

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRESSIVISM IN NIGERIAN  
EDUCATION: AN ASSESSMENT**

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**UNIVERSITY OF JOS.**

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this work is the product of my own research efforts, undertaken under the supervision of Prof. Ayo Adewole and has not been presented elsewhere for the award of a degree or certificate. All sources have been duly distinguished and appropriately acknowledged.

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## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the research work for this thesis and the subsequent preparation of this work by **Mr. Joseph Maina Musa** (*PGED/UJ/14154/02*) were carried out under my supervision.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my father – Da Chile Daspan and mother – Naa Nahir Chile who although have not seen the four walls of the classroom for no fault of theirs but have raised me up to this level of academic attainment.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration:----	---	----	-----	----	----	---	---	----	ii
Certification:-----	----	---	----	---	---	---	---	----	iii
Acknowledgement:----	---	----	-----	---	----	----	---	---	iv
Dedication:---	---	----	---	----	---	---	---	---	vi
Table of Contents:---	----	---	----	---	--	----	---	---	vii

### CHAPTER ONE

#### INTRODUCTION

1.1	BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY: ----	----	----	---	----	1
1.2	STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM: ---	----	-----	---	----	9
1.3	PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: ----	---	----	---	----	12
1.4	RESEARCH QUESTIONS: ----	----	---	---	----	12
1.5	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY: ----	---	----	----	----	13
1.6	REFERENCES: ----	----	--	----	---	14

### CHAPTER TWO

#### PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH METHODS

2.1	INTRODUCTION: ---	-----	----	----	----	--	18
2.2	PHILOSOPHICAL AND EMPIRICAL METHODS: ---	----	----	----	----	19	
2.3	PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS: ---	----	---	---	----	20	
2.3.1	Analysis of Concepts:----	----	---	----	----	22	
2.2.2	The Principles Guiding the use of a Word:----	----	----	---	----	28	
2.2.3	The Conditions logically Necessary for the Application of a Concept:---	----	----	---	----	28	
2.2.4	The Relevance of Analytic Philosophy:----	----	----	----	----	29	

2.4	PRESCRIPTIVE PHILOSOPHY: ----	---	---	---	----	30
2.5	LOGICAL ARGUMENTS THROUGH DEDUCTIVE REASONING: -					31
2.5.1	Validity and Soundness of Deductive Arguments: ---	---	----			33
2.6	INDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS: ---	---	---	---	----	35
2.7	THE APPLICATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL METHODS IN THE					
	STUDY: ---	---	---	----	---	36
2.8	SUMMARY:---	---	---	---	---	39
2.9	REFERENCES: ---	---	---	---	---	41
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>						
<b>THE CONCEPT OF PROGRESSIVISM</b>						
3.1	THE NATURE OF THE CONCEPT---	---	---	---	---	44
3.2	THE ANALYSIS OF PROGRESSIVISM:---	---	---	----		45
3.3	CONCEPTS THAT HAVE DEVELOPED SIMILAR MEANINGS					
	WITH PROGRESSIVISM: --	-----	----	-----	-----	51
3.3.1	Naturalism:----	----	---	----	--	51
3.3.2	Liberalism: --	----	---	---	---	53
3.3.3	Pragmatism: ---	---	---	---	---	55
3.3.4	Reconstructionism: ---	---	---	---	---	57
3.4	CONCEPTS THAT HAVE DISSIMILAR MEANING WITH					
	PROGRESSIVISM: - - - -	----	---	---	---	59
3.4.1	Conservatism: ---	---	---	--	----	60
3.4.2	Regressivism: ---	---	---	---	----	63
3.5	THE CONTEXTUAL USAGE OF PROGRESSIVISM: ---	---				64
3.6	CONDITIONS LOGICALLY NECESSARY FOR THE USE OF					
	PROGRESSIVISM: ---	---	---	---	---	66

3.6.1	Anti- Tradition:	---	---	--	--	--	----	---	----	66
3.6.2	Pro-Reforms:	---	--	---	---	---	---	---	---	67
3.6.3	Trust in Human Intelligence---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	68
3.6.4	Democratic Orientation:-	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	69
3.7	SUMMARY:	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	71
3.8	REFERENCES:	---	---	---	--	---	---	---	----	73

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **JUSTIFICATION OF PROGRESSIVISM**

4.1	INTRODUCTION:-----	---	---	---	---	----	--	---	---	79
4.2	PROGRESSIVISM:---	----	---	----	----	----	--	---	---	80
4.3	POLITICAL JUSTIFICATION OF PROGRESSIVISM:-----	---	---	---	---	----	--	---	---	81
4.4	THE SOCIO – ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION OF PROGRESSIVISM:---	----	---	---	---	---	----	---	---	87
4.5	EDUCATIONAL JUSTIFICATION OF PROGRESSIVISM:-----	---	---	---	---	----	--	---	---	90
4.6	SUMMARY:---	----	----	----	--	---	----	----	---	96
4.7	REFERENCES:---	----	----	----	----	---	----	---	---	99

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **ASSESEMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

5.1	INTRODUCTION:-----	--	----	----	---	-----	---	---	---	102
5.2	THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION:-----	---	---	----	---	---	---	---	----	103
5.3	THE MEANING OF PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION:---	---	---	----	---	----	---	---	---	105
5.4	ACCESS TO EDUCATION:---	-----	----	----	----	----	---	---	---	109

5.4.1	Placement:---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	110
5.4.2	Tuition, incidental Costs and Poverty:---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	114
5.4.3	Geographical Location of Schools:---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	120
5.4.4	Gender and Access to Education;---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	124
5.5.	THE INVOLVEMENT OF LEARNERS IN DECISIONS AFFECTING								
	THEM:---	----	---	---	---	---	---	----	127
5.5	THE INVOLVEMENT OF LEARNERS IN CURRICULA								
	DECISIONS:---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	133
5.6.1	The Nigerian Curriculum:---		--	---	---	---	---	---	135
5.6.2	The Problems of Implementing Progressive Curriculum in								
	Nigerian Education:---	---	----	---	----	----	--		138
5.7.	INVOLVING LEARNERS IN DISCIPLINE DECISIONS:-----		--						143
5.8	ACADEMIC FREEDOM:-----		---	----	---	---	--		146
5.8.1	The Concept of Freedom:---		---	---	---	----	---		146
5.8.2	Freedom of Expression and Association:---		---	---	---				155
5.9	THE PURSUIT OF CHILDREN'S NEEDS AND INTERESTS:--								157
5.9.1	Needs;---	---	---	---	---	----	---	--	158
5.9.2	Biological Needs of the Child and Education:---	---				----	---		161
5.9.3	Children's Interests in the Educational Process:---		---	---	---				170
5.9.4	The Psychological Meaning of Interest:---				---	---	---		170
5.9.5	Normative Interest:---		---	---	---	----	---	---	174
5.10	PUNISHMENT AND PROGRESSIVISM:---		--	---	--				178



**ABSTRACT**

The thesis sought to assess the extent to which progressive education is implemented in Nigeria. This is essentially because while the National Policy on Education has progressive underpinnings, progressivism is capable of multiple meanings. Also, some clauses in the National Policy on Education contradict some of the tenets of progressive education. If the assessment shows that Nigerian education is not progressive, measures will be prescribed on how to implement progressive education in Nigeria. In carrying out the research, the analytical and prescriptive methods of doing philosophy were employed. In analysing the key concept of the study, progressivism was found to be in line with positive change thus the necessary conditions of progressivism are pro-reforms, anti-tradition, democratic orientation and the trust in human intelligence. Hence, the concept was justified for its forward looking view of things. Progressive education advocates equitable distribution of educational places. However, a wide chasm exists between male and female enrolment in Nigerian education. On learners involvement in managerial decisions, the study noted that Nigerian learners are not adequately consulted. They have no say in disciplinary and curricular issues. For lack of personnel and instructional materials, the implementation of progressive curriculum in Nigerian education is not possible. The study also noted that neither the needs nor the interests of Nigerian school children are met because of the conspicuous absence of health facilities, inadequate classroom accommodation and books. The freedom of the learners is curtailed through the undue imposition of often unjustified rules by the teachers and the school authority. Although the position of the progressivists on punishment is negative, it is a normal phenomenon in Nigerian education. The progressive teaching methods were found to be inadequately implemented in Nigeria. Contingent upon these findings, the study inferred that Nigerian education is not progressive. It was therefore recommended that the National Policy on Education be reviewed, private and special schools be abolished and the teaching of religious knowledge scrapped.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

A stranger in the educational landscape soon discovers that just as in politics and religion, education is approached from different perspectives. Among the perspectives is progressivism which has distinguished itself as a renowned educational approach that has received wide acclaim. It did not emerge from a vacuum but has a long and honourable ancestry. As an educational movement, progressivism grew out of pragmatism which was formulated by Charles Pierce, enriched by Williams James and nurtured by John Dewey. Progressive education rose in opposition to essentialism the predominant educational practice in America in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Essentialism drew its educational ideas from the philosophical thought of idealism which is “perhaps the oldest systematic philosophy in western culture, dating back at least as early as Plato, the Greek philosopher”<sup>1</sup>. The major stronghold of the idealist system of thought is the assertion that the world & all in it is unchanging. This view was borne out of the socio-political circumstances of that time which were conservative in nature. Conservatism, the rock upon which essentialism was built has as its progenitor, Edmond Burke - an English statesman and philosopher. On Burke’s support for stability and abhorrence for reform movements, Pratte<sup>2</sup> writes that “His (Burke) chief interest was in order and stability ... his ideal was a state governed by a

landed aristocracy in which property was safe and an established church was respected”.

Conservatism therefore views institutions as the traditional conserving agents of societal values. In this connection, educational institutions are meant to transmit certain elements of societal cultural heritage which are held in high esteem to the extent that they cannot be ignored. By this, essentialism views education as “a central body of essential knowledge that must be transmitted to all who come to school”<sup>3</sup>. Here, knowledge is considered as something that has to be put into the learners by the teacher whose task is that of a depositor. He issues out orders to the learners who patiently and passively absorb what is dished out only to be reproduced in examinations. In this regard, the supreme position of the teacher as the only acknowledged messenger of knowledge sharply contrasts that of the learner who is seen as an ignorant and unthinking being to whom the essential heritage of the society has to be passed on.

By the eighteenth century, conservatism together with essentialism astronomically rose to overshadow socio-political and educational life of Britain - its birth place from where it spread to other parts of the globe. Since Britain was the colonial lord of both America and Nigeria, conservatism and essentialism became the general practice in the society and school. This was the state of affairs which triggered bitter oppositions by a group of critics stigmatised, the liberals. Liberalism is the brainchild of John Locke - an English philosopher who belongs to the realists school of thought originated by

Aristotle in opposition to idealism. The realists condemn in its entirety, the idealists over glorification of the mind and assert that without matter or object, the mind would know nothing.

Locke and his school of thought advocated the challenge of the divine right of the king. The aim of Locke's protest was to loosen the arbitrary grip of the church and the state on the citizenry. Wingo<sup>4</sup> confirms that, "originally, liberalism was a protest against the arbitrary interference of institutions, particularly church and state in the affairs of citizens". The motivating force in the struggle was the liberal's belief in change as a major component of societal development and that there can hardly be any reason why some ideals should be so held in high esteem that they cannot be subjected to critical scrutiny and where necessary, changes effected. The various institutions of the society are to exist only to the extent that they serve human welfare. Where they fall short of this, they should be changed. Mayer<sup>5</sup> describes the major engagement of the liberals thus:

The liberals primary engagement was a bitter struggle for social progress. They stood at the side of the farmers . . . with equal vigour, the liberal leaders probed the inefficiency of government and exposed the abuses of political leaders. Through the novels, the press, school lecture forum and churches, the liberals tried to make the government responsive to the demands of the common people.

With the acceptance of change as an inevitable phenomenon of life, more reform movements came into existence. Prominent among them is progressivism.

America, the land of birth of pragmatism and subsequently progressivism is a multi-racial country. Handlin<sup>6</sup> confirms that American

population is “a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans and Swedes”. These people migrated to America for various reasons ranging from religious and political persecution to famine. Adducing the rationale for an Irish flight to America, Handlin<sup>7</sup> reveals that:

A murderous famine that spread across Ireland for two years after 1846 found that unhappy island in an already weakened condition. Over populated, ruled by alien masters, and living on the margin existence even in normal times, . . . Hundreds of thousands died and millions lost their claims to the tiny plots of land which had been their sole hope for survival, under these circumstances, emigration became the only alternative to death.

With this diverse population, America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was faced with numerous socio-economic and political problems which begged for solutions. The old and simple ways of living in the village was evolving into complex urban life thus it was “in the city that we have the slum and the breeding place of anarchy, ignorance and crime. It is there we have the mob”<sup>8</sup>. In addition, corruption had permeated the fabric of American life. In the words of Garraty<sup>9</sup>:

There was a corrupt relationship between criminals and the New York police . . . large numbers of American employers, workers and politicians were fundamentally immoral. Lawyers were becoming tools of big business, judges were permitting evildoers to escape justice, the churches were materialistic.

Economically, America was industrialising, Akinpelu<sup>10</sup> reports that “gigantic expansion in industry and commerce” were witnessed but the economic sector was monopolised by a few and powerful individuals. Graft<sup>11</sup> explains that “the basic industries . . . were ruled by the decisions of a comparatively small and compact oligarchy of bankers and industrialists”. In consequence, a sharp line of difference was drawn between the fabulously wealthy executives and financiers and the majority of the citizens who worked

for low wages and lived in filthy and disease infested environments. This situation did well in providing a sharp contrast between the palatial mansions of the rich and the slums of the poor.

It was with these problems at sight that Dewey popularized progressivism by integrating the ideas of Pierce and James. According to Pierce, an idea or a thing must ultimately be judged by its consequences. Bowen<sup>12</sup> describes Pierce's central idea thus; "Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object."

To Pierce therefore, valid knowledge comes only from consequences of actions. James contribution is in the field of pedagogy where he advocates that psychological principles be used. Since progressivism favours change, various reforms were initiated in America particularly in politics where democracy was upheld. Dewey descended heavily on the essentialist type of education in America which according to him is "authoritarian; it was based on the learner being necessarily dependent upon the mind and will of another ... (consequently) the whole conception and practice of education had to be radically changed"<sup>13</sup>.

The effort of Dewey and his colleagues at changing the society using the school gave birth to progressive education, which according to Brahmeld<sup>14</sup> is "a cluster of systematic beliefs about education". Based on the progressivists belief that progressivism is "a democratic philosophy that

challenged traditional authoritarian theories"<sup>15</sup>, progressive education views democracy as a veritable tool for educational progress. Consequently, Bowen<sup>16</sup> clarifies that the organic school of Dewey was meant to "attack the life-less pedagogy, ... passivity and listening which are all ipso facto, undemocratic".

Progressive education seeks to forge a close relationship between the child's learning experiences and the society. Karier and Hogan<sup>17</sup> report that Dewey, the dominant intellectual force behind the actualisation of progressive education "saw the weakness of schooling divorced from social reality and he therefore consistently and forcefully argued for ways of integrating the school with the society". Taking cognizance of this, William Wirt established a school that integrate "learning and labour, the abstract and the applied, the individual and the society."<sup>18</sup> . Although different strands of progressive education exists, they concur that education should be democratic and linked up with societal realities.

On the Nigerian educational terrain, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society is credited with the introduction of western education in Nigeria when in 1842, it established the first primary school at Badagry. This sparked off the interest of other missionary groups into establishing their own schools. For the missionaries, the purpose of education was to spread the gospel. Side by side with Christian Missionary activities were the growth of British colonial rule and European trade in Nigeria. The interest of the traders, colonial government and Christian Missionaries taken together, determined the

purpose of Nigerian education. According to Fafunwa<sup>19</sup>, “Commerce, gun and the Bible were the basic instruments used to exploit Nigerians”. It is in this regard that Arithmetic, Religion and Reading formed the heart of the curriculum.

The essentialist education inherited from the British colonialists was irrelevant because it had no bearing on the needs and interests of the Nigerian learner and society. Ukeje<sup>20</sup> maintains that “Nigerian pupils learn about . . . the English Lake District or the exploits of Robert Clive in India without knowing a word of their own home geography or history”. This led to the production of persons who could not function effectively in the society because they could do well only as employees of missionaries, colonial government or commercial firms. It then becomes of less wonder Fafunwa’s<sup>21</sup> declaration that “the best student we can produce with our present system is one who is Nigerian in blood but English in morals and intellect.”

The colonially inherited education was frowned at by patriotic Nigerians because in their judgement, it has alienated the Nigerian child from “the practical orientation which was typical of traditional education”<sup>22</sup>. They argue that although the essentialist type of education was solving the problems of the British, the contrary is the case in Nigeria. Fafunwa<sup>23</sup> says that “Nigerians have practically made themselves slaves of a system which may be working remarkably well in meeting the needs of the British but which is in fact unsuitable in Nigeria.”

On the basis of the above consideration, colonial education drew heavy criticisms from Nigerians. For instance, Solarin<sup>24</sup> accuses the colonially inherited education for being “rootless and excessively literal” because of its strong bias towards academic subjects at the expense of science and technology, Omatseye<sup>25</sup> condemns the then Nigerian essentialist education for its “overemphasis on the 3 Rs.”

Put together, the discontent about colonial education led to strong agitations for an overhaul of Nigerian education in order to make it relevant to both the learners and the society in which they live. This gave rise to the national curriculum conference of 1969 which was held in Lagos. In line with Fafunwa’s<sup>26</sup> contention that “if you really want to know how good your product is, ask the consumer,” representatives were drawn from:

Trade unions, farmer’s unions, women’s organizations, religious bodies, teachers’ associations, other professional organizations, university teachers and administrators as well as ministry officials, youth club organizers businessmen and representatives from governments of the most of the then twelve states of Nigeria.

The conference endorsed sixty-five recommendations on Nigerian education. After the Nigerian civil war, a national seminar was organized which gave birth to the National Policy on Education in 1977. According to Ukeje<sup>27</sup>, the National Policy on Education is meant to eliminate “the existing contradictions, ambiguities, and lack of uniformity in the educational practices in the different parts of the Federation.” In praise of the objectives of primary education according to the policy, Wokocho<sup>28</sup> says that:

The objectives of primary education in Nigeria as enunciated (in the National Policy on Education) are so functional in their orientation that if they are successfully achieved, they form the basis for a very enlightened,

self-reliant, healthy, disciplined and in fact, well roundly developed citizenry.

The National Policy on Education which shows a radical departure from the colonially inherited education is considered by many Nigerians to be relevant and appropriate to our needs and aspirations as a nation. Enoh<sup>29</sup> says that “ in the new system, schools teach those skills that will meet the needs of the immediate society, . . . schools therefore cease to be abstractions but are created to solve the problems of society.” With this development, Nigerian education became progressive. The National Policy of Education<sup>30</sup> for instance states that Nigerian education is directed towards “self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as towards social, cultural, economic, scientific and technological progress.” In giving effect to the policy statement, Omatseye<sup>31</sup> explains that there has been marked increase in “technical and commercial secondary schools, trade centres, polytechnics and universities of technology.”

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Nigerian educational approach as pointed out above has progressive underpinnings because the National Policy on Education “is essentially progressive in character.”<sup>32</sup> Evidently, the National Policy of Education<sup>33</sup> states that Nigeria’s philosophy of education believes that:

There is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive united Nigeria. To this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive, while interest and ability should determine individual’s direction in education.

Despite the progressive stance of Nigerian education, elements of essentialist education feature prominently in the National Policy on Education. For instance the Policy document prescribes that subjects like mathematics and English language must be studied by the students both in the junior and senior secondary schools.<sup>34</sup> Again, one of the progressive goals of Nigerian education is to “lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking.”<sup>35</sup> This notwithstanding, the National Policy on Education turns round to encourage indoctrination which is unprogressive and cannot be consistent with the achievement of scientific and reflective thinking. This makes Okoh<sup>36</sup> to wonder how a learner could “be indoctrinated (in line with the word inculcation used in the national policy) and at the same time be ‘trained’ to develop the faculties for scientific thinking?”

Closely allied to the above is the apparent contradictions of some of the clauses in the National Policy on Education. For instance the National Policy of Education<sup>37</sup> stipulates that “primary education shall be tuition free, universal and compulsory.” The question is, how can the compulsion component of primary education give effect to its universal claim when primary education is only tuition free? Can a parent be prosecuted for not sending his school age child to school on the ground of lack of money for books and/or uniforms?

Another instance of contradiction in the National Policy on Education is the concept of “free and democratic society”<sup>38</sup> where freedom is viewed as the absence of constraints, can the learner be punished if he comes to the school late? If a secondary student is free to study subjects of his choice, the

question follows as to whether all subjects are offered in all Nigerian secondary schools. On democracy, Adewole<sup>39</sup> states that “political systems and/or regimes that are diametrically opposed can and do in fact lay claim to being democratic”, the problem being that “some such claimants . . . are mistaken in their conception of democracy. This suggests the need for clarity about the notion of democracy in order to remove the ambiguities surrounding it.”<sup>40</sup>

With the implementation of progressive education in Nigeria, solutions to societal problems are expected to be provided. This is because it is functional.<sup>41</sup> But Adesina<sup>42</sup> asserts that “the vast majority of Nigerian population are still very poor and their living standards and other indicators of quality of life (food, health and education) are the same with those found among the poorest countries of the world.” Added to the above are social problems like “increased crime waves, acute shortage of municipal services, proliferation of slums insecurity of life and property.”<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, Awan, Ezeogu and Bagu<sup>44</sup> lament that “corruption has eaten deep into the very fabric of Nigerian society.”

Commenting on the popularity of progressivism, Brahmeld<sup>45</sup> writes that progressivism is a 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy which has:

Won the support of more outstanding American theorists than any competing philosophy. It has influenced foreign educators both east and west. And it has affected practice on every level from nursery school to adult forum.

In spite of the global fame of progressivism, when one ponders on what it consists in, no precise answer readily comes to mind. Enoh<sup>46</sup> says that it

means “different things to different people”. In consequence, Ozmon and Craver<sup>47</sup> posit that problems of this kind are “located in confused and tutored language, warped or unclear meanings and linguistic confusion.”

With these problems in view, it becomes pertinent to reflect deeply on the extent to which Nigerian education is succeeding in the implementation of progressive principles in her educational system. What are the constraints and the remedies? These questions will be answered as the work progresses.

### **1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this research therefore, is to assess the degree of success of the implementation of progressive educational views in Nigerian education and pave the way for its effective implementation if found defective.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In carrying out this research, the researcher is to be guided by the following questions.

1. What is progressivism and how adequate is it as an educational ideal in Nigeria?
2. What are the progressive tenets contained in the National Policy of Education?
3. How has Nigeria fared in the implementation of progressive views contained in the National Policy on Education.?
4. If overall assessment is not favourable, how can Nigerian education be organized to get maximum benefits from progressive tenets?

5. What steps are necessary to implement aspects of progressivists views in Nigerian education?

## 15 **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

On completion of this work, the findings will assist educational policy makers in fashioning out new educational policies, particularly as it relates to the National Policy on Education which as discussed, contains series of ambiguities and contradictions. It is only when this is done that Nigerian education will be truly progressive. Parents, learners, the government and the general public, the major stakeholders in Nigerian education will know what to do and how to do it.

When progressive education is adequately implemented in Nigerian education, the numerous societal problems will be remedied. This is because progressive education became a historical reality in America as an attempt to provide solutions to societal problems that were created by the changing industrial world.

When the work is accomplished it will serve as a reference material for prospective scholars who intend to undertake researches on the same or similar topics.

Owing to the misconception of the concept of progressivism, “no one progressive school is just like another and quite a lot of them are poles apart.”<sup>48</sup> The significance of this work therefore lies in coming out with a concise analysis of the concept of progressivism. This will brush aside, conflicting conceptions that obscure a clear view of this movement in

education. It is only when this is done that a clear understanding of progressive education will emerge.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH METHODS

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Greek Philosophers, the kernel of Western philosophy started professional philosophy in the 5<sup>th</sup> century during which knowledge was considered as a whole and not compartmentalised into Science, Arts and Social Sciences<sup>1</sup>. A Philosopher was therefore expected to be verse in general knowledge. Writing on Aristotle as an educational thinker, Akinpelu<sup>2</sup> reports that:

He was a prolific writer and a typical example of the ancient philosopher who ventured into many areas of knowledge which include the natural sciences (especially physics and biology), law, logic, politics, ethics, metaphysics and so on.

Consequently, all questions raised on knowledge were philosophical in nature but it was later discovered that “the field of scientific knowledge has become far too detailed and complex for one man to deal effectively with”<sup>3</sup>. The philosopher was then accused of asking questions in areas that belonged to different fields of knowledge. The need for specialization therefore, arose which led certain people to specialize in one aspect of investigation and others in another. Thus, the 17<sup>th</sup> century saw the rise of modern science which made the demarcation between it (Science) and philosophy more concrete and permanent. Other disciplines followed suit. Schofield<sup>4</sup> reveals that “philosophy brought forth offsprings. These were called ‘science’ ‘theology’ ‘mathematics’

and each of these children of philosophy gathered a store of knowledge of its own.”

## 2.2 PHILOSOPHICAL AND EMPIRICAL METHODS

Having established itself as an independent field of study, science discovered that to know what the world is like, one has to look and see. Observation was viewed as a reputable method of gathering knowledge. But O’connor<sup>5</sup> objects to this standpoint as he notes that:

Mere observation of the world of nature was not enough to lay the foundations of science. The results of observation had to be refined by experiment and by measurement and the direction of observation controlled by hypothesis.

In a nutshell, the scientific method took the empirical form of investigation which as Nwana<sup>6</sup> highlights consists in identifying a problem, reviewing of related literature, propounding hypothesis or hypotheses on the basis of which data are collected through observation, interview, experiments or administration of questionnaires. The data collected are analysed by employing the use of statistical devices like percentage, chi-square, standard deviation, Z-score and T-score from where a conclusion is drawn.

With the successful detachment of science, mathematics and other disciplines from philosophy, questions arising from natural and social sciences are settled by empirical methods. But as O’Connor<sup>7</sup> observes:

There are a very large number of questions that do not seem to fall into either of these categories.... If such questions cannot be decided either by empirical or purely deductive methods, how are they to be answered?... this is the problem that has been set to philosophy by the success of natural science.

Since philosophical questions were and still are not to be answered by the empirical method, the fundamental problem set before the philosopher was

the question of finding a method. First, it was thought that philosophical problems could be solved through the use of universal symbolism which was like mathematics. Thus, whenever a philosophical problem arose, philosophers would say, "To resolve our difficulty let us sit down and calculate"<sup>8</sup>. With this method, an attempt was made at providing philosophical conclusions as mathematical ones but this was not possible because of the nature of philosophy.

Philosophy is an area of investigation which proceeds through a process of arguments and counter arguments. In these arguments, logical reasoning plays a very unique role. This is because philosophical arguments delve into abstract issues where specific empirical facts are not readily available to solve the problems at hand. Thus, when disagreement arises on a philosophical matter as it always does, the only way of settling it is to consider the arguments on both sides with logical acumen. Burt's<sup>9</sup> epitomization of this method is worth noting:

Unless one can specify a procedure by which a given assertion is testable, so that either it or the contrary assertion can be confirmed by adequate evidence, the assertion ... has no sense.

In order to advance arguments with logical accuracy, clarity becomes very necessary. To achieve this, concepts and ideas have to be analysed on the strength of which deductive or inductive arguments could be constructed.

### **2.3 PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS**

As earlier stated, this investigation is not empirical in nature. Thus, the empirical method of formulating hypotheses, data collection and analysis could

not find application. Instead, the philosophical method or rather the analytic philosophical method was used. This method of doing philosophy has been in practice since the days of Socrates. Since philosophy is concerned with clear thinking and precise expression, Socrates' major philosophical engagement was the clarification of concepts and ideas through his famous dialectic method in order to rid people's minds of error(s). Explaining the Socratic method, Akinpelu<sup>10</sup> says that Socrates would:

Propose a topic.... And by means of dialogue with his listener, they would jointly arrive at what they all could regard as a consensus. In the process of the dialogue, many definitions would have been examined..... until they rested their arguments.

This mode of doing philosophy was abandoned in the course of the development of philosophy but by the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was revisited through the activities of logical positivists and labelled analytic philosophy. The analytic process occupies a high seat of philosophical prestige. According to Burt<sup>11</sup>, “ the analytic movement ... has become the most attended contemporary development among professional philosophers.”

To analyse something implies separating it from others to expose its various constitutions and show the way in which they are related. In the analysis of a battle for instance, the historian distinguishes moves from counter moves and shows how these led to either victory or defeat. Burt<sup>12</sup> explains that analytic philosophy “emphasizes the logical dissection of concepts and statements to reveal their precise meanings and tries to draw all the distinctions required.” Here, concepts are clarified so as to discover the

real meanings of expressions made. By so doing, the problem that is faced is exposed.

### **2.3.1 Analysis of Concepts**

Language is the major medium of communication among people. Every language is made up of words which are combined to form sentences. If the words in a sentence are not appropriately put in place, it gives rise to communication difficulties. This is further confirmed by Hosper's<sup>13</sup> statement that "a brief look at the dictionary will show you that the majority of the words are used with more than one meaning."

Resulting from the above development, a word could be used to mean different things or different words used to mean the same thing. Thouless<sup>14</sup> identifies this as a major source of crooked thinking as he claims that "the most obvious piece of crooked thinking which results from an absence of clear meanings is that in which a word is used in different senses." Whereas the dictionary provides the meaning of a word, an analysis takes a step further and lays bare the rationale for that meaning. According to Wilson<sup>15</sup>, "we use words in an attempt to 'digest' our experiences but at times, we suffer from indigestion. At such times, analytical philosophy is taken as a kind of Alka-Seltzer."

The concept of something conveys the notion or idea that points out what is common to a number of specific things or state of affairs. The concept of a school as a formal institution of learning for instance stands for what is found in a certain range of formal educational institutions - nursery

schools, primary schools - day or boarding, private or public and make them all schools and not hospitals or banks. It is in this light that some concepts used in this thesis will be analysed to avoid any form of misuse and/or misconception.

Words although related to concepts are not the same as concepts because the same word can be used for different concepts on different occasions. Contingent upon the context, the word "school" signifies the concept of a family of philosophers or a class of educational institutions. The relationship between words and concepts is that, apart from being the same at times, words are used in the process of conceptual analysis (as will be embarked upon later in this work).

To possess a concept therefore, is not the same thing as having a strait jacket image of the concept. For instance, one can have the concept of punishment without necessarily creating the mental picture of a recalcitrant student being lashed. Furthermore, to have the concept of punishment does not imply only the correct usage of the word but also the ability to relate it to other words like "guilt" and say that it is only somebody who commits an offence that can be punished.

Conceptual analysis first picks on the meaning of a concept. This could be achieved through definition. There are many methods of defining a word. First is definition by equivalent words. In this case, other words which are equal in meaning to the word to be defined are used in a way that both the

word and the defining phrase could be substituted for one another without altering the meaning of the sentence. According to Cornman and Leherh<sup>16</sup>:

When a word is defined (by equivalent words), certain other words are supplied which together have the same meaning as the word to be defined. For example, we might define the word 'brother' by using the words 'male sibling' that is the word brother is equal by definition to the words 'male sibling'.

The problem with definition by equivalent words is that sometimes, the words used in the definition are not comprehended by some listeners or readers. As in the above instance, it is not all people that understand that 'sibling' means children of the same parents. Consequently, an accurate definition could be offered but not understood, thus constituting a communication bottleneck. To elaborate on this problem, Hospers<sup>17</sup> asserts that "when you define a word, it is ordinarily one whose meaning your hearer is unfamiliar with, and he can understand the definition you give only if he is familiar with the meanings of the words in the definition."

Even if the words used in a definition are understood, another source of difficulty in definition by equivalent words is the provision of wrong definitions by authorities. An example is found in the word "bachelors" which is often defined as "unmarried males," This definition sounds fallacious because it implies wrongly that two-day old males who are not married are bachelors. This renders the two symbols - bachelors and unmarried males unsubstitutionable for one another because the latter refers to all unmarried males and the former, to unmarried adult males.

Sometimes it becomes difficult to define a word using equivalent words because of the problems explained above. At times like this, a denotation of

the word could be given. The denotation of a word comprises of all things to which a word refers. Cornman and Leher<sup>18</sup> explain that:

Speaking of those individual things to which a term refers, it is convenient to have some term to refer to the whole group or class of things to which the term refers. Following standard usage on this point, we shall call the group of things to which a term refers the denotation of the term.

In this vein, the word “man” refers to all classes of men in the world be they white, black or yellow; tall, short or moderate. It has to be added that the denotation of “man” does not only refer to men who presently occupy the surface of the earth but it encapsulates the past, present and future generations of men.

A denotative definition is not fault proof because in most cases, only a partial list of what a word denotes can be obtained. Like in the denotative definition of “man” which embraces past, present and future men of the world, it becomes very difficult if not impossible for someone to exhaust the list. In this regard, only some few men can be used to provide a denotative definition of men instead of the whole men of the world that ever lived in the past, present and future.

Apart from words that could be defined by denotation, some have a particular connotation. The connotation of a word refers to the associations it has in the minds of its users. In other words, the connotation of a word entails the thoughts, feelings and images that its utterance brings to the mind of the hearer. “Lion” for instance connotes all classes of Lion in the world but to most people, it is associated with the characteristic of being courageous.

The problem with connotation is that often when a word or concept is used, it connotes a wide range of imagination, feeling or thoughts. As earlier cited, the utterance of the concept “school” leads one person to think of educational institutions and another, a group of thinkers.

So far, the discussion on definition shows that a word or concept could be defined through the use of other words. This process is very helpful most especially when the meanings of the words used in defining a word are clearly understood but as pointed out earlier, the meaning of some of the words used in a definition are sometimes not understood. In finding out what they mean, more words are used to explain their meaning again, some of which might not be understood. To avoid the rigours of continuous use of words, the word to be defined is directly connected with a thing through non-verbal expressions, for example by pointing at the object. This technique is referred to as ostensive definition.

In ostensive definition, somebody - say the teacher points to something and pronounces a word for what is pointed at. The word becomes the definition of the thing. If for instance a teacher points at a book and says “book” his pupils will know that this particular thing is called “book” thus the word “book” refers to book alone. So, the meaning of a word is found in the thing that it is used to refer to.

Drawing attention to the significance of ostensive definition, Hospers<sup>19</sup> has this to say:

It (ostensive definition) is the most fundamental kind of definition, in that without it, no other kind of definition could ever get started. Without ostensive definition, how could we have begun to learn the meanings of words? When we learn our first word, we could not learn its meaning by having other words thrown at us, (definition by equivalent words) for we would not have known what they meant.

Although ostensive definition seems to be plausible enough as portrayed by the viewpoint above, on a close examination, some loop - holes can be spotted. First, in calling attention to the subject referred to by a word, the use of sense organs like eyes, ear, tongue and nose become very central. Thus, in defining the colour "red", a red thing has to be seen with the eyes. But, if one were born blind or suffers from colour blindness, it becomes impossible for him to see the red object being pointed at. Nature or any other factor like accident could render one or more of our sense organs faulty. This makes ostensive definition problematic.

Another problem with ostensive definition is that, if the things that certain words represent can be pointed at with ease, others are not tangible and cannot be pointed at. It is for instance certain that one cannot point to his or another person's thoughts or point to God, devil or angles. In the same vein, conjunctions like "but" and "because" cannot be pointed at. In this case, does it logically follow that words, which cannot be pointed at, are meaningless?

From the foregoing on definition, it has become clear that definition by equivalent words, denotative and connotation definitions and ostensive definitions suffer some deficiencies. This suggests that it is unsafe to lean heavily on definitions in the process of conceptual analysis. Having

confirmed this, Adewole<sup>20</sup> provides the next steps to be taken. According to him:

Possessing a concept transcends grasping a definition. It is not simply the meaning of a term we uncover in analysing a concept. Basically, we examine the use of a word in order to see what principles govern its use. We pick out conditions logically necessary for the application of the term.

### **2.3.2 The Principles Guiding the Use of a Word**

As already pointed out, most words possess more than just a meaning. In the same vein, a word can be used in different senses. It is from the way that it is used that its meaning is determined. Flew<sup>21</sup> clarifies that:

It is commonly impossible to distinguish between different senses of a word without considering how it is used in context. When used in different contexts, the same word may assume different senses. Take an example, the transitive use of a Verb; 'I smell a lilac' (and) 'the lilac smells lovely.'

It is only when the context in which a word is used is understood that the meaning of the word clearly comes out as a representation of the intent of its user. The words "pregnant" and "fruit" for instance can be used in different contexts as in "she is pregnant" and "the air got pregnant with the smell of a burnt meat." Then, "this is the fruit of a tree" and "this is the fruit of his meditations."

### **2.3.3 The Conditions Logically Necessary for the Application of a Concept**

For a concept to be adequately analysed, those concepts that have developed similar and opposite meanings to it have to be analysed from where the logical conditions for the application of the concept are worked out. In doing this, the rules under which a concept will be used are laid bare. This

tells when the concept can be used. We know what the concept “student” means when we know the conditions under which the concept “student” is applicable to somebody and when it is not. In the words of Brody<sup>22</sup>, “a word has meaning only because of the existence of rules governing its use.”

On the conditions logically necessary for the application of a concept, it could be inquired if at all, all of the conditions necessary for the use of a concept can be exhausted. On this, Hospers<sup>23</sup> poses further questions, “is there a definite set of characteristics to choose from? Who could make such a list, and if one did, could he be quite sure that it was complete?” Because of questions like the ones raised above, to talk about all the conditions for the application of a concept cannot be possible. Only the necessary conditions for the application of the concept is always feasible.

On the whole, conceptual analysis involves attempting a definition of the concept, examining concepts that have developed similar and dissimilar meanings to the concept under analysis, its contextual usages and picking out criteria logically necessary for the application of the concept.

#### 2.3.4 **The Relevance of Analytic Philosophy**

The task of philosophical analysis is not undertaken just for its sake but to facilitate the clear expression of ideas. This will make our audience grasp firmly, the meaning of the idea(s) expressed. Where an idea is not clearly expressed because the meaning of what it intends to express is concealed or disguised, it can be restated in a new form of words that clearly brings out what the previous expression failed to exhibit.

Analytic philosophy is therefore significant in the educational process in the sense that through conceptual analysis, educational concepts are elucidated. Hirst, one of the famous analytic philosophers is cited by Omatseye<sup>24</sup> as saying that philosophy is a distinctive pursuit, primarily an analytic pursuit, with the ambition of understanding concepts. In support of the above view, Adewole<sup>25</sup> has argued that it is only through conceptual analysis that we understand educational concepts. If for instance, we are not clear about the concept of “education,” it logically follows that we cannot make a distinction between it and other related educational concepts like training and indoctrination. Where educational concepts are clearly understood, those engaged in the business of education would say and do what they actually mean. This would go a long way in enhancing performance in the educational sector.

#### **2.4 PRESCRIPTIVE PHILOSOPHY**

To some philosophers, it is not enough to only provide an elucidation of educational concepts (as advocated by analytic philosophers) without prescribing the course that education ought to take. This is because education, as they see it, is a decision – ridden enterprise. To this group of philosophers, philosophy of education should be prescriptive in nature because analytic philosophy leaves open, the action that ought to be taken.

The roots of prescriptive philosophy are firmly established in one of the most ancient definitions of philosophy which sees it as an amalgamated concept of Greek ancestry - “Philo” (love) and “Sophia” (wisdom) which when

joined together, means the love of wisdom. Philosophy therefore has to be a prerogative of the wise as it was considered to be a superior activity capable of resolving all problems. A historical glance at the evolution of philosophy reveals that philosophers of the days of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were encyclopaedic sages who specialized not in particular problems but general ones. This qualified them to decide for others. According to Frankena<sup>26</sup>, prescriptive philosophy involves a set of:

Defined goals and of rules governing achievement of the goals which are more or less external to the individual and imposed on him or inculcated as habits ... (which) the individual takes as his own and regulates his own conduct by them.

It was on this basis that Plato worked out a system of education for his country (Athens). Many nations have borrowed a leaf from Plato. According to Akinpelu<sup>27</sup>:

In Tanzania, President Nyerere and his party in 1966 enunciated a national Philosophy which they called 'African socialism' and followed it with a programme of education called 'education for self reliance. In Nigeria, there was an effort to base the 1977 National Policy on Education on a national philosophy and hence its first chapter enunciated what is regarded as a National philosophy upon which the policy was based.

## 2.5 LOGICAL ARGUMENTS THROUGH DEDUCTIVE REASONING

Our ideas, thoughts and beliefs can only be made explicit if they are expressed in sentences. Since sentences are used in particular contexts, they constitute statements, and at one time or the other, we strive hard to show someone that a particular statement is true. This process is labelled an argument. According to Cornman and Lehrer<sup>28</sup>, an argument is "a group of statements in which ... the conclusion, is claimed to follow from others." This

entails that evidence for and against any claim is to be critically examined without any trace of prejudice. This would expose the strong and weak points of the claim from where a conclusion is drawn.

An argument is divided into two major parts. While the first part lays the foundation of the argument (premise), the second draws the conclusion on the basis of the premise. An argument could have one or more premises but always one conclusion. Where more than one conclusions are drawn, it is expected that there are also several separate arguments. In stating the premise of an argument (which is normally in declarative statements not exclamatory or questions) words like “Since” and “because” could be used to introduce it while “therefore” and “it follows” could be used in introducing the conclusion.

In deductive arguments, when we know that something is true, we then use that knowledge as a basis for coming to know that something else is the case. The claim is that if what we know is true, then this other thing must also be true. A deductive argument Barker<sup>29</sup> explains, is one in which;

It has premises such that if they are true, they absolutely ensure the truth of the conclusion. Knowing that the premises are true would give us completely sufficient reason for believing the conclusion. Indeed, it would be inconsistent for anyone who accepts the premises as true to regard the conclusion as false.

An instance will suffice. If we suppose that a man does not believe that he will die, he could be convinced of his mortality by the deductive argument that:

All men will die.

You are a man

Therefore, you will die.

In the above argument, there exists a logical connection between the premises and the conclusion in a way that the premises (“all men will die” and “you are a man”) inescapably imply the conclusion (“you will die”). The speaker has advanced adequate reasons to convince the man in doubt about his mortality.

An accusation always levelled against deductive arguments is that nothing new is learnt from them since their conclusions are mere restatement of their premises. The question now arises as to whether we learn something new at all from the conclusion which we did not know when stating the premises of the argument. In Hospers’s<sup>30</sup> view, the question is psychological. Thus, the answer depends on individuals, but the researcher is of the conviction that something new is learnt. In the above syllogism for instance, the initial position of the man was a belief that he would not die but contingent upon the strength of the premises, he is bound to accept the conclusion that he will eventually die. This to my mind constitutes learning.

#### 2.5.1 **Validity and Soundness of Deductive Arguments**

In this work, an attempt will be made at advancing valid and sound arguments. For an argument to be sound, it has to be valid. It is valid when the premises affirm the conclusion as with the above example. However, the conclusion can be false with the premises being true or the premises can be false with a true conclusion. Arguments with false premises or conclusions can be valid

provided the conclusion follows logically from the premises. Hospers<sup>31</sup> presents an instance of a valid but unsound argument worth quoting:

All cows are green  
 I am a cow  
 Therefore, I am green.

An invalid argument could be constructed from the above valid argument thus:

All cows are green.  
 I am a cow  
 Therefore, I am probably green.

Although the premises of the first argument are not true, its conclusion follows logically from the premises. This renders the argument valid but in the second argument, the conclusion does not support the premises thus the argument is invalid. The validity of an argument therefore is not to be judged by the truthfulness of its premises or conclusion. This stand point is summed up by Hocutt<sup>32</sup> as he writes that “a valid argument can have true premises or false ones and true conclusions or false ones and it can have them in any combination except one; the premises cannot be true while the conclusions are false.”

On the basis of valid arguments, sound arguments could be constructed.. In this case (that is of sound arguments), apart from the conclusion logically following from the premises, the premises have to be true

because if the premises are true, it equally follows that the conclusions will also be true. Here is an example of a valid and sound argument.

All men have heads.

Mr. John is a man.

Therefore, Mr. John has a head.

## 2.6 **INDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS**

Not all arguments are deductive in nature some take the inductive form. Inductive arguments are direct opposites of the deductive types because instead of proceeding from general to specific, they proceed from specific to general and from the known to the unknown as against deductive arguments whose premises are hinged on the unknown with a conclusion that is known. In this process (that is of inductive argument), an examination of a small number of objects or occurrences that belong to a class is made. From this, the number that possess the property in question is determined and on the basis of which a conclusion is drawn. In this case, the evidence obtained from the observation of some known cases help us to conclude on a whole class of cases.

In deductive arguments, the truth of the conclusion might be known but the reverse is the case in inductive arguments, as the truth of the conclusion may remain uncertain. This is because, although the premises provide evidence for the conclusion, such evidence may not be complete. At best, the conclusion of an inductive argument is only but probable. Herrod<sup>33</sup> notes that, “in induction, . . . we are only concerned with conclusions that are probable; in

that case what should be invariably true is the degree of probability assigned to the conclusion.” Let us consider the argument below:

Crow number 1 has a white neck.

Crow number 2 up to 20,000 have white necks.

Therefore, all crows have white necks.

The argument here is that, what is true of a reasonable number of crows is also true of the rest of the crows in the world. With this, it becomes easy to detect that even where the premises are true, the conclusion is only probable because the next crow after these may not have a white neck. The degree of probability of a conclusion therefore refers to the extent to which it is reasonable to believe the conclusion on the basis of given evidence. Arguing on the validity of an inductive argument, Barker<sup>34</sup> contends that:

An inductive argument is valid if the degree of probability claimed for its conclusion is indeed a reasonable degree of probability to attribute to the conclusion, relative to the available evidence. (On the contrary) the argument is a non-sequitur if it claims for its conclusion a degree of probability that it is unreasonable to attribute to that conclusion, relative to the available evidence.

Hospers<sup>35</sup> adds that it is more justified to claim that all crows are black having examined 10 000 of them and found them to be black than observing only one.

## **2.7 THE APPLICATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL METHODS IN THE STUDY**

At the beginning of this part, an exposition was made on scientific methods to usher in discussion on the methods of analytic philosophy, prescriptive philosophy, deductive and inductive reasoning. As implied in the discussion, the scientific and philosophical methods are not the same. While

philosophical questions “require us to ‘sit down and think’ in order to obtain an answer . . . To answer empirical questions, we must ‘ get up and do’ (something).”<sup>36</sup>. Since this investigation is a philosophical one, it logically follows that the philosophical method was used in its execution. To this end, the already discussed philosophical methods were eclectically applied as the need arose. This is due to the flexible nature of philosophical discussions.

Under conceptual analysis, progressivism, the key concept of the study was analysed to unfold its educational usage which distinguished it from political, social, religious and economic progressivism. Also analysed were reconstructionism, naturalism and pragmatism which have developed similar meanings with progressivism; there after, conservatism and regressivism which possess opposite meanings were also analysed. The conditions logically necessary to qualify an educational approach as progressive were identified and discussed. As the work progressed, concepts related to progressivism as contained in progressive tenets were analysed. These include needs, interests, democracy and freedom.

The field of philosophy whose major concern is argument is referred to as logic.<sup>37</sup> Although all fields of knowledge depend in a way on argument, logical reasoning is the handmaid of philosophy. It is only when we are abreast with the principles of logical thinking that mistakes are avoided in the process of reasoning. If we are able to avoid logical mistakes in reasoning, clear and correct thoughts will be produced. Therefore, to give this work the

necessary philosophical base that it deserves, valid and sound arguments were presented.

In making an assessment of progressive education in relation to Nigeria, it was not assumed that the views of the progressives are absolutely perfect. In this regard, an attempt was made at subjecting them (progressive educational views) to a critical analysis (through the process of arguments) at the end of which the extent of their logical consistency or otherwise was drawn. This was done either by showing that the premise on which the conclusion of their (progressivists) argument is based are false or that the conclusion does not support the premise (s) both of which invalidate the argument. In other words, if an argument proved a particular position of the progressives inconsistent, that view became unacceptable.

In conducting the arguments, the views of some pillars of progressive educationists like Dewey, Rousseau and Montessori were articulated. These layed the premises of the argument from where the conclusion was drawn.

The essence of undertaking the above task was to eliminate false statements that were incorporated into the premises of the argument or the conclusions that were not logically connected with the premises. This was because as earlier mentioned, the views of the progressives could hardly be without any fault thus, having subjected them to a process of rigorous check of this sort, a sound assessment might be produced.

Philosophy of education is prescriptive when the course that education ought to follow is made explicit. "This way of looking at philosophy of

education” says Akinpelu<sup>38</sup> “has great prospects for improving education because it is a method of raising questions for philosophy from the inside of education and finding solutions to educational problems in the process of doing philosophy.”

Prescriptive philosophy is therefore, of immense significance to policy makers in the task of reconstructing the educational system. In this connection, having analysed the concept of progressivism and subjecting the major views of the progressives to a process of argument in relation to Nigerian education, a programme of action was suggested for Nigerian education to promote progressive education through some recommendations.

## 2.8 SUMMARY

In the days of ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, all knowledge belonged to philosophy, But, with the declaration of independence by science and other disciplines in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the philosopher was considered to be asking questions that belonged to other fields of knowledge. This led to the differentiation of philosophical methods from other disciplines. Thus, while natural and social sciences are studied through empirical methods, philosophy is done through analytic and prescriptive methods.

In philosophical analysis, concepts are logically dissected in order to reveal their precise meaning. In analysing a concept therefore, definition(s) is/are attempted for it from where the weaknesses of the definition(s) is/are identified. Similar and dissimilar concepts to the concept under analysis are

examined. Contextual usage of the concept is given and the conditions logically necessary for the application of the concept should be explicated. In prescriptive philosophy, having provided an analysis for a concept or an issue, the line of action to be taken is clearly spelt out.

The major tool for both analytic and prescriptive philosophies is argument, which could be either deductive or inductive. Deductive arguments proceed from general principles to specific principles while inductive arguments are direct opposites of deductive arguments as they start with specific principles and end up with general principles. In applying these methods to the study, progressivism, the key concept of the inquiry was analysed. Valid and sound arguments were also advanced through deductive and inductive arguments.

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## CHPATER THREE

### THE CONCEPT OF PROGRESSIVISM

#### 3.1 NATURE OF THE CONCEPT

The Dictionary of Etymology<sup>1</sup>, the Oxford Dictionary<sup>2</sup> and Chambers Dictionary<sup>3</sup> all agree on the Latin origin of the central concept of this inquiry - progressivism. It originates from the Latin word “progressus” which was subsequently used by the French as “progres” and the English as “progress”<sup>4</sup>. Progressivism is a commendatory concept that gains a ready acceptance in the mind unlike the concept of retrogressivism which is repugnant and conveys a negative effect. Wilson in Barrow<sup>5</sup> confirms that progressivism is a concept that is “self evidently desirable” and creates the impression of pleasantness.

Apart from being a commendatory concept, progressivism is historical in nature. Graham<sup>6</sup> contends that “the belief in progress is certainly a belief about the contingent course of history”. Consequently between the Stone Age and the space age, it is believed that man has made progress in various aspects of his life endeavour. “The history of mankind . . . is a story of progressive development or civilization”<sup>7</sup>. As a historical concept therefore, progressivism reached its apogee in America and Europe by the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the opening of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as explained by Shafritz<sup>8</sup> that:

The progressive era, that transparently optimistic label which (scholars) almost uniformly have fastened on the first decade and half of the twentieth century, may also be considered the climax of the nineteenth century. In the United States as in Europe, that century had come to be accepted as an age of progress. After hundreds of years of varying degrees of physical druggery and enslavement the human race had thrown off its chains.

### 3.2 THE ANALYSIS OF PROGRESSIVISM

Like most other concepts, progressivism cannot be pinned down to a precise definition because it is not a tightly-knit idea of an individual or a harmonious group of individuals. Rather, it is a stream of diverse positions. “Inevitably, there have been almost as many definitions of it as writers upon it,”<sup>9</sup>. The Oxford dictionary<sup>10</sup> defines the word “progress’ from where progressivism emanates as “the action of stepping or marching forward or onwards. Onward march; journey, travelling, travelled a journey, an expedition”. In addition, though not sufficient, Patridge<sup>11</sup> defines “progress” as “forward or onward movement, advance or development”.

From the above dictionary definitions, progress and consequently progressivism imply change by moving from one state of affairs to another. But since change can be either negative or positive, the definitions are ambiguous because no specification has been made on the nature of change. However, the point has to be made that progress connotes a positive change, a change for the better. It therefore becomes unacceptable to label a negative change as progressive as in the explanation of progress offered by Pratte<sup>12</sup> that “ a society can progress in terms of being committed to race genocide, or to segregationist beliefs. A burglar may progress in his endeavours by becoming more skilful and proficient.” From this, it becomes clear that while some changes are progressive, others are regressive thus, while some changes constitute progress, others do not.

From a different view point, Moore<sup>13</sup> posits that progress means “movement in a single direction toward an approved goal.” Then the question arises as to whether it is possible to identify any movement that is directionless in human interaction. As pointed out above, a movement will always point either to a negative or positive direction. In addition, for Moore to assert that to progress means to move towards an approved goal, it becomes problematic to identify whose norms guide the approval of the goal and whether or not such norms are justified.

In yet another way, Moore<sup>14</sup> defines progress as “an advance towards freedom. By Moore’s<sup>15</sup> estimation, “ the material condition of the masses has certainly improved in many large areas of the world and promises to rise further.” Consequently, through political and technical advancement, man has liberated himself from the shackles of societal constraints. Through political progress, democracy which promotes the freedom of the individual has been put in place. Technologically, there is an overwhelming evidence of continued advancement from earliest to present times to the extent that the most confirmed opponents of progressivism will have to concede.

Acceding to the definition of progress as a movement towards freedom through economic, political and technological advancement of large areas, it has to be pointed out that small areas are left out. This makes progress discriminatory in nature because only the large areas are singled out for technological and political advancement to the mutual exclusion of small areas. Furthermore, mention has to be made of the fact that the large areas

of the world that have progressed have not done so on the same line. Consequently, while some of them are more advanced in technology, some excel in politics.

Added to the above objection is equally the consideration that in as much as technology has done well in the improvement of man's quality of life, it has also created havoc to him. "At this point however," says Moore<sup>16</sup>, "it is quite legitimate to deny that technological advancement with all its consequences implies movement toward freedom . . . without modern weapon and methods of mass communication, 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarianism state could not exist." To this end, Brauna and Borns<sup>17</sup> sum up what progress entails in the following words; "the concept of progress inevitably involves the idea of change and direction; and from this we can identify the most elementary definition of progress possible: progress is change in a desirable direction."

On the basis of the above, Moore<sup>18</sup> affirms that "any society including our own, is destined to become antiquated and replaced by something better." This process is no doubt progressive. Lively and Reeve<sup>19</sup> add that the desired progress is that which improves "the quality of the human beings composing the society." This can be achieved through interaction between human nature and human condition in the society. For instance, human needs and interest, which constitute in part his nature, can be satisfied through the manipulation of his environment. In buttressing this assertion, Graham<sup>20</sup> writes that:

Our ability to manipulate the world increases the world's capacity to satisfy our needs. We can grow food as well as find it, raise sheep as well as catch them. Conversely, we can, within limits, alter our nature to accommodate the world. We can acclimatize ourselves to cold as well as put something to keep us warm . . . In order to protect ourselves against malaria, we may act upon the human condition, destroy its carriers for example or upon our nature - make ourselves immune . . . . This is just the sort of change a believer in progress is interested in.

From the foregoing, progress invariably implies both change and improvement. Improvement in this sense has to be judged on the ground that it becomes applicable to the whole period of change. An instance on the methods of lighting in human progress will make this point clearer. Electricity currently enjoyed by many people is an improvement on the oil-lamp down to burning torches. In this case, there has been change and improvement on account of which it could be argued that there has been progress in lighting methods because the purpose for which burning torches were intended to serve; that is, to see in the absence of natural light, has been served better by each new method of lighting in the sequence. In the same vein, for a student to progress in his school work, it has to be shown that the quality of his present work is better than the previous ones. Graham<sup>21</sup> explains that:

In order to claim that a student has made progress in his work (essay writing), we must show that he continues to write essays, and that these are better than earlier ones. But we must also show that the standard by which these are judged to be better is one equally applicable at the beginning and end of the sequence.

On the whole, progressivism could be viewed as a series of reform initiatives rather than a single reform movement which involved the religious, political, social and economic life of the people. On the religious platform, progressivism "argued for the infinite improvability of the human condition, rather than ordained class distinctions"<sup>22</sup>. This called for a dynamic mode of

classifying people in the society depending on the effort that the individual puts in order to alter his present position for better.

Politically, progressivism seeks to reform politics by making it responsive to the majority rather than special interest groups. Because of the prevailing political corruption and general inefficiency in government in America and Britain in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Bolt<sup>23</sup> states that progressivism sought ways of arousing “the conscience of the people in order to purify (political) life.” This led the progressivists to mount concerted assaults on the perpetrators of societal vices.

As a result of the conviction of progressivism in popular rule, the Republican Party in America which was and still is conservative in nature, had a crack which eventually led to its break up into “the progressives and the old guard”<sup>24</sup>. According to Funk and Wagnalls<sup>25</sup>:

The first progressive party . . . was organized by a group of dissident Republicans at a national convention . . . These men initiated the formation of a new party (because) they were dissatisfied with the Republican administration . . . which they felt was too highly influenced by the interest of big business.

The existence of these two major political parties has continued to affect American politics. Thus, while the progressivists are constantly asking for more reforms in the Democratic Party, the conservatives are always advocating for a safe custody of the status quo in the Republican Party.

In Britain, progressivism remains opposed to the preponderance of the landed gentry and to its control of parliament. Bramsted<sup>26</sup> maintains that the progressivists “wanted to take government out of the hands of the special interest and make it responsive to the multitude.” They emphasized the

freedom of the individual and the need to loosen his ties from the established stratified society; thus, the parliamentary government according to the progressivists should be subjected to democratic control. By this, the state needed not be an instrument of oppression and suppression but the people should be free to partake in determining its actions. In backing this up, Chamberlain<sup>27</sup> in Bramsted says that “the state should move towards intervention” on behalf of the weak against the strong in the interest of the masses against the privileged.

Apart from seeking for political reforms in order to improve the life of the majority, progressivism is also interpreted as a move for economic change because of the belief that change characterises not only the process of industrialization but it remains a permanent feature in the development of all societies. Ernest<sup>28</sup> explains that it is only in the future “the time may come when an industrial society is also a stable one, and relinquishes further change. So far, there is little evidence of this happening.” Resulting from this, progressivism launched a “massive attack on the economic problems of the time.”<sup>29</sup>

The above attack by progressivism was meant to check the monopoly of the economic sector by only a few but powerful men of wealth who acquired their wealth through dubious means and indulge in lavish spending. Graft and Kront<sup>30</sup> assert that the rich men “had piled up untaxed fortunes . . . and ostentatiously parade their opulence . . . they gave incredible expensive dances and festivals.” Then asks the progressivist:

What could be done for instance to the many children who each day manufacture artificial flowers until midnight . . . For slaughterers who risked life and climb in the meat-packing plants? For women who worked 60 hours a week in the textile plants?<sup>31</sup>

Socially, progressivism advocates for social reforms in the society due to social problems. In Bolt's<sup>32</sup> submission, these social problems result from "a rapidly increasing immigrant – swollen population, strained transport, housing and welfare facilities." This makes Pratte<sup>33</sup> to define progressivism as "social and humanitarian reformism, one which expresses a concern for the welfare of the common man."

### **3.3 CONCEPTS THAT HAVE DEVELOPED SIMILAR MEANING WITH PROGRESSIVISM**

#### **3.3.1 Naturalism**

One of the concepts that has developed a similar meaning with progressivism is naturalism. Dodd<sup>34</sup> writes that progressivism is often "identified with that philosophy called naturalism."

To ponder on what nature means attracts no definite explanation; thus naturalism is capable of numerous definitions. According to Schofield,<sup>35</sup> the Romans used the expression "Secundum Naturam Vivere" which means to live according to nature. By this, nature was seen as being "pure and simple" - typical of village life which runs contrary to city life that is complex and frustrating.<sup>36</sup> In like manner, Rousseau, a staunch 18<sup>th</sup> century naturalist is reported by Schofield<sup>37</sup> as having depicted life in a natural state' as spontaneous, simple, happy, contented and honest. This does not conform with artificial life which is superficial and cruel.

From the foregoing, naturalism could be viewed as an ideal existence of unspoiled peace and calm. But, man has destroyed this golden era beyond recall when he became highly obsessed with the quest for material things and filled with the ambition to corner as much wealth as he can for himself. In summary, Pratte<sup>38</sup> refers to Naturalism, as “the ideal condition of man-nature was man’s original condition prior to the fall.”

Like progressivism, naturalism believes in the natural goodness of man. Progressivism according to Bramsted<sup>39</sup> means “faith in the unlimited perfectability of man.” Rousseau, a name that tops all others in naturalism forcefully lay claim to the perfectability of man but laments that the environment is the sole agent of man’s defilement. Akinpelu<sup>40</sup> explains that in two of Rousseau’s articles, he “attacked the influence of the society on the individual which deprived him of his freedom and made him conform to the social order.”

The love of democracy is another common feature between progressivism and naturalism. As documented by Bolt,<sup>41</sup> the progressivists cherish democracy so much that most of their efforts are geared towards “giving the government back to the people.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, they initiated “devices designed to democratise political parties and governments.” Speaking for the naturalists, Rousseau advocates that “the general will of the people should be the ruling force in any society”<sup>43</sup>. By this move, Peacock says that he (Rousseau) wanted government by the people and for the people.

### 3.3.1 **Liberalism**

As an off-shoot of the decadent and outmoded medieval order, liberalism increasingly sought to assert the right of the individuals to engage in commercial, industrial and agricultural endeavours without any restriction by lack of inherited privilege, monarchical or theocratic power. Brahmeld<sup>44</sup> states that liberalism “was a pattern of attitudes and practices designed to bolster a “new” culture that was partly agrarian, partly industrial and decreasingly feudal . . . it was an age of wide protest resulting in religious as well as political reformation.” Liberalism therefore implies the pursuit of an individual’s ends by exercising his intelligence to the fullest. “Liberalism involves the promotion of individuals liberty based on the exercise of rational will”<sup>45</sup> The exercise of an individual’s liberty can therefore be achieved only when he is free because where the contrary is the case, he is subjected to arbitrary despotism.

Closely allied to the above, Shafritz<sup>46</sup> defines liberalism as:

A political doctrine that espoused freedom of the individual from interference by the state, toleration by the state in matters of morality and religion, laissez-faire economic policies and a belief in natural rights that exist independently of government.

Liberalism as can be seen strongly advocates that government should rest on the consent of the masses. This is hinged on the social contract which envisages a contract between the rulers and the subject and grants the subjects the right to dethrone rulers thought to have breached the contract. Locke in his argument for popular sovereignty, sanctions “the right of rebellion against oppression.”<sup>47</sup>

Economic liberalism expresses displeasure on mercantilist policies that subject the economy to state control. Funk and Wagnalls<sup>48</sup> explain that “as industrial capitation developed, . . . economic liberalism continued to maintain a negative attitude toward state authority.” Social liberation is identified with movements directed towards changing the social order through the further extension of democracy. The liberals are always at the forefront in criticising feudal restraints that prevent the individual from rising out of a low social status or restrictions such as censorship that limit his free expression of opinion, and arbitrary power over him exercised by the state.

From the above discussion, we are not left in doubt that liberalism is similar in meaning with progressivism. Pratte<sup>49</sup> endorses that “liberalism . . . is practically synonymous with progressivism.” A common ground of the two concepts is their acceptance of the application of man’s intellectual ability to solve his problems. Like the progressivist, Wingo<sup>50</sup> states that “the liberal has insisted that intelligence is sufficiently distributed in the population so that all men when sufficiently nurtured . . . can make the wise decisions necessary for self government.”

Another common feature between liberalism and progressivism is their belief in reforms. To both of them, societal institutions should be reformed where they fail to leave up to expectation. Resultantly, both the progressivists and the liberals jointly launch concerted attacks on societal institutions that remain adamant to the needs and aspirations of the people. This they did to

press for reforms. Funk and Wagnalls<sup>51</sup> say that “liberalism connotes, mainly, political, economic and social reform.”

### 3.3.3. **Pragmatism**

Although pragmatism originates from the Greek word “pragma” which means “action”, it was introduced into philosophy by Pierce, James and Dewey who are often referred to as the “pragmatic trinity.” Fox<sup>52</sup> confirms that: “The pragmatic tradition in philosophy is thought to have been originated by Charles Sanders Pierce, and transmitted by him through the influence of his teaching to William James and John Dewey”.

The rise of pragmatism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century owes much to the development of science and technology and the desire of people for material benefit of any activity under-taken. It is pragmatism that “expresses the popular spirit and attitudes of this age more than any other philosophies ancient or modern.”<sup>53</sup>

According to Pratte,<sup>54</sup> “pragmatism is an intellectual response to Darwinian evolutionary theory of evolution.” Charles Darwin a renowned biologist posits that species are not fixed but always change slowly into other species thus, the earlier state of man was closer to that of apes on the trees than of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. The evolutionary theory reveals that:

Man has evolved over a long period of time from other less complex forms of life; that is, man’s ancestry can be traced through his primitive ancestors, to apes, to certain forms of sea life and finally to single - cell living beings<sup>55</sup>.

Since nothing is permanently fixed, it follows that new environmental conditions are constantly emerging and will continue in that order insofar as the universe exists. As time passes on, new demands will be made on all living things including man and new forms will also have to emerge to deal with them. This shows that although Darwin “confined the theory of natural selection or survival of the fittest to the sphere of biology, . . . (others) eagerly extended it to apply to the entire human field of affairs”.<sup>56</sup> This innovation gave rise to the system of thought referred to as pragmatism.

Evolution according to the Darwinian theory is a “process free from supernatural intervention”<sup>57</sup>. This arbitrarily excludes people who believe in God and the stability of the universe.

Pragmatism has also been defined as a method of science. According to Pratte<sup>58</sup>, pragmatism . . . is often equated with a method; the method of science.” At the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, science had made unprecedented inroads on the public mind and had effected changes in institutional arrangements.

To Pierce, no matter how subtle we can think, none of our thoughts can be so refined to become the last word. Instead our thoughts could be alternatives to others. To clarify our thought, we have to consider the practical effects the object may bring about. Buenyen<sup>59</sup> cites Pierce as saying that: “True knowledge of any object depends on the examination of our ideas in real-life experience. Ideas, he argues are hypotheses until and unless they are tried upon the anvil of real life experience”.

Man's intelligence is therefore measured in how scientific he proffers solutions to the problems that he encounters in his environment. Akinpelu<sup>60</sup> presents the scientific method as identification of the problem, propounding of hypotheses, data collection and testing of hypotheses.

Reforms occupy a central place in progressivism. This is also the case with pragmatism. Pratte<sup>61</sup> attests to this claim in his declaration that "if we must assign pragmatism a place in . . . Philosophy, it must be aligned with reform. From the very beginning, it espoused a reformist dimension to the world."

Democracy is another element of similarity between progressivism and pragmatism. The progressivists are always against concentrating governmental powers in the hands of a few. Their loud calls have always been in favour of popular rule. The pragmatists also share this view and add that democracy should be extended to all facets of human life.

#### 3.3.4 **Reconstructionism**

Reconstructionism is also related to progressivism. Dewey, a very popular name in pragmatism was the one that suggested the label "reconstructionism in the year 1920"<sup>62</sup>. Pratte<sup>63</sup> establishes that reconstructionism is historically related to pragmatism." Since pragmatism is related to progressivism, it logically follows that reconstructionism has a similar meaning with progressivism.

According to Maiklejohn<sup>64</sup>, reconstructionism is a process that involves the development of intelligence which will help the individual to "define and

achieve the good society through the application of that intelligence to social problems.” Put in other words, Brahmeld<sup>65</sup> in Thayer adds that reconstructionism calls on “all members of the community not merely to study knowledge and problems. . . but also to make up their minds about the most promising solutions and then act concretely.” In doing this, change becomes inevitable.

The desire for change becomes a common feature between reconstructionism and progressivism. Pratte<sup>66</sup> who subscribes to this view does so on account that reconstructionism accepts change as an instrument of societal process. He asserts that “A theoretical understanding of reconstructionism depends on the definition attached to the concept of social change.” In consequence, reconstructionism like progressivism out rightly rejects old ways of solving personal and societal problems. In refuting the conservation of dominant values of the influential few in the society, Counts<sup>67</sup> asks, should we “continue as in the past, in the grip of conservative forces. . . serving the course of perpetuating ideas and institutions suited to an age that is gone?”

The basis for the reconstructionist call for change in the society is hinged on his concern for the poor. Pratte<sup>68</sup> reports that the “reconstructionists are united in their attempt to oust the well – entrenched, powerful, insensitive forces of the minority in favour of the masses” because as Counts<sup>69</sup> explains, society reveals:

The most extra-ordinary contradictions . . . dire poverty walks hand in hand with the most extravagant living the world has ever known, an abundance of goods of all kinds is coupled with privation, misery and even starvation. . . an ideal or rugged individualism . . . is used to justify a system which exploits pitilessly and without thought of the morrow.

With this gloomy state of affairs in sight, Kneller<sup>70</sup> moves for the “creation of a new and more equitable society.” In line with this, Counts<sup>71</sup> believes that:

The power to usher in an age of plenty, to make secure the lives of all and banish poverty forever from the land (can be achieved if and only if we) face squarely and courageously every social issue (and) come to grips with life in all its stark reality.

In humanizing the society, the reconstructionists are in complete accord with the progressivist’s panacea of democratising the society; thus as Kneller<sup>72</sup> contends, “the ideal society is democratic.” The reconstructionist blames societal crises on the undemocratic ways of inducting new members into the culture which is derived from the past and did not stress democracy. In democratic societies, people plan, think and reach decisions together<sup>73</sup>. The reconstructionist democratic dream “is the dream which has made nations great when they shared it, stagnant when they forget and decadent when they lost it”<sup>74</sup>.

#### 3.4 **CONCEPTS THAT HAVE DISSIMILAR MEANING WITH PROGRESSIVISM**

Apart from naturalism, liberalism, pragmatism and reconstructionism among other concepts which are synonymous with progressivism, there are other concepts that have developed opposite meanings. Of these concepts, conservatism and regressivism clearly stand out. In what follows, a discussion

of these antonyms will ensue in order to unfold what progressivism does not consist in.

### 3.4.1 **Conservatism**

Conservatism is one of the phenomena with which progressivism has developed dissimilarities. Progressivism considers change as its central theme while conservatism places emphasis on the retention of the “wisdom” of the ancients. Consequently, progressivism has remained the chief opponent of conservatism; thus it was borne out of the rejection of the assumptions and practices of conservatism. In any case, the most eminent characteristic feature of conservatism is its ceaseless opposition to progressivism. Resulting from this, the conservatives embarked on fierce polemics with the hope of curtailing the alleged excesses of the progressivist. Wingo<sup>75</sup> explains that the “conservatives have reserved some of their strongest wrath and most bitter language for the progressive movement.”

As it is always the case with polemics, Wingo<sup>76</sup> states that “much of the language was not only bitter but vituperative.” Brahmeld<sup>77</sup> captures an instance of the polemic and reports the conservatives as claiming that progressivism is:

An embodiment of all the precarious fluctuations of our time – a way of life and education that reflects only too accurately the desperate groupings of rootless and restless persons and therefore, glorifies the very cultural characteristics most congenial to its own spirit . . . tentativeness, flexibility . . . trial and error.

The fountain head of conservatism is Burke - a great English thinker who believes that the present and the past generations are united by a compact to the extent that it becomes very difficult for a generation to uproot

and destroy the existing pattern of society either violently or peacefully. Doing so amounts to a breach of faith between the generations that are gone, those that exist and even the ones yet to come. To uproot institutions and ways of life “is the ultimate immorality and the (Surest) road to chaos”<sup>78</sup>.

White explains in Pratte<sup>79</sup> that conservatism is premised on the effort to:

Discover the order which is essential in things rather than to impose an order upon them; to strengthen and perpetuate that order rather than dispose things anew according to some formula which may be nothing more than a fashion.

On the basis of the above, Funk and Wagnalls<sup>80</sup> say that conservatism consists in “the need for men to live in harmony with the heritage from past generations and to use the lessons of history in shaping the present and planning for the future.”

While the progressivist views man as originally good but corrupted by societal forces, the contrary is the case with the conservative who believes that man is “originally bad and if left to the promptings of his desires and passions, will always run amuck, cheat, violate and generally conduct himself in an indisciplined way<sup>81</sup>.” Viereck<sup>82</sup> in Pratte sums up the argument of the conservative and the progressivist on the position of man’s nature thus:

The conservative, politically descended from Burke, distrusts human nature and believes in original sin which must be restrained by the ethical traffic lights of traditionalism. The leftist and the liberal, descended from Rousseau . . . (and) assumed the natural goodness of man.

The progressivist and the conservative differ in their views on change because while the progressivist upholds change, the conservative abhors it. Burke<sup>83</sup> the father of conservatism is reported by Pratte as having deep interest in “order and stability.” Burke’s<sup>84</sup> position and that of many of his disciples is

that since history has it that each state had its genius, “any attempt to imitate other people’s or adopt novel devices based upon theoretic dogmas was doomed to failure.” Thus, to those who encourage change, the watch word is progress and to those who would prevent change the watch word is conservatism.

Contingent upon the bad nature of man as posited above, the conservative maintains that what he claims to know should not be relied upon. The progressivist on the other hand believes that man’s intelligence is enough to be relied upon in the provision of solutions to his environmental problems.

While the progressivist cherishes popular rule, the contrary is the case on the part of the conservative. Wingo<sup>85</sup> explains that “ the conservative has never been very sanguine about popular rule, preferring to think that society should be governed by its wisest and most able men.”

One other sore point between the conservative tradition and progressivism is their views on freedom. To the progressivist, a good society should be the one that tolerates and encourages divergent opinions and beliefs. But the conservative is opposed to this thus the progressivist “has opposed resolutely various authoritarian schemes (of the conservative) for enforcing conformity in personal and political life”<sup>86</sup>.

Conservatism does not share the progressive view of God or a supernatural being. While the conservatives look up to God for the solution of all problems with a little effort from the individual, the progressivists believe in

human effort. Whatever luxury is provided in heaven, the progressivists orientation specifies that “our business is here in this world”<sup>87</sup>.

### 3.4.2 **Regressivism**

Regressivism is yet another concept which possesses dissimilar meaning with progressivism. This is because while it is highly critical of progressivism, it has considerable soft spot for conservatism. As expected, together with conservatism, regressivism jointly descend heavily on progressivism. This establishes the fact that “the dividing line between conservatism and regressivism is a narrow one”<sup>88</sup> but very wide with progressivism.

Like the conservatist, “the regressivist is characterized as one who looks to the past. . . (and) holds that the old is the best”<sup>89</sup>. The regressivist’s position is that through man’s ignorance or evil design, the golden age has slipped off thus the world is fraught with chaos and changes. For normalcy to be restored, man has to return to the past golden age.

Faced with a very dynamic society, the regressivist is committed to a search for a pattern that is stable. According to the regressivist, “if the world is in a constant state of flux and only change abides, there is no hope”<sup>90</sup>. Life therefore has to be guided by principles which are perennial and not mere change. “Perennial” if understood to mean everlasting, persistence or a fixed pattern that abides despite changes in the substance undergoing the change, then permanence to the regressivist is more real and ideal than change.

Although the regressivist concedes that the world changes, he argues that stability has to be maintained. In buttressing this position, Pratte<sup>91</sup> states that:

Societies are made up of individual persons, and like individual experiences and individual things, they come and go, experience birth, growth and decay with years. But patterns or forms common to all things recur and remain identical as patterns or forms decade after decade, (century after century), millennium after millennium - indeed they are forever perennial.

While progressivism is associated with change, regressivism like conservatism looks back at the past with nostalgia and advocates that steadfastness has to persist and dominate human activity. According to Pratte<sup>92</sup>, the regressivist is by definition, not a progressivist, therefore he must be opposed to change. The regressivist contends that since the world is constantly in a flux, it becomes unpredictable, chaotic and increasingly complex. Given this situation where only change abides, there is no ray of hope whatsoever for the attainment of a harmonious society except where change remains a mirage. Pratte<sup>93</sup> cautions that “a man must . . . attempt very few changes at a time.”

### **3.5 THE CONTEXTUAL USAGE OF PROGRESSIVISM**

The faithful adherents of progressivism adopt change as a universal phenomenon. Consequently, the concept could be used to yield a political, social, economic or educational significance. Below are instances of its usage to enable us differentiate the various contexts in which it is used.

Mayer<sup>94</sup> provides a political use of progressivism as he writes that the progressivists were opposed to the institutions of the past.” With a critical eye,

they examined the constitution, the executive branch of the government, congress, the supreme court, the state governments and local mayors.”

Because the progressivists have an abiding faith in man’s rationality, they believe that “if the abuses of government . . . were publicized sufficiently, the people would act to remedy the situation”<sup>95</sup>. These usages expose progressivism as centering on politics where the progressivists tried to use their influence to effect change in the government of the day. It was their intention to check power monopoly and to ensure that the system of political democracy worked as expected.

The concept of progressivism also finds application in the social sphere. Here, the welfare of the people becomes a matter of paramount concern. Consequently, the progressivist is not silent on how societal institutions should endeavour to improve the lots of the underprivileged. Progressivism in the social arena thus becomes the mouth piece of the underdog. As Ornstein and Levine<sup>96</sup> report, “Jane and Addams and other progressives work . . . to improve social welfare in Chicago and other urban areas.” On the workers, Mayer<sup>97</sup> writes that the progressive thinker was strongly in support of the rights of labour.” He tried to help the farmer to get his equitable share of the national income.” On the whole, the progressivist’s preoccupation is to echo calls on the government to improve the general welfare of the people.

In the educational sense, progressivism has attracted the attention of educationists and is used in that context. Kneller<sup>98</sup> says that “progressivism in its pure form declares that education is always in the process of development.

Educators must be ready to modify methods and policies in the light of new knowledge and changes.” The above usage depicts progressivism as a process of learning which does not involve only the learner but also the teacher, the curriculum and the manner in which the curriculum content will be transmitted to the learners. The whole of the process witnesses constant changes thus, those involved in the business of education have to be abreast with the changes so as to respond accordingly.

### 3.6 **CONDITIONS LOGICALLY NECESSARY FOR THE USE OF PROGRESSIVISM**

Earlier in this part, definitions of progressivism were given. Because of the restrictive nature of these definitions, Ash<sup>99</sup> wonders “whether we can find a definition of it (progressivism) to satisfy us.” In the absence of a definition that commands a universal acceptance, it becomes incumbent on the researcher to formulate criteria which are logically necessary for the use of progressivism. Unless this is done, no sharp line of demarcation can be drawn between progressivism and its synonyms like naturalism and reconstructionism. The following therefore can be argued as the necessary conditions of progressivism.

#### 3.6.1 **Anti – Tradition**

The divergence of progressivism in both theory and practice notwithstanding, the progressivists are resolute in the abhorrence of tradition. Therefore, for a system to be described as progressive it has to eschew orthodox practices because the progressivist condemns conservatism in its

entirety. Shils<sup>100</sup> contends that one of the most established traditions of the progressivists is that tradition is antagonistic towards progressivism.

In the days that the kings ruled as they wished, the government rested with them. Peacock<sup>101</sup> confirms that “All power in the last resort, emanated from the king.” Since the king was the be all and end all of political power, Louis XVI says “I am the state”. This expresses the despotic power of the kings over their subjects. This the progressivists rose against.

The criticism of traditionalism by the progressivists is hinged on the ground that tradition is “the mindless repetition of inherited lines of thought and conduct into which individuality did not enter”<sup>102</sup>. This makes Dewey to boldly encourage the progressivists to challenge the conservative ideas that had led to unworkable conservative solutions.

Since traditionalism is the hallmark of conservatism, the progressivists hardly come to terms with the conservatives on their views about reality. Contingent upon this, for any institution - be it political, social or economic to lay claim to progressivism, it has to do away with traditional practices.

### 3.6.2 **Pro – Reforms**

Because progressivism generally frowns at tradition, it logically follows that to be progressive entails a favourable view on reforms. Pragmatism (the philosophy from where progressivism springs up) views reforms and not permanence as the essence of reality. In like manner, the progressivist believes that “nothing is fixed, everything changes, the only unchanging thing in life is change itself”<sup>103</sup>.

Progress and change are closely related. Pratte<sup>104</sup> stresses that “the progressivist regards progress as synonymous with change. Having accepted change as sine-qua-non in life, the progressivist adds that it must be directed to a desirable way.

Resulting from the activities of the progressivists, political, social, educational and economic reforms are brought into fruition. These reforms are “more notable for their efficiency (and not) for their responsiveness to constituent pressures”<sup>105</sup>. To the progressivists therefore, all things are always in the process of change. As a result of this, people should ensure that they are ready to modify their views to rhyme with the changes in their environment. To the progressivist, life is not a mere application of perennial standards of goodness but it entails the continuous reconstruction of experiences. In line with this, when Roosevelt broke away from the conservative party and formed the progressive party, he “called for tariff reform . . . and other reforms” (Funk and Wagnalls)<sup>106</sup>.

### 3.6.3 **Trust in Human Intelligence**

For the fact that one antagonizes traditional practices and supports reforms, his intellect and not the wisdom of the ancients has to be trusted in proffering solutions to his and societal problems. Since the progressivists have an abiding faith in the rationality of man and his ability to use reason in order to proffer solutions to his and societal problems, they call on all men to face resolutely “the problems of their own times and to use intelligence, the most powerful means at their disposal, to build a better society and a better life for

all of a generation”<sup>107</sup>. Others could have done otherwise because as Pratte<sup>108</sup> reports, when someone confronts:

A situation . . . containing a difficulty or perplexity . . . He may dodge it dropping the activity that brought it about, turning to something else. He may indulge in a flight of fancy, imagining himself powerful or wealthy, or some other way in possession of means that would enable him to deal with the difficulty.

For one to be intelligent, one has to be creative because creativity brings novelties into existence. Creativeness therefore becomes the sole agent of change because it is only the creative mind that can move for diversion from the accepted ways of living. Man has to be creative because as Dewey<sup>109</sup> says “principles and laws do not lie on the surface of nature. They are hidden, and must be wrested from nature” Dewey<sup>110</sup> defines an intelligent person as one who “by virtue of his capacity, his ability he is able to estimate the possibilities of a situation and then act in accordance with his best estimate.” Intelligence is therefore putting reason (which is theoretical) into action. The individual is therefore viewed to be creative only to the extent that he is capable of positively improving his life condition through the use of intellect.

#### 3.6.4 **Democratic Orientation**

It is not sufficient for the progressivists to shun traditionism, effect reforms and trust in man’s intelligence; he has to take a step further to be democratic. Unless this is done, the trust in man’s intelligence becomes impotent because in the absence of democracy, not much sense can be made of the dependence on his intelligence. By this token, a system has to be democratic if it is to be progressive.

The use of the concept “democracy” by different scholars makes it look ambiguous. Shafritz<sup>111</sup> says that because democracy could be used to describe a broad range of institutional possibilities democracy has lost its meaning. Consequently, “one person’s democratic regime is another’s totalitarian despotism. Democracy like beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”<sup>112</sup>.

As a political contender, the roots of democracy are firmly established in the Greek words “demos” and “cratia” which connote the rule by the ordinary people<sup>113</sup>. This sharply contrasts aristocracy or oligarchy where only the best or only a few men rule. Lincoln’s widely accepted definition of “democracy” as “government of the people by the people for the people” raises the question of who the people are. Are they Aristotle’s “poor” or Marx’s “proletariate”?<sup>114</sup> In a democratic government, decisions have to be reached by majority vote, periodic popular elections, the voicing out of grievances and of alternative lines of policy and the separation of powers. Adewole<sup>115</sup> sums up the institutional requirements of democracy as “consultation, freedom of expression of opinion and association, the rule of law and accountability.”

A democratic government encourages the citizens to partake in ruling themselves rather than to be under the tutelage of some one else. Self direction is more cherished than having decisions made by others and imposed on one. According to Raphael<sup>116</sup>, the underlying idea (of democracy) is that self direction choosing for one self is far preferable to having decisions made for you, and imposed upon you by another.”

For this reason, freedom is much valued by the progressivists. Kilpatrick<sup>117</sup> explains that freedom in democracy entails that everybody should be free to think for himself and argue out his belief before others. This calls for “the freedom of speech, of press, and of assembly.”

Progressivists would also advocate for the democratisation of the economy by opposing the domination of the national economy by industrial and financial monopolies. On the basis of this, the progressivist has to be apprehensive of the power exercised by influential but corrupt men. According to Bolt<sup>118</sup>, the progressivists “were dedicated to the spirit and principles of . . . democracy.”

### 3.7 SUMMARY

At the opening of this part, the etymology of the concept of progressivism was traced to the Latin word “progressus” which was subsequently used by the French as “progres” and the English as “progress”. Definitions were attempted from where the political, social and economic contexts of the concept of progressivism were examined.

The concepts of naturalism, liberalism, pragmatism and reconstructionism were discussed in the light of their similarity with progressivism. Naturalism is related to progressivism because both of them believe in the natural goodness of man. A common ground between liberalism and progressivism is their acceptance of reforms as the basis for social progress. Both reconstructionism and pragmatism share with progressivism the love for democracy both as a system of government and

way of life. On concepts that have developed different meaning with progressivism, conservatism and regressivism have been discussed. While progressivism assume the natural goodness of man, conservatism distrusts human nature. Regressivism advocates for stability while progressivism is associated with change.

The examination of the concepts which have developed similar and dissimilar meanings to progressivism was undertaken in order to expose what progressivism is and what it is not. Having established that, the political, social and educational usages of progressivism were provided. The conditions logically necessary for the application of the concept “progressivism” were identified and discussed as anti-tradition, pro-reforms, trust in human intelligence and democracy. In the next part of the work, an attempt will be made at justifying the concept of progressivism.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### JUSTIFICATION OF PROGRESSIVISM

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The task of justification has been and is still a major philosophical activity. Attesting to this contention, O'Connor<sup>1</sup> writes that “it has been regarded as a proper concern of a philosopher to explain, criticize . . . and justify” concepts and/or actions. Justification is generally an ethical issue because justifying a concept entails arguing for the positive aspects of the concept or action that is justified. In any case, therefore, only worthwhile activities are justifiable. In Peter’s<sup>2</sup> justification of education for instance, he maintains that education is justifiable because it involves worthwhile activities. The worthwhileness of a thing or an activity is an ethical matter because the society must have ascribed a positive value to what it labels education by which it is viewed as something worthwhile. Consequently, in justifying education:

Arguments must be given for initiating children into activities and forms of awareness such as science and poetry rather than into bingo and horror films. On the other hand, arguments must [also] be given to justify some procedures of initiation rather than others<sup>3</sup>.

It is on the basis of this that relevant concepts are justified by philosophers whenever they handle such concepts. In this connection, this part of the work is dedicated to the justification of the key concept of this thesis, namely the concept of progressivism.

## 4.2 PROGRESSIVISM

Progressivism as a concept is justified for the consideration that it is desirable because it suggests a forward looking approach to issues in contrast to retrogressivism which suggests looking backwards. In the words of Pratte<sup>4</sup>, 'progressivism is generally regarded as a good thing'. Closely associated with the Darwinian theory of evolution, progressivism sees nothing as permanently fixed or final and perfect as the Aristotelian conception of a static and unchangeable universe. Pratte<sup>5</sup> explains that change to the progressivists is slow and certain as:

The planets in their orbits and the day and night in their respective settings. The day is not to be hurried nor jupiter speeded up in its cycle. . . . progress is a sort of slow reform. . . and reformers are concerned with bringing about change in a desirable direction.

From this assertion, it is the case that positive change often characterizes progress because it will sound contradictory to affirm that one can progress without at the same time changing for better or at worst, that one has progressed but that he has not changed for the better at all.

In understanding the type of change associated with progressivism, Pratte<sup>6</sup> explains that:

Since nothing can be accepted as final in a world of change and flux this view of life regards progress in society as those activities or undertaking or changes that direct the course of social evolution toward the perfectibility of man and institutions. These are not changes declared by some transcendental authority to be desirable but rather what men, employing rationality and science discovered in nature to be desired and needed.

From the progressivist stand point, men should face resolutely, the problems of their times by using intelligence which is the only most powerful weapon at hand that can be used to fashion out a better society for all of a generation. Sahakian<sup>7</sup> states that “by an intelligent course of action, man will improve, progress, advance and remedy his problems”. Positive change is therefore meant to improve the life of those enjoying it. Thus, making things better is equated with progress. In the light of this, to progress implies improving a previous retrogressive position. Consequently, progress can be noticed in the various aspects of man’s livelihood like in politics, social, economic and educational ramifications.

#### **4.3 POLITICAL JUSTIFICATION OF PROGRESSIVISM**

In the words of Aristotle, “man is by nature a political animal”.<sup>8</sup> by which he means that no one except a beast or a god can survive without associating with some one else. Thus, political life starts from the family and moves up to the nation through the villages, towns and cities. As a political animal therefore man needs the help of the government to perfect his nature, Aristotle<sup>9</sup> believes that “man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all.” Politics is therefore a legitimate and inevitable life endeavour of man and practiced through different systems of government among which are monarchy, plutocracy, aristocracy, feudalism and democracy.

To the progressivists, democracy represents the only form of political life that is consistent with the fundamental principles of morality because as

Peters<sup>10</sup> contends, “those who are put in authority . . . are appointed to rule in the public interest.” In this regard a progressive government is expected to govern for the common good of the people. Where the government is unprogressive, it governs for the private gain or interest of the rulers as obtained in despotic regimes. It is on this score that democracy becomes a viable alternative to any form of despotism. Thus, progressivists identify themselves and their ideas with democracy. Sellers, May and Mcmillan<sup>11</sup> report that “La Follette, one of the most militant and uncompromising progressive leaders . . . made Wisconsin a laboratory of democracy.”

Progressivism is also politically justified because of its quest to purge the society from societal vices. For this reason, the complaint of the progressivists was centered on what they regarded as immoral and irresponsible power. In consequence, their effort was geared towards ending “corruption, throwing out the crooks and returning power to ‘good citizens’ like themselves”<sup>12</sup>.

In line with the above, La Follette a distinguished political progressivist in America became “an uncompromising foe of corruption”<sup>13</sup>. His fundamental political faith was the belief that the people if adequately informed and inspired will do the right thing in any given circumstance. His political career provides a proof for this because in his repeated clashes with the conservatives, he won battle after battle through proper grassroots campaigning. By involving the people in the political process through his campaigns, they became motivated to participate in the government. If on the

other hand the people were not granted the freedom of active participation as in totalitarian regimes, they would become discontented and pose a threat to the survival of the government. The danger of non-participation of the people in the political process is pointed out by Enoch<sup>14</sup> as he asks if “it is of any wonder why Dewey said that absence of participation tends to produce lack of interest and concern on the part of those shut out?”

Resulting from the progressivists’ abhorrence of corruption, the political structure of Wisconsin state (La Follette’s state) was overhauled. This became possible because La Follette was devoted to the cause of an honest government. Impliedly, progressivism sought to curtail the excesses of despotic political leaders. Garatty<sup>15</sup> explains that the tyrannical authority of political leaders was checked and that “this change was thoroughly progressive.” This is a significant dividend of progressivism.

Since the progressivists endorse an honest government and that which encourages mass participation, progressivism believes in a system of government that guarantees the people the right to express themselves and to associate with one another freely. This accords the people the opportunity to articulate and express their opinions on government policies be they positive or negative. Without this provision, the people’s active participation in the political process becomes vacuous. In a despotic system of government where the freedom of expression and association is hardly guaranteed, the citizens are subjected to “the unconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of another man”<sup>16</sup>. This is unprogressive because under such arrangement,

there can not be provision for change through public opinion. Consequently, whatever the ruler deems adequate for the citizens is implemented without an iota of opposition even if it is against their wishes.

Like their American counterparts, Nigerian progressives believe that in order to protect the citizens against the misuse of power by political leaders, “the progressive movement must . . . democratize the process of governance”<sup>17</sup>. The problem however is that Nigerian democracy is still at its nascent stage and thus, not much of its dividends can be cited as in a matured democracy like the American democracy. The late development of a progressive government in Nigeria owes much to the political subjugation that Nigeria suffered in the hands of British colonial Lords and the incessant intervention in politics by the military, most of these regimes are unprogressive. In expressing his discontentment with this trend of political development, Omatseye<sup>18</sup> laments that:

For long, Africans have suffered deprivation in the exercise of their rights to fully determine their fortune. This unfortunate trend which started with colonialism has continued under the leadership of successive post – independence regimes most of which have not only been repressive but outrightly dictatorial.

A prominent post – independence feature of Nigerian politics is the dominance of the military on the political landscape. In each case, the military government is ushered in by a coup d’etat. The process is often violent and mostly accompanied by massive arrests of politicians and other perceived enemies or opponents, detentions without trial and in some cases, public execution of people. This shows that military governments are marked by

severe curtailment or total elimination of fundamental human rights and freedoms such as freedom of thought and expression which were earlier on pointed out as the pillars of progressivism.

Resulting from the absence of the exercise of the fundamental freedom of the citizens, it becomes difficult for them to distinguish between the truth and falsehood in government. Thus, the citizens are coerced into submitting to the whims and caprices of the powers that be. In such a state of affairs, it becomes difficult for them to make a choice of government of their own.

Since progressivism advocates change, supporters of military government could argue that there has been change from one military government to the other. Moreso, some military governments inject 'sanity' into the society like the short lived regime of Mohammed Murtala. Essien – Ibok<sup>19</sup> reports that during this regime:

corrupt, inept and unproductive military leaders were either fired, dismissed or retired. More than 11000 civil servants were either retired or dismissed for various reasons ranging from old age, laziness, unproductiveness and corruption. There was discipline in the system. It radiated from the hierarchy of the governor to the mass base of the governed.

Since the above developments are appreciable ones, the argument could end up that military regimes are progressive.

Although the above argument sounds logical enough, it could be easily debunked when the ethical criterion of progressivism is applied to it because as earlier on stated, the events that characterize the advent of military regimes and to a significant extent their operation could hardly be morally defended as cases of the curtailment of fundamental human rights abound. In fostering

this, the military rule by decrees and a host of other obnoxious practices as exposed by Essien Ibok<sup>20</sup> that:

the military governed with decrees, force, intimidation and coercion . . . . inalienable human rights of Nigerians were either denied or abused. Freedom, liberty, equality, press freedom and criticism were often traded off for physical molestation, intellectual confinement and psychological abuses.

In consequence of the above submission therefore, military regimes can be described as unprogressive.

With the enthronement of democracy in Nigeria after a lengthy period of colonial and military rule, the government becomes progressive as avenues were created for positive changes. This has been in the granting of legitimate freedoms to the citizens especially to choose their government and also to freely express themselves. This has helped in no small measure to ensure that Nigerians pursue their legitimate functions without fear of molestation.

The exercise of the freedom of expression for instance has enabled the people to say or write their opinions on how the government runs the political affairs of the state. Stressing the advantage of progressive government in Nigeria, Rimi<sup>21</sup> posits that the Nigerian system of government “allows for the expression of differing political opinions”. This makes the government to be responsive to the yearnings of the people. In consequence, there have been reforms in the educational, political, social and economic facets of the nation. Politically therefore, progressivism has elevated the tone of politics through the adoption of democracy as a system of government. This has raised the aspirations of the citizenry and fashioned out valuable reforms in the country.

Through the exercise of the freedom of expression also, there has been an amicable resolution of political differences between the executive and the legislature through dialogue. Additionally, disagreements between the government and the citizens are voiced out and resolved through negotiation with the aggrieved party like the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) settlement with the Federal government over pay rise and petroleum price. Since the ultimate objective of a progressive government is the service of its people; the three arms of Nigerian government have always cooperated with one another to promote the general welfare of the people. This is discussed below.

#### **4.4 THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION OF PROGRESSIVISM**

On the social flank, progressivism calls for reforms to curb social problems in order to improve the quality of life in general. Some of the social problems that the progressivists directed their attention to include the exploitation of factory workers.

Women were considered inferior to their men counterpart thus they were allocated second position in the society. In some cases, they were treated as house-hold utensils which when spoilt is dumped on a rubbish-heap. Uno<sup>22</sup> confirms that “the place of women in our society has always been relegated to the background. This has been so because of the process of human history and therefore, an age long phenomenon.” Since the arbitrary imposition of inferior position to women is purely conservative, the “conservatives . . . opposed the extension of the suffrage” to women<sup>23</sup>. This

implies that women were not given due consideration in political and labour matters as they were not appointed to highly exalted positions in the society.

On the problem of women suffrage, the progressivists ensured that women benefited from the reform impulses of social progressivism because the political aspirations of women could no longer be denied. Sellers, May and Mcmillan<sup>24</sup> explain that “by 1896, the four western states of Wyoming, Utah, Colorado and Idaho had granted women to vote.” With this development, the progressivists pressed harder swinging considerable energies behind the enfranchisement of adult women. This struggle came to fruition when in 1920 women franchise was passed into law. Since then, up to date, women have continued to enjoy the right to vote and also to be voted for during elections.

Apart from the enfranchisement of the women folk, the stage was equally set for further struggles for the general improvement of life and labour matters. Prominent among the concern of progressivism was the subordinate role of women in labour related matters. The progressivists therefore called for a comprehensive redefinition of women’s status in the society as well as to eliminate gender related impediments to women’s socio-economic and political opportunities. As a result of the effort of the progressivists, reforms were initiated and practically implemented. To this effect, during La Follette’s tenure as the governor of Wisconsin state for instance, apart from his support for women suffrage, women were also appointed to the service of the state.

Today however, women participate actively in politics and also occupy high positions in government. These are the achievements of the progressivists.

On the factory workers, their condition of work was not attractive. This is in addition to the fact that they laboured under the great risk of accidents or death. Graft<sup>24</sup> reports that in America, “25000 workers lost their lives and about 700 were seriously injured as a result of industrial accidents.” With this sad development, America led the world in industrial accidents in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The problem with these industrial accidents or deaths was the pain and the additional difficulty associated with the settlement of their compensation. The cities were also crowded into slums and immigrant ghettos which shielded all shades of crimes. Added to this were poverty, disease and corruption. All these added up to make life less cheerful in the cities.

Although these social problems had been there, no effort was made by any person or group of persons at proffering solutions to them. It was the progressivists who kindled and sustain the awareness in the people that amelioration was needed. The progressivists therefore launched bitter protests against the employment of underaged children in industrial work and the rapid growth of urban slums. Their reform moves were initiated in line with Rousseau’s contention that “man has dignity, a right to the pursuit of happiness, as well as rights of life, liberty and property”<sup>26</sup>.

Contingent upon the progressivists zeal in securing a better life for the down trodden, a handful of reforms were advocated and effected in relation to

the exploited factory workers. Comprehensive safety devices were provided in addition to the enactment of accident insurance laws. Bolt<sup>27</sup> explains that “accident insurance systems were provided, minimum wage standards for women were enacted, limitations on the hours that women and children could work were created, children were also exempted from dangerous works.” As a result of the work of the progressivists therefore, the standard of living of the people was generally improved for the better.

In the Nigerian context, the standard of living of the people has improved considerably over the years after the installation of a progressive civilian government. Since majority of Nigerians live in rural areas, feeder roads have been built or rehabilitated. This has helped a lot in linking up these areas with nearby towns or cities for commercial, political, social and educational purposes. In the area of water supply, dams have been constructed and boreholes drilled in various locations in the country. Health wise, more hospitals and clinics have been built in both rural and urban areas to cater for the health needs of the people. On electricity supply, rural electrification has been undertaken while electricity supply is fairly stabilized in the towns and cities. All these could have hardly been achieved under an unprogressive regime.

#### **4.5 EDUCATIONAL JUSTIFICATION OF PROGRESSIVISM**

Another compelling aspect of the justification of the concept of progressivism lies in the educational sector. In making this justification, emphasis will be placed on the positive accomplishments or consequences of

progressive education as against its counterpart – essentialist education. In this regard, effort will be made at discussing the benefits of child-centered education and the progressive curriculum. Positive innovations in progressive teaching methods will also be discussed.

The advent of progressive education owes much to the lack of respect accorded children in the traditional school system where the children were viewed as empty vessels that need to be filled up with essential skills by the teacher. This according to the essentialists is because the children are wayward and “with original sin rather prominent in their make-up”<sup>28</sup>. It was on the basis of this consideration that the teacher needed to be a strict disciplinarian in order to mould the character of the children into a desirable shape. The methods employed by the teacher in teaching therefore stressed “formal instruction and learning by heart”<sup>29</sup>. With total disregard to individual differences, children were crammed into one classroom and instructed en bloc. Hirst and Peters<sup>30</sup> sum up that the children’s “right to freedom was disregarded; they were victims of cruelty and needless oppression.”

The above educational practice was viewed with great concern by progressive educational reformers thus they were quick at querying the sterile and lifeless activities of the learners and echoed loud calls for a change. Hirst and Peters<sup>31</sup> say that “from Rousseau onwards they (progressivists) made a moral protest against the lack of respect shown to children.” It was this that gave birth to child – centered education which reversed the entire trend of educational practice. In consequence, instead of relegating the child to the

background in the teaching/learning process, he was placed at the center. Through the efforts of the progressivists, therefore, the needs and interests of the learners dictate the direction that learning will take. Adewole<sup>32</sup> writes that the central focus of progressive education is “the learners own interest.”

In basing educational activities on the needs and interests of the children, people with essentialists inclination might wish to object to this practice on the ground that it will be risky to allow children learn whatever interests them because of the essentialist claim that children are naturally bad and their interest will be in bad things. The progressivists view of the nature of children is at variance with this. Accordingly, the progressivists contention is that children are naturally good and will always do good things when they are given an enabling environment.

Through progressive education therefore, the needs and interest of the children were taken into consideration in the teaching/learning process. Consequently, the children became free to bare their minds on how they would be educated and not just to absorb the bits of information that the teacher dictates to them. Not only that but progressive education provided a consideration for the children as individuals and not as a whole class. Impliedly, the peculiarities of individual learners were carefully identified and adequately catered for. Moreso, through progressive education, the learners were liberated from the strict discipline of the teacher as punishments were relaxed. All these added up to make the children relate well with each other in the school instead of concentrating only on their schoolwork with the hope

of performing better than their colleagues. This helped in the positive socialization of the children because cooperation is always better than competition.

With the advent of progressive education, teaching methods shifted from the didactic method to a variety of approaches, all of which involved dealing with the students in smaller groups than the entire class. Progressive teaching approaches also took into consideration the age range of the children so as to enhance learning. According to Hirst and Peters<sup>32</sup>, “importance was attached to taking account of children’s stage of development of waiting till they were ready to learn what had to be learnt from experience .” This no doubt is a positive step taken in the right direction because teaching methods could be educative if only they make the child to learn from his own experience instead of being told everything that he needs to learn by the teacher. With this, the learners discover things by themselves and for themselves and not mere listeners.

Additionally, the progressivists teaching strategies made the learners to participate more directly and actively than they did in the traditional recitation format. Learners were also exposed to a variety of sources than just one textbook. In order to accommodate these innovations, the appearance of the classrooms were improved upon. This was done by adding some aesthetic qualities to the classrooms. In consequence, more pleasant surroundings were provided and the furniture of the classrooms made more moveable to

permit group activities. This replaced the rigid and passive modes of the essentialists.

Another educational area that did not escape the attention of progressive educational reformers was the traditional curriculum. This was because it ignored the industrial and urban transformations of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The curriculum isolated the school from its social context and thus seemed incapable of preparing students for active roles in the society. Again, because of its concern with abstractions, it ignored particular needs because the formal classroom pedagogy of drill failed to take into account, the way children learn and their need for activity and specificity. It was the progressivists who advocated that “the child’s curriculum is to be drawn up in consultation with him”,<sup>34</sup>.

Resulting from the calls of the progressivists, a new curriculum was fashioned out which became markedly different from the traditional one. The new curriculum provided for the learners to be taught how to work with their hands. They had the opportunity to obtain manual training by coordinating their hands and their mind. This was important given the consideration that some of them would become manual workers on completion of their education. With only a little or no opportunity for training in the values of hand-work as obtainable in the old system, the school leavers can hardly fit correctly into the world of work. It was the progressive curriculum that offered the child with the opportunity to feel that he had received something of personal meaning and value while in the school. This made the schools to become the

arena of “social action for example social integration (and) elimination of poverty”<sup>35</sup>.

On a separate note, the progressive educational reformers sought for the integration of the school and the society. This is meant to make the school an understandable and integral feature of people’s lives by having it reflect and shape the needs of the community. By this, it is hoped that the role of the school will be enhanced to the extent that it should be able to fashion out a new social order. This is because other societal institutions cannot accomplish this task except the school. Harkavy<sup>36</sup> establishes that “educational reformers doubted the efficacy of other institutions and argued that societal problems lay beyond the abilities of philanthropists and privately supported settlement houses and called upon the school to accept responsibility for re-ordering life in the society.” It was therefore only through educational institutions that the concerns of the progressivists were shown. This yielded a variety of positive responses as discussed above which did well in meeting the needs of modern societies.

With the launching of progressive education in Nigeria, primary and junior secondary school education are made universal, free and compulsory for Nigerian children who are of school age. This is accomplished through the launching of the Universal Basic Education (UBE). With this development, impoverished Nigerian parents who could not afford school fees for their children can now send them to the school (primary and junior secondary schools). This progressive stance has risen the intake of children at the

primary school level and it is hoped that this will continue up to the junior secondary school level. Additionally, in line with the progressivists position that the learning environment be made attractive, efforts are made at making Nigerian schools learner friendly. This is done through the provision of instructional and infrastructural materials to primary schools in the country. Moreso, the renovation of educational institutions are undertaken giving them a face-lift. Finally, the progressive method of assessing the learners academic performance on continuous basis has been of much help to Nigerian pupils/students because through it, they have had better results in examinations.

On a separate note, the liberalization of the control of education has given rise to progressive practices in Nigerian education most especially in the area of access to education, where apart from public schools, there exist private ones. Although this is advantageous, but on the negative sheet, it has to be pointed out that the cost of education particularly in the private educational institutions limit access to education.

#### **4.6 SUMMARY**

Justification which is an ethical activity has been the concern of philosophers. Consequently, concepts and actions are justified on the basis of their positive connotations. It is in this respect that concepts like democracy, freedom, equality and education among others have been justified by philosophers. Progressivism which is the central theme of this thesis is justified for the consideration that it does no harm to anybody. It is generally

considered to be desirable thus it is regarded as a good thing. Unlike the conservative static conception of the universe, progressivism believes in an ever changing world. For a person or an activity to progress, there has to be some kind of positive change otherwise, it will be contradictory to claim that a person has progressed but that he has not in any way changed for better. To progress therefore implies an improvement of previous retrogressive position. This could be noticed in our political, social, economic and educational lives.

Politically, progressivism is justified because politics is a legitimate live endeavour of man. Since political progressivism is concerned with an honest government, the progressivists struggled very hard to end corruption and other political vices in the body polity and return political power to good citizens. This they did through the promotion of democracy which according to them is the only form of political life that is consistent with the fundamental principles of morality. Progressivism therefore helped in no small measure to curtail the excesses of despotic political leaders.

Socially, progressivism called for reforms to curb social vices in the society in order to improve the quality of life in general. In this respect, women who were denied the right to vote and/or be voted for were granted suffrage. They were also made to occupy positions in the state service. Again, the lots of factory workers were improved thus both women and children were given considerable attention in labour matters.

Progressivism made education to be child centered by considering the needs and interests of the child. This led to the introduction of a variety of

teaching approaches that encouraged learners participation in the learning process. This involved using a variety of sources rather than just one textbook as it was the case in the conservative essentialist education. The appearance of the classrooms were changed with the provision of spacious and movable furniture. The curriculum was subjected to a rethink at the end of which it was renovated so as to discard its abstract elements to the extent that it can integrate the school and the society in order to fashion out a new social order.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Progressive education is fundamentally an ethical movement against the traditional practice which according to the progressivists disregards the active participation of the learners in the educational process. To this effect, the progressive education movement strove hard to throw overboard traditional practices in education and sought to relate the nature of the child's growth and development to education. With the insistence of the progressivists on the child's active participation in the educational process, American education was democratized. Also, in order to counter teacher domination in the educational process, the learner was to direct his learning through activity-based methods like project and discovery methods.

The acceptance and implementation of progressive education led to chains of reforms in America. With this, progressive education became a global educational phenomenon. As part of the global match therefore, Nigeria has adopted progressive education in her educational practice as contained in the National Policy on Education. The issue that this part of the thesis seeks to address is the extent to which Nigeria has fared in the implementation of progressive educational ideas in her educational system. In

doing this, the discussion has to be set in motion by first understanding the development of progressive education.

## **5.2 THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION**

Progressive education is a brain child of pragmatism which owes its origin to the Greek word “pragma” which means “work” or “action”. With emphasis on practicability, pragmatism evolved into a philosophical system of thought at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the combined effort of Pierce, Williams and Dewey. It was the application of pragmatism to education that gave rise to the educational movement called progressive education. Tracing its origin to pragmatism, Omatseye<sup>1</sup> explains that:

The term progressive education was first used in 1910 when the pragmatists spearheaded the agitation for a new orientation which would alter the effects of schooling on the vocational, scientific and political life of each child in the United States of America.

Of all the pragmatists, Dewey stands out as the dominant intellectual force behind the actualization of progressive education in America. Appointed a head of department in the University of Chicago, Dewey sought to make teaching an independent field of study which would be at par with other University disciplines. This called for a Scientific approach to teaching where a systematic investigation would be instituted from where teachers would be able to teach as professionals and manage the educational enterprise without the interference of outsiders. Omatseye<sup>2</sup> reports that Dewey “deplores a situation where people outside the field of education would sit on school boards dictating school curricula, the choice of textbooks, procurement of

furniture and making decisions on other technical issues about which they cannot claim expertise”.

Added to this effort was the establishment of the laboratory school by Dewey. This Model school was to do for education what laboratories have done for science disciplines. The learner was to learn what was in his interest. Emphasis was placed on vocational subjects which Dewey called the occupations. Carpentry, sewing and cooking were introduced in the school curriculum. It was the outcome of Dewey’s activities at Chicago University that progressive education as an intellectual movement swept across the United States of America and beyond. America therefore became the world pacesetter in the conception and implementation of progressive education. With this, the time became ripe for further initiatives to be taken in developing progressive education. Thus, “in 1919, Standwood Cobb a teacher at Annapolis Novel College, formed the Association for the Advancement of Progressive Education with an initial membership of eighty-five”<sup>3</sup>.

For the improvement of primary education, the association members identified the following as their watchwords.

1. Freedom to develop naturally.
2. Interest, the motive of all work.
3. The teacher, a guide, not a task maker.
4. Scientific study of child development.
5. Greater attention to all that affects the child’s physical development.

6. Cooperation between school and home to meet the needs of child-life.

The Association for the Advancement of Progressive Education later changed its name to the American Progressive Education Association and founded a quarterly journal in 1924 called "Progressive Education". It was through the journal that progressive education was propagated. In 1927, Dewey was elected as the honorary President of American Progressive Education Association. The acknowledged headquarters of the Association was the Teachers College, Columbia.

### **5.3 THE MEANING OF PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION**

Educational thinkers are not unanimous on their conception of what progressive education consists in. This is why Lloyd<sup>4</sup> notes that:

The progressives were not a disciplined army marching united on a particular town. They were a group of travelers who, finding themselves together on the road had formed a united band. They did not all intend to finish in the same town and while on the journey some were to leave the band and new travelers were to join it. Observers who watched them from a distance sometimes thought they were pilgrims.

Despite the divergence of the progressivists as pointed out above, it could be argued that they shared certain things in common. First is their identity as a group. If they were thorough-going incompatibles, their journey as a group would not have been possible. Secondly, they were treading the same path. For a group of people to do that implies that there is shared interest among them otherwise they could have all taken to different directions

since there were other ways and no form of coercion was imposed on them to take the progressive path.

The only string that held the progressivists together was their general consideration that education should be child-centred. It was this that granted them a safe journey as travelers on the same road. On the basis of this, Adewole<sup>5</sup> asserts, that “the main theme of progressive education is that the concern of education should be the learners”.

With this behind his mind, Dodd<sup>6</sup> defines progressive education as, “that sort of education which places the child himself at the very center of the educational process which regards him as an individual with inalienable rights of his own which must be respected by the educationist”.

From this definition, it becomes eminent that the child is the central focus in the educational process. In this regard, progressive education views the child as a child and not as a scaled down adult whose development lies in his ability to accumulate a wealth of knowledge to enable him unfold the characteristics of an adult in future. The child argues Adewole<sup>7</sup> is not “a miniature adult” and should not be treated as such. Where the child is toyed around with to somebody’s advantage, no claim at all can be made to the effect that the child was at the center of his educational scheme. It is for this consideration that progressive education is viewed as a protest movement. Indeed, it is a moral protest against the erstwhile educational practise, which placed the learner at the rear boundary of the educational process.

Since the child is not an adult and should not be treated as such as shown above, he is not also to be treated as another child because he is not another ant in an ant hill but an entirely distinct personality. For this, educators are charged to acquaint themselves with the various stages of the child's development on the basis of which his education should be based. Dodd<sup>8</sup> emphasizes that:

a child passes through a series of developmental stages of growth. Not only must his education be linked to these, it must in fact be founded upon the special nature of each of these stages.

This assertion implies that each child has to be considered and treated as an individual because no two children can think, act, learn or develop in exactly the same way. Progressive education gives adequate attention to the child's physical, mental, social, moral and emotional development at each of the developmental stages. Based on the peculiarities of the learner, the progressivists prescribe an individualised method. Thus Emile's tutor was for him alone.

Nigerian education is in complete harmony with child-centred education as the National Policy of Education<sup>9</sup> legislates that "educational activities shall be centred on the child". Also, for the adequate development of the child's physical, social, emotional and moral abilities, the National Policy of Education<sup>10</sup> has pledged to inculcate "the right type of values and attitudes" for the social, cultural, economic and scientific progress of the learner.

To say that education should be centred on the child alone implies a total neglect of both the teacher and content. Herbart<sup>11</sup> reminds us that establishing a rapport in teaching involves three elements namely “the teacher, the content of the teaching and the learner”. Again, at the early stage of the child’s development, he is said to be egocentric. If learning activities are to be tailored round this behavioural trait, the fear is that the child will grow into an irrational and prejudiced adult. This makes schofield<sup>12</sup> to infer that “child-centredness resulted in an extreme solution instead of a rational and balanced conclusion reached after carefully weighing the evidence for and against”. In Nigeria, education can hardly be said to be child centred because of persistent teacher domination in the teaching/learning process as shall be seen as the work in this part progresses.

The individualised method prescribed by the progressivists is utopian because even in America it cannot be possible for each learner to have his own teacher from primary to the tertiary level of the educational system. If it is reduced to mean that classrooms should not be over crowded with say over 30 learners, this could be attained in America and other developed nations like Britain and France. As for Nigeria, the teacher learner ratio is still high as stated by Sule<sup>13</sup> that “most classrooms now have to cope with quite large populations sometimes reaching up to 50 to 60 children in a classroom”. The congestion resulting from high learners population in the classroom discomforts the learners as they

cannot move freely in the classroom. It also encourages indiscipline acts in the classroom because the teacher cannot attend to all of the learners at the same time. The claim that Nigerian education will inculcate the right type of values and attitudes into the children can be faulted on two grounds. First, given the cultural diversity of the nation, what becomes the modus-operandi for identifying right values and attitudes that will ensure the social, political, moral and emotional development of all Nigerian children? Secondly, the use of “inculcation” suggests passivity on the side of the learners. This contradicts the progressivists earlier position that education is to be centred on the child.

#### **5.4 ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

On access to education, the progressivists opt for equal educational opportunities. Cited by Bowen<sup>4</sup>, Dewey says that “education should be.....provided for all, regardless of sex, religion, race or social class; any other system is divisive and therefore has no genuine educative function”. These factors are disregarded in educational provision because as Adewole<sup>15</sup> argues, they are accidental. According to him:

Traditional obstacles to the achievement (of equal educational opportunities) should be removed so that each person can rise as far as his talents will allow. It de-emphasizes such accidental factors as family background, social class, race or ethnic group, colour and religion, so that individuals can rise by merit alone.... The assumption is that the more intelligent members of the lower and/or disadvantaged class will be able to wriggle out of their supposedly oppressive situation.

Insofar as it is accepted that the above factors are accidental to the extent that they are beyond the learner's sphere of influence, what of his intellect? In point of fact, no child can choose the amount of intellect that he will inherit from his parents. If this were possible, no child could have chosen to be of low mentality. After all, intellectual ability devoid of an enabling environment can not be sufficient for the child's optimum educational development.

Nigerian education adopts this progressive stance. Thus the National Policy of Education<sup>16</sup> states that "there is need for equality of educational opportunities to all Nigerian children,.....each according to his or her ability". Elsewhere, the policy documents pledges to provide "equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels"<sup>17</sup>. For the sake of convenience, this provision shall be examined under the following sub-heads:

1. Placement
2. Tuition, incidental costs and poverty.
3. Gender issues.
4. Geographical location.

#### **5.4.1 Placement**

The placement of Nigerian primary school pupils into secondary schools is done through the first school leaving certificate and the National Common Entrance Examination. On the first school leaving

certificate, the Federal Republic of Nigeria<sup>18</sup> directs that it “shall be based on continuous assessment” and not a single examination.

Trends in Nigerian primary schools point at threats to its implementation. First, because of the high pupils: teacher ratio and the ill preparedness of primary school teachers in constructing cognitive and non-cognitive test items, they often set multiple-choice tests which although are simple to mark focus largely on cognitive measures only. This is done to the detriment of assessing the pupils’ performance in the affective and psycho-motor domains. Since the issue of examination malpractice is an acknowledge national problem in Nigeria, primary school pupils could copy each others work or the teacher could fabricate or inflate marks of pupils that are in one way or the other related to him. Worst still, some primary school teachers and headmasters still base the assessment of their pupils on terminal and/or sessional examinations only.

The corruption of the continuous assessment practice gives birth to fake school leaving certificate results, which are in turn wrongly used in placing primary school leavers in to secondary schools. It therefore becomes of less wonder that a student in JSS I or even JSS II cannot read and write or construct a single simple and correct sentence in English language despite the marks that he might have scored to merit placement into the secondary school.

Again, with the existence of the National Common Entrance Examination, the National Policy on Education remains silent on the inclusion of continuous assessment in its conduct. The question is, are we then operating two systems of selection into secondary schools – one for the Federal Government Colleges and another for State Secondary Schools? Why can't the first school leaving certificate be used for placement of pupils into both State and Federal Government Colleges?

On placement into tertiary institutions, the National Policy on Education<sup>19</sup> says that, “transition from secondary education to tertiary education shall be through the appropriate selection mechanism”. This pronouncement leaves us in the dark as to what the constituents of appropriate selection mechanism are. Could it be the quota system and catchment area applied in the admission of students into our tertiary institutions of learning? The quota system recommends the number of students that should come from a state regardless of their academic qualification for entry into the University. The rationale behind this practice is that the educationally disadvantaged states will catch-up with the educationally advantaged states. On catchment area, reference is made “to the people among whom a University is established” (Onwuka)<sup>20</sup>.

Bringing these into play in the admission policy of Nigerian Universities, Dangana<sup>21</sup> quotes the guidelines on admission policy in Nigerian universities thus:

- a. 45% on merit from all the states of the Federation.
- b. 35% from catchment areas.
- c. 20% for students from educationally disadvantaged states.

The above guidelines are expected to be strictly adhered to; failure to comply attracts appropriate penalties.

The problem with this admission policy has to do with poor Nigerians who are not favoured as their enlightened and/or rich counterparts. On the merit component of the policy, it has already been pointed out that without an enabling environment, a mentally viable child may fall behind his mentally weak colleague who has a conducive educational environment. In consequence, at the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board examination, children of the enlightened and/or rich who possess adequate academic stimulation by attending costly and well equipped private schools will out perform their poor counterparts who attended public schools. Where many children of the poor fail the University qualifying examination, the rich would always defend as in Adewole's<sup>22</sup> illustration with William's story that "we do not exclude anyone for being poor; we exclude people for being weak, and it is unfortunate that those who are poor are also weak". This is a clear but unfair case of making a well-fed horse to run the same race with a well starved one. The same goes for University discretion and catchment areas. All these are filled up by the children of the rich and enlightened parents because they can always lobby for admission as against poor

and ignorant parents who are not even aware of this provision in the University admission policy.

#### **5.4.2 Tuition, Incidental Costs and Poverty**

Dewey<sup>23</sup> writes that education should be free and he quickly adds that free education goes beyond free tuition to include free books, medical services and lunch. In America the cradle of progressive education, primary and secondary education are free. Thus apart from free tuition, American children enjoy free health care and feeding. Harkavy<sup>24</sup> reports that since health care is considered as inevitable to mental growth, American pupils are provided with “free lunch, bath facilities, nurses and play grounds”. In the same vein, Britain provides free primary and secondary education to her citizens.

The United Nations declares that every citizen of the world has the right to free education at least at the elementary level. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>25</sup>, “education shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages”. However, the ambiguity enshrined in the definition of what constitutes elementary education has to be unraveled. Since elementary, fundamental and basic are synonyms, where does fundamental, elementary or basic education start and where does it end? Because of the lack of clear definition, different countries of the world have offered varying definitions may be to suit appropriate economic positions. Thus, while the developed nations who because of their economic prowess view basic education as beginning

from the primary to the secondary school level, the developing and less developed worlds see it as starting and ending in the primary school.

Renowned Nigerians with progressive temperament have craved for free education at all levels of Nigerian educational system. Awolowo<sup>26</sup> makes this clear in Nwogu when he writes, that “if Nigerians want to modernize and live in peace, free education at all levels must be provided for all the citizens”. In support of the above assertion, Fawehinmi<sup>27</sup> has this to add:

Free education at all levels in Nigeria will extricate the country from the obnoxious clutches of lopsided economic development, nagging tribalism, the morass of clannish chauvinish and other degrading socio-economic viricides that plague an illiterate society.

In answer to the above calls, which is in line with the progressive posture of the country's education, free education is featured in virtually all important documents of Nigeria. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria<sup>28</sup> for instance pledges to provide “free, ....primary education”. The National Policy of Education<sup>29</sup> again prescribes that both primary and Junior Secondary School education will be tuition free. In like manner, the Implementation Guidelines for the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme<sup>30</sup> says that “the UBE programme is intended to be universal, free and compulsory”. The question is, are Primary and Junior Secondary school education free in Nigeria?

For a start, we are greeted with the confusion and contraction in claims of the Constitution, National Policy of Education and the

Implementation Guidelines. While the suspended 1999 Nigerian Constitution and the UBE Implementation Guidelines on the one hand talk about free primary education, the National Policy on Education on the other hand talks about free tuition at the Primary and Junior Secondary school levels. Arising from this, one is lost as to which of the two positions is operational because free education is different from free tuition.

By free tuition or free basic education as provided by the Universal Basic Education Programme, it is meant that no school fees is to be charged in all Nigerian Primary and Junior Secondary schools. A closer look at the implementation of this progressive ideal shows that it falls short of the expected because the ownership and management of fee paying private primary and secondary schools is guaranteed by the same National Policy on Education that prohibits the payment of tuition fees. In confirmation of this assertion, the Federal Republic of Nigeria<sup>31</sup> states that “Government welcomes the contribution of voluntary agencies, communities and private individuals in the establishment and management of primary schools along side those provided by the state and local governments”. In the same vein, the Federal Republic of Nigeria<sup>32</sup> adds that “Government welcomes the participation of voluntary agencies, communities and private individuals in the establishment and management of secondary schools”. The same is the case for tertiary institutions.

With the above legislation, private primary and secondary schools have become a usual phenomenon in the Nigerian educational landscape. The question is, can all Nigerian children who wish to attend private schools do so? Certainly no. The major reason being that private schools are oriented towards profit maximization thus their fees are prohibitive to the extent that poor parents cannot afford. With the over commercialization of education via private schools, the unfair division in the society between the rich and the poor is perpetuated and consolidated because the private schools are more qualitative than the public schools. Frowning at this state of affairs, Adewole<sup>33</sup> submits that:

In most places, inequality is still the general rule and hence egalitarians object to that institutional arrangement where a sector of schools financed and administered independently of the state exists. The argument is that such an arrangement is unfair to the poor ones who cannot afford the high fees charged in such schools. The point of the unfairness rests on the fact that the private sector of education provides better quality education than the public schools; and so it is always felt that it puts the children of the rich at an advantage over those of the poor.

Attempts by the government at abolishing private educational institutions in Nigeria have proved abortive. The government's effort at taking over schools from voluntary agencies and private proprietors has also failed. All these could be accounted for in the light of parents who are enlightened and/or wealthy who send their children to these schools and who can easily influence government policies than poor illiterate parents.

In public primary and junior secondary schools where it is claimed that tuition fee is abolished, it is paradoxical to discover that both primary school pupils and junior secondary school students pay an equivalent or

even more of the tuition fee through inexhaustible levies charged by school authorities. Examples of these levies include “games, development, excursion, practicals, parent teachers association, brooms, library, medical, light, examination and furniture”<sup>34</sup>. This implies that although tuition fee is abolished, most of the costs of running the school still lie in the hand of parents. This goes a long way in affecting the number of children that attend primary and junior secondary schools as many parents are no longer able or willing to send their children to the school because of the levies charged. Adewole<sup>35</sup> accounts for the high rate of drop outs at the primary school level as “resulting from parental inability to cope with the usual levies”.

Even if primary and junior secondary schools were tuition free, it takes more than that to make education free in Nigeria. In the words of Amaale<sup>36</sup>, free education “means free tuition, feeding, free books, free accommodation, free transportation, free uniform and other personal uses of the learner”. With the government shouldering only the responsibility of tuition, the balance of feeding, books, accommodation, transportation, uniforms and learners personal uses are pushed to the parents. The problem is the financial inability of the parents in footing the bill. This is because in discussing the major democratic impediments in Nigeria, Jacob<sup>37</sup> says that “poverty is another problem militating against a free and democratic society in Nigeria (because) majority of the people in Nigeria lack basic materials for survival”.

Having established that most Nigerians are poor, the question follows as to whether their children enjoy equal access to education with their wealthy fellow country men. Enoh, Bamanja and Onwuka<sup>38</sup> provide a satisfactory answer to this when they write that:

On the issue of parental income, it is known that individuals can be differentiated markedly on the basis of their wealth. Those with considerable wealth are capable of maintaining their children in schools for as long as they are willing to read. Poor parents on the other hand may be forced to withdraw their children from school even when they are still capable of reading just because they can no longer cope with high cost of maintenance.

When the children drop out of the primary or junior secondary school, no option is left for them than to take up various jobs, their age notwithstanding. By the International Labour Organization<sup>39</sup> estimates of 2002, “211 million children aged between 5 and 14 were working, of these children, approximately 111 million children were working full time and did not attend school”. This implies that while some of the children have dropped out of the school at primary or JSS I or II, others continue but may have to sponsor themselves in part or wholly. It is therefore not strange to see primary school pupils or junior secondary school students hawking various things after school. Some of them go to the farm in order to make up for their school needs. The Punch<sup>40</sup> reports that at Ibologwu primary school Amuwo in Lagos where the occupation of most parents is fish and coconut farming, primary school pupils have to leave school to assist their parents during harvesting season. A teacher in the school confirms that “we see this often when they have to buy new school uniforms or books. They are forced to assist their parents to generate the income for their welfare”. In situations that pupils or students

have to sponsor their education, the fear is for them to be tempted into doing other things that are counter productive in a bid to raise the fund for their education. This could be linked to the rampant and persistent cases of prostitution, indecent dressing, cheating and even armed robbery involving students. All of these affect their learning in the school in no small measure because for the period that they absented themselves from the school, they missed all the lessons, assignments and examinations conducted in their absence.

Apart from free tuition, the National Policy of Education<sup>41</sup> has promised to put the following in place in order to achieve free basic education in Nigeria. They are:

1. School libraries
2. Basic health schemes
3. Specialist teachers of particular subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Physical Education, Language Arts and Home Economics.

For now, discussion on school libraries and basic health scheme will be postponed and taken up when assessing the needs of the Nigerian school child. The provision of specialist teachers will also be tackled later when the progressive teaching methods will be assessed.

#### **5.4.3 Geographical Location of Schools**

On the geographical distribution of schools, Rusk<sup>42</sup> reports that Rousseau expounds “a universal system”. Jefferson, a vocal advocate of

the democratization of American education had to insist that every child has to be close to the school. In discussing the problems of Nigerian education, Fafunwa<sup>43</sup> puts that “other factors that contribute to stay-outs phenomenon include....distance from the nearest school”. This shows that the proximity of a school to a child’s home positively influences his attendance. Where learners have to travel long distances before reaching the school or cross many rivers in the rainy season, they may defend their inability to attend school on ground of inaccessibility. Lockheed<sup>44</sup> et-al posit that “for every kilometer that a child walks to the school, the likelihood of attendance drops”. The above submission cannot go unchallenged. What explanation for instance can be offered in a situation where a child leaves a school behind his house to attend a particular one in a distant place where he may even have to pay transport fare on daily basis. Similarly, instances abound where learners have to travel even outside their states of origin or country to study a course that is available in their home University. For instance, although University of Jos is located in Plateau State, one from Plateau State may enlist interest in studying law in University of Ibadan.

The geographical distribution of schools in Nigeria takes the progressive stance because the National Policy of Education<sup>45</sup> stipulates that both the primary and junior secondary schools are to be “Universal”. This literally means that they are to be found everywhere in Nigeria. This cannot be the case because it will be impossible to establish these schools

in every nook and crannies of Nigeria. There is therefore the need for a more restrictive definition of “universal” as contained in the policy document.

When western education was introduced in Nigeria in 1842, the few schools were not accessible to many Nigerians partly because of distance. But, with the expansion of education through the years, the enrollment figure increased. The launching of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976 further boosted the enrolment of children into primary schools with the implication that more secondary schools and tertiary institutions had to be built to accommodate the learners. With the re-incarnation of the U.P.E. into the Universal Basic Education, more schools are built to the extent that almost every district has a secondary school. This is not to talk of the numerous primary schools in each district. On University education, almost all states of the Federation have at least one.

Despite the proliferation of schools all over the country, some children do not attend school on account of inaccessibility. This according to Adewale<sup>46</sup> owes much to rural-urban disparity. “These disparities exist within and among the states both qualitatively and quantitatively”. Throwing their weight behind the urban-rural variation argument, Enoh, Bamanja and Onwuka<sup>47</sup> write that:

it is the urban areas that get the largest number of schools and colleges and even when the rural areas also have the same number of schools, differences in quality often arise to the disadvantage of the rural areas..... Clearly, these differences between the urban and rural areas mean that an urban child is more likely to have a good school near his home and particularly at the primary level where it has been found that distance of the

school from home affects attendance, the rural child who may have to travel long distances for a school may have to absent himself from school more.

Resulting from this, the number of rural children of school age that attend school are fewer than those in the towns and cities. Even the few that attend hardly complete primary education thereby swelling up the number of primary school drop-outs.

It is the lowest ebb of Nigerian education that is most hit by the urban-rural difference in Nigeria. This is because, to ensure a steady supply of nursery school pupils from well to do parents, nursery schools are built only in towns and cities. Because nursery school children are too young to trek from the village to the town and back, they cannot attend such schools. This deprives the few rich parents in the rural areas of providing nursery education for their children.

Like Pestalozzi “whose aim in life was to ameliorate the lot of the poor” in the society<sup>48</sup>, Ezeoma complains on distance as a hindrance to school attendance in respect of the pastoral Fulani in these words; “other constraints preventing the pastoral Fulanis from sending their children to school are the long distances of schools from their camps”. This complain looks genuine given the consideration that long distances will make the Fulani pupils to be tired on arrival in the school thus he asserts further that the long distances to be covered will inject the spirit of truancy and absenteeism into the children. This argument could be easily debunked given the fact that as their name implies, the pastoral Fulani spent the whole

day grazing their cattle in far away bushes which when compared, walking to the school is less tedious. On truancy and absenteeism the question could be asked as to whether all truants and pupils that absent themselves from the school are all Fulanis. The truth of it is that there are children that their houses are just behind the school yet they are truants or could absent themselves from the school indiscriminately.

Reflecting on the impediments to the achievement of close location of schools to the homes of Nigerian children, the topography of the country has to be considered first. As a country endowed with high and low land areas, there exist hilly and rocky features with human settlements either on the top or behind the hills. There could also be several large rivers that separate one settlement from the other. All these put together make it very difficult to build schools close to the children's houses because of the lack of access road to transport building materials and school equipment.

#### **5.4.4 Gender and Access to Education**

Gender denotes the notion of the global differentiation of the entire human race in accordance with their sex – male or female. Relating this to educational accessibility, the progressivists demand for a balanced enrollment between males and females. Keeping in tune with this position, Dewey says that education is to be distributed to all citizens regardless of sex<sup>49</sup>. Rousseau had also worked out a scheme of education for both Emile and Sophie. In response to this, the Federal Republic of Nigeria<sup>50</sup> clarifies that no Nigerian shall be subjected to any form of deprivation because of the

circumstance of his birth. The Federal Republic of Nigeria<sup>51</sup> adds that Nigerian education is built on our national goals one of which is the building of an egalitarian society. Thus the policy document guarantees equal access to education for both males and females<sup>52</sup>. What then is the position of implementing a gender balanced education in Nigeria?

Despite policy statements on gender equality in respect of access to educational chances in Nigeria, it could be observed that a wide chasm exists between males and females enrollment in the various sectors of Nigerian education. While the girls suffer educational deprivation in the North, the boys fall victim of same in the South-Eastern part of the country. For the girls, the UNICEF<sup>53</sup> reports that although there is an improvement in the literacy rate of children in the developing countries, the “boys have fared much better than girls and gender discrepancy increases (even) during the (junior) secondary school phase”. Lassa<sup>54</sup> laments that even with the emphasis on equal educational opportunities in the National Policy on Education, only a little is done to promote girl-child access to education. Consequently, the literacy rate of the girl-child in Nigeria was 39.5% compared to 60.5% for males in 1990<sup>55</sup>. In what follows therefore, an attempt will be made at identifying the factors responsible for the disparity.

One of the persistent impediments against equal access to educational distribution between males and females stems from the socio-economic considerations of the people. The celebration that welcomes the birth of a boy into the family is often reduced to sadness in the case of a girl.

The reason being that when she grows up, she will marry thus ceasing to be a member of the family but that of her husband's. First, any income she earns become her husband's and secondly, the family's name dies out and she can no longer care for her parents or siblings. These when considered amount to great losses as against the boy who can provide all these thus the preference to send a boy to the school and not the girl.

Because of the second position allocated to women, some parents would prefer that their daughters remain at home to provide family labour. She cooks, sweeps, fetches water and fire-wood and could even be given out in marriage in order to use her bride-wealth in catering for her male brother's school needs. Closely related to this are situations where parents give out their daughters in wedlock at a very tender age under the pretext of religion. Having settled down for marriage, the issue of schooling is forgotten.

Pre-marital pregnancy forces the girl to drop-out of school. Even as a pregnant married woman, her education is negatively affected because in some cultures the movement of the pregnant woman is restricted. Thus, apart from delaying her completion, it could even cause her to terminate her educational pursuit.

Where the parents of a girl are not educated, they may not see the need to send their daughter to the school. Instead, they may wish that she takes up apprenticeship in any of the trades. This is so most especially when such parents think about the cost of education vis-à-vis the

unemployment saga. In some co-educational schools, girls are discriminated against by teachers and school administrators who believe that girls are incompetent. In some cases therefore, girls do not ask or are asked questions in the classroom. They are made to sit behind the class, and their names written in red ink at the bottom of the register.

On the side of the boy child, impediments to equal access to education could be associated with societal adoration of wealth. A lot of boys particularly in the South-Eastern part of the country desert the schools for various trades or businesses in order to quickly amass sufficient wealth to attract communal or societal attention. To them, schooling is a sheer waste of time because its dividends cannot be reaped on time.

## **5.5 THE INVOLVEMENT OF LEARNERS IN DECISIONS AFFECTING THEM**

For the learners to be involved in taking decisions that affect them, the progressivists call for the democratization of education. According to Omatseye<sup>56</sup>, the progressivists love of “democracy was based....on the principle of the right of citizens to participate in decisions affecting their lives”. Since the school serves as a socializing agent of the society, and the society is democratic, the school has to be a democratic community. In the words of Child and Child<sup>57</sup>, “to train children for life in a democracy mean at least a measure of democratic life in school”. Put in other words, Buenyen<sup>58</sup> says that “a democratic state should have a democratic form of education”. In consequence, Dewey, the author of progressive education often talk of “democracy and education” “democracy in education” and “democratic

education". The democratization of education implies involving the learners in taking decisions that affect them. Before delving into that discussion, we shall pause and ponder on what democracy consists in.

America where progressivism has its original home hold democracy in high esteem. Though not of American origin, democracy crept into America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century during which it was considered as "the hope of everybody who believed in progress"<sup>59</sup>. Owing to its trickish nature, democracy defies a single scholarly definition thus, diametrically opposing regimes could all lay claim to it. For example, before the collapse of the Soviet Union, it once claimed to be as democratic as America. Kansen<sup>60</sup> explains that "in Soviet political theory, the dictatorship of the proletariat is presented as democracy". This openly shows that democracy is often defined to match appropriate intentions of the person or people defining it.

The original meaning of the concept "democracy" coined in the political practice of Ancient Greeks was "rule by the people"<sup>61</sup>. Premised on this etymological definition, most definitions of democracy make reference to the people as the pivot of democratic governance. This therefore compels us to probe into who the people are. Citing Benn, Bueylen<sup>62</sup> states that the demos were the poor in Ancient Greece. Consequently, democracy in the Greek sense connotes a government of the poor. Adewole<sup>63</sup> further confirms that, Aristotle defines democracy as government of the poor but that to Marx, democracy has to do with government by the proletariats. From the foregone, it becomes pertinent to enquire further whether the

people are Aristotle's poor or Marx's proletariats whom he identified true democracy with. To Marx, the exploited workers constitute the people as against the poor or the rich. Whichever of the two, it could be observed that both Aristotle and Marx are myopic in their views of who the people are because only one section of the entire population is identified as the people while others particularly the rich are arbitrarily excluded. Peters<sup>64</sup> condemns this practice as "undemocratic".

In the Nigerian context, the people are supposed to be all Nigerians but politically, the people are restricted to Nigerians who are rational and law abiding. The National Policy of Education<sup>65</sup> clarifies this position as it forbids the following category of Nigerians from voting or being voted for in a political dispensation, viz; the lunatics or persons declared to be unsound in mind, persons under death sentence imposed on them by any court of law in Nigeria, convicts, undischarged culprits or members of secret cults. The question is, how do we identify some of these people for instance secret cult members?

Democracy as rule by the people implies general participation of the governed in the government. This was easily met in the Greek City States because the population was small to the extent that all adult citizens could participate in policy decisions through discussions and voting. The practical difficulty in implementing this system of government in modern societies stem from their teeming population. In remedy to this therefore, democracy is practiced in representative terms where decisions are reached on the

basis of majority votes. In this practice, it becomes the norm that the will of the majority becomes the will of the people.

When majority rule is viewed critically, some loopholes could be spotted. The first is the doubt frequently expressed in the freeness and fairness of the electoral process. Speaking about Nigeria, Jacob<sup>66</sup> says that “other anti-democratic behaviours of our politicians include election rigging”. Besides this, in a multi-party democracy, the minority may form the government because the seats won by the minorities when added up may out number that of the ruling party. This always makes for a conflict ridden government because the smooth running of the government depends sizably on the cooperation between the party in power and the minority parties. Musa, Choji and Agada<sup>67</sup> present an instance where during the Second Republic in Nigeria, crisis rocked the Kaduna State House of Assembly when “the People’s Redemption Party (PRP) formed the government but the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) ganged up with the minority parties and impeached the governor”. Added to the above, it is worth mentioning here that numerical superiority of the majority does not necessarily imply value superiority. Since political parties are formed along the lines of interest, majority of the citizenry could constitute itself into a political party with common interests that are counter productive to the society. Situations like this give rise to tyranny of the majority.

Having discussed democracy, we shall now turn our attention to the assessment of how it is applied in taking managerial decisions that affect the

learners. Adewole<sup>68</sup> prescribes that a democratically minded school head will “allow as much room as possible for joint decisions”. For this reason, it becomes incumbent on the head of the educational institution to consult the learners on how to run the school. This could be done through their representatives in the Students Union Government or the institution of prefects as the case may be. Where it becomes necessary to consult all the students or pupils in the school, this could be done at a students’ parley or general assembly.

The problem with this progressivists position is that since primary school pupils are predominantly immature, they may not make meaningful contributions on matters relating to the management of the school as it affects them. Even where the students are matured like those of the secondary and tertiary institutions, it will be difficult to involve them in deciding on a complex or sensitive issue affecting them. According to Adewole<sup>69</sup>, “it may for instance be inappropriate to say that in the name of democracy students, however mature should be made to decide on how many years of say, university tutoring they should have before being allowed to graduate”. For this reason, the head of the educational institution should be cautious in consulting and deciding with the learners on matters that affect them. This is because when a problem erupts as a result of a wrong decision taken with the learners, it is the head of the school that will be held responsible and not the learners.

On the extent of learners' involvement in taking decisions that affect them in Nigerian education, much has to be done. This is because some educational institution heads could actively participate in joint decision taking with their pupils or students but turn round and either refuse to implement the decision or implement the contrary. Another way that Nigerian head of educational institutions violate the principle of consultation is by taking prior decisions on issues before calling the pupils or students to dictate to them all that they have decided. As the only cock that crows, the pupils or students passively listen and implement all that has been dictated to them because any attempt to raise objection even on good grounds, is met with the wrath of the head. Instead of holding discussions with their pupils or students during meetings, such heads will always clarify that it is not a meeting as such but briefing therefore it is informational. To such school heads, Buenyen<sup>70</sup> says that they should give room to discussions and accept decisions taken to which they themselves are opposed when the weight of opinions are against them. Worst still, some school heads do not hold consultations with their pupils or students. This is because they will either not make themselves available in the school or even when in the school, they will claim to be always busy.

On the part of the government, the pupils or students have less to say in the educational administration of the country. This is because the government does not consult the pupils or students before major educational decisions that will have far reaching effects on them are taken. For instance, the Universal Basic Education Programme which is said to be a people's

programme, was conceived and implemented without adequate consultation of the pupils, students, teachers and Nigerians. Enoh<sup>71</sup> explains that it was only a few elites that:

Conceived the idea, designed the curriculum and had a form of consultation which was more informational than discussive. Alone they designed the physical structure and alone they are building them. The individuals for whom the scheme is intended have up to this moment no say in any form.... We have never paused to ponder how the masses of the people are being actively involved in implementing the scheme.

All of the above add up to unprogressive practices in the Nigerian educational system and the administration of an undemocratic head culminates into discontentment and lack of interest to actively participate in school activities. This makes the learners lost a sense of belonging and could go underground to cause problems of various dimensions to the school sometimes leading to an open students unrest.

## **5.6 THE INVOLVEMENT OF LEARNERS IN CURRICULA DECISIONS**

With the insistence of the progressivists on child centred education, their position on curricula issues follow suit. To them, the child has to be actively involved in deciding curricula activities. Adewole<sup>72</sup> cites Rousseau as saying that “the child’s curriculum is to be drawn up in consultation with him”. In his protracted argument on the state control of the curriculum, Adewole<sup>73</sup> has cause to infer that:

Curriculum decisions are largely a moral matter dealing with considerations of the ‘good life’ and the “good society”, a matter in which there are no experts. In such an area of decision, most tax payers, local employers, pupils, parents, mature students and so on, have an obvious interest and indeed a right to be involved.

It is on the basis of this inference that the 1969 national conference in Lagos which gave birth to the National Policy on Education was attended by “both literates and illiterates, professional and non-professional bodies, males and females, workers and students”<sup>74</sup>. Progressive education therefore offers a Smorgabord Curriculum in the belief that the “child will select that which answers his felt needs”<sup>75</sup>.

With the commendable effort of basing the curriculum on the needs of the learners, the problem of learners population surfaces. How can the felt needs of the children in our overcrowded classrooms be identified for the curriculum to be based on them. Since the needs of the learners vary from one child to the other, it means that every child is to have his curriculum. An impossibility is sensed in this direction. Again, if the curriculum is to be based on the needs of the learners, the fear is that because of the tenderness of the learner’s age, it may become difficult for their needs to be in consonance with educationally valuable activities. Even in Summerhill, Neil<sup>76</sup> himself admits that “because we consider religion unimportant, we withheld it.... We do therefore select and choose according to our own make-up.... Frankly, I cannot see how we can do otherwise”. If the curriculum were based on the needs of the learners as preached by the progressives, this could not have been the case.

The progressive curriculum ushered in an education, which gave children the knowledge that they needed and developed in them the power

to handle themselves in the modern world. This was done by providing an array of elective courses. Activities were also introduced to cater for the diverse interests and abilities of the learners. Dewey strongly advocated for the inclusion of vocational courses like carpentry, sewing and cooking in the school curriculum because “he saw a balanced education as one comprising the occupations along with the historical and social studies, science and communication and expression”<sup>77</sup>. In all, the disciplines listed in the progressivists curriculum are meant to involve the learner in exploring and discovering knowledge on his own with the assistance of the teachers. Explaining the significance of the subjects in the curriculum, Akinpelu<sup>78</sup> contends that:

The sciences are much favoured in this type of curriculum, and they will be taught not in the way of learning the laws and theories in physics and chemistry, but by way of the child exploring and being aided to discover new knowledge by himself. The social sciences are important as representing the social environment and the factors that affect human behaviour in his community. The humanities.....deal with the cultural heritage of his race. History for instance, is to be regarded and treated as the record of man’s social life and progress while language is to be taught as an instrument of communication. The aesthetic subjects like arts, drama, literature, music and so on are to be included for the development of the creative abilities of the child.

### **5.6.1 The Nigerian Curriculum**

In line with the above progressivists stance, Nigerian education is carefully arranged to cater for “differences in talents”<sup>79</sup>. This is done through the diversification of the curriculum in order to accommodate the different abilities and aptitudes of the learners. Further more, the emphasis of Nigerian

education is on science and technology as reflected by the National Policy of Education<sup>80</sup> where it states that “A greater proportion of expenditure on university education shall be devoted to science and technology”. It states further that “not less than 60% of places shall be allocated to science and science oriented courses in the conventional universities and not less than 80% in the universities of technology”<sup>81</sup>. To comment on this admission policy vis-à-vis students’ participation in curriculum issues, the question could be posed that supposing 60% or more of the students are not interested in science and technology related courses. By this practice therefore, some students become unwilling captives of the most valued science and technology education because they have to develop a fake interest for the course to avert the wrath of their parents or other extrinsic factors. This is unprogressive.

For the Nigerian curriculum, the National Policy of Education<sup>82</sup> recommends that “the junior secondary school shall be both pre-vocational and academic”. In consequence, the curricula will comprise of the following core subjects. “English, French, Mathematics, Language of the environment to be taught as L1, one major Nigerian language other than that of the environment to be taught as L2, Integrated science, Social Studies and citizenship Education (and) Introductory Technology”.

Junior Secondary School students are also to study one of the following pre-vocational subjects. “Agriculture, Business Education, Home Economics, Local Crafts (and) Computer Education”. For non-pre-vocational electives, the

junior secondary students have to study one of the following; “Religious Knowledge, Physical and Health Education, Fine Art, Music and Arabic”<sup>83</sup>. At the Senior Secondary School level, there are core subjects in addition to non-vocational and vocational electives. Then, at the tertiary level, these courses are provided in order to enable a student specialize in an area. All these are built on the foundation laid by primary education.

The narrowness of the colonially inherited curriculum did not go down well with some Nigerian learners. Akafor<sup>84</sup> explains, that “the principal reason for the drop-outs was the dissatisfaction of the child with what the school could offer”. With the diversification of the curriculum, Nigerian learners have ample opportunities to choose from the array of disciplines, those which match their interests and abilities. With this practice, the individual difference of the learners is taken care of. In addition, since societal problems are always transferred to the schools for solution<sup>85</sup> a diversified curriculum will help in no small measure to address the numerous problems of the society. From the American example, “when progressivism became the order of the day....the curriculum was....expanded far and wide to meet the broadening social problems”,<sup>86</sup>.

Since the emphasis of Nigerian education is on science and technology:

There are universities established exclusively for science and technology. This is an addition to a plethora of Polytechnics, Colleges of Technology and Technical Colleges of Education. In some states, science secondary schools abound in addition to Federal Technical Colleges,<sup>87</sup>.

With the diversified curriculum and appropriate educational institutions on ground, it could be concluded that the progressive curriculum is fully implemented in the Nigerian educational system but on slight reflection, some deficiencies could be located namely; the notion of core subjects, which are found in both, the junior and senior secondary school levels. In the primary school however, the subjects are all compulsory. This practice carries with it an essentialist triat because of the essentialists believe in a common knowledge that must be transmitted to all that go to the school. Since progressive education talks much about the child's needs and interests, supposing a learner is not interested in one or more of the core subjects? Again, because of the lack of teachers and educational materials, some subjects in the curriculum are not taught. Where then is the learner's freedom of choice?

#### **5.6.2 The Problems of Implementing Progressive Curriculum in Nigerian Education**

Following from the above, it becomes necessary for us to examine some of the major impediments militating against the successful implementation of the progressive curriculum in Nigeria. This is because a wide chasm exists between curriculum theory and practice. The problems facing the teaching and learning of Mathematics, Science and languages will be discussed in due course. For now, some remarks on introductory technology and agriculture will suffice. The choice of these is simply for the consideration that they form the basis for vocational education.

On introductory technology which has been accorded a core subject status at the junior secondary school level, the problem of teachers has been one of the greatest crisis area that stares it on the face. Tracing the history of this ugly phenomenon, Okoro<sup>88</sup> reveals that:

Since the inception of the National Policy on Education (1977) it has never been easy to recruit teachers into the technical system. Colleges of Education (Technical) were opened to train vocational teachers while the government instituted scholarship under the Technical Teacher Training Programme (TTTP), yet many trained personnel shunned the classroom for the industry irrespective of the two-year bond.

Even for the few teachers that teach introductory technology, their qualification is in great doubt as Okeke and Nwachukwu in Malo<sup>89</sup> draws our attention to the result of a study on the quality of introductory technology teachers thus; “94% of the teachers lack requisite qualification for their assignment”.

In addition to inadequate personnel is the lack of infrastructural facilities in technical institutions and secondary schools some of which include workshops, laboratories and classrooms. These will be deliberated upon while discussing the needs of the child. Resulting from the lack, programmes that are supposed to be “practical based” as endorsed by the National Policy on Education are taught only using the chalk board. Imarhiagbe<sup>90</sup> confirms that “between 1988 and 1990, an average of about 40,000 students sat for the JSCE in introductory technology. Reports have it that there is no evidence of practical work”. The level of students’ participation during such lessons

therefore becomes passive as against an active involvement of the learners in the course of the lesson as advocated by the progressivists.

In schools where laboratories and workshops are available, the problem has been the absence of necessary equipment. Government's effort at importing workshop and laboratory equipment from abroad has not succeeded in salvaging the situation because the instructional manuals are written in the language of the producing country which could be Germany, Japan or Bulgaria. The introductory technology teacher who is trained in English cannot read and comprehend such instructional manuals. According to Malo<sup>91</sup>, the "government bought machines for the implementation of introductory technology in the secondary schools from Bulgaria, it turns out to be that the instructional manuals for mounting and operations were written in their language". For this reason, some of these equipment are up to date rusting away in our introductory technology workshops. In some cases, there could be a standard workshop or laboratory in the school but because the school is located in the rural area without electricity supply or a generator, the teachers cannot use them.

Agriculture is another practical subject that requires the learner's direct involvement in order to acquire psychomotor skills like handling and using of agricultural tools and equipment. The gain of it is that the school leaver becomes self-employed instead of roaming the streets looking for a job that is not there. What then is the present position of implementing agricultural science curriculum in Nigerian education? Apart from the recurring problem of

inadequate personnel and facilities, another major problem of implementing agricultural science curriculum in Nigerian schools is the erroneous use of agricultural work as punishment thus, if a student does something wrong, he is sent to the school farm or a teacher's farm to work. Also, some schools use the period allocated to agriculture on the time-table to do odd manual works like sweeping round the school compound. Worst still, the agricultural science teacher is made the labour master in some schools. Although it could be said that the learners are actively involved in the work but the educational value of the work is doubtful as it involves coercion. This wrong practice therefore does not portray agricultural science in a progressive light.

On a separate note, agricultural science is viewed as a subject meant for males alone. Some schools have helped the learners to nurse this wrong notion to fruition by arranging the time-table in such a way that the learners study either agriculture or home economics at the same time. The Federal Republic of Nigeria<sup>92</sup> is also guilty of this. With this provision, it is always the practice at the junior secondary school level that boys study agricultural science and girls home economics. Another cog in the wheel of a successful implementation of agricultural science programme in our schools is the unwilling nature of some students from high socio-economic families to work on the farm because they feel that practical agricultural work is a menial job meant for the poor. As a result of this, they feel too big to get involved in practical agricultural work. Where demonstration plots are allocated to them for the practical aspect of the subject, they employ others to do the work for

them. Finally, there are instances where agricultural science teachers do not work instead, they take the students to the farm while they find a comfortable place to sit and watch the students work.

From the foregoing, it becomes glaring that much has to be done in the areas of teachers' supply, workshops and instructional materials. Owing to these inadequacies, the progressive curriculum is yet to be implemented. For this reason, science and technology education, the point of emphasis of Nigerian education, is portrayed as a mere teacher-centred activity devoid of the much talked about learners involvement proclaimed by the progressivists. It is for this that Ajeyalemi<sup>93</sup> rightfully sums up in Kosemani that:

It is a general belief that Nigerian universities have been producing more of "scientific historians" than "scientists", those who could only read and memorise scientific facts and principles and regurgitate these when needed but who could not think or use science.... Most of them need to be retrained by employers before they can operate even the simplest equipment.

True to this position, it is real that oil companies operating in Nigeria have established a training institution in Warri where Nigerian technicians are to be retrained before they could be fully employed in the oil industry.

The situation is not any better in technology education as it has to do with the application of scientific knowledge to provide solutions to practical problems. Where scientific principles are not grasped, they cannot be used in providing remedies to practical societal problems. Hence "the repair of automobiles, installation and maintenance of electrical and electronic appliances....are the exclusive preserve of roadside mechanics and

technicians and not the product of technical institutions”,<sup>94</sup>. Furthermore, “years after our refineries have been put in place, Nigerian engineers cannot do any major repairs on any of them”<sup>95</sup>.

Another problem arising from the failure to implement the progressive curriculum is unemployment. In fact many Nigerians have lost faith in schooling because their intention of going to the school is to obtain pre-requisite qualification for the kind of job and remuneration that they are interested in but behold, the reverse is the case. Bamidele<sup>96</sup> reveals that “only about 45 per cent of graduates nationwide are employed and mostly in jobs that have no direct relationship to their major fields of studies”. With a very huge army of unemployed graduates who must survive, various dubious survival strategies are worked out. By implementing them, society suffers the scourge of armed robbery, which has led to the lost of lives and property. Prostitution has done much in eroding the economy and stability of the family of the victims and most dangerously is its role as the major agent of distributing the notorious and deadly HIV/AIDS virus. The celebrated 419 is patronized by unemployed graduates. They are also neck deep into alcohol and drug addiction.

## **5.7 INVOLVING LEARNERS IN DISCIPLINE DECISIONS**

Indiscipline which is the opposite of discipline has been the bane of Nigerian society. In confirmation of this assertion, Wokocho<sup>97</sup> identifies the following as common practices in the body polity. General lack of courtesy on our highways, scrambling or even riotous behaviour at the airports and other

public places, lack of respect for law and order, the wish to get rich quickly by unscrupulous means, including fraud, cheating and exploitation of fellow citizens. When these are reversed, they give rise to discipline which according to Hirst and Peters<sup>98</sup> originates from the Latin word “disco” which means “I learn”. The underlying motive of discipline is submission to the rules that structure what is to be learnt. In relation to the school therefore, discipline is concerned with the ways that disruptive behaviours of the learners are checked in order to provide a general condition of orderliness for learning to take place.

Although philosophers are divided on how to maintain discipline in the school, they unanimously concur that discipline is necessary in the process of educating the learners. From the progressivists flank, Dewey moves that discipline should be imposed from within the individual and not from any person or thing outside him<sup>99</sup>. Continuing, Bowen<sup>100</sup> writes that Dewey’s “rejection of an external value-system imposed from above....was the cause of much church opposition to him”. By self-imposed discipline, it is meant that:

Conforming to rules or standards is accepted as either a means to doing something that one wants or something one considers desirable. Examples of self-discipline would be when an individual decides to submit to a diet and to regular exercise in order to keep healthy or when he learns German in order to enjoy himself abroad<sup>101</sup>.

From the above, one could infer that self-imposed discipline is educationally desirable because the submission to rules results from the learner’s resolution to do so and not for the fear of punishment or any form of sanctions from parents, teachers or friends. But having justified self-imposed

discipline as put forth by the progressivists, a question could be raised. Supposing the learner resolves to conform to the rules of stealing and/or fighting in the school? Since it is generally accepted that educational activities have to be desirable, it becomes unacceptable to submit that every action of the child – say stealing, is educationally valuable to the extent that he should not restrain himself from it.

What remains at stake is the extent to which Nigerian learners are involved in taking decisions related to disciplinary matters. This question is raised in the light of the prescription by the National Policy of Education<sup>102</sup> that “character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes” shall be vigorously pursued to the extent that the learners shall be found worthy in both learning and character on completion of their education. On the question of learner’s involvement in disciplinary decision taking, Wokocha<sup>103</sup> regrets that “the teachers often endorse the teacher-imposed type of discipline”.

Resulting from the above practice, no meaningful contribution is made by the learners in fashioning out the rules and regulations guiding their conduct in the school. Instead, they are compiled by the school authority and handed down to the learners for strict compliance. Adewole<sup>104</sup> states, that “at the university level, students’ agitations to be represented on senate or academic boards have not received favourable responses from the authorities”. In as much as we can always make a case for excluding learners in deciding on complex and sensitive disciplinary issues on the ground of their age and lack of expertise, they could be allowed to decide on other matters

considered to be appropriate to their level for example, making rules on how to keep the classroom clean or on how to maintain a minimum orderly condition in the classroom during lessons. Where the teachers and school authorities dominate in deciding on disciplinary matters in the school, indiscipline could result. Thus, when the teacher is out of sight, indiscipline acts like noise making, fighting, bullying, stealing and examination malpractice take over.

## **5.8 ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

Staunch progressivists like Rousseau and Dewey have often sponsored arguments on freedom. On the part of Rousseau, the rationale for his defence of freedom is hinged on the consideration that man was born free but that he is everywhere in chains. For this reason, Herbert<sup>105</sup> in Schofield opines that freedom should be granted to school children in the educational process. Where the school fails to do this, it leads to tyranny not education. Contingent upon this, “children in the Dewey school were given freedom”<sup>105</sup>. With the progressivists’ emphasis on freedom of the learner in education, it becomes pertinent to pause and ponder on what freedom is, before reflecting on how it can be applied to education in Nigeria.

### **5.8.1 The Concept of Freedom**

To say that somebody is free from something involves the absence of impediments. In line with this, Adewole<sup>107</sup> says that:

Freedom suggests a situation where a person has no constraint in doing what he considers worthwhile. A free person has full opportunities to act without someone else stopping him and with reference only to his wishes and desires.

From the above, freedom creates the notion of some kind of unlimited action because of the absence of a limiting factor to the extent that the individual does whatever pleases him without being debarred. If freedom means acting according to one's choice, the fear is that we are very close to the total annihilation of the society and consequently, marking the end of freedom for everyone. This is because if we are boundlessly free to act, we are at liberty to act wrongly even if it is at the expense of other society members who favour right action and have equal freedom to do so. Freedom in this direction wrongly justifies terrorism. This makes Popper to warn in his "paradox of freedom" that too much freedom leads to too little. Where people are allowed to do whatever pleases them, the strong impose arbitrary constraints on the weak. This gives rise to survival of the fittest.

Stemming from the demands of absolute freedom, Fromm<sup>109</sup> in Adewole has expressed his "fear of freedom" because it may give birth to deep seated psychological strains and insecurities that can cause man to fall back into more limited forms of life. Despite Fromm's "fear of freedom", he opines that regardless of the consideration of the psychological strains and insecurity that man develops as a result of freedom, it remains desirable that man should be free rather than slaves. Fromm's position though attractive attracts an objection. Since freedom entails choosing what one wants to do or be, what of a situation where one wants to be a slave? The argument is that since Fromm views freedom as something that is desirable despite its limitations, it should be the case that it is enjoyed by all men and slaves. After

all there are men slaves. However, while the progressivists claim that freedom goes with the complete absence of constraints, Peters<sup>108</sup> identifies two unescapable constraints namely, “the impediments of nature and the constraints of man”. Linking these impediments to the child’s academic performance in the school, it could be asserted that if a child’s academic attainment in the school is poor as a result of low mental ability, it could be said that his educational performance suffers as a result of natural constraint. If on the other hand, the child’s academic performance at school is poor because of impoverished environmental factors like poor family background, it could be said that his poor academic performance results from an artificial constraint.

In applying freedom to education, the progressivists have argued that freedom is a natural state and all that education should do is to desist from setting barriers against it. In Neil’s<sup>110</sup> Summerhill progressive school, “freedom is ....simply doing what you like” thus the child is “completely free to learn or not to learn”<sup>111</sup>. The significance of freedom schools lies in the consideration that they provide things that help in the improvement of the learners in such a way that no compulsory system can ever provide. The progressivists assert that the products of their schools are sincere, independent and have interest in people and things that no textbook or discipline in the world can provide. A free child is always a complete personality as against a disciplined child who is torn between a self and an imposed model. Neil<sup>112</sup> himself reports that:

For many years I have seen children from unfree schools come to freedom, poor, timid souls with artificial voices and artificial interests....if we want to see a happy cultured, sincere population, we shall have to demand that the child will be free.

It is on the basis of this that progressive education did not impose opinions, beliefs, tastes, politics or religion on their learners.

Although the progressive position on freedom is advocated and supported by great and influential names in education, it has to be accepted with great caution. Where school children are granted boundless freedom to the extent that the choice of whether to learn or not is left in their hands and they are also to do whatever they deem is right without a limiting factor, it could be problematic. In an amazing revelation of what progressive school children can do in exercise of an unimpeded freedom, Neil<sup>113</sup> writes that:

Lately, I have been dealing with a new girl who has been stealing. Each time she stole I gave her three pence reward she said: what a fool you are Neil I'll steal every day so as to get the three pence. And for three days she came and told me of her thefts, and she got her three-pence....I made it four pence on the third occasion because the theft was a bigger one than usual.

The immediate problem that arises from the above submission is the question as to whether stealing is such a worthwhile activity that could be encouraged in the process of educating young Nigerian children. In writing on Neil, Ash<sup>114</sup> says that "I remember him perfectly well. He was a madman". This shows that what children like doing are hardly in agreement with societal expectations and as a societal socializing agent, the school should seek to

promote societal norms where defensible instead of working against them as depicted in the case above.

Another problem with the granting of an unchecked freedom to the children is that it gives birth to chaotic situations in the classroom because while some children may not like to sit down on their seats, others may also prefer to make noise. A child from a progressive school confirms that “it was such a hell when the headmaster was not around because of the bullying that went on”<sup>115</sup>. For children to learn effectively, there has to be some order in the classroom without which the classroom would be reduced to no less than a tower of Babel all in the name of freedom. Where orderliness is absent in the classroom, the freedom of some children will be trampled upon. In such situations, education can hardly go on smoothly.

Relatedly, where a limitless freedom is granted to the children to interact with everything, they are most likely to engage in harmful activities. For instance, can we give children the freedom to use very sharp knives and liquid paraffin for experiment? Added to this, “horror comics and pornography do not adorn the shelves of our school libraries. Sexual experimentation is not encouraged”<sup>116</sup>. These control conditions suggest the need for necessary constraints on the freedom of the children.

The products of progressive schools are said to have interest in people and things which no textbook in the world can provide. It becomes of less wonder therefore that Rousseau condemned the use of textbooks in favour of direct interaction with the natural environment. Says Rousseau:

When I get rid of all the usual tasks of children in this way, I also get rid of the books which are the chief cause of unhappiness... Emile at the age of twelve will scarcely know what a book is<sup>117</sup>.

However, while it could be accepted that the process of education cannot be book work all through without giving way to practical work, it becomes ridiculous and completely out of place to say that books are outrightly irrelevant in the educational process of the child. This is because books contain vital information that can aid the understanding of the children. After all, Rousseau himself rose to fame through writing. If it were bad, why did he exert so much energy on it? Moreso, his progressive American counterpart Dewey was a prolific writer who had 40 books and 700 journal articles to his credit<sup>118</sup>.

On a final note, it is fair to comment briefly on the progressivists claim that they do not impose opinions, beliefs, tastes and religion on their learners. A close look at Neil's Summerhill Progressive School reveals that the children did not have complete freedom because certain things were imposed on them from the adult world, for instance the withholding of religion from the children. If the progressivists learners were not to be influenced by the opinions, beliefs, tastes and religion of others, Rousseau could not have placed Emile under a tutor because at whatever rate, the opinions and beliefs of Emile were shaped by his tutor.

By basing Nigerian education on the needs and interests of the child, as will soon be discussed, it equally follows that he is free at all times, to learn

only those things that interest him and when he likes. Thus, the choice of whether to learn something or not is his. This progressive position does not find application in the Nigerian educational system because where school children are allowed to choose whether or not to learn in the school, they may spend the whole day not learning anything. Consequently, for the whole school hours, the time-table specifies the type of learning activities to be undertaken. After school hours, the learners are supposed to have been allowed to undertake activities of their choice with minimal interference from the school but extra-curricula activities are spelt out for them. For instance, games, clubs and societies activities, preps and so on. This makes school life so regimented to the extent that the learner is fenced against making a free choice of activities at any point in time.

Other ways that the Nigerian learner's freedom is unprogressively curtailed in the school include practices where he operates within the confines of a list of school rules handed down to him by the school authority for strict compliance. The school prefects together with the senior students who serve as the agents for the enforcement of these rules and regulations also have theirs all of which must be obeyed. With the Nigerian teacher's role as task masters, they dominate all learning activities to the sad extent that no freedom of choice is left to the learner other than to follow the dictates of the teacher. This is in addition to the teacher's threats with cane and/or verbal abuses. Enoh<sup>119</sup> says that "just as the teacher's actions are controlled by the higher authority which he cannot influence, the learners are also forced to learn".

With this dispensation we cannot claim that the Nigerian child is free to do what he likes as in Summerhill.

The learner apart, the teacher is also supposed to enjoy academic freedom. Citing Lovejoy; Ruwa<sup>120</sup> quotes Kaka as defining academic freedom thus:

The freedom of the teacher or research worker in higher institutions of learning to investigate and discuss the problems of his science and to express his conclusions, whether through publication or in the instruction of students without interference from political or ecclesiastical authority, or from the administrative officials of the institution in which he is employed, unless his methods are found by qualified bodies of his own profession to be clearly incompetent or contrary to professional ethics.

Whereas arts and social science teachers are supposed to enjoy academic freedom, the above definition restricts it to only science teachers and research workers. In addition, the definition talks only about teachers and research workers in higher institutions of learning; What about those at the primary and secondary school levels of the Nigerian educational system? According to the National Policy of Education<sup>121</sup>, the areas of freedom for the institutions from where that of the teachers is drawn are to:

- (iii) teach, select areas of research; and
- (iv) determine the content of courses.

From the above, Nigerian teachers at all levels are free to undertake academic activities which could be teaching, conducting research, interpreting and publishing of one's findings. All these are to be done without interference

from anybody except where questionable methods are used. Do Nigerian teachers enjoy all these?

Analysing the concept of academic freedom with reference to Nigeria, Ruwa<sup>122</sup> points out that among the reasons for ASUU strikes in Nigeria is the demand for “academic freedom and university autonomy”. This has continuously strained the relationship between ASUU and the Federal Government. So, if academic freedom were enjoyed by the university teachers, there could have been no point to down tools for its sake. This trend continues down to the primary school level. Again, government has set up checks on the type of education to be given in learning institutions. We have the National Universities Commission (NUC), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and the National Primary Education and Nomadic Education (NCNE).

If the above parastatals are to set up minimum academic standard for the respective levels of Nigerian education, where is the freedom of the teacher to teach what he wants? Although no parastatal is responsible for secondary education the syllabii for both junior and senior secondary education are there to guide the teacher. Since the National Policy on Education recognizes teaching as a profession and one of the criteria of a profession is autonomy, the government has arbitrarily interfered with the exercise of this vital ingredient of teaching as a profession. This is indeed unprogressive.

### **5.8.2 Freedom of Expression and Association**

In our deliberation on students involvement in curricula, management and discipline decisions, consultation became an inevitable tool for their achievement. To consult without considering the freedom of expression and association will make little or no effect at all. It is in realization of this that the freedom of expression and association shall be discussed in relation to what is obtainable in the Nigerian educational system.

Where the freedom of expression and association are denied, Brahmeld<sup>123</sup> states that it is undemocratic. In his words, “freedom is genuine only when individuals working and living in groups are able to discuss and express their interests fully, continually, together. Any institution that blocks such interplay....is so far undemocratic”. Hinged on this, pupils, students or staff can state either verbal or in writing, the impact of school policies on them or their views on how the school should be run. These views could be expressed through bulletin boards, suggestion box and school magazine. Students can also form associations that will mount pressure on the school administration for the solution of their problems. These may include the press and current affairs club, literary and debating club, young farmers club, Mathematical students association and young Christian students. The staff could enroll as members of professional associations like the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU) and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) among others.

Although staff and students have various avenues to express and associate with themselves, it is quite sad to note that the school heads or even the government does not allow them free hand to operate. Where professional associations like COEASU and ASUU do not function within the whim and caprices of the government, one sanction or the other is imposed on them. Students' unionism is banned whenever students press hard on issues of public interest like kicking against the taking of International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan or when they do the same in pursuit of what is legitimately theirs. Even at the secondary school level, activities of clubs and societies suffer in the hands of the school authority who is skeptical about the functioning of clubs and societies. The press club for instance is always at loggerheads with the school authority if it carries any news item that exposes the weakness of the school authority. Worried about the ban of students' union activities, Adewole<sup>124</sup> writes that:

The practice whereby students' union activities are banned in some countries especially when the government has any problem with the students cannot ultimately prove helpful. Rather than ban students' union activities in such situations, efforts should be made by all concerned to facilitate responsible unionism. It should be realized that some of the time the fault is with the authorities, particularly in their failure to ensure a free flow of communication with the students.

While accepting that some of the time the fault is with the authorities, at the rest of the time, the fault resides with the students themselves. This is because of their conception of freedom as complete absence of constraints. Resulting from this nebulous conception of freedom, there have been chains

of indiscipline cases in our educational institutions. An instance is cultism, which could be wrongly interpreted as exercise of the freedom of association. Adewole<sup>125</sup> adds that “nowadays lecturers can and indeed have been seen to be beaten up by their students, or were lock-out by a few “free” students who in the process insult, harass and intimidate those who might not want to interpret freedom to that extent.

Other instances include “free” parents walking to the primary or secondary school to tell the teachers that they should employ labourers to cut the grasses around the school compound rather than their children doing it. There are also cases where “in tertiary institutions students have been observed to “freely” “carry guns in bags meant for books to the classroom”<sup>126</sup>. All these add up to suggest that when a case is being made for the students to freely express and associate with themselves, it should also be the case that they are to do all these without infringing on the freedom of others. The associations to be formed should be such that they are morally defensible and whose objectives agree with that of the school.

## **5.9 THE PURSUIT OF CHILDREN’S NEEDS AND INTERESTS**

Since the progressivists unanimously agree that education should be child centred, they also endorse that educational activities should be tailored round the needs and interests of the learners. In the same connection, Sarup<sup>127</sup> views progressive education as the mode of education where the child largely chooses activities according to his own needs and interests. This

implies that educational activities have to proceed from the needs and interests of the child. In what follows, a discussion on the needs of the child will be undertaken after which interest is examined.

### **5.9.1 Needs**

Hirst and Peters<sup>128</sup> explain that the concept of needs gives the impression of lack. Thus, if we say that a child needs something, it implies that he lacks that which he needs. To say therefore that a child needs a ruler or book implies that that child lacks a ruler or book. Since Hirst and Peters assert that the concept of needs only give an impression of lack then the lack of something does not convey the concise meaning of need because one can still need what he already possesses. Dearden<sup>129</sup> maintains that “the absence of a state of affairs does not create a need.” If a teacher says that a pupil needs to work harder for his forth-coming examinations, it could be the case that the teacher has noticed a lack of concentration or seriousness on the part of the pupil. On the contrary, it could also be that the motive of the teacher might be to improve his reputation as a teacher through the good result of the pupil. In making a need statement therefore, it has to be clarified as to who is it that is in need of something. In identifying the needs of the learners in education, certain criteria have to be met.

For anything to be considered as a child’s need, that thing conceived of has to be desirable. The determination of the desirability of a need rests squarely on the ethical consideration of what is needed. Consequently, the

desirability of a need could stem from a variety of sources. According to Hirst and Peters:<sup>130</sup>

In the case of biological needs like those for food and oxygen, it derives from the norm of survival which is, generally speaking, universally accepted as a desirable condition. In the case of universal psychological needs, like those for love and security, the norm assumed is that of some minimum level of functioning covered by the concept of mental health.

In continuation, Hirst and Peters<sup>131</sup> identify two more needs and provide justification of their desirability. They are:

Basic needs, such as for a bed, in which the norm is determined by the way of life of a particular society. Finally, there are functional needs such as that of a carpenter for a saw, or of a teacher for access to books, which depend upon the role or purpose of the individual in question.

Apart from the desirability criterion, it has to be added that the absence of that which is desirable will hamper the achievement of an educational goal. For instance, a child studying music that lacks certain basic musical instruments like piano and guitar is not likely to be a successful musician. A musical student therefore, needs a piano and a guitar. But if on the other hand the child is studying agricultural science, the absence of piano and guitar cannot affect his possibility of becoming a successful farmer, thus they do not constitute an area of need to him. In a way therefore, what is viewed to be an area of need has to be a relevant condition for achieving what the norm prescribes as in the case of a music student stated above.

In sum therefore, the needs of the child are categorized into biological, psychological, basic and functional. It is on these that the progressivists say that the child's education should be based upon. In line with this, the National Policy of Education<sup>132</sup> legislates that "universal Basic Education will be provided to all citizens of the country depending on their needs." The issue of universal basic education was treated under accessibility to education. Other areas of the child's needs specified by the National Policy of Education<sup>133</sup> include, the need for equal educational opportunity and the need for functional education. While the former was discussed under accessibility, the later has been deliberated upon under the involvement of learners in curriculum decisions. The pending task rests on needs.

If education is to be based on the needs of the children, we will surely be faced with the problem of its application because where a person wants something like food, he knows what he wants and can take necessary steps to get it but in the case of need, one may need education but he may not be aware of this need so as to take the necessary steps towards getting it. In consequence, a child may not want schooling whereas he may need education. For instance, "a young boy say from Anambra State (may) perceive his need to be to make quick money from trading rather than attendance at school"<sup>134</sup>. Even while in the school, this problem can show up because where children are for instance asked to participate in drawing up the school time table and to indicate break – times and the closing hour, they may not be indicating their needs but wants. Consequent upon this, the child may

want what he does not need and likewise, the teacher may implement the child's wants and not his needs.

Another problem associated with needs application is the crowdy nature of our schools. Since a class could have up to sixty children as against Rousseau's one child, one teacher recommendation, how then does the teacher arrive at a common need for the entire class? The dilemma is, if he chooses to work out the average needs of the whole class, it does not equate the average need of the child and if on the other hand he chooses the needs of a single child and apply to the whole class, it becomes impositional which progressivists have often frowned at.

By the desirability criterion of needs it is clear that what is needed has to be consistent with ethical considerations. If this be the case, can the immature primary school pupil distinguish between desirable and undesirable needs?

### **5.9.2 Biological Needs of the Child and Education**

The biological needs of the child encapsulates food, air, water proper temperature and the need for elimination<sup>135</sup>. As for air, it is clear that nature has provided abundant oxygen for each and every child to breathe free of charge. On that, the child's need is cheaply satisfied by nature. On water which although is also provided by nature, it requires human effort in its provision. To this, most Nigerian school children particularly in the rural areas have to drink from either the well or river. Proper temperature and the need for elimination have to be met through the provision of well ventilated

classrooms and toilets. As for ventilated classrooms, no much talk can be made on the Nigerian case because despite the renovation work carried on in Nigerian schools, most primary schools remain doorless and/or windowless. Sule<sup>136</sup> confirms that “most public school buildings are in very bad conditions of maintenance. Classrooms are without windows.” This exposes the learners to the harsh weather conditions of the rainy and dry seasons. For toilets, most schools do not have thus the learners have to ease themselves in nearby bushes.

On food, America the home of progressivism provides lunch to school children. Those that cannot pay are freely served. In Britain too, Baron<sup>137</sup> reports that school children who could not have attended school because of lack of food were served with meals in their schools. This helped in no small measure to boost attendance. In Nigeria, the same is not the case because school children in both the primary and secondary schools do not enjoy a free meal at all. Abenga<sup>138</sup> warns that “if children are not fed. . . they will not be successful in the school.” There is therefore the need for children to be well fed before going to the school, but since we have already established that most Nigerians are poor, it follows that hunger becomes their unwanted but unavoidable companion. Anzaku<sup>139</sup> reveals that the children of the poor “are the first to drop-out of school . . . as a result of malnourishment.” Those that persist may have to spend the school day on empty stomach. The effect of this is obvious – lack of concentration in the classroom.

When children have money to buy food from food sellers, Abenga<sup>140</sup> suggests that “only persons approved by the school who are certified to be medically fit, should sell food items to students.” This suggestion is yet to gain ground because most if not all food sellers in Nigerian schools do not seek the approval of the school authority even where they do, no medical certificate is demanded. Resulting from this, the sanitary condition of the food is in question. Less wonder therefore, that learners often suffer from inhygienic food related diseases like stomach ache and diarrhea. In boarding schools, Abenga<sup>140</sup> recommends that “students meals should be well prepared and there should be menu time-table in order to provide a balanced diet.” In actual practice, students eat any type of food they are served just to survive. The issue of balanced diet therefore does not arise. Since feeding problem stretches up to the tertiary institutions, Shika<sup>142</sup>, reports that “there was a violent demonstration by the students of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. The students complained of inadequate rice, chicken and milk and demanded that these items be increased.”

Apart from the child’s biological needs, the extent to which his functional needs are catered for will be discussed. The provision of functional needs has to do with the availability and free access to books, uniforms, biro, libraries, laboratories, workshops, and furniture. Dewey<sup>143</sup>, an arch progressivist commands that “free books and libraries should be provided to school children in the course of their schooling.” Countries like America and Britain have complied by providing free books and well equipped libraries,

laboratories and workshops. The National Policy of Education<sup>144</sup> documents that educational services among which are library, workshops and laboratories, shall be provided to Nigerian children. By extension, books shall be made available.

The policy statement on the provision of school libraries remains a mirage as far as most Nigerian Schools are concerned. It is nothing hidden to say that while most of our primary and secondary schools do not have school libraries, the few that have do not have essential books, current journals and other materials to make the library functional, thus such libraries are at best reading rooms. Giving more effect to this assertion, Odetoyinbo<sup>145</sup> states that “where libraries exists in our primary or secondary schools, obsolete books and magazines are stored under lock and key in the headmaster’s or principal’s office.”

Even the few libraries that are available, they are hit with the problem of acute shortage of school librarians. Resulting from this, headmasters or principals do use their initiative to appoint one of the school teachers as a librarian. In the first place, the teacher has no indept knowledge of how to manage the library. Secondly, where the post is imposed on him as it is always the case, he may not be interested in the work. Thirdly, the teacher-librarian is an academic staff who would have to discharge his primary function first that is teaching all his lessons and coupled with the shortage of teachers in the Nigerian school system, the teacher-librarian will surely suffer time constraint in attending to the library needs of the pupils or students. This

makes Ortyoyande<sup>146</sup> to painfully infer that “it is difficult to find useful libraries” in our primary and secondary schools. Despite the scantiness and irrelevance or even complete absence of library materials in our schools, some schools pitilessly extort money from the school children in the name of library fees.

Although note, exercise and text books together with biros and pencils are supposed to be provided free of charge, but contrarily, the prices of these educational essentials compete favourably with any other commodity in the Nigerian market. Not only this but there is general shortage of relevant textbooks. Ortyoyande<sup>147</sup> rightfully observes that “the greatest defect in Nigeria’s educational system is lack of textbooks.” This adds more to government’s inability to make good its promise of providing libraries to the schools.

For technical workshops, science laboratories and furniture, the situation is not any better than the one presented above on school libraries. Although well equipped laboratories are required by science teachers to make teaching real and enjoyable, they are no where to be found. Accepting this claim, Idowu<sup>148</sup> explains that “many schools and colleges do not have science laboratories.” The few that have may lack science equipment to make the laboratory function well. In the words of Akpan<sup>149</sup>, over 98% of secondary schools in this country lack science materials and so cannot carry out adequate practical lessons.” For this reason, most science laboratories particularly in the rural areas have been converted into other uses like classrooms, examination or assembly halls. In other cases, they are kept

under lock and key. With the absence of well equipped science laboratories Idowu<sup>150</sup> says that “the teaching-learning process is stalled and the overall development of the children within the school system is retarded and their learning potentials marred”.

Well-equipped technical workshops are hard to come by in Nigerian schools. For this reason, a building serves as multi-purpose or general hall, lecture theatre and workshop. As for the workshop equipment, they are mostly outdated. This is because they “are imported and most often due to administrative fraud, lack of knowledge coupled with inadequate purchasing power, only outdated tools are made available.”<sup>151</sup>. In schools that do not have workshops, these outdated equipment are kept outside in the crates used in importing them. At times, they are vandalized by thieves. For the importation of outdated equipment, we need no reminder that we cannot use yesterday’s tools for today’s education and still expect to be relevant tomorrow.

On furniture, Bowen<sup>152</sup> reports that Montessori’s children’s House, “was designed with smaller – scale furniture and cupboards” appropriate to the age and size of the children. This creates opportunity for free movement in the classroom, as against the traditional practice where desks were permanently nailed to the floor. In Nigeria Haggai and Mallum<sup>153</sup> state that “over 70% of seats in secondary schools were made by the PTA. In addition, some schools charge furniture levy to enable them make seats for the students.” Despite these efforts it is common place to see pupils or students sitting on the floor.

Worrisome enough, even the floor on which some of the learners sit on are scrapped. This situation is not peculiar only to the primary and secondary school levels but it extends up to the university level because some university students would have to hang on the windows or peep through the windows to catch a glimpse of what is going on in the lecture hall. In severe cases, they stand outside. All these could not be that there are sufficient seats in the classrooms or lecture halls.

On the maintenance of good health, Harkavy<sup>154</sup> has this to say:

healthcare and the provision of . . . playgrounds . . . instruction in the care of teeth and in proper ventilation become important elementary school subjects. Demands for more sanitary school buildings in an environment where sanitary conditions were deplorable appeared frequently.

It is on the basis of this that America provided free healthcare services to all primary school pupils. In doing this, the school health services embark on periodic medical check up of both staff and school children in order to dictate common departure from normal health. Through the check up too, communicable disease and emergency health cases are identified and treated. Health counseling is also provided for the staff and school children.

Like in America, the healthcare of the school children in Britain is progressively catered for, Baron<sup>155</sup> succinctly clarifies that the health services act made it mandatory for the Local Education Authority to arrange for a thorough medical inspection and treatment of health defects found in school children. It is also to provide the school with well ventilated, spacious and clean classrooms. The following are also to be provided for the schools;

“gymnasia and swimming baths, adequate playground space and playing fields”<sup>156</sup>.

From the Nigerian perspective, it is recommended that “a national health scheme” shall be put in place<sup>157</sup>. Apart from this brief pronouncement, no further details are offered on what the health scheme shall consist in. All the same, the assumption is that the national health scheme shall cater for the health needs of Nigerian school children without money being charged for the services rendered. On the basis of the above provision, it is sad to note that many schools do not have even a common first aid box not to talk of a school clinic. Even where there is a school clinic, drugs are always out of stock. Where drugs are available, the pupils or students are charged for the treatment which they received. In another way, the students pay for their treatment even where there is none, through the payment of medical fees. Bagudo<sup>158</sup> identifies one of the major crisis areas of Nigerian education as the inadequacy of “health and health related facilities.”

On children’s psychological needs for love and security, the head of the institution and the teachers are charged with this responsibility. According to Abenga<sup>159</sup>, children need security and the principal should provide it. He should be fair and honest in dealing with them for injustice kills their sense of security.” For the teacher, he should be friendly in his disposition. On the question of how small children particularly learn under a psychologically relaxed environment, Hirst and Peters<sup>160</sup> say that:

She (the teacher) behaves towards them like a mother towards her family . . . A teacher is not just treating children as individuals. . . she is also very much concerned, as part of her role, with their welfare as individuals. She is meant to be warm . . . to concern herself with all their 'personal' worries and delights, . . . she stands much more manifestly in loco parentis than does a teacher.

The achievement of this is very difficult in Nigeria because it is always the practice that Nigerian classrooms are a forest of children sometimes up to 100, how then can the teacher identify with their personal worries and delights. Consequently, most Nigerian teachers are always concerned with only how they can teach their subject in a way that the learners will understand them. Where on the other hand the learners move closer to their teachers with their personal problem, for example, with some amount of money for safe keeping it has always resulted in something different because the money may not be readily available when the child needs it. It has always been a problem when female learners go to share their personal problems with male teachers because she may end up being put in the family way. The honesty of both the school head and the teachers in treating the learners equally in order to boost the confidence of the learners is questionable where school heads could promote a learner slated for repetition or probation. On their own part, teachers could inflate or fabricate continuous assessment or examination marks for learners that are related to them in one way or the other. For all these, Kalusi<sup>161</sup> concludes the discussion in this sub-section by saying that Nigerian education is "divorced from . . . the needs of majority of the students."

### **5.9.3 Children's Interest in the Educational Process**

The issue of interest of the learner in education has been and is still a concern of the progressivists. For this, Wilson<sup>162</sup> asserts that the statement “children learn through interest is among the first which a student is likely to hear in his college of education course.” But first of all, the question is what does the concept “interest” consist in? To the question, Wilson’s<sup>163</sup> response is that no one may seem sure of the answer because such a question could only attract an array of things that are thought to be the interest of the children like play and talking but “what interest itself is or what sort of family of words it belongs to remains elusive”<sup>164</sup>. Because of its capability of multiple meanings, the concept interest is ambiguous. Thus, Peters<sup>165</sup> categorises the meaning of interest into two namely, psychological and normative and it is on this that what follows will depend.

### **5.9.4 The Psychological Meaning of Interest**

Interest in the psychological sense refers to those things which children are disposed to attend or take notice of. This implies that children’s interest are portrayed in activities that they find joy or pleasure in doing. It is in line with this that Dewey<sup>166</sup> contends that to be interested in something means “to be absorbed in, wrapped up in, carried away by some objects. To take an interest is to be on the alert, to care about, to be attractive.” In the same vein, Wilson quotes White<sup>167</sup> as claiming that:

To feel interested to it; to feel inclined to give attention to it. Naturally, it also involves feeling disinclined to attend to other things, and feeling vexed, unhappy and uncomfortable, where prevented from giving attention.

When a child is interested in a thing, he becomes very attentive and absorbed or lost in it. The presence of interest therefore helps in no small measure to maximize the likelihood of the child's concentration to learn what interests him even when it proves difficult. Wilson<sup>168</sup> confirms that "when what he (the child) is interested in proves difficult or problematic, he will put forth and sustain not just his greatest but also his best possible effort to master its difficulties."

From the psychological meaning of interest above, it becomes clear that where children's interest coincides with what is of educational value, consideration has to be given to them because they actually go a long way in facilitating learning. In promoting progressive educational ideals "interest should determine (the) individual's direction in education" in Nigeria<sup>169</sup>.

The problem that is bound to arise from basing education on children's interest is the diversity of childrens' interests. Since school children have many and varied interests, how does the teacher identify them and collect the resources that are relevant to those interests? If the teacher is to ask the children what their interests are, Wilson<sup>170</sup> expresses doubt on their competency to answer the question as he says that children can not "just say what their interests are" thus, when such questions are raised, the children may not even understand it. It is on this note that Wilson<sup>171</sup> again confidently infers that "it is certainly a fundamental error . . . to suppose that children can simply tell their teachers what their interest are."

Leaving the child alone, if on the other hand, the teacher proposes on his own what he thinks constitutes children's interests, how does he know that his proposition genuinely represent their interests? This is because by mere looking at the child on the face, we can hardly diagnose his interest. Moreso, since children's interests are diverse and in a class of 30 children. Some may be interested in music while others in play, reading and bullying; how then does the teacher cater for these interests simultaneously?

One other problem associated with basing education on children's interest is that while some of the interests of children promote learning, others are antithetical to education. Alaezi<sup>172</sup> for instance states that Nigerian children and of course all children are interested in play and that "a normal Nigerian child plays at any given moment." In playing, children try to imitate others in the adult world like father, mother, teacher, nurse and farmer among others. Children could also play with objects found in their environment like sand, genea-corn stalk, water, clay, empty tins and cartons. Children are also involved in displaying their physical agilities through play like in skipping, climbing and chasing.

If it is the case that play dominates the life of children, the question is, are all plays educational? What of situations where children engage in indiscriminate stone throwing at each other? Peters<sup>173</sup> submits that play has no educational value because "the person who plays does not regard his activity as being serious." Education is a purposeful activity but in children's play, there is no clearly defined purpose. This must have induced Peters<sup>174</sup>

assertion that “it is doubtful whether much of substantial educational value could be learned by a process of unconscious “picking up” during play activities.”

Still on educationally worthless activities that children enlist interest in, Wilson<sup>175</sup> asks, “what about such childishly interested activities . . . as biting one’s nails.” It is obvious that some children show great interest in it and as it is said, children learn best what interests them. This implies that children will take great pains and make frantic effort at ensuring that they bite their finger nails very well. But, if there is no educational value in an activity such as “biting one’s nail or finger, what sense does it make to say that children do it best”<sup>176</sup>. Other educationally worthless activities that children are interested in include stealing, bullying, cheating, lying, fighting and pinching others in the classroom. It therefore becomes clear that if Nigerian children and by extension the generality of children are left to do whatever interests them, it becomes obvious that all they will be doing will not be of significant educational value.

On the problem of children showing educationally undesirable interest as claimed above, hard-core progressivists of Rousseau’s breed will always counter that children are in point of fact, by nature good and that it is the society that corrupts them. What this implies is that children if left on their own will always, develop and show good interest. Writing on Rousseau, Boyd<sup>177</sup> reveals that:

Rousseau claimed that the child's nature is intrinsically good and that contrary to the Christian doctrine of original sin, there is no evil present in the new born child. As the opening lines of Emile proclaim: Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the maker of the world but degenerates once it gets into the hands of men.

The weakness of Rousseau and his disciples' argument could be easily spotted at a glance because if children were by nature good but corrupted by men, the question is, who corrupted the first man on earth?

### **5.9.5 Normative Interest**

Owing to the inadequacies inherent in the psychological meaning of interest, a normative meaning has been proposed. In it, interest has to take into cognizance the worthwhileness of the object of interest to the extent that it yields some benefits to the individual. This implies that interest is developed in only those things that will be useful to him in the future. For this consideration, normative interest is instrumental in nature because the object of interest might not capture the psychological interest of the child but for the consideration of the benefit there-in, the child is left with no option than to develop interest in it. Consequently, normative interest refers to something being in one's interest and not that one is interested in it.

To say that something is in the child's interest is quite different from saying that the child is interested in the thing. This is because what is in the child's interest involves some instrumental consideration. It specifies some lines of action that will promote an end. Resultantly, a child may not be genuinely interested in what is in his interest, but because the object is a

requisite for what he is interested in, he is bound to develop interest in it. In the words of Dawet:<sup>178</sup>

A student might be interested in studying engineering in the university and may not have the likeness for mathematics. Such a child could pay attention and somehow be 'interested' in mathematics because he has to pass it before he is admitted into the university to study engineering. This is the case of interest being developed in something because of the worthwhileness of the object, a pass in mathematics is required or is instrumental to his gaining admission into the university to pursue his felt interest.

The consideration here is therefore what would be beneficial to the learner or child. The normative meaning of interest therefore does not simply refer to what will be to the learner's interest only rather, it also refers to what in a sense, a community of adults have judged to be beneficial to the child either presently or in the future. A teacher for instance, who belongs to the adult community and who is concerned with what is in the interest of his learners will in this direction cater for their welfare and protect them against any obstacle that will constitute a bottleneck in the achievement of what is beneficial to them. Dawet<sup>179</sup> avers that "a teacher so concerned with pupils' valuative interest has the responsibility of making moral decisions and suggesting courses of action which he insists on as being in the child's interest."

The above submission implies that the content of education is a thing that is too important to be based only on the interest of the learners. Hence, adults have to consider beforehand what will be of children's interest and make them to study it. This no doubt informs the position of the then federal Commissioner of Education in his opening address during the National

Curriculum Conference in 1969 which ultimately gave rise to the National Policy on Education as cited by Adewole<sup>180</sup> that “the socio-economic needs, values aspirations and development of our society” should be considered in the course of the conference. This suggests that education should be based on societal interests. It is hinged on the above that Nigeria as other nations desirous of development believes that education holds the key thus societal needs and interests are supposed to be met through education.

The priority area in Nigerian education as earlier on identified by the National Policy of Education<sup>181</sup> is the sciences thus “not less than 60% of places shall be allocated to science and science oriented courses in the conventional universities. On how Nigeria has fared in the implementation of the above policy statement, Adewole<sup>182</sup> uses university of Jos as a case in point to provide a hint on university admissions in the sciences for the 1989/1990, 1993/1994 and 1997/1998 sessions as he writes that:

In 1989/1990 session, 315 places were allocated to the faculty of Natural Sciences . . . only 37 or 11.4% of all the applicants into the six departments of the faculty made the pass mark of 200 and above in the Universities Matriculation Examination (U.M.E). In 1993/1994 too, although 160 places were allocated to science education programmes, only 5 candidates scored 200 and above in the U.M.E . . . For the admission exercise in respect of 1997/1998, although a total of 119 places were allocated to the core programmes of Botany, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics and Zoology in the faculty of Natural Sciences . . . only 6 candidates scored 200 and above in the U.M.E.

From the University of Jos example, the same or similar admission situations should be the case in other Nigerian Universities. Although various

reasons have been adduced for Nigeria's backwardness in science, ranging from teacher, government and administration factors, a fundamental cause of this ugly situation is the students factor namely, their lack of interest in the sciences. They take to sciences to please others and not themselves. This depicts the danger of the unprogressive practice where what the society thinks is its needs or priorities, is imposed on the learners. As earlier on stated, whatever interests the child he will try to learn it despite its difficulty.

The next problem with normative interest is that it introduces instrumental consideration in education. That is, it assumes a certain end which the learner is to be modeled for, for instance, science for technological or industrial development. The belief being that the form in which they would be modeled would be in the interest of the society. This however, implies that the learners are used as means to an end and not ends in themselves. Apart from arbitrarily using the individual to achieve societal objectives, there can be the problem of individuals who can not be modeled in the fashion which the society cherishes. Such people, the society would label educational failures and consequently societal misfits. Their efforts at contributing to national development is frustrated thus, they are prone to engage in the perpetration of societal vices as strategies for survival.

On the basis of the above, the inability of the individual to acquire the desirable education prescribed by the society might not be his fault. This is because Nigeria is a class society and if by accident of birth, a child is born in a deprived home of a third class parent, it may not be possible for him to

develop his innate abilities in such priority areas while on the other hand, children from rich families will be unduly favoured because of their rich educational environment. This makes the situation far from being fair.

Finally, to tailor education in consonance with national priorities is tantamount to working towards social conformity which Adewole<sup>183</sup> dismisses as worthless. According to him, education:

Should aim at autonomy rather than social control. A conception of education as something that involves the development of capacities of rational thought and critical approval could be argued to be intrinsic to the notion of education rather than an extrinsic requirement of a particular society.

In sum therefore, of the two notions of interest psychological and normative, none could be directly applied to education without some form of modification. Having done that, interest when applied to education serves a motivational purpose because it does much in moving the child to learn. In acceptance of this assertion, Adewole<sup>184</sup> says that “interest serves as a source of motivation to learning.” In consequence, once a child is interested in an educational activity, more effort will be channeled towards learning. So, for a child to learn effectively, he has to be interested in what is to be learnt.

#### **5.10 PUNISHMENT AND PROGRESSIVISM**

Grambs in Jimoh<sup>185</sup> views punishment as “chastisement inflicted on the body in order to cause physical pain or suffering, usually with the professed purpose of modifying behaviour.” This definition is restrictive because its emphasis is only on physical pain leaving out psychological pains. Again, the purpose of punishment is not only for behaviour modification but for

deterrence and sometimes retributive purposes too. Peters<sup>186</sup> advances a more comprehensive definition of punishment as “the intentional infliction of pain or something unpleasant on someone who has committed such a breach of rules.” The definition is silent on the administrator of the punishment. For a phenomenon to be referred to as punishment, the following have to be present.

1. Intentional infliction of some pain or some kind of unpleasantness.
2. The infliction of the pain whether physical or psychological, must be on an offender as a result of a breach of rules.
3. Punishment must be administered by someone in authority.

The position of the progressivists on punishment is undoubtedly negative. Even where attempts are made at justifying it on the grounds of reformation and deterrence, such justifications are countered because criminals are punished yet they commit the same offence or they are not in any way changed for better. Neil<sup>187</sup> says that he has often heard the mournful story that I have punished my child but he has grown worse and worse and not becoming a good boy. He then concludes that “the punished child does grow worst. What’s more, he grows into a punishing father or punishing mother, and the cycle of hate goes on through the years.” It is on this score that the progressivists say that the learner should not be punished because to inflict pain of any kind on an individual is evil, thus punishment is mischievous as it involves the infliction of pains. Furthermore, Neil<sup>188</sup> posits that to punish for disobedience is reserved for nature or the omnipotent Almighty. When a

teacher or anybody punishes, he is exercising an illegal authority because he is not the right person to punish.

In Rousseau's view, when a Child does wrong, he should not be punished by the teacher or any person in authority instead, the offender should be left to suffer the natural consequence of his misbehaviour. It was on the basis of this that when Emile broke the glasses of his bedroom window, he was not punished by his tutor but by night cold. "Let the child's punishment spring from his action"<sup>189</sup>. In upholding this position in Germany, "a teacher who strikes a pupil is tried for assault and generally punished"<sup>190</sup>.

Rousseau's doctrine of natural consequence brings to mind the doubt of this approach to control young children's behaviour. Is it true for instance that children will always suffer in some way as a result of their wrong deed? Supposing a child steals some money from his classmates, what natural punishment can he serve? Even where it is possible for nature to punish all wrong deeds, will the punishment be commensurate with the offence? On the broken window glasses, Emile must have in a way been forced to sleep in the bedroom which is unnatural because left alone, he could have chosen to sleep else where; in that case too, he would have escaped the natural punishment. Supposing a snake or a wild animal crept through the broken window and kill Emile? Could the punishment not have been too much for the offence?

In Peter's<sup>191</sup> analysis of punishment, he concludes that;

The truth of the matter is that punishment in a school is at best a necessary nuisance . . . (because) education can not go on unless minimum conditions of order obtains and punishment may on occasions be necessary in order to ensure such conditions.

In succumbing to this stand-point, the progressivists still insists that on occasions where punishment becomes inevitable, the offender's opinion has to be seeked as to whether or not he wants to serve the punishment. Where he refuses, he should not be forced to serve the punishment. If he agrees, a step could be taken further into agreeing on the type of punishment that he wants to serve. If punishment is meant to inflict pain on the offender then this can not be met because no child will choose to suffer pain or something unpleasant.

Although the progressivists abhor punishment but Neil<sup>192</sup> reports that "one day, a boy borrowed my best saw. The next day I found it lying in the rain, I told him that I would not lend him that saw again." This is a clear case of punishment because by carelessly leaving the saw outside in the rain, the child has committed an offence. By refusing to lend the child the saw again, something unpleasant is inflicted on him. As the child's teacher, Neil is an authority.

In the Nigerian context, Omatseye<sup>193</sup> counsels that "in every case, a positive attitude towards a child and persuasion ought to be given prominence and not coercion." This implies that the teacher is not supposed to punish the learner even where he goes wrong because as already discussed, punishment cannot stamp out undesirable behaviour in school children. Punishment also

down grades the personality of the child. For these reasons, Omatseye<sup>194</sup> contends that: “A teacher who feels compelled to carry a stick in order to maintain discipline ought to re-examine his personal values and power of persuasion to determine whether all is well with him”. Impliedly, what is expected is an incessant persuasion of the child to do good instead of the use of coercion in any form because it only promotes the culture of violence. In order to curb indiscipline in our schools therefore, there should be shift from punitive measures like threats, abuses, corporal punishment, suspension and expulsion.

Despite the unproductive consequences of punishment, it remains a common practice in Nigerian schools. In 1977 for instance, an official recognition was granted punishment when soldiers were deployed to secondary schools to administer punishment particularly corporal punishment. By this practice, the government has forgotten that military discipline is not the same with school discipline. Impliedly, military discipline cannot be one of the aims of Nigerian education. In recent times too, Wokocha<sup>195</sup> confirms that as disciplinary measure in schools, “corporal punishment exists.” He lists other forms of punishment administered in Nigerian schools as “depriving either a child, a group or the whole class of recreational time, isolation of individual offenders, sending away culprits from the classroom and referring children to the Head teacher for punishment.” Added to the above list are knelling down, denial of responsibility, breaking of stones, hewing of fire wood, fetching of sand or water and working on the school farm.

### **5.11 COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND PROGRESSIVISM VIS-À-VIS NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE**

In view of the avowed significance of education in the development of nations, Akpotu<sup>196</sup> infers that it is education that holds the key to “social and economic progress and political stability of nations.” To the individual, education provides: “better opportunities . . . for a higher income in adult life, decreased poverty, reduced criminal activity, greater political participation, better health and increased life expectancy. Lower fertility rates . . . and lower dependence on social support”<sup>197</sup>.

It is on the basis of the above consideration that the progressivists successfully persuaded legislators to pass compulsory education laws. The outcome being that “all children below a certain age were required to attend school and above that age were to continue education”<sup>198</sup>. Fawehinmi<sup>199</sup> reveals that by 1973, of the 35 North American countries, all except one enjoyed compulsory education. Quoting the British Education Act, Adewole<sup>200</sup> states that parents must send their children who are of school age to the school. Parents who default are normally charged to court. In Nigeria however, the National Policy of Education<sup>201</sup> has it that both primary and junior secondary schools shall be compulsory for Nigerian children who are of school age.

The call for compulsory education by the progressivists and its subsequent implementation by various countries of the world amounts to a contradiction of the freedom of the learners earlier on advocated by the same

progressivists. If the government considers itself to be the protector of the rights of children by which it justifies making education compulsory, this is commendable but as it were, it should be done in consultation with the children. Where the government single handedly imposes the compulsion law, it becomes unprogressive.

On the implementation of compulsory education in Nigeria it could be said that like free primary education, the compulsory component ends up in policy documents that are yet to be practically implemented. The reason is that it remains a common thing to see children of school age hawking various things on the streets during school hours. In addition, some children are also trapped in occupations like cattle rearing, fishing, farming, blacksmithing and trading during school hours. This shows that primary and junior secondary schools are not compulsory because none of the parents of the hawking children has ever been prosecuted. Because education is not compulsory, "Nigeria with a population of about 88 million is expected to have school aged children of 22 million (i.e 25%) . . . (but) the actual number of children in primary schools is 14.91 million"<sup>202</sup>. This of course is in addition to lots more children that have dropped out of primary schools. What then could be responsible for all these?

First, because of the prevailing unemployment saga, a parent might want his child to learn occupations like carpentry, brick-laying or road-side mechanic. This in the parent's thinking would be of more use because of the practical value that could be derived compared to sending the child to the

school which normally take longer time at the end of which no harvest may be yielded. In upholding this position, Adewole<sup>203</sup> writes that:

A parent may opt out of education for his child. He may, for instance believe, rightly or wrongly, that the worth of education lies in its potentialities to enable its beneficiaries secure well paid jobs, and related benefits. He may also look round and have reason to believe that the education system only succeeds in breeding unemployable people. Such a parent might also feel he has a duty to prepare his child for a future gainful employment and which he cannot see education as capable of guaranteeing.

Ignorance can also cause a parent to withhold his child from primary education and the subsequent levels that build on it. Quoting Helvetius<sup>204</sup>, Adewole asserts that parents who are ignorant of the value of education believe that “children are born ignorant, not stupid: it is (formal) education that makes them stupid.” Where children are ignorant and have no knowledge as provided for by formal educational institutions, they remain happier. Formal education opens the eye of children’s mind to the numerous problems surrounding them for instance diseases, poverty and insecurity among others. All these will ginger them to do things that will surely disrupt their happiness. In further promotion of the virtue of ignorance, Enoh<sup>205</sup> has this to say:

The idea that (formal) education is essential for technological progress can be severely debunked when it is argued that it was not men of education that ushered in industrial revolution. Socially, education may be seen as a major cause of social instability rather than one of progress. Economically, particularly in capitalist societies, the so called economic benefits of education are limited to the capitalists few as the very structure of the economic set-up worsens rather than solve the problem of unemployment.

Added to the above argument, Rousseau traced the decline and fall of ancient people to the growth of knowledge and argues that “the days of their poverty, simplicity and ignorance were also the days of their strength, their happiness and their innocence”<sup>206</sup>.

Some parents may wish that their children stay out of school because of religious considerations. If as it is that everybody is granted freedom of worship and his mode of worship does not conform with the way that school children dress to the school, such a parent may withhold his child from attending school. Again, a parent’s religion may urge him to give his daughter out in marriage at puberty. Will he then refuse to adhere to the teaching of his religion? Supposing too that through the religious influence of a parent, the school is viewed as a nursery of immorality, can he still send his child to such a morally permissive institution against his religious conviction?

## **5.12 PROGRESSIVISM AND TEACHING METHODOLOGY**

In discussing progressivists teaching strategies and how Nigerian education has fared in its implementation, it could be noted that teaching methods are worked out only when the nature of the learner is known. It is for this consideration that an exposition on who the learner is shall be considered first. This will be closely followed by the role of the progressive teacher. Having done all these, we will then turn to discuss the progressivists teaching methodologies.

### **5.12.1 Nature of the Learner**

The nature of the learner in the progressivists fashion is based on the conception of learning as a process of growth. The concept of growth finds application in many fields of man's endeavour even without the progressivists mention of it. Consequently, there have been talks of economic and educational growth among others. From whichever, perspective growth is visualised, a common string runs through them namely, a sequence of change where the growing thing increases in size or the differentiation of function in a particular direction.

The progressivist strongly advocate for the consideration of education as the process of growth in which they rightly view the growth of the child as entirely a thing to be done by him and not by his teacher, parents or friends. Since it is the child that does the growth himself, it presupposes that growth is not transferable thus the stress by the progressivists that "all education is self-education"<sup>207</sup>. Continuing, Dearden<sup>208</sup> identifies Rousseau as the first educational thinker to view education as a process of growth when he worked out the child's developmental stages and tailored appropriate educational activities round each of the stages of development.

Pestalozzi and Freobel conceive the process of educating the child as the biological unfolding of the inner potentialities of the child. Expressing Freobel's position, Akinpelu<sup>209</sup> says that he sees the child as: "a seed, the seed is an entity by itself, but yet contains the germs of full development into a

huge plant according to its type; so also the child has the capacity of growing into full manhood”.

The position of the progressivists on the nature of the learner is their general acceptance that education as a process of growth conveys the message of a model of educational situation in which everything required for the process of education is readily available in the child and what is left is just for the learner to be stimulated and provided with the right type of external condition to unfold and develop. Weber<sup>210</sup> in squire sums that:

The child is an active, growing, learning being. Following the tradition of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel, this premise supplied the basis for the widespread request for “child-centered education” in which an actively self-directed learning process dictated both the learning and teaching role.

With the above exposition on the nature of the learner championed by the progressivists, the following comments are meant to expose the futility of their effort. It could be observed that it is not right to equate children with plants as the progressivists did. This is because, “human beings are not like plants”<sup>211</sup>. In addition, if the process of education is a natural one as the progressivists posit then, the teacher has no role to play at all. The child is also supposed to just sit down and watch how nature will develop him educationally because an attempt to do something makes the development unnatural. Moreso, the question could be asked on what happens in situations where children change their interests for instance from play to bullying? Can this be said to be a change of nature?

The claim of the progressives that all education is self-education is also an exaggeration. In the educational process, some agents have to come into play before the child learns. For instance, children could learn through their play objects with their peers and also through imitating some aspects of adult behaviour. In addition, there are some aspects of the child's learning that needs direction from the teacher, parents and peers. For instance, no matter how educationally stimulating a child's environment is arranged, he must be taught how to read and write. Now that he requires certain abilities, attitudes and skills from his parents, peers and teachers and other community members in the process of his education, can we then say that the child learns all that he ought to learn by himself without the assistance of others or, can we categorise all these as self learning?

Nigerian education accepts the progressivists conception of the learner as one who possesses the intelligence to guide his learning because the National Policy of Education<sup>212</sup> says that the Nigerian educational system will be arranged in a way that it develops the practice of self learning. The present situation in Nigerian schools reveal that self learning is not encouraged. This is because in promoting self-learning, provision has to be made for an enabling environment where there are sufficient materials for the learners to interact with but the dearth of these have already been decried when examining same in the free education programme of the nation.

### **5.12.2 The Role of the Progressive Teacher**

Since progressive education places the child at the center of all educational activities, the role of the teacher is reduced to setting up of the learning environment in which self directed learning can take place. The teacher at this dispensation is a facilitator of learning who influences the learning of his learners from behind. According to Montessori<sup>213</sup>, “the teacher is not in any strict sense a ‘teacher’, rather . . . a director of learning experiences.” Presenting the views of Pestalozzi on the role of the teacher which both Rousseau and Froebel also accept, Akinpelu<sup>214</sup> writes that “the teacher . . . provides the resources for learning’ lays them for the child to choose and explore.”

The progressivist teacher is therefore first and foremost, an observer who watches out the signs of readiness in the child. This negates the practice in Nigeria where the teachers lack the patience to wait for the child to get ready for learning. The progressivists view with affection, the nexus “between education” and “educere” rather than “educare” thereby moulding the concepts towards “leading out” rather than “stamping in”<sup>215</sup>. What the teacher does therefore depends solely on the lead which the growing child gives him to follow. The teacher is like a gardener as Kay<sup>216</sup> writes in Dearden that “a classroom is a garden of children and the green – fingered teacher who knows their needs at every crucial stage can watch them grow and blossom.”

The progressivists comparison of the role of the teacher with the green fingered gardener is faulty. Though the expectation is that plants would

always grow straight but sometimes some do bend in the wrong direction. Its growth has to be redirected by the gardener. In the same vein, the teacher as a teacher can not just sit down, fold his arms and watch his learners grow in a negative direction even if he is just a care-taker.

Following from the above, the ability of the teacher to know the needs of all the children at every stage is greatly questionable. While discussing needs of the learners, it was established that one of the practical difficulties in its application is the inability of the teacher to know the diverse needs of the learners. Finally, the guiding role of the teacher has to be defined otherwise it will degenerate into a state where he absconds from his legitimate functions as a teacher, thus becoming *laissez fiare*. This will make learning unproductive.

Since the National Policy of Education<sup>217</sup> emphasises the use of teaching methods that are practical and exploratory in nature, the role of the Nigerian teacher becomes like that of the progressivists type because it is silent; with the activities of the learners being more pronounced. In point of fact, this is just in theory because in real practice, the Nigerian teacher has not changed much from the colonial days teachers who occupied the central stage in the teaching/learning process. Lecture method of teaching, the chief promoter of teacher dominance is still very much in practice in Nigerian educational institutions.

Owing to the significant role of the teacher, the National Policy of Education<sup>218</sup> prescribes that “specialist teachers of particular subjects such as

Mathematics, Science, Physical Education, Language, Arts (in relation to English & Nigerian languages) Music, Fine Arts and Home Economics” will be provided. The government’s effort at providing specialist teachers in these areas of academic endeavour is commendable but the question is, what of other primary school subjects like Social Studies, Religious Studies and Agriculture? Even with the pronouncement of the policy document, it is visibly clear that there is an inadequate supply of specialist teachers in the identified areas. In science teaching, Sule<sup>221</sup> reports that “most primary schools across the country are lacking in trained teachers . . . for its (science) teaching. Physical Education Sule<sup>222</sup> reveals “has been hampered by the lack of qualified teachers.” The problem of teachers in the languages is no exception because of “the dearth of teachers in these major languages”<sup>223</sup>. In consequence, “the general trend in the primary school now is for a teacher to teach all subjects in his class”<sup>219</sup>. This Kiebel<sup>220</sup> contains, makes some mathematics teachers to skip such topics as “decimals, fractions, shapes and angles” because they are difficult.

Reflecting on the possible causes of the lack of teachers in our schools, Enoh<sup>224</sup> posits that “most state governments since the inception of democratic rule in 1999, have not employed a single teacher in their secondary schools.” The same goes down to the local government authorities. Worse still, whenever shortfalls are experienced in educational expenditure, “the first visible expression is the termination of teaching appointments”<sup>225</sup>. As if these are not enough, teachers particularly at the primary and secondary school

levels are further frustrated through undue delays in the payment of their monthly salaries, stoppage of annual increments and even promotions. All these add up to give them a poor public image.

For the above consideration, secondary school learners who have good results will wish to study courses that will launch them into other professions than teaching. It is only when most students cannot make up the entry requirements into other professions that they fall back on education as a last resort. On completion of their study, it becomes evident that they will not put in their best in teaching even as they wait for the slightest opportunity to sneak out of teaching.

### **5.12.3 Progressive Teaching Methods**

Contingent upon the nature of the learner and the role of the teacher, the progressivists endorse for use, the following methods of teaching.

1. Project
2. Discovery
3. Play-way
4. Field-trip

On the project method, “Dewey . . . emphasised individual and group projects”<sup>226</sup>. This is because in project, we interact with the object of knowledge. Stressing the significance of project, Enoh<sup>227</sup> quotes Dewey as saying that:

We know an object when we know how it is made and we can only know that when we ourselves have a share in making it. (in the project method) an individual is given the opportunity to try out things that perplex him.

On the play-way method, Froebel<sup>228</sup>, its originator states that play is “the spontaneous expression of (a child’s) thought and feeling – an expression which his inner life requires”. In play, the child exercise “harmoniously all his physical, emotional and intellectual qualities. Play combines attention with relaxation, purpose with independence and rule with freedom. Play is for the child as ethical as devotion to his work is for the adult”<sup>229</sup>. The pair of activities in play as provided by Ulich are faulty. How for instance can rule be compatible with freedom? In the discovery method, the learners are encouraged to search and find the solution of a problem by themselves. Field-trip involves going outside the classroom to make relevant observations in order to obtain information about something. Like the discovery method, field-trip is very practical. It also promotes good community relations.

The progressive flavour of Nigerian Education in respect of teaching methods is documented by the National Policy of Education<sup>230</sup> in these words; “teaching shall be practical, exploratory and experimental.” Again, the government is to ensure that the method of teaching at the nursery school “level shall be through play”<sup>231</sup>. It is on the basis of these policy pronouncements that the implementation of the already discussed methods will be assessed.

On the project method, the manner in which it is implemented in the Nigerian educational system leaves much to be desired. On the side of the teacher who guides the project, he is supposed to be emotionally calm and

dedicated to his guiding role. This will be accomplished through a teacher who is satisfied with his work but the constant industrial actions by Nigerian teachers in recent times clearly testifies their dissatisfaction with their job. With this development in sight, some teachers are often engaged in doing other things in order to make ends meet. Consequently, they hardly find time to supervise and assess the progress of learners projects.

Cashing in on the above, some learners replicate similar project works or take their project work to their parents, friends or relations who would produce the complete work without the learner having an idea of how it was done. Where it is a group project, some learners do not contribute at all. Additionally, there are instances where project topics are imposed on the learners by the teachers. All these sum up to unprogressive practices.

A careful look at the operation of the field-trip method shows that despite its glorification as an effective teaching method, most teachers shy away from using it under the pretext of money and/or time constraint. Even the few teachers who venture into organizing field-trips often encounter bottlenecks. For instance, hot squabbles could break-up between the organizing teacher and the school administration on how to manage the money contributed by the learners for the field trip. This normally end up in either poor organization or postponement of the trip. It is worthy of note that where a field-trip is not well organized, it is reduced to a kind of a pleasurable visit as against an educational one.

Despite the adoption of the learning by doing teaching strategy through the discovery method, its implementation in Nigerian education negates the progressivists creed of granting the learner freedom to explore the learning environment. This is because teacher domination in the teaching/learning process still persists. Frowning at this practice, Enoh<sup>232</sup> says that:

The strict adherence to particular class hours for learners to carry out activities under the strict supervision of the teacher and in most cases following designs and instruction prepared by him limits the activities of learners to mere physical exercise.

Froebel who advocated and popularised the use of play as a method of teaching explains that the stage has to be set for the child through the provision of playing materials which he calls “gifts”. The gifts take the form of wooden or solid geometrical shapes like balls, cubes, cylinders, cones and spheres<sup>233</sup>. In the case of the Nigerian child, his play is not in anyway progressive because the necessary play materials or Froebelian gifts are just not there. Schofield<sup>234</sup> posits that the child plays with things “only because the teacher makes them available.” Contingent upon the absence of play materials, children indulge in uneducative plays to the sad extent that nothing educational results at the end of the day or even where a discovery is made by the child, it is not recognized by him as such.

Added to the above problems that have impeded the realization of the implementation of progressive teaching methods in the Nigerian school system could be added the perennial problem of lack of sufficient and qualified teachers in Nigerian schools. This has already been discussed in this part

but it can only be added that the teachers that we have on ground are not prepared in such a way that they can implement the teaching strategies of the progressivists. This is because while in their teacher training institutions, the traditional lecture method is used in teaching them. In consequence, they are left with no option than to use same as they can not give what they do not have. Finally, the constraint of learning facilities also constitute another cog in the wheel of implementing progressive teaching methods. How for instance can the learner experiment where there are no laboratories or laboratory tools? Again, how can any meaningful project be executed on the face of acute book shortage and the conspicuous absence of well equipped libraries?

#### **5.13 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE**

This thesis has contributed to knowledge in the following ways:

1. The thesis provides a comprehensive analysis of the concept of progressivism. This is an improvement on the previous lopsided analysis of the concept by other authors. In this work therefore, the political, economic, social and educational ramifications of progressivism were explored.
2. The two major discrete methods of doing philosophy are the analytic and prescriptive modes. In this study, these methods are integrated thus the work is both analytic and prescriptive. This strikes a balance between the two traditional ways of doing philosophy.
3. Because philosophy is naturally critical, this work could not have accepted unsceptically the positions of staunch progressivists like

Rousseau and Dewey. In consequence, some of these positions were faulted. For instance Rousseau's claim that man is originally good but corrupted by his environment. Dewey's view on needs and interests of the learner and Neil's position on freedom and punishment. A critique of their views and recommendations by the researcher opens a new way that education should tread.

4. The National Policy on Education, which is accepted by many writers as being completely progressive, is exposed by this work to possess the debris of other philosophical positions like essentialism and existentialism.
5. The study exposes the wide chasm that exists between the National Policy on Education and its implementation. The failure of parents, teachers, learners and the government in their responsibilities were pointed out and measures prescribed to make Nigerian education truly progressive.

#### **5.14 SUMMARY**

This part which forms the corpus of the thesis focused on the assessment of the implementation of progressive education in Nigeria. Having traced the historical antecedents of progressive education, the work progressed with the examination of the issue of equal access to educational distribution between males and females, rural and urban settings, and the rich and poor. It was discovered that in the north, a wide chasm exists between males and females enrolment in favour of the males while in the south-east,

the reverse is the case. The urban areas the study revealed, are placed at advantage as against the rural ones in terms of proximity to schools, provision of equipment and personnel. Also, poverty has adverse effects on the child's attendance and academic performance in the school. On placement, the weaknesses of continuous assessment, and entrance examinations were exposed.

The democratization of the school called for the involvement of the learners in decisions affecting them in areas like discipline, curricula and managerial matters. Although the progressivists endorsed the application of self-discipline, Nigeria practices the teacher – imposed type. Apart from inadequate consultation of the learners on curricula issues, the imposed school disciplines lack the right calibre of teachers both in quantity and quality to implement the Nigerian curriculum successfully. On managerial issues, the learners are not duly consulted. Academic freedom implied the freedom of teachers to teach what they want and the learners to learn what interests them. They are also free to express and associate with each other. In the Nigerian context however, various checks are imposed on Nigerian teachers and learners. Thus, they cannot teach or learn what they like without any form of interference. Nigerian education therefore, cannot be said to be based on the needs and interests of the learners. Moreso, where teachers or learners associations do not operate in conformity with the whims and caprices of the powers that be, they are sanctioned. At other times too, freedom is wrongly exercised by the learners through the formation of associations that are counter

productive and antithetical to the realization of the purpose for which the school was established for instance, the cultists.

Punishment, the intentional infliction of pain or unpleasantness on an offender by someone in authority is totally rejected by the progressivists. If at all it must be administered on the learner, the teacher or whoever is administering the punishment has to sought the consent of the erring learner. This is not the practice in Nigeria because school teachers and administrators openly administer various punishments on the learners without their consent. On free education as a progressivists ideal, Nigeria has much to do to achieve it because even where free education is reduced to free tuition, the numerous levies charged in Nigerian schools supercedes tuition fee. Books and libraries which are part of free education programme are no where to be found most especially in Nigerian primary schools.

As for compulsory education, adequate evidence was advanced to disprove its implementation in Nigeria. For instance, a lot of primary and junior secondary school children roam the streets during school hours without them or their parents being prosecuted. The progressivists teacher is just to guide the learner because he already possess the potentialities of self-learning. On the basis of this, the discovery, play, field-trip and project methods were recommended, none of which was found to be implemented in the progressive way in Nigeria.

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## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 SUMMARY

Chapter one of the thesis provided a general introduction to the work. It viewed progressivism as an educational approach that has received a wide acclaim. As an educational movement, progressivism grew out of pragmatism in opposition to essentialism. Essentialism drew its educational ideas from idealism which was borne out of the socio-political circumstances of that time and which were conservative in nature. As a handmaid of conservatism in education, essentialism views education as “a body of essential knowledge that must be transmitted to all who come to school”<sup>1</sup> By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, essentialism became the dominant educational practice in Britain and America. This academic prominence triggered bitter criticisms from its educational opponents. A leading protest movement against essentialism was progressivism.

America, the land of birth of pragmatism and consequently progressivism is a multi-racial country. With its diverse population, America in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was faced with numerous socio-economic and political problems which begged for solutions. With these problems in mind, Dewey , the acknowledged megaphone of the progressive movement popularized progressivism by integrating the ideas of Pierce and James who were the founding fathers of pragmatism. It was therefore the effort of Dewey at changing the society using the schools that gave birth to progressive

education which according to Brahmeld<sup>2</sup> is a “cluster of systematic beliefs about education.” Although there are different strands of progressivism, they all agree that education should be democratic and linked up with societal realities.

On the Nigerian educational terrain, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary society is credited with the introduction of Western education in Nigeria when in 1842 it established the first primary school at Badagry. The growth of British colonial rule, European trade and Christian missionary activities taken together, determined the purpose of Nigerian education. It is in this regard that Arithmetic, English, Writing and Religion formed the heart of the curriculum. These were considered to be essential subjects making the arrangement to conform with the philosophy of essentialism rather than progressivism.

The above development made our education system grossly irrelevant to the needs and interests of the Nigerian learners and society. Ukeje<sup>3</sup> asserts that “Nigerian pupils learn about ... the English lake District or the exploits of Robert Clive in India without knowing a word of their own home geography or history.” This led to the production of persons who could not function effectively in the society because they could do well only as employees of the missionaries, colonial government or commercial firms. It then becomes of little wonder Fafunwa's<sup>4</sup> declaration that “the best student we can produce with our present system is one who is Nigerian in blood but English in morals and intellect.”

This state of educational development drew heavy criticisms from Nigerians. Solarin<sup>5</sup> for instance criticises the colonially inherited education for being “rootless and excessively literal” because of its strong bias towards academic subjects at the expense of science and technology. The critical voices on the colonially inherited system of education led to the great national curriculum conference in 1969, which gave birth to the National Policy on Education in 1977. According to Ukeje<sup>6</sup> the National Policy on Education is meant to eliminate “the existing contradictions, ambiguities, and lack of uniformity in the educational practice in the different parts of the federation Enoh<sup>7</sup> adds that” in the new system, schools teach those skills that will meet the needs of the immediate society... schools therefore cease to be abstractions but are created to solve the problems of society.” On the basis of this, Nigerian education became progressive.

The statement of the problem established the progressive underpinnings of Nigerian education as contained in the National Policy of Education. Since the progressivists often lay claim to any significant educational progress, the question is, how is Nigeria faring in the implementation of progressive ideals in her educational system? Cook<sup>8</sup> in Ash has wondered “whether the progressive schools are as progressive as they think they are”.

Progressivism rose to be popular in America and other parts of the world but despite its global fame, when one ponders on what it actually consists in, no precise answer readily comes to mind. Consequently, Enoh<sup>9</sup>

says that progressivism means” different things to different people”. If this is the case, our conception of what progressivism is, becomes far from being clear.

The rise of progressivism led to series of reforms. In America where progressivism originated, the way was paved for the democratization of the society but the problem has been and still is that ”some (people) .... Are mistaken in their conception of democracy”<sup>10</sup>.

Added to the issues raised above is the apparent contradictions of some clauses in the National Policy of Education. For instance, the National Policy on Education supports equal educational opportunities at all levels of the educational system but the same Policy document spells out that it is only the primary and junior secondary schools that shall be tuition free, universal and compulsory. On the basis of the fore gone, the purpose of the research is to assess the degree of success of the implementation of progressive education in Nigerian education with the view of paving way for its effective implementation if found defective.

Progressive education has been differently interpreted by different, educationists. In consequence, there are diverse practices in education that all claim to be progressive. Ash<sup>11</sup> confirms that “no one progressive school is just like another and a lot of them are poles apart”. The significance of this study therefore lies in coming out with a concise analysis of what progressivism is. It is only this that can brush aside conflicting ideas that obscure people’s view of the concept. Again, progressive education became a historical reality as an

attempt to provide solutions to societal problems, which were created by the changing industrial world. As an industrializing nation, Nigeria suffers the same fate and swims in related problems of food shortage, unemployment, inadequate shelter and poor health.

Chapter two of this thesis is on philosophical research methodology. This is because prior to the rise of science in the 17<sup>th</sup> century all knowledge belonged to philosophy. However, resulting from the declaration of independence by the sciences and other disciplines, philosophy was accused of asking questions that belonged to other fields of knowledge. This led to the compartmentalization of knowledge into Arts and science subjects which have adopted different methods from philosophy. While natural and social sciences are studied through empirical methods, philosophy is done through analytic and prescriptive methods.

In philosophical analysis, concepts are logically dissected in order to reveal their precise meaning. In analyzing a concept therefore, a definition is attempted from where the weakness of the definition is identified. Similar and dissimilar concepts to the one under analysis are examined. Contextual usage of the concept is given and the conditions logically necessary for the application of the concept explicated.

Prescriptive philosophy views philosophy as a decision-making enterprise, suggesting that philosophers are not to leave in limbo, the actions that ought to be taken, to solve societal problems. In prescriptive philosophy

therefore having provided an analysis of a concept or an issue, the line of action to be taken has to be clearly spelt out.

Since philosophy proceeds through a process of arguments and counter arguments, the major tool for both analytic and prescriptive philosophy is argument, which could be either deductive or inductive.

In applying these philosophical methods to the study, progressivism the central concept of this enquiry was analyzed. To give the work the necessary philosophical base, valid arguments which were either deductive or inductive were advanced for position taken. In this respect, the ideas of the progressivists provided the premises of the argument from where the conclusion was drawn. Having under taken the task of analyzing the concept of progressivism and subjecting the views of the progressivists to a critical scrutiny in relation to Nigeria education, recommendations were made.

In chapter three, the work undertook an analysis of the concept progressivism. It traced the etymology of the concept to the Latin word "progressus" which was subsequently used by the French as "progres" and the English as "progress". Since progressivism is not a tightly-knit idea of an individual, there are almost as many definitions of it as writers on it as earlier stated. Most of the definitions of "progress" from where progressivism emanates agree that progress means change by moving from one state of affairs to another. Because the nature of change could be either negative or positive, Brauna and Borna<sup>12</sup> maintain that "the concept of progress inevitably involves the idea of change .... in a desirable direction". Moore's<sup>13</sup> two

definitions of progressivism as “movement in a single direction towards an approved goal” and “an advance towards freedom were also examined. The political, economic and social implications of progressivism were discussed.

On the concepts that have developed similar meaning with progressivism, naturalism was found to be related to progressivism because both believe in the natural goodness of man. A common ground between progressivism and liberalism is their acceptance of reforms as the basis for societal progress. Both Reconstructionism and pragmatism share with progressivism, the love for democracy. Conservatism was found to have developed a distinct meaning from progressivism because while progressivism assumes the natural goodness of man, conservatism distrusts human nature. Having provided the contextual usage of progressivism, the conditions logically necessary for its application were identified and discussed.

In chapter four, an attempt was made at justifying the concept of progressivism. As a concept, progressivism was found to be desirable because it suggests a forward-looking approach to issues in contrast to retrogressivism which suggests looking backwards. According to Pratte<sup>14</sup> progressivism is generally regarded as a good thing. Thus, progress implies positive change because it will sound quite contradictory to claim that one has progressed but that he has not changed for better at all. On the basis of this, to progress implies improving a previous retrogressive position.

Politically, the progressivists view democracy as the only mode of social control that is consistent with the principles of morality because it suggests

that “those who are put in authority ... are appointed to rule in the public interest”<sup>15</sup>. In this regard, a progressive government is expected to govern for the common good of the people. Where the government is unprogressive, it governs for the private gain and interest of the rulers as obtained in despotic regimes. In progressive governments, the right of the people to express themselves and also to freely associate with each other is guaranteed. This makes for active participation of the people in the political process. In despotic regimes where this is denied, the citizens are subjected to “the constant, uncertain, unknown and arbitrary will of another man”<sup>16</sup>. This is unprogressive because under such an arrangement, there can hardly be any provision for change based on public opinion.

In Nigeria, the entrenchment of democracy as a system of government is a recent development. This owes much to the political subjugation that Nigeria suffered in the hands of British colonialists and the incessant intervention in politics by the military. Worried about this state of affairs, Omatseye<sup>17</sup> says that:

For long, Africans have suffered deprivation in the exercise of their rights to fully determine their future. This unfortunate trend which started with colonialism has continued under the leadership of successive post-independence regimes most of which have not only been repressive but outrightly dictatorial.

Following from the above, the post-independence political life of Nigeria was dominated by military regimes. In each case, the military government is ushered in by a coup d'tat. This process is often violent and marked by massive arrests of politicians and other perceived enemies or opponents,

detentions without trial and in some cases, public executions. This curtailed or totally eliminated the fundamental human rights of the people which the progressivists consider as the pillars of progressive government. It is only with the current enthronement of democracy in Nigeria that the government became progressive as avenues were supposedly opened for positive changes. This has been in the granting of legitimate freedom to the citizens especially to choose their government and freely express themselves. This has helped in no small measure to ensure that Nigerians pursue their legitimate functions without fear of molestation.

On the social sphere, progressivism sought to improve the lot of women because of the discrimination that they suffered. Prior to the progressive era for instance, women in America could not vote or be voted for. It was the efforts of the progressivists that earned franchise for the women. This apart, gender related impediments to political opportunities were eliminated. In consequence, during La Follette's tenure as the governor of Wisconsin State in America, women were appointed to highly exalted political positions. Up to date, women participate actively in politics and also occupy high positions in government. These are progressive achievements. In like manner, Nigerian women occupy high political positions. Thus, from the local to the federal government level, there are women legislators, Local Government chairpersons, commissioners and ministers.

On the factory workers, they laboured under the risk of accidents or death for which they were hardly compensated. The cities were crowded into

slums and ghettos which shielded all shades of crimes. Additionally, poverty, disease and corruption ravaged the towns and cities. All these combined to make life unattractive. It was the progressivists that kindled and sustained the awareness in the people that amelioration was needed. Contingent upon the progressivists zeal in securing a better life for the people, reforms were advocated and effected in relation to the exploited factory workers, women and child labour. In Nigeria, the areas of social amelioration are in the building and rehabilitation of feeder roads the construction of dams and building of hospitals and clinics and rural electrification.

Educationally, the progressivists queried the sterile and lifeless learning activities of the learners under the essentialists educational agenda. It was for this that the child's education was based on his needs and interests and not just to absorb the bits of information that the teacher dictates to him. Through progressive education, the learners were encouraged to relate well with each other instead of concentrating only on their work with the hope of out-performing their colleagues. There was also a shift in teaching strategies all of which made the learners to participate more directly and actively than they did in the traditional recitation format. With the launching of the National Policy on Education in 1977 which made Nigerian education progressive, primary and junior secondary schools are made free, universal and compulsory. Also, the progressive method of assessing the learners academic performance on continuous assessment has helped Nigerian learners in obtaining better results in examinations.

Chapter five focussed on the assessment of the implementation of progressive education in Nigeria. It presented progressive education as essentially an ethical movement against essentialism. It came to fruition through the untiring efforts of the pragmatists. Consequently, America the home of pragmatism also became the birth place of progressive education. Efforts at popularizing progressive education led to the formation of the Association for the Advancement of Progressive Education which was later renamed American Progressive Association. In 1924, it founded a journal called Progressive Education. Although the progressivists are not unanimous on what progressive education consists in, they accept that education should be child centred. The problem with centering education on the child is that other components like the teacher and the content of education may be neglected.

On accessibility to education in Nigeria, the study revealed that a wide disparity exists between male and female enrolment to the advantage of the males. The incidental costs of education has also barnished the children of the poor from attending schools. On learners involvement in management decisions, the study maintained that much has to be done for the implementation of the principle of consultation. This in effect does not create any allowance for the learners to partake in deciding on discipline and curriculum matters. Although the National Policy on Education significantly provides for a progressive curriculum, its implementation is hampered by the dearth of instructional materials and lack of adequate personnel. This has

rendered our education inconsequential thus societal problems remain unresolved.

Freedom was viewed as the absence of constraints but two inescapable constraints were identified, namely the impediment of nature and that of man. This notwithstanding, the progressivists posit that where the school fails to grant freedom to the learners, it amounts to tyranny and not education. Thus in Neil's summerhill progressive school, children were at liberty to learn or not to learn. It was pointed out that where children are free to do what they like at all times, the freedom of some children particularly the weaker ones will be trampled upon. In relation to Nigeria, the child does not enjoy progressive freedom because of the plethora of unnecessary constraints stultifying it. These range from rules and regulations from the teachers and senior students. On freedom of association, both institutional heads and the government interfere with the freedom of expression and association in schools when these do not operate in their favour.

On the progressivists' tenet of basing education on the needs of the learners, which is also in consonance with Nigerian education as contained in the National Policy on Education, the question is, suppose the needs of the child are so numerous to the extent that the teacher cannot identify and cater for them? As a criterion of need, what is needed has to be morally defensible without which a goal will not be achieved. Learners needs were identified as biological, psychological basic and functional<sup>18</sup>.

On the biological need of food, most Nigerian children do not enjoy it to the sad extent that they cannot attend school because of hunger. The health and safety of Nigerian school children are not guaranteed because of the lack of health facilities in most Nigerian schools and even where there are, school children pay for the services rendered to them whereas this is freely done in America, the home of progressivism. Classroom accommodation is inadequate at all levels of Nigerian educational system while the provision of books, uniforms, pencils and biros are solely the responsibility of Nigerian parents. Again, this is a total negation of the progressivists creed.

The progressivists believe that children learn what interests them. Thus Peters<sup>19</sup> psychological and normative ramifications of interest were explored. Psychologically, interest refers to what children derive joy or pleasure in doing. Where the child's interest is emphasized this maximizes the likelihood of his concentration even when the activity proves difficult. However, the problem is how the teacher can identify children's interest as to cater for them. In the case of normative interest, the worthwhileness of the object of interest has to be taken into cognizance to the effect that it yields some benefit to the individual. In Nigeria as elsewhere, it was observed that children are often interested in plays that hardly carry any educational value. Again, where educational activities are prioritized by the society and imposed on the learner as in the case of science education, the psychological interest of the learner is killed with the concomitant consequence of poor educational attainment.

The progressivists hold a negative notion of punishment because to them it is evil to inflict any type of pain on the learner. Instead, the offender should be left to suffer the natural consequence of his misbehaviour. The question is, can children always suffer in some way other than punishment as a result of their wrong deed?. In Peters<sup>20</sup> analysis of punishment, he infers that “the truth of the matter is that punishment is at best a necessary nuisance” In Nigeria, Wokocha<sup>21</sup> confirms that as a disciplinary measure in schools, “corporal punishment exists”. Others include depriving either a child, a group or the whole class of recreational time, sending away offenders from the classroom and kneeling down. As for compulsory primary and junior secondary education, evidence abounds to disprove its implementation in Nigeria. First, a lot of primary and junior secondary school age children roam Nigerian streets during school hours and secondly, no parent has ever been prosecuted for the act as it is the case in countries (especially Britain) where primary and secondary education are compulsory.

In their view of the nature of the learner, the progressivists posit that what is required for the process of education is already in the child and what should be done is to stimulate him by providing a conducive external environment for his potentials to unfold and develop. On this score, all learning is self-learning. If all learning is self learning, is it not always the case that the child’s teacher, peers, parents and other community members serve as agents of his education?. In line with the above nature of the learner the teacher is expected to serve as his guide; more of an educational facilitator than

instructor. On the basis of this, the following teaching strategies are recommended: discovery, field-trip, play and project. Although Nigerian education holds all of them in high esteem, it was observed that their implementation leaves much to be desired. For project, students replicate other (former) students works without any sense of ingenuity. The use of field trip has also not been emphasised. Teacher domination hampers the implementation of the problem solving method and the Nigerian school child's play is not in any way progressive because the necessary materials are not available.

## **6.2 CONCLUSION**

This study intended to enquire into the extent to which progressive education has been implemented in Nigerian education. This is because as already discussed, Nigerian education has progressive underpinnings and it is only an assessment of the situation that will determine whether Nigerian education is truly progressive. An unexamined life is often said to be worthless of living. Resulting from the assessment therefore, it was found that Nigerian education does not take cognizance of the learners needs and interests because the learners do not actively participate in taking decisions that affect them particularly on managerial, curricular and discipline issues. Teacher domination still persists in the educational process.

It was also observed that the chains of levies charged in Nigerian schools render vacuous the free education claim in the National Policy on Education. This in effect renders impotent the compulsory component of

Nigerian education. Equitable distribution of education was found to be flawed with impediments like those of sex disparity and the quota system of admission among others. All of these practices clearly deviate from the progressivists tenets of centering education on the learner by taking into account his needs and interests in the process of educating him which will enable him to participate actively in his education.

It is contingent upon the above deficiencies in Nigerian educational system as it relates to progressive education that it becomes safe for the researcher to logically infer that although progressivists tenets are embedded in Nigerian education as contained in the National Policy on Education, these tenets have not been significantly translated into reality. This makes Nigerian education to remain tilted towards the inherited essentialist education of the British colonial days.

### **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In chapter Four of the thesis, progressivism was justified on the basis of the consideration that it suggests a forward looking approach to issues as against retrogressivism which suggests looking backwards. In our examination of the extent to which progressivism has been implemented in Nigerian education, it was inferred that Nigerian education is far from being progressive. It is in the light of this that the following recommendations are made with the hope that when they are implemented, Nigerian education will be progressive both in theory and practice.

1. For Nigerian education to be progressive, the National Policy on Education has to be reviewed. It is only when this is done that the contradictions inherent in it will be identified and eliminated. Among the many contradictions, an instance will suffice. Although the National Policy on Education prescribes that it is the interest of the child that will determine his direction in education, the same policy document imposes compulsory subjects on him from primary up to the university level.
2. The government should provide sufficient and well equipped libraries, science laboratories and technical workshops particularly at the primary and secondary school levels of Nigerian educational system. This is because apart from being the foundation of education, these segments of the educational system are the most hit by the lack of these facilities. Furthermore, qualified staff should be employed to manage the facilities in the libraries, laboratories and workshops.
3. Like Dewey's laboratory school and Montessori's children's Home, the Nigerian educational environment should be made learner friendly through the provision of adequate classrooms with good doors and windows, sufficient and adequate seats, appropriate classroom size of 20-30 learners, provision of toilets, play fields, maps, charts and pictures.
4. In America where progressivism originated, the children are provided with free primary and secondary education. If Nigerian education is to

be truly progressive, free education at both the primary and secondary levels should be provided to all Nigerian children. Free education in this sense should not be restricted to free tuition but extended to include free uniforms, books, writing materials and health services. In addition, all forms of levies should be prohibited in Nigerian schools.

5. If Nigerian education is to be progressive, the current emphasis on theoretical skills at the expense of practical work particularly in the sciences and vocational subjects should cease. It is only when science and vocational subjects are practically taught that our effort at technological development will be achieved.
6. Using radio and television jingles; the government should mount a concerted enlightenment campaign on the significance of basic education to all Nigerian children. Religious leaders and traditional rulers would also be of great help in making parents to see the need for their children to be educated. With this publicity in place, universal basic education will be achieved.
7. Closely allied to the above is the enlightenment of parents on the extent of their rights over their children's education, particularly in respect of compulsory education. It is only when a consensus is reached on this that parents will see it as their responsibility to send all school age children to the school. It is only then too, that the government can prosecute defaulting parents.

8. As we saw in the work, gender balance is one of the concerns of the progressivists. In order to ensure a gender balance education in Nigeria, the government and school administrators should discourage any form of sexual discrimination that could prevent the learners from attending school. For instance, practices that suggest the superiority of the boy over the girl as perpetrated through verbal abuses by parents, teachers or male learners could discourage the girl child from attending the school.
9. In the United States of America the cradle of progressivism, Uzoh<sup>22</sup> asserts that the remuneration of teachers is the best compared to other workers. In this connection, it is strongly recommended that the remuneration of Nigerian teachers should top others. When this is done, teaching will be attractive to the extent that young and brilliant Nigerians will be attracted to the profession thus marking the end of the perennial shortage of teachers in the Nigerian school system.
10. Teaching should be made a full fledged profession because it is yet to attain a full professional status in Nigeria. This owe much to the existence of quacks in the field resulting from the inability of the Teachers Registration Council to be fully operational since its establishment in 1993 by decree No. 31.
11. The Nigeria certificate in Education (NCE) curriculum should be reviewed to the extent that NCE teachers can successfully teach in both our primary and junior secondary schools. This is because the current

NCE programme makes its graduates suitable to teach only in the junior secondary schools thus while we cry of the lack of teachers in our primary schools, many NCE teachers remain unemployed. This could be done by making Primary Education Studies a general course in our colleges of education. When this is done, the students will be exposed to the basic knowledge of all primary school subjects and the strategies of guiding the learners in the teaching/learning process.

12. The teaching of Religious knowledge in our schools is indoctrinatory in nature because it involves the inculcation of doctrines. Furthermore, it is impositional as confirmed by the National Policy on Education<sup>23</sup> that “no child will be forced to accept any religious instruction which is contrary to the wishes of his or her parents”. What of situations where the parents of the child do not share the same faith? To say therefore that the child must study the religion of his parents’ wish even to his detriment is unprogressive. Thus, the teaching of religious knowledge should be scrapped (as in Neil’s summerhill progressive school). The scrapping of religious studies could be further supported by the consideration that moral uprightness which the teaching of religious knowledge is expected to achieve has remained elusive thus immoral acts are championed by men of religion. Adewole<sup>24</sup> has argued that there is no empirical or logical relationship between morality and religion.

13. On learners' freedom, needs and interests as argued in the corpus of the work, consideration should be given to them except where they are judged to be antithetical to education. For this reason, managerial, curricular and disciplinary issues that affect the learners should be discussed with them except where such issues are too complex or too technical in nature for the learner's level of maturity.
14. On punishment, the progressivists abhor it. But, as we saw in the process of our assessment of progressive education, punishment although an evil is a necessary one thus it should be administered in our schools. The caution here is that educators should not use punishment constantly in the course of discharging their daily educational functions. This caution is necessary because of the constant use of punishment by the teachers, prefects and senior students to correct the slightest breach of the school rule. Learners should be strictly restrained from administering punishment on their fellow pupils or students.

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