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JECAN, the official journal of Early Childhood Association of Nigeria (ECAN), presents its Volume 9 (2020). Membership of the association is open to students, graduates, practitioners and scholars of early childhood education and/or related fields in Nigeria and abroad.

All the articles that feature in this volume are those presented at the 2019 National Conference of the association held between 29 July and 2nd of August, 2019 at Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education Otto-ijanikin, Lagos Nigeria, Arrangements are on to make it possible for interested researchers to submit articles directly for publication in the journal.

It is therefore, the expectation of the Editorial Board that readers will not only find this volume a good companion in their continuous search for knowledge but also a reliable source of literature for further research activities.

Prof. Olusegun Akinbote
Editor-in-Chief

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ASSESSMENT OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATIONAL QUALITIES IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined the availability of preschool classes, children enrolment and teachers' children ratio. It also determined the availability of infrastructural facilities and assessed the qualification of teachers. It assessed the availability and accessibility of preschool curriculum and finally examined the provision of instructional materials and their suitability to the recommended standard. The study applied qualitative research methodology using content analysis technique. The population consisted of all pre-primary schools in Oyo State public primary schools. Multi-stage sampling procedure was employed for the study. The three Senatorial Districts of Oyo State were used for the study. In each Senatorial District, two Local Government Areas (LGAS) were randomly selected using simple random technique. The sample size consisted of 30 schools from the six LGAS that were selected randomly and 30 ECCE teachers that were purposively selected. A two researcher-designed instruments were administered. Five research questions were answered. Data obtained were analyzed using Atlas.ti. The results revealed that there is availability of ECCE centers in all primary schools in Oyo State, and that children enrolment is averagely high to some extent but the ratio of teachers to children is low. The results revealed further that there is low availability of infrastructural facilities and that teachers' qualifications are met with the standard of Federal government. Finally, it revealed that there is unavailability of age appropriate curriculum for pre-school children and also there is no provision of instructional materials. The findings provided information on all aspects of preschool education that did not meet with the National Minimum Standards for Establishment of ECCE centers that can hinder the qualities of preschool education.

Keywords: *Pre-School; ECCE Centers; Teachers; Children; Infrastructural Facilities; Curriculum; Instructional Materials;*

Introduction

Early years in life are the most consequential to the formation of intelligence, personality and social behaviour of a child. This is why modern societies show serious concern to the education of their young ones by providing all necessary support for them to accomplish their holistic development (Ejeh, 2006). It is a common practice in most societies to make provision for early childhood education programmes of various categories for children below the official school age mainly to prepare them for education in primary schools (Obidike, 2012). This is why Nigeria as a country cannot be left out in providing all essentials facilities for children at preschool age.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN. NPE 2013) refers to Early Child Care Development and Education as the care, protection, stimulation and learning promoted in children from age 0-4 years in a crèche or nursery. In Nigeria, organised education of the children below primary school age did not receive major recognition until very recently. Early Childhood education in the form of nursery school or pre-primary education, as we know it today in Nigeria is largely a post-colonial development. The equivalent of it during the colonial era were the kindergarten and infant classes, which consisted of groups of children considered not yet ready for primary education. The Federal Government of Nigeria recognises the importance of early childhood education in Nigeria and as a result gives it prominence in the National Policy of Education (FRN, 2013) as one of the programmes in the Nigerian educational system.

Bagudo (2008) stated that information across the world revealed that an estimated figure of one hundred million children struggle for survival in villages and cities, and that they are always opened to the risks of hunger, poverty, disease, illiteracy and abuses. The above assertion gave a clue on what children encounter during their early childhood age which could have a significant negative effect on their holistic development and their education. In the light of this, it could be evident that the government and other stakeholders in every country still have many roles to play in ensuring that all children have access to quality care and education. In support of this opinion, Mahuta (2007) emphasizes that there is need to address the problems, and

rescue these children and the upcoming generation of children from this menace. This necessitated the programme of Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE). However, the challenges faced by children in both rural and urban could only be corrected through quality care for children at their early stage of life, which also includes quality preschool education that will assist them in other levels of their education in life. Mahuta (2007) also stated further that the goals of ECCDE is to support the proper development of the children, to identify and address their challenges, to utilize their potentials, mould their character, improve their learning, equip them for life, so that all their actions will be towards positive personal, communal and global development in all ramifications of life.

The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in conjunction with the United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other developmental partner, in addressing the gaps in ECCE programme states that there is need to develop National minimum standard to guide the operation of ECCE. The National minimum standard for Early Child Care Centers (ECCC) in Nigeria was developed in 2007 to address the gaps and serve as a guideline for operators and stakeholders so that both the practice and operations of pre-primary education will become standardized across Nigeria. This posed that government wants preschool children to undergo quality preschool education. With the development, it can be asserted that the Early Childhood Care and Development in Nigeria has adopted an integrated and holistic approach for the care and support given to children from birth to five years.

Furthermore, in Nigeria, the established minimum standard for ECCE centers include types of ECCE centers, the location, ownership, provision for qualified and experienced teachers and staff, provision of infrastructure and equipment, provision of standard curriculum and monitoring and supervision of ECCE programme in Nigeria. It also includes the minimum content, materials and practices that would be expected in the ECCE centers in Nigeria. This is the government's way of ensuring the provision and maintenance of quality in the ECCE centers in the country.

The quality of care and education a child receives during pre-school age determines to a large extent the level of physical, cognitive and psychosocial development a child would achieve (Odiagbe, 2015). The assertion could explain the significance of quality preschool education for

children at the early childhood stage. Preschool or nursery school is a center-based programme that provides educational experiences for all children during the year or years preceding kindergarten. Preschool programmes can be rated along two dimensions of quality, which are process and structure as they both make quality education. The teaching and learning materials, teacher's qualification, age appropriate curriculum, conducive learning environment, and health and safety routines in the school are rated as a measure of process quality while the structural quality includes the size of each group of children in the classroom, the teacher-children ratio and infrastructural facilities.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) describe the features of a high-quality pre-school programme in terms of what is important for the child, family, teacher, curriculum, and classroom. A high quality early childhood programme provides a safe and nurturing environment while promoting the physical, social, emotional, cultural and intellectual development of young children. From the ongoing, it could be agreed that quality preschool education entails all that is required for children development at home, in school environment and the society at large. Quality preschool education could serve as a great benefit to holistic development of Nigerian children, for this reason it may be very necessary for all stakeholders in education, most especially the government at all levels to provide preschool education that will be of good quality and standard in order to meet the children needs at early childhood stage.

Statement of the Problem

The quality of education which every child receives at pre-school stage could determine the extent of their holistic development which will be a reflection on their academic performance in subsequent stages of education. Researchers and stakeholders in education have in the recent past identified several factors as the causes of persistent poor performance of students in external examinations. Some of the factors stated are: poor location of the schools, high student teacher ratio, lack of conducive environment, e.t.c. (Adepoju & Oluchukwu 2011). Lack of quality preschool education may also be considered as one of the factors responsible for student's performance. Umana (2018) stated that there is no organised pre-primary education sector in Nigeria and those available were operating without considering children age which could tell on children intellectual development. However,

this research investigated the quality of preschool education provided for children in Oyo State public primary schools in line with the National Minimum Standard for Establishment of ECCE centers. This is with a view of generating accurate information that can help to improve the quality and standard of public preschool education in Nigeria towards achieving 2030 education agenda for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- 1. Examine the availability of preschool classes, level of preschool children enrolment and teachers' children ratio in public primary schools in Oyo State.
- 2. Investigate the availability of infrastructural and playground facilities for preschool children in public primary schools in Oyo State.
- 3. Assess the qualification of teachers in ECCE classes in public preschools in Oyo State.
- 4. Investigate the availability and accessibility of age appropriate curriculum for children in ECCE centers in public preschools in Oyo State.
- 5. Examine the provision of instructional materials and their suitability to the recommended standard for preschool children in public primary schools in Oyo State.

Research Questions

- 1. Is there availability of preschool classes for children? What are the levels of preschool children enrolment and the ratio of teachers to preschool children in Oyo State public primary schools?
- 2. What is the level of availability of infrastructural and playground facilities for preschool children in Oyo State public primary schools?
- 3. Do the qualification of teachers in Oyo State preschool classes meet the standard set by the Federal Government?
- 4. Is there availability of age appropriate curriculum for children and accessibility of the curriculum for preschool teachers in Oyo State public primary schools?
- 5. Are there provision of instructional materials for preschool children in Oyo State public primary schools?

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative research design. The population of the study consists of all public pre-primary schools and ECCE teachers in Oyo State. Multi-stage sampling procedures were employed for the study. The three Senatorial Districts were used for the study. In each of the Senatorial Districts, two Local Government Areas were randomly selected using simple random technique. In each of the Local Government five schools were selected randomly. The sample size consisted of 30 schools that were randomly selected and 30 ECCE teachers that were purposively selected. A two self-designed instruments entitled, 'Quality of Early Childhood Education for Pre-School Children Questionnaire (QECEPCQ) and Observation Checklist' were used for the study. The questionnaire has four sections. Section A entails teacher's bio data, Section B has two items on pupil's enrolment, Section C has seven items on availability of classroom and playground facilities, Section D has ten items on availability of instructional materials and curriculum for preschool children while the observational checklist has 13 items on availability and accessibility of other infrastructural facilities. The data obtained from the instruments were analyzed using Atlas.ti.

Results

Research Question One

Is there availability of preschool classes for children? What are the levels of preschool children enrolment and the ratio of teachers to preschool children in Oyo State public primary schools?

Table 1: Level of Enrolment in Public Preschools in Oyo State

Sampled schools	Creche	Nursery 1	Nursery 2	Pre-Basic	Observed
1	-	-	-	29	All in one class
2	-	-	-	24	All in one class
3	-	-	-	6	All in one class
4	-	-	-	60	All in one class
5	-	-	-	6	All in one class
6	-	-	-	10	All in one class
7	-	-	-	20	All in one class
8	-	-	-	15	All in one class
9	-	5	13	-	All in one class
10	-	-	-	15	All in one class
11	-	-	-	18	All in one class

12	-	-	-	20	All in one class
13	-	-	-	25	All in one class
14	-	-	-	30	All in one class
15	-	-	-	15	All in one class
16	-	-	-	16	All in one class
17	30	-	-	30	All in one class
18	30	-	-	25	All in one class
19	-	-	-	20	All in one class
20	-	-	-	25	All in one class
21	-	-	-	25	All in one class
22	-	-	-	19	All in one class
23	-	-	-	5	All in one class
24	-	-	-	21	All in one class
25	-	-	18	35	Two arms of classes
26	-	-	-	13	All in one class
27	-	-	-	30	All in one class
28	-	-	-	20	All in one class
29	-	-	-	21	All in one class
30	-	-	-	25	All in one class

Table 1 above shows that all the schools in Oyo State have pre-school classes but the children are not placed in different classes according to their ages. It can be viewed that the primary schools in Oyo state did not adhere strictly to Federal Government National Minimum Standards directive. The children population was high in some schools and the federal government ratio of 1: 25 children in addition to one helper was not implemented as stipulated.

Research Question Two

Is there availability of infrastructural facilities in Oyo State public primary schools?

Table 2: Showing Availability of Infrastructural Facilities

Federal Govt. Guidelines	Observations
There should be a class size of 12x65m to accommodate 25 children	The population of the children in most schools was suitable for the class size but some of the schools have overcrowded classrooms due to insufficient classrooms.
There should be cross ventilation in each class, that is two windows located in opposite direction	All schools visited have windows located in opposite directions.
Two door ways	Few of the schools have two door ways
Each classroom must have veranda on either side.	Most schools visited have veranda in both sides while others in front only.
There must be toilets and wash hand basin	Only five schools have toilets out of the schools visited and none of the schools has wash hand basin.
There must be source of water	Few of the schools have untreated well as source of water while majority has no source of water.
Provision of age appropriate chairs and tables	All schools have age appropriate chairs and tables.
Provision of large tables with drawers for teachers	Majority of the schools have no large tables and drawers.
Playground well grassed and have play facilities such as swing, slide see-saw, sand box, merry -go -round, beam	Very few has grassed playground with only merry-go-round while majority has no grassed playground and play facilities.
A tract of hard surface for pushing along wheeled toys	None of the schools has it.
Facilities provided should ensure safety of children	Just few out of the schools provide facilities that ensures safety of the children

Table 2 above indicates that most of the schools partly meet with the standard while some did not meet with the standard of the guideline stipulated in National Minimum Standard for Establishment of ECCE Centres as regards infrastructural facilities.

Research Question Three

Do the qualifications of teachers in Oyo state meet the standard set by the Federal Government for public pre-schools?

Table 3: Showing Teachers' Qualifications

Federal Government Requirements	Observation
NCE should be the least qualification for preschool teachers.	All schools visited had preschool teachers with minimum of NCE certificate but not in Early Childhood Education.

Table 3 shows that all the teachers in the schools visited have National Certificate in Education as their minimum qualification.

Research Question Four

Is there availability of age appropriate curriculum for children in ECCE centers in Oyo State public primary schools?

Table 4: Showing Availability of Age Appropriate Curriculum

Availability of age appropriate curriculum	Majority of the teachers have access to curriculum but the curriculum available is only meant for the age six in Kindergarten class.
Accessibility to approved curriculum	

Table 4 shows that there is availability and accessibility of curriculum by the teachers but the curriculum is only meant for a year class to basic one.

Research Question Five

What is the level of provision of instructional materials for children in Oyo State public primary schools?

Table 5: Showing Instructional Materials Being Provided

Pictures roll	In all the schools visited majority of them have improvised picture rolls and flash cards, while none of them has televisions and toys.
Toys	
Television	
Flash cards	

Table 5 indicates that majority of the schools improvised some of the instructional materials used in teaching.

Discussions

The findings of this study revealed that there are ECCE centers in all public primary schools in Oyo State and that pupil's enrolment rate was averagely high. However, all the children were merged together in a class due to non-availability of classrooms. Also, the children were not placed in classes according to their ages and there is low number of teachers to care for the children. This finding corroborates the study of Bosah, Ejesi and Aleke (2016) who found out in their studies that there was high rate of enrollment and overcrowding in preschool classes.

The findings further revealed that there is age appropriate furniture. Few of the schools have two doorways, most of the schools have two verandas, all these are partly met with standard. It also revealed that majority of the schools has no toilet and wash hand basin, no source of water, no large tables and drawers for teachers, no well grassed playgrounds with play facilities, no tract of hard surface for pushing along wheeled toys and the facilities available did not really ensure safety of the child. All this finding negates Odiagbe, (2015) who found out that there are no age appropriate chairs and tables for pupils. Part of the result is in agreement with that of Bosah, et'al. (2016) who found out those infrastructural facilities are not met with stipulated standard.

The findings also revealed that all the teachers have a minimum

qualification of NCE in different fields but not in ECCE. This met with the standard set by the Federal Government as it was not stated that teachers must be ECE specialist. The result corroborates that of Uduma, (2016) who found out that ECCE providers recruit staff to a high extent in line with national minimum standard. The curriculum available did not meet with different age of pupils but only meant for a year class before Basic One. Some of the teachers stated that they normally teach the children according to their intellectual ability. This finding is in agreement with Bosah, et'al. (2016) who found out that there is no availability of approved age curriculum for pre-school children in their study. The findings on instructional materials revealed that all the schools have no television and toys but the teachers improvised pictures roll and flash cards. The result can be said to be in agreement with Odiagbe, (2015) who also found out that there is no availability of instructional materials in all schools visited.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from this study that there is availability of ECCE centers in all public primary schools in Oyo State, and that pupils' enrolment is averagely high. However, the ratio of teachers to pupils is low. There is also a low availability of infrastructural facilities; especially grassed playgrounds with play facilities, water supply, toilets for boys and girls, wash hand basins, large tables with drawers for teachers. Furthermore, the study concluded that the teachers has minimum of National Certificate in Education which met with the standard of Federal government as stipulated in the guidelines but their area of specialization is not in Early Childhood Education, also there is unavailability of age appropriate curriculum for preschool children and there is no provision of instructional materials in majority of the schools.

Recommendations

There should be funding and provision of all important infrastructural facilities needed for preschool children at all levels of government so as to achieve quality outcomes in pre-school education. The government should adjust the standard on teacher's qualification for preschool children to be minimum of N.C.E. in Early Childhood Education. Government as the establisher of National Minimum Standard for Establishment of ECCE centers needs to lead by example for private ECCE centers by adhering to the stipulated guidelines and also provide age appropriate curriculum for preschool children in all Government schools. The teachers teaching the

preschool children should embark on professional development in ECE, for them to have additional certificate that will make them qualify as a professional ECE experts.

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