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### EDITORIAL COMMENTS

The 2024 ECAN Annual National Conference proceedings present a rich tapestry of research papers that explore the complexities of early childhood education in Nigeria.

Dr. Nkechinyere Promise-Adele's paper sets the tone for the conference, highlighting the need for improving 21st-century teaching skills to enhance effective learning in primary education.

AJERE Kayode Oyeniyi's research takes us deeper, examining the correlation between learning environments and children's interest and academic achievement in numeracy skills development.

Iliasu Samuel Femi and Oloninisi Omowumi Omotayo's study sheds light on the perception of Western education among Almajiri children in Kwara State, highlighting the need for inclusive education.

Sani Musa CLN and Saleh Abdullahi Adam's paper emphasizes the crucial role of libraries in enhancing early childhood care, development, and education in Nigeria.

Oluwaseun Temitope Lawal's research focuses on integrating research data to promote quality inclusive education for children with disabilities in Nigerian basic schools.

Uchenna E. Ajake, Ajayi Oluwatosen Motunrayo, and Sopekan Oludola Sarah's study investigates the perception of school environment and academic performance in mathematics among primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis.

Ekechukwu Evelyn Nmaugo's paper examines the problems and prospects of leadership and governance of middle basic education in Nigeria.

Opeloye Nafisat Onaopemipo's research explores the impact of head teachers' leadership styles on teachers' job performance in lower primary schools in Osun State.

Fowowe S. S. and Popoola Saidat Olusesan's study highlights the need for scaling up career opportunities and professional development among pre-school caregivers in Nigeria.

Godfirst Nwonwu Nwonkwo's paper emphasizes the importance of utilizing ICT among caregivers in early childhood education for sustainable development.

Tombowua Sooter's research focuses on integrating research-based practice through the Reggio Emilia approach for effective early childhood education in Nigeria.

Amaka Akabueze's paper presents the Igwebuike curriculum for early years education, offering an innovative approach to early childhood education.

Emberu Ifeyemi A., Wordu Esther C., and Effiong Rebecca Eke-Abasi's study examines stakeholders' involvement and the choice of early childhood education in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku.

Ona Comfort Uduma's paper explores the application of multimedia in early childhood education in Nigeria.

Fowowe Simeon S., Adebowale Damilola C., Dagunduro Olayinka M., and Omilola Olawole's research highlights the importance of unlocking the power of community engagement and partnerships in promoting early childhood education programs in Nigeria.

The remaining papers continue to explore critical issues in early childhood education, including the impact of nature-based experiences on children's cognitive development, the influence of age and gender on school adjustment, and the professionalism of caregivers and teachers as a pivot to effective literacy skills for young children.

The research presented by Sobulo Elias Adeshina, Ogunleye Titilayo Omowumi, and Osayande Victoria Efe on the impact of nature-based experiences on children's cognitive development and environmental awareness is particularly noteworthy, as it highlights the importance of outdoor play in early childhood education.

Similarly, the study by Zakariyah Fatimat Fadeke on the influence of age and gender on school adjustment among newly admitted university undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria, provides valuable insights into the factors that affect students' transition to higher education.

The paper by Usman-Abdulqadri Taibat, Ige Olumide Olakunle, and Dagunduro Olayinka Morenike on the impact of training on caregivers' skills in designing and using individually and age-appropriate assessment tools for early years education is also significant, as it highlights the need for ongoing professional development for caregivers.

The research presented by Oyewumi Nasimot Opeyemi and Lawal Oluwaseun Temitope on the professionalism of caregivers and teachers as a pivot to effective literacy skills for young children underscores the importance of teacher quality in early childhood education.

The final papers presented at the conference, including those by Aderogbin Boluwatife Bridget, Akinlosotu Leonard Damilola, and Aroloye Oluwatosin Mary on enhancing career opportunities and professional development for early childhood educators in Nigeria, and by Hassan Q O, Raji A A, and Ojo O O on the examination of educational policy implementation and primary school curriculum in Nigeria, provide a fitting conclusion to the proceedings, highlighting the need for ongoing research and innovation in the field of early childhood education.

Overall, the 2024 ECAN Annual National Conference proceedings offer a comprehensive and robust exploration of the complexities of early childhood education in Nigeria, and highlight the need for continued research, innovation, and collaboration to improve outcomes for young children.

The papers presented at the conference demonstrate a commitment to advancing knowledge and understanding in the field of early childhood education, and highlight the need for evidence-based practices to inform policy and decision-making.

***Dagunduro O M PhD***  
***On behalf of the Editorial Team***

## FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that I write this foreword to the 2024 ECAN Annual National Conference proceedings, which showcase a diverse range of research papers on early childhood education in Nigeria. This conference brings together scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to share knowledge, expertise, and experiences in advancing the field of early childhood education.

The papers presented in this proceedings demonstrate a commitment to excellence, innovation, and inclusivity, reflecting the conference theme "Improving 21st-Century Teaching Skills: Implications for Effective 21st-Century Learning in Primary Education." The authors have tackled critical issues in early childhood education, including teacher development, learning environments, children's interest and academic achievement, and community engagement.

These papers offer valuable insights, practical strategies, and evidence-based recommendations for improving early childhood education in Nigeria. They highlight the need for collaborative efforts among stakeholders, including government agencies, educational institutions, and local communities, to ensure that young children receive high-quality education that prepares them for success in the 21st century.

I commend the authors, editors, and organizers of this conference for their dedication to advancing knowledge and understanding in the field of early childhood education. I also acknowledge the support of ECAN and other organizations that have made this conference possible.

This proceedings is a valuable resource for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to improve early childhood education in Nigeria and beyond. I hope that the ideas, findings, and recommendations presented here will inspire and inform efforts to enhance the quality of early childhood education, ultimately benefiting the children, families, and communities we serve.

**Professor Abidogun Babajide**  
**National President**

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## THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN SCALING UP THE STATUS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*Early Childhood Education (ECE) is crucial for fostering children's early development and future success. In Nigeria, ECE faces considerable challenges, including limited access, variable quality, and insufficient infrastructure. This paper explores the Nigerian government's role in scaling up ECE, examining current challenges and providing recommendations based on international best practices. Key issues include inappropriate programme strategies, such as the implementation of developmentally unsuitable programmes and ineffective teacher training methods. Drawing from successful ECE models in Finland, Singapore, and New Zealand, the paper offers strategies for improving ECE quality and access in Nigeria. Recommendations include revising policy frameworks, increasing funding, enhancing teacher training, and fostering community involvement. The goal is to provide actionable insights for policymakers and stakeholders to improve Nigeria's ECE system.*

**Keywords:** best practices, community involvement, policy framework, teacher development, variable quality

### **1.0 Introduction**

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a critical phase in a child's development, laying the foundation for lifelong learning, cognitive and social skills, and overall well-being. High-quality ECE programs have been shown to yield significant benefits, including improved academic performance, reduced dropout rates, and enhanced socio-emotional development (Barnett, 2008). Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays a vital role in shaping a child's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development, laying a foundation for lifelong learning and success (Barnett, 2008). Research consistently shows that high-quality ECE programmes positively impact children's future academic achievement, social skills, and overall well-being (Ige, 2023; Heckman, 2006).

Studies consistently demonstrate that children who attend high-quality preschool programs are more likely to succeed in school, graduate from high school, and have better long-term economic outcomes (Heckman, 2011). ECE also plays a significant role in social equity, as it provides opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to gain essential skills and knowledge before entering formal schooling. This early intervention can help close the achievement gap between socio-economic groups, fostering a more inclusive society (Sylva et al., 2004). Furthermore, ECE contributes to the economic development of a country by developing a more skilled and educated workforce (UNESCO, 2015).

Investment in ECE yields a high return on investment, with every dollar spent on early education saving up to seven dollars in future costs related to remedial education, healthcare, and social services (Heckman, 2011). As such, ensuring access to quality ECE is not just a moral imperative but also an economically sound policy decision. However, in Nigeria, ECE faces significant challenges that hinder its effectiveness and accessibility. Despite the growing recognition of ECE's importance, Nigeria's ECE system is characterized by limited access, inconsistent quality, and systemic issues that need addressing.

Nigeria's ECE landscape reveals stark disparities between urban and rural areas, public and private institutions, and different regions. Urban centers such as Lagos benefit from better infrastructure and resources, while rural areas like Zamfara struggle with inadequate facilities and fewer trained teachers. Additionally, many ECE programmes in Nigeria are marred by poorly designed strategies and implementation issues that exacerbate existing problems (Olaleye, Florence & Omotayo, 2009). For instance, the introduction of Eko Excel, designed for primary education, has been criticized for its unsuitability for ECE settings, while ineffective consultant training and the imposition of uniform teaching methods further undermine ECE quality (Edozien, 2020).

The government's role is crucial in addressing these challenges, developing and implementing effective policies, and ensuring equitable access to quality ECE. This paper explores the Nigerian government's role in scaling up ECE, focusing on current challenges, including uninformed program strategies, such as the use of developmentally unsuitable programs and ineffective teacher training methods. By examining international best practices and providing actionable recommendations, the paper aims to guide policymakers and stakeholders in improving ECE in Nigeria.

### 1.1 Current State of ECE in Nigeria

Despite the recognized importance of ECE, Nigeria faces numerous challenges in providing accessible and high-quality early childhood education. The country struggles with issues such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, poorly trained teachers, and inconsistent policy implementation (UNESCO, 2015). These challenges hinder the effective delivery of ECE services, leaving many children, particularly those in rural and underserved areas, without the foundational education they need. According to UNICEF (2019), only about 36% of Nigerian children aged 3-5 are enrolled in any form of early education, a figure significantly lower than the global average.

Nigeria's ECE sector faces significant challenges related to access, quality, and outcomes. According to UNICEF (2019), only 36% of Nigerian children aged 3-5 years are enrolled in ECE programmes. This low enrollment rate is exacerbated by disparities between urban and rural areas. The disparity in ECE access is more pronounced in rural areas, where poverty, cultural factors, and lack of awareness about the benefits of early education further impede enrollment rates (Onyango, 2016). In urban centers such as Lagos, enrollment rates are approximately 80%, while in rural areas like Zamfara, rates drop to as low as 10% (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2018).

Moreover, the quality of ECE varies widely across the country; many centers lack standardized curricula and effective pedagogical practices, resulting in inconsistent educational outcomes. Research indicates that children in high-quality ECE programme are better prepared for primary education, both academically and socially. However, many Nigerian children enter primary school without the foundational skills necessary for success (Ogbonnaya, 2016).

### 2.0 Challenges: Infrastructure, Funding, Teacher Training, Policy Implementation

#### 2.1 Infrastructure

Inadequate infrastructure remains a significant barrier to quality ECE in Nigeria. Many ECE centers lack essential facilities such as clean water, toilets, and safe learning environments. According to a 2018 report by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), over 60% of public ECE centers require urgent infrastructural improvements (UBEC, 2018). These deficiencies impact children's health, safety, and learning experiences.

#### 2.2 Funding

Funding is a critical issue for ECE in Nigeria. Government expenditure on education is below the recommended benchmark set by UNESCO, which is 26% of the national budget. ECE receives a minimal share of this allocation, leading to reliance on private funding sources and high tuition fees for many families (UNESCO, 2015). This underfunding hampers the ability to expand access and improve the quality of ECE services.

#### 2.3 Teacher Training

The quality of ECE is also affected by the shortage of qualified teachers. Many ECE teachers lack formal training in early childhood education, with only about 20% having received specialized training (Akinrotimi&Olowe, 2016). This lack of professional development opportunities exacerbates the problem, as teachers struggle to implement effective pedagogical practices.

#### 2.4 Policy Implementation

Weak policy implementation is a major challenge for ECE in Nigeria. Despite having several policies aimed at improving ECE, factors such as bureaucratic delays, corruption, and lack of coordination among government agencies impede effective execution. Onyango (2016) notes that the absence of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks makes it difficult to assess the impact of policies and make necessary adjustments.

#### 2.5 Developmentally Inappropriate Strategies

Several developmentally inappropriate strategies have been implemented in Nigerian ECE programme, exacerbating existing challenges. One notable example is the use of Eko Excel, a digital education platform designed primarily for primary education, at the ECE level. The programme's content and pedagogical approach are not tailored to the developmental needs of young children, leading to ineffective learning experiences (Edozien, 2020).

The deployment of consultants to train ECE teachers has also been problematic. In some cases, these consultants lack expertise in early childhood education, providing inadequate or misleading training that does not address the specific needs of ECE settings. This issue is compounded by the imposition of uniform teaching methods, such as Montessori, without considering the diverse developmental needs and cultural contexts of Nigerian children (Akinrotimi&Olowe, 2016).

Additionally, the creation of separate inclusive units within schools, rather than ensuring that all schools are inclusive, reflects a misunderstanding of the principles of inclusive education. Effective inclusion should be a fundamental aspect of all ECE programme, not a separate initiative, to ensure that all children, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have equitable access to quality education (Okoli, 2017).

Government intervention is crucial in addressing these challenges and scaling up the status of ECE in Nigeria. By focusing on policy formulation, funding, capacity building, and quality assurance, the government can play a pivotal role in transforming the ECE landscape in Nigeria.

### **3.0 Government's Role in Scaling Up ECE**

#### **3.1 Policy Formulation and Implementation**

The government's role in ECE involves creating and implementing policies that address the sector's unique challenges. This includes developing a comprehensive national ECE strategy that sets clear goals and targets. The Federal Ministry of Education (2014) emphasizes the need for a cohesive policy framework that integrates ECE into the broader educational system.

Policies should focus on inclusivity, ensuring access for marginalized and vulnerable groups. This can be achieved through affirmative action policies, scholarships, and grants that address disparities in access to quality ECE services. Effective policy implementation requires addressing bureaucratic inefficiencies, enhancing coordination among agencies, and developing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks (Okoli, 2017).

#### **3.2 Funding and Resource Allocation**

Increasing budgetary allocations for ECE is essential for scaling up access and improving quality. The government should explore innovative financing mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships and international aid. Establishing dedicated ECE funds and providing subsidies can help reduce the cost of ECE for low-income families (UNESCO, 2015).

Public-private partnerships can mobilize additional resources and expertise, while international donors can offer financial and technical support. Collaborating with organizations like UNICEF and the World Bank can provide valuable resources and insights for improving ECE in Nigeria (UNICEF, 2019).

#### **3.3 Capacity Building and Teacher Training**

Building capacity in ECE involves investing in teacher training and professional development. The government should support pre-service and in-service training programme, focusing on modern pedagogical techniques, child psychology, and inclusive education practices. Collaboration with higher education institutions and international organizations can help develop effective training programme (Akinrotimi&Olowe, 2016).

Addressing the issue of developmentally inappropriate training and consultant deployment is crucial. The government should ensure that training programme are designed and delivered by experts in early childhood education and that they align with the developmental needs of young children (Edozien, 2020).

#### **3.4 Quality Assurance and Monitoring**

Developing and enforcing quality assurance standards is essential for maintaining high standards in ECE. The government should establish a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system, including regular inspections and feedback mechanisms. Technology can enhance data collection and analysis, providing real-time insights into the effectiveness of ECE programme (UNESCO, 2015). Quality assurance frameworks should include support mechanisms for ECE centers, helping them meet established standards. Providing technical



assistance and financial incentives for centers that demonstrate improvements in quality can encourage adherence to standards (Ogbonnaya, 2016).

### 3.5 Public Awareness and Advocacy

Raising public awareness about the importance of ECE is critical for garnering support from stakeholders. The government should launch advocacy campaigns to educate parents, communities, and policymakers about the benefits of early childhood education. This can help shift attitudes and increase demand for quality ECE services (Okoli, 2017). Community engagement is also vital. Involving parents, local leaders, and community organizations in planning and implementing ECE initiatives ensures that programmes are responsive to local needs and gain community support (Olaleye, Florence & Omotayo, 2009).

### 3.6 Incentives and Support for Private Providers

Given the significant role of private providers in ECE, the government should offer incentives to encourage their participation. This can include tax breaks, grants, and technical assistance to improve the quality of services provided by private centers (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016). Public-private partnerships can enhance resource mobilization and expertise, supporting efforts to expand access to quality ECE. Collaborating with private sector organizations can provide additional resources and innovative solutions tailored to the Nigerian context.

### 3.7 Integration with Primary Education

To ensure continuity and maximize the benefits of early childhood learning, effective integration between ECE and primary education is crucial. Strategies for this integration include aligning curricula, assessment practices, and support systems to create a seamless transition for children moving from ECE to primary school.

### 3.8 Curriculum and Assessment Alignment

One key aspect of integration is aligning curricula and assessment methods between ECE and primary education. This alignment ensures that the learning goals and assessments are consistent, preparing children for the academic demands of primary school. The curriculum should build on the foundational skills acquired in ECE, with a focus on a smooth progression to primary education (UNESCO, 2015). For example, implementing a continuous curriculum framework that bridges ECE and primary education can help maintain coherence in learning objectives and pedagogical approaches. Assessment practices should also be harmonized, ensuring that they reflect the developmental stages of children and provide a comprehensive evaluation of their progress (Federal Ministry of Education, 2014).

### 3.9 Support Systems for Transition

Creating support systems for families and children during the transition from ECE to primary education is essential. These support systems can include orientation programmes for parents and children, counseling services, and transition planning. Such programmes can help ease the adjustment process and address any challenges that may arise during this critical period (UNESCO, 2015).

Transition support should involve collaboration between ECE centers and primary schools, facilitating communication and planning to address the needs of transitioning children.

Regular feedback from both parents and educators can help identify areas for improvement and ensure that the transition process is smooth and effective (Ogbonnaya, 2016).

### 3.10 Leveraging International Support

International support can play a significant role in enhancing Nigeria's ECE system. Engaging with international organizations and donors can provide financial resources, technical expertise, and access to best practices. Collaborating with international organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank can provide valuable support for scaling up ECE in Nigeria. These organizations offer financial assistance, technical guidance, and policy advice tailored to the specific needs of the Nigerian context (UNICEF, 2019).

International donors can contribute funding for infrastructure development, teacher training programme, and curriculum enhancement. They can also provide technical assistance in areas such as monitoring and evaluations, ensuring that ECE programme are evidence-based and aligned with global best practices (UNESCO, 2015).

### 3.11 Adoption of Best Practices

Nigeria can benefit from adopting best practices from successful ECE models in other countries. For instance, the holistic and play-based approach of Finland's ECE system, the bilingual education framework in Singapore, and New Zealand's child-centered and culturally responsive curriculum offer valuable lessons for improving ECE in Nigeria (Karila, 2012; Tan, 2017; Ministry of Education, New Zealand, 2017). Some examples of international best practices are provided.

#### 3.11.1 Finland

Finland's ECE system emphasizes holistic development, play-based learning, and inclusivity. The Finnish government ensures that ECE is accessible to all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, through substantial public funding. Teachers are highly trained, with mandatory qualifications and continuous professional development opportunities. This comprehensive approach has resulted in Finland's high rankings in global education indices (Karila, 2012).

Key elements of Finland's success include:

- **Holistic Approach:** Focus on social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development.
- **Play-Based Learning:** Emphasis on learning through play and exploration.
- **Inclusivity:** Equal access for all children, including those with special needs.
- **Teacher Training:** High standards for teacher education and ongoing professional development.

#### 3.11.2 Singapore

Singapore has developed a robust ECE framework that includes stringent standards for teacher qualifications, a focus on bilingual education, and extensive parental involvement. The government supports ECE through public funding and partnerships with private providers. Singapore's ECE curriculum emphasizes cognitive, social, and emotional development, preparing children for the rigorous academic environment of primary school (Tan, 2017).



Key elements of Singapore's success include:

- Bilingual Education: Early introduction of bilingualism to enhance cognitive skills.
- Parental Involvement: Strong engagement of parents in the education process.
- Regulatory Framework: Strict standards and regular inspections to ensure quality.
- Public-Private Partnerships: Collaboration with private sector to expand access.

### 3.11.3 New Zealand

New Zealand's ECE system is characterized by a strong emphasis on child-centered learning and community involvement. The government provides substantial funding for ECE and ensures that all children have access to quality early learning experiences. The New Zealand ECE curriculum, TeWhāriki, is designed to be flexible and culturally responsive, catering to the diverse needs of the country's population (Ministry of Education, New Zealand, 2017).

Key elements of New Zealand's success include:

- Child-Centered Learning: Focus on the interests and needs of each child.
- Community Involvement: Active participation of families and communities in the education process.
- Cultural Responsiveness: Inclusive curriculum that reflects the cultural diversity of the population.
- Government Support: Significant public funding and support for ECE services.

Adopting these practices involves adapting them to the local context and integrating them into Nigeria's ECE policies and programme. This can enhance the quality and accessibility of ECE services and ensure that they meet the developmental needs of Nigerian children (UNESCO, 2015).

## 4.0 Call to Action: Recommendations for Policymakers and Stakeholders

Based on the analysis, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the status of ECE in Nigeria:

### 1. Revise Policy Frameworks:

Beyond providing a national policy on Education, a section of which addresses pre-primary education as we have it currently, Government and all other stakeholders should work towards developing a comprehensive national ECE policy that aligns with international best practices and addresses local needs. This policy should set clear goals, standards, and timelines for implementation, ensuring a coordinated and an integrated approach across all levels of government (FME, 2014).

### 2. Increase Funding:

In the light of the need for increased funding of early childhood programmes, governments and all other ECE investors at all levels should enhance budgetary allocations for ECE and explore innovative financing mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships and international aid. We need to further reiterate the call by UNESCO to establish dedicated ECE funds and provide subsidies for low-income families to reduce financial barriers (UNESCO, 2015).

### 3. Improve Teacher Training:

To improve professional development among early childhood practitioners, all critical stakeholders including government and private school owners should invest in pre-service and in-service teacher training programme, focusing on modern pedagogical techniques, child psychology, and inclusive education practices. It is important to reiterate at this point the value of ensuring that training programme are designed and delivered by experts in early childhood education, as advocated by scholars such as Akinrotimi and Olowe (2016), Edozien (2020) and Ige, Omotuyole and Sebili (2020).

#### 4. Enhance Infrastructure:

Infrastructure plays a key role in the success of a good ECE programme. Therefore there is the need by government to play the expected leadership role in addressing infrastructural deficiencies in ECE centers by providing funding for the development and maintenance of facilities. In line with this recommendation, Universal Basic Education Commission advocates that all centers have access to essential resources including clean water, safe learning environments, and appropriate teaching materials (UBEC, 2018).

#### 5. Strengthen Quality Assurance:

To establish and enforce quality assurance standards for ECE centers, including regular inspections and evaluations, there is the need for government, working in collaboration with relevant professional associations such as Early Childhood Association of Nigeria (ECAN), to develop a robust monitoring and evaluation framework that incorporates feedback from all stakeholders to track progress and ensure accountability (Ogbonnaya, 2016).

#### 6. Foster Community Involvement:

In the light of the central role the community plays in the early childcare, development and education, it is expected that governments, especially at the local and state levels, engage parents, local leaders, and community organizations in planning and implementing ECE initiatives. In this regard, Olaleye, Florence and Omotayo (2009) recommend the launch advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of ECE and encourage community support.

#### 7. Ensure Effective Integration with Primary Education:

Recognizing that one of the cardinal objectives of ECE is to prepare the child for the primary level of education, there is the need to carefully align curricula and assessment practices between ECE and primary education to ensure a smooth transition for children. In this regard, UNESCO (2015) recommends developing support systems for families and children during the transition process to address any challenges.

#### 8. Leverage International Support:

ECE is a programme that mostly derives its focus, policies and direction from several global protocols, the need to collaborate with international organizations and donors to access financial and technical resources cannot be overstressed. To remain relevant and fully attuned to its vision, one cannot but reiterate the recommendation by UNICEF (2019) and UNESCO, (2015) that governments, school owners, practitioners and other stakeholders should strive to recognize best practices from successful ECE models in other countries, adapting them to the Nigerian context to enhance the quality and accessibility of ECE services.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

Scaling up Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Nigeria is a critical endeavour for improving the developmental outcomes of young children and ensuring their future success. Government intervention is essential to address the existing challenges and disparities in ECE access and quality. Addressing current challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, and developmentally inappropriate strategies, is essential for creating a robust ECE system. By revising policy frameworks, increasing funding, enhancing teacher training, and leveraging international support, and collaborating with various stakeholders, the Nigerian government can significantly improve the quality and accessibility of ECE services and also ensure that all Nigerian children have access to quality early education, setting them on a path to success. Drawing from successful ECE models worldwide provides valuable insights and strategies that can be adapted to the Nigerian context. Implementing these recommendations will contribute to a more equitable and effective ECE system, benefiting children, families, and society as a whole.

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## IMPROVING 21ST-CENTURY TEACHING SKILLS: IMPLICATION FOR EFFECTIVE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY LEARNING IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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### Abstract

*Developing the self-efficacy required to support the curricular demands necessary skills to address the learning needs of students for the 21st Century. The acquisition of modern competencies and skill is gathering increasing attention as an instrument and channel of improving the quality of instructional process to meet the demands of the present day. However, a major obstacle in bringing about the desired improvements lies in the lack of ability to manage essential 21<sup>st</sup> century learning needs, methods of teaching and plausible avenues of supporting teacher professional development. This paper focuses on the need to ascertain the quality of teaching processes in relation to available modern instructional strategies and aids by examining how such tools enhance content delivery, teacher feedback, reflective practice, and continuous improvement, the hope is to pave the way toward enhanced 21st-century teacher skills and, in turn, 21st-century learners. The project-based pedagogy was identified as a plausible 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching method and it was suggested that government through the Universal Basic Education Board should set up a team of pedagogy experts that will evaluate the impact of learning situation among others.*

**Keywords:** 21st-century, skills, teacher, development,

### Introduction

An increasingly complex society and a rapidly changing technology-based economy have posed new and demanding challenges to schools and communities alike. School systems worldwide are being asked to develop frameworks emphasizing developing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in the 21st Century. Around the world, employers and policymakers alike have argued that institutions are not “producing the twenty-first century graduates needed to compete and succeed after high school in an increasingly complex and interconnected world (Achieve, 2010). In recent times, government educational functionaries are providing guidelines designed to ensure students are prepared for entry-level careers and/or college level courses. Such indicators of readiness include completion of a preparatory curriculum, standardized test scores, and career-related skills (Sharon, Mahjabeen & Edward, 2019). However, other factors such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, collaboration, communication, digital and technological literacy can also be important determinants of success in schools and careers (Conley 2007; Dweck, Walton & Cohen 2011; Schleicher, 2012; Wurdinger & Rudolph, 2009).

Classroom instructional quality can serve as a critical lever for the perceived educational change. Many instructional strategies and traditional teaching skills are more popular for their cost-effectiveness and ease of use, but may not be able to distinguish key aspects of the 21st-century classroom environment such as student engagement, the effective use of

modern instructional devices, or the emotional factors that support child development (Bruns et al., 2016; Seidman et al., 2018)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has been of immense support in the provision modern technological and skill requirements for primary education. It would be recalled that periodic training of teachers to cope with global trend and adequate skill of educating pupils with the aid of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is attributed to UNESCO (Giannini, 2020). These international bodies also equip the school laboratories, libraries as well as set up ICT units. More so, quiz, debate and field trips are organized to enable the pupils learn outside the normal classroom setting (Promise-Adele and Egbuchelem, 2022)

### **Primary Education**

Ugwumba, Alabekee and Akueshi, (2014) stated that primary education is an education aimed at developing and transforming the child as well as the society. They maintained that it is the stage of education that creates awareness on how to read, write and manipulate figures. Therefore, it equips an individual for capacity building. Obinaju, (2013) noted that primary education is that level of education that a child attends during ages 6-11 years. She maintains that it is a foundation of other stages of education in Nigeria. Primary education is the genesis of formal education in Nigeria; it is a preparatory ground for secondary education. Obinaju, (2017) states that a child of 6-11 years of age, must attend primary education as a necessary requirement for sustainability of future success in life. The goal of primary education as enshrined in the National Policy of Education (2013) includes. (a) Inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy and ability to communicate effectively. (b) Lay a sound basis for scientific, critical and reflective thinking. (c) Promote patriotism, fairness, understanding and national unity (d) Instill social and moral norms and values in the child. (e) Develop in the child the ability to adapt to the changing environment and (f) Provide opportunity for the child to develop manipulative life skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity.

Achuonye, (2019) stated that primary education is part of formal education. It is evident that formal education begins with the primary stage which of course, in Nigeria is targeted at children 6-11 years old. Primary education is the bedrock of other formal education in Nigeria whose aim is teaching learners to be productive to their immediate environment and beyond. Primary education is considered compulsory in Nigeria. Primary school is divided into two namely; junior and senior primary school. Observation shows that common features occur at this stage of education which includes exhibition of rapid cognitive development and academic challenges among others (Anero, 2018). From the foregoing, the above definitions from various scholars, it is remarkable to note that primary education shapes the child's thinking towards development of one's self and that of his environment. Also, it is a stage of education that is done in a serene and definite environment known as 'school'.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Teacher/Teaching Skills**

There is no shortage of current definitions of 21st century skills and knowledge. In this paper we do not seek to provide another or choose one over another. Rather we share two well-known examples and pull out several common themes. In a frequently-cited example, the University of Melbourne-based and Cisco- Intel- and Microsoft-funded Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills (AT21CS) consortium—which organizes 21st century



skills, knowledge, and attitudes/values/ethics into the following four categories (Asia Society, 2010):

- Ways of Thinking: creativity/innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making, and learning to learn (or metacognition)
- Ways of Working: communication and teamwork
- Tools for Working: general knowledge and information communication technology literacy
- Living in the World: citizenship, life and career and personal and social responsibility including cultural awareness and competence

Another definition by Wagner (2008) proposes that students need seven survival skills to be prepared for 21st century life, work, and citizenship. These skills are:

- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Collaboration and leadership
- Agility and adaptability
- Initiative and entrepreneurialism
- Effective oral and written communication
- Accessing and analyzing information
- Curiosity and imagination

However, improving learning outcomes and addressing the demands of a global economy requires that education systems increase the supply of teachers with strong working knowledge of their content and the pedagogical techniques necessary to link their content with real-world application (Rustique & Stam, 2013). Researchers and practitioners agree that building an education system with “powerful learning focused on the demands of life, work, and citizenship in the 21st century” requires a strong human capital base (Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2019). In other words, preparing teachers to teach 21st Century skills must focus on the curricular demands necessary to address the real-life learning needs of students for the 21st Century (Bell et al., 2012).

### **The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning**

21<sup>st</sup> century teaching should produce a 21<sup>st</sup> century learner with global competence. A 21<sup>st</sup> century learner according to the Asia Society is defined as the student with capacity and disposition to understand and act upon issues of global significance. Per this definition, a globally competent student should be able to:

- Investigate the world beyond their immediate environment
- Recognize perspectives, others’ and their own
- Communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences
- Take action to improve conditions

These 21st century skill definitions as presented above are cross-disciplinary and relevant to many aspects of contemporary life in a complex world. Some lists emphasize technology, and others stress attitudes and values more. However, most focus on similar types of complex thinking, learning, and communication skills and all are more demanding to teach and learn than memorization and other types of rote skills. In recent years, education systems worldwide have also developed frameworks with an increased emphasis on developing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in the 21st century (Levine, 2012).

There are compelling economic and civic reasons for education systems to develop students' 21st century skills. The economic rationale is that computers and machines can cost-effectively do the sorts of jobs that people with only routine knowledge and skills can do, which means the workplace needs fewer people with only basic skill sets and more people with higher-order thinking skills. Further, supply and demand in a global rather than national or local marketplace increases competition for workers who can add value through applying non-routine, complex thinking, and communication skills to new problems and environments (Luk-Fong and Brennan, 2010).

There is also a strong civic rationale for schools to increase their focus on developing students' 21st century skills. Though students need a foundation of basic civic knowledge, rote learning, recitation of information about government and citizenship is not a sufficient way to promote civic engagement. They also need to learn how and why to be engaged citizens who think critically so that they can, for example, analyze news items, identify biases, and vote in an educated way. They need to be able to problem solve so they can propose or review policies to address social challenges (Boix-Mansilla and Jackson, 2011).

Global interest in how teaching practices and classroom processes affect student learning outcomes and their psychosocial development is growing and with good reason. Instructional quality has proven to be more strongly associated with child learning than structural aspects of schools in both Western and developing countries (Pianta et al., 2009; Chavan and Yoshikawa, 2013; Patrinos et al., 2013; Yoshikawa and Kabay, 2015). Hence the need to contemplate a pedagogy that effectively utilizes the competences of a 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher while inducing and developing the characteristics of a 21<sup>st</sup> century learner. This paper favours the use of project-based pedagogy

### **Project-based learning**

Project-Based Learning (PBL) prepares students for academic, personal, and career success and readies young people to rise to the challenges of their lives and the world they will inherit (PBL Works, 2019). This study applies the following definition: PBL is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge. In PBL, the project is central to the curriculum and a core teaching strategy through which concepts, content, and standards are taught. Projects are focused on questions or problems in which students make connections between activities, principles of a discipline, and the underlying conceptual knowledge (Grant, 2002; Parker et al., 2011). In addition, projects embody characteristics of authenticity with real-life challenges that offer solutions with the potential to be implemented (Barell, 2007; Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Boss & Krauss, 2007; Larmer & Mergendoller, 2015).

Researchers and practitioners suggest that PBL has the potential to reach the cognitive processing levels necessary for 21st Century college and careers (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), 2012; Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Boss & Krauss, 2007; Boss et al., 2011; Ross, 2012). Secondary school teachers who use PBL in their classrooms have the potential to increase student engagement and motivation while at the same time providing rigorous academic content combined with real-world applications of that knowledge in a particular industry sector. While some literature provides an examination of integrated projects "as an indicator of the rigor of teaching and learning" (Warner et al., 2015, p. 31), little is known about the effectiveness of this approach in career-themed academies. Moreover, no research describes how teachers design and



implement such projects. The available research focuses on PBL as a tool to engage students in real-world tasks that cross over into all areas of academic content. However, it may not necessarily apply to an industry theme. With a growing emphasis on schools providing a career-themed college-preparatory curriculum that prepares students to identify and solve problems, the idea of engaging teachers in PBL practices that foster depth of learning and engage students on a personal level is quite appealing.

The number of PBL studies involving teacher candidates at the higher education level is limited (Brears et al., 2008; Hartman et al., 2018; Hixson et al., 2012). However, evidence suggests that can help both pre-service and in-service teachers better engage their students with content and pedagogy in a collaborative, technology-enhanced environment designed to foster student learning (Bhattacharyya & Bhattacharya, 2009; Ertmer et al., 2014). A case study of social studies teacher candidates analyzed the impact of problem-based learning and pedagogical devices that could guide students to gain the cognitive skills required to effectively address complex problems and issues (Wynn & Okie, 2017). In this study, researchers reported that teacher candidates felt confident about planning and implementing PBL and attributed that confidence to their experience with multiple PBL activities in the methods course (Wynn & Okie, 2017). Moreover, these candidates explicitly identified the potential power of PBL to improve the learning environment in contrast to the traditional learning environment that was common in their classrooms (Wynn & Okie, 2017). Similarly, Saye and Brush (2004) studied how to support teachers in implementing PBL in secondary social studies classrooms and found that modeling, scaffolding, and collaboration were effective in helping teachers utilize PBL. The application of PBL as an integrated teaching and learning strategy in the preparation of teachers is believed to develop a level of self-efficacy required to support the curricular demands necessary to address the learning needs of students for the 21st Century (Bell, 2010; Brears et al., 2008; Mioduser & Betzer, 2007; Wurdinger & Rudolph, 2009). Drawing on Grossman et al. (2009), the goal is to enable teachers to identify the core domains of college and career-based reform models and implement high leverage practices that can support the development and implementation of 21st Century curricula. If you suppose education systems are to improve schools for the 21st Century, then they must increase the supply of teachers with strong working knowledge of their content and the pedagogical techniques necessary to link their content with real-world application. Programs must be well-designed and provide a curricular focus on the following key concepts: a collaborative, interdisciplinary instructional model aimed at dramatically increasing student engagement; career-technical standards and work-based learning approaches with academic standards and a focus on the social-emotional well-being of students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Farnan et al., 2014; Garet et al., 2001; Schleicher, 2012).

### Conclusion

Preparing students for work, citizenship, and life in the 21st century is complicated. Globalization, technology, migration, international competition, changing markets, and transnational environmental and political challenges add a new urgency to develop the skills and knowledge students' need for success in the 21st century context. The 21<sup>st</sup> century learner therefore requires more than just rote learning. To become a global competent learner, students should be taught with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in mind, using 21<sup>st</sup> century suitable pedagogy by a 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher.

### Suggestion

The following suggestion are made:

1. Pedagogy that encourages students to gain knowledge and skills through demonstration should be adopted for teaching
2. Educators, education ministries, foundations and employers prioritize in-service training for teachers, to train and retrain the teachers to make teaching and learning more engaging and productive.
3. The use of modern technology should be encouraged in classroom teaching/learning
4. The government through the Universal Basic Education Board should set up a team of pedagogy experts that will evaluate the impact of learning situation and proffer suggestions when necessary.

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## PHILOSOPHICAL TOOLS FOR SCALING UP EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the philosophical underpinnings crucial for scaling up Early Childhood Education in Nigeria, emphasizing the interconnected roles of various stakeholders. Recognizing the limitations of a purely economic or infrastructural approach, the paper argues for a robust philosophical framework grounded in constructivist and progressivist principles. This approach positions children as active agents in their learning, emphasizing play-based pedagogy, individualized learning experiences, and the social construction of knowledge. The paper analyzes the critical roles of key stakeholders such as policy makers, Educators, parents and communities in this endeavour: By embracing a constructivist and progressivist philosophy and fostering active collaboration among stakeholders, Nigeria can create a thriving ECE ecosystem that nurtures the cognitive, social, and emotional development of its youngest citizens, laying a strong foundation for a brighter future.*

### **Introduction**

Early childhood education (ECE) represents a critical foundation in human development, encompassing the formal and informal learning experiences the child receives in the formative years from birth to age eight. This critical period lays the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour, and health. It is characterized by rapid brain development and the acquisition of fundamental cognitive, social, and emotional skills that shape the child's lifelong trajectory. The field of ECE has evolved significantly over the past century, transitioning from basic childcare approaches and custodial care to sophisticated educational paradigms informed by developmental psychology, neuroscience, and pedagogical research. It is in line with this that Nigeria, in accordance with the Jomtien Declaration of Education for all (EFA), is committed to making available qualitative and comprehensive early childhood education and care for all children.

Evidences have confirmed that good ECE is one of the greatest investments that a nation can make for their children, that is, an education that can promote a strong learning foundation for children in later years (Engle et al., 2011, Nores & Barnett, 2010). United Nations (2019) affirms that ECE is one of the strongest determinants of the child's school readiness in both high-income and low-income countries. Consequently, efforts are being geared towards providing and promoting quality education for children at all levels through several policies that are put in place.

Implementation of these policies are ensured by those who have stake in the organisation. Educational stakeholders are all direct and indirect participants in an educational system, including policy makers and members of the public, who have vested interest in its functioning and outcomes (Adebayo, 2013). Recently, it was established that educational

provision is the responsibility of all stakeholders (Kufi, 2013; Takyi et al., 2013), and that stakeholders could play substantial roles in influencing the attainment of education quality by promoting the need for educational effectiveness. The National Policy on Education guaranteed stakeholders participation with a view to eliminating overlaps, and to sustain and achieve synergy among diverse stakeholder groups (FGN 2013).

In the same vein, the philosophical underpinnings of ECE have similarly progressed, moving from views of children being seen as miniature adults and as such no special need was accorded to them to being seen as passive recipients of knowledge and to further recognise them as active participants in their own learning (Keelay, 2007). This shift has profound implications for educational practice, policy, and the roles of various stakeholders in the ECE ecosystem. Contemporary philosophical perspectives in ECE emphasize the importance of play-based learning, child-centred approaches, and the integration of diverse cultural contexts in early learning environments. The Nigerian government in response to this call inaugurated the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in order to allow every child to have access to basic education.

The importance of scaling up efforts in ECE cannot be overstated. Report has it that globally, access to early childhood education (ECE) has been expanding rapidly with the most dramatic increases occurring in low- and middle-income countries however, the Nigerian statistics says otherwise. In view of the report from the International Centre for investigative report (ICIR 2023) which states that one out of three children in Nigeria is out of school with about 10.2 million children at the primary school level and only one in three children aged 36-39 months having access to Early Child Care Development Centre (ECCDE).

Despite widespread acknowledgment of ECE's benefits, access to quality programmes remains uneven across socioeconomic groups and geographic regions of Nigeria. Scaling up may involve not only expanding access but also enhancing the quality of ECE programs. This includes improving teacher training, developing evidence-based curricula, and creating supportive learning environments. It is to this end that this paper aims at examining the interplay between philosophical perspectives, stakeholders roles, and practical implementation strategies that will foster the scaling up of early childhood Education in Nigeria.

### **Early Childhood Education in Nigeria**

Historically, Nigeria gained her independence in 1960, and efforts to restructure and empower the educational system has been quite challenging. However, the educational reforms in Nigeria dated back to pre-independence in 1955 when the then Western Regional Government of Nigeria put in place the structure of compulsory Universal Primary Education scheme (UPE) that made primary education free for all children in the region (Edho, 2009). At this stage, many formal and organized preschools and child care centres were established in order to enable working mothers keep their children in safe places while they went to work (Odigie, 2016). The government was not involved with the management and running of this level of Education hence, the administration of pre-primary education continued in the hands of private proprietors until 1969 when a curriculum conference was held. At the end of the conference, the committee advocated a head-start programme for toddlers and children and nursery and kindergarten schools were to cater for the needs of children between the ages of three and five years.

The preschool programme was to allow for the smooth transition of the child from home to school as well as prepare the child for primary level of education. The preschool programme



was also meant to provide custodial care for children of working-class parents. The conference recommended that private proprietors should manage the affairs of such schools. In the 1970s, there was the urgent need for government to make more definite policies on the preparatory roles of pre-school institutions. In response to this, the federal government, in its first major National Policy on Education, in 1981, had a full section on pre primary education. In that section, pre-primary education was referred to as, “the education given in an educational institution to children aged three to five years plus, prior to their entering the primary school. Also stipulated in the National Policy on Education (2013), the purpose of pre-school education as follows:

- (i) Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school
- (ii) Preparing the child for the primary level of education
- (iii) Providing adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work, (on the farms, in the markets, offices etc)
- (iv) Inculcating social norms Inculcating in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, and the local environment, playing with toys, artistic and musical activities etc
- (v) Teaching co-operation and team spirit
- (vi) Teaching the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc, through play, and
- (vii) Teaching good habits, especially good health habits.

To fully achieve the above goals, the Nigerian government has specified in the National Policy on Education (2013) and through the UBE scheme that it would:

- a. Set and monitor minimum standard for ECCDE centres
- b. Develop and disseminate curriculum materials such as the Integrated Early Child Care Development (IECD) Policy, National Minimum Standard for the establishment of Early Child Care Education Centres, IECD Curriculum, IECD implementation Guidelines and all other materials that will enhance the implementation of ECCDE
- c. Encourage both community and private efforts in the establishment of ECCDE centres based on set standards.
- d. Make provision in teacher education programmes for specialization in early childcare and education and for retraining of teachers.
- e. Ensure that the curriculum of teacher education is oriented towards play-way method
- f. Ensure that ECCDE Centres adopt the following caregiver infant ratio: (i) Crèche shall be 1:10; (ii) Nursery 1:25
- g. Develop suitable ECCDE curriculum for nationwide implementation
- h. Supervise and control quality of ECCDE centres
- i. Make provision for the production and effective utilization of learning and instructional materials inadequate numbers, and
- j. Ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community, and to this end will:  
Develop the orthography of more Nigerian languages and Produce textbooks, supplementary readers and other instructional materials in Nigerian languages.

### **To what extent has the government ensured the implementation of the above?**

Studies have shown that there is a huge gap between policy and implementation (Abdulrahman, 2018, Salami, 2016). Although, access to ECCDE provisions has improved

in recent years through collaborative efforts of the Government and NGOs, ensuring enough access and quality education has been a major obstacle. Children from disadvantaged and marginalised areas are mostly affected by inadequate services and provisions.

In a bid to attend to these issues, the federal government, in collaboration with UNICEF, produced a national curriculum for the education of children in 2004 to cover children of ages 0-5 years plus. Subsequently, in 2013, in a bid to ensure minimum standard for ECCDE centres, a one-year Pre-Primary School curriculum was also produced. This curriculum was to serve as a guide for implementing the compulsory one-year pre-primary education. This was a milestone achieved by the government in a bid to provide free preschool education for Nigerian children. Prior to then, the provision of preschool education rested in the hands of private individuals and organisations (FGN, 1998).

In line with the above, several policy documents were provided to guide the implementation of ECE in Nigeria and they included the National Policy on Education (NERDC, 1977, 1981, 1998, 2004, 2013), the National Minimum Standard for Early Child Care Centres in Nigeria (NERDC, 2007), the National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development in Nigeria (NERDC, 2017) and the guidelines for Implementing National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development in Nigeria (FME, 2013).

In the same vein, by 2007, the National Minimum Standard for Early Child Care Centres in Nigeria (NMSECCC) was produced by Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in collaboration with United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF). The document justifies the need to set minimum standards. It further outlines the objectives, the strategies to be adopted, and the prescribed minimum standards to be upheld. It was an all encompassing document which highlighted the roles of supervision, healthcare services to be provided, stakeholders involvement and roles, human resources etc.

In 2004 the Nigerian government made provision for a one-year pre-primary education programme in the public primary schools. The Idea Early Childhood Development (IECD) commenced with the review of the curriculum for preschool education for ages 0 to 5 years to incorporate other key factors that will promote the holistic development of the child. Other factors incorporated into the curriculum included issues of provision of water, environmental sanitation, health, food, safety, protection as well as nutrition.

In the same year, the National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development in Nigeria (NPIECD) was also developed and produced by NERDC. This document confirms the deprivation, denial of child rights that the Nigerian child suffers and therefore included in the document, the justification for the policy, the policy's goal and objectives, the policy target and outcomes, the planning and development of interventions, national and state IECD co-ordinating committees, stakeholders' roles and responsibilities, the desirable practices for family, neighbourhood and media, implementation strategies and finally, the financial responsibilities and financial projections. All these aimed at improving care and support that should be given to the growing child in order to give a good head start in life.

In view of all the efforts made by the government in ensuring that the Nigerian child receives access to quality education, how has the government fared in bringing theory to practice? This is a major focus of this section.

According to Ekpo et al., (2016) in a survey carried out on the implementation of ECE Curriculum in Owerri, Imo State, it was discovered that the use of the curriculum was minimal, that is it was not adequately implemented. In the same vein, Adejobi, Omoare and

oyediran (2017), in their comparative assessment of the implementation of ECE Curriculum in public and private schools in Ogun State observed the availability of the Old Curriculum and low implementation in all the schools covered. Salami (2016) in his study on the extent of implementation of government policies about ECE in public schools in Nigeria, observed the following:

- The centres had no curriculum that guided their activities. Most of the time, the teachers either borrowed from the nearest private school (the curriculum used by the private schools is foreign based) or relied on the experience of the teachers to decide what to teach
- About 75% of the public schools in southwest part of Nigeria did not have any of the policy documents. Therefore, the teachers were not aware of the policies guiding the implementation of ECE in the country
- The only resources in the learning centres were chairs and tables for the children and caregivers, and chalkboard. Learning resources were either not supplied at all or grossly inadequate. Those that were supplied were kept out of reach of children in the name of protection from being getting spoilt.
- About 70% of the centres visited had a single teacher working with the children. There were situations in which a teacher was meant to teach the children and one other primary class at the same time.
- The learning environment was generally unattractive and lacks both indoor and outdoor playing materials. There were playing grounds for the children but none of the centres had play materials; the playgrounds were not well-kept and safe for the children.

The above submissions have revealed that as much as the government and relevant organs desire progress of the educational system, there is a great gap in the area of theory and implementation. The success of policies and goals can only be realised through its implementation. The process of adequate monitoring to ensure and enforce implementation is a major gap.

In the light of this, the next section will engage in interrogating the fundamental assumptions raised and attempting to actualise the goals using the ideologies of great Educational philosophers.

### **Philosophical Basis of Early Childhood Education**

The numerous schools of thought in philosophy cannot be exhausted in this paper, however philosophy has been a foundation upon which other disciplines emanated from. It is an indispensable tool for understanding other disciplines. Several concepts in its relation to other disciplines have been teased out of philosophy and it has brought about systematic study of ideas and issues and by implication allows individuals to perceive relationships among diverse fields of study.

philosophy has been established to relate to all subjects such as mathematics, history, religion and even early childhood education. Man's quest advanced philosophy. In classical study, philosophy was traditionally divided into three principal parts which are natural philosophy, moral philosophy (Ethics) and metaphysics philosophy (logic).

The Natural philosophy birthed the various natural sciences like physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy etc while Metaphysics birthed logic and Moral philosophy birthed social science of which is Early childhood Education.



All disciplines in social sciences have their root in philosophy. Studies in Philosophy focuses on the meaning of ideas as well as coherence and relations to other ideas. It employs critical attitude to develop human knowledge and establishes principles of rational beliefs in human beings. Philosophy opens the mind of education practitioners to allow neutrality and subject their beliefs and knowledge for further critical examination.

Early childhood education has its basis in philosophy. Educational thinkers from time immemorial have underscored the importance of basic education not only as an indispensable prerequisite for subsequent and further education but also as a necessary requirement for engendering social justice and cohesion. Plato, who lived between 427 and 347 BC was about the first to see the need and importance of the early stage of the child's development as being fundamental to his all-round growth. He advocated first stage of education, nursery schools for children between the ages of three to six years. His focus was on physical education, music, and basic intellectual training to develop a well-rounded character and in order to achieve this end, he thinks basic education should be universal (for all and sundry), it should be free and compulsory and controlled by the government. He recommended the use of play method in teaching the child at this stage. Plato was the first to divide education of the child into stages. Plato's quest to build an holistic child, stressed the need to instil courage and self-discipline in the child. This, to him, can be achieved by exposing the child to pleasure and pain through stories of great men in the society who impacted their world positively, as early as three years of life. In trying to emphasise the importance of early years, he affirmed that the beginning of any task is an important part, especially for any creature that is young and tender. It is at this pre-school stage that the child as a learner is best moulded. This prepares him for latter education (Mkpa, 1999).

Froebel (1782-1852), devoted most of his life to early childhood education. He begins from the premise that the child is an individual entity, hence educators should not apply a universal method of education to all children. He submitted that through activities of learning, the interest and abilities of the child would naturally unfold. Froebel's philosophic thought is derived from the flower metaphor and it is from this that he coined the word, 'kindergarten' which means "the children's garden", another name for pre-school. In this analogy, the growing child is compared to a growing, (flowering) plant. According to him, the child's innate tendencies, natural talents begin to unfold. Similarly, the child's teacher represents the gardener, while nature fertilizes and facilitates growth and development. These stages through which children pass could be successful or hindered, depending on the expertise of the teacher in tending the child. The duty of helping the child to bud lies with every significant adult around. The child maximises his potentials through the role of play.

Idealists philosophers believe that children are the purest expression of divinely inspired nature (Johnson, 2014). They are innocent and in that organic unity with themselves and the universe which most adults have lost as a result of their interaction with their world. To this end, the child's talent and knowledge should be applied more meaningfully to boost his moral imagination. Moral discipline is very fundamental to the idealist theory of early childhood learning because it is assumed that the child operates a universal mind. Such is supported by Odigie (2016) who concurs that discipline is aimed at developing positive behaviours and attitudes in the child through early learning. This would help the child act in accordance with societal norms and values as he grows. In view of this, the idealist's curriculum for early childhood education is based on the premise that the whole concept and practice of education should first be seen as a symbolic activity. Within the context of epistemology, symbols are not mere tools of learning, but rather, instrument of the mind. Consequently, the idealists would argue that symbols as a medium of learning and

expression is quite crucial to helping the young learner acquire knowledge. For one thing, the use of symbols in pre-school teaching creates a suitable pedagogical environment. It is also suggested that the classroom, as the environment where symbols are expressed, explained and visualized, should be made more meaningful to the child. Consequently, all that takes place in a typical nursery class should constitute an environment rich in symbols. This, they urge, can be achieved through the use of colourful pictures, diagrams, toys and other learning materials. These would help to stimulate the thoughts and feelings of the pre-schooler.

Rousseau, an Existentialist philosopher who lived between 1712 and 1778, imparted significantly the world of pedagogy. He came up with notion that education should consist less in precept than practice. Education should be child centred, focusing on the needs of the child. He broke the stages of education into 4 with infancy between 0-5years and boyhood between 6-12. Every child has inherent unique characteristic features. His ideology stands on the pedestal that every child has his intrinsic worth and by implication, the child is not a miniature adult, rather, he is a being with characteristic traits that are unique to children, a being of inherent worth and dignity for the present rather than for the future.

An ideal Rousseau's classroom teacher should be one who harmonizes his secret educational strategy with the natural conditions of a child's growth. He provides relevant and favourable experiences to the right conditioning of the pupil's behaviour and his preparation for life. An analysis of Rousseau's works on early childhood education and its implication for contemporary day pre-school learning reveals that the nature of education is natural. He believes that the child is a naturally good person who needs care and compassion. However, this belief was quite in opposition to the prevailing Christian belief of his time. The child at this time was perceived as one born with the "sin of Adam".

According to Mkpa (1999), Rousseau recognized that:

- i. Education is more than what takes place in the formal school or classroom. The whole environment of the child is a resource for learning, and there are agencies of learning other than what the teacher's life itself teaches.
- ii. The readiness of the child for new items of learning has to be watched, and no new learning task should be presented to him, until he demonstrates that he is ready. The deciding factor is his eagerness for new learning.
- iii. The child is not a miniature adult and so should not be treated as such nor should his education consist mainly of preparation for adult life which could only destroy all the joy and the excitement of learning in the child.
- iv. Each child is a unique individual and should be studied and understood as such.
- v. The teacher should cultivate affection for his pupils; he should deeply respect their individual nature, and, in general should be a sympathetic guide and adviser.

### **The role of Stakeholders in the application of Philosophical tools in Scaling up ECE**

Scaling up early childhood education requires a robust philosophical foundation that guides its implementation and ensures its effectiveness. Constructivism, with its emphasis on active learning, individualized experiences, and the social construction of knowledge, offers a powerful framework for this endeavor. Crucially, a constructivist approach recognizes the interconnected roles of various stakeholders in creating a thriving ECE ecosystem.

### Stakeholders and Their Roles in a Constructivist ECE Approach:

- **Children:** At the heart of constructivism are the children themselves, recognized as active agents in their learning. Scaling up ECE through this lens means prioritizing children's interests, curiosity, and individual learning styles. (Designing learning experiences together with children, 2012) emphasizes the importance of designing learning experiences *with* children, giving them a voice in shaping their education.
- **Educators:** In a constructivist approach, educators transition from dispensers of information to facilitators of learning. Their role involves creating stimulating environments, posing thought-provoking questions, and guiding children to construct their own understanding through exploration and interaction. (MyEssayDoc: Design an Exemplary Early Childhood Environment, 2022) suggests incorporating elements into the learning environment that reflect the natural beauty of the surroundings, encouraging children to connect with and learn from their environment.
- **Parents and Families:** Constructivism recognizes the crucial role of families as children's first teachers. Scaling up ECE requires strong partnerships with families, involving them in their child's learning journey, valuing their cultural perspectives, and providing opportunities for shared learning experiences. (MyEssayDoc: Design an Exemplary Early Childhood Environment, 2022) also highlights the importance of involving families in the design of the learning space, recognizing their unique insights and needs.
- **Communities:** Constructivism emphasizes the social nature of learning. Scaling up ECE necessitates collaboration with communities to create enriching learning opportunities beyond the classroom walls. This includes partnerships with museums, libraries, community centers, and local experts who can contribute to children's holistic development.
- **Policy-makers:** Creating a supportive ecosystem for constructivist ECE requires policy-makers to prioritize funding for teacher training, developmentally appropriate assessments, and resources that support active, inquiry-based learning environments. (Meeting the Needs of Early Childhood Professionals, 2023) points to the need for professional development opportunities for educators, equipping them with the skills to implement constructivist principles effectively.

### Challenges and Opportunities:

- **Shifting Mindsets:** Embracing a constructivist approach requires a shift from traditional, teacher-centred models of education. This necessitates ongoing professional development for educators and open communication with families and policy-makers.
- **Assessment and Evaluation:** Measuring the success of constructivist ECE requires moving beyond standardized tests to embrace authentic assessments that capture children's skills, knowledge, and dispositions as learners.
- **Equity and Access:** Scaling up constructivist ECE must prioritize equitable access for all children, ensuring that resources and opportunities are available regardless of socioeconomic background or geographic location.

### **Progressivism as a Philosophical Tool in Scaling Up Early Childhood Education: The Crucial Role of Stakeholders**

Scaling up early childhood education effectively and equitably requires a collaborative approach, bringing together various stakeholders who play a crucial role in shaping the landscape of early learning. Progressivism, with its emphasis on democratic principles, community involvement, and the holistic development of the child, provides a valuable framework for understanding and leveraging the contributions of these stakeholders.

#### **Key Stakeholders and Their Roles:**

- **Educators:** As frontline implementers of ECE, educators are central to translating progressive ideals into practice. Their understanding of child development, commitment to play-based learning, and ability to create inclusive environments are paramount. (Luff & Webster, 2014) emphasizes the importance of participatory approaches in ECE, advocating for educators' voices to be heard and their expertise valued in decision-making processes.
- **Parents and Families:** Recognizing the vital role of families in a child's development, progressivism encourages active parent engagement in ECE. This includes open communication, shared decision-making, and opportunities for families to contribute their unique perspectives and cultural capital. (Kinkead-Clark, 2017) highlights the diverse perspectives of stakeholders, including parents, on the influence of external factors on ECE, emphasizing the need for inclusive dialogue.
- **Communities:** Progressivism views education as a shared responsibility between schools and communities. Scaling up ECE requires partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and community leaders to provide resources, create enriching learning experiences, and ensure that programs are responsive to local needs. (Sagui, 2021) discusses the concept of "child leadership" within a progressive framework, suggesting that preparing children for active participation in a democratic society necessitates collaboration between schools and communities.
- **Policy-makers:** Creating a supportive ecosystem for scaled-up ECE requires policy-makers to prioritize early learning through adequate funding, developmentally appropriate standards, and policies that promote equitable access for all children. (Policy 1 - Quality Pre-K | 3 Practices and 3 Policies, 2018) provides an example of policy recommendations advocating for high-quality pre-K, highlighting the role of policy-makers in shaping the ECE landscape.
- **Researchers:** Evidence-based decision-making is crucial for effective scaling up. Researchers contribute by studying the impact of different ECE approaches, identifying best practices, and informing policy and practice with data-driven insights.

#### **Fostering Collaboration and Shared Vision:**

- **Open Dialogue and Communication:** Creating platforms for regular communication and collaboration among stakeholders is essential for building consensus, addressing concerns, and ensuring that everyone's voice is heard.

- **Professional Development and Training:** Equipping educators, administrators, and policy-makers with the knowledge and skills to implement progressive principles in ECE is crucial for successful scaling up.
- **Community Engagement and Outreach:** Actively involving families and communities in the design, implementation, and evaluation of ECE programs fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility.

### Conclusion

Scaling up Early Childhood Education in Nigeria is not merely a logistical challenge of making policies and training more teachers; it demands a fundamental shift in our understanding of early learning and the roles various stakeholders must play. This paper has argued for the adoption of a robust philosophical framework grounded in constructivist and progressivist principles, recognizing children as active agents in their learning journey.

By embracing these theories, there is a paradigm shift, that is moving away from rote memorization and standardized testing towards a system that values exploration, creativity, and the social construction of knowledge. This requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders: policymakers enacting supportive legislation and ensuring equitable resource allocation; educators embracing their roles as facilitators of learning; parents and families actively engaging in their children's education; and communities providing enriching experiences beyond the classroom.

The task is undeniably complex, requiring a sustained commitment to collaboration, innovation, and ongoing dialogue. However, the potential rewards are immeasurable. By investing in children and providing them with a strong foundation in early childhood education, there is a hope of brighter future for Nigeria, one characterized by critical thinking, creativity, and a lifelong love of learning.

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**LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AS CORRELATE OF CHILDREN'S INTEREST  
AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN NUMERACY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT  
IN PUBLIC EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION  
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**Abstract**

*This study investigates the relationship between learning environment, children's interest and academic achievement in numeracy skills development in public Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) Centres. A correlational design was adopted with 120 children from Nursery III, selected from twelve (12) randomly sampled ECDE centres across the six (6) districts of Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State (two ECDE centres per district). The Classroom Environment and Children's Interest and Academic Achievement in Numeracy (CECIAAN) questionnaire was used for data collection. Two null hypotheses were tested at a .05 alpha level of significance. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used for data analysis. The results showed significant positive relationships between learning environment and children's interest and academic achievement in numeracy. Based on the findings, it is recommended that caregivers create stimulating and well-organized learning environments that foster exploration and curiosity in children. This can be achieved by incorporating engaging numeracy activities in lesson planning and utilizing a variety of teaching strategies. Additionally, policymakers should develop guidelines for ECDE classroom environments. These guidelines should establish clear standards for the physical layout, resources, and teacher-to-children ratios within ECDE Centres.*

**Keywords:** Classroom environment, interest, numeracy skills, academic achievement

**INTRODUCTION**

Education is the single most important instrument for national development. Without the enlightenment education provides, one could imagine where the world and people would have been stuck in perpetual cycle of stagnation and ignorance. This is because education is the vehicle which drives technological, social, political and economic development of any nation. It is a means by which the society ensures its stability. It is through the educational system that young members of the society are taught the expected behaviour. Through the educational system, people are taught to meet changing situations. Schools are opened by communities not only to preserve the culture and maintain continuity but also to bring about progressive change. Education among other social institutions, is a vehicle for changing the society through inculcating in the learners the right attitude and norm through learning.

Learning is an important feature in our humanity as it is through learning that knowledge is acquired. By natural endowment, the human being has a more advanced nervous system and thus a higher capacity to learn. It is through learning therefore that man is better equipped for adaptive behaviour and survival within the environment. The environment of Early Childhood Care Development Education (ECDE) Centres have been observed to influence various facets of the teaching and learning processes that happen in it. Given the magnitude of the importance of both the indoor and outdoor environments to the care, development, and education of preschool children, there are environmental standards by which ECDE Centres are established. These standards help to enhance the quality of services provided at the Centre. Emphasizing on the quality of preschool environments, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018) noted that, the foundation for learning and continuous development depends on a nurturing and stimulating environment. Therefore, an ECDE Centre ought to be built and equipped to be child-friendly, teacher enabling, aesthetically pleasing, and supportive of diverse teaching and learning activities.

Learning environment covers a range of learning aspects that include the relationship that exists among learners themselves and their teachers. The learning environment attempts to spell out the teacher's expectations on the children's motivation for effective learning, the strategies that should be employed for effective teaching, the kind of materials that would motivate children to have greater interest in learning, and the social behaviour that should be exhibited. Learning environment may be considered to be associated with good planning, effective teaching, teacher's concern for the children's welfare, and the beauty that is reflected in the classroom.

There is growing awareness on the importance of various learning activities in classrooms that children can carry out during school so everything is well prepared (Fardlillah & Suryono, 2018). Early childhood education institutions can prepare learning models that are used and environments that can support early learning. Learning that children acquire at schools cannot be separated from the physical environment of the classroom because almost every day children acquire these activities in the classroom. In the opinion of Malik and Rizvi (2018), learning environment is a shared perception of the pupils and sometimes of the teachers in that environment. They also stated that the classroom psychological or social environment refers to the climate or atmosphere of a class as a social group that potentially influences what learners learn. A classroom setting has two major components, namely, physical component and human component. Physical component comprises all the physical objects present in the classroom for instance, black board, furniture, lightings, projector, books, computers among others, whereas the human component comprises of individuals, teachers and children in the classroom.

Academic achievement represents performance outcomes that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environments (Ezike, 2018). Academic achievement is the ability to study and remember facts and being able to communicate his knowledge orally or in written form even in an examination condition (Kpolovie, Joe & Okoto, 2014). According to Akunne and Anyamene (2021), it has been observed that one common challenge facing teachers is how to introduce and teach in a manner that would generate interest in their students. Dewey much earlier in 1913 argued that if interest can be secured in a given set of facts or ideas, it will be perfectly sure that children will direct their attention or energies towards mastering them. He further claimed that a strong interest will sustain an individual's attention and lead to sustained effort in accomplishing an academic goal. Learning environment provides



children with effective instruction and promotes smooth teaching-learning process and affect academic achievement positively. This could influence the level of interest among learners in ECDE Centres. Ezike (2018) defined interest as a psychological state of having an affective reaction to and focus attention for particular content and or the relatively enduring predisposition to engage repeatedly in particular classes of objects, events or ideas. The power of learning environment is expressed in the formulation of situational interest as key factor in the enhancement of learner's engagement. Interest is an affective reaction triggered by specific or appealing stimuli in the environment. It can be enhanced through the manipulation or modification of certain aspects of the learning environment and contextual factors such as teaching strategies, task presentation and structuring of learning experiences. According to Akinso cited in Akunne and Anyamene (2021) interest is the affective reaction triggered by specific or appealing stimuli in the learning environment. Interest is said to be enhanced through the manipulation or modification of certain aspects of the learning environment and contextual factors such as teaching strategies, task presentation and structuring of learning experiences. Empirical studies by Ikegbusi (2019), Ikegbusi, Egwu and Iheanacho (2021) have maintained that the learning environment plays a vital role in determining how learners perform or respond to circumstances and situations around them. This implied that no society is void of environmental influences. The learning environment determines to a large extent how a pupil behaves and interacts, that is to say that the environment in which one finds themselves tends to mold their behaviour so as to meet the demands of life whether negatively or positively.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Children's interest in numeracy and their overall performance in the learning environment of early childcare and development education centres (ECDE) seems to have led to the outcry by both parents and teachers. This is case where most learners tend to lack learning and numerical culture among others. Parents groan under the financial burden of repeated registration of their children for the same examination as a result of previous failures. More so, caregivers feel frustrated since their effectiveness is largely judged by the society based on the learning outcomes which face steady decline. Many parents urge their wards to consider going to school as a pleasant adventure and the turn-out is excitement; after a few months or years. The circumstance surrounding the learners like or dislike for schooling have been found to be the classroom learning environment. Similarly, in some locations in Plateau state, factors such as the classroom, school location, lack of instructional facilities, large class size overtime have been found to affect the academic achievement, interest and retention level of learners. Some classrooms are poorly ventilated, poor lighting and sound system, large class size, and so on. Contrary to standards, the infrastructure of most public ECDE Centres in urban, suburban, and rural settlements in the state are dilapidated. This bothers stakeholders in the education sector because in Plateau State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The broad purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between learning environment and children's interest and academic achievement in numeracy skills development in public ECDE Centres in Pankshin Local Government Area. Specifically, the study will investigate

1. The relationship between learning environment and children's interest in numeracy skills development in public ECDE Centres in Pankshin Local Government Area

2. The relationship between learning environment and children's academic achievement in numeracy skills development in public ECDE Centres in Pankshin Local Government Area

## Research Hypothesis

The following research questions will guide the study.

1. There is no significant relationship between learning environment and children's interest in numeracy skills development
2. There is no significant relationship between learning environment and children's academic achievement in numeracy

## Significance

Learning environment is very important in the development of children at home and school. In the school, environment determines whether a child will be happy and ready to learn or turn into a truant. Learning environments are extremely important for both the child and caregiver. The physical, social and psychological or emotional environments must be such that every aspect of a child's development is warmly accommodated. It is therefore important for caregivers, proprietors, parents and administrators to understand this in order to know how to organize their learning environments to increase children's interest and academic achievement in numeracy.

## Methodology

This study adopted a correlational research design. The target population are children in all the public ECDE centres in Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. Twelve (12) ECDE centres were sampled from six (6) randomly selected across six (6) districts of Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. The instrument used for data collection was the Classroom Environment and Children Interest and academic achievement in Numeracy (CECIAAN) questionnaire. The researcher distributed the CECIAAN questionnaire to caregiver in the selected ECDE centres. Caregivers complete the questionnaire sections.

## Results

HO1: There is no significant relationship between classroom environment and children's interest in numeracy skills development in public early childhood care development and education centres in Pankshin Local government area of Plateau State. This hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and the result is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient showing the relationship between classroom environment and children's interest in numeracy in public early childhood care development and education centres in Pankshin Local government area of Plateau State.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std.Dev</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>Remark</i>
Learning environment	120	65.67	7.30	.191	.005	Significant

Children's interest	120	7.12	2.82
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Results of analysis presented in table 1 show that the correlation coefficient(r) is significant at  $P < .05$  ( $r = .191$ ,  $P < .05$ ). This Implies that the null hypothesis of no significant relationship is rejected indicating a relationship between classroom environment and children's' interest in numeracy public early childhood care development and education centres in Pankshin Local government area of Plateau State.

**HO2:** There is no significant relationship between learning environment and children's' academic achievement in numeracy skills development in public ECDE Centres in Pankshin Local Government Area.

**Table 2:** Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient showing the relationship between learning environment and children's academic achievement in numeracy in public ECDE Centres in Pankshin Local Government Area.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std.Dev</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>Remark</i>
Learning environment	120	1.37	.483	.12	.031	Significant
Academic achievement	120	7.12	2.82			

Result of analysis shown in table 2 reveals that the correlation (r) is significant at  $P < .05$  ( $r = .12$ ,  $P < .05$ ). This implies that the null hypothesis of no significant relationship is rejected indicating a significant relationship between classroom environment and children's academic achievement in numeracy in public early childhood care development and education centres in Pankshin Local government area of Plateau State.

## Discussion

This study was embarked on to seek if a relationship exists between one independent variable (classroom environment) and two dependent variables (Children's' interest and academic achievement in numeracy). Results show that there was a positive significant relationship between classroom environment and children's interest and academic achievement. This finding is consonance with those of Taylor and Vlastos (2009) in Boniface U.E (2018) who wrote that classroom physical environment acts as a 'silent curriculum', Ekpo et al (2009) found that classroom climate had a significant relationship with academic achievement in Social Studies, Sang (2013) working with preschool children in Uasin Gishu county Kenya found that preschool children in favourable classroom environment had better performance in Mathematics (with a mean score 94.85) than their counterparts in unfavourable classroom environment (mean 48.03).Most scholars agree that students' academic achievement, interest and their retention level vary with learning condition.

## Conclusion

From the result of the study, it could be concluded that learning environment is a vital factor that can affect children's interest in learning. Interest has the potential to dictate

the level of children's motivation, academic achievement and subsequent commitment in any activity.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, which revealed a positive relationship between classroom environment and children's interest and academic achievement in numeracy skills development. I hereby recommend that:

- Care givers should enhance classroom design to create a stimulating and well-organized learning environment that fosters exploration and curiosity. This could involve incorporating age-appropriate numeracy materials like counting blocks, puzzles, and manipulatives in designated activity areas.
- Caregivers should also incorporate engaging numeracy activities in planning lessons that utilizes varieties of teaching strategies, such as games, songs, and hands-on activities to make learning numeracy concepts fun and interactive to children.
- Policymakers should develop guidelines for ECDE classroom environment and establish clear guidelines and standards for the physical layout, resources, and teacher-to-children ratios within ECDE centres. This will ensure consistent quality and promote optimal learning environments. Sufficient resources for ECDE centres to acquire age-appropriate learning materials and maintain a stimulating classroom environment for learning efficiency.

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**PERCEPTION OF WESTERN EDUCATION AMONG ALMAJIRI CHILDREN IN  
LAFIAGI, EDU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KWARA STATE**

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**Abstract**

*The research work was carried out to investigate the Almajiri children's perceptions to Western Education in Lafiagi, Edu local government Area of Kwara State. The population of the study was all the Almajiri children in Ilorin metropolis. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select 50 Almajiri children across 4 areas within Lafiagi, Edu Local Government, Kwara State were selected to participate in the study. Three research questions were raised and answered and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the conduct of the research. A well-structured questionnaire was used to collect relevant information from the randomly selected Almajiri children while the data collected was carefully analyzed through the use of descriptive and inferential statistics at 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study concluded that; age and schooling of Almajiri children have no significant influence on their perception of Western Education, while gender was found to have a significant influence on the perception of Almajiri children of Western Education in Lafiagi, Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State. Based on the findings of this research, it was therefore recommended among others that;*

- i. The state and local government should make a policy to create awareness among the Almajiri in the state on the importance of Western Education and the need for parents to enroll their children.*
- ii. Also, parent of Almajiri should be encouraged through subsidize the integrated schooling system for Almajiri irrespective of their age bracket.*

**Keywords:** Almajiri Children, Western Education, Perception

**Introduction**

The formal and informal educational systems are integral to the socio-cultural fabric in urban centers in Northern Nigeria. The Almajiri School, an informal educational system found throughout Northern Nigeria, is a significant part of mixed-use activities in towns and cities. "Almajiri" is a Hausa word meaning pupil or student, derived from the Arabic word "al-muhajir," which refers to a migrant journeying for a treasured purpose (Adamu, 2016; Shehu, 2017; Yahaya, 2018).

The Almajiri system, originating in the pre-colonial era, was initially designed to educate in Islamic principles (Bano, 2016). Traditionally located in rural areas near farmlands, the system is now seen in urban areas, with students resorting to begging and scavenging for food (Odumosu, 2018). The schools' rural location allows for cultivation and shelter provisions, helping them to sustain themselves (Gomment, 2017). The system, aimed at educating in Islamic principles, has evolved into a struggle for survival, deviating from its original purpose (Iliyas & Olanipekun, 2017).



In 2016, the federal government of Nigeria implemented a National Policy on Education, which incorporated Qur'anic Schools into the modern school system. A year later, in 2018, the Kano state government launched a plan aimed at enhancing the legal and operational aspects of the system. This initiative was prompted by the longstanding presence of Almajiri schools in the Kano metropolitan area, influenced by its Islamic heritage and historical ties to the Arab city-states and empires of Northern Africa, including Morocco, Libya, Egypt, and Sudan. Currently, there are approximately 5,000 Almajiri schools in the Kano Metropolitan area (Kano State Ministry of Education, 2016).

The Almajiri system, prevalent in Northern Nigeria, faces integration challenges with Western Education due to spatial, framework, and locational issues (Isiaka, 2015; Yusha'u, 2018; Aliyu, 2018). Qur'anic education in Hausa land historically occurred in urban settings or mosques, facilitated by "Malam" teachers (Abraham and Canhan, 2018; Alamin, 2017). Despite the colonial introduction of Western Education, the Qur'anic schools persisted without government funding (Abraham and Canhan, 2018). This enduring educational system underscores the historical and cultural significance of Quranic education in the region.

The Al-majiri system in Kwara State, Nigeria, originated in the 11th century in Kanem-Borno and was later adopted in the Sokoto Caliphate after Sheikh „Uthman Dan Fodio's Jihad. The system was supported by state resources and various stakeholders, including the community, parents, and the pupils. The products of the system became teachers, Imams, and government officials during the pre and post-colonial era in Northern Nigeria. Additionally, they played essential roles during the colonial period, as Ajami, the writing and reading of the Hausa language in the Arabic alphabet, was widely used. This led to their recruitment as clerks and office attendants by the British colonial authorities. Upholding its religious and moral importance, Qur'anic education in post-independence Nigeria has relied on the efforts of pupils and teachers due to inadequate government assistance. (Abdul Qadir, 2015).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Almajiri children in Nigeria face significant challenges, often dropping out of Quranic education due to hardship and living in impoverished conditions. They are often seen begging for alms and food, and many are not able to meet their basic needs. One of the issues they face is the perception that Western Education conflicts with their religious beliefs and traditions, which hinders efforts to improve their living conditions. Research on Almajiri and their perceptions of Western Education has been limited, particularly in Kwara State. Therefore, a study in Lafiagi, Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State aims to address this gap and contribute to the existing body of knowledge on this topic. The study seeks to provide relevant suggestions for the government and society to address the challenges faced by the Almajiri and offer potential solutions to improve their living conditions.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The broad objective of this study was to examine the Almajiri children's perceptions to western education in Lafiagi, Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Specifically, the objective of the research was to;

- i. examine the perception of Almajiri children of Western Education
- ii. determine if there is a significant difference on the perception of Almajiri children of Western Education based on age.
- iii. determine if there is a significant difference on the perception of Almajiri children of western education based on gender

- iv. determine if there is a significant difference on the perception of Almajiri children of Western Education based on schooling

## Research Questions

This research question was generated to guide the conduct of the study.

1. What is the perception of Almajiri children of Western Education in Lafiagi, Edu LGA of Kwara State?

## Research Hypotheses

This hypothesis guided the conduct of the study.

- H01:** There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female Almajiri children of Western Education in Lafiagi, Edu Local Government Area Kwara State.
- H02:** There is no significant difference in the perception of Almajiri children on Western Education based on age in Lafiagi, Edu Local Government Area Kwara State.
- H03:** There is no significant difference in the perception of Almajiri children on Western Education based on schooling in Lafiagi, Edu Local Government Area Kwara State.

## Methodology

In this study, the survey method was used. This method made it possible to collect information from teachers about the Almajiri children's perceptions to Western education in Lafiagi, Edu local government Area of Kwara State. The population of the study was all the Almajiri children in Ilorin metropolis. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select 50 Almajiri children across 4 areas within Lafiagi, Edu Local Government, Kwara State were selected to participate in the study. Three research questions were raised and answered and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the conduct of the research. A well-structured questionnaire was used to collect relevant information from the randomly selected Almajiri children while the data collected was carefully analyzed through the use of descriptive and inferential statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The questionnaire consists of two sections (A and B). Section 'A' seeks for personal information of respondents and section B contains structured question items. The items on the questionnaire were arranged using the Likert scale type of True/False. The instrument was re-administered on the same subject after two weeks interval and a reliability co-efficient of 0.92 was obtained which was considered reliable for the study.

## Data Analysis

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics showing responses on Almajiri children's perceptions on Western Education.

S/N	Items	True (%)	False (%)	Mean (x)	Rmk
1	Western school system only takes from me and does not give me.	49(98.0)	1(2.0)	2.98	Agree
2	There are a lot of benefits to gain in Qu'ranic school than in Western school.	49(98.0)	1(2.0)	2.98	Agree
3	Western Education is expensive compared to Qu'ranic education.	39(78.0)	11(22.0)	2.78	Agree
4	It will take a very long time before I make money if I go to school.	18(36.0)	32(64.0)	2.36	Agree

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5	Western schools are too difficult to understand.	48(96.0)	2(4.0)	2.96	Agree
6	Western Education will make me corrupt.	37(74.0)	13(26.0)	2.74	Agree
7	Western Education prevents Islamic teachers from achieving their aims	11(22.0)	39(78.0)	2.22	Agree
8	Western Education builds self-confidence in people.	30(60.0)	20(40.0)	2.60	Agree
9	Western Education provides a better way of life.	45(90.0)	5(10.0)	2.90	Agree
10	Western Education prevents Islamic teacher from achieving their goals.	24(48.0)	26(52.0)	3.48	Agree
11	Western Education supports religious belief.	18(36)	32(64.0)	2.36	Agree
12	Western Education gives freedom to children.	28(56.0)	22(44.0)	2.66	Agree
13	Great leaders are made through Western Education.	24(48.0)	26(52.0)	3.48	Agree
14	There is no discipline in the Western Education system as in the Qu'ranic system of education.	29(58.0)	21(42.0)	2.58	Agree
15	Full knowledge about my religion is not well taught in Western Education.	23(46.0)	27(54.0)	2.46	Agree
16	Western Education changes one religion.	5(10.0)	45(90.0)	2.10	Agree
17	Western Education is meant for whites	30(60.0)	20(40.0)	2.20	Agree
18	Culture is being promoted through Western Education.	17(34.0)	33(66.0)	3.34	Agree
19	Western Education gives opportunities to get a good job.	44(88.0)	6(12.0)	2.88	Agree
20	Western Education promotes morality and good conduct.	48(96.0)	2(4.0)	2.96	
<b>Aggregate Mean Score</b>				<b>2.85</b>	

The analysis of respondents' responses as depicted in table 1 above shows that Almajiri children have a negative perception of western education in Lafiagi, Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State. Based on the analyzed data, the mean scores in each of the items were above the 2.50 criterion mean value which implies that the majority of the respondents (Almajiri children) perceive Western Education as a strong barrier to the practice of their religion (Islam). It was believed that Western education would make most of the children not to be conscious of their duties to Almighty Allah. From the table, 98.0% of the respondents said true to statement one that the Western school system only takes from me and does not give me while only 2.0% disagree. Also, in response to item 2, 98.0% disagree with the statement that there is a lot of benefit to gain in Quranic School than in Western schools, while 2.0% agree. The mean scores on each of the items analyzed were above the criterion mean value of 2.50 which implies that respondent has negative perceptions of Western education.

Item 6 states that Western school is too difficult to understand 37(74.0%) of the respondents agree while 13 (26.0%) disagree with the mean score of 2.80. also, the next item states that Western education prevents Islamic teachers from achieving their aims 48.0% of the respondents chose agree (true) while 52.0% said false with a mean score of 3.10 which is above the 2.50 criterion mean value. In response to the next items, 36.0% agree that Western education supports religious belief while 64.0% disagree. It shows clearly that Almajiri children have a negative perception of western education as the majority of them believe

that no discipline in the western education system as in the Qu'ranic system of education. The aggregate mean for the entire items is 2.86 which is also above the 2.50 criterion mean which implies that the majority of respondents has a negative perception of western education in Lafiagi Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State.

## Hypothesis Testing

**Table 2:** *There is no significant difference in the perception of Almajiri children on Western Education based on age*

Variables	N	Mean	Std.D	t	Df	Sig.	Remark
Age							
5-9	20	5.601	2.401				
10-14	15	4.322	3.021	3.160	0.682	0.046	Significant
15 & above	15	4.301	2.462				

Table 2 shows that there was no significant difference between the gender of Almajiri children ( $t=3.160$ ;  $df=48$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). Therefore, hypothesis one was not rejected. This implies that the age of Almajiri children has no significant influence on their perception on western education in Lafiagi, Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State.

**Table 3:** *There is no significant difference in the perception of Almajiri children on Western Education based on gender.*

Variables	N	Mean	Std.D	T	Df	Sig.	Remark
Gender							
Male	23	15.682	2.602	2.03	48	0.681	Not Significant
Female	27	14.241	3.411				

Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference between the gender of Almajiri children and their perception of western education ( $t=2.03$ ;  $df=48$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). Therefore, hypothesis two is hereby not rejected since the value of 0.68 is greater and more significant to the chosen 0.05 alpha level of significance. This implies that the gender of Almajiri children has a significant influence on their perception on western education.

**Table 4:** *There is no significant difference in the perception of Almajiri children on Western Education based on schooling in Lafiagi, Edu Local Government Area Kwara State*

Variables	N	Mean	Std.D	T	Df	Sig.	Remark
Schooling							
True	32	11.164	3.450	1.842	48	0.913	Not Significant
False	18	6.23	2.823				Ho <sub>3</sub>

Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference between schooling and the perception of Almajiri children of Western Education ( $t=1.84$ ;  $df=48$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). Therefore, hypothesis three is hereby accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the perception of Almajiri children on western education based on schooling in Lafiagi, Edu Local Government Area Kwara State.

### Summary of Findings

Based on the analysed data it was gathered that;

- There was no significant difference in the perception of Almajiri children on western education based on age.
- There was a significant difference in the perception of male and female Almajiri children to western education.
- There was no significant difference in the perception of Almajiri children on western education based on schooling in Lafiagi, Edu Local Government Area Kwara State

### Discussion of Findings

In this chapter, the discussions of findings were presented based on an authoritative empirical review to provide further support for the research work's conclusions. The analysis revealed that Almajiri children in Lafiagi, Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State hold a negative perception towards Western Education. Several factors accounted for this negative perception, including religious barriers/practices, parental socioeconomic status (such as level of income, education, and occupation), age of the respondents, and traditional beliefs.

The findings indicate that the religious practices and cultural backgrounds of the Almajiri significantly influence their perceptions of Western Education. It was observed that the religious beliefs of the Almajiri, a predominantly Muslim group, led them to perceive Western Education as a form of Christian education. As a result, religious extremism and fanaticism played a substantial role in shaping their perceptions. These findings align with previous research conducted by Yusuf (2018), Lawal (2018), and Muhammad (2019), which similarly concluded that religious practices and beliefs were statistically associated with Almajiri children's attitudes toward Western Education in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the study revealed that the age and gender of the Almajiri also influence their perceptions of western education. It was found that the age and gender (boys or girls) of Almajiri children have an impact on their views of Western Education. This supports the findings of Ahmed (2018) and Ali (2016), who indicated that gender determines the level of enrollment in Western Education among Almajiri children. Additionally, Adebayo (2016) and Muhammad (2018) reported that age determines the level of school enrollment among Almajiri children in Western Education. Moreover, the study found no significant difference in the perception of Almajiri children towards Western Education based on their attendance at schools in Lafiagi, Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State, suggesting that school attendance has no significant influence on their perceptions.

### Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The provision of Western Education to Almajiri was considered a significant obstacle to their way of life and sustenance.
2. This form of education was believed to contradict their religious beliefs and traditional practices in the Almajiri educational system in the northern region.
3. The research findings concluded that age and schooling did not significantly influence the perception of Western education among Almajiri children.

4. On the other hand, gender was found to have a significant impact on how Almajiri children perceive Western education in Lafiagi, Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn in this study, the following recommendations are made:

- 1) The state and local government should create a policy to raise awareness among the Almajiri in the state about the importance of Western Education. This should also emphasize the need for parents to enroll their children in school.
- 2) Parents of Almajiri children should be encouraged through subsidized integrated schooling systems, regardless of their age.
- 3) There is a need for comprehensive broadcast programs in the language of the Almajiri community to further raise awareness and educate them about the benefits of the Western Education system. Additionally, efforts should be made to address gender stereotypes in education.

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## ENHANCING EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE, DEVELOPMENT, AND EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES

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### Abstract:

*This paper explores the crucial role of libraries in improving the status of early childhood care, development, and education in Nigeria. It discusses the challenges facing early childhood education in the country and highlights the potential of libraries as invaluable resources for supporting the holistic development of young children. Drawing on current research and literature, this paper provides insights into the various ways libraries can contribute to enhancing early childhood education in Nigeria, including access to educational materials, literacy promotion, and community engagement. Additionally, it examines the importance of collaboration between libraries, educational institutions, and government agencies in implementing effective strategies to leverage libraries for the benefit of early childhood education. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature and empirical evidence, this paper offers practical recommendations for policymakers, educators, and library professionals to maximize the role of libraries in advancing early childhood care, development, and education in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** early childhood education, libraries, Nigeria, literacy, community engagement

### Introduction

Early childhood care, development, and education are critical components of a nation's human capital development agenda (UNESCO, 2020). However, in Nigeria, like many other developing countries, early childhood education faces numerous challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, limited access to quality educational resources, and insufficient support for holistic child development (Ogunyemi & Ojebisi, 2019). In this context, libraries emerge as potential allies in addressing these challenges and enhancing the quality of early childhood education in Nigeria. This paper explores the role of libraries in improving the status of early childhood care, development, and education in Nigeria, highlighting the importance of leveraging library resources and services to support the holistic development of young children.

### Challenges in Early Childhood Education in Nigeria

Nigeria's early childhood education sector faces several challenges that hinder its ability to provide quality care and education to young children. These challenges include inadequate funding, lack of trained personnel, poor infrastructure, and limited access to educational materials (Ezeani & Nwagbo, 2018). Additionally, socio-cultural factors such as poverty, gender inequality, and cultural beliefs about early childhood education contribute to the marginalization of young children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds

(Okeke, 2017). Addressing these challenges requires multifaceted approaches that involve collaboration between government agencies, educational institutions, and other stakeholders, including libraries. This implies that the early childhood education sector in Nigeria faces obstacles including insufficient funding, personnel shortages, and infrastructure limitations, hindering its ability to provide quality care and education. Socio-cultural factors like poverty and gender disparities worsen the marginalization of young children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Resolving these issues requires cooperation between government bodies, educational institutions, and stakeholders such as libraries.

### **The Role of Libraries in Early Childhood Education**

Libraries play a crucial role in supporting early childhood care, development, and education by providing access to a wide range of educational resources and services. As repositories of knowledge, libraries offer children and their caregivers opportunities for exploration, learning, and engagement (Schwartz, 2021). Through age-appropriate books, educational toys, storytelling sessions, and interactive programs, libraries contribute to children's cognitive, social, emotional, and language development (Senechal & LeFevre, 2014). Moreover, libraries serve as community hubs where families can access information, connect with other parents, and participate in educational activities (Burke & Brown, 2019). By fostering a culture of reading and lifelong learning, libraries lay the foundation for children's academic success and overall well-being (Golinkoff et al., 2019).

Here we can see that Libraries are essential for supporting early childhood development by offering a diverse range of educational resources and services. They provide children and caregivers with opportunities for learning and engagement through books, toys, storytelling sessions, and interactive programs. Additionally, libraries serve as community hubs where families can access information, connect with others, and participate in educational activities. By promoting a culture of reading and lifelong learning, libraries contribute significantly to children's academic success and overall well-being.

### **Strategies for Leveraging Libraries in Nigeria**

To maximize the potential of libraries in enhancing early childhood education in Nigeria, it is essential to implement strategic initiatives that promote collaboration, innovation, and sustainability. First and foremost, there is a need to strengthen the integration of libraries into the early childhood education system, ensuring that libraries are accessible to all children, regardless of their socio-economic background (Robinson et al., 2020). This may involve establishing library corners in early childhood centers, conducting outreach programs in underserved communities, and training library staff to cater to the needs of young children and their families (Muijs, 2017). To maximize the contribution of libraries to improving early childhood education in Nigeria, it's essential to implement strategic initiatives that encourage collaboration, innovation, and long-term viability. A key aspect of this is integrating libraries smoothly into the early childhood education framework, guaranteeing access for all children regardless of their economic circumstances. This might involve initiatives like creating library spaces within early childhood facilities, organizing outreach efforts in underserved areas, and providing specialized training for library staff to effectively support young children and their families.

Furthermore, libraries can leverage digital technologies to expand their reach and enhance the delivery of educational content and services to young children (Farrell & Zitkus, 2018).

By digitizing their collections, developing online platforms for early literacy activities, and providing virtual programming, libraries can overcome barriers of access and promote equitable learning opportunities for all children (Neuman & Celano, 2020). Additionally, libraries can collaborate with local stakeholders, including schools, NGOs, and government agencies, to develop comprehensive early childhood literacy initiatives that address the specific needs of Nigerian children (Perry et al., 2016). It is worth noting that Libraries have the potential to utilize digital technologies to broaden their impact and improve the provision of educational resources and services to young children. Through initiatives such as digitizing collections, creating online platforms for early literacy activities, and offering virtual programming, libraries can overcome accessibility barriers and foster equitable learning opportunities for all children. Moreover, collaborating with local partners like schools, NGOs, and government agencies enables libraries to develop holistic early childhood literacy programs tailored to the unique needs of Nigerian children.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, libraries have the potential to significantly contribute to the improvement of early childhood care, development, and education in Nigeria. By providing access to educational resources, promoting literacy, and fostering community engagement, libraries play a crucial role in supporting the holistic development of young children. However, realizing this potential requires concerted efforts from policymakers, educators, library professionals, and other stakeholders to prioritize early childhood education and invest in library services and infrastructure. Through collaborative partnerships and innovative approaches, Nigeria can harness the power of libraries to ensure that all children have access to quality early childhood care and education, laying the foundation for their future success and well-being.

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## INTEGRATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RESEARCH DATA TOWARDS PROMOTING QUALITY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN NIGERIAN BASIC SCHOOLS

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### Abstract

*From observation and research, it is of no doubt that children with disabilities are not fully enjoying equal rights in terms of quality education. This paper adopted systematic review as it reviewed some results that had been gathered through empirical researches on inclusive education for children with disabilities in Nigeria. The data generated revealed the state of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Nigerian public basic schools. It revealed that Nigeria as a country is still putting efforts in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 4 which focus on education and has its major aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all children including children with disabilities. It is recommended that the research data generated should be properly integrated and implemented by Nigerian Government and this can be done through collaboration of government and stakeholders in education with researchers across tertiary institutions or individual researchers in education, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations. The government should review the policy on education in line with the data generated by the researchers. It would enable proper accommodation and effective implementation of inclusive education in Nigerian Basic Schools.*

**Keywords:** Research, Data, inclusive education, children with disabilities, integration, implementation

### Introduction

Education is one of the rights that all children in every community must be accorded. This is why researchers are advocating for quality inclusive education for children with disabilities in Nigeria. Inclusive education is a way of assuring presence and full participation of all children with disabilities in any nation. The Individual with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 describe inclusive education as a form of education that accommodates children with disabilities to learn in the same academic environment with other children without disabilities, this is with the fact that their academic goals maybe different. The Act states further that inclusion of children with disabilities goes beyond simple placement but also includes the extent of children's participation in classroom activities and other activities in the inclusion setting.

Nigeria is among the 185 countries that signed and ratified the United Nation Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007. Article 24 of the convention provides that all schools must be inclusive and accessible to all children including those with disabilities. According to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), about 95% of children with disabilities in developing countries are out of school and 90%



of them may never gain access to basic education in their lifetime. In actual terms, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report indicates that there are over 10.5 million out of school children in Nigeria.

It will not be out of place to estimate that 5 to 7 million of them are children with disabilities. This projection is in line with World Bank and World Health Organisation (WHO) projections that persons with disabilities constitute about 15% of populations in developing countries and that between 80 to 90% of them don't gain access to basic needs of life especially basic education (World Bank, 2023). It is pertinent to know that UNESCO 2005, states that inclusion involves: identifying and recognizing the children's fundamental human right to education and its provision on indiscriminate, a general vision which protects all children with disabilities, the major source for educating all children with disabilities in order to enjoy their right to equal education and a process of correcting and responding to all individual needs of children no matter their disabilities. Promoting effective inclusive education in Nigeria is beyond mere documentation of its purpose in all international and national documents but requires proper implementation and this could be achieved through integration of available, accurate and reliable research data.

### CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

#### Research Data in Education

Educational Research plays an important role in overall development of every areas of educational system including policy formation on education. It is an essential aspect of every nation and in an effort to expand the frontiers of knowledge makes education research a major priority. Education research is a type of systematic investigation that uses empirical methods to solve challenges in education. It always employs rigorous and well-clarified scientific processes in order to gather and analyse data for problem solving and knowledge advancement (Mian, 2022).

The generation and availability of data in education is to ensure accountability in the management of every nation educational system. It has been observed that poor planning, unavailability of data or non-use of generated data for educational improvement is very common in Nigerian educational system. Azuh, Joshua and Ibieta (2016) opined that empirical data and reports are very minimal or scarce in Nigeria, their view on low availability of research data might be due to financial capability of majority of researchers and this may affect the availability of data needed to be used by the stakeholders in Nigerian educational system.

#### Data Availability on Children with Disabilities in Nigeria

Citing statistics from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 2021, World Population Dashboard as well as the [WHO](#)/World Bank (2011) report on disability, Save the Children International (SCI) noted that Nigeria is home to an estimated 32 million people with disabilities, most of whom are children. UNICEF (2023) through data gathered from MICS report that between 2015-2022 percentage of children between ages 2-4 that has disabilities in Nigeria was 7.6% while those above age 5 were 15.5% this data is in agreement with World Bank and WHO projections. The report further indicate that 29.7% of CWDs who is between the age of 3-6 had access to early childhood education programme, 24.0% never attended school, 33.1% of the children were out of primary school in Nigeria. From the aforementioned, it is evident that there is availability of data on CWDs in Nigeria,

although the data may not be solely accurate but to some extent it has provided major information that will be needed to make educational provision for CWDs in the country.

### **Data Generation on Inclusive Education in Nigeria through Empirical Studies**

Salami (2014) investigated the implementation of Nigeria's policies of education on provision of inclusive early childhood education in Nigeria. The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research methodology. In the quantitative method, the study gave analysis of inclusive early childhood education policy documents while for the quantitative aspect of the research questionnaire was used to gather data. The population of the study comprised of the special needs education officers in the state universal basic education boards, the head teachers in public primary schools and special education lecturers in tertiary institutions across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that the statement of the policies were not well specified, resources were not provided for children with disabilities and no inclusion was being practiced in Nigeria.

Ewa (2016) in her study evaluated service provision that is available for students with hearing impairment and the situations that were put in place for effective implementation of inclusive education programme in Nigeria. Six hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The population for the study comprised students with hearing impairments, the parents, groups/organization, school agencies and those saddled with the responsibility of providing service delivery to students with hearing impairment. Seven thousands and four hundred (7400) respondents from the six geopolitical zone in Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja were used for the study. Questionnaire, anecdotal records and interview were used as instrument for data collection for the study.

The result revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between the students with hearing impairment and the use of Assistive Technology (AT) devices in the inclusive secondary schools, there was a significant positive relationship between teachers' training in the regular school setting, there was a significant positive relationship between the availability of supportive staff in the regular school environment and effective implementation of inclusive education programme in Nigeria. It also revealed that there was no significant difference in the provision of educational service resources between the Northern and Southern geo-political zones of Nigeria and effective implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria.

Colton and Paul in 2017 examined the understanding of inclusive education in Lagos state which was based upon thorough interviews with students with visual impairments. The findings revealed that despite the long periods of formulation of inclusive education policies, Nigerian children living with disabilities continue to encounter non-availability of instructional support. The study suggested that inclusive education programmes in Nigeria must be the type that would attend to both school and immediate environments of the children. For children with disabilities to enjoy their rights to equal educational opportunity with their peers who have no disabilities, the government at all levels are meant to establish schools close to learner's residential environment for easy access to education and also put into consideration their level of ability to assimilate during teaching and learning process. This is to explain why adequate provision of special teachers and other specialist are very important for children with disabilities in both inclusive and special school.

Abigail and Felix in 2019, examined the prospect of inclusive education for physically challenged children in Nigeria using the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals with major reference to goal number four (SDGs) which laid emphasis on quality and equal education for all children. The study adopted quantitative method of investigation. The study administered questionnaires to 200 respondents. The finding of their study reveals that in Nigeria the education system provided for physically challenged

children is in serious hazard which urgent calls for revalidating policy of education as there is no traces of SDGs implementation. The study concluded that every child including those with challenges must have access to education if the country truly wants to achieve any development on equal educational opportunity for all children.

Ewa, Nanjwan, Enweazu and James (2019) investigated availability and utilisation of assistive technological devices (AT) and its implication on implementation of inclusive education programme for students with hearing impairment in Cross Rivers State Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design. The sample size comprised 50 students with hearing impairment randomly selected from the secondary schools in the area of the study. Three hypotheses were generated for the study and a questionnaire was used to obtain data. The findings revealed that the provisions, availability and utilisation of assistive technology devices is grossly inadequate among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Cross Rivers State.

In same vein, Lawal, Olusola and Ajagbe (2022) carried out an investigation on reality of equal basic education opportunity for children with disabilities in Southwest Nigeria. The study adopted qualitative research. The study adopted survey research design. The sample size consists of public basic schools in three selected states in southwest Nigeria. The result revealed that very low percentage of the schools practices inclusive schooling in southwest Nigeria.

### **Data Availability on Implementation of Inclusive Education at Basic education level**

It is not a gainsaying that there is no accurate data that has been generated which could be used for integration and proper implementation of inclusive education at the basic level of education in Nigeria. It is evident from the empirical studies reviewed above that information is available through researches but need to be gathered to become a data set that would be used to address challenges that may be facing the implementation of quality and effective inclusive education for children with disabilities in Nigeria Basic schools.

In 2018, National Personnel Audit (NPA) generated data which showed that both the public and the private sectors were involved in the provision of education to children with disabilities. It further revealed that the number of ECCDE and Basic Schools available were very few and not commensurate with the population of children with disabilities as expected. The data generated by NPA also revealed that in many states in Nigeria, children with disabilities lack access to ECCDE and Basic school due to lack of suitable types of schools for them. The data generated by NPA did not feature inclusive education for CWDs but it can be captured on the data generated on accessibility to type of school suitable for CWDs in the country.

### **Conclusion**

From the above reviews, it cannot be fully concluded that there is no data being generated on status of inclusive education implementation in Nigeria. Researchers had put in efforts to generate data through empirical studies on inclusive education at the basic level of education but it could be gathered from the researches that inclusive education is a bit effective at the secondary education level in Nigeria. It is therefore the responsibility of government and other stakeholders in education to integrate and properly implement the available data for the best interest of CWDs by providing them with quality inclusive basic education in Nigeria.

## Recommendations

The Nigerian government through Federal Ministry of Education and other stakeholders in education should give more support to researchers through recognition and valuing their researches. The research data generated by the researchers should be properly integrated and implemented by Nigerian Government and this can be carried out through collaboration with researchers across tertiary institutions (Universities and Colleges of Education) or individual researchers in education, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). The government should use the data generated to guide the review of the National Policy on Education and other policies on inclusive education in Nigeria. This would promote quality and effective inclusive education for CWDs in Nigerian Basic schools. The government should also make inclusive education for CWDs at the basic level of education a major priority by providing them with enough schools that will accommodate the children for inclusive type of education, necessary infrastructural facilities and assistive technology that is required for smooth operation of inclusive education.

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**PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND ACADEMIC  
PERFORMANCE IN MATHEMATICS AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN  
CALABAR METROPOLIS, CROSS RIVER STATE**

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**Abstract**

*This study investigated the perceived relationship between school environment and academic performance of primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the research. The study adopted a stratified random sampling technique and a sample of 144 pupils were randomly selected from a population of 5594 primary six pupils in Calabar Metropolis. Instruments for data collection were a questionnaire titled: "Perception of School Environment Questionnaire" (PSEQ) and "Mathematics Achievement Test" (MAT). The face validity of the PSEQ was done by experts in Educational Test and Measurement Department of the University of Calabar while the content validity of the MAT was done using Test Blueprint. The reliability of the PSEQ was determined using Cronbach Alpha reliability method with coefficients that ranged from 0.73 to 0.85 while Guttman split-half reliability method was used for the MAT with a coefficient of 0.72. The data collected for the study was analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation tested at .05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that classroom facilities, instructional facilities had significant relationship with academic performance in Mathematics of primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis. It is concluded that pupils' perception of school environment is a key determinant of their academic performance in Mathematics in Calabar metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria. It was recommended among others that pupils, policymakers, head teachers, teachers, parents, and researchers should pay adequate attention to school environment as an important factor for improved academic performance in Mathematics.*

**Keywords:** School environment, Classroom facilities, Instructional facilities, Physical structure of school building

**INTRODUCTION**

Education is a continuous process of training and developing the knowledge, skill, mind and character of people. It is also the process by which the latent abilities of individuals are developed so that they may be useful to themselves and the society (Ewetan & Ewetan, 2015).

Primary education, which is the focus of this study, is regarded as a major foundation for social-economic and political development of any nation. It aims learning at a basic level



of complexity with little of any specialisation (ISCED, 2011). The development of the skills and knowledge of the people of a nation through the education process constitutes one of the prerequisites of national development and this begins at the primary level for many nations including Nigeria. Therefore, any threat against the quality standard of education at this level cannot be disregarded.

Primary education begins at around age five for the majority of Nigerians. Pupils spend six years in primary school and graduate with a school-leaving certificate. Subjects taught at the primary level in Nigeria include Mathematics, English Language, Christian Religious Knowledge, Islamic knowledge studies, Agricultural science, Home economics and one of the three main indigenous languages and cultures: Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo. Primary school pupils are required to take a Common Entrance Examination to qualify for admission into the Federal and State Government Secondary schools, as well as private ones.

Mathematics is an important subject and in full recognition of its importance, the Federal Government of Nigeria made mathematics compulsory in all Nigerian primary and secondary schools. The role of Mathematics in the understanding of the foundations and structure of Science, technological advancement, economic development as well as in the understanding of inter-relationship between disciplines is a very significant one and cannot be overemphasized. However, the rate at which students fail this subject is very alarming.

There is a general attitude of many to Mathematics either at primary, secondary or even at tertiary level, which often result to mass failure in the subject. The underlying problem to this attitude most times is been investigated at the secondary school level neglecting the foundation of the students. There is a saying that if the foundation be destroyed what can the righteous do. The reason I supposed is that, most of the pupils at primary school only needed to pass their common entrance, which is an aggregate of scores in Mathematics, English and General Paper. Once they get a score above the cut off mark, straightway they gained admission to Secondary School. Since the pass mark is a function of the aggregate scores of the three subjects, their performance in each subject is often not considered important. However, the result of the common entrance examination of pupils in Calabar Metropolis from 2017 to 2019 has shown that majority of these pupils failed Mathematics though did well in English and General Paper. This work is looking into this omission, which has been unnoticed for so long.

## Primary six pupils' performance in Mathematics

Schools	Examination Year	Total number of Candidates that enrolled.	Candidates that scored above 50 in Mathematics	Above 50 (%)
Henshaw Town Pry School.	2017	78	25	32.1
	2019	60	16	26.7
Government Pry School Atu.	2017	106	29	27.3
	2019	87	9	10.3
Redeemer Lutheran Pry School Calabar.	2017	67	1	1.5
	2018	77	22	28.6
	2019	99	58	58.6



## ECAN 2024 PROCEEDINGS ON NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Brotherhood Pry School Calabar	2017	114	3	2.6
Government Pry School Abenyo	2017	33	12	36.4
Hope Waddel international Nur/Pry School	2017	54	18	33.3
Calabar Preparatory International School	2019	115	50	43.5

Source: - Cross-River State Ministry of Education.

Generally, as a contribution towards solving the longstanding problem of low achievement in mathematics in Nigerian school, Federal Government of Nigeria through the Mathematical Association of Nigeria (MAN) launched a War Against Poor Achievement in Mathematics (WAPAM); but WAPAM did not succeed in solving the problem of poor achievement in mathematics in Nigerian high schools. Thereafter, the National Mathematical Centre Abuja Nigeria launched a Mathematics Improvement Program through the Director of the centre. Also, the Mathematics Association of Nigeria initiated a mathematics improvement project intended to improve mathematics teaching in schools, they outlined how to teach the subject as well as how to present it to students in order to enhance their interest and performance. The Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN) also made efforts to counter the problems plaguing science, technology and mathematics in Nigeria through various workshops, projects and programmes. Yet, the sad situation persists.

The learning environment which includes classroom facilities, instructional facilities, are essentials needed to develop cognitive areas of knowledge, abilities and skills as well as the development of the affective and psychomotor domain that are necessary for academic achievement in Mathematics. Comfortable classroom enhances teachers' effectiveness as well as provide opportunity for pupils to receive more individual attention, ask questions and participate more fully in the calculation process. The attitudes of students to Mathematics at primary and secondary schools' level have been discovered to be greatly influenced by what they encounter in classrooms (Onah, 2017). The use of instructional materials in teaching and learning mathematics has the capacity of making the subject less abstract and application oriented.

Classroom is a place where teaching and learning takes place. A typical classroom has structural and symbolic facilities. The structural facilities are the lighting, noise, air quality, temperature in the classroom while the symbolic facilities are the objects like desk, chairs, whiteboard etc. found in the classroom as well as the wall decorations. These facilities have been discovered to have a variety of effects on teachers, students and the teaching-learning process (Cheryan, Ziegler, Plaut & Meltzoff, 2014).

Empirical studies have shown that classroom facility has effect on student performance in Mathematic. Shamaki (2015) in his study investigated the influence of some classroom facilities, which are classroom painting, lighting, air quality, seat, seat arrangement, chalkboard, and their possible influence on students' academic achievement in mathematics. The study involved a sample of 337 randomly selected SS II students that was taken from a population of 1682 students in Potiskum LGA, Yobe State. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics as well as t-test. His findings revealed that dull classroom painting and lighting have influence of students' academic achievement

in mathematics, poor ventilation makes mathematics lesson boring, bad seat arrangement makes mathematics uninteresting, class chalkboard does affect the students sitting at the back in as much as they cannot clearly see the writings on it. The result actually shown that, there is significance difference between the mean performance of students taught in an ideal learning environment and that of students taught in a dull learning environment at .05 level of significance.

Studies have also shown that Classroom facilities have effect on student's performance in other subjects apart from Mathematics. In a study carried out by Wali, Abulfathi and Mustapha (2019), they examined the impact of classroom environment on the academic performance of students in English language as well as their performance difference by gender. Survey and Correlation research designs was employed for the study. The population of the study involved 183 teachers and 2003 SS III students in the selected schools. 401 students representing 20% and 183 teachers were randomly selected. Self-developed questionnaires and proforma were used for collection of data for this study. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation and Multiple Regression Analysis. After their analysis, their findings reveal that classroom environment has strong impact on the academic performance of students in English Language. Their conclusion is that when an optimum environment is enabled by the school, both students and teachers tend to be motivated and inspired toward teaching and learning.

Instructional materials are wide variety of equipment used for teaching-learning by teachers to stimulate self-activity on the part of the pupils. There are several types of instructional materials which can be used in learning. Instructional materials can be divided into three major categories based on their sensory appeal, namely audio, visual and audio-visual (Akpan, Okpara, Okoli & State, 2017). According to Ede, Oleabhiele and Modebelu (2016) instructional materials help the teacher to make learning meaningful to the learners. The quality of education a learner received is usually a function of availability, quality and access to or the lack of physical facilities (instructional facility inclusive) and the overall atmosphere in which learning takes place.

Instructional materials are an important tool in a learning process of all subjects (Lyimo & Too, 2017). To determines the effect of instructional materials on students' performance in Economics, a study was carried out by Oleabhiele and Ede (2016) using the control and experimental groups. In their study to investigate the effect of instructional materials on senior secondary students' achievement in Economics, they adopted the quasi-experimental design for the study. The simple random sampling technique was used to obtain the sampled schools. Sixty (60) students consisting of 30 assigned to experimental group and 30 were assigned to the control group. They discovered that after the application of treatment (instructional material), the post test scores indicated that the experimental group achieved better than the control group. In addition, the mean difference in the achievement was statistically significant meaning that the use of instructional materials helped the students to achieve better learning outcomes in economics. Their results actually show that students who were taught using instructional materials performed better than those taught without instructional material. They concluded that the use of instructional materials in the teaching of economics improve students' achievement level in economics.

Fajemidagba, Salman & Ayinla, (2012) in their study to examine the effect of Instructional strategy pattern on the performance of Nigerian Senior Secondary School Students in Mathematics word problems, was made up of a total number of 125 Senior Secondary two Students from two schools in Ondo town of Ondo State, Nigeria as sample. The research type adopted for the study was quasi-experimental involving a 2 x 3 Factorial design. Consequently, two hypotheses were formulated and tested using Analysis of

Covariance (ANCOVA) at alpha level of 0.05 to determine significant level. Findings from the study revealed the efficacy of the instructional strategy pattern in improving students' performance in Mathematics word problems involving simultaneous equations. Other findings from the study include the fact that the strategy pattern was beneficial to all ability levels irrespective of the standard of the members of such groupings.

The findings of Olayinka (2016) in her study on the effects of instructional materials on secondary school students' academic achievement in Social Studies in Ekiti State corroborates with the findings of the above reviewed researchers. The study, which also adopted quasi-experimental pre-test, post-test, control group design. However, in her case the population engaged for the study were junior secondary school class two students from among which 180 were sampled. The study generated four hypotheses that were tested at the significance level of .05. ANOVA and ANCOVA statistical tools were used to analyse the data collected. The study found that there was a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test of students in the experimental group. She also concluded that the students taught with instructional materials have excellent achievement scores compared with those taught without any material.

Many more researchers have stated some more important roles of instructional materials in the learning process aside. As a result of this, Onyia (2013) said instructional materials make simple learning, practical, effective and understandable to the students. It also helps to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values of students in the learning process (Saglam, 2011). Akpan, Okpara, Okoli and State (2017) submitted that instructional materials make learning easy and it helps to memorize the things needed. Another role of instructional materials is to develop self-confidence, self-actualization, and motivation of students in learning (Olayinka, 2016; Saad, 2017). Other roles are that it gives room for teachers and students to participate actively and effectively in learning, enhances the learning outcomes, save time, increase students' interest, and facilitate retention of students' memory (Awolaju, 2016). The importance of instructional material in enhancing academic performance in a school environment cannot be over-emphasized.

### **Statement of the problem**

A close interaction with pupils in most Nigerian government primary school shows indeed that these children are barely learning the basics in the school. Many of these pupils cannot read let alone to write, simple arithmetic, many of them cannot solve it, flipping through their notebooks, it is nothing to write home about, their common entrance result confirms this.

However, the Nigerian Government in a bid to bridge the gap to improve the performance of primary school pupils had made several efforts by ensuring that that quality supervisors are been sent periodically to schools for routine checks and inspection, they have organized several seminars, workshops etc. for teachers, they increased their consistency in the payment of teachers' salaries, yet, there seems to be little or no improvement in the performance of these pupils. Could their poor performance in many of their subjects especially mathematics be as a result of their learning environment? This project is designed to look into this.

The main purpose of this study were to investigate the relationship between school environment and academic performance of primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis. Specifically, this study intends to do the following:

1. To investigate the relationship between perceived classroom facilities and academic performance in Mathematics among primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis.

2. To determine the relationship between perceived instructional facilities and academic performance in Mathematics among primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis.

### Research questions

The researcher formulated the following research questions to guide the study.

1. To what extent do perceived classroom facilities relate with academic performance in Mathematics among primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis?
2. How do perceived instructional facilities relate with academic performance in Mathematics among primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis?

### Statement of hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

1. There is no significant relationship between perceived classroom facilities and academic performance in mathematics of primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis.
2. There is no significant relationship between instructional facilities and academic performance in mathematics of primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis.

### Scope of the study

The study is delimited to the relationship between school environment on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis during the 2020/2021 academic session. The variables covered in this study are classroom facilities, instructional facilities, physical structure of school building, school climate and academic performance in Mathematics. The study involved only primary six pupils in Calabar Metropolis.

### Methodology

The design adopted for this study is ex-post facto research design type which is a category of research design where the investigation starts after the fact has occurred without interference from the researcher. The Ex-post research design fits the study since quality that already exists (school environment) is compared to the dependent variable (academic performance).

The sample of this study was drawn from 12 out of the 46 government primary schools in Calabar Metropolis. The researcher proportionally sampled the pupil using fifty percent of the pupils in each school, giving a total of 144 pupils as the sample.

The sampling technique used in this study is stratified random technique. Stratified random technique is a technique that avails every member of the population equal and independent opportunity of being selected, which is a chance event. This technique was employed to enable effective representation of the population, which have equal probability of being chosen. The researcher wrote the names of all the government primary schools in Calabar Metropolis on different pieces of paper, each piece was rolled into a paper ball and put in a container to blindly draw the required number of primary schools, which was six for Calabar Municipal and six for Calabar South making twelve altogether.

Data for the study was collected using the two instruments (PSEQ and MAT). The researcher visited the selected schools and inform the school authority the intention behind the study. After the formal introduction, the instrument was administered to the pupils with the assistance of the teachers in the various schools. The pupils were informed on the need

to give honest responses to the instruments and that the data collected will only be used for research purposes. All the instruments distributed were collected after the exercise as the researcher thanked the pupils for their cooperation and the teachers for their assistance.

The data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

## Results

This study investigated the relationship between perception of school environment and academic performance in Mathematics among primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis. The main variables of the study are identified, their means and standard deviations are calculated. The independent variable in the study is perception of school environment with regards to classroom facilities, instructional facilities while the dependent variable is academic performance of pupils in Mathematics.

The means and standard deviations of the two variables and the achievement test scores are presented in Table 1. The result presented in Table 1 indicated that classroom facilities produced a mean score of 14.08 with a standard deviation of 3.27 while instructional facilities produced a mean score of 13.98 with a standard deviation of 3.20. The result finally indicated that the mean performance of the pupils in Mathematics is 8.30 with a standard deviation of 2.99.

**TABLE 1**  
Descriptive statistics of research variables (N=144)

SN	Variables	Mean	SD
1.	Classroom facilities	14.08	3.27
2.	Instructional facilities	13.98	3.20
3.	Achievement test in Mathematics	8.30	2.99

**TABLE 2**  
Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between perceived classroom facilities and academic performance in Mathematics(N=144)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	r-ratio	p-level
Perceived classroom facilities (X)	14.08	3.27	.206*	.013
Academic performance in Mathematics(Y)	8.30	2.99		

\*Significant at .05 alpha level. df=142.

**TABLE 3**  
Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between perception of instructional facilities and academic performance in Mathematics(N=144)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	r-ratio	p-level

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Perception of instructional facilities (X)	13.98	3.20	.221*	.008
Academic performance in Mathematics(Y)	8.30	2.99		

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\*Significant at .05 alpha level. df=142.

## Discussion

Hypothesis one states that, there is no significant relationship between perceived classroom facilities and academic performance in Mathematics of primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis. To test this hypothesis, perceived classroom facilities and academic performance in Mathematics were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

The result in Table 2 revealed that the mean score obtained by the pupils as regards perceived classroom facilities was 14.08 with a standard deviation of 3.27 while they had a mean score of 8.30 with a standard deviation of 2.99 as regards their academic performance in Mathematics. The result also revealed that the calculated r-ratio of .206 with a p-value of .013 at 142 degrees of freedom is statistically significant since the p-value is less than .05. Hence, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between perceived classroom facilities and academic performance in Mathematics of primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis is rejected. With the obtained value of .206, it means that there is a significant positive relationship between perceived classroom facilities and academic performance in Mathematics.

It was observed that the classroom facilities of some of the schools visited was nothing to write home about, talking in terms of desks, chairs and black/white board for the pupils and of course the outcome is what is seen in their performance. According to Asiyai (2014), she reported that the classroom environment has a significant impact on the motivation and learning of students. Whatever, the condition of the classroom environment, this serves as a motivation for these pupils and when the classroom environment is not conducive, it has a high tendency of distracting learning. Mathematics is such a subject that requires high concentration on the part of the pupils and even the teacher, so anything that can serve as a distraction will definitely affect learning.

The findings of this study is in agreement with the study carried out by Shamaki (2015) who investigated the influence of some classroom facilities and their possible influence on students' academic achievement in mathematics. His own findings reveals that chalkboard does affect the students sitting at the back in as much as they cannot clearly see the writings on it. As such the student cannot comprehend what is being taught. The findings of the study also concurred with Wali, Abulfathi and Mustapha, (2019) who examined the impact of classroom environment on the academic performance of students in English language and found out that classroom environment has strong impact on the academic performance of students in English Language. They concluded that when an optimum environment is enabled by the school, both students and teachers tend to be motivated and inspired toward teaching and learning.

However, the findings of this study does not conform with the findings of Ibrahim, Umar and Clement (2017) who studied the impact of school facilities on secondary school students' achievement in Bauchi State. They in their study found out that school facilities have no impact on student achievement.



Hypothesis two states that, perception of instructional facilities do not significantly relate with academic performance in mathematics of primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis. To test this hypothesis, perception of instructional facilities and academic performance in Mathematics were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

The result in Table 3 revealed that the mean score obtained by the pupils as regards perception of instructional facilities was 13.98 with a standard deviation of 3.20 while they had a mean score of 8.30 with a standard deviation of 2.99 as regards their academic performance in Mathematics. The result also revealed that the calculated r-ratio of .221 with a p-value of .008 at 142 degrees of freedom is statistically significant since the p-value is less than .05. Hence, the null hypothesis that perception of instructional facilities do not significantly relate with academic performance in mathematics of primary school pupils in Calabar Metropolis is rejected. With the obtained value of .221, it means that there is a significant positive relationship between perception of instructional facilities and academic performance in Mathematics.

The use of instructional materials by the teacher does not only encourage teachers and students to work collaboratively but also results in more co-operate learning activities among the students.

The findings of this study supported the views of Fajemidagba, Salman & Ayinla (2012) who found out that instructional strategy pattern helped to improve students' performance in Mathematics word problems involving simultaneous equations after they examined the effect of instructional strategy pattern on the performance of Nigerian senior secondary school students in Mathematics word problems. In addition, Olayinka (2016) found out that students taught with instructional materials have excellent achievement scores compared with those taught without any material. Based on the findings from her study, which was on the effects of instructional materials on secondary school students' academic achievement in Social Studies in Ekiti State, she strongly recommended that teachers of Social Studies are encouraged to search for necessary instructional materials that can appeal to the senses of learners, arouse their interest, encourage their participation, make learning more meaningful and of course promote academic standard.

Furthermore, the findings in this study establishes the fact that instructional facilities help to promote retention of the subject matter taught. This corroborates the findings of Effiong and Igiri (2015) whose study on the impact of Instructional materials in teaching and learning of Biology concluded that instructional materials, make learning real, permanent, which in turn enhance good understanding of the subject matter and ultimately promote the retention of the subject matter learnt.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the analyses of the data collected for the study, it was concluded that the way pupils perceive their school environment play significant role on their academic performance in Mathematics in such a way that those who had better perception of the school environment usually perform better than those that do not have good perception of their school environment.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations were considered necessary.

1. Well ventilated classroom with clear white board should be made available in the classroom.
2. Mathematics teachers should made good use of instructional material that will help the pupils assimilate whatever they are being taught.

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**LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE OF MIDDLE BASIC EDUCATION IN  
NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

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***Abstract***

*The product and quality of students who pass out of basic education have generated worries among parents, employers, institutions of learning and even the entire society. Who is to blame; is it the educational administrators, the students, the society, the political leaders or appointees? This paper attempted a discourse on the leadership and governance of primary education in Nigeria, looking at the problems and prospects. It is a qualitative and thematic analysis of the past, the concept of leadership and governance of the educational system. Educational development in Nigeria has been hindered by many factors. It concluded that despite the clog on the wheel of educational development there are still prospects for the nation's educational system, if the leaders will tap from the wide cultural diversity, put the right persons to head various leadership positions in education, curb corruption, prioritize teachers' welfare, apply donations appropriately and take teachers training seriously.*

**Keywords:** *Leadership, Governance, Middle Basic, Problem and Prospects*

**Introduction**

Primary education in Nigeria, now called basic education, has come a long way since 1842 when the missionaries established the first primary school. With the first education ordinance in 1800s, the British (Colonial) government became part of the administration of education until independence. Primary education at that time produced school leavers that were sound in written and spoken English, morally high personalities and nation builders. However, the story is different today and one is compelled to ask would we have left primary education in the hands of the British till now? The fact is that the primary produced and preceded the elementary education and this finally gave birth to the basic education. From inception primary education in Nigeria has transformed severally, which heightened soon after independence as education became liberalized in the regions.

Consequently, since independence in 1960 education has faced series of policy summersault on account of change of government and the deep rooted attitude of discontinuity of policies of preceding government. Yet education is being paraded the world over including Nigeria as the bedrock on which the development of man and his society hinges. Some of these policy changes are ill-timed either that they are made quite behind the world's trend in education or timely formulated but die in the hands of the so called leaders; with motivating and worded policy documents, blue print and standards. Indeed, education, especially the basic education holds enormous benefits to the society in form of western education wherever it is practiced because of its ability to prepare people for reading and writing and by extension, to possess good communication competence. It has further been said that she shall pursue educational system that would meet the nation's desire for united, strong and self-reliant members of the society.

The foundation part of the education that prepared people to be able to read and write, and perhaps do some rudimentary arithmetic including religion were the subjects colonial masters offered us until the constituting of the Philip-Stokes and Ashby commissions that turned the focus to the nation's need and higher education (NTI, 2000). This was what informed the assertion by Fafunwa in Amopho (2020) that the Nigeria educational system was only functional to the colonialist, because it taught the few who were opportune to speak good English live polished lifestyle and practiced religion. Leadership and governance during the colonial era were mainly to jettison our culture and accept the Western culture, thereby enslaving and precipitated their exploitation agenda. A decade before independence, Nigeria and indeed Africa had already begun to feel the need for an educational system that is relevant to African society with curriculum contents that feature local examples and illustrations. Presumably, the nationalists, the Nigerian leaders at the time knew only little of what to do but focused on attainment of independence and tribal/sectional popularity. This scenario might have set the tone for what is happening to education today where budgetary allocation to it has been very poor, grossly below the recommended percent by UNESCO. Anazodo et al (2015) emphasized that since independence in 1960, Nigerian leader and their regimes have been deeply engrossed in excessive act of corruption and bad governance.

The crisis in the education sector has manifested in age-long failure of education directives, policies that had attained far less than 100% implementation and greater part of the blame are on Nigerian leaders who seemed not to be prepared to undo what the colonialists have done to our educational system in terms of curriculum, philosophy, administration and infrastructural development. When indigenous philosophy was spelt out in 1977, it has left the nation without direction as inter tribal killings of different nature were still recorded in spots of Nigeria, sentiment that manifested in government appointments, admission racketeering accentuated by tribalism, weakness of educational institutions to assert their authority over irregularities on account of leaders' lack of political will, insecurity of education reformer who made effort to change the status and financial corruption celebrated around the leadership cadre. In the real sense of leadership, it entails influencing people and other distributed leaders to pursue a positive goal having clear paths to success without bias among them given that the environment is secure for such visions. It was typical of Nigeria educational institutions that they lack committed, visionary and strategic leadership (Nwanekezie, 2022).

Nigeria and her leaders have had 64years after independence to manage the educational system, however it appears that what standard six holders of the colonial era would do, primary/basic six pupils of now cannot do it. Many children are still out of schools. This is traced to the fact emphasized by Chapman (2006) that the policies adopted by an educational system are essentially drawn by the government in power. Educational policies are continually reeled out claiming to join the committee of nations in the modern education reforms, a case in point was the education for all stance by the year 2000 reached by nations, of the world in 1990 (Jomtien Declaration, 1990). It is high time Nigerian leaders stopped paying lip services to the numerous problems of education at the formative education age which are staring before them. They should embark on all inclusive government where the people have a strong say in the affair of government that affect them rather than championing concocted opinions of few chorus and praise singers to political leaders.

The issue of leadership and governance is highly intertwined since leaders are expected in a democratic setting to carry majority of the subjects along for the common good of the people; and education as a social service oriented pursuit is a measure of government

success, thus elucidating the reason the British government intervened in making the first education ordinance as against the practices of the missionaries early in 1800s. Delivering the common good of the people is of utmost importance. In Nigeria there is lack of strategic leader, men and women of integrity willing to turn things around for the common good or public interest (Anazodo, et al, 2015). Teachers and pupils are in serious desire for leaders who are positive, supportive and actively engaged in the pursuit of the goal and philosophy of our educational system (Alimi, 2013).

### **Administering education in Nigeria: the Post Independence Experience**

Before 1960 the reports of the Phelps-Stokes commission opened the lacuna between the policies and practices of the colonial masters and what Nigerians expected in terms of the education been offered. Education then was highly bookish, only to prepare Nigerians for the white collar jobs where the nation was blessed with rich mineral resources to be harnessed for the common good of the people. Less than ten years after independence the urge became stronger, though regionally motivated, to fashion out an educational system that would satisfy the nations desire for united, strong and self reliant members of the society (Amopho, 2020). The regions adopted a separatists approach in their education policies that is the Northern region, the Western region and the Eastern region. There was the Universal Primary Education (UPE) of the Western region in 1955, a policy and programme known to have recorded a huge success. The hallmark success was; massive training programme for teachers, expansion of teachers training facilities and construction of new, equipped classroom block. This was matched by massive turnout of pupil for enrollment in the primary schools.

As a follow up to the stride of the Western region, the Eastern regional government launched the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1957. As huge as the programme was and so much financial commitment was needed to continue the programme, it recorded limited success having short lived for about 2 years. Fafunwa (1982) reported that the costs of building were born by the local authorities who found it difficult in most cases to meet the financial requirements of the scheme. The programme also recorded a huge turnout for enrolment perhaps that also accounted for its quick failure because the enrollment beat the imagination of the government in power. The failure was blamed on poor planning by the educational administrators. In the Northern region western education had not been properly rooted, however, the Islamic/Koranic school were scattered around the expanse of the region. In terms of Western education, the Northern region was backward; thus there was little or no account of success of western education in the region.

In many parts of Nigeria, the civil war which started in 1967 retarded educational development even when policies were still in place. The consciousness for a relevant curriculum for Nigerians continued and on 8<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> September, 1969, there was a National Curriculum Conference held in Lagos to review the inherited curriculum and identify new national goals for Nigeria's education (NTI, 2000; Okoroma, 2006). The conference brought Nigerians from different walks of life to produce curriculum that was more meaningful to the Nigeria society. The communiqué was not an educational policy but it led to the formation of the maiden National policy on education in 1977, preceded by a national seminar organized by the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in 1973 chaired by Chief S.O Adebayo. The National policy on education was based on five main goals of Nigeria; namely to build

- A free and democratic society



- A just and egalitarian society
- A united, strong and self reliant nation
- A great and dynamic economy
- A land full of opportunities for all citizens

Since the formulation of the maiden edition of the National policy on education in 1977, Nigeria had several published editions of the policy – the second editions was in 1981; third edition was 1988; fourth edition was in 2004; fifth edition was in 2007 while the sixth edition was in 2013 (Ezeyi, et al, 2022). Worthy of note is that the fourth edition was a product of innovation and changes in the third edition; and the sixth edition was also a product of innovations and changes in the fifth edition. The maiden edition of 1977 introduced the 6-3-3-4 system of education which continued and operated till 1999 when the universal basic education was launched by Gen. Olusengu Obasanjo at Sokoto Caliphate, however, it was signed into law as UBE Act in 2004. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in its forth National Policy on Education stated that the basic education shall be of a 9 – year duration comprising 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary education and that it shall be compulsory.

The FRN (2004) also spelt out the goals of primary education (first 6-years of school) such as to:

- Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively
- Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking
- Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society
- Mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child
- Develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment
- Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity
- Provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality

The policy went on to provide for the curriculum, other related educational services, teaching method, classroom condition/atmosphere, gender related issues in classroom, mode of summative assessment/evaluation, use of modern ICT tools among others. The stand of the policy as far as primary education is concerned is comprehensive. To achieve these goals, leaders in education must be focused, committed and dogged through distributed leadership. As a good and appealing as these goals may appear, leaders at different levels must take it seriously without deviation.

In recognition to the fact that population explosion was really a problem to educational services delivery and emerging technologies in education, the sixth edition of the National policy on education provided new guide for teacher education and training, mode of study and curriculum. (Ezuyi et al, 2022). It therefore accommodated some recent development, among them are;

- The lifting of the supervision order on open and distance learning by government
- Revitalization and expression of the National Mathematics Centre (NMC)
- Establishment of Teachers Registration Council (TRC)
- Introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the school system

- Prescription of French Language in the primary and secondary school curriculum as a second official language and
- The integration of basic education in the programme of school, to ensure equal opportunity and implementation of UBE

All of these provisions have implications for primary education administration.

### **Leadership and Governance in Education**

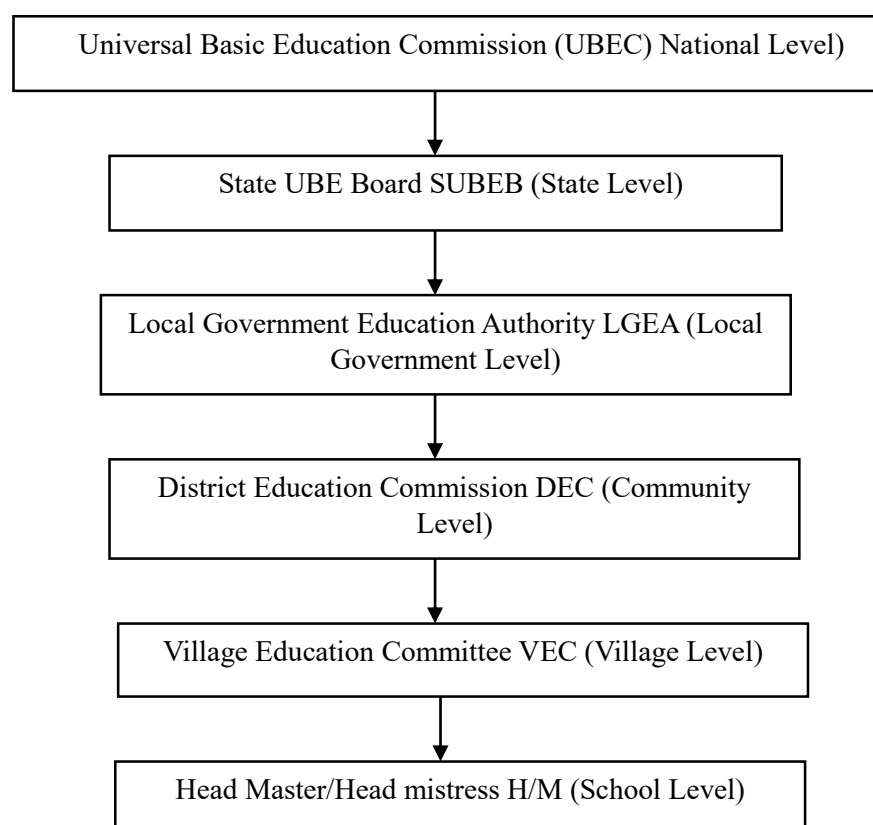
Leadership is a person (s) and at the same time a process of leading that is guiding others on tasks that are to be accomplished. Leadership is therefore both the adhesive and catalyst that bind people, followers and citizen of a given group, movement, organization or country together and triggers their motivation towards the achievement of individuals and group objectives (Anazode et al, 2015). It is a process which involves influence (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, 2021). Yukl (2002) also defined leadership as a social process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person (or group) over other people (or groups) to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organization. In summary, the following characteristics are attributable to a leader

- A leader inspires others
- A leader motivates others and he is highly motivated to achieve set goals
- A leader directs others and the work
- A leader is committed to a course or action
- A leader always have updated information
- A leader uses authority
- A leader is self controlled
- A leader has a broader view of problems
- A leader delegates authority (Nwanekezie, 2022).

Governance seems to be a jargon of the political scientist but from a broader perspective, it is suitable for use in any social setting, church, school, club, mosque and community. Its verb form is govern; thus governance was defined by the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP, 2011) as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authorities to manage a country's affairs (education) at all levels. It can be viewed as the formulation and stewardship of the formal and informal rules that regulate the affairs of the public including the economic and social actors' interest in making decisions. Governance aims at the common good whereby every interest in accommodate and given a fair room to exercise rights and obligations. Governance can be good governance or bad governance Anazodo et al (2015) identified some characteristics of good governance such as participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, efficient, inclusive and rule of law. The absence of these is an indication that there is bad governance.

The preamble in the National Policy on Education has always referred to education in Nigeria as an instrument "per excellence" for effecting national development. Its importance lies in the ability to transform the society economically, socially, political, technologically and otherwise through transformed individuals. Okorosaye-Orubite (2019) defined education as a social creation, designed to meet the specific needs of the society at any particular point in time. The end point of education is society transformation although it can engender some benefits to the individuals who have acquired it where the majority of members of the society are oblivious of its benefits. Based on the aforementioned, Adiele (2020) observed that the gigantic function of education calls for committed leadership for

the vast administrative work needed to be accomplished. At various levels of the leadership cadre, there are groups of person who pilot the affairs of education in Nigeria such as; House Committee on Education in Senate, House of Representatives, and respective States House of Assembly. There are the ministers and commissioners for education. Other agencies and bodies that have some responsibilities to education include; National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), National Teachers Institute (NTI), National University Commission (NUC), National Commission for College of Education (NCCE), The West African Examination Council (WAEC), Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) among others (Duru, 2011). Okwori and Amenger (2014) presented the structure of the Universal Basic Education below;



Each of the leadership cadres, agencies, commissions and committees from the top to the bottom were charged with specific set of responsibilities to education and primary education in particular, for the common good of Nigerians.

### **Problems of Leadership and Governance of the Primary Education Level**

There is no gain saying that the primary education is at cross road with all legal and policy statement including the UBE Act, 2004 meant to fast track development at this level, yet many Nigerian children are out of school. The problems facing this level of education are multifarious. Some of them include;

1. **Corruption in the Education System:** The bane of every sector in Nigeria is corruption. It has been described as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. Corruption is responsible for diversion of fund meant for education, appointment of the wrong persons into offices; people arrogate more powers to themselves and use their political connection to fight against anyone who will find them out.

2. Poor budgetary allocation to education sector: Budgetary allocation to the education sector has hardly reached the 2.6 percent of the nation's entire budget as recommended by the United Nation Education and Scientific Community Organization (UNESCO). Both the past military regimes and the democratic administrations do not see good reasons to invest highly in education which they have always perceived as the bed rock of any meaningful development of the society. In other words, they pay lip services to their policy statement even when they form part of the community of nations in making declaration in favour of education
3. Lack of continuity of education projects by incoming administrations/political leader: Education, the bedrock of development is sacrificed at the altar of politics and new administrations always see themselves as having good wishes for the people and neglecting the education of the people. Education is now politicized that new leaders of the educations sector such as ministers, commissioners, education secretaries change policies of past administrations. These often result to wastage of public resources which could have been channeled to other needs of the people.
4. Slow rate of curriculum change and innovation: Nigeria is slow to adopt trending development in education. It is sad to know that our turn out at various level of education to a high percent cannot compete favourably outside the shores of the nation except few people of special ingenuity. The public primary educational institutions are the worst hit as it is observed that many pupils in primary/basic six find it difficult to read or express proficiency in numeracy skills. This further affects the quality of secondary school certificate holders and graduates of our institutions. The technology adopted for teaching the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners are lacking in our institutions.
5. Lack of teacher training: It is often said "Garbage in, Garbage out". A faulty curriculum and system like that of Nigeria can only produce teachers who are ill-equipped and therefore need training. Teacher education is not evolving as the global society is evolving. Teacher education has always taken the same vicious circle without innovation. Teacher in service are not given in service training to upgrade their knowledge of teaching in this century by the government because of corrupt practices of diverting fund meant for such training. Primary teachers teach from year to year without employing new knowledge, method and content.
6. Role conflict in policies/school management: The Nigeria policies and enabling laws, Act or Decrees have loops holes that encourage easy escape for political leaders in the course of administering education at the lower and middle basic level. Basic education presumed to be a federal project does not enjoy much of the supervision by the state and the local government, especially where expected subvention is not forth coming. There exist educational conflicts between the roles of federal, state and local government in the management of public schools.
7. Open flaunting of ill-gotten wealth by politician: This attitude of displaying the stolen public fund and property by political leaders negatively affects the psyche of our children. The get rich quick syndrome is prevalent in the society; and it is also pervasive that young children begin to ask questions like; why are my parents not rich as compared to another parent which is a politician. This goes a long way to discourage them from going to school. It leaves an impression in their mind that immediate physical comfort is utmost in life. Even when such children are in school, they drop out from school at slightest stress.
8. Lack of correct statistics for planning purpose: the bane of planning in Nigeria that has been responsible for education policy failures is lack of correct statistical records

either of teachers, pupils infrastructure or fund. It is worthy to note that corruption breeds very well under this condition. A lot of things go on in the schools unnoticed by the education secretaries, commissioners and ministers of education.

9. Poor teachers welfare: Teachers as professionals who were instrumental in raising the president, governors, local government chairmen, ministers, commissioners, education secretaries and heads of government agencies and parastatals, are supposed to be well paid with lofty allowances to take care of their housing, transportation, health care and feeding but it is unfortunate to realize that they are one of lowest paid personnel in public and private sectors. In some schools, infrastructures meant to facilitate their work such as chairs, tables and stationary are not provided.
10. Limited number of schools to accommodate population explosion: No doubt, Nigeria population is increasing in geometric ratio and there is no effective birth control regulation in the country. More and more children are due for entry into formal basic education every year but the schools are not established in the same ratio. The results are overcrowded classrooms where little or no learning takes place. It is rather a potential breeding place for children misconduct, deviant behaviors and violence among others.
11. Economic hardship: There is a general economic hardship in Nigeria where an average Nigerian does not earn up to one dollar a day. Families past through a sort of hell to feed and take care of the needs of the children. Nigerian leaders are exploiting in nature and do not worry about the welfare of the common man. This has a lot of consequence on the family such as divorce, child labour, drop out from school and eventually death on account of inability to get quality healthcare service in a case disease outbreak.

### **Prospect for Leadership and Governance of Education in Nigeria**

A number of measures have been put in place since the inception of democratic regime to make basic education accessible, rich and relevant to the current society. Some are contained in the national policy on education. However, matching corresponding measures to the identified problem in addition to policy provision will take the nation further positively in such ways as;

1. Nigeria with its wide cultural diversity is blessed with educationists, the likes of Amino Kano and Benneth Ukeje should shun politics in education and the education sector will move forward.
2. With the right people as leaders of the education sector and appropriate application of international grants and subvention to education, basic education school leavers will meet national, regional and international standards.
3. Curbing corruption by practicing the rule of law where no government or public appointee/elected persons are placed in position of authority is above the law, Nigeria leader will develop the political will to deliver on the mandate given to them for the common good.
4. An increased level of welfare for teachers will turn the teaching profession around and teachers will put in their best to raise our future leaders that will continue to administer the education sector without having to perform their duties as dictators in the sector.

5. With resilient and buoyant economy, the private sector partnership with government will make basic education accessible for every Nigeria child as more schools will exist and offer quality education
6. Training and re-training teachers in the primary will indeed make the level of education the bedrock of further national development because a high level of literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate will be attained among school leavers.

### Conclusion

Administration of primary education in Nigeria has past several developmental stages through the colonial/pre-independence era, early post independence period, the period of unified national concerted effort to reap the benefit of education to the nation's development. Within these periods, the first level of education which operated under different nomenclature has suffered pressures due to population explosion, lack of basic educational facilities, irresponsible government regimes, poor planning and the wide spread corruption in different quarters of public affairs. This paper is an attempt that x-rayed these and others as the problems bedeviling the leadership and governance of the education sector. Despite the constraints that have been hindering educational development in Nigeria and making her not to meet international standard, a number of prospects still holds for the nation.

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## HEAD TEACHERS' LEADERSHIP STYLES AND TEACHERS' JOB PERFORMANCE IN LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN OSUN STATE

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### ABSTRACT

*The study investigated head teachers' leadership styles and teachers' job performance in lower primary schools in Osun State. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The sample constituted 30 head teachers and 90 lower primary school teachers' that were selected using simple random sampling procedure. From the selected senatorial district, three Local Government were selected using simple random sampling technique. From each of the selected LGA, ten primary schools were selected using simple random sampling technique. In each of the schools selected, one head teacher and three lower primary school teachers exclusively selected using simple random sampling technique. Two research instruments titled "Head Teacher Leadership Style Questionnaire" and "Teachers' Job Performance Questionnaire" were used for data collection. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The result showed the leadership style preference with ground mean for authoritarian leadership style (3.15); democratic leadership style (3.33); and laissez-faire leadership style (2.78). Furthermore, the results showed the cluster means of 3.06 for teachers' job performance and it was found to be above the criterion mean of 3.00. Finally, the result showed that there is significant relationship between head teachers leadership style and teachers' job performance ( $r = 0.301$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The study concluded that most head teachers adopted authoritarian and democratic leadership style and there is significant relationship between head teachers leadership style and teachers' job performance. It is recommended that head teachers should apply any suitable style that seems appropriate for a given situation to improve their staff job performance.*

**Keywords:** Leadership Styles, Job Performance, Laissez-Faire, Authoritarian, Democratic

### Introduction

Lower primary schools are essential in the area of basic education as they establish the groundwork for lifelong learning and development. Numerous studies have consistently emphasised the significance of superior early school education in fostering diverse facets of child development Sylva Melhuish, & Sammons (2020) conducted a meta-analysis that demonstrated the favourable influence of lower schools on the social and emotional growth of young children. Yoshikawa Wuermli & Britto (2021) conducted a study that highlights the significance of lower schools in mitigating disparities in academic achievements and fostering fairness. The afore mentioned citations provide evidence for the importance of lower schools in promoting comprehensive growth and laying the foundation for academic achievement and future success among children. However, Teachers in lower primary schools are accountable for the day-to-day nurturing and education of young children in their developmental stage. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the impact of leadership styles exhibited by Head teachers on the job performance of educators in the field of primary school education. The provision of primary education is a fundamental component of the

educational framework in Nigeria and the Government has endeavoured to enhance the education dispensed to pupils. However, the quality of lower education in Nigeria continues to be a matter of concern, owing to a range of issues such as inadequate funding, a dearth of proficient teachers and substandard infrastructure. The quality of primary education is significantly impacted by the leadership style of the head teacher, as noted by Akintayo & Adelabu (2021), in conjunction with other factors. The efficacy of any academic establishment is contingent upon the leadership of the school head.

The significance of Head teachers in shaping the educational standard of schools has been emphasised by recent research. Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins (2020) conducted a study which revealed that competent head teachers play a crucial role in promoting school advancement, ultimately resulting in improved academic achievements of students. Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2019) conducted a meta-analysis that highlights the noteworthy influence of head teacher leadership on teacher motivation, student engagement and the general performance of schools. Harris, Jones & Smith (2021) conducted a recent study which emphasised the significance of head teachers in facilitating a favourable school climate and cultivating a culture of ongoing enhancement. These recent citations underscore the critical role of head teachers in educational leadership and their influence on school success. The leadership style of a head teacher significantly impacts their role within an educational setting.

The impact of leadership style on employee performance within a firm is important. The job performance of lower primary school teachers in the primary education can be significantly influenced by the leadership style of the head teacher. The primary duty of head teachers is to supervise the overall functioning of the educational institution and ensure the effective implementation of the prescribed curriculum. The impact of the Head teacher's leadership style on the job performance of primary school teachers can be important and immediate. The provision of leadership, guidance and support to lower primary school teachers is the responsibility of head teachers. Research indicated that the performance of educators is positively influenced by head teachers who exhibit transformative or democratic leadership styles. Kalibala, Kakuru, & Kimera (2021) conducted a study and revealed a positive correlation between the leadership styles of head teachers and the job satisfaction of lower education teachers.

In lower primary schools, teachers are positioned at the core of operations, adhering to a prescribed sequence of order. The provision of superior teaching is of utmost importance in fostering the cognitive, social, and emotional growth of school children. It was revealed in a recent research that was carried out by Kim & Sheridan (2021) that providing children with responsive teaching has a good influence on the cognitive development as well as the social and psychological formation of children which sum up to holistic growth. Furthermore, research conducted by Suh & Song (2020) has emphasised the significance of providing qualitative teaching as a means of fostering favourable mental health outcomes among children. The aforementioned results emphasise the crucial significance of teaching in facilitating the comprehensive growth and welfare of school pupils.

Moreover, the job performance of educators in the field of Early Childhood Education can be positively influenced by a Head teacher who provides unambiguous guidance, assistance, and evaluation. Conversely, Ogunkoya & Adeyemo (2021) asserted that an authoritarian, unsupportive, and inadequately feedback-providing head teacher can significantly impede

the job performance of early childhood caretakers. The individuals in question bear the responsibility of providing daily care and education to young children. Numerous studies have been conducted to examine the various factors that impact the job performance of caregivers in early childhood settings. The level of education and training of caregivers in early childhood is a critical factor. Empirical evidence has consistently indicated that early childhood caregivers who possess elevated levels of education and training exhibit superior job performance (Kim & Sheridan, 2021; Suh & Song, 2020).

The provision of monitoring and support to educators of young children is a critical factor in ensuring quality education. Research indicated that the provision of regular supervision and support to lower primary school teachers is associated with higher performance levels (Boller Matusovich, & Boynton-Jarrett, 2021; Bronte-Tinkew Carrano, Guzman, & Kosciulek, 2021). There exist various forms of guidance and support, such as consistent feedback, coaching, and mentoring. One of the identified factors that has been found to impact the job performance of lower school teachers is their perception of the physical work setting. Research indicated that lower primary school teachers who work in environments that are clean, secure, and adequately equipped are more likely to exhibit superior job performance (Hirst & Goosby, 2020; Kim & Sheridan, 2021). The study revealed a positive correlation between the job satisfaction of lower primary school teachers and their perceptions of the physical environment, including factors such as cleanliness and safety. The research findings suggest that emotional exhaustion, characterised by feelings of emotional depletion and strain, significantly impairs the job satisfaction of individuals responsible for the teaching of young children.

The impact of emotional intelligence on the job performance of early childhood caretakers has been identified as a significant factor. Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to perceive, comprehend, and regulate both their own and others' emotions. The study conducted by Machado, Simoes, & Almeida (2020) revealed a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and the job satisfaction as well as affective commitment of lower primary school teachers. The findings indicated that there is a positive correlation between the emotional intelligence of lower primary school teachers and their job performance. Research showed that lower primary school teachers who exhibit positive interactions with the children under their supervision tend to demonstrate higher levels of job performance (Machado Simoes, & Almeida, 2020; Zhao, Zhang, & Shi, 2021). Fostering a welcoming and supportive atmosphere, dedicating valuable time to the pupils and exhibiting attentiveness to their requirements are instrumental in cultivating favourable connections.

Hence, the job performance of lower primary school teachers can be influenced by the leadership style of the head teacher. The current research on the impact of head teacher leadership styles on the job performance of lower primary school teachers is limited in its scope, as it fails to explore this association across diverse contexts. The majority of scholarly investigations have focused on a specific geographical area, such as Nigeria (Akintayo & Adelabu, 2021). Consequently, there exists a necessity for conducting research that investigates this correlation across diverse cultural and societal settings, specifically within Osun State. An additional area of research that requires exploration pertains to the examination of the impact of distinct leadership behaviours on the occupational performance of lower primary school teachers. Prior studies have investigated the overarching leadership approaches adopted by school heads, including transformational leadership. However, further inquiry is warranted to explore the impact of distinct leadership

behaviours, namely communication, feedback, and recognition, on the work performance of lower primary school teachers. Furthermore, it is imperative to conduct research that investigated the mediating and moderating factors that could potentially impact the correlation between head teacher leadership styles and the job performance of teacher in the primary school education setting.

The present analysis concluded that although recent research has provided insights into the impact of head teacher leadership styles on the job performance of lower primary school teachers, further investigation is warranted to explore this association in diverse settings, scrutinise particular leadership behaviours, explore mediating and moderating factors, and evaluate the enduring effects of head teacher leadership styles on the job performance of early childhood caregivers. Overall, there is a dearth of understanding of how head teacher leadership styles and other characteristics may influence the job performance of lower primary school teachers, which is crucial for enhancing the quality of primary education and encouraging favourable outcomes for pupils.

### **Objective of the Study**

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- (i) assess the leadership styles adopted by the head teachers in lower primary schools in Osun west senatorial district;
- (ii) examine the job performance of teachers in lower primary schools in the study area; and
- (iii) determine the relationship between the head teacher's leadership styles and teachers job performance in lower primary schools.

### **Research Questions**

In order to address the objectives of this study the following research questions were raised:

- (i) What are the leadership styles adopted by the head teachers in lower primary schools in Osun west senatorial district?
- (ii) What is the job performance of teachers in lower primary schools in the study area?

### **Hypotheses**

There is no significant relationship between head teacher leadership styles adopted and teachers' job performance in lower primary schools in Osun west senatorial district.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study consisted all lower primary schools in Osun west senatorial district. Osun's population is 3,416,959 people (2006 census). 90 teachers and 30 head teachers were sampled via simple random sampling technique for the study. Three Local Government Areas (LGAs) were selected from the senatorial district using simple random sampling technique. From the selected Local Governments, ten schools were selected using simple random sampling techniques. From each school, three teachers and the head teacher of the school were selected purposively across the schools. Two self-designed research instruments were used in this research study.

An instrument titled “Head Teacher Leadership Styles Questionnaire” (HTLSQ) and “Teachers’ Job Performance Questionnaire” (TJPQ). HTLSQ was used to elicit data from the head teachers on types of leadership styles adopted in the schools and it was based on Likert ratio scale of "Exactly like me, Much like me, A bit like me and Not me at all". TJPQ was a four point Likert scale questionnaire of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) which was used to assess teachers’ job performance in the lower primary schools in Osun west senatorial district in Osun State. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to analyse research question one and two. While Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to examine the hypothesis.

## Results

**Research Question One:** What are the leadership styles adopted by head teachers in lower primary schools in Osun west senatorial district?

To answer this research question, data generated on leadership style adopted by head teachers in lower primary schools were analysed using frequency count, simple percentage and mean.

**TABLE 1**

Descriptive analysis of leadership style adopted by head teachers in lower primary schools

Item description Mean	SA		A		D		SD		$\bar{x}$
	f(%)		f(%)		f(%)		f(%)		
1. Teachers need to be supervised closely or they are not likely to do their work	16(53.3)	9(30.0)	2(6.7)	3(10.0)	3.30				
2. It is fair to say that most teachers in the general school are lazy	5(16.7)		9(30.0)		13(43.3)		3(10.0)	2.77	
3. In complex situations, head teachers should let teachers work out problems on their own	12(40.0)	6(20.0)	8(26.7)		4(13.3)	2.94			
4. Teachers want to be part of the decision-making process	17(56.7)		11(36.7)		1(3.3)		1(3.3)	3.50	
5. Providing guidance without pressure is the key to being a good leader	12(40.0)		11(36.7)		7(23.3)		0(00.0)	3.20	
6. As a rule, teachers must be given rewards or punishments in order to motivate them to achieve educational goals	19(63.3)		5(16.7)		4(13.3)		2(6.6)	3.38	
7. Head teachers requires staying out of the way of teachers as they do their work		4(13.3)		13(43.3)		9(30.0)		4(13.3)	2.70
8. Most teachers want frequent and supportive with their head teachers	12(40.0)		11(36.7)		6(20.0)		1(3.3)	3.19	
9. As a rule, leaders should allow Members to appraise their own work	6(20.0)		10(33.3)		11(36.7)		3(10.0)	2.66	
10. Most teachers feel insecure about their work and need direction		12(40.0)		13(43.3)		3(10.0)		2(6.6)	
11. Head teachers need to help their teachers accept responsibility for completing their work	17(56.7)		9(30.0)		2(6.6)	2(6.6)	3.38		
12. Head teachers should give teachers complete freedom to solve problems on their own	12(40.0)		10(33.3)		8(26.7)		0(00.0)	3.12	
13. In most situations teachers prefer little input from the head teachers	11(36.7)		10(33.3)		8(26.7)	1(3.3)	3.10		
14. It is the head teacher's job to help members find their "passion"	15(50.0)		14(46.7)		0(00.0)	1(3.3)	3.36		
15. The head teacher is the chief judge of									



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	the achievements of the teachers	12(40.0)	10(33.3)	4(13.3)	4(13.3)	3.00
16.	Effective leaders give orders and clarify procedures	9(30.0)	19(63.3)	2(6.6)	0(00.0)	3.22
17.	In general, it is best to leave teachers alone	5(16.7)	4(13.3)	10(33.3)	10(33.3)	2.13
18.	Teachers are basically competent and if given a task will do a good jobs	13(43.3)	15(50.0)	2(6.6)	0(00.0)	3.36
<b>Cluster Mean</b>						<b>3.08</b>

Results in Table 1 showed the mean value of items 1 to 18 which are 3.30, 2.77, 2.94, 3.50, 3.20, 3.38, 2.70, 3.19, 2.66, 3.20, 3.38, 3.12, 3.10, 3.36, 3.00, 3.22, 2.13 and 3.36. The result showed that items 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 18 were rated above criterion mean of 3.00 and thus accepted; while items 2, 3, 7, 9 and 17 were rated below it and thus rejected. Moreover, the cluster mean of 3.08 was found to be above the criterion mean of 3.00. This implied that most head teachers were affirmative of their different leadership style they employed in the study area.

**TABLE 2**

Summary of descriptive analysis of leadership style preference

Items	Leadership Style Preference	Total Mean Score
1, 2, 6, 10, 15, 16	Authoritarian	3.15
4, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18	Democratic	3.33
3, 7, 9, 12, 13, 17	Laissez-faire	2.78

**Criterion Mean =3.00**

Table 2 showed the summary analysis of leadership style preference with ground mean for authoritarian leadership style (3.15); democratic leadership style (3.33); and laissez-faire leadership style (2.78). Since, authoritarian and democratic leadership style with cluster mean of 3.15 and 3.33 were rated above criterion mean of 3.00. This meant that majority of the head teachers adopted authoritarian and democratic leadership style in their schools.

**Research Question Two:** What is the job performance of teachers in lower primary schools in the study area?

To answer this research question, data generated on the job performance of lower primary schools teachers' were analysed using frequency count, simple percentage and mean.

**TABLE 3**

## ECAN 2024 PROCEEDINGS ON NATIONAL CONFERENCE

### Descriptive analysis of the job performance of lower primary school teachers'

Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	
Mean	f(%)	f(%)	f(%)	f(%)	$\bar{X}$
1. I am a self-motivated person	27(30.0)	27(30.0)	18(20.0)	18(20.0)	3.12
2. I am well trained in my work	28(31.0)	24(27.0)	20(22.0)	18(20.0)	3.13
3. I am clear about my duties and responsibilities	20(22.0)	22(24.0)	21(24.0)	27(30.0)	2.86
4. I am willing to accept my faults	25(28.0)	25(28.0)	20(22.0)	20(22.0)	3.10
5. I receive the respect I deserve from my colleagues	21(24.0)	20(22.0)	23(26.0)	26(28.0)	2.70
6. I see problems as challenge rather than as obstacle	26(28.0)	27(30.0)	20(22.0)	17(20.0)	3.20
7. The superior encourages me at work	27(30.0)	25(28.0)	20(22.0)	18(20.0)	3.18
8. I always receive positive feedback from my employ	23(26.0)	22(24.0)	20(22.0)	25(28.0)	2.90
9. I gain personal growth by learning various skills in my work	26(28.0)	24(27.0)	20(22.0)	20(22.0)	3.10
10. The management appreciates my suggestions and leadership	25(28.0)	25(28.0)	22(24.0)	18(20.0)	3.17
11. Head teachers encourage me to do well in my work	23(26.0)	24(27.0)	20(22.0)	23(26.0)	3.08
12. I am rewarded for the quality of my effort	20(22.0)	20(22.0)	25(28.0)	25(28.0)	2.78
13. I am valued by my head teachers	22(24.0)	20(22.0)	22(24.0)	27(30.0)	2.85
14. The school has a positive image towards my friends and family	27(30.0)	27(30.0)	18(20.0)	18(20.0)	3.10
15. My teaching job brings positive changes to me	29(32.0)	34(38.0)	15(17.0)	12(13.0)	3.36
16. I am able to solve problems immediately to satisfy my superiors	23(26.0)	31(34.0)	18(20.0)	18(20.0)	3.23
17. I am happy with my job	24(27.0)	30(33.0)	12(13.0)	24(27.0)	3.12
18. I gain personal accomplishment through my work	26(28.0)	30(33.0)	15(17.0)	19(22.0)	3.35
<b>Cluster Mean</b>					<b>3.06</b>

Results in Table 4.5 showed the mean value of items 1 to 18, which are 3.12, 3.13, 2.86, 3.10, 2.70, 3.20, 3.18, 2.90, 3.10, 3.17, 3.08, 2.78, 2.85, 3.10, 3.36, 3.23, 3.12 and 3.35. The result showed that items 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 were rated above criterion mean of 3.00 and thus accepted; while items 3, 5, 8, 12 and 13 were rated below criterion mean and thus rejected. Moreover, the cluster means of 3.06 was found to be above the criterion mean of 3.00. This indicated that the majority of lower primary school teachers were positive of their job performance in the schools in Osun West senatorial district, Osun State.

### Testing of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between head teachers' leadership style and teachers' job performance in lower primary schools in the study area.

In order to test this hypothesis, data collected on head teachers leadership style and teachers' job performance were subjected to Pearson product moment correlation and the results are presented in Table 4.

**TABLE 4**

Pearson product moment correlation of the relationship between head teachers leadership style and teachers' job performance

<b>Variables (tailed)</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>Sig.(2-</b>
Head Teacher Leadership Style	90	50.80	7.46	.302**	.002
Teachers' Job Performance	90	46.49	6.99		

( $r = 0.302^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ )

Results in Table 4 showed that there is significant positive relationship between head teachers leadership style and teachers' job performance in the study area ( $r = .302$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between head teachers leadership style and teachers' job performance in the study area is hereby rejected. This indicated that there is correlation between head teachers leadership style and teachers' job performance in Osun state.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The results showed that most head teachers in the lower primary schools adopted authoritarian and democratic leadership style in Osun west senatorial district of Osun State. This finding is in conformity with Krampe et al (2020) as they found that lower primary schools teachers were less productive when led by head teachers who had a hands-off approach to management. It has been discovered that this kind of leadership does not improve the efficiency of workers in the lower school level. Furthermore, Mwita et al (2020) opined that head teachers in Africa who practise democratic leadership have a positive impact on the effectiveness of their basic school education. Leaders in democracies include their followers in decision-making and provide them with the tools they need to succeed. It has been shown that this method of leading improves the efficiency of workers in Africa's lower primary school and education sector.

Furthermore, the result showed that the majority of the lower primary school teachers' were positive of their job performance in the schools in the study area. The findings corroborated Bassey, Bisong, Isangedighi and Ubi (2011) who reported that teachers in both public and private schools were superior in classroom management, students discipline and supervision of co-curricular activities in their respective schools. The findings contradicted with Krampe et al (2020) as they reported that early school educators were less productive and their efficiency of workers were less in the lower primary school level. Likewise, Ogunkoya and Adeyemo (2021) discovered that head teachers whose leadership styles are characterised by laissez-faire have a detrimental impact on the job performance of early school teachers. It has been determined that this leadership style is inefficient at enhancing the job performance of early school teachers in Nigeria.

Lastly, the result showed that there is significant positive relationship between head teachers' leadership style adopted and teachers' job performance in the study area. The finding agreed with Hofstede (2005) in Wu and Pan (2006) that employer-employee relationship is moral, like a family link. Furthermore, the finding agreed with Wu and Pan (2006) that democratic leaders pay more attention to the relationship between managers and employees, and they care more about their subordinates. It was further stated that the employer-employee relationship is a contract between parties on a labour market. Management in an individualist society is management of individuals. Task prevails over relationship. If incentives or bonuses are given, these should be linked to an individual's performance (Hofstede, 2001 in Wu & Pan 2006). Transactional leaders generally reward or discipline the follower depending on the adequacy of the follower's performance.

### Conclusion

The study concluded that most head teachers in lower primary school adopted authoritarian and democratic leadership style and teachers were diligent about their work in their various schools. Lastly, the study revealed a significant relationship between head teachers leadership style and teachers' job performance.

### Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the findings of this study, it is hereby recommended that:

- i. School head teachers should apply any suitable style that seems appropriate for a given situation.
- ii. It is recommending that head teachers need to recognize the importance of their staff in decision making and treat all the staff equally. They contribute in one way or the other to development in the schools.
- iii. This research recommends that both men and women should feel free to adopt leadership strategies that will help them succeed

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**SCALING UP CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AND PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT AMONG PRE-SCHOOL CAREGIVERS IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*This conceptual paper examines the critical need for scaling up career opportunities and fostering professional development among pre-school caregivers in Nigeria. Despite the pivotal role they play in early childhood education, pre-school caregivers often face limited career pathways and inadequate support for professional growth. Drawing on empirical research, policy analysis, and stakeholder perspectives, this paper highlights the multifaceted challenges facing pre-school caregivers, including low wages, lack of formal recognition, and insufficient training opportunities. The paper argues for a comprehensive approach to address these challenges, emphasizing the importance of policy reforms, institutional support, and community engagement. It proposes strategies such as creating formal career pathways, enhancing training programs, and establishing mentorship initiatives to empower pre-school caregivers and elevate the quality of early childhood education. Furthermore, it underscores the significance of collaborative efforts among government agencies, educational institutions, NGOs, and community stakeholders to effect sustainable change. By advocating for the scaling up of career opportunities and professional development for pre-school caregivers, this paper contributes to the broader discourse on improving early childhood education in Nigeria. It underscores the imperative of investing in the workforce that nurtures the youngest learners, ultimately promoting social equity, economic development, and human capital advancement in the nation.*

**Keywords:** professional development, caregiver , Earlychildhood education, scaling up

**Introduction**

Early childhood education lays the foundation for lifelong, wide long learning and development, it equally plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' cognitive, emotional, and social capacities (UNESCO, 2012). In Nigeria, the significance of pre-school education cannot be overstated, as it serves as the initial step towards academic success and societal integration for young learners. Pre-school caregivers in Nigeria, comprising teachers and educators, play a critical role in facilitating children's holistic development during their formative years (Ajayi, 2019).

Despite the undeniable importance of early childhood education, pre-school caregivers in Nigeria encounter various challenges that hinder their effectiveness and professional growth. One prominent challenge is the limited availability of career advancement opportunities within the field. Unlike their counterparts in primary and secondary education, pre-school caregivers often face restricted avenues for career progression, which can

demotivate and stifle their potential (Ajayi & Fajonyomi, 2020). Additionally, inadequate support for professional development further compounds the challenges faced by pre-school caregivers, hindering their ability to stay updated with best practices and innovative teaching methodologies (UNICEF, 2020). This introduction sets the stage for exploring strategies to address these pressing issues and enhance career opportunities and professional development among pre-school caregivers in Nigeria.

In response to these challenges, it becomes imperative to explore initiatives aimed at scaling up career opportunities and professional development among pre-school caregivers in Nigeria. By addressing these issues, not only can the quality of early childhood education be improved, but also the overall well-being and future prospects of young learners can be enhanced. This paper will delve into potential strategies and interventions that can empower pre-school caregivers, thereby fostering a more conducive environment for early childhood education in Nigeria. Through collaborative efforts between policymakers, educational institutions, and relevant stakeholders, meaningful progress can be achieved in bolstering the capacity and support systems available to pre-school caregivers, ultimately leading to positive outcomes for both educators and children alike. These efforts may include implementing comprehensive professional development programs tailored to the unique needs of pre-school caregivers, providing access to continuous training and mentorship opportunities, and advocating for policies that recognize and reward their contributions to early childhood education. Additionally, fostering a culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing within the pre-school education sector can further amplify the impact of these interventions, enabling caregivers to learn from each other's experiences and best practices. By investing in the professional growth and well-being of pre-school caregivers, Nigeria can nurture a generation of competent and motivated educators- caregivers, who are equipped to provide high-quality early childhood education, laying a solid foundation for the nation's future development and prosperity.

By exploring strategies to scale up career opportunities and enhance professional development among pre-school caregivers, this paper aims to contribute to the advancement of early childhood education in Nigeria, ultimately fostering the holistic development and future success of young learners. Through collaborative efforts and targeted interventions, we can create a more supportive and empowering environment for pre-school caregivers, paving the way for a brighter future for Nigeria's children and society as a whole.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was developed by Robert D. Lent, Steven D. Brown, and Gail Hackett in the late 20th century, particularly in the 1980s. The theory emphasizes the role of self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals in shaping career choices and behaviors. It posits that individuals' career choices are influenced by their self-efficacy beliefs in their ability to perform certain tasks, their expectations about the outcomes of their actions, and the goals they set for themselves.

In terms of educational implications, SCCT suggests that educators should focus on fostering students' self-efficacy beliefs, providing diverse role models, and creating opportunities for career exploration and skill development. This can help students make informed career decisions and pursue paths aligned with their interests and abilities.

SCCT provides a valuable framework for understanding how individuals make career choices and the factors that influence these decisions. It emphasizes the importance of cognitive processes, social influences, and contextual factors in shaping career development, making it relevant to various fields such as counseling, education, and organizational psychology.

### Guided Questions

The following five questions were generated to have a deeper understanding of the study:

1. How can we enhance professional development opportunities for early childhood educators to improve the quality of preschool education?
2. What strategies can be implemented to scale up career pathways for individuals entering the field of preschool education?
3. In what ways can we foster collaboration between preschools, educational institutions, and businesses to create more diverse career opportunities in early childhood education?
4. How can technology be leveraged to expand access to professional development resources for preschool teachers in remote or underserved areas?
5. What innovative approaches can be employed to attract and retain talented individuals in the preschool education sector, thereby increasing career opportunities and advancement prospects?

Improving professional development opportunities for early childhood educators is crucial for enhancing the quality of preschool education. Research by Whitebook, Gomby, Bellm, & Sakai (2009) emphasizes the importance of ongoing training and support for educators to stay abreast of the latest pedagogical practices and child development theories. Additionally, early childhood education experts like Pianta, Mashburn, Downer, Hamre, & Justice (2008) highlight the significance of specialized training in areas such as language development, social-emotional learning, and cultural competence.

One effective approach is to provide educators with access to high-quality, research-based professional development programs. Studies by Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia (2016) suggest that these programs should incorporate active learning strategies, reflective practices, and opportunities for collaboration with peers. Moreover, establishing mentorship programs where experienced educators guide and support novices has been shown to enhance skill development and job satisfaction (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009).

Furthermore, integrating technology into professional development can facilitate continuous learning and skill acquisition. Platforms like online courses, webinars, and virtual communities of practice allow educators to access resources conveniently and exchange ideas with colleagues globally (Zhang & Espelage, 2016). Additionally, incentivizing participation in professional development through rewards, recognition, and career advancement opportunities can motivate educators to engage actively in their own growth and development (Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

In summary, enhancing professional development opportunities for early childhood educators through research-based training, mentorship programs, technology integration,

and incentivization can significantly contribute to improving the quality of preschool education, ultimately benefiting young learners.

To effectively scale up career pathways in preschool education, several strategies can be implemented. Firstly, expanding access to professional development opportunities is crucial. Research by Hedges and Cullen (2018) emphasizes the significance of ongoing training for early childhood educators to enhance their skills and competencies. By providing accessible and relevant training programs, individuals entering the field can continually improve and advance their careers.

Furthermore, establishing mentorship programs can facilitate the transition into the field and promote career advancement. As noted by Yoon and Kim (2020), mentorship enhances job satisfaction and retention among early childhood educators. Pairing novice educators with experienced mentors can offer guidance, support, and valuable insights into the profession, thereby nurturing their professional growth.

Additionally, advocating for policy changes to improve wages and benefits for preschool educators is essential. Research by Whitebook et al. (2016) highlights the correlation between compensation and workforce retention in early childhood education. By advocating for better pay and benefits, we can attract and retain talented individuals, ultimately strengthening the workforce and career pathways in preschool education.

Moreover, fostering partnerships between educational institutions and childcare centers can create seamless pathways for career advancement. Collaborative efforts, as suggested by Farran et al. (2019), can align coursework with workplace demands and offer opportunities for practical experience and professional development.

By implementing these strategies, we can effectively scale up career pathways for individuals entering the field of preschool education, ensuring a skilled and motivated workforce dedicated to the early development and education of children.

To foster collaboration between preschools, educational institutions, and businesses for diverse career opportunities in early childhood education, we can implement various strategies. Firstly, establishing partnerships between preschools and educational institutions allows for the exchange of resources, knowledge, and best practices. This collaboration can be facilitated through joint training programs, workshops, and seminars where educators from both sectors can share insights and expertise (Coyne & Needham, 2020).

Furthermore, involving businesses in this collaboration enhances the practical aspect of early childhood education by providing real-world experiences for students. By partnering with businesses, educational institutions can offer internships, apprenticeships, or job-shadowing opportunities in childcare facilities, educational toy companies, or child development research centers. This exposure not only broadens students' understanding of the field but also helps them develop essential skills and competencies required for diverse career paths in early childhood education (Seitz, 2018).

Additionally, leveraging technology can facilitate collaboration among stakeholders. Online platforms or forums can be created where educators, preschool administrators, and business professionals can exchange ideas, share resources, and discuss innovative approaches to early childhood education (Vanderlinde & van Braak, 2019). By harnessing the power of technology, barriers of time and distance can be overcome, allowing for continuous collaboration and networking opportunities.

Therefore, fostering collaboration between preschools, educational institutions, and businesses is essential for creating diverse career opportunities in early childhood education. Through partnerships, practical experiences, and technological integration, stakeholders can work together to prepare a skilled and diverse workforce that meets the evolving needs of the field.

In Nigeria, leveraging technology to expand access to professional development resources for preschool teachers in remote or underserved areas is crucial for enhancing educational quality and outcomes. According to a report by UNESCO, Nigeria faces significant challenges in providing quality education, particularly in remote regions (UNESCO, 2019). Additionally, research indicates that professional development for teachers positively impacts student learning outcomes (Desimone, 2009).

Integrating technology into professional development initiatives can address barriers such as geographical isolation and limited resources. Online platforms and digital resources offer flexibility and accessibility, enabling teachers in remote areas to engage in ongoing learning opportunities (UNESCO, 2017). For example, virtual workshops and webinars can provide interactive learning experiences without requiring teachers to travel long distances.

Moreover, mobile technology can play a pivotal role in reaching teachers in underserved areas. With the widespread availability of smartphones, mobile applications can deliver professional development content directly to teachers' devices, allowing for self-paced learning and real-time support (UNESCO, 2020).

Furthermore, partnerships between educational institutions, government agencies, and technology companies can facilitate the development and dissemination of tailored professional development resources. Collaborative efforts can ensure that content is culturally relevant and aligned with the needs of preschool teachers in diverse contexts (UNESCO, 2018).

Therefore, leveraging technology offers a promising solution to expand access to professional development resources for preschool teachers in remote or underserved areas of Nigeria. By embracing digital platforms, mobile technology, and collaborative partnerships, policymakers and stakeholders can work together to enhance teacher capacity and ultimately improve early childhood education outcomes across the country.

To attract and retain talented individuals in the preschool education sector, innovative approaches are crucial. One effective strategy is to implement personalized professional development programs tailored to educators' needs (Smith, 2019). This approach acknowledges individual strengths and fosters a sense of investment in their career growth, ultimately leading to higher job satisfaction and retention rates (Jones et al., 2020).

Additionally, leveraging technology can enhance engagement and streamline administrative tasks, freeing up educators to focus on teaching and fostering relationships with students (Brown & Green, 2021). For instance, incorporating virtual reality simulations for training purposes can provide hands-on experience in classroom management and child development techniques (Choi et al., 2022).

Furthermore, establishing mentorship programs connecting experienced educators with newcomers can offer invaluable support and guidance (Wang & Kim, 2018). This fosters a sense of community and facilitates knowledge sharing, leading to enhanced professional development and job satisfaction among educators (Jones et al., 2020).



Moreover, creating flexible work arrangements and offering competitive compensation packages can attract and retain top talent (Smith, 2019). By providing opportunities for career advancement and recognizing educators' contributions, institutions can cultivate a culture of excellence and commitment within the preschool education sector (Brown & Green, 2021). Overall, by implementing these innovative approaches, the preschool education sector can effectively attract and retain talented individuals, thereby increasing career opportunities and advancement prospects for educators.

### Suggestions

Based on the search for plethora of related studies on how to scale up career opportunities and professional development among preschool educators, consider the following suggestions:

- **Training Programs:** Develop specialized training programs focusing on early childhood education, covering pedagogy, child psychology, and developmentally appropriate practices.
- **Certification Programs:** Establish certifications or credentials specific to early childhood education to validate educators' skills and expertise. -Mentorship Programs: Implement mentorship initiatives pairing experienced educators with newcomers to provide guidance, support, and professional development opportunities. -Networking Events: Organize networking events, conferences, and workshops to facilitate collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the exchange of best practices within the early childhood education community.
- **Career Pathways:** Create clear career pathways with opportunities for advancement, such as lead teacher roles, curriculum development positions, or administrative roles within preschool settings or education organizations. -Continuous Learning: Encourage and support ongoing professional development through access to online courses, webinars, and resources tailored to early childhood educators' needs and interests. -Partnerships: Foster partnerships with universities, education organizations, and government agencies to enhance access to professional development resources, research opportunities, and funding for preschool educators. -Recognition and Incentives: Recognize and reward excellence in early childhood education through awards, incentives, and public acknowledgment to motivate educators and promote retention.
- **Community Engagement:** Engage parents, caregivers, and community members in supporting preschool educators' professional development efforts and advocating for the importance of early childhood education.
- **Research and Innovation:** Invest in research and innovation to continually improve teaching practices, curriculum design, and assessment methods in early childhood education, ensuring educators have access to cutting-edge knowledge and tools.

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## UTILIZATION OF ICT AMONG CAREGIVERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

*The benefits of information and communication technology in educational sector necessitates the study on the use of information and communication technology among caregivers for 21<sup>st</sup> century. The paper revealed that the use of technology among caregivers will help to improve training of caregivers by providing unrestricted access to better educational resources, providing multimedia resources that will help the caregivers in the stimulation of good basic information technology and encourage collaborative learning among preschoolers and caregivers. The paper exposed the basic information technological skills needed by caregivers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as word processing skills, electronic presentation skills and file management strategy among others. The paper revealed that the challenges of using information technology among caregivers as inadequate expertise knowledge of lecturers and shortage of basic information and communication technology among others. The paper concluded that the procurement of information and communication technology is not the panacea for caregivers effective teaching but the ability to harvest the potentials technological skills that will enhance caregivers' teaching skills. This paper suggested that the administrators of the early childhood education sector should provide a dossier of caregivers with skills and knowledge of technology and certificate issued and will be used as one of the requirements for appointment and promotion.*

**Keywords:** information technology, network technology, information and communication technology, caregivers' education, and Sustainable development

### Introduction:

The concept of education involves the process of cultural transmission, its deals with the art of instilling on the people or individual, positive values, morals, ethics among others all to make the people live a functional and productive life and become fit to contribute to the development of any nation. Akinpelu (1981) as cited in Agabi O. G, Okirosaye – Orubite, A. K Ezekiel – Hart, J. and Egbezor, D. E (2005) states that the end product of education is the educated man, who in Africa is one who shows evidence of a well-integrated personality...he is economically efficient, socially and politically competent, morally accepted and intellectually and culturally sophisticated. The above statement imply that education also inculcate skills, knowledge, and virtues that will make the individual presentable in the society to participate in democratic process.

This brings to limelight the significant role of caregivers in the attainment of the national policy of education as it concerns the preschool children. The achievement of the policies in the early childhood education solely rest on the shoulders caregivers who are saddled with the direct responsibilities of implementing them in the classroom to ensure educational objectives of the ECE are achieved in all ramification and make it paramount for continuous training and retraining of caregivers for sustainable development. Caregivers have

significant role in building preschoolers morally, emotionally, physically, cognitively and socially.

In view of the above, education international (2010) stated that only experienced, passionate and lovable caregivers can effect about quality education of the children. Hence qualification with experience play important role in the life of the preschool children. Caregivers or caregiver according to Houghton (2011) as people who play the role of assistants to other people on demand in order to make it faster for someone to achieve results within time frame, help provided to support someone. Further, a caregiver is someone, it could be a male or female to is paid to look after preschool children in all educational institution or at home provided the preschoolers are well taken care of in terms of needs. Brisbane (2000) opines that a caregiver often times refer to as someone who cares for the preschoolers which could be on a short or long- term period. He further added that family members, parent, grandparent, foster parent, babysitters as well as child workers can provide the same skills in caring for children or preschoolers.

In a world where the information and communication technology has created a paradigm shift in every aspect of human endeavors, has changed the way people reason, teaching/learning are no longer the normal old method, people relate to one another in a dynamic way or manner, the way and manner knowledge is shared has changed significantly and improved. Today, the information and communication technology is a name that rings bell everywhere or aspect of the society which the education is not left out. Utilization of ICT among the caregivers to enhance the process of teaching/learning of the preschool children is one of necessity.

### **Conceptual Clarification:**

#### **Information and Communication Technology:**

The information and communication technology (ICT) refers to the technologies that facilitate the capturing, processing, storage and dissemination of data via the electronic process or means. It goes further to encompasses a wide or variety range of technologies such as the computers, telecommunications software applications and networks. Before the inception of the information and communication technology ideas, information were passed through the use or means of letter writing and memos or the use of oral means of communication or dissemination. However, the inception of ICT led to different channels by which messages are passed through one person to another or from the sender to the receiver, information and communication technology are two different concepts that people often mistake as the same. But for the purpose of clarification, information technology (IT) refers to the use of computers, networks, software, and other technologies to manage and process data, communicate, and solve problems. It covers wide range of activities that include computer programming, data management, networking, cybersecurity and software development. Put differently, information technologies are frequently used in the industries while the information and communication technologies are used in educational settings.

Information and communication technology is the application of the technological tools to solve educational problems while enriching it's services. The component of the ICT includes the radio, television, computers, CD/DVD, internet and others - that can store and retrieve data, information and communication technology encompasses computer and computer networks, hardwares, software, electronics mail and other services. These services that the ICT carry out are video conferences, distance learning, internet technology, audio conferencing and multimedia utilization (Anulobi & Anusiem 2012). Accordingly, Okai

(2008) states that the information and communication technology are computer-based tools that people use to work with information that aide the data and data processing needs of an organization. It includes the keyboard, joystick, mouse, printers, monitors, screen, payroll software, modems etc.

Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) machine learning, blockchain, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), internet of things (IOT) and robotics which are transforming how information is processed, communicated and utilized. According to Agweche (2008) information and communication technology can make preschool caregivers to be more effective and productive in the classroom. The ICT can also enhance teaching and learning via it's dynamic interactive and engaging content and it can provide real opportunities for individualized instruction, has the potential to accelerate, enrich and deepen skills, motivate and engage the preschool children in learning.

The information and communication technology (ICT) can play a very important and significant role when properly acquired and effectively applied during teaching and learning process by the caregivers in the classroom.

1. **Interactive Learning Tools:** the ICT offers interactive learning tools such as educational software, apps and games designed specifically for preschool children. The tools can make learning more engaging, enjoyable and effective by incorporating colorful graphics, animations and interactive elements.
2. **Communication and Collaboration:** The ICT facilitates communication and collaboration among preschool children through platforms like videos-conferencing, online forums and collaborative projects. This helps them share, learn how to interact ideas, work as a team, and develop social skills.
3. **Adaptive Learning:** Some ICT tools incorporate adaptive learning algorithms that personalized the learning experience based on each child's strength, weakness, and progress. This individualized approach can optimize learning outcomes and support differentiated instructions.
4. **Parental Involvement:** ICT enables parents to be more involved in their child's learning journey through educational apps, online/progress tracking tools and communication platforms with caregivers. This partnership fosters a supportive learning environment both at home and in preschool settings.

Overall, when used appropriately and under guidance, ICT can be a valuable tool for enhancing preschool education, promoting holistic development and fostering a love for learning among young children.

### **Caregiver Education:**

Teaching is seen as one of the oldest progressions to mankind. Teaching is the deliberate or conscious efforts made by the caregiver to impact on the learners certain skills, knowledge, values, morals, attitude and culture of a particular people that cause a change in the behavior of the learners or children and make them become fit in the society where they may find themselves or among their peers. It is inter-relational process in which the knowledgeable caregiver tries to infuse certain skills and attitudes to the preschool children who may be seen as less knowledgeable in order to prepare the preschoolers for a functional life or future.

Caregiver education typically involves training and support programmes designed to help individuals learn how to care for others effectively. This can include understanding the needs of the preschool children being cared for, learning about medical conditions, developing

caregiving skills such as communication and empathy and managing caregiver stress. It involves the equipping of caregivers with ethical intellectual competences and skills, dispositions and emotions that enable the caregivers to imbue in the preschool children the requisite educational and societal dispositions (Nwankwo & Ofojebe 2016). . Professional development represents an integral component to quality caregiving, and offers caregivers the opportunity to continually finetune and improve their caregiving skills. Findings show that participation in specialized intensive multi-model professional development improves caregivers' competency in the area of skill improvement targeted by the professional development activity (Trost, 2006 Sadowski, 2006, Fukkink & Lont 2007, Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavis 2005). For instance, a meta-analysis examining effects of caregiver participation in professional development found that specialized trainings (that targeted specific caregiving behaviors or practice) resulted in improved caregiver pedagogical competency, attitude toward caregiving, content knowledge, and skill when compared to participant in more generalized, broad brushing trainings (Fukkink & Lont 2007)

### **The Goals of caregiver Education:**

The federal government in recognizing the importance of quality caregiving shall continue to emphasize caregiver education in educational planning and development (FGN, 2014). The goals of caregiver education among others includes the encouragement of the spirit of enquiry and creativity in caregivers and providing them with the intellectual and professional background that will be equitable for their assignments and also make them adaptable to changing situations. Government did not only recognize that caregivers should be professionally trained but that information technology (IT) should be integrated into the caregivers training programmes (FGN 2014).

It is important we take a look at how the application of information and communication technology will be of help to achieve educational goals. Making reference from the goals of caregivers' education, and the integrating of information technology (IT) in the professional training of caregivers the federal government without hesitation want to achieve the following educational objectives in the early childhood education sector.

- ❖ Expanding access to caregivers' education
- ❖ Improving the quality of caregivers' education
- ❖ Developing lifelong learning process in caregivers' education

### **Expanding Access to Caregivers' Education**

This aspect is very crucial for improving the quality of care provided to the preschoolers or children using the online education platforms, making available online courses and platforms tailored to caregivers' needs allows them to access education from anywhere at any time. Providing financial support in terms of grant and scholarship can make education more affordable and accessible to our caregivers.

The availability of workplace training programmes is another important area where employers can offer training programmes and workshops to improve the existing knowledge of the caregivers focusing on relevant skills and knowledge that will be of great benefits to the preschoolers, collaborating with community, organizations and colleges can also help in designing and delivering educational programmes for caregivers, offering flexible schedules and part-time options for education allows caregivers to balance their work and education responsibilities. Advocating for policies that support caregivers' education, such as tax incentives or funding for



education programmes, can lead to systematic improvement. By implementing these strategies, we empower caregivers with the knowledge and skills they need to provide high-quality care to the preschool children.

### **Improving the Quality of Caregivers' Education**

This is another way of enhancing the overall standard of care and support provided to the individuals in need. Develop and implement comprehensive training programmes that cover a wide range of topics relevant to caregiving, including communication skills, medical knowledge, empathy building and stress management. Provide opportunities for caregivers to gain hands-on experience through internships, shadowing experience caregivers or stimulated training scenarios, practical experience is invaluable for applying theoretical knowledge in real-life situation.

Continuing education that encourages and support caregivers to pursue continuing education opportunities to stay updated with the latest advancements best practices, and regulations in the field of caregiving. Establishing a mentorship programmes where experienced caregivers can mentor and guide newer caregivers. This fosters a culture of continuous learning and professional development. Emotional intelligence training plays a vital role in improving the quality of caregivers' education, incorporate training on emotional intelligence, cultural competence, and ethical considerations into caregiver education. These crucial skills are essential for building meaningful relationships with care recipients and their families.

Creating technology integration training into caregiver education to familiarize them with tools and platforms that can enhance the efficiency, communication and coordination of care can create peer support networks or support groups where caregivers can share experiences, seek advise, and provide emotional support to each other. This can help reduce burnout and improve overall well-being of the individuals, implement regular evaluations and feedbacks mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of caregiver education programmes and make necessary improvements based on input from caregivers and care preschool children.

### **Developing Lifelong Learning Process in Caregivers Education**

Caregivers are fundamental in the achievement of quality education, therefore there is the need for the continuous training and retraining of caregivers if they must be effective in the discharge of their tasks or duties. Foundational knowledge that involves ensuring caregivers have a strong foundation in the principles of caregiving, including understanding of medical conditions, basic healthcare practices and communication skills. Caregivers should also be offered regular training sessions or workshops to update caregivers on new technological advancement and their benefitsto the early childhood education.

In collaborating this assertion Onuoha- Chidiebere (2016) states that caregivers are people who aim at bringing about the desired outcomes not only in preschool children to the society at large. For caregivers to bring the desired skills out of the preschool children and the society, there should is the need for the training and retraining of caregivers in the theory and practice of the early childhood education.

### **The need for Information and Communication Technology in Caregiver Education**

Information and communication technology (ICT) plays a crucial role in caregiver education by enhancing training methods, improving access to resources and facilitating communication among caregivers, early childhood providers or administrators. The early childhood education is overwhelmed with population of preschool children and there is the need to meet the aspirations of the society or parents in the attainment of the ECE pursuit. Therefore, there is the need for the effective use or application of technology in the process of teaching and learning. The universe is changing in every aspect or sphere of human endeavors be it socially, economically, culturally, politically, religiously and therefore the early childhood education sector in Nigeria must not be neglected or left out.

The emergence of this new global economy that is information and knowledge driven has a great implication where caregivers can access a wide range of educational resources through ICT platforms, including e-books, research articles, videos and online forums. This access helps them stay updated with the latest practices and guidelines in caregiving. ICT also allows caregivers to participate in remote or distance learning programmes, which is especially beneficial for those in the rural areas who may not have easy access to traditional educational institutions. This also enable flexibility in learning schedules. The information and communication technology tools facilitate collaboration and networking among caregivers, ECE providers or administrators and researchers. The collaboration fosters knowledge sharing, peer support, and update professional development opportunities.

The integration of information and communication technology in caregivers' education is now a necessity that is long overdue in Nigeria early childhood education sector. The ICT system can be used to collect, manage and analyze data related to caregiver education and training. The data driven approach helps in identifying learning trends, assessing programmes effectiveness and making data informed decision for the ECE curriculum improvements. Though online platforms and mobile applications caregiver can engage in continuous learning and professional development activities such as certification courses, workshops, and conferences without geographical constraints.

### **Information and Communication Technology Skills Needed in Caregiver Education**

The caregiver education of this contemporary age must possess or acquire certain rudimental basic skills of information technology to enable caregivers to perform optimally. Some of these skills are:

- Electronic presentation skills
- Assistive technologies
- Information literacy
- Educational copy rights knowledge

However, the 21<sup>st</sup> century caregiver should not only possess the above stated skills but should equally carry out the following role:

- Instill on the preschool children the skills on the use of digital tools in the process of teaching and learning
- Encourage high order thinking and knowledge that will help in problem-solving
- Guide the learner to learn new knowledge and skills that will encourage collaborative learning among peers and experts

### **Information and Communication Tools that can aid Caregiver Education:**

The upswing of information technology has open vista of opportunities for effective and efficient communication between the caregivers, parents, preschool children and ECE providers /Administrators. In the recent past, radio and television played an important role in the dissemination of information on education materials or services but upon the emergence of the 21<sup>st</sup> century where information and knowledge drive the system has changed the entire educational system including the ECE sector. In this global economy the roles and the responsibilities are on the ECE administrators to choose the required ECE instructional resources that best suit the preschool children so that they can achieve the ECE predetermined goals.

There are ample of information technological tools that can be used by caregivers in the ECE sector that will in turn benefit the preschool children.

1. Video Conferencing Tools: platforms like zoom, Microsoft teams, or google meet enable caregivers to participate in virtual meetings, workshops and conferences fostering collaboration and professional development.
2. Data Management System: tools for collecting, analyzing and managing preschool children's data can aid caregivers in tracking progress, identifying areas for improvement and making data informed decisions
3. E-mails: this is simply an act of sending or receiving of messages through the electronic devices from one computer to another. The message could be memos/letters, ideas, assignments or collective research. E-mails is an important channel and medium of delivering of lessons either in school or off-school premises. During COVID-19, parents collaborated with caregivers to open email address for the preschoolers via which assignment are conveyed from the caregivers to the children to be done with the help of their parents.

### **Challenges in Using Information Technology in Caregiver Education**

Despite the numerous benefits of information and communication technology in caregiver education, there yet some bottlenecks or factors mitigating the effective application/use of technology in caregivers' education and foremost is the caregivers' attitude or behavior or perception on the use of information technology. Perception here indicates how people how people believe, think and see the person or objects. among them are:

1. Language Barrier: Here the type of language used to build the technology will determine the level of knowledge the caregivers can get or understand the device especially if the technology used does not support multiple languages or if the caregiver have limited proficiency in the language in which the ECE resources or materials are delivered.
2. The federal government has not made quality provisions of adequate funds for the ECE or the education sector at large to meet the basic standard of 26% of annual budget as prescribed by UNESCO. So, the educational institutions are bereft of

technological facilities that can enhance caregivers' education such facilities like computers, projectors, fax machines, photocopiers etc. Adomi & Kpangban (2010) buttress the assertion when they stated that unavailability of some ICT component in the schools has hampered on caregivers' use of ICT tools.

3. Digital Divide: Here, some socioeconomic disparities can escalate the digital divide, a situation where certain groups or regions have limited access to technology or lack the skills to use it effectively. In corroborating this fact, Ohiweres, Azil and Okoli (2013) stated that barriers to utilization of the ICT include inadequate skills and lack of caregivers' knowledge about computer. This inequality can impact the quality and equity of caregivers' education.

### **Possible Solution to Challenges Inhabiting the Effective Use of Information Technology in Caregivers' Education:**

-The globalization and modernization in the society has caused desired and trend change throughout the entire human race and the ECE sector is not left out. The upswing of information technology has changed the preschool children and caregivers' relationship and this invariable affected the ECE classroom management, content delivery, lesson plan and presentation. Hence there is the need for caregivers to initiate change methodology of passing instruction or imparting skills in order to keep abreast with the modern tools that aid to enrich the ECE caregivers teaching and learning. Again, invest in building and upgrading IT infrastructures such as internet connectivity, computer labs and digital resources to ensure accessibility and reliability.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the following educational bodies like Early/Childhood Association of Nigeria (ECAN) and the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria can advocate for government policies and initiatives that prioritize IT integration in caregiver education including funding support regulatory frameworks and partnership with IT providers. They should also ensure that IT solutions are accessible and inclusive, considering factors such as language diversity, disabilities, and geographical limitations, to reach a wider audience of ECE caregivers.

### **Conclusion:**

Information technology has come to stay in as much as the global education system is concerned, and Nigerian caregivers should not be left out else they will be endangered species that will merely fizzle out and cannot contribute to the ECE enhancement and development. The procurement of Information technology gadgets is not just the leeway in solving the challenges of caregivers' education but the ability to cultivate and harvest in the potentials of technology in training of caregivers on the use of modern technological facilities. Caregivers who use ICT tools and resources are able to enhance their teaching methods, engage the preschool children in an interactive learning experience and streamline administrative tasks. However, it is important for caregivers to be mindful of potential risks associated with excessive screen time and to ensure that technology is used in a balanced and purposeful manner. Overall, the integration of ICT in early childhood education can support caregivers in providing a stimulating and enriching environment for preschool children to learn and grow.

### Suggestions:

1. Implementing online training programmes and webinars for caregivers in education to enhance their skills and knowledge in providing care for preschool children with low learning mind and low self-esteem.
2. Utilizing social media platforms and online support groups to correct caregivers in education with others who are in similar situations and provide a sense of community and support.
3. Using virtual reality (VR) technology for training caregivers in education on practical skills, such as proper lifting and transferring techniques and to help them better understand the perspectives of preschool children with learning disabilities or cognitive impairments.

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**INTEGRATING RESEARCH-BASED PRACTICE THROUGH REGGIO  
EMILIA APPROACH FOR EFFECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Developing a comprehensive early childhood education curriculum to foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills can be challenging and require designing and redesigning activities and practices that see children as natural researchers. The Reggio Emilia approach to learning shifts the focus of the classroom away from the teacher and onto the learner, and views children as capable, creative, curious, intelligent, and having the willingness to experiment and the desire to discover things on their own. Early Childhood Education adopts principles and practices of educational Philosophies. The failure to put these principles into practice has led to a decline in the quality of early childhood education in Nigeria. This paper examined the need to integrate research-based practice through Reggio Emilia approach in early education in Nigeria. Finally, the paper suggested ways of bridging the gap between the Principles of Reggio Emilia and its application in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Research-Based, Early Childhood Education, Reggio Emilia Approach.

**Introduction**

The demands of the 21st Century are solving problems flexibly, thinking critically and creatively, using Knowledge and skills in new situations, collaboration, and communication skills and technological literacy. These skills should be promoted in elementary schools. Children with these skills will become critical citizens and agents of their learning, ready to navigate today's increasingly complex and uncertain world (Doherty, 2013 ). Childhood is a period between birth and puberty. Many Philosophers, especially naturalist philosophers agree that the early childhood stage of life is crucial to the all-round development of any human being (Ansari, 2018; Williams, 2019). Brain research shows that from conception to age five is the most rapid period of brain development with brain cells forming at the rate of more than one million cells per second (Rinaldi, 2021; Roffey, 2022). Positive early childhood relationships, experiences, and environments support brain cell connections while negative experiences, relationships and environments hinder connections. Positive networks built positive experiences for each child. Positive experience lay new foundations and help reverse damaged brain connections. Access to quality early childhood education has shown to help reduce deficits gained from negative early childhood experiences and support school readiness and skills (Schiller & Willis, 2015). Evidence shows that access to quality practice through project-based early childhood education is critical to supporting the development of skills that will enable children do well academically and have better economic, health and social outcomes in life (Roffey, 2012). Hence, the necessity to adopting appropriate teaching methods in teaching children in the first five years of life is incontrovertible. Reggio Emilia approach and other educational philosophies have stressed the relevance of early childhood education with nature because



for them teaching involves some level of naturalist activities (Barnett & Friedman-Klauss, 2016; Delaney, 2018). Whatever form it takes the idea of "Play" is control when it comes to early childhood training. This is probably why the National Policy on Education (2013) stressed the deployment of the "play-way method" which is in line with the Reggio Emilia's approach in the passing of instructions to preschoolers/pupils at the pre-primary level of education. The document further recommends that the early childhood education facility providers must ensure that the main method of teaching at this level should be through play-way method (FRN, 2013).

Much of the focus in education in Nigeria has been to push teacher driven lessons based around state and national standards culminating in high stakes annual assessments. Even the youngest preschools are facing pressure to perform, use technology effectively, and sit and get information through rote procedures. This type of approach results in an educational design where children have very little choice in the curriculum they are offered and, therefore, become disengaged and disinterested. Most frequently in Nigeria, curriculum is covered at a superficial level rather than around questions that are interesting to children (Onuoha, 2017). The culture of education in Nigeria tends to lean towards sheltering and protecting children as opposed to providing them with space to explore, inquire, and experiment. The Reggio Emilia approach is the opposite of this trend and offers the children choice, collaboration, and project-based learning around topics that are contextually inviting. The culture of the country must be considered as an integral part of the Reggio Emilia approach. Therefore, it is critical that one can translate the Reggio Emilia approach into their own cultural context for the approach to be successful. Against this background, this paper intends to suggest ways of bridging the gap between Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education and its practical implementation in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper examines the following;

- i. The present state of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria.
- ii. Integrating research-based practice through Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education in Nigeria.

### **Concept of the Child and Early Childhood Education**

A child is a young human being between birth and puberty; a son or daughter of human parents. According to the National Child Welfare Policy of 1989, a child is anybody who is 12 years and below. But this has been recently modified. Thus a child in Nigeria is now considered to be anybody below the age of 18 years (Qsakwe, 2011). This appears to agree with the United Nations age definition of a child. In the same vein, the Nigerian law also regards anybody below the age of 18 years as a child (minor). Whatever a child experience between birth and puberty constitute his/her childhood, the early childhood period is generally referred to as the period from birth till about the age of five or Six (Onuoha, 2017). It is the period before the official primary School age in Nigeria. It means that early childhood does not go beyond the pre-school or what is popularly called nursery school years in Nigeria.

The term early childhood education is used by different Scholars to describe social and educational programmes for young children (Murray, 2018). However, in the western world, the term is used to describe services for child care and education for children between 0-8 years. Generally, the term Early Childhood Education could be used to describe the care and education of children from birth to about seven years of age (Doherty, 2013). According to National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), early childhood

spans the human life from birth to age eight (NAEYC, 2019). Early Childhood Education is provided in educational institutions to children prior to their entering the primary school (FRN, 2013). Maduewesi (1999) defines early childhood education or preschool education as a semi-formal education arrangement usually outside the home whereby young children from the age of three are exposed through play activities in a group setting to mental, social and physical learning suited to their developmental age until mandatory ages of government approved formal schooling. Early childhood education comprises the entire early childhood programmes including Day Care Centres for children 0-2 years and Kindergarten or Nursery education for children 3-5 years.

### **Research and Research - Based Teaching and Learning**

Research is generally understood as creative work undertaken on a systematic basis to increase the body of Knowledge. The knowledge in turn is used to devise new applications and improve the standard of living (Currie-Alder, 2015; Echino, 2023). Research could also mean the creation of new knowledge or the use of existing knowledge in new and creative way so as to generate their concept, methodologies and understandings.

Research-based teaching and learning is a Constructivist based approach to learning in which pupils learn through research. Instructors support this process by teaching in a way that does not present topics as closed, but rather opens them up for pupils to research (Grajeiro, 2019). The research-based learning approach is based on the idea that academic education consists of thinking beyond the curriculum and competences set therein, of questioning established knowledge and becoming active in the academic pursuits by developing an inquiring mind. When children learn through researching, they go through the typical stages of an open- ended research process, developing thus their academic and professional competences and expanding their knowledge independently.

### **Overview of the Reggio Emilia Approach**

Reggio Emilia has become the subject of world-wide attention and on International phenomenon in early childhood education. The Reggio Emilia approach stated in 1945 after World War II by Loris Malaguzzi a great educationalists and parents in the poorest parts of northern Italy in a village called Reggio Emilia. The approach derives its name from the City. The approach was based on Malaguzzi's method to provide an education that promotes critical thinking and collaboration skills in children. This method was later became known and appreciated by many educators (Reggio Children, 2015; Reggio Children , 2020).

The Reggio Emilia approach is a child-centered Community-based philosophy of leaning that respect and values children, parents and environment as important contributors to the teaching and learning process. According to Reggio Children (2017) key components/principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach include;

- 1. The Image of the Child:** The Reggio Emilia approach is designed to view young children as capable learners who can contribute to Knowledge building. The Reggio Emilia philosophy believes that children are protagonists in their own learning and development. Educators who follow this approach also believe children are Capable of building his or her learning (relationships, abilities, competencies, Knowledge) and are innately creative.
- 2. The Learning Environment as Third Teacher:** The way Reggio Emilia approach accomplishes a high-quality learning is by considering the environment as the third teacher. The Reggio Emilia approach is built on a socio-constructivist model that

views knowledge as constructed through interactions with both people and the environment. In Reggio-inspired schools, the physical environment holds great importance because it reveals a lot about how children are regarded as well as the value assigned to the process of teaching and learning.

3. **The Role of the Teacher:** An important aspect for the teacher is to be able to create rich opportunities and environment for children and their learning. Teachers will focus on creating experiences that are open ended and include critical thinking rather than crafting preset objectives for children (Moss, 2016). Teachers observe and listen closely to the children. They ask questions to discover the children's ideas, hypotheses, and theories. Teachers consider themselves to be partner in learning and construct plans for research together and learning process, working in coordination with the children.
4. **The Role of Parents/Families:** In Reggio Emilia schools, parents and family members are seen as critical part of the educational process. Family participation is seen as essential to both the families and to the school. Participation in the programme is an opportunity offered to all parents. There is constant interaction between three main groups: children, teaches, and parents (Reggio Children, 2017). Parents participate many ways in the Reggio Emilia Schools which including serving on school advisory committee to guide the decisions made at the school level. Parents and families and also asked to support children's project work and participate in activities
5. **Project Work/Emergent Curriculum:** In Reggio Emilia Schools the core of the curriculum is developed form the interests and questions of the teachers and children. These projects are ways of doing work with children that in effect stimulate real life (Moss, 2016). Loris Malaguzzi worked to construct a pedagogy designed for children's pedagogy of relations, listening and liberation. The curriculum would incorporate children and adults working together to construct knowledge-meaning making through processes of building sharing, testing, and revising theories, always in dialogue relationships with others, working in particular through the medium open-ended project work. It is a pedagogy that builds on the interests of children and welcomes the unexpected and the unpredicted that values wonder and surprise (Stegelin, 2013).
6. **Interaction among Participants (Collaboration):** Communication, interactions and relationships are considered key components to building knowledge in Reggio Emilia Classroom (Gandini, 2002). Grounded in social constructivism, Reggio Emilia approach creates an environment where interactions between children and adults allow Knowledge to be constructed rather than being transmitted from the teacher to the learner. One to this principal belief, teachers and children are a part of a democracy in which both individuals are equally important to the learning process. In the Reggio Emilia approach, strong relationships are built among teachers, children families, and communities. Teachers learn about each child's uniqueness because children will stay with the same peer group for multiple years. In some cases, the same group will stay together for a 3 - year cycle.

### **The State of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria**

A careful look at the Nigerian situation would reveal that majority of Pre-Primary schools/nursery schools in Nigeria are poorly run. Besides the dangerous trend of pushing small children too fast, to grasp concepts and the "nuisance" of unqualified and inexperienced teachers in most of these educational centres, the learning environment, which is called the "third teacher" is hardly put into consideration in Nigeria. In many early childhood education centres in Nigeria, the physical/learning environment is poorly designed, without ample space, furniture, toys, whole some pictures and other materials which a child needs for stimulation, exploration and simulation as propounded by the Reggio Emilia approach. This is against the backdrop of the fact that researches inducting that the physical environment of pre-schools has an important influence on the education and development of children are resonating globally. This is particularly regrettable because a critical element in the pre-primary education philosophy is the idea of educational play. Of course, the physical environment and the curriculum together enhance and support the child's ability to play or do something himself/herself, initiate and complete activities, take control of his/her own actions and responsibilities, communicate and interact with others easily and have better perceptions and motor skill.

The Nigerian situation appears worse as experience has shown in Osakwe (2011) that the government does not play the crucial supervisory, funding and regulatory roles in levels of education recommended by the National Policy on Education. There are few government run preschool centres in Nigeria as advocated by Plato for state ownership of school and the ones owned by Private organisations are not closely monitored or supervised by a designated government agency. Presently, there are so many ill-equipped, sub-standard Kindergarten and nursery institutions scattered all over the urban centres and some in the rural areas in Nigeria. Standard or quality may become an anathema to most of these early childhood institutions. The inspectorate unit in most of the Ministries of Education in the country solely charged to checkmate standards, are yet to do its job effectively.

Most nursery schools charge higher fees than what many model secondary schools do charge. The extra-ordinary prohibitive high cost has not been reciprocally matched by an encouraging provision of facilities and best equipment. The early childhood education is the ultimate foundation stone needed by the child to smoothly transit to the formal school system at the primary level. Any shaky foundation here naturally will affect other levels.

The curriculum of a typical early childhood education centres owned by mostly private individuals and organisations includes: alphabets, numbers, nursery rhymes, colouring and storytelling and in some cases rudiments of reading writing and arithmetic. Emphasis is laid on children's intellectual development. This is because the yardstick for assessing the quality or effectiveness of nursery schools by parents seem to be the age at which the children attending them can count, recognize alphabets, read and in particular, recite and memorize poems, verse and passages.

Ejieh (2009), observed that there are many Pre-schools located in various places and buildings, Church premises, private homes while some are set up mainly in cities as full-fledged nursery and primary school with their own buildings and premises. The physical structures vary in terms of quality and aesthetics so do the facilities and equipment. For monetary gains early childhood centres now spring up here and there and some of them lack the qualities/standard stipulated by Federal Government on early childhood education. This anomalies need to be corrected.

### **Application of Reggio Emilia Approach to Nigeria Early Childhood Education**

As one takes account of the principle and practices of educators from the past, one might assume that while today's thoughts and practices on the education of children are more informed, many basic ideas of the past fit well with current thinking and practice. The following statements of the influence from the past are still considered in vogue today in Nigeria early childhood education by many in the area of curriculum, teaching method, instructional materials, learning environment among others.

The role of the teachers in Reggio Emilia approach is to be a caretaker and facilitator. In this approach, teachers are also learners and researchers. The teacher takes cue from constructivist theorists such as Piaget, as well as advice from other new schools throughout in Europe. They took the approach that children construct their own knowledge by working through so called cognitive knots or roadblocks in their present knowledge base. The teacher there focused on the role of facilitators, they don't impart knowledge, but assist the children to create their own knowledge. They allow children to explore and figure things out in their own. When the children eventually run into roadblocks, the teachers offer themselves as another resource to be utilized (Salami, 2011).

In Reggio Emilia, the pupil are viewed as present citizen. That is, a child has the right of a full-fledged citizen. They are not viewed as a future citizen that needs to be prepared for the world. Through observation, the teachers determine what each child needs to further his or her intellectual growth and provides opportunities for that to occur. Through their pedagogy of listening, they identify what most interests the child and uses that interest to provide learning opportunities. This means that, the children's roles cannot be predetermined. This is because they strictly depended on their own interest. In Nigeria early childhood education centres and activities are prescribed for the children. The children are referred to as the future of Nigeria and the teachers have already prepared that contents be exposed to the pupils.

The community participation is not just welcomed in Reggio Emilia approach, but also made compulsory. The teachers insisted not to play the role of parents but only to assist them to develop the children. Hence, parents in the community are allowed to participate in the school activities. The organization in the administration of the community schools reflects this objectives. Everyone from the educational consultant to the cooks has the equal say in what happens in the school. Each classroom contains two co-teachers. Each teacher has equal status. This goes back to the notion that, everyone has something to offer and learn from everyone. The curriculum prepared for early childhood education in Nigeria does not recognize the role of the community. Parents are mentioned in such that their activities are limited to their individual home (Salami, 2011).

The environment is also considered to be the third teacher in Reggio Emilia approach. The people know the important of environment to the learning process and that it would have positive impact on the learning of the children. They created spaces that were both nurturing, stimulating and conducive. The teachers have the freedom to manipulate the environments to capture the interest of the children and create learning opportunities. The environments are full of learning resources in which the children could interact with. In Nigeria, a place called school, either pre-primary or primary only consist of unattractive blocks of buildings, anyhow with constructed seat, un kept and unplanned open space called field without any attractive materials.



### **Suggested Ways of Bridging the Gap Between The Reggio Emilia Approach and its Application in Nigeria**

In developing the curriculum of early childhood education, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) should consider the components of the Reggio Emilia principles to ensure that child interest curriculum it developed for a well laid foundation of Nigerian education system. In-Service training of teachers on this approach should be intensified with emphasis on play-way method and trained specialists in pre-primary education should be motivated while institutions training teachers at this level should be expanded to ensure that this approach is used effectively in Pre-Primary education.

In providing early childhood education, effort should be in line with the ideas of philosophers to ensure that the physical environment and the curriculum together enhance and support child's ability to play, do something himself/herself, initiate and complete activities, take control of his/her actions and responsibilities, communicate and interact with others easily and have better perception. As earlier stated, Reggio Emilia approach emphasized that children are capable, creative, curious, intelligent, and have the willingness to experiment and the desire to discover things on their own. Therefore, educators in line with the ideas of this approach to ensure proper care and attention is given to children at these stage.

More so, the description of Reggio Emilia approach, seriously match that of non-formal, traditional education that was in Nigeria before the advent of Western education which we have thrown into the dustbin (Salami, 2011). If early childhood education should be the foundation of functional education, some aspects of Nigerian community/ traditional education should be incorporated into the system.

The Government should set and monitor minimum standards for early childhood care center in order to ensure standard, through its regulating body charged with this responsibility as it is obtained at the primary level where Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) supervises at the national level while the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) supervises at the State and Local Government levels. The Government's inability to regulate and control the establishment and operations of early childhood education in the country and enforcing the educational laws which relate to them, will reduce its indiscriminate establishment of early childhood educational institutions with little or no Concern for Standards in infrastructure , curricula and teaching methodologies.

### **Conclusion**

The idea expressed by Reggio Emilia approach, are very vital for a good understanding of how to implement the correct teaching/learning strategies. For instance Reggio Emilia approach believed that children should be provided with opportunities to think for themselves, carryout exploration and inquiry by allowing them to add their own creativity and thoughts to their work. This attitude toward children is essential to an understanding of good educational practice that often makes the difference between good and bad teaching. The future of education for child will continue to advance as new knowledge and promising practices evolve. As with may present and past thoughts on curriculum for young child, the following fundamental beliefs may be maintained; individuality of the child; the value of play and explorations , the significance of social interactions, the advantage of self-directed activity; and the benefits of problem-solving and real life experiences.



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## IGWEBUIKE CURRICULUM FOR EARLY YEARS EDUCATION

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### Abstract

*Decolonisation of education has been a subject of academic and scholarly inquiries. Historical evidence shows that the land now called Nigeria had indigenous systems of education that were rooted in the needs of the society before the encounter with Arab and Europe. This article examines how curriculum that is underpinned by African Philosophies can bring back lost glory of this great nation. The point of view of this article is that physical colonisation of Nigeria ended in 1960 but the colonial legacy is more insidious than the physical occupation of the country by the colonisers. This could be verified in every facet of the society. Students and scholars in both Global South and Global North had raised their voice against the ways education in African (Nigeria) has been informed by, and continued to perpetuate, a series of assumptions that favour a particular epistemological perspective (Bhambra et al, 2018). Decolonisation of education in Nigeria is therefore a matter of urgency. The article concludes that the project of decolonisation should begin at the early childhood education, which is the foundation stage of future learning, and that the curriculum should be underpinned by African philosophies. A house without a solid foundation cannot stand. This article, drawing on Igwebuike philosophy proposes a model of curriculum for Nigerian education that is founded on African Ontology.*

**Keywords:** Colonisation, Decolonisation, Curriculum, Decoloniality, Igwebuike

### Introduction

Students in both Global South and North had raised their voice against the perpetuation of certain assumptions that favour a particular epistemological perspective. They have criticised universities for the content of their curricula, their institutional cultures and pedagogical practices that perpetuate the attainment gap and exclusion (Morreira, et al 2020). This situation has given rise to curriculum and pedagogical debates in the campuses.

This article proposes a new curriculum from decolonial perspective thus delinking from colonial Western epistemology that marks the mainstream curricula in Nigeria. It proposes a decolonial approach that can build an epistemically insurgent curriculum that considers non-Western epistemology (Bailon and Lissovoy, 2019).

The emergence of decolonial theories that originated in Latin America has challenged important assumption and foundations of educational theory and practice. Scholars associated with this tradition include Dussel, (1985); (2007); Mingolo, (2000), (2011); Quijano, 2000; Walsh, (2010); Mbembe, (2001); Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (2013); (2018) and a host of others. The decolonial theories move beyond the postcolonial theories that had

exerted influence in educational studies. Postcolonial theories such as Said, (1979); Spivak, (1988) had exposed a global Eurocentrism that dictates who is centred and who is not in text, discourse, and science. Decolonial theories on the other hand push this critique to the roots of epistemology and ontology. From decolonial perspective, it is not the question of mere shifting relations between foreground and background, but rather the fundamental matrix of domination that secures the rights of the West above and against those of Others. Decolonial tradition unlike the postcolonial theory that stopped at showing the insidious sleights of hand that operates to guarantee the authority of mainstream readings without interrogating the theoretical toolkit which is rooted in Western modernity; goes further to propose a project of ‘delinking’ Mignolo, (2011) that assumes a fundamental integrity for non-Western and indigenous epistemologies divorced from Western ones.

Decolonial theorists had articulated an analysis that exposes a range of dimensions of domination that has characterised colonial relationship. This was referred to as ‘coloniality of power’ Quijano, (2000) which comprises economic, epistemological, subjective, gendered, cultural, and ontological dimensions. These different dimensions of domination are tied together within the project of dispossession and annexation that characterises colonialism but lives while physical colonialism dies. Education unfortunately is tied in the past and in the present to the project of reproducing the matrix of coloniality (Bailon and Lissovoy, 2019).

This article having problematised the colonial and Western epistemological assumption underpinning Nigerian curricula, proposes a decolonial approach that can serve as the foundation for an epistemically insurgent curriculum that considers non-Western epistemologies. Insurgency in this article is contrast to resistance and defensive but suggests a proactive protagonism of creation, construction, and intervention that is assuming force today and in future (Walsh, 2010 p. 202).

### **Developing new decolonial approaches**

Curriculum development offers the opportunity to articulate this insurgent knowledge. The curriculum that is being proposed in this article is underpinned by African Philosophy: Igwebuike. The new curriculum aims at cultivating and restoring African indigenous values and culture in educational setting. From theoretical lens, the curriculum is guided by the works of Kanu which is influenced by the principles of the Igwebuike philosophy. This is a sharp shift from Eurocentric perspective to African indigenous philosophies and knowledge systems.

Igwebuike philosophy which is like but different from Ubuntu philosophy captures the Igbo philosophy of relationality, complementarity, and interconnectedness of reality (Kanu, 2019). **To be** is to live in solidarity and complementarity and **to beoutside** is to suffer alienation (Ibid). The concept of ‘**Igwebuike**’ is articulated by Professor Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony (2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019). It represents and communicates Igbo African world. *Igwebuike* is a form and symbolic of the Igbo African mental being and a gateway to Igbo African philosophy (Obiagwu, 2020). *Igwebuike* literally means there is **strength in number**. Philosophically speaking, *Igwebuike* which could be liken to Ubuntu that translates, *I am because you are*, Mangena, (2020) is built on the principles of community bond, emphasising community as opposed to individualism, the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity (Ogude, 2019). Informed by Collective Fingers Theory, Mbigi (1997), this article espoused how the principles of Igwebuike philosophy can cultivate and restore African indigenous values and culture in educational

setting. Mbigi Collective Finger Theory, (1997) for example is underpinned by African proverb ‘a thumb,

although it is strong, cannot kill aphids on its own, it will require the collective co-operation of the other fingers’. This proverb has three meanings that can be summed up thus: individuals like fingers need to work as a team to achieve a desired goal; secondly recognition as equals promotes willingness to participate and lastly the proverb when internalised and nurtured represents collective culture which forms core African values. Mbigi identified five core African values: survival, spirit of solidarity, compassion, respect, and dignity Mbigi, 1997, p.32).

The philosophical base of the new curriculum has as its core values social justice. Social justice relates to principles of equality, equity, and fairness towards members of a community or individuals who have been marginalised, disadvantaged, or excluded. Ubuntu philosophy for instance represents social justice in the sense that it embraces social values of inclusion, participation, and respect for all (Metz, 2011).

Drawing on Igwebuike as philosophy of education, a new pedagogy is proposed for the promotion of co-existence, social cohesion, and inclusivity in education (Ngubane and Makua, 2021). The new concept of pedagogy is thus defined as ‘a humanising approach to teaching and engaging students in the learning process’ Blackwood, 2018, p.30). Igwebuike pedagogy is a learner-centered pedagogy where every learner matters irrespective of their racial or economic background (Ukpokodu, 2016). Learners are considered as important actors who come into the learning and teaching interaction with unique experiences and knowledge which teachers build on towards the development of new knowledge. Thus, Igwebuike pedagogy recognises incompleteness of both the teacher and the student. It emphasises collaboration between the teacher and student in creating a meaningful learning environment (Ngubane and Makua, 2020). This gives rise to dialogical pedagogy that considers the teacher and the student as community of inquiry, community in search for knowledge, where both teacher and students are learners.

The educator becomes like a mid-wife, humane, caring, non-authoritative, collaborative, and unassuming. Educational process recognises the rights of the individual and allows development of critical thinking, creative thinking, higher order thinking and so on. The curriculum gears towards what is relevant to the student. Teachers place new knowledge in context that is already appreciated by the student. This form of education has resonance with African educational system which is never in abstract. People learn to hunt because they are going to be hunters (Fafunwa, 1974).

This article is contributing to reformulation of Nigerian Early Years Curriculum. It is an attempt to lay theoretical framework that brings decolonial theory into concrete engagement with the structural, cultural, institutional, relational, and personal logic of curriculum and pedagogical practice in EY education in Nigeria. Adekunle and Meroyi, 2023 argue that modification of the curriculum had yielded little or no results. This is because it is like changing the bottle without changing the content of the bottle.

My intention is to prompt lecturers of EYE into deeper understanding of their role in decolonising education in general and EYE education in Nigeria in particular. Their discipline heavily impacts the education of the youngest of our society as they teach the next generation of EY educators. Children in the nursery schools in Nigeria today are the future leaders, and it is important to equip them with a diverse view of the world.



This is because disciplines that are part of the academy have not been immune to the process of colonisation. Most members of the academy have gained understanding of the world that was grounded in cultural world views that have either ignored or been antagonistic to knowledge systems that sit outside those of the colonisers. Research and teaching methodologies, all instrument of knowledge production, were and are still being used to classify, organise, and represent knowledge. Knowledge according to Said (2019) was a commodity in colonial exploitation like other natural resources.

Some academics have distanced themselves from any responsibility to engage with the decolonisation project while some are concerned that decolonising curriculum is deleting what has been (Arshad, 2021). Because of strong need Africa and Nigeria has of decolonising education, no one will wait to be coaxed.

The question that may rise is how do I start? The simple answer is, do not worry for you are not alone. Harshad Keval talked about repositioning ‘who and what gets to occupy the centre and the margins of ideas and society’ and to rebalance that power relation (Harshad,2017). It is about being ready to reconnect, reorder and reclaim knowledges and teaching methodologies that have be submerged, hidden or marginalised. Decolonising is not about deleting knowledge or histories that have been developed in the West or colonial nations; rather is to situate the histories and knowledges that do not originate from the West in the context of imperialism, colonialism, and power and to consider why these have been marginalised and decentred.

In my view, decolonisation of education should start with the decolonisation of our class room practices. There is no universal template. The first step will be to understand why the curriculum should be decolonised. This is part of educators’ commitment to justice.

### **Decolonial curriculum aims and methods**

This article undertakes a theoretical and epistemological analysis of decolonial approaches to curriculum formation. It articulates the core values of Igwebuke pedagogy in the following lines:

**Diversity and Inclusion:** the curriculum aims at representation of diverse perspectives and voices. It should include content from the students’ diverse environments not just Western perspectives and should reflect the diversity of the student body. Utilising student’s linguistic resources to promote meaningful learning. Children should learn the letters of the alphabet through songs/objects that have meaning in their local environment.

Instead of ‘A for apple’ it will be ‘A for Ada’. Ada has significant meaning as a name in Igbo society as it represents the first daughter.

**Critical Thinking:** it should encourage students to question established norms and narratives, fostering critical thinking and an understanding of how knowledge is constructed.

**Cultural Awareness and Respect:** the curriculum should promote cultural sensitivity and respect for different cultures, histories, and experiences. It recognises the importance of indigenous knowledge systems and respects cultural differences. Space should be created for parents and grandparents to pass down some crucial traditions and customs to the next generation. The fact that some of these elders cannot read or write, does not mean that their voices should be excluded from the education of their children. Their knowledge should be valued and respected.



**Social Justice:** the curriculum is rooted in social justice, actively challenging societal inequalities and working towards a more equitable world. It is a curriculum that cares for the needs of all children irrespective of their background, ability, or disability.

**Historical Accuracy:** it corrects the distortions and gaps in traditional curriculum by providing a more balanced and nuanced understanding of history that includes the experiences and contributions of marginalised groups. A good example is the history of the discovery of River Niger by Mungo Park (Adichie, 2007).

**Relevance:** the curriculum should be relevant to the students, addressing contemporary issues from a decolonial perspective and encouraging students to apply their learning to real-world situations.

**Dialogue and Collaboration:** it should promote open dialogue and collaboration among students, encouraging them to learn from each other's experiences and perspectives. This discourages an individualistic approach (Adednego et al 2019).

Decolonial approaches to curriculum do not prescribe one-size-fits all praxis but allows for adaptation of the guiding philosophical viewpoints according to context. Therefore, joining Ngubane and Makua, this article calls for a design of early years education curriculum that draws on Mbigi, (1997) Collective Finger Theory. This will bring about transformation to the education of children in Nigeria. It will bring about co-existence, respect, inclusion, and social justice in the classroom of early years education.

### Conclusion

The adoption of the above curriculum will liken education process and goal of education to game of football. Football is a game where every player counts. The victory or defeat belongs to everyone. Each player is respected in their unique ability. This being the case, no one would like to play the role of the 22 players. Having said this, the new education system that will be inspired by this curriculum will not have examination as criteria for assessing what students have learnt.

Examination has been found to be stressful for both students and teachers (Zeidner, 2010 and Madara & Namango, 2016). Durning et al, (2016) argue that examination prepares students for stress of real life, but examination does not put into contexts other realities in real life. Outside the classroom, students do have access to information and check it before using it (Saucier et al, 2022). According to Saucier et al (2022), examinations in class are not equitable, logistically difficult to administer, not empathetic, not fun. A new form of assessment could be developed. In place of 'marks' currently allocated to students at the end of examination, I suggest replacing it with Strengths and Areas of Improvement (not weaknesses) which puts all students at par; thus, removing the negative impacts of failure in examination.

The fear of failure, craze for certificates, desire of parents to choose the profession and university, pressure on students to pursue courses which they have no aptitude for are some of the factors leading to examination malpractices in Nigeria (Udim et al, 2015). The effects of examination malpractices according to Udim et al (2015) include but not limited to the following: loss of credibility, negative consequences on the individuals and institution of learning, leads to moral decadence, corruption, discourages hard work among students and so on.

Decolonising a curriculum is an ongoing process and not a one-off event. It requires continuous reflection, assessment, and adaptation to ensure it remains responsive to the needs of all students.

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**STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVEMENT AND THE CHOICE OF EARLY  
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
(TECHNICAL) OMOKU**

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**Abstract**

*This study is designed to investigate the influence of Stakeholders awareness involvement on the choice of Early Childhood Education in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State. Three research questions were used to obtain the findings of the study. Descriptive survey study design was adopted. The population of the study consist of all 856 students in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku. Sample random sampling technique was used to select 5 students from 30 departments making the sample size 150 respondents. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire title Stakeholders Involvement and The Choice of Early Childhood Education in Federal College of Education, Omoku (SITCECE) which was administered and tested using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study reveal that the stakeholders' awareness involvements influence students' choice of studying Early Childhood Care and Education in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State. Therefore, it was recommended that government, parents and community be involved in the awareness of the programme thereby creating a standard and better objective.*

**Keywords:** Stakeholders, Government, Community, Parents, Early Childhood Care and Education

**INTRODUCTION**

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is more than preparation for primary school. It aims at the holistic development of a child and broad information for lifelong learning and wellbeing. Early childhood care and education has possibility to nurture and care for capable and responsible future citizens. In this way Early Childhood Care and Education is one of the best investment a country can make to promote human resources development, quality and social cohesion and to reduce the cost of later remedial programmes.

According to Universal Basic Education (2004) in Nigeria, Early Childhood Care and Education was introduced to increase the access of children to basic education and impose the state of education in the country. In order for the aim of the Early Childhood Education to be fully realized, the quality of the teachers will determine strength of the educational system and the value of the learners. Early childhood care and education is an attractive



career option for students who enjoy working with your children. The ideal early childhood education profession has a varied skill set, they are able to be both innovative and traditional, analytical and artistic, patient and commanding. Teaching young children requires a different approach than that applied to older children. Early Childhood Education professionals need to have a firm grasp on the developmental stages of early childhood.

According to FRN (2013) the objectives of Early Childhood Care and Education were stated as follows:

- i. Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school.
- ii. Prepare the child for the primary level of education.
- iii. Provide adequate care, supervision, and security for the children while their parents are at work.
- iv. Inculcate social, moral norms and values.
- v. Inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and the use of toys, etc.
- vi. Develop a sense of co-operation and team-spirit.
- vii. Stimulate in the child good habits, including good health habits and
- viii. teach the rudiments of numbers; letters, colours, shapes, forms etc., through play.

These objectives of Early Childhood Care and Education cannot be achieved without the use of qualified and trained Early Childhood Care and Education teachers. As the government have also started in the National Policy on Education that it shall: Set and monitor minimum standard for Early Child Care Centers, encourage both community and private efforts in the establishment of Early Childhood Care Development and Education Centers based on set standards, make provision in teacher education programmes for specialization in Early Childhood Care and Education, and for retraining of teachers and so on. The government and other stakeholders should be involved in creating awareness of the programme. A good awareness brings and yields better results. Sending awareness to the public attracts their attention and makes them know the information available at that point in time. Stakeholders have a big role to play in the awareness of early childhood care and education because it is the bedrock of education.

Stakeholders has to do with people who has an interest in something or directly impacted by something. In education, stakeholders include those with an investment or vested interest in the success and welfare of a school or educational system. A stakeholder is synonymous to a partner or shareholder. Stakeholders in educational system are categorized into two categories namely; internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are those who work or study in an educational institution. This includes those who receives remuneration for their contribution. Internal stakeholders focus more on the organization success because their income or education depends on it. Internal stakeholders include; students, parents, teachers, staff support, school administrators and the school board. External stakeholders: are those who do not directly participate in the school system daily. They are not employees of the institution and do not realize any financial gain from it. They have a personal interest in the institutions' success or failure, as it could impact them one way or the other. External stakeholders include: Government and Local Authorities, Educational Policy Makers, The Community, Local Businesses, Unions, Tax Payers, Philanthropists, Universities, Voters and so on.

Government officials as stakeholders determine the protocols and objectives of the education system. Different ministers regulate educational strategies, including health and nutrition. Local authorities and officials want to ensure that the future workforce learns essential knowledge and skills. They want to ensure that students are ready to become productive members of their communities. Well-educated students are more employable and able to earn decent wages. This reduces the number of people relying on the benefits system and other government and council assistance packages. Involvement of government improve access to and quality of early education. According to Ford (2013), state investment in Early Education can be an important component of improving the overall education success and eventually futures employment and earnings of children. Extensive evidence points to the ability to high-quality preschool to narrow the chance at success later life. Below are two primary actions that can put government on the right track to improving Early Childhood Education.

Build early education infrastructure and capacity. One way to expand access to early childhood education is ensure states have adequate infrastructures and capacity-that is, facilities and talents. In building infrastructure, state children without sacrificing quality.

Increase early education quality through training, high standard and incentives states can work towards higher-quality early childhood education in three ways:

- i. First, they can develop a strong foundational approach to increase training and learning among early childhood care givers and educators.
- ii. State can raise the bar by setting clear definitions and standards of quality.
- iii. After developing evidence-based quality of standards for early care and education, states can incentivize programs to improve on those dimensions of quality.

Local communities are stakeholders because they're the ones who benefit from an educated community. Well-educated students are likely to become civic-minded, self-confident leaders. They may participate in community programmes and local campaigns. Community participation in school management has a great mistrust and distance between people and schools by nurturing transparency of information and a culture of mutual respect and by jointly pursuing improvement of school by sharing vision, process, and result (Henderson, 2006) consistent community involvement and engagement at all levels of the school have been shown time and time again to have significant short- and long-term benefits.

According to Karen.L. (2016) Volunteering is one of the most common and popular ways to encourage community involvement in schools. Connect with local business, civic organizations, charities, nonprofit foundations and other groups in your community to enlist volunteers to come in before, during or after the school day. Volunteering can come in many different shapes and forms. Invite local leaders and individuals in the community is going to have the time or capacity to participate in-person and on-premise volunteer opportunities. That's why it's important to also prioritize community involvement in the form of sponsorship and donation programs. Do the Early Childhood teachers need iPad or smart boards to engage children with new technologies? Cerate and publicize sponsorship and donation need throughout your community, give local organization and businesses the opportunity to partner with your school. The responsibility for raising a well-educated and civic-minded generation of children cannot react solely with schools.

Parents are key stakeholders because they pay for their children's education. In return, they want their offspring to receive a great education that prepares them for leaving home and embarking on a career. Parents ensure they attend classes and comply with the school's

policies. They complement their children's formal education by ensuring they complete their homework, study for exams and follow healthy diets and sensible sleep patterns. Parents expect the school to keep their children safe and reinforce the values taught at home.

Parents are the first educators of their children. The support, they provide affects their child's learning and development and linked to subsequent educational outcomes. According to Hurley (2015), parental support includes direct effects on learning before and formal education, as well as monitoring and facilitating factors that are indirectly linked, such as nutrition, behaviors, health and hygiene. Also, Wagner, B. (2006) further said Early Childhood Education programme should focus on child-parent interaction and promotes whole-child development-including parenting skills and knowledge to ensure proper child nutrition, health, and hygiene. Communicating to improve parental involvement in schooling communication between teachers and parents can be facilitated through home/school link programs. Such programmes may be implemented by special school staff who are responsible for connecting families with schools, building relationship, encouraging school attendance and linking the curriculum in the home with school instruction.

According to UNICEF, Early Childhood Care and Education is the most cost-effective investment to start a lifelong path of learning and ensure all children have a fair chance to reach their potentials. Without a trained early childhood educator such chances are not there for the children. Also, Gage Witt (2013), states that Early Childhood is a concerned prefect to the government, community and the parents. Improving the child care system is highly dependent on government support, according to National Policy on Education: section 2 Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) states that the responsibilities of government for Pre-primary Education shall be to promote the training of qualified Early Childhood Care and Education school teachers in adequate numbers, contribute to the development of suitable curriculum, supervise and control the quality of such institutions and establish Pre-primary sections in existing public schools.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The state of Early Childhood Care and Education Department of Federal College of Education(Technical) Omoku in terms of students is very poor as the rate of students enrollment is low. Early childhood Care and Education is under School of Early Childhood and Primary Education which is well equipped in infrastructure, as well as qualified and seasoned lecturers. From my observation and questioning, I found out that 80% of the population of people in the school and community are unaware that a course like Early Childhood Care and Education do exist. Some people asked questions like what is the course all about? Efforts have been made by the head of administration of the department alongside teaching and non-teaching staff of the school in campaigning, advertising and working hand in hand with the college in promoting the course to the public. Despite the provision of standard curriculum, conducive classrooms, learning materials and so on, students' enrollment is still poor. Therefore, it is pertinent to investigate the stakeholders' awareness involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Education as a course in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between stakeholders' involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Care and Education as a course in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of this study are:

- To determine the relationship between government involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Care and Education as a course in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State.
- To investigate the relationship between community involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Care and Education as a course Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State.
- To ascertain the relationship between parental involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Care and Education Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State.

### **Research hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses are formulated to guide the study

1. There is no significant relationship between government involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Care and Education as a course Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between community involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Care and Education as a course Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State.
3. There is no significant relationship between parents' involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Care and Education as a course Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprises of all student in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State. Through simple random sampling technique, a total of 150 students were selected from 30 department. A structured questionnaire titled "Stakeholders Involvement and The Choice of Early Childhood Education (SITCECE)" was used for the study. The modified four (4) point likert relating to strongly Agreed (SA-4) Agreed (A-3), Disagree (DS-2) Strongly Disagree (SD-1), as optional on the questionnaire were used. The instrument consisted of fifteen (15) items on the research questions raised for the study. The instrument was divided into (2) sections A & B respectively. Section A elicit information on personal data of the respondents while section B, contains the questions which were answered by each respondent. The questionnaire was subjected to criticism by specialists in Early Childhood in Education who read through it and corrections were made. All the comments and corrections made by the experts were incorporated into the final form of instrument before it was finally administered. This process ensured the content validity of the instrument. Therefore, it was subjected to content reliability using Cronbach Aloha. The reliability coefficient was 0.85 which was considered high for a new developed instrument. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents by the researchers. The researchers were able to obtain 100% return of the instruments distributed. Data collected for the

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purpose of the study was analyzed using mean as a statistical tool. To take decision with respect to accepting or rejecting research outcome the midpoint of 2.5 was accepted.

### Results

#### Research hypothesis One

*There is no significant relationship between government involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Care Education as a course in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State.*

**Table 1: Mean responses of Involvement of Government and the Choice of Early Childhood Care Education as a Course.**

S/N	VARIABLES	SA	A	D	SD	RESPONSE SCORE	x	MEAN RESPONSE	REMARK
1.	Government is providing scholarship for early childhood	20	15	30	35	220	2.5	2.2	Rejected
2.	Government campaigns for early childhood education.	15	30	25	15	175	2.5	1.8	Rejected
3.	Government provides jingles to arouse people's interest to make early childhood education a choice in university	14	16	26	50	206	2.5	2.0	Rejected
4.	Government has established pre-primary sections in existing public schools	45	35	15	5	320	2.5	3.2	Accepted
5.	Government approved early childhood education programme in every university	15	5	40	40	195	2.5	2.0	Rejected
<b>Total</b>								<b>2.2</b>	<b>Rejected</b>

From the above analysis in the table above it is observed that the grand mean 2.2 of all the questionnaire item (1-5) is below cut off point of 2.5. Therefore, it means that there is a significant relationship between government involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Care Education as a course in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State.

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### Research Hypothesis Two

*There is no significant relationship between community involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Care as a course Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State.*

**Table 2: Mean Response of how Community involvement and the Choice of Early Childhood as a Course.**

S/N	VARIABLES	SA	A	D	SD	RESPONSE SCORE	X	MEAN RESPONSE	REMARK
6.	Communities announce the availability of early childhood education programmes in their churches.	25	15	30	45	220	100	2.2	Rejected
7.	Community involves in posting bills or advertisement of early childhood education programmes	20	5	40	30	205	100	2.0	Rejected
8.	Community sends town criers to send information on the importance of early childhood education as a career.	5	10	50	35	185	100	1.9	Rejected
9.	Community provides scholarship for early childhood student teachers	20	15	35	30	225	100	2.2	Rejected
10.	Community has established relationship with early childhood education organization.	30	35	15	5	260	100	2.6	Rejected
<b>Total</b>								<b>2.1</b>	<b>Rejected</b>

From the above analysis in the table above it is observed that the grand mean 2.1 of all the questionnaire items (6-10) is below the cut-off point of 2.5 therefore, there is a significant relationship between community involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Education as a course in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State.

### Research Hypothesis Three

*There is no significant relationship between parents' involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Care and Education as a course Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State.*

**Table 3: Mean Response of Parents Involvement and the Choice of Early Childhood Education as a Course**



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S/N	VARIABLES	SA	A	D	SD	RESPONSE SCORE	X	MEAN RESPONSE	REMARK
11.	Parents are involved in the campaign awareness of early childhood education	10	20	10	45	165	2.5	1.7	Rejected
12.	Parents encourage their children studying early childhood education in university.	15	5	20	5	120	2.5	1.2	Rejected
13.	Parents are aware of early childhood education as a course in university	15	25	20	20	195	2.5	2.0	Rejected
14.	Parents are involved in forming committees in school.	40	30	10	5	275	2.5	2.8	Accepted
15.	Parents are involved in educating their children of early childhood education programme.	10	20	25	25	175	2.5	1.8	Rejected
<b>Total</b>								<b>2.0</b>	<b>Rejected</b>

From the above analysis in the table above it is observed that the grand mean 2.0 of all the questionnaire items (11-15) is below the cut-off point of 2.5. Therefore, it means that there is a significant relationship between parents' involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Care and Education as a course in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku.

### Discussion of Findings

Findings in the work from result of table 1, revealed that there is a significant relationship between government involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Care and Education as a course in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State. It is the primary responsibilities of the government to announce to the public about the importance of Early Childhood Education and encourage people into it, this is in line with the assertions of Janice Ford (2013) who opined that involvement of government improve access to and quality of early education and investment in early education can be an important component of improving the overall education success and eventually futures employment and earnings of children.

Also, the results of table 2, revealed that there is a significant relationship between community involvement and the choice of Early Childhood Education as a course in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State. This is evidenced by the calculated grand mean of 2.1 below the cut-off point 2.5. McWilliam & Baily (2018) stated that involvement of community helps in children's development and provide a platform for Early Childhood Education services, schools and other early years services to work together in supporting local children. Possibilities include collaboratively planning transition programs, and planning for the needs of children arriving at school. Early childhood educators can discuss their community results with a range of stakeholders to engage them in action that seeks to improve outcomes for the children of their community.

From the statistics in the table 3 of this work, it is observed that the mean score of the questionnaire items is below 2.5 bench mark, meaning that there is a significant relationship between parents and the choice of Early Childhood Care Education as a course in Federal College of Education Technical) Omoku, Rivers State. Epstein J. L, (2009), Research shows that parental- involvement is more important to children's academic success than their family's socio-economic status, race ethnicity, or educational background.

### Conclusion

Early childhood care and education has a global scope and caring for and educating young children has always been integral part of human societies. From the result of the findings, it is concluded that awareness factors affect the choice making of every childhood education as a course in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku in Rivers State. It is time to be involved in the early childhood education to give it a quality standard to achieve a better objective. It is a powerful tool for early childhood education services to raise awareness of the importance of early childhood development and the lead action towards improving outcome for children.

### Recommendations

Based on the research the following recommendations were made:

- (iii) Government should provide scholarship for early childhood student-teachers
- (iv) Awareness should be done about early childhood education to the public.
- (v) Implementation on policy of the National Policy on education should be implemented in schools by the governments, community, parents, teachers as being stated.
- (vi) Increase early childhood education quality through consistent training.
- (vii) Build early education infrastructure and capacity.
- (viii) Government should only employ teachers with Early Childhood Care and Education qualification in Early Childhood Care Centers.

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## APPLYING MULTIMEDIA IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*The application of multimedia in early childhood education in Nigeria is timely as it provides teaching aid that spurs learning in this fast developing world. In this paper, the application of multimedia in early childhood education was reviewed. Different procedures in the application of multimedia in early childhood education in Nigeria were shown to boost assimilation rate in young learners thereby developing their domains of learning and increasing effectiveness. Results further reveal that in the use of multimedia in early childhood education, progress in learning is made in the presentations of facts and observations, the premise upon which children easily learn. Based on these findings, the study recommends the use of multimedia in early childhood education in order to check the advantages associated with the use of multimedia in early childhood education in comparison with its demerits. This in turn, would allow adequate information for stakeholders to determine the way forward as regards multimedia integration in early childhood education.*

**Keywords:** Application, Multimedia, Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Early Childhood, Education.

### 1. Introduction

Technology is fast developing and has become the means in virtually all facets of life in today's world. This is quite obvious in the use of artificial intelligence (AI) which is a part of technology in building machines and systems that can think and learn in similar fashion like humans (Kalvium, 2024). Multimedia which is a form of technology, has gained acceptability among teachers and learners as a teaching tool in recent time. The rapid innovation and development in information and communication technologies has increased the application of multimedia in our daily life and brought the changes to computing, entertainment and education. In a broad sense, multimedia applications encompass information technology with AI as a subset (Kalvium, 2024). However, educational multimedia applications are not going to replace the roles of teachers, rather, it will only enhance their work as teaching aid that allow learners to learn more when compared with traditional teaching methods (Mohammed & Al-Ani, 2021; Ulyawati & Hotimah, 2023). They are essentially teaching aids that help teachers to teach and students to learn effectively (Mohammed & Al-Ani, 2021).

Dinç (2000), on the other hand, defines multimedia as the synthesis of digital platforms such as text, audio, graph, animation, visual and video. Alkan et al. (2001) observed that multimedia sources created by using audio, video, visual, graph, text, animation to explain a subject is expressed as the use of different data types to explain an idea, an event or a subject. Additionally, multimedia is often introduced as a tool that combines different platforms such as written, audio, numeric graphs and animation. In line with these assertions, multimedia is defined as the use of more than one bodily platform to increase the

effectiveness of instruction. Nonetheless, it is generally used to refer to computer-based multimedia today. In essence, multimedia is composed of computer platforms where written media is presented with audio visual and animation media, and high definition and graphs are set (Maddux et al., 2001).

In early childhood education, multimedia is necessary as it provides easiness and facilities in education (Ulyawati & Hotimah, 2023). As a result of multimedia practices, young learner can learn brand new information. It was on this premise that Mayer (2001) asserts that learners can gain the knowledge and information that would be impossible to get in traditional ways. Evidently, it follows that the use of multimedia possesses is aimed at helping learners with different skills and learning styles.

Multimedia is fast gaining authenticity and variety in learning and instruction. This can be attributed to the fact that message via multimedia reaches the receivers in various ways and thus, it provides a richer learning environment. The subjects being taught could be transmitted to learners through web-based audio, visuals, video and animations in a way that could not be taught in classrooms authentically with other techniques (Mohammed & Al-Ani, 2021). This in turn, provides closeness to reality and at the same time, boosting the achievement of complete learning objectives. Furthermore, multimedia eases education in terms of data used, storage, share and transportation of the visual and non-visual written material, graphs, audios and other materials. Moreover, multimedia creates a familiar, various, economic and practical environment in education (Genc & Sahin, 2016).

Multimedia also contributes to early childhood education as it helps increase the academic achievement of young learners. This is in contrast to traditional teaching methods that have become obsolete and boring to learners especially early years (Uşun, 2000). Specifically, it is obvious that multimedia application simplifies and objectifies learning as it presents more than one technological tool to the learner and it addresses more than one emotion of the learners.

Multimedia applications on the other hand, can be defined as an application that uses a combination of many media sources such as texts, graphics, audios, videos and animations. It enables the delivery of information which is more powerful than printed learning resources such as printed text book (Mayer, 2001). Multimedia application also allows users to interact with the information quickly and accurately. Multimedia applications in early childhood education enable young learns to get information in various formats. Examples of multimedia applications are World Wide Web, courseware, interactive TV, computer games, and virtual reality (Alkan et al., 2001; Ogunbote and Adesoye, 2006).

Multimedia applications in education can be liken to printed text books and other teaching materials, however, they consist of a wider range of sources. The potential of multimedia applications for educational purposes is well-recognized by the universities, school, government and private organization. Multimedia applications in early childhood education can be tailored to achieve specific objectives like smart class rooms (Surata et al., 2020).

Multimedia designed for learning that can help create smart classrooms refers to the process of building mental representations of words and images in different contexts (Surata et al., 2020). This is because multimedia is designed to aid learning with tools that can be used in presentations, classroom or laboratory learning, simulation, e-learning, computer

games, and virtual reality, thus enabling students to process information in both verbal and image form (Surata et al., 2020).

Smart classroom on the other hand, is defined as a closed environment assisted by technology that improves teaching and learning experiences, and can support teaching and learning environments that demand the creation of real situations, inspiration thinking, information acquisition, resource sharing, collaborative learning and so on (Phoong et al., 2019). Moreover, according to Yi et al. (2021), the provision of smart application services and other software and hardware, allows encouraging teachers to teach using a variety of media.

This helps to optimize the presentation of teaching content, create a variety of comfortable learning resources, promote classroom interaction space development, and also have the function of situational awareness and environmental management.

Overall, smart classroom is simply a form of physical class or online class that uses multimedia in its delivery (Shi et al., 2018). It has been employed in various studies, such as early childhood education among others boosting the learning experiences of learners in general (Wright & Park, 2021). In the light of this, this review seeks to examine the application of multimedia in early childhood education in Nigeria.

## 2. Early Childhood Education in Nigeria

Early childhood education is concerned with the teaching of young children through formal or informal means up to the age of five (Ejem et al., 2018). In today's society, it is obvious that education is the best legacy any nation can give its citizen that guarantees national development and to achieve this national goal demands that children be carried along. This is because early childhood education is the foundation upon which all other educational levels are based (Ejem et al., 2018). According to Ubogu (2006), a young learner who misses the early stage of learning typically experiences a setback making it difficult for the learner to get a fresh start. To avert this menace, Obiweluozor (2015) asserts that early childhood education be included in mainstream education. This in essence, is the view of the Nation Policy on Education that stipulates the following objectives of early childhood education (Obiweluozor, 2015):

- i. To effect a smooth transmission from the home to the school;
- ii. To prepare the child for the primary level of education;
- iii. To provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work;
- iv. To inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature and environment, art, music and playing with toys, etc;
- v. To develop a sense of co-operation and team spirit;
- vi. To imbibe social norms;
- vii. To spur good habits, especially good health habits; and
- viii. To teaching rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms and the like through play.

In Nigeria, the government oversees the implementation of the aforementioned objectives through the participation of stakeholders in both public and private school systems. This is



largely due to the fact that the government aims to ensure comparability with global best practices in early childhood education. However, this is not the reality on ground as most publicly owned schools have nothing to offer young learners thereby leaving just a hand full private schools to deliver quality early childhood education.

### 2.1 Challenges to Early Childhood Education in Nigeria

There is no doubt that early childhood education has not been effective in Nigeria. According to Nwaubani (2004), professional qualification of caregivers/teachers, resources, staff-child ratio and funding etc are the central challenges facing early childhood education in Nigeria.

- **Teacher Development:** The educational preparation of teachers will greatly impact on their professional output in the discharge of their teaching assignments. Since, very few qualified teachers are in the job market, what we have in most schools today are unqualified teachers who instruct young learners without professional exposure to the methods and ways of teaching learners at this young stage of their educational development.
- **Resources:** Resources generally determine quality and this holds true in teaching young learners. As observed by Chukwbikem (2013), the availability of resources for any educational programme would determine the capacity of school systems to implement that type of educational programme. The dearth of resources across public schools in Nigeria has impeded on the successful implementation of most of the educational programmes suitable for the young learners.
- **Teacher-Learner Ratio:** National Policy of Education (Obiweluzor, 2015) opined that in order to have an effective learning, teacher to pupil ratio is 1:25. This is however, not the case in most public schools in Nigeria as most often, the classes are overstretched with large number of learners (Ejem et al., 2018). This creates an enormous amount of stress for the teacher culminating to less attention to the learners. The children on their part are distracted and opened to lack of concentration.
- **Funding:** This is the backbone of quality resource provision that drives learning. Lack of funding has resulted in the drop in morale teachers and the end result of this is teaching without passion. This makes learning dull without fun, a major part of early childhood education. Overall, early childhood education is underfunded in Nigeria.

### 2.2 Some Approaches to Early Childhood Education in Nigeria

A number of approaches to early childhood education were outlined by FRN (2012) as applied to early childhood education in Nigeria. These approaches include:

- **Role-playing Approach:** Role-playing is a very important part of the early childhood educational development process. This is largely due to the fact young learners learn by playing in groups where each child is given certain roles. This helps in building team spirit that further enhance their social development.
- **Dramatization Approach:** When literatures are turned into a play or drama, young learners are intellectually stimulated. It births curiosity and spur inquisition into reality around their immediate environment and the world at large.

- Building Approach. This is where young learners are given objects to build certain shapes and structures. This brings about innovation and helps the learners grow with a craftsman's view to things around them.
- Telling Story Approach: Story telling helps young learners to digest information easily as it connects information together with emotions and helps children to remember.

### 2.3 Multimedia Approach to Early Childhood Education

According to Ejem et al. (2018), multimedia technology refers to interactive, computer-based applications that allow people to communicate ideas and information with digital and print elements. This approach to early childhood education employs interactive computer elements, namely, graphics, text, video, sound, and animation. It is a modern innovation aimed at enhancing the teacher-learner experience. In its most basic form, multimedia application combines five types of media into the learning environment such as text, video, sound, graphics and animation, hence, providing a powerful teaching aid for early childhood education.

Generally, there are six main elements in multimedia applications for educational purposes which are:

- Texts
- Images
- Audio
- Video
- Animations and
- User control.

Text as the first element is very significant in multimedia applications. This because it can be used to provide information and emphasize specific point by using different styles, fonts, and colours. Image on the other hand as the second element is an object that gives visualization effect has greater impact than mere reading of text materials in a learning environment. Some of the ways image can be added to multimedia applications include the use of colour scanner or digital camera etc. Additionally, some types of images include photographs, artworks, drawings. Audio as an element of multimedia application can be utilized to stress different points thereby enabling teachers to presents a lot of information at once rather than use printed learning resources. Audio also enables young learners to use their imagination without being biased, so it will greatly increase the learning outcome.

Furthermore, information can be presented beyond the scope of the ordinary class room through the use of videos. The use of video to deliver information can be very powerful with instantaneous impact as it allows teachers to highlight certain key points. It also helps the teacher to assign tasks to the learners by giving a real life experience of the subject being discussed. Animation as an element of multimedia application helps to demonstrate an idea as well illustrate a concept - an object that appears blurry in video can be presented clearly in animation because it can view the changes of the object over time. Finally, user control helps to provide learners with the option to skip particular parts of the multimedia application and allow them to navigate other areas of that program. In essence, these elements are combined to provide a platform for students to maximize the effectiveness of educational purposes (Norhayati & Siew, 2004).

### 2.4 Benefits of Multimedia Applications in Early Childhood Education

The benefits of multimedia applications in early childhood are numerous as it increases effectiveness in teaching and learning. The environment created by multimedia applications in early childhood education invariably influences the way teachers teach and how learners learn. Some of the benefits of multimedia technologies in early childhood education include:

- i. **Enhanced Learning:** the application of multimedia technologies is aimed at boosting learning in the children. This is due to the fact that multimedia technologies initiate fun through its platform and spurs fun among young learners. Hence, learning is enhanced by making learners learn with fun thereby attaining great heights of excellence in what is taught. As observed by Cairncross & Mannion (2001), multimedia applications enable learner increase their memory of content and foster deeper learning when compared to traditional teaching ways that use by teachers.
- ii. **Interaction:** Multimedia applications help create a learning environment that is interactive. That, it helps foster a teacher- learner and the teaching system. This is very important to young learners who learn by observation. According to Yi et al. (2021), learners will engage actively when teachers integrate multimedia element in learning process because they will pay more attention as the lesson becomes more interesting. This is the usual scenario in a smart class room case (Shi et al., 2018).
- iii. **Flexibility:** The leaning interface created by multimedia technologies can be used both at school and home. This flexibility helps the learners in touch with the same experience both at school and home.
- iv. **Problem-Solving Oriented:** The overall objective of the application of multimedia technologies in early childhood education is the provision of a learning platform that is problem-solving oriented. The system is designed present real life situation in simple form. For instance, video simulations aids learning by enhancing learning-by-viewing and as such giving a problem-solving approach to learning.
- v. **Uniform Distribution of Learning Experience:** Multimedia applications help distribute uniform learning experience for all learners at the same pace. This is possible as learners learn the same principles and skills simultaneously. In presenting contents through multimedia applications in early childhood, the contents are tailored with information that meet the need of specific individual because it can be presented in different ways to engage learners with different learning styles and strengths (Cairncross & Mannion, 2001). Every learner may have different preferences and modes of learning something. For instance, a learner may prefer to read certain learning materials from prints, while another learner may prefer a visual presentation. Thus, multimedia applications in early childhood education give every child a platform of participation. This also hods for teachers engaging the learners.

### 3. Boosting Early Childhood Education in Nigeria through Multimedia Technologies

Multimedia technologies can be utilized to boost early childhood education in the school system across the country. This is because it offers better approach to teaching and learning

that address the challenges of traditional teaching method currently being used by schools in Nigeria. Multimedia approach helps in the delivery of core subjects that are difficult to teach without teaching aid. Ejem et al. (2018) observed that multimedia content can be represented, creating a game like experience even as learning is going on. This helps to stand in where teacher explanation is required as all parts of the teaching materials have been designed with suitable examples and stored in the system to be accessed by the child at all time.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this review examines different procedures of multimedia applications in early childhood education. Findings show that young learners learn effectively through the combination of texts, images, videos, animation and the like. Furthermore, results show that the assimilation rate of young learners is increased when they are taught using multimedia applications than traditional methods of instruction. This helps to develop all their learning faculties which in turn increasing effectiveness. Based on these findings, it was therefore recommended that multimedia applications in teaching be encouraged at the early childhood stage so as to ensure that progress is made in presentations of concepts through demonstration, the premise upon which young learners learn. Government and other stakeholders can check the benefits associated with multimedia applications in early childhood education in comparison with its disadvantages. This is necessary for adequate information that will help chart the way forward as it relates the use of multimedia applications in early childhood education.

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**UNLOCKING THE POWER OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND  
PARTNERSHIPS IN PROMOTING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
PROGRAMS IN NIGERIA**

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***Abstract***

*Enhancing early childhood education (ECE) in Nigeria hinges significantly on fostering community engagement and partnerships. This abstract explores strategies to unlock the potential of community involvement in promoting ECE programmes across the nation. Nigeria faces numerous challenges in ECE, including accessibility, quality assurance, and socio-economic disparities. Effective community engagement can mitigate these challenges by mobilizing local resources, knowledge, and support networks. Partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, educational institutions, and community leaders are crucial for implementing sustainable ECE initiatives. This paper underscores the importance of tailored approaches that respect local cultures and traditions while integrating global best practices. Key components include sensitizing communities about the benefits of ECE, involving parents in educational processes, and creating supportive environments that prioritize child development. In conclusion, harnessing community strengths and fostering collaborative partnerships, Nigeria can significantly improve the reach and impact of its ECE programmes, laying a foundation for lifelong learning and socio-economic development.*

**Keywords:** *community engagement, partnerships, early childhood education, Nigeria, sustainable initiatives, parental involvement*

**Introduction**

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a critical foundation for lifelong learning and development (UNESCO, 2017). In Nigeria, ECE is crucial for addressing the country's developmental challenges, including poverty, inequality, and poor educational outcomes (World Bank, 2018). However, ECE in Nigeria faces numerous challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, poorly trained teachers, and limited access to quality education (UNICEF, 2019). To address these challenges, community engagement and partnerships are essential for unlocking the power of ECE programs in Nigeria (Okeke, 2018).



Community engagement and partnerships can foster social capital, cultural capital, and economic capital, all of which are vital for promoting ECE (Bourdieu, 1986). In Nigeria, community engagement and partnerships can help build trust, foster collaboration, and mobilize resources for ECE programs (Adeyemi, 2017). Furthermore, partnerships between public and private sectors can leverage resources, expertise, and funding to support ECE programs (Arikewuyo, 2019).

This paper explores the potential of community engagement and partnerships in promoting ECE programs in Nigeria. By examining current initiatives, challenges, and best practices, we aim to identify strategies for unlocking the power of community engagement and partnerships in ECE. Our goal is to inform policy and practice, ultimately improving access to quality ECE for all Nigerian children.

In Nigeria, community engagement and partnerships are crucial for addressing the challenges facing ECE programs. According to Okeke (2018), community involvement in ECE can improve access to quality education, enhance parental engagement, and foster community ownership. Similarly, Adeyemi (2017) notes that partnerships between public and private sectors can leverage resources, expertise, and funding to support ECE programs.

However, challenges persist. UNICEF (2019) reports that only 24% of Nigerian children aged 3-5 have access to ECE, with significant disparities across regions and socio-economic groups. Moreover, inadequate infrastructure, poorly trained teachers, and limited access to quality education hinder the effectiveness of ECE programs (World Bank, 2018).

To address these challenges, innovative approaches to community engagement and partnerships are necessary. This paper explores the potential of collaborative initiatives, capacity building, and resource mobilization to unlock the power of community engagement and partnerships in promoting ECE programs in Nigeria.

By examining best practices and lessons learned from successful initiatives, we can identify strategies for improving access to quality ECE, enhancing community engagement, and fostering effective partnerships. Our goal is to inform policy and practice, ultimately improving the lives of Nigerian children and their communities.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Social Capital Theory, founded by Pierre Bourdieu in 1986, posits that social relationships and networks have value and can be leveraged to achieve individual and collective benefits. In the context of unlocking the power of community engagement and partnerships in promoting Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs in Nigeria, Social Capital Theory offers a robust framework for understanding the dynamics of community engagement, partnerships, and their impact on ECE outcomes.

#### **The Key tenets of Social Capital Theory:**

- 1) Social capital refers to the resources and benefits that arise from social relationships and networks.
- 2) Social capital can be mobilized to achieve individual and collective benefits.
- 3) Social capital has three forms:
  - Bonding capital (within-group relationships)
  - Bridging capital (between-group relationships)

- Linking capital ( relationships between individuals and institutions)

### **Educational implications for stakeholders:**

#### 1. Community members:

- Bonding capital: Strong relationships within the community can foster trust, cooperation, and collective action, leading to improved ECE outcomes.
- Bridging capital: Relationships with other communities and organizations can provide access to resources, expertise, and support, enhancing ECE programs.

#### 2. Educators and teachers:

- Linking capital: Relationships with community members, organizations, and institutions can facilitate access to resources, training, and support, improving teaching practices and ECE outcomes.

#### 3. Institutions and organizations:

- Linking capital: Partnerships with communities, organizations, and institutions can leverage resources, expertise, and funding, enhancing ECE programs and outcomes.

#### 4. Children and families:

- Bonding capital: Strong relationships within families and communities can provide emotional support, leading to improved early childhood development and education outcomes.

In Nigeria, Social Capital Theory can inform strategies for unlocking the power of community engagement and partnerships in promoting ECE programs. By fostering bonding, bridging, and linking capital, stakeholders can:

1. Build trust and cooperation within and across communities.
2. Mobilize resources, expertise, and support from diverse stakeholders.
3. Enhance ECE programs and outcomes through collaborative efforts.

Therefore, recognizing the value of social capital in ECE, stakeholders can harness the power of community engagement and partnerships to improve early childhood education in Nigeria.

### **Strengths of Social Capital Theory:**

1. Highlights the importance of social relationships and networks in achieving individual and collective benefits.
2. Emphasizes the value of community engagement and partnerships in promoting Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs.
3. Encourages collective action and cooperation among stakeholders.
4. Recognizes the role of institutions and organizations in supporting ECE programs.
5. Provides a framework for understanding the dynamics of social capital in ECE contexts.

### **Limitations of Social Capital Theory:**

1. Overemphasizes the role of social capital in achieving outcomes, potentially overlooking other important factors.
2. Can be difficult to measure and quantify social capital.
3. May not account for power imbalances and inequalities within communities and networks.
4. Can be challenging to mobilize and sustain social capital over time.
5. May not be applicable in all cultural and contextual settings.

In the context of unlocking the power of community engagement and partnerships in promoting ECE programs in Nigeria, the strengths of Social Capital Theory can be leveraged to:

1. Foster collaborative relationships among stakeholders.
2. Build trust and cooperation within and across communities.
3. Mobilize resources and support for ECE programs.

However, the limitations of Social Capital Theory should also be acknowledged and addressed, such as:

1. Ensuring equitable distribution of resources and benefits.
2. Addressing power imbalances and inequalities.
3. Developing culturally sensitive and context-specific strategies.
4. Establishing sustainable and long-term partnerships.
5. Integrating social capital with other theoretical frameworks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of ECE programs in Nigeria.

The following are five guided questions raised to discuss the study :

1. What specific strategies can be implemented to foster community engagement and partnerships in promoting Early Childhood Education programs in Nigeria, and how can these strategies be sustained over time?
2. How can social capital be leveraged to mobilize resources, support, and expertise for Early Childhood Education programs in Nigeria, and what are the potential challenges and limitations of this approach?
3. What role can community-based organizations and institutions play in promoting Early Childhood Education programs in Nigeria, and how can they be supported and empowered to do so effectively?
4. How can partnerships between public, private, and civil society sectors be fostered and strengthened to promote Early Childhood Education programs in Nigeria, and what are the key factors that contribute to successful partnerships?
5. What are the key barriers and challenges that hinder community engagement and partnerships in promoting Early Childhood Education programs in Nigeria, and how can

these be addressed and overcome to unlock the full potential of community engagement and partnership

What specific strategies can be implemented to foster Community Engagement and partnerships in promoting Early childhood education program in Nigeria and how can these strategies be sustained over time ?

Fostering community engagement and partnerships is crucial for promoting Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs in Nigeria. Several strategies can be implemented to achieve this, including:

1. Building relationships and trust with community members (Okeke, 2018).
2. Establishing community-based committees to oversee ECE programs (UNICEF, 2019).
3. Providing training and capacity building for community members and ECE providers (Adeyemi, 2017).
4. Encouraging community participation in ECE program planning and decision-making (World Bank, 2018).
5. Leveraging technology to enhance community engagement and partnerships (OECD, 2020).

To sustain these strategies over time, the following approaches can be adopted:

1. Establishing a framework for community engagement and partnerships (Bourdieu, 1986).
2. Providing ongoing support and resources for community members and ECE providers (Coleman, 1988).
3. Encouraging community ownership and leadership of ECE programs (Putnam, 1995).
4. Fostering collaboration among community members, ECE providers, and other stakeholders (Wagner, 2018).
5. Continuously monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of community engagement and partnerships (Katz, 2019). Implementing these strategies and approaches, community engagement and partnerships can be fostered and sustained, leading to improved outcomes for ECE programs in Nigeria.

How can social capital be leveraged to mobilize resources, support, and expertise for Early Childhood Education programs in Nigeria, and what are the potential challenges and limitations of this approach?

Leveraging social capital to mobilize resources, support, and expertise for Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs in Nigeria can be a powerful strategy. Social capital refers to the networks, relationships, and norms of trust and cooperation within and between communities (Bourdieu, 1986). By tapping into these social networks, ECE programs can access resources, expertise, and support that might otherwise be unavailable.

One way to leverage social capital is through community engagement and participation. When community members are engaged in ECE programs, they are more likely to invest time, resources, and expertise in the program's success (Coleman, 1988). This can lead to increased access to resources, such as funding, materials, and facilities (Putnam, 1995).

Another way to leverage social capital is through partnerships with community-based organizations and institutions. These partnerships can provide access to expertise, resources, and support, as well as help build trust and credibility within the community (Wagner, 2018).

However, there are also potential challenges and limitations to leveraging social capital for ECE programs in Nigeria. One challenge is the potential for unequal distribution of resources and support, with some communities having more access to social capital than others (Okeke, 2018). Another challenge is the potential for conflicts and power imbalances within and between communities, which can hinder effective collaboration and resource mobilization (Adeyemi, 2017).

Furthermore, social capital can be context-dependent, and what works in one community may not work in another (Katz, 2019). Additionally, social capital can be influenced by broader structural factors, such as poverty, inequality, and political instability, which can impact its effectiveness (UNICEF, 2019).

Therefore, leveraging social capital can be a powerful strategy for mobilizing resources, support, and expertise for ECE programs in Nigeria. However, it is important to be aware of the potential challenges and limitations, and to approach social capital leveraging in a thoughtful and context-sensitive manner.

What role can community-based organizations and institutions play in promoting Early Childhood Education programs in Nigeria, and how can they be supported and empowered to do so effectively?

Community-based organizations and institutions play a vital role in promoting Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs in Nigeria. These organizations and institutions are well-positioned to provide support and resources to ECE programs, leveraging their local knowledge, expertise, and community trust (Okeke, 2018). They can:

1. Provide access to education and healthcare services (UNICEF, 2019).
2. Offer training and capacity building for ECE providers (Adeyemi, 2017).
3. Mobilize community resources and support (Wagner, 2018).
4. Advocate for ECE policy and program development (World Bank, 2018).
5. Facilitate community engagement and participation (Katz, 2019).

To support and empower community-based organizations and institutions, the following strategies can be employed:

1. Provide funding and resource support (OECD, 2020).
2. Offer technical assistance and capacity building (USAID, 2019).
3. Foster partnerships and collaborations (UNESCO, 2017).
4. Promote community ownership and leadership (Save the Children, 2018).
5. Encourage community-based research and evaluation (Journal of Early Childhood Education, 2020).

By supporting and empowering community-based organizations and institutions, ECE programs in Nigeria can benefit from increased access to resources, expertise, and community trust, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for young children.

How can partnerships between public, private, and civil society sectors be fostered and strengthened to promote Early Childhood Education programs in Nigeria, and what are the key factors that contribute to successful partnerships?

Fostering and strengthening partnerships between public, private, and civil society sectors is crucial for promoting Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs in Nigeria. Effective partnerships can leverage resources, expertise, and influence to improve access, quality, and sustainability of ECE programs (UNICEF, 2019). Key factors contributing to successful partnerships include:

1. Shared goals and vision (Adeyemi, 2017).
2. Trust and mutual respect (Wagner, 2018).
3. Clear roles and responsibilities (OECD, 2020).
4. Effective communication and coordination (Katz, 2019).
5. Capacity building and resource sharing (USAID, 2019).
6. Flexibility and adaptability (Save the Children, 2018).
7. Community engagement and participation (Journal of Early Childhood Education, 2020).

To foster and strengthen partnerships, the following strategies can be employed:

1. Establish a partnership framework (World Bank, 2018).
2. Encourage multi-stakeholder dialogue (UNESCO, 2017).
3. Build capacity and provide technical assistance (DFID, 2019).
4. Foster private sector engagement (IFC, 2020).
5. Leverage technology and innovation (GSMA, 2019).

Adopting these strategies and emphasizing key factors, partnerships between public, private, and civil society sectors can be strengthened, leading to improved ECE outcomes in Nigeria.

What are the key barriers and challenges that hinder community engagement and partnerships in promoting Early Childhood Education programs in Nigeria, and how can these be addressed and overcome to unlock the full potential of community engagement and partnerships?

Community engagement and partnerships are essential for promoting Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs in Nigeria, but several barriers and challenges hinder their effectiveness. Key barriers and challenges include:

1. Lack of awareness and understanding of ECE importance (UNICEF, 2019).
2. Limited community resources and infrastructure (World Bank, 2018).
3. Cultural and linguistic barriers (Adeyemi, 2017).
4. Power imbalance and lack of community ownership (Katz, 2019).



5. Inadequate funding and support (USAID, 2019).
6. Poor communication and coordination (Journal of Early Childhood Education, 2020).
7. Limited capacity and skills of community members and ECE providers (DFID, 2019).

To address and overcome these barriers, the following strategies can be employed:

1. Raise awareness and build understanding of ECE importance through community sensitization and education (UNICEF, 2019).
2. Provide resources and infrastructure support through partnerships and funding (World Bank, 2018).
3. Develop culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate ECE programs (Adeyemi, 2017).
4. Empower communities to take ownership and lead ECE initiatives (Katz, 2019).
5. Mobilize adequate funding and support through government and private sector engagement (USAID, 2019).
6. Establish effective communication and coordination mechanisms (Journal of Early Childhood Education, 2020).
7. Build capacity and skills of community members and ECE providers through training and technical assistance (DFID, 2019).

Addressing and overcoming these barriers, community engagement and partnerships can be strengthened, leading to improved ECE outcomes in Nigeria.

### Conclusion

Community engagement and partnerships are essential for promoting Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs in Nigeria. The paper has highlighted the importance of community engagement and partnerships in improving access, quality, and sustainability of ECE programs. However, several barriers and challenges hinder the effectiveness of community engagement and partnerships, including lack of awareness, limited resources, cultural and linguistic barriers, power imbalance, inadequate funding, and poor communication.

To unlock the full potential of community engagement and partnerships, it is crucial to address and overcome these barriers. Strategies such as raising awareness, providing resources and infrastructure support, developing culturally sensitive programs, empowering communities, mobilizing funding, establishing effective communication mechanisms, and building capacity and skills of community members and ECE providers are essential.

### Suggestions

1. Develop a national framework for community engagement and partnerships in ECE, emphasizing shared goals, roles, and responsibilities.
2. Establish a community engagement and partnership fund to support ECE initiatives.
3. Develop culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate ECE programs, incorporating community values and beliefs.

4. Empower communities to take ownership and lead ECE initiatives, providing training and technical assistance.
5. Mobilize private sector engagement and funding, leveraging technology and innovation.
6. Establish effective communication and coordination mechanisms, utilizing digital platforms and community networks.
7. Build capacity and skills of community members and ECE providers, focusing on early childhood development and education.
8. Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation, using participatory and inclusive approaches.
9. Foster collaboration among government, private sector, civil society, and communities, promoting a coordinated approach.
10. Support research and development, generating evidence-based solutions and best practices.

Therefore implementing these suggestions and addressing the barriers and challenges, community engagement and partnerships can be strengthened, leading to improved ECE outcomes in Nigeria. This will ultimately contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

Some authors support these suggestions, emphasizing the importance of community engagement and partnerships in ECE (UNICEF, 2019; World Bank, 2018; Adeyemi, 2017; Katz, 2019; USAID, 2019). By unlocking the power of community engagement and partnerships, Nigeria can make significant progress in promoting ECE programs, improving the lives of young children and their families.

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**INFLUENCE OF AGE AND GENDER ON SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT OF NEWLY ADMITTED UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*The study examined the influence of age and gender on school adjustment among newly admitted university undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria. The population consisted of all university undergraduates in Osun state with the sample of 1056 newly admitted students who were purposively selected from three universities in Osun State, Nigeria using stratified, purposive and simple random sampling techniques. A validated adapted instrument titled Socio-Demographic Variable Scale (SDVS) was used to elicit information from the students. The reliability of the instruments was investigated using Internal Consistency Approach based on Cronbach's Alpha. Frequency count, percentage and Chi-square were used to analyze the data collected. The results revealed that gender had significant influence on the university undergraduates' school adjustment while age does not exert any significant influence on school adjustment among university undergraduates in Osun State. It was recommended that age of the learners to be admitted should be considered while female students should be oriented and counseled from time to time.*

**Key words:** school adjustment, age, gender, university, newly admitted, undergraduates

**Introduction**

Attending a university is one of the criteria an individual needs to fulfill to achieve academic excellence and educational success in life; therefore, gaining admission into a university as a requisite for academic excellence is not the only solution to achieving this excellence but also gaining the required adjustment-skill which enhances/fosters coping mechanism in the university system itself. Adjusting to the university system is one of the multifarious challenges faced by many undergraduates, especially the newly admitted ones in conventional universities; many of them have never been confronted with such profound and dynamic situations/realities such as moving from one lecture theater to another for different courses; encountering different course lecturers with their divergent approaches to teaching; and interacting with different people (colleagues and non-teaching staff) with culturally and educationally diverse backgrounds. These situations are unprecedented to many of them yet they are unavoidable; they remain ostensible academic realities an individual undergraduate needs to grapple with in order to achieve their academic pursuit in the ivory tower of intellectualism; this, consequently, affects how they discharge their duties as students and their performances at large. This is further explained by Hazard and Carter (2018) who avowed that university expands one's mind and makes an individual a little uncomfortable which makes them doubt their abilities. In doubting their abilities, some of them sometimes result to unorthodox ways of enhancing their performances, managing stress, time and other existential challenges posed by the university environment; such ways include abuse of stimulants, self-deprivation of required sleep, prostitution, sex in exchange for marks and initiation into cult groups; this position is further reinforced by the existential competitiveness in social, academic and religious activities which characterizes most

conventional universities. Furthermore, Osoro, Nyamwange & Obuba (2020) affirmed that first year students in Kenyan public universities are facing numerous adjustment challenges such as cheating on exams, handling money and time poorly, drug and substance abuse, suicidal thoughts and poor academic performance among others. All these are attributable to much work load, perceived and real peer pressure, social influence, permissive nature of university environment and a strong desire not to miss out on the joy that comes with success.

Also, entering the higher institution may be a source of stress and challenge for students. University, in particular, is a new big and relatively permissive environment and community that triggers different reactions among first year students (Mudhovisi, 2012). Such reactions include what they do with their relative and newly found freedom, and the strong explorative will to try out new things: making friends and engaging in other socio-economic activities. Thus, for the fresh undergraduate, life can be, exciting and frustrating, an admixture of experiences. This is because, on one hand, the increased personal freedom can feel wonderful and exciting since there is no involvement of parents who would consistently guide them on how to harness productively the inherent potential in the freedom. And, on the other hand, the students need to readjust to be physically and mentally fit for the journey. It has been researched that poorly adjusted students may withdraw from the university. This is in line with Zakariyah and Adeniyi (2023) who observed that students' failure to adjust to the university may lead them to withdraw from the university or delay them from graduating at the appropriate time, leading them to pro-social activities; crossing to other departments; become emotionally unstable or, in worst case scenario, committing suicide which are major concerns for parents, the school management and the students. Some students who could have become beacon of hope in the society and contributed immensely to the educational, social, political and economic development of the country have been lost to these concerns; this makes the study of adjustment programme an imperative undertaking that should be executed very timely.

Adjustment is a process by which an individual attempts to deal with stress of life, tension that comes with it, and conflicts, and also meets their needs while making efforts at the same time to maintain successful relationship with the environment (Ugodulunwa & Anakwe, 2012). An individual who is able to maintain a balanced relationship with their environments, physical and social, and still meets their needs is well-adjusted but those who have difficulty in maintaining a balanced relationship with their environment while attempting to meet their needs are not well-adjusted. In support of the preceding submission, *well-adjusted* students usually appreciate what they learn, engage positively in classroom activities and receive high grades meanwhile *not well-adjusted* students will not appreciate what they learn, engage positively in classroom activities and receive high grades. Furthermore, Agbakwuru and Agbakwuru (2012) referred to school adjustment as the process of bringing an individual student's behaviour in conformity with the culture of the school setting. The experiences and exposure gained by an individual before entering the university will not completely help them function efficiently in the new environment; some of these experiences have to be reinforced, some have to be unlearned while others to be blended with the new experiences garnered in the university environment. This is because the university is a dynamic environment that requires a dynamic approach to live in it. Technically, the onus is on students to learn the basic required academic culture of the university needed for survival. In addition, school adjustment is a continuous process that is geared towards the adaptation of the individual to school life and culture. The process is continuous because it begins when students are newly admitted and ends when they



graduate, it runs concurrently with other activities within the university. School adjustment is also viewed as a continual process in which the students vary their behaviour to produce a more harmonious relationship with the school environment. It can be taken to mean the process by which students adopt and adapt to maintaining a balance between their academic, social and emotional needs and the school environment. This proves that adjustment is holistic as it touches all areas of students' development: behavioural, attitudinal, cognitive and psycho motor (skill oriented). Indeed, students' school adjustment depends on the match between their competences, needs and the demands of the school environment.

In another view, Hazard & Carter, (2018) opined that going to university is a cultural experience which comes with its own language and customs, some of which can be confusing or confounding at first. This suggests universities have their own ways, culture, of doing things which differ from one university to the other. Adjustment may also vary from one university to another; the location of the university (urban, semi-urban or rural), the host community of the university, and the religious atmosphere/milieu of the community can shape greatly the culture of the university; so, understanding and adapting the culture gives an undergraduate the assurance of peaceful stay. However, Calvete and Conor-smith, (2016) in Aloka, (2023) reiterated that there are lots of issues anywhere new learning takes place which include emotional and social shocks that new students struggle with. New students therefore face adjustment problems.

In this study, one of the factors, as predicted, capable of constituting a strong impediment to the adjustment process of newly admitted university undergraduates is age. According to the Oxford Dictionary, age is the length of time that a person has lived or a thing has existed. Lately, it has been discovered in Nigerian universities that students below age of eighteen have been having difficulties adjusting to the university system because of their chronological age as many of them are not emotionally and socially mature. The inability of these students to adjust to the new environment and cope with the intricacies that come with it has adversely affected their performances and emotional stability. In view of these, all hands (university stakeholders) are now on deck to curb this serious menace that thrusts many students into dangers like pro-sexual activities, suicide and suicidal thoughts, and dropping out from the university. It was observed and reported that many of the students below that age are not mentally, socially and emotionally ready for the tasks. Recently, the Federal government of Nigeria directed that students below the age of eighteen should not be admitted into any tertiary institution. This could be related with Alhussain, Onayq, Ismail, Alduayi, Alawbathani & Aljaffer, (2023) revealed that adjustment of students is dependent on their age. They added that older students have better coping strategies while the young students struggle inadvertently to adjust to the demands of the new environment.

Gender, another variable predicted to influence school adjustment among university undergraduates is an ambivalent term with diverse meanings especially in recent human living history; it is a marker of identity in relation to sexes, male or female; it also underpins the social roles culturally and socially assigned to each sex, male and female. In effect, the dichotomies of sex and roles which are both biologically and socially created respectively have a way of affecting the adjustment process of individual students. The existence of gender differ allows for comparative study of students' adjustment between male and female students, and to ascertain the degree of the difference as it borders on adjustment. According to reports from different universities, it was observed that male students perform better than the female students academically and in adjustment due to a balanced relationship they maintained with the environment. Although, this varies from university to university depending on the coping strategies one devises. The low level of adjustment of female

students could be predicted to have been caused by distractions from their male counterpart, newly found independence or age. Hence, this study tends to reveal which, age or gender, could actually predict the school adjustment of newly admitted university undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria.

### **Objectives**

*The objectives of the study were to*

1. assess the influence of gender on school adjustment among university undergraduates in Osun State;
2. examine the influence of age on school adjustment among university undergraduates in Osun State

### **Research Hypotheses**

H<sub>01</sub> There is no significant influence of gender on school adjustment of undergraduate students.

H<sub>02</sub> There is no significant influence of age on school adjustment of undergraduate students

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of all newly admitted Part I university undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria. Three universities were selected in the state for the study. A Federal and a State University were purposively selected because they were the only Federal and State Universities as of the time of the study while a private university was randomly selected from the three private universities in the state using balloting system. The population consisted of all newly admitted university undergraduates. The sample size comprised 1,200 students who were selected randomly using simple random sampling technique while 1056 copies of questionnaire were analyzed because some respondent didn't complete theirs. An adapted instrument titled "Questionnaires on Socio-Demographic Variables and School Adjustment (QSDVS)" was used to gather information from the students.

The instruments were pilot tested on 30 university undergraduate students. The reliability of the instruments was investigated using Cronbach Alpha, the internal consistency of the instrument ranges from 0.30 to 0.43. The overall coefficient was 0.78 which implies that the scale is reliable for the study. Frequency count, percentage and Chi-square were used to analyze the data collected.

### **Results**

**Research Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant influence of gender on school adjustment among university undergraduates.

**Table 1: Chi-square Analysis of Influence of Gender on School Adjustment of Students.**

	Sex					
Levels of Adjustment	Male	Female	Total	$\chi^2$	Df	P
Low	101	63	164	8.017	2	.018
Moderate	367	370	737			
High	76	79	154			
Total	544	512	1056			

Table 1 shows the influence of gender on the school adjustment of students. It can be observed that a Chi-square test indicated a significant influence of gender on the school adjustment of students,  $\chi^2 (n = 1056) = 8.017$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .018$ . Since the p-value is less than .05 thresholds, we therefore reject the stated null hypothesis. This result concludes that there is a significant influence of gender on the school adjustment of students. In other word, male genders' level of adjustment is higher than that of the female gender.

**Research Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant influence of age on the school adjustment of the university undergraduates.

**Table 2: Chi-square Analysis of Influence of Age on School Adjustment of Students.**

	Age						
Levels of Adjustment	15-20yrs	21-25yrs	26yrs and Above	Total	$\chi^2$	Df	P
Low	54	79	31	164	3.382	4	.496
Moderate	257	372	109	738			
High	57	79	18	154			
Total	368	530	158	1056			

Table 2 shows the influence of age on the school adjustment of students. It can be observed that a Chi-square test indicated a non-significant influence of age on the school adjustment of students,  $\chi^2 (n = 1056) = 3.382$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .496$ . Since the p-value is greater than .05 thresholds, we therefore accept the stated null hypothesis. This result concludes that there is no significant influence of age on the school adjustment of students.

## Discussion

It was discovered in this study that there was no significant relationship between age and school adjustment of university undergraduates. That is age did not have influence on undergraduates' school adjustment. Also, students between the ages of 21 and 25 performed better than their other counterparts whose ages are between (15 & 20) and (26 & above). To buttress this result, it is believed that university students belong to the category between late

adolescence and early adulthood. This stage of life is characterized by periods of instability, considerable conflicts, anxiety and tension (Hall, 1904). Socially, adolescence is period of building a stable identity, many young people experience role confusion and blurred self-image. It was also revealed in this study that undergraduates between 15 & 20 years had moderate adjustment, 21-25 years had high adjustment while 26 & above had low level of adjustment.

It can be easily deduced from this study that students between 15&20 had moderate level of adjustment because their social and emotional maturity is yet to develop before gaining admission which negatively affects their adjustment in the university system. One can also assume that undergraduates between 21&25 years had high level of adjustment because they have left the adolescent stage which is considered stormy and stressful. While undergraduates of 26& above had low level of adjustment because it is believed that their age bracket is adulthood stage which comes with a lot of responsibilities from family for those especially that are married. These responsibilities in conjunction with school requirements and culture may inhibit them from being well-adjusted.

The above argument is in line with Malau-Aduli, Adu, Alele, Jones, Dronvandi, Mylrea, Sfera, Ross & Jennings, (2021) who indicated that adjustment of students is dependent on age because the mature and older ones are adjusting better as compared to the young students in their first year. In another study reported by Kirtania, Alam, & Santra, (2021), the older students have better emotional adjustments compared to the younger students, thus, age is a critical factor in the adjustment of students at university. Similarly, Aloka, (2022) in his study in Kenya, opined that older students that are first born have adjustment mechanism as compared to the younger ones. In contrast to the above arguments, Atteraya, 2021 argued that age of students does not contribute to their adjustment. The variations in argument made by the researchers above on male and female differences in adjustment could be as a result of individual differences which include level of intelligence, socio-economic status and educational background of an individual.

It was also revealed in this study that there is significant influence of gender on school adjustment among university undergraduates in Osun State. That is male students have high level of adjustment compared to their female counterparts. This finding is related to the findings of a study by Inman, (2017) who indicated that there is effect of gender on adjustment among university students and their attitudes regarding their mental health. Wang and Zhang (2015) in their own findings also indicated that the males' score was better than those of the female students on psychological adjustments. Similarly, the study conducted by Makwana and Kaji (2014) revealed that gender differences exert significant influence on social adjustment in that male students have higher adjustments socially when compared to their female counterparts. However, in another related study, Nidhi and Kermane (2015) reported that male and female students at colleges adjust similarly and, of course, no gender is superior to the other.

On the contrary to the above findings on male students having higher adjustment than female students, Devika (2013) reported that girls adjust well emotionally in comparison to boys, but boys adjust better in academic aspects. In another view, Bhagat (2016) reported that gender effects are evident in adjustment among learners, with girls having higher scores on academic and emotional adjustments while there is higher social adjustment among boys. Similarly, Panth, Chaurasia & Gupta, (2015) revealed gender differences in the emotional adjustments and that girls have better scores as compared to boys. It can be deduced from the analysis that both male and female students have greater ability to carry out tasks if they

invest more efforts in seemingly difficulty tasks. Also, it can be suggested that the reason these results are at variance could be differences in culture, beliefs or locations where the researches were conducted.

### Conclusion

School adjustment is very crucial for all undergraduates. It is one of the criteria that determine the fate of any students in the university. Thus, adjustment depends on age and gender and to this effect, it was revealed in this study that gender has influence on school adjustment of undergraduates. That is male students' adjust faster than female in Universities in Osun State. It was also established in this study that undergraduates between the ages of 21-25 adjusted faster than undergraduates between the ages of 15-20 years and 26 years and above.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were therefore made:

1. Time to time counseling should be made mandatory for the newly admitted undergraduates especially the female students.
2. If the students below the age of 18 are going to be admitted into the university, there should be organized special orientation programme for them.
3. Also, the government should ensure that lecturers are to have at least diploma in education course. This would help them in understanding human behaviour so as to deal with learners with their differences.
4. Bursary should be made available for older undergraduates as this will enable them to support their family without challenges.

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**IMPACT OF NATURE-BASED EXPERIENCES ON CHILDREN'S COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS FROM CAREGIVERS' PERCEPTION IN LAGOS STATE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CARE CENTRES**

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**Abstract**

*This study aimed to investigate the impact of nature-based experiences on children's cognitive development and environmental awareness from caregivers' perception in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State. To achieve this purpose, a descriptive survey design was employed, with data collected from 75 caregivers randomly selected from 25 public preschools in 5 purposively selected Local Government Areas. A self-designed questionnaire, titled "Nature-based Experiences, Children's Cognitive Development, and Environmental Awareness Questionnaire (NECCDEAQ)," was developed and demonstrated high reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.89. Findings revealed that nature-based experiences, such as outdoor play, gardening, and exploring natural environments, significantly contribute to children's cognitive development in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State. Caregivers perceived these activities as beneficial for enhancing children's environmental awareness. Specific nature-based activities considered most beneficial included gardening and exploring natural environments. Furthermore, caregivers expressed support for incorporating nature-based experiences into the curriculum of early childhood education care centers. Factors influencing caregiver support included the educational benefits of nature-based activities and their positive impact on children's well-being. Overall, the findings concluded that nature-based experiences play a crucial role in promoting children's cognitive development and environmental awareness in early childhood education settings in Lagos State. Caregivers reported a positive correlation between these experiences and children's learning outcomes. The study recommended that nature-based activities should be integrated into daily routines and curriculum, promoting environmental stewardship. The researchers recommended need for provision of training for caregivers to effectively implement these practices.*

**Keywords:** Nature-based experiences, Children, Cognitive development, environmental awareness and Caregivers

**Introduction**

Early childhood education plays a crucial role in shaping a child's cognitive development and environmental awareness. In recent years, there has been growing interest in the potential benefits of nature-based experiences for young children. This study aims to explore

the impact of nature-based experiences on children's cognitive development and environmental awareness from the perspective of caregivers in Lagos State early childhood education care centers. Nature-based experiences refer to activities and learning opportunities that occur in natural outdoor environments, allowing children to interact directly with nature (Louv, 2015). These experiences can include outdoor play, gardening, nature walks, and exploration of local ecosystems. Cognitive development, as defined by Piaget (1952), involves the growth of mental processes such as perception, memory, language, problem-solving, and reasoning. Environmental awareness, on the other hand, encompasses an individual's understanding of the natural world and their role in preserving it (Chawla, 2006).

Nature-based experiences have been shown to offer numerous benefits for children's overall development. Research suggests that exposure to nature can enhance cognitive functioning, improve attention span, reduce stress, and promote physical activity (Wells, 2000; Faber Taylor and Kuo, 2009). Additionally, nature-based experiences have been linked to increased environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviors in children (Cheng and Monroe, 2012).

Proponents of nature-based experiences argue that they provide a rich, multisensory learning environment that stimulates children's curiosity and imagination. Kellert (2005) suggests that direct contact with nature is essential for children's cognitive, emotional, and moral development. Studies have shown that nature-based experiences can improve children's attention, working memory, and problem-solving skills (Dadvand *et al.*, 2015; Schutte *et al.*, 2017).

Furthermore, nature-based experiences have been associated with increased environmental stewardship and conservation attitudes in children. Wells and Lekies (2006) found that childhood experiences in nature were positively correlated with pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors in adulthood. This suggests that early exposure to nature can have long-lasting effects on environmental awareness and concern.

Critics of nature-based experiences in early childhood education argue that they may pose safety risks and logistical challenges. Some researchers have raised concerns about potential hazards such as insect bites, allergic reactions, and exposure to harmful plants or animals (Little and Wyver, 2008). Additionally, there are concerns about the feasibility of implementing nature-based programs in urban areas with limited access to natural spaces (Ernst, 2014).

Another argument against nature-based experiences is the potential for reduced focus on academic skills traditionally emphasized in early childhood education. Some educators and policymakers worry that time spent outdoors may come at the expense of structured learning activities aimed at developing literacy and numeracy skills (Maynard *et al.*, 2013).

Despite these concerns, the potential benefits of nature-based experiences for cognitive development and environmental awareness are compelling. Research has shown that nature-based learning can enhance executive functioning skills, which are crucial for academic success and overall cognitive development (Bourrier *et al.*, 2018). These skills include attention, working memory, and cognitive flexibility, all of which are essential for problem-solving and critical thinking.

Moreover, nature-based experiences provide opportunities for children to develop a sense of connection with the natural world, fostering environmental awareness from an early age.

Chawla (2007) argues that direct experiences in nature during childhood are crucial for developing environmental sensitivity and a lifelong commitment to environmental stewardship.

Several empirical studies have explored the impact of nature-based experiences on children's cognitive development and environmental awareness. For example, a study by Ulset *et al.* (2017) found that outdoor time in preschool was positively associated with children's cognitive and behavioral development. The researchers observed improvements in attention and reduced hyperactivity symptoms among children who spent more time outdoors.

In another study, Collado *et al.* (2013) investigated the effects of a nature education program on children's environmental attitudes and behaviors. The results showed that participation in the program led to increased environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviors among the children.

A longitudinal study by McCree *et al.* (2018) examined the impact of forest school experiences on children's development over three years. The findings revealed improvements in children's confidence, social skills, language and communication, motivation and concentration, and physical skills.

The absence of nature-based experiences in early childhood education may have several negative consequences. Louv (2015) coined the term "nature-deficit disorder" to describe the potential developmental and health issues that can arise from a lack of connection with nature. These issues include attention difficulties, higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses, and a diminished use of the senses.

Furthermore, limited exposure to nature may result in reduced environmental awareness and concern among children. This could lead to a generation less equipped to address pressing environmental challenges and less likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviors (Chawla, 2006).

The lack of nature-based experiences may also deprive children of important opportunities for physical activity, sensory stimulation, and social interaction. These elements are crucial for holistic development and may be more difficult to replicate in indoor, structured learning environments (Fjørtoft, 2001).

Given the potential benefits of nature-based experiences and the risks associated with their absence, it is crucial to investigate their impact on children's cognitive development and environmental awareness. This study therefore seeks to investigate the impact of nature-based experiences on children's cognitive development and environmental awareness from caregivers' perception in Lagos State early childhood education care centres.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Early childhood is a critical period for cognitive development and environmental awareness. While research suggests potential benefits of nature-based experiences (outdoor play, gardening, exploring natural environments) for children's cognitive skills and environmental connection (Fjørtoft, 2009; Wells and Evans, 2003), limited research has explored these experiences within the context of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centers in Lagos State, Nigeria. Urbanization in Lagos has led to a decrease in green spaces and limited opportunities for children to connect with nature. Additionally, the curriculum in many ECEC centers may not prioritize nature-based activities (Akinbile and Alabi, 2012).

This research focuses on the under-explored area of caregiver perceptions in Lagos. While some studies have explored the benefits of nature-based experiences for children (Fägerström *et al.*, 2019), there is a dearth of research on how Lagos caregivers perceive the impact of such experiences on children's cognitive development and environmental awareness within ECEC settings. Understanding these perceptions is crucial for designing effective nature-based learning programs and promoting their integration into Lagos preschool curriculums. It is against this background that this study examines the impact of nature-based experiences on children's cognitive development and environmental awareness from caregivers' perception in Lagos State early childhood education care centres

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to examine the impact of nature-based experiences on children's cognitive development and environmental awareness from caregivers' perception in Lagos State early childhood education care centres.

Specifically the study seeks to:

- i. examine the extent to which nature-based experiences, such as outdoor play, gardening, and exploring natural environments, contribute to children's cognitive development in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State;
- ii. assess caregivers' perceptions on the impact of nature-based experiences on children's environmental awareness in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State;
- iii. identify the specific nature-based activities that caregivers believe are most beneficial for enhancing children's cognitive development and environmental awareness in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State and
- iv. explore the factors that influence caregivers' support for incorporating nature-based experiences into the curriculum of early childhood education care centers in Lagos State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What extent to which nature-based experiences, such as outdoor play, gardening, and exploring natural environments, contribute to children's cognitive development in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State?
2. What are the caregivers' perceptions on the impact of nature-based experiences on children's environmental awareness in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State?
3. What are the specific nature-based activities that caregivers believe are most beneficial for enhancing children's cognitive development and environmental awareness in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State?
4. What are the factors that influence caregivers' support for incorporating nature-based experiences into the curriculum of early childhood education care centers in Lagos State?

It will also contribute to the growing body of literature on the benefits of nature-based learning, particularly in the context of urban environments where access to nature may be limited.

### Literature Review: Overview of Nature-based Experiences

This research explores the impact of nature-based experiences (NBEs) on children's cognitive development and environmental awareness in Lagos, Nigeria, through the lens of caregiver perceptions in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centers. To understand the potential benefits, a review of the existing literature on NBEs is crucial.

NBEs encompass a range of activities that connect children with the natural world. These include:

- Outdoor play in parks, forests, or schoolyards (Fägerström *et al.*, 2019)
- Gardening activities where children plant, care for, and harvest (Graça *et al.*, 2018)
- Nature exploration walks, hikes, or field trips (Stenhouse, 2009)

These experiences provide opportunities for sensory engagement, exploration, and discovery, fostering a connection with nature.

Research suggests a positive link between NBEs and cognitive development. Studies by Kuo and Barnes (2019) indicate that exposure to green spaces can enhance attention, working memory, and cognitive function in children. Time spent outdoors fosters opportunities for problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity as children navigate the natural environment (Fägerström *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, NBEs provide opportunities for unstructured play, which allows children to explore their curiosity and develop independent learning skills (Graça *et al.*, 2018).

NBEs can play a vital role in cultivating environmental awareness in children. Engaging with nature allows them to experience the beauty and complexity of the natural world firsthand (Sobel, 2018). Activities like gardening foster an understanding of ecological processes like plant growth and the interconnectedness of living things (Graça *et al.*, 2018). Exposure to nature can also foster a sense of stewardship, encouraging children to care for the environment (Kahn and Kellert, 2002).

This research aims to bridge this gap by investigating how Lagos caregivers perceive the impact of NBEs on children's cognitive development and environmental awareness within ECEC settings. Understanding their viewpoints will contribute to the development of effective nature-based learning programs for Lagos preschools.

### Methodology

A descriptive survey design was employed to investigate the impact of nature-based experiences on children's cognitive development and environmental awareness from caregivers' perspectives in Lagos State. This design allows for the collection of data on current perceptions and practices within early childhood education care (ECEC) centers.

A two-stage sampling approach was utilized. First, five Local Government Areas (LGAs) were purposively selected within Lagos State to ensure geographic diversity. Second, a random sample of 25 public preschools was chosen from the selected LGAs. Finally, from each preschool, three caregivers were randomly selected to participate, resulting in a total sample size of 75 caregivers. A self-designed questionnaire titled "Nature-based Experiences, Children's Cognitive Development and Environmental Awareness Questionnaire (NECCDEAQ)" was developed to collect data. The questionnaire content and construct validity were ensured through professional review by experts in early childhood



education and environmental psychology. Additionally, the questionnaire demonstrated high internal consistency with a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.89, indicating reliable measurement. Data analysis will be conducted using IBM SPSS 26.0 software. Simple percentages will be used to describe the distribution of caregivers' responses on demographic variables and their perceptions of nature-based experiences. Chi-square tests will be employed to examine potential relationships between variables, such as the frequency of nature-based experiences offered and caregiver perceptions of their impact on children's cognitive development and environmental awareness.

## Results and Findings

**Table 1: Frequency Distribution of the Participants According to Gender**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	37	49.3	49.3	49.3
	Female	38	50.7	50.7	100.0
	Total	75	100.0	100.0	

From Table 1, it shows that 37 respondents representing 49.3% of the total population of the respondents were male, while 38 respondents representing 50.7% of the total population were female. This indicates that there were more female respondents than the male counterpart in this study.

### Research Question One:

What extent to which nature-based experiences, such as outdoor play, gardening, and exploring natural environments, contribute to children's cognitive development in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State?

**Table 2: Table Showing the Respondents' response with respect to the extent to which nature-based experiences contribute to children's cognitive development**

**Frequently (F) = 4   Sometimes (S) = 3, Rarely (R) = 2. Never (N) = 1**

S/N	Statement	F	S	R	N	x	Remarks
1.	How frequently do children engage in outdoor play at the early childhood education care centers in Lagos State?	20	25	5	25	3.17	
2.	How often do children participate in gardening activities at the early childhood education care centers in Lagos State?	30	20	15	10	3.67	
3.	To what extent do children explore natural environments at the early childhood education care centers in Lagos State?	23	32	15	5	3.18	
4.	How often do children have the opportunity to interact with nature-based experiences at the early childhood education care centers in Lagos State?	10	12	20	33	2.48	
5.	How frequently are nature-based experiences incorporated into the curriculum at the early	20	20	15	20	2.17	

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	childhood education care centers in Lagos State?						
	Grand Mean					2.93	

**Source: Field 2024**

### Decision Rule

A score of 2.50 on a rating scale served as the threshold for agreement (above 2.50) or disagreement (below 2.50). The data in Table 2 suggests that respondents generally agreed with 3 items on the questionnaire, but disagreed with 2 other items which are (2.17 and 2.48) lower than the threshold of agreement. The grand Mean is 2.93 which is higher than the threshold of agreement (2.50), hence it shows that nature-based experiences, such as outdoor play, gardening, and exploring natural environments, contribute significantly to children's cognitive development in early childhood education care centers within the study area.

**Research Question Two:** What are the caregivers' perceptions on the impact of nature-based experiences on children's environmental awareness in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State?

**Table 3: Analysis on caregivers' perceptions on the impact of nature-based experiences on children's environmental awareness**

Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	x	Remarks
1.	I believe nature-based experiences positively impact children's environmental awareness.	22	27	7	19	3.37	
2.	Nature-based experiences play an important role in developing children's appreciation for the environment.	20	25	5	25	3.17	
3.	I think children are more likely to learn about the environment through nature-based experiences.	18	24	6	27	3.05	
4.	I strongly agree that nature-based experiences should be integrated into early childhood education programs.	12	15	18	30	2.65	
5.	I strongly disagree that traditional classroom activities are more effective than nature-based experiences in fostering environmental awareness in children.	10	5	30	30	2.42	
	Grand Mean					2.93	

**Source: Field 2024**

### Decision Rule

A score of 2.50 on a rating scale served as the threshold for agreement (above 2.50) or disagreement (below 2.50). The data in Table 3 suggests that respondents generally agreed with 4 items on the questionnaire, but disagreed with the fifth item which is (2.42) lower than the threshold of agreement. The grand Mean is 2.93 which is higher than the threshold of agreement (2.50), hence it shows that there is significant impact of nature-based

experiences on children's environmental awareness in early childhood education care centers from caregivers' perceptions.

**Research Question Three:** What are the specific nature-based activities that caregivers believe are most beneficial for enhancing children's cognitive development and environmental awareness in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State?

**Table 4: Rank Order Analysis on the specific nature-based activities that caregivers believe are most beneficial for enhancing children's cognitive development and environmental awareness**

S/N	Statement	Means	x	Remarks
1.	<b>SENSORY EXPLORATION</b>	1.67	0.47	Available
	Nature walks			
2.	Nature treasure hunts	1.88	0.33	Available
3.	Sensory bins	1.50	0.50	Available
4.	Barefoot walking	1.80	0.40	Available
5.	<b>CREATIVE PLAY</b>	1.78	0.41	Available
	Nature art			
6.	Mud art	1.91	0.29	Available
7.	Storytelling in nature	1.94	0.23	Available
8.	Building with natural materials	1.97	0.18	Available
9.	<b>SCIENCE EXPLORATION</b>	1.59	0.50	Available
	Planting seeds and observing growth			
10.	Collecting and identifying leaves and rocks	1.70	0.46	Available
11.	Weather observation and experiments			Available
12.	Animal tracking and identification	1.18	0.38	Not Available
13.	<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</b>	1.12	0.39	Not Available
	Nature obstacle courses			
14.	Nature yoga and mindfulness	1.08	0.27	Not Available
15.	Nature scavenger hunts	1.56	0.54	Available
16.	Ball games in nature	1.64	0.48	Available

Source: Field 2024

## Decision Rule:

Caregivers believe that the nature-based activities which are most beneficial for enhancing children's cognitive development and environmental awareness are those with a mean score of 1.80 and above. Activities with a mean score below 1.80 are not considered as effective for achieving these outcomes. Based on the rank order analysis, the following activities are considered the most beneficial for enhancing children's cognitive development and environmental awareness:

Storytelling in nature; Building with natural materials; Mud art; Nature treasure hunts and Barefoot walking. Activities such as animal tracking and identification, physical activity like nature obstacle courses and nature yoga, and mindfulness are not considered as effective for enhancing children's cognitive development and environmental awareness.

**Research Question Four:** What are the factors that influence caregivers' support for incorporating nature-based experiences into the curriculum of early childhood education care centers in Lagos State?

**Table 5: Rank Order Analysis on the factors that influence caregivers' support for incorporating nature-based experiences into the curriculum of early childhood education**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Remarks
1.	I believe there is positive impact of nature-based experiences on children's cognitive development, physical health, social skills, and environmental awareness	15	30	5	35	3.25	
2,	I believe nature-based experiences align with the overall educational goals of the ECEC center	18	20	22	15	3.18	
3.	Caregivers' own comfort level with spending time outdoors and their personal connection to nature can influence their support.	29	22	15	9	3.68	
4.	Cultural values regarding outdoor play and interaction with nature might influence caregiver perspectives.	10	12	15	43	2.48	
5.	Compatibility of nature-based experiences with existing curriculum standards can influence support.	22	25	13	15	3.40	
	Grand Mean					3.20	

Source: Field 2024

## Decision Rule

A score of 2.50 on a rating scale served as the threshold for agreement (above 2.50) or disagreement (below 2.50). The data in Table 5 suggests that respondents generally agreed with 4 items on the questionnaire, but disagreed with the fifth item which is (2.48) lower than the threshold of agreement. The grand Mean is 3.20 which is higher than the threshold of agreement (2.50), hence it shows that there are significant factors that influence caregivers' support for incorporating nature-based experiences into the curriculum of early childhood education care centers.

## Discussion of Findings

Based on the data presented in Table 2, it can be inferred that nature-based experiences, including outdoor play, gardening, and exploring natural environments, contribute significantly to children's cognitive development in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State. The respondents generally agreed that children frequently engage in outdoor play, participate in gardening activities, and explore natural environments at these centers. This is supported by the grand mean score of 2.93, which is above the threshold for agreement at 2.50. The findings are consistent with previous research that has shown the positive impact of nature-based experiences on children's cognitive development. For example, a study by Wells and Evans (2023) found that exposure to natural environments can enhance children's cognitive abilities, such as attention and problem-solving skills. Similarly, Louv (2015) emphasizes the importance of nature-based experiences in promoting creativity and reducing stress in children.

Furthermore, the disagreement with the frequency of opportunities for children to interact with nature-based experiences and the incorporation of nature-based experiences into the curriculum suggests that there is room for improvement in this area. Authors like Sobel (2018) advocate for the integration of nature-based learning into educational settings to support children's overall development. Overall, the findings support the importance of nature-based experiences in early childhood education and highlight the need for educators to prioritize outdoor play, gardening, and exploration of natural environments to enhance children's cognitive development.

The data from this study on caregivers' perceptions of the impact of nature-based experiences on children's environmental awareness in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State indicates that the majority of participants agree that nature-based experiences have a positive impact on children's environmental awareness. Specifically, respondents strongly agreed or agreed with statements indicating that nature-based experiences are important in developing children's appreciation for the environment and that children are more likely to learn about the environment through such experiences. This aligns with previous research by Chawla (2018), who found that nature-based experiences can enhance children's cognitive and emotional connection to the environment.

On the other hand, there was disagreement among participants regarding the belief that traditional classroom activities are more effective than nature-based experiences in fostering environmental awareness in children. This finding is supported by Sutter and Twardowski (2021), who argue that hands-on experiences in nature are more impactful in promoting environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviors in children compared to traditional classroom-based learning. Overall, the grand mean of 2.93 in this study indicates that caregivers perceive nature-based experiences to have a significant impact on children's environmental awareness in early childhood education care centers. This finding is consistent with previous research by Kahn and Kellert (2022), who emphasize the importance of connecting children with nature early in life to foster a lifelong appreciation and stewardship of the environment.

The data from the rank order analysis suggests that caregivers believe certain nature-based activities are more beneficial for enhancing children's cognitive development and environmental awareness in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State. Specifically, activities such as storytelling in nature, building with natural materials, mud art, nature treasure hunts, and barefoot walking were identified as the most effective in achieving these outcomes, as they all had mean scores of 1.80 and above. This finding is consistent with previous research by Chawla (2017), who emphasized the importance of storytelling in connecting children with nature and fostering an understanding of the environment. Similarly, Kytta (2022) highlighted the benefits of hands-on activities such as building with natural materials and mud art in promoting cognitive development and environmental awareness among children.

On the other hand, activities such as animal tracking and identification, physical activities like nature obstacle courses and nature yoga, and mindfulness were not considered as effective for enhancing children's cognitive development and environmental awareness, as they had mean scores below 1.80. Overall, the findings of this study support the notion that specific nature-based activities play a crucial role in enhancing children's cognitive development and environmental awareness in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State, aligning with the literature on the subject.

The data from Table 5 suggest that there are several factors that influence caregivers' support for incorporating nature-based experiences into the curriculum of early childhood education care centers in Lagos State.

Firstly, the belief in the positive impact of nature-based experiences on children's cognitive development, physical health, social skills, and environmental awareness was found to be a significant factor influencing caregivers' support. This finding is supported by previous research by Chawla (2015) who argued that exposure to nature in early childhood can enhance cognitive and social development.

Secondly, the alignment of nature-based experiences with the overall educational goals of the ECEC center was also identified as an important factor influencing caregivers' support. This finding is consistent with the work of Bell and Dymont (2024) who emphasized the importance of integrating nature-based experiences into curriculum planning to meet educational objectives. Additionally, caregivers' own comfort level with spending time outdoors and their personal connection to nature were identified as influential factors in supporting nature-based experiences. This finding is in line with the research of Sobel (2018) who highlighted the significance of caregivers' attitudes and beliefs in shaping children's experiences with nature.

On the other hand, cultural values regarding outdoor play and interaction with nature were found to be a factor that influences caregiver perspectives. This finding aligns with the work of Zelenski *et al.* (2015), who emphasized the need to consider cultural beliefs and values when promoting nature-based experiences in early childhood education.

Lastly, the compatibility of nature-based experiences with existing curriculum standards was also identified as a factor influencing caregivers' support. This finding is consistent with the research of Ernst (2022) who argued that nature-based experiences can be integrated into curriculum standards to enhance learning outcomes. The findings suggest that there are significant factors that influence caregivers' support for incorporating nature-based experiences into the curriculum of early childhood education care centers in Lagos State. Future studies could delve deeper into the specific ways in which these factors can be addressed to promote the integration of nature-based experiences in early childhood education.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the research study, the research findings suggest that nature-based experiences play a crucial role in enhancing children's cognitive development and environmental awareness in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State, according to the perceptions of caregivers. The study revealed that outdoor play, gardening, and exploring natural environments are significant activities that contribute to children's cognitive development. Caregivers also believe that these nature-based experiences are beneficial for enhancing children's environmental awareness. It was also found that certain factors such as the availability of resources and training influence caregivers' support for incorporating nature-based experiences into the curriculum of early childhood education care centers. Overall, the research highlights the importance of incorporating nature-based activities in early childhood education to foster children's cognitive development and environmental awareness.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:



1. There is need to encourage early childhood education care centers in Lagos State to prioritize nature-based experiences, such as outdoor play, gardening, and exploration of natural environments, to enhance children's cognitive development.
2. There is need to provide training and resources for caregivers in early childhood education care centers in Lagos State to support and facilitate nature-based activities that promote children's environmental awareness.
3. There is need to incorporate specific nature-based activities that caregivers believe are most beneficial for enhancing children's cognitive development and environmental awareness into the curriculum of early childhood education care centers in Lagos State.
4. There is urgent need to identify and address the significant factors that influence caregivers' support for incorporating nature-based experiences into the curriculum of early childhood education care centers in Lagos State, such as lack of resources or knowledge.
5. There is need to foster partnerships and collaborations between early childhood education care centers, community organizations, and local authorities in Lagos State to create opportunities for children to engage in nature-based experiences that support cognitive development and environmental awareness.

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**IMPACT OF TRAINING ON CAREGIVERS' SKILLS IN DESIGNING/USAGE OF INDIVIDUALLY AND AGE APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT TOOLS FOR EARLY YEARS**

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**Abstract**

*The changing context of child care, development, learning and assessment across the globe call for constant improvement of early child care practitioners' competencies in the area of performance-based assessment. This is attributable to the fact that there seems to be lack of training programmes and manuals that specifically centre on area of designing performance-based assessment tools. This study examined impact of training on caregivers' skills in designing/usage of individually and age appropriate assessment tools for early years in Eti-osa Local government area, Lagos State, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey and non-experimental impact evaluation designs. Study population and sample covered all the 60 ECCDE caregivers in Eti-osa, Local Government Education Authority (LGEA), purposively selected and officially authorised to participate in the training. Research instruments used for the study were Capacity Programmes' Assessment Questionnaire (CPAQ), Pre and Post-training Evaluation Tests (PPTET) and Individual and Age Appropriate Assessment Tools (IAAAT) Manual used for the training. Data collected were analysed using simple percentages, interview schedule (IS) and paired sample t-Test. Hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The interviews were analysed using the thematic approach. The study found among others that; participants rated the effectiveness of the existing provisions for caregivers' training on designing individual and age appropriate performance-based assessment tools in the study area very low; exposure to IAAAT training manual had a positive significant effect on the skills of the participants in designing and usage of performance-based assessment tools [ $t\text{-Cal}=7.21 > t\text{-Crt}=2.23$ ]. The study concluded that improving caregivers' competencies in designing and usage of individual and age appropriate assessment tools requires adequate exposure to regular training guided by focused training manuals. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others; a comprehensive examination of the effectiveness of the existing provisions for training ECCDE caregivers in the study area; regular exposure of caregivers to training programmes that focus on designing and usage of performance-based assessment tools.*

**Keywords:** Assessment, Age Appropriate Assessment, Caregivers, Individually appropriate assessment, Tools

**Introduction**

Each child is an individual; each child brings a different history, a different way of development, a different way of responding to phenomenon, a different style of learning and a different dream for the future. Therefore, for caregivers to appropriately cater for individual needs and respect every child's uniqueness, he/she required to be skilful in designing diversified assessment tools for measuring all domains of development and learning in early years. Recognizing and respecting each child as a unique individual with his/her strengths, interests, and learning styles is imperative for caregivers. Therefore, regular assessment of children's development to understand their progress, preferences, and

areas where they may need additional support is crucial and can be appropriately carried out by trained caregivers skilled in designing, selecting and implementing assessment instruments suitable for measuring across all domains of development. Typically, developmental areas comprise but not limited to academic skills-reading, writing, drawing and number work; arts and creative expressions; cognitive-intellectual development; concept acquisition- concepts of time, colour, size; emotional development- self-confidence, self-esteem; language skills – oral development, reading and vocabulary; motor skills – fine and large muscles; sensory awareness; sensory motor skills- visual and auditory training; social-interpersonal skills – cooperation and obeying rules; verbalizing feeling (Fowowe & Usman-Abdulqadri, 2019).

Individual appropriate practices in the field of early childhood education is conceptualized as a range of strategies and approaches that are tailored to meet the unique needs of each child. Individuality of children in development and learning can never be compromised. Uniqueness of children is denied when assessment of their development and learning progress is done against one another (NRC, 2008). Research findings have revealed that early years' caregivers are ignorant of various assessment tools and procedures appropriate for holistic assessment which has resulted to only traditional paper-pencil assessment method for assessing only the cognitive domain at the expense of other domains ( Yusuf & Alabi, 2021). However, the broad goal of early childhood care development and education in Nigeria can be best achieved through individually appropriate assessment carried out by professionally skilled caregivers (Usman-Abdulqadri, 2023). This is why, regular professional development of caregivers in designing age and individually appropriate assessment tools for early years is crucial to equip them to stay current with best practices in performance-based assessment strategies. This is in line with the fact that, current approaches in the field of early childhood education advocate for authentic assessment measures that reflect real-life activities and interactions. There is a shift towards integrating various assessment tools and frameworks to provide a comprehensive evaluation of a child's development (NAEYC, 2023).

Considering the peculiarity of early years across the globe, child assessment needs to expand its scope to adequately equip childcare practitioners to appropriately respond to the emergent paradigms in the field. The National Association for the Education of Young Children, (NAEYC) rightly noted that an early childhood professional, working with young children is a decision-maker that makes many decisions about the children in their programmes daily. Understanding individually Appropriate Practices (IAP) is critical in guiding the decisions practitioners make for young children (NAEYC, 2009). Developing the skills to make good decisions for children relies on building knowledge about individual children and child development principles combined with adequate knowledge of effective collecting and recording observational data using individually appropriate tools. Thus, responding appropriately to the changing context of child care development and learning necessitates improving early childhood caregivers' skills in designing age and individually appropriate assessment tools (Ige, 2020; Ige & Usman-Abdulqadri 2022).

But while there have been series of efforts on the part of government and private organizations as well as individuals to improve caregivers' skills through in-service training programmes in the general area of practice (Ige & Omotuyole, 2015), one of the major challenges in this area is the extent to which the training aligns with the dynamism of individually appropriate child assessments in the global contexts. The challenge becomes even more daunting in the light of the large quantum of barely trained, largely unskilled

caregivers operating in early childcare institutions across the state (Usman-Abdulqadri, 2023).

Studies that focused on training programmes reported that many early years caregivers in Nigeria receive inadequate training on child assessment techniques. The training programs often lack depth and fail to cover essential aspects of assessment quality comprehensively. The inadequacy in these training of caregivers in assessment is not unconnected with lack of standardized curriculum (Obiweluzor & Nwanekezi, 2020). According to Okoro & Osuji, 2020, there is a lack of a standardized curriculum for the training of early years' caregivers, leading to inconsistencies in the quality and content of training programmes across different areas and institutions. Limited practical experience has also been observed as a gap in the previous training of caregivers. Ajayi & Kuku (2021) reported that, training programs often emphasize theoretical knowledge over practical skills. Caregivers do not get enough hands-on experience with real-life assessment scenarios, which is crucial for effective child assessment. A systematic review of studies centered on training of caregivers indicated that, continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities for early years' caregivers are limited. This leads to outdated knowledge and practices in child assessment, as caregivers are not regularly updated on new assessment tools and methods. Lack of continuous professional development on designing age and individual appropriate assessment tools pushed caregivers to employ only traditional paper-pencil form of assessment despite all its weaknesses (Pamela, 2013 cited in Hafees, Olumuyiwa & Usman-Abdulqadri 2022).

However, despite the crucial need for preschoolers to be assessed holistically to inform instructional strategies, learn about each child's readiness, interests and learning preference by professionally skilled caregivers in modern assessment strategies, many studies have observed inadequacies of caregivers' in-service training programmes. Attention has been drawn to the quality and scope of training manuals that were used to train early childhood caregivers. A content review of these manuals reveals that the training manuals tend to use a formal approach that allows little or no participation from participants; present content that focuses mainly on engaging participants in responding to questionnaire items underplaying skills in designing age and individually appropriate assessment tools in contemporary early child care development and education (Ige, Usman-Abdulqadri, Salami, & Ogunleye, 2020).

The apparent deficiency of the existing training programme and specific manuals tailored to age and individual appropriate assessment suggests a disconnection with the modern realities of contemporary child holistic assessment in the study area (Usman-Abdulqadri, 2023). This is a disturbing situation, especially viewed against the background that a sizable number of caregivers working in preschool institutions in the study area are without the requisite professional preparations (e.g., Ige, Usman-Abdulqadri, Salami & Ogunleye, 2020; Ige & Omotuyole, 2015), as a result of which they are also mostly deficient in skills in designing age and individual appropriate assessment tools. While there have been efforts by the Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board (LASUBEB) to ameliorate this problem through capacity development programmes organised for teachers in the state, one major area of concern has been how these training programmes have impacted caregivers' skills in the area of designing individual and age appropriate assessment tools for early years' holistic assessment. These categories of caregivers, who were neither specially prepared prior to their entry into the service nor equipped with the requisite skills through

effective in-service training programmes, might not be competent enough to design age and individually appropriate assessment tools in order to assess children's developmental and learning progress with suitable techniques and relevant modern assessment tools.

This background of identified inadequacies provides a justification for the development, validation, and subsequent deployment of the individual and age appropriate assessment tool (IAAAT) manual and a focused in-service training on emphasizing the what, and how caregivers can appropriately assess children's developmental and learning progress. This is one premise which justifies research of this nature to examine the impact of training on caregivers' skills in designing age and individually appropriate assessment tools for early years in the study area with a view to determining its effectiveness.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study aimed at examining impact of training on caregivers' skills in designing/usage of individually and age appropriate assessment tools for early years in Eti-osa Local government area, Lagos State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. find out how caregivers view effectiveness of antecedent training on assessment in early child care development and learning;
2. assess how the training on individual and age appropriate assessment impact caregivers' skills in designing and using performance-based assessment tools in preschool settings.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do caregivers assess effectiveness of antecedent training on assessment in early child care development and learning?
2. How would the training on individual and age appropriate assessment impact caregivers'

skills in designing and using individual and age appropriate assessment tools in preschool settings?

### *Hypothesis*

This hypothesis was tested in the study:

1. Exposure to the training does not significantly improve caregivers' skills in the design and usage of individual and age appropriate assessment tools.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a combination of the descriptive survey and non-experimental impact evaluation designs. The rationale for survey design is its efficacy to describe the frequency distribution of certain characteristics of a population as well as eliciting the opinions of respondents in a study. The appropriateness of the non-experimental impact design is justified on the basis that the outcomes for groups of participants are measured before and after an intervention and an assessment of impact is inferred from the differences (Bell, Bell, & Scanlon, 1979, in Ige, 2011). This design is often used to assess whether the knowledge and skills of the group changed after exposure to a classroom curriculum or job training programme. The population and sample for the study comprised all 60 ECCDE caregivers in Eti-osa Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) in Lagos State.



Adopting purposive sampling technique. *Research instruments used for the study were Capacity Programmes' Assessment Questionnaire (CPAQ)*, this is a researcher-designed instrument that comprised 5 items which sought the participants' opinions on the training programmes they have participated in, prior to IAAAT training.

*Pre and Post-training Evaluation Tests (PPTET)*. This was constructed by the researcher. The pre and post-training tests focused on: caregivers' ability to design and use individual and age appropriate assessment tools. The tests were aimed at finding training needs assessment before participants' exposure to IAAAT training and impact of the training on skills of the participants. Interview Schedule (IS) this instrument consisted of one semi-structured question that assessed participants' opinion on Individual and Age Appropriate Assessment Tool (IAAAT) training programme. Individual and Age Appropriate Assessment Tools (IAAAT) Manual used for the training. This training manual was developed and used to train caregivers towards improving their existing skills, experiences and competency. It comprises samples of assessment tools like: rating scale, anecdotal records, event sample, narrative recording, developmental and behavior checklist. The training manual was adapted from Assessment in Early childhood Education (Wortham, 2008). The reliability values of the instruments were determined using the internal consistency coefficient method. Cronbach Alpha Statistical tool was employed. The high scores 0.71, 0.76, 0.79 and 0.82 recorded respectively as reliability co-efficient showed that the instruments were reliable. Data collected were analysed using simple percentages, and paired sample t-Test. Hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The interviews were analysed using the thematic approach.

## Results

### Research Question 1:

How do caregivers assess effectiveness of antecedent training on assessment in early child care development and learning?

Assessment of antecedent training on assessment in early child care development and learning

	Mode of preparation	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1	Participation in organised training for the ECCDE caregivers	8 13.3%	6 10%	8 13.3%	38 63.3%
2.	Exposure to knowledge and skill enhancement seminars.	5 8.33%	4 6.67%	6 10%	45 75%
3	Attendance at training on individual differences among children	47 78.33%	13 21.67%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
4.	Participation in workshop on development of individual appropriate assessment tools.	45 75%	15 25%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
5	Exposure to training on usage of appropriate assessment tools.	48 80%	12 20%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%

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**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

Analysis of items 1 and 2 shows that majority (63.3%) of the respondents often participated in organised training on ECCDE and 75% have been exposed to knowledge and skill enhancement seminars. Analysis of item 3 suggests that majority (78.33%) of the respondents never attended training on individual differences among children. Item 4 depicts that 75% of the participants never participated in workshop on development of individual appropriate assessment tools. Item 5 indicates that an overwhelming majority (80%) were never trained on usage of appropriate assessment tools.

**Research question 2** : How would the training on individual and age appropriate assessment impact caregivers' skills in designing and using individual and age appropriate assessment tools in preschool settings?

The data analysis from caregiver informants (CIs) produced a construct, and a theme and in the framework of analysis as developed for data analysis. The coding of the caregivers' data generated a construct called "Capacity building Programme's Focus". The construct has one theme namely: Skills with Antecedent Professional Preparation. The in-depth discussion on the theme exhibited a comprehensive account of caregivers' perceptions on IAAAT training as it relates to their skills in area of holistic child assessment.

Theme: Designing and using a variety of individual and age appropriate assessment tools

**Interview Question:** *"Has this training improved your skills in designing and using different individual and age appropriate assessment tools in the classroom?"*

Caregiver informants agreed that the capacity building programme has improved their knowledge and skills in designing and using variety of assessment tools and also helped them to recognize the importance of various assessment tools in their interactions with children. Their statements connected to designing and using variety of assessment tools are presented as follows:

- "Through this training, I have learnt that assessment isn't limited to mental ability alone children's behaviour can also be assessed".
- "I know I have learnt a lot about assessment. Bringing the children into small groups for example would help me in learning various ways in assessing them".
- "This training has exposed me to a lot of assessment tools like: anecdotal records, event sampling, portfolios, checklist and so on which we can use to assess children in our classrooms. Learners can be assessed through reasoning, actions, and so on".

The statements amply reflect caregivers' overwhelming agreement on the impact of the IAAAT training programme on their knowledge and skills in the area of designing appropriate assessment tools. It is clear from the responses that IAAAT training programme made a significant difference in caregivers' knowledge and skills in designing and using variety of assessment tools and also helped them to recognize the importance of various assessment tools in their interactions with children.

**Hypothesis** : Exposure to the IAAAT training manual will not significantly improve caregivers' skills in the design and usage of assessment tools.

IAAAT training and caregivers' skills in design and usage of assessment tools

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	<i>PRE</i>	<i>POST</i>
Mean	36	61.36
Variance	32.6	67.65
Observations	11	11
Pearson Correlation	-0.38	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	10	
$\alpha$	0.05	
t-Calculated	-7.21	
P(T<=t) two-tail	2.89E-05	
t Critical two-tail	2.23	
Remark	Significantly different	
Null Hypothesis result	Rejected	

Criterion for significant difference:  $P(T \leq t) < 0.05$

Since the magnitude of the calculated t-value (i.e.  $|t\text{-Calculated}|=7.21$ ) in the Table is greater than the critical t-value (i.e.  $t\text{-Critical} = 2.23$ ), and the calculated P-value (i.e.  $P(T \leq t) = 2.89E-05$ ) meets the criterion for a significant difference (i.e.  $P(T \leq t) < 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis which says that exposure to the IAAAT training programme will significantly improve caregivers' skills in design and usage of assessment tools is accepted. This implies that the IAAAT training programme significantly improved caregivers' skills in the design and usage of individual and age appropriate assessment tools (i.e. the scores were higher after the intervention).

## **Discussion**

### **Hypothesis :**

*Exposure to the IAAAT training programme does not significantly improve caregivers' skills in the design and usage of assessment tools.*

It is worthy to note that exposure to the IAAAT training manual significantly improved caregivers' ability to design and utilise individual and age appropriate assessment tools. The strategic role the caregivers play in fostering growth and development and learning, makes it imperative that all those who care for and teach young children should possess a broad synthesis of knowledge and skills that enhance child development and positively influence learning, including assessment. The finding of this study justifies the stand of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC,2023), that training caregivers in developmentally appropriate assessment practices is essential. The use of authentic and performance-based assessments is adjudged to capture the holistic development of children. These forms assessments focus on real-world tasks and children's everyday experiences to provide a more accurate understanding of their development and learning needs.

### Conclusion

In this study, an attempt was made to examine how individual and age appropriate assessment tools training could improve early childhood caregivers' skills in Eti-osa Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) in Lagos State. The study established that the training manual – Individual and Age Appropriate Assessment Tools (IAAAT)–positively enhanced knowledge and skills of the training participants. Furthermore, it demonstrated that the training significantly improved participants' skills in designing and utilization of individual and age appropriate assessment tools. The research concludes that improving caregivers' skills to design and utilize appropriate assessment tools in order to assess preschoolers holistically requiresadequate exposure to training modalities guided by enriched training manuals that capture a broad range of emergent areas of assessing child development learning.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Caregivers should be constantly exposed to training programmes that focus on holistic assessment of child development and learning.
- There is a need for agencies of governments and other education stakeholders to offer early years' caregivers continuous opportunities for knowledge and skills improvement in development and appropriate usage of variety of assessment tools.
- Head of schools and Proprietors of private schools should also be trained on the need to avoid paper-pencil assessment strategies as the only method of evaluating preschoolers and incorporate performance-based strategies.

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**PROFESSIONALISM OF CAREGIVERS AND TEACHERS AS A PIVOT TO  
EFFECTIVE LITERACY SKILLS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN IN PRE- SCHOOL  
CLASSES**

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**Abstract**

*The study examined the professionalism of caregivers and teachers on effective literacy skills for young children in pre- school classes. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population comprised all caregivers in private schools in Iwo Local Government, Area of Osun state, Nigeria. The sample consist 3 teachers that were purposively selected from 20 private schools that were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique to make a total number of 60 caregivers. Self - developed questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. Data collected were analyzed using frequency count, percentage, and standard deviation. The results revealed that low percentage 6.7% of caregivers were ECCE certificated, 43.3% had other education disciplines, 46.7% were registered under Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), 52.2% uses the expected methodology for teaching literacy skills while 67.2% were engaged in various professional development and collaborate in teaching literacy skills. It can be concluded that the professionalism of pre-school teachers in term of certification is very low, less than 50% were professionally registered but the methodology applied in teaching literacy skills are appropriate. The study recommended that school owners should make recruitment of ECCE professionals a priority and encourage caregivers to engage more in professional development that will equip them in the field of ECCE.*

**Keywords:** Professionalism, Early Childhood Education, Caregiver, Literacy Skills, Young Children.

**Introduction**

The quality of care and education experienced by young children from the caregivers at development center/crèche and pre-school classes during their early years had been confirmed by researchers that it has a lasting impact on their holistic development (Lawal & Oyewumi, 2023). This could explain why professionalism of caregivers/teachers in the field of early childhood education should serve as an important criteria when recruiting staff for this level of education but from observation this is often overlooked by school owners and even the government. Professionalism of caregivers/teachers in the field of early childhood care and education (ECCE) involves experts who had gone through appropriate training at the College of Education or University and had been exposed to knowledge of child development (Kimberly,2021).

It is important to note that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the services of caregivers/teachers who are qualified professionals in the field of ECCE is very essential to achieve quality early childhood care and education in Nigeria. In a situation where this is lacking ECCE may experience ineffectiveness and this may have negative impact on children development (Gomtas 2017), and as result Nigerian children may not receive the quality care and education needed to thrive in becoming a responsible adult in the society. Professionalism



of caregivers/teachers is the key ingredient to achieve quality and effective early childhood education. Therefore, it is expected of any experts teaching or caring at this level of education to exhibit proficiency or ability in carrying out their duties as expected of them with or without any supervision.

Education International and United Nation Education scientific and cultural organization (EI & UNESCO, 2019) stated that early childhood as a profession cannot be negotiated as no human would want unqualified surgeons operating on their children, as a result of this no space will be granted to unqualified caregivers/teachers. This explains why it is essential to employ an expert in the field of early childhood education to handle young children in the early years most especially at preschool level where children learn language development and literacy skills.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2019) outline six (6) professional standards and competencies for early childhood educators which includes; (i) understanding the children unique development, learning in relation to multilingual contexts and the use of multidimensional knowledge to make evidence base decision. ii) Partnerships with families and community of young children they serve in the child development and learning, iii) understand that assessment are carried out to make informed decision, iv) understand and use teaching skills that are responsive to the learning trajectories of young children and the needs of each child, v) have knowledge of the content of the academic disciplines such as literacy and language, arts, mathematics etc., vi) participate in professional development and collaborate with peers.

It can be confirmed from the aforementioned above all that is required in becoming a professional in the field of early childhood education. However, findings revealed that professionalism also includes a range of competences, such as ethical behavior, pedagogical knowledge and communication skills (Jones & Smith, 2018). It is therefore important to note that for effective communication skills to take place among children there is need for proper training of literacy skills by caregivers/teachers and this encompass a range of abilities related to language skills (receptive and expressive) such as phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, word recognition strategies and fluency building practice.

In other to teach literacy skills in preschool classes caregiver/ teachers needs to be aware that early childhood education is centered on child needs and interest and therefore the curriculum to use for teaching at this stage must be emergent curriculum where there will be combination of hands-activities, (such as play-based learning, sensory activities, storytelling, read aloud, structured learning activities and outdoor exploration) and the instructional materials to be used are stated in the curriculum. Maduabum (2017) stated that in a classroom where child centered approach is used, the teacher is expected to plan the lessons with the pupil's needs in view, where there will be more pupils' activity than teacher's activity. The teacher in child centered education is regarded as facilitator of learning not a director of learning.

There are so many benefits associated with child centered approached such as children learn to make decision on their own, they get a feelings of belonging by taking part in activity planning, the child holistic development will be addressed and also allow the child to develop confident and independent Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC 2019). Educators can become more effective in promoting literacy skills by taking advantage of professional opportunities and continue training (Clerk 2021). Caregivers/teachers teaching in preschool classes need to become a professional in the field of ECCE so as to discharge his/her duties effectively by using the right methodology, they also need to engage in professional development because as a teacher you need to learn, relearn and unlearn so as to stay relevant in the field. From the foregoing it is important to

investigate the professionalism of caregivers and teachers on effective literacy skills for young children in pre- school classes.

## Research Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the qualification of caregiver/ teachers in pre-school classes
2. Investigate the level of professionalism of caregivers/ teachers in pre-school classes.
3. Assess the methods of teaching preschool literacy skills applied by caregivers/ teachers

## Research Questions

1. What are the qualifications of caregivers/teachers handling pre-school children in private schools in Iwo Local Government?
2. What is the level of professionalism among the caregivers/teachers in the schools?
3. What method of teaching are been applied by the caregivers/teachers to teach preschool literacy skills?

## Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of this study consist of all caregivers/teachers in the private pre-school classes in Iwo Local government Area of Osun State. 20 private schools were randomly selected, in each of the schools 3 teachers were purposively selected in Nursery 1-3. The sample size consist of 60 pre-school caregiver/teachers that were purposively selected. A self -designed questionnaire titled **Professionalism of Caregivers on Teaching Literacy Skills at Pre-School Level Questionnaire (PCTLSPLQ)** was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire had three sections, section A consist of caregiver/teacher bio data and section B consists of items on professional development and collaboration of teachers while Section C consists of items on caregivers instructional methods of teaching literacy skills. The data were analyzed using frequency count, percentage and standard deviation.

## RESULTS

1. **Research Question 1: What are the qualifications of caregivers/teachers handling pre-school children in private schools in Iwo Local Government? In order to answer this research question, data collected were subjected to frequency count and percentage.**

Academic Qualifications/ Specialization.	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
NCE/B.Ed (ECE)	4	6.7
NCE/B.Ed (PES)	26	43.0
OND	4	6.7
HND	4	6.7
B. Sc	2	3.3
PGDE	-	-
OTHERS	20	33.3
TOTAL	60	100

The table 1 above showed that 4(6.7%) of caregivers were ECCE certificated, 26(43.0%) were NCE, B.Ed. (PES) holders, 4(6.7%) and 4(6.7 %) were ND and HND holder, 2(3.3%) are B.sc holder and 20(33.3%) had other education disciplines.

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**Research Question 2: What is the level of professionalism among the caregivers/teachers in the schools? In order to answer this research question, data collected were subjected to frequency count and percentage, mean and standard deviation**

S/N	Statement	Yes		No		Mean	SD
		F	%	F	%		
1.	Are you a member of any teachers' professional body?	28	46.7	32	53.3	1.53	.50
2.	If your answer is No to number 1, please indicate other professional body you belong to	-		-		3.00	.00
3.	Have you attended any form of training on literacy skills?	48	80	12	20	1.20	.40
4.	Have you participated in literacy communities or networks for continuous Professional Development?	40	66.7	20	43.7	1.33	.47
5.	Are you engaged in any ongoing professional learning on how to teach literacy skills at pre-school level?	14	23.3	46	76.7	1.77	.43
6.	Do you collaborate with colleagues to share ideas on instructional strategies and resources on teaching literacy skills?	56	93.3	4	6.6	1.07	.25
7.	Does your school organize seminars or trainings before resumption of a new session?	56	93.3	4	6.6	1.07	.25

Table 2 above revealed that 28(46.7%) were registered under Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) while 32(53.3%) were not registered under any professional body, 48(80%) of caregivers/teachers attended training on literacy skills, 12(20%) didn't attend any professional literacy skills, 40(66.7%) were engaged in continuous professional development and 20(43.7%) didn't participate in literacy communities or networks for continuous professional development. In furtherance, it also revealed that 14 (23.3%) were engaged in an ongoing professional learning on how to teach literacy skills at pre-school level while 46(76.7%) were not engage in such. Similarly, 56(93.3%) collaborate with colleagues to share ideas on instructional strategies and resources on teaching literacy skills while 4(6.6%) didn't share their view of collaboration, 56(93.3%) of schools organize seminars or trainings before resumption of a new session while 4(6.6%) didn't organize seminars for teachers.

**Research Question 3: What method of teaching are been applied by the caregivers/teachers to teach preschool literacy skills? In order to answer this research question, data collected were subjected to frequency count and percentage, mean and standard deviation.**

S/N	Caregiver Instructional Methods of Teaching Literacy Skills	Always		Rarely	Sometimes		Never		Mean	SD
		F	%		F	%	F	%		

1	Do you incorporate phonemic awareness activities when teaching literacy?	10 16.7	24 40	26 43.3	-	2.27	.73
2.	Do you utilize and use word recognition strategies?	36 60	7 11.7	17 28.3	-	1.68	.89
3.	Do you make use of fluency-building practices when teaching literacy skills?	20 33.3	18 30	17 28.3	-	2.22	1.11
4.	Do you use interactive learning activities?	34 56.7	14 23.3	8 13.3	11 18.3	1.70	.94
5.	Do you provide literacy materials, resources and tasks that are age appropriate?	28 46.7	20 33.3	12 20	4 6.7	1.73	.78
6.	Do you always practice read aloud to children?	60 100	-	-	-	1.00	.00

Table 3 shows that 10(16.7%) always, 24(40%) rarely incorporate phonemic awareness activities when teaching literacy skills while 26(43.3%) sometimes incorporate it. Also, 36(60%) always and 7(11.7%) rarely utilize and use word recognition strategies, while 17(28.3%) sometimes use word recognition strategies, 20(33.3%) and 18(30%) always and rarely make use of fluency- building practices when teaching literacy skills while 17(28.3%) sometimes make use of it. However, 34(56.7%) and 14(23.3%) always and rarely use interactive learning activities while 8(13.3%) and 11(18.3%) sometimes and never use interactive learning activities. In the same vein, 28(46.7%) and 20(33.3%) always and rarely provide literacy materials, resources and tasks that are age appropriate while 12(20%) and 4(6.7%) sometimes and never provide it and lastly, 60(100%) always practice read aloud to children.

## Discussion of Findings

The findings on teachers' qualifications revealed that caregivers with ECCE certificate taking literacy skills in pre-school classes were very low, this could have implications on the quality of education and care provided to young children at their early stage of life, this findings was in-line with Sinead Rhodes (2001) who submitted that unspecialized early childhood caregivers/teachers teaching preschool classes can lead into inadequate learning experiences, less effective developmental support, and potential safety concerns.

The findings further revealed that a significant number of teachers are not registered with the Teachers Registration Council (TRCN) and majority of them didn't belong to any professional bodies which would indicate a lack of formal recognition in the teaching profession. However, majority of the caregivers/ teachers are engaged in professional development which often organized by the school management, this is encouraging as it shows a commitment to ongoing learning and improvement, this corroborate with Brightwheel (2024) who found out that teachers engaging in professional development can help to support the skill development and enhance learning outcome of the children in the ECCE center, it also agreed with the findings of (Susan, Carolyn, Christine and Lisa, 2009) who asserted that specialized training of early childhood educators' enhances their proficiencies.

The findings also revealed that low percentage of the caregivers always incorporate the use of phonemic awareness activities in teaching literacy skills, this outcome can affect the reading acquisition of young children and the reason could be that majority of the caregivers/teachers have little knowledge about phonemic awareness, this is in agreement with the study of Micheal (2009) who carried out studies on first- year teacher knowledge of phonemic awareness and its instruction and found out that majority of teachers lack knowledge of phonemic awareness instruction.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings in this study, it is evidence that there is low percentage of ECCE expert as caregivers/teachers in the preschool classes and also the method of teaching literacy skills in the preschool classes would have be of higher percentage if majority of caregivers/teacher are ECCE expert. However, majority of teachers/caregivers engaged in professional development and school organized seminars for their personal improvement. It can be concluded that majority of school proprietors didn't recruit professionals in the field of early childhood care and education as caregivers/teachers to teaching literacy skills in preschool classes.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommended that:

1. School owners should make recruitment of ECCE professionals as a priority and encourage caregivers to engage more in professional development that will equip them in the field of ECCE.
2. Government should create more awareness on early childhood care and education, so that a lot of student can enroll for the course in Nigeria Colleges of Education and University.
3. Caregivers/teachers should prioritized their professionalism by belonging to different professional body apart from TRCN
4. National Education Research and Development council (NERDC) should inculcate the write methodology of teaching Literacy skills in the preprimary school curriculum.
5. Nigeria Colleges of Education and other tertiary educations should extend early grade reading to early childhood education, instead of only been taught in primary education studies.

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**ENHANCING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AND PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS IN NIGERIA:  
STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS**

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**Abstract**

*Early childhood education plays a pivotal role in shaping the developmental trajectory of children, yet the career opportunities and professional development pathways for educators in Nigeria face significant challenges. This paper explores strategic interventions aimed at improving career prospects and advancing professional growth among early childhood educators in Nigeria. Key strategies include advocacy for policy reforms to recognize the importance of early childhood education, investment in training and capacity-building programmes, fostering partnerships between governmental and non-governmental entities, leveraging technology for enhanced teaching methodologies, and promoting leadership and governance within educational institutions. These initiatives aim at empowering educators, foster a conducive learning environment, and ultimately elevate the quality of early childhood education across Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Career Development, Early childhood, Educators, Professional and Strategies.

**INTRODUCTION**

Education is acknowledged as the foundation for national growth in all contemporary societies. All educational levels must be maintained, but pre-primary education is crucial since it lays the ground work for all other educational phases. It frequently becomes difficult for a child to catch up with the fundamentals later on if they skip this early period. Pre-primary education, which offers a variety of early childhood education programs to children younger than the official school age (usually six years), is a widely implemented practice in many nations. These programmes' main goal is to prepare kids for the rigors of elementary school and beyond.

Early childhood is an essential part of every human. It is the stage at which cognitive, perceptual, language, motor, and socio emotional skills develop (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016). This stage of life is also associated with two extremes: potential and vulnerability. Every child has potential that must be nurtured and developed. On the other hand, children are the most vulnerable because they rely on others to cater to their basic needs (Bagattini, 2019). These explain why their well-being is paramount.

Early childhood education (ECE) in Nigeria focuses on the care, development, and education of children from birth to age six. This period is critical for children's cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development. Through various policies and programs, the Nigerian government aims to provide a solid foundation for lifelong learning and development.

### **History of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria**

Before the federal government of Nigeria formalized the early childhood education system, the responsibility for children's well-being fell solely on immediate and extended family members. With the arrival of missionaries and the establishment of churches, early childhood education began as Sunday school classes (Okewole, 2015). After gaining independence, Nigeria introduced several educational interventions. Early childhood care and development were first recognized in the National Policy on Education (1977), developed by the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). This policy was revised in 1981 and 1988 (OhiriAniche, 2016).

The 4th edition, released in 2004, expanded early childhood education to include; creche, nursery, and kindergarten. Its goals were to help children transition from home to school, prepare them for primary education, provide adequate care and supervision, and facilitate rudimentary knowledge of numbers, letters, colors, and shapes through play (NERDC, 2004). The policy assigned the government several responsibilities: establishing early childhood education centers at existing public schools, encouraging community and private initiatives, setting and monitoring standards for these centers, creating teacher education programs specializing in ECE, and ensuring that children learn primarily through play. The government also mandated the use of the mother tongue or the immediate community's language as the primary medium of instruction. The National Early Childhood Curriculum was developed to guide the education of children from ages 0 to 5 (Viatonu *et al.*, 2011).

In 2013, the 6th edition of the National Policy on Education was released. This policy divided early childhood education into two sections. The first, Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE), targeted the "care, protection, stimulation, and learning promoted in children from age 04 years in a creche or nursery" (NERDC, 2014, p. 7). The second part, PrePrimary Education, provided one year of education to children aged 5. In addition to the stipulations in the 2004 policy document, the government was tasked with developing and distributing the IECD policy and implementation guidelines, national minimum standards to guide the establishment of ECE centers, and the IECD curriculum.

The formal introduction of ECE in Nigeria can be traced back to the colonial period when missionary organizations established the first nursery and primary schools. However, significant government involvement began post independence with the establishment of various educational policies aimed at improving early childhood education.

### **Importance of Professional Development and Career Opportunities for Educators**

Professional Development for early childhood educators refers to ongoing learning and training activities to enhance their knowledge, skills, and competencies. These activities aim to improve teaching practices, stay updated with educational standards and methodologies, and foster personal and professional growth. Career Opportunities for early childhood educators encompass the various paths and advancements available. This includes opportunities for promotion, specialization in specific areas of early childhood education (such as special education or curriculum development), leadership roles within educational institutions or organizations, and involvement in policymaking and advocacy related to early childhood education. Career opportunities are crucial in providing educators with pathways for professional growth, job satisfaction, and contribution to the field's development.

In Nigeria, early childhood educators play a pivotal role in laying the foundation for lifelong learning and development among young children. However, the field faces challenges related to professional development and career opportunities, essential for ensuring high-quality education outcomes. This paper explores the significance of professional development and career opportunities for early childhood educators in Nigeria, with a focus on strategies to enhance their effectiveness and professional growth.

Professional development for early childhood educators in Nigeria goes beyond mere training; it is a critical investment in improving teaching quality and meeting evolving educational standards. Continuous learning through workshops, seminars, and certifications equips educators with updated knowledge and skills (Ogunsanmi & Oyedeji, 2017). This ensures that they can employ effective teaching methodologies that cater to the developmental needs of young children, aligning their practices with global best practices (Egbochuku & Igbino, 2019).

Moreover, professional development supports career advancement within the field. Access to opportunities for skill enhancement and specialization enhances job satisfaction and contributes to the professionalization of early childhood education in Nigeria (Adedeji, 2018). By investing in their professional growth, educators can elevate their societal status and attract more talented individuals to the field (Ogundele & Afolabi, 2016).

Furthermore, professional development enables educators to effectively address the diverse needs of children. This includes implementing inclusive education practices that accommodate children with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds (Oyekanmi, 2020). Additionally, professional development empowers educators to engage actively in policy development and implementation, (Odejebi & Ajiboye, 2019). Participating in policy discussions contributes to shaping the future of early childhood education in Nigeria.

Professional development and career opportunities are integral to the success of early childhood educators in Nigeria. By continuously enhancing their skills, educators improve teaching quality and contribute to the professionalization and advancement of the field. As Nigeria strives towards educational excellence, prioritizing professional development for early childhood educators remains paramount for sustainable educational development.

### Existing Career Paths for Early Childhood Educators

Early childhood educators are pivotal in nurturing the foundational years of children's education, shaping their cognitive, emotional, and social development. Beyond the classroom, the field of early childhood education offers diverse career paths and opportunities for professional growth. These paths cater to individual interests and specialties and contribute to the evolution and enhancement of educational practices globally. Early childhood educators in Nigeria and globally have various career paths and opportunities for professional growth. Here are some common career paths:

- 1. Classroom Teacher:** This is the foundational role where educators directly interact with young children, facilitating their learning and development through age-appropriate activities and curriculum implementation.
- 2. Special Education Teacher:** Specializing in working with children with disabilities or special needs, these educators adapt teaching methods and materials to meet the unique learning needs of their students.
- 3. Curriculum Developer:** Educators involved in curriculum development create and revise educational programs and materials tailored to early childhood learning goals and developmental milestones.
- 4. Education Administrator:** These professionals oversee the management and operations of early childhood education centers, including staffing, budgeting, and ensuring compliance with educational standards and regulations.
- 5. Early Childhood Education Consultant:** Consultants provide expertise and guidance to schools, government agencies, and NGOs on best practices in early childhood education, curriculum design, and teacher training.
- 6. Policy Advocate:** Educators involved in policy advocacy work influence educational policies and reforms that impact early childhood education at local, national, and international levels.
- 7. Researcher:** Early childhood educators can contribute to the field through research, conducting studies on child development, effective teaching methods, and the impact of early education interventions.
- 8. Professional Development Trainer:** These educators provide workshops, seminars, and training sessions to other early childhood educators, helping them enhance their teaching skills and stay updated with educational trends.

**9. Entrepreneurship in Early Childhood Education:** Some educators establish their centers, daycare facilities, or consultancy services, contributing to the growth and innovation within the field.

These career paths offer early childhood educators opportunities to specialize, advance professionally, and contribute significantly to education and child development.

### **Challenges and Barriers to Career Advancement**

Early childhood educators are critical in laying the foundation for children's lifelong learning and development. Despite their importance, professionals in this field often encounter challenges and barriers that can hinder their career advancement. Understanding these obstacles is essential for addressing systemic issues and supporting the professional growth of early childhood educators.

**1. Low Wages and Compensation:** Early childhood educators frequently face low salaries and inadequate compensation issues, impacting their ability to pursue further education and training (Nkempu, 2019).

**2. Limited Professional Recognition:** The field lacks adequate recognition and status, affecting career progression and opportunities for advancement (Sarigiannidi, 2020).

**3. Lack of Career Pathways:** Many educators encounter unclear or limited career paths within early childhood education, hindering professional growth and specialization (Ministry of Education, 2018).

**4. Insufficient Training and Professional Development:** Challenges in accessing quality training and development opportunities can impede educators' ability to stay current with best practices (UNESCO, 2021).

**5. Policy and Regulatory Challenges:** Inconsistent policies and regulations related to early childhood education pose barriers to career advancement and mobility (World Bank, 2019). Addressing the challenges and barriers to career advancement in early childhood education is crucial for ensuring the well-being of educators and the quality of education for young children. From inadequate compensation and limited professional recognition to insufficient training and policy inconsistencies, these issues must be systematically addressed through collaborative efforts involving policymakers, educational institutions, and stakeholders. By prioritizing professionalization, improving working conditions, and enhancing support systems, we can create environments where early childhood educators thrive professionally and contribute effectively to the holistic development of children worldwide.

### **Key Stakeholders Involved in Professional Development**

Professional development is crucial for enhancing early childhood educators' skills, knowledge, and effectiveness. Engaging key stakeholders in this process is essential to ensuring educators receive the support and resources to provide high-quality education to young children. This discussion explores the critical stakeholders involved in the

professional development of early childhood educators, highlighting their roles and contributions to advancing the field.

**1. Educational Institutions:** Colleges, universities, and training centers play a vital role in providing initial teacher education and continuous professional development programs tailored to the needs of early childhood educators.

**2. Government Agencies:** Ministries or departments of education develop policies, standards, and regulations that shape professional development initiatives and ensure alignment with educational goals.

**3. Professional Associations:** Organizations representing early childhood educators, such as the Early Childhood Association of Nigeria (ECAN) and the Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Préscolaire (OMEP), offer resources, networking opportunities, and professional development workshops to support ongoing learning and career advancement.

**4. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** NGOs focused on education and child welfare provide training, advocacy, and support services that contribute to the professional growth of educators in early childhood settings.

**5. Employers and Early Childhood Education Centers:** Schools, daycare centers, and educational institutions where educators work provide on-the-job training, mentoring, and opportunities for professional growth and leadership development.

**6. Parents and Community Members:** Stakeholders advocate for quality early childhood education and support policies that enhance educator development, recognizing educators' critical role in children's development.

**7. Research Institutions:** Organizations researching effective teaching practices and child development contribute evidence-based insights that inform professional development strategies and initiatives.

**8. Funding Agencies:** Entities providing financial support for professional development programs, scholarships, and research initiatives in early childhood education facilitate access to resources and opportunities for educators.

### **Gaps and Challenges in Enhancing Career Opportunities and Professional Development for Early Childhood Educators in Nigeria**

Early childhood educators in Nigeria face several challenges that hinder their career advancement and professional development. These challenges include:

**1. Low Wages and Compensation:** Adeyemi and Ogunyemi (2017) highlight that early childhood educators in Nigeria often receive low salaries and inadequate compensation relative to their educational qualifications and responsibilities. This financial constraint limits their ability to pursue further education or professional development opportunities.

**2. Limited Professional Recognition:** Ajayi (2018) discusses the lack of professional recognition for early childhood educators in Nigeria compared to other sectors of education.



The field lacks clear career pathways and formal recognition mechanisms, which impacts career progression and opportunities for advancement.

**3. Insufficient Training and Development:** Adediran and Ogunsola (2018) emphasize the challenges in accessing high-quality training and professional development programs tailored to the needs of early childhood educators in Nigeria. There is a gap in providing relevant and practical training that aligns with international best practices.

**4. Lack of Career Pathways:** Olaniyan and Oyebanji (2017) identify the absence of clear and structured career pathways within early childhood education in Nigeria. Educators often face uncertainty about career progression and opportunities for specialization, which affects job satisfaction and retention.

**5. Workplace Conditions:** Lawal and Alade (2018) discuss workplace conditions, including high workload, inadequate resources, and lack of support systems in early childhood education centers across Nigeria. These factors contribute to job dissatisfaction and turnover among educators.

### Strategies and Solutions

Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from stakeholders across various sectors. Here are strategic approaches and solutions based on Nigerian research and insights:

**1. Advocacy for Improved Remuneration:** Engage with government agencies and advocacy groups to push for improved salaries and better compensation packages for early childhood educators (Oni, 2019).

**2. Enhancing Professional Recognition:** Promote awareness and advocate for the professionalization of early childhood education through certifications, licensing, and accreditation mechanisms (Olatoye & Babalola, 2020).

**3. Investment in Training and Development:** Collaborate with educational institutions and NGOs to develop and implement comprehensive training programs that address the specific needs of early childhood educators (Ogunleye & Okeke, 2019).

**4. Developing Clear Career Pathways:** Work with stakeholders to establish structured career pathways, including opportunities for specialization, leadership roles, and continuous professional growth within the field (Ogundele & Afolabi, 2021).

**5. Improving Workplace Conditions:** Implement policies and initiatives to improve working conditions, such as reducing workload, providing adequate resources, and fostering supportive work environments in early childhood education settings (Afolabi & Olatunji, 2019).

### **Strategic Solutions for enhancing Career Opportunities for Early Childhood Educators in Nigeria**

#### **1. Advocacy for Improved Remuneration:**

Early childhood educators in Nigeria often face challenges related to low wages and inadequate compensation, which can hinder their professional growth and motivation. Adeyemi and Ogunyemi (2017) highlight that educators' salaries are often not commensurate with their qualifications and their critical role in child development. Advocating for improved remuneration involves engaging with policymakers, educational institutions, and relevant stakeholders to advocate for policies prioritizing fair and competitive wages for educators (Oni, 2019).

#### **2. Professional Recognition and Accreditation:**

Establishing professional recognition through certification and accreditation frameworks is crucial for validating the expertise and qualifications of early childhood educators. Ajayi (2018) discusses the need for formal recognition mechanisms that acknowledge educators' skills and contributions, enhancing their professional status within the education sector.

#### **3. Investment in Continuous Professional Development:**

Investing in ongoing professional development programs tailored to the needs of early childhood educators is essential for enhancing their teaching skills and knowledge. Adediran and Ogunsola (2018) emphasize the importance of accessible and relevant training opportunities that align with international best practices in early childhood education.

#### **4. Development of Career Pathways:**

Creating clear and structured career pathways within early childhood education is crucial for providing educators with career advancement and specialization opportunities. Olaniyan and Oyebanji (2017) discuss the importance of developing pathways that include leadership roles, specialized training, and continuous professional growth opportunities.

#### **5. Improvement of Working Conditions:**

Enhancing working conditions in early childhood education settings is essential for promoting job satisfaction and retention among educators. Lawal and Alade (2018) highlight the need for policies that address workload, resource inadequacies, and supportive work environments to improve educator well-being.

These strategic solutions are crucial for addressing the challenges early childhood educators face in Nigeria, enabling them to thrive professionally and contribute effectively to the holistic development of children in the country. By implementing these strategies, stakeholders can support and empower educators to achieve their full potential in nurturing young minds and building a more robust education system in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made;

1. Advocate for policy reforms prioritizing fair wages and benefits for early childhood educators, aligning with their qualifications and the critical nature of their work. Collaborate with government bodies, educational institutions, and advocacy groups to push for policies recognizing and supporting educators' contributions.
2. Establish a national accreditation system formally recognizing early childhood educators' qualifications and expertise. Introduce certification programs and professional standards to enhance educators' status and career prospects within the sector.
3. Increase investment in continuous professional development (CPD) programs tailored to the needs of early childhood educators. Provide accessible and subsidized training opportunities that cover areas such as child development, educational psychology, inclusive education practices, and leadership skills.
4. Develop clear career pathways that outline opportunities for advancement, specialization, and leadership roles within early childhood education. Establish mentorship programs, professional networks, and promotional pathways to encourage ongoing professional growth and retention.
5. Implement policies to improve working conditions in early childhood education settings, including adequate staffing ratios, safe and well-equipped learning environments, and supportive administrative structures. Address issues such as workload management, job security, and professional autonomy.

Implementing these recommendations requires collaborative efforts from government agencies, educational institutions, NGOs, and community stakeholders. By prioritizing early childhood educators' professional growth and well-being, Nigeria can strengthen its early childhood education sector and improve outcomes for young children nationwide.

### **Conclusion**

Enhancing career opportunities and professional development for early childhood educators in Nigeria is essential for advancing the quality of early childhood education and nurturing the holistic development of children. By implementing strategic solutions, stakeholders can address educators' challenges and create a supportive environment conducive to their growth and success.

By advocating for policy reforms that prioritize fair remuneration and recognition, investing in comprehensive training programs, and developing clear career pathways, Nigeria can empower educators to excel in their roles. Improving working conditions, promoting research and innovation, and fostering community partnerships enrich the educational landscape, ensuring educators have the resources and support they need to thrive.

Finally, through continuous collaboration and concerted efforts, Nigeria can build a robust early childhood education sector that meets international standards of excellence and prepares children for a brighter future.

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**EXAMINATION OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND  
PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA: A THEORETICAL  
PERSPECTIVE**

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**Abstract**

*This paper presents a comprehensive analysis of educational policy implementation and primary school curriculum in Nigeria through a theoretical lens. Beginning with a historical overview, it explores the evolution of educational policies in Nigeria and identifies the theoretical frameworks used to analyze policy implementation. The paper examines the challenges encountered in implementing educational policies in the Nigerian context, particularly focusing on the primary school sector. Furthermore, it delves into the development and structure of the primary school curriculum in Nigeria, highlighting key components and objectives. Strategies for effectively implementing the curriculum are discussed, along with the importance of stakeholder involvement in the process. Additionally, the paper addresses the crucial aspects of evaluation and monitoring in ensuring successful policy implementation. Recommendations are provided for enhancing policy implementation and curriculum development in Nigeria's primary education sector, which including increased funding allocation, strengthened capacity building, curriculum review and adaptation, improved monitoring and evaluation systems, and enhanced stakeholder engagement. Through this theoretical exploration, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding educational policy implementation and curriculum development in Nigeria, offering insights for future research and practice.*

**Keywords:** Educational Policy, Curriculum Analysis, Primary School Curriculum and Policy Implementation

**INTRODUCTION**

The effective implementation of educational policies and the development of primary school curricula are fundamental elements in the enhancement of Nigeria's educational system. Educational policies serve as blueprints for achieving educational objectives and societal development. However, translating these policies into tangible outcomes faces numerous challenges, underscoring the importance of understanding the theoretical frameworks that underpin policy implementation (Ayeni and Adebisi 2017). In Nigeria, a country marked by



diverse cultural, social, and economic dynamics, the implementation of educational policies is particularly complex (Oyedepi & Oyinloye, 2016). Furthermore, the primary school curriculum serves as the foundation of formal education, influencing teaching and learning processes (Egbe, 2014). Hence, examining the curriculum through a theoretical lens is imperative for elucidating its developmental trajectory and efficacy in meeting educational goals.

This paper aims to provide a theoretical perspective on the examination of educational policy implementation and primary school curriculum in Nigeria. Through this exploration, to identify challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for enhancing Nigeria's educational policy implementation and primary school curriculum. Therefore, integrating theoretical this study contributes to the discourse on educational reform and development in Nigeria.

### **Historical Overview of Educational Policy in Nigeria**

A historical examination of educational policy in Nigeria provides crucial insights into the evolution of the country's educational landscape and its impact on policy implementation and curriculum development. Nigeria's educational policies have been influenced by colonial legacies, post-independence aspirations, and socio-political changes (Ogbonnaya & Okeke, 2018). Understanding this historical context is essential for comprehending the current challenges and opportunities facing the Nigerian educational system.

During the colonial era, education in Nigeria primarily served the interests of the British colonial administration, focusing on the training of indigenous elites to serve as intermediaries in the colonial bureaucracy (Adeyemi, 2012). The introduction of missionary schools further shaped the educational landscape, leading to the establishment of religious-based educational institutions (Ogunsaju, 2016).

Post-independence, Nigeria witnessed a proliferation of educational policies aimed at addressing disparities in access and quality of education (Okebukola, 2005). The Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme introduced in the 1970s aimed to provide free and compulsory education for all Nigerian children, reflecting the government's commitment to education as a tool for national development (Okebukola & Jegede, 1989).

Despite these efforts, Nigeria's educational system continues to grapple with challenges such as inadequate funding, infrastructural deficits, and disparities in access and quality (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2018). Moreover, successive educational policies have often been characterized by discontinuities and inconsistencies, hindering effective implementation and sustainable development (Adesina, 2019).

Thus, a historical overview of educational policy in Nigeria underscores the importance of recognizing the colonial legacies, post-independence aspirations, and socio-political changes that have shaped the country's educational trajectory. Understanding the historical context, policymakers and educators can gain valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for advancing educational reform and development in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Frameworks for Analyzing Policy Implementation**

The theoretical frameworks that underpin policy implementation is crucial for analyzing the complexities and challenges encountered in translating educational policies into practice within the Nigerian context:

1. **Rational Choice Theory:** Rational choice theory posits that individuals make decisions based on rational calculations of costs and benefits (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). Within the context of policy implementation, this theory emphasizes the role of actors' interests, preferences, and incentives in shaping their behaviour and actions (Oyededeji & Oyinloye, 2016).
2. **Institutional Theory:** Institutional theory focuses on the influence of formal and informal institutions on policy implementation (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). It highlights the importance of organizational structures, norms, and cultures in shaping actors' behavior and decision-making processes (Oyededeji & Oyinloye, 2016).
3. **Advocacy Coalition Framework:** The advocacy coalition framework views policy implementation as a dynamic process shaped by the interactions between competing advocacy coalitions (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). This framework emphasizes the role of belief systems, interests, and resources in driving policy change and implementation (Ayeni & Adebisi, 2017).

Despite the insights offered by these theoretical perspectives, policy implementation in Nigeria is often hindered by challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and resource constraints (Oyededeji & Oyinloye, 2016). However, these theories provide valuable analytical tools for understanding the underlying factors influencing policy implementation and identifying strategies for overcoming barriers.

Hence, drawing on theoretical frameworks such as rational choice theory, institutional theory, and the advocacy coalition framework, researchers and policymakers can gain deeper insights into the complexities of policy implementation in Nigeria's educational system. Integrating theoretical insights, it becomes possible to develop more effective strategies for enhancing policy implementation and fostering positive educational outcomes.

### **Challenges in Implementing Educational Policies in Nigeria**

Despite the formulation of numerous educational policies in Nigeria, the effective implementation of these policies often faces significant challenges. The challenges encountered in translating educational policies into tangible outcomes within the Nigerian context includes:

1. **Inadequate Funding:** One of the primary challenges facing the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria is inadequate funding (Oyededeji & Oyinloye, 2016). The education sector often receives insufficient budget allocations, leading to a lack of resources for infrastructure development, teacher training, and instructional materials (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2018).
2. **Bureaucratic Inefficiencies:** The bureaucratic nature of government institutions in Nigeria can impede the smooth implementation of educational policies (Ayeni & Adebisi, 2017). Complex administrative procedures, red tape, and overlapping responsibilities among government agencies often result in delays and inefficiencies in policy implementation.

3. **Corruption:** Corruption is a pervasive challenge that undermines the effective implementation of educational policies in Nigeria (Oyedeji & Oyinloye, 2016). Mismanagement of funds, embezzlement, and bribery can divert resources away from educational initiatives, compromising their impact and effectiveness.

4. **Infrastructure Deficits:** The lack of adequate infrastructure, such as classrooms, laboratories, and libraries, poses a significant challenge to the implementation of educational policies (Oyedeji & Oyinloye, 2016). Many schools in Nigeria lack basic facilities, hindering the delivery of quality education and limiting students' learning experiences.

5. **Socio-cultural Factors:** Socio-cultural factors, including ethnic diversity, language barriers, and cultural norms, can also pose challenges to policy implementation (Oyedeji & Oyinloye, 2016). Differences in cultural practices and beliefs may affect the acceptance and adoption of educational reforms, leading to resistance and implementation bottlenecks.

Thus, addressing the challenges in implementing educational policies in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach that addresses funding constraints, bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, infrastructure deficits, and socio-cultural factors. Identifying these challenges and developing targeted strategies to overcome them, policymakers can enhance the effectiveness and impact of educational policies in Nigeria.

### **Primary School Curriculum Development in Nigeria**

The development of the primary school curriculum in Nigeria is a crucial aspect of educational policy, as it shapes the learning experiences and outcomes of millions of Nigerian children in primary education sector:

**Curriculum Development Process:** The development of the primary school curriculum in Nigeria involves multiple stages, including curriculum planning, design, implementation, and evaluation (Egbe, 2014). Curriculum planners collaborate with education experts, teachers, and stakeholders to identify educational goals, learning objectives, and content areas that align with national educational priorities and societal needs (Oyedeji & Oyinloye, 2016).

**Key Components:** The primary school curriculum in Nigeria typically comprises core subjects such as English language, mathematics, science, social studies, and religious and moral education (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2018). Additionally, efforts have been made to integrate indigenous knowledge, environmental education, and life skills into the curriculum to promote holistic development and address local contexts (Egbe, 2014).

**Curriculum Implementation Strategies:** To ensure effective implementation of the primary school curriculum, various strategies are employed, including teacher training and professional development, instructional materials development, and curriculum adaptation to local contexts (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2018). Continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are also put in place to assess the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of the curriculum on student learning outcomes (Oyedeji & Oyinloye, 2016).

**Challenges and Innovations:** Despite efforts to develop a comprehensive primary school curriculum, challenges such as outdated content, overcrowded curriculum, and inadequate teacher capacity persist (Egbe, 2014). However, ongoing initiatives, such as curriculum

reform efforts and the integration of technology in teaching and learning, hold promise for addressing these challenges and enhancing the quality of primary education in Nigeria (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2018).

Thus, the development of the primary school curriculum in Nigeria is a dynamic and multifaceted process that requires collaboration among policymakers, curriculum developers, teachers, and stakeholders. By ensuring alignment with educational goals, relevance to societal needs, and responsiveness to local contexts, the primary school curriculum can contribute to the holistic development and empowerment of Nigerian children.

### **Curriculum Implementation Strategies**

Effective implementation of the primary school curriculum in Nigeria requires the deployment of various strategies aimed at enhancing teaching and learning processes. The strategies employed to ensure the successful execution of the curriculum within the Nigerian educational context:

**Teacher Training and Professional Development:** Teacher training and professional development programs play a crucial role in equipping educators with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to effectively implement the curriculum (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2018). Continuous professional development opportunities enable teachers to stay abreast of pedagogical trends, curriculum updates, and best practices in teaching and learning (Egbe, 2014).

**Instructional Materials Development:** The availability and accessibility of quality instructional materials are essential for supporting teaching and learning activities in the classroom (Oyedeji & Oyinloye, 2016). Curriculum developers collaborate with publishers, educators, and relevant stakeholders to produce textbooks, workbooks, digital resources, and teaching aids aligned with the curriculum objectives and content standards (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2018).

**Curriculum Adaptation to Local Contexts:** Adapting the curriculum to local contexts and addressing the diverse needs of students is essential for promoting relevance and inclusivity (Egbe, 2014). This involves incorporating indigenous knowledge, cultural perspectives, and community-based learning experiences into the curriculum to enhance students' understanding and appreciation of their cultural heritage (Oyedeji & Oyinloye, 2016).

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are essential for assessing the implementation of the curriculum and identifying areas for improvement (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2018). This involves collecting data on student performance, teacher effectiveness, curriculum coverage, and resource utilization to inform evidence-based decision-making and policy adjustments (Egbe, 2014).

**Stakeholder Engagement:** Effective implementation of the curriculum requires the active involvement and collaboration of various stakeholders, including government agencies, educational institutions, parents, communities, and civil society organizations (Oyedeji & Oyinloye, 2016). Engaging stakeholders in curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation processes fosters ownership, accountability, and collective responsibility for improving educational outcomes.

Therefore, employing strategic approaches such as teacher training, instructional materials development, curriculum adaptation, monitoring and evaluation, and stakeholder engagement, Nigeria can enhance the implementation of the primary school curriculum and promote quality education for all learners.

### **Stakeholder Involvement in Policy Implementation**

The involvement of stakeholders is essential for the successful implementation of educational policies and curriculum development in Nigeria. The significance of stakeholder engagement and the role of various actors in shaping policy implementation processes involves:

**Government Agencies and Ministries:** These are the Federal Ministry of Education and State Ministries of Education, play a central role in formulating, implementing, and monitoring educational policies (Ayeni & Adebisi, 2017). These agencies are responsible for coordinating efforts, allocating resources, and providing policy guidance to educational institutions at the federal, state, and local levels.

**Educational Institutions:** This, including schools, colleges, and universities, are key stakeholders in the implementation of educational policies and curriculum development (Oyediji & Oyinloye, 2016). School administrators, teachers, and staff are responsible for translating policy directives into action, ensuring compliance with curriculum standards, and fostering a conducive learning environment for students.

**Teachers and Educators:** play a critical role in the implementation of the curriculum, as they are directly involved in delivering instruction and facilitating student learning (Egbe, 2014). Their expertise, commitment, and professional development are essential for effective curriculum delivery, pedagogical innovation, and student engagement (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2018).

**Parents and Communities:** Parents, guardians, and community members are important stakeholders in education, as they provide support, resources, and feedback to schools and educational authorities (Oyediji & Oyinloye, 2016). Their involvement in school governance, decision-making processes, and community outreach initiatives enhances accountability, transparency, and community ownership of educational initiatives.

**Civil Society Organizations:** These, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), advocacy groups, and professional associations, play a vital role in advocating for educational reforms, promoting equity, and mobilizing resources for educational development (Ayeni & Adebisi, 2017). Their advocacy efforts, research, and capacity-building initiatives contribute to shaping education policies and improving educational outcomes.

Hence, stakeholder involvement is crucial for fostering collaboration, accountability, and ownership in the implementation of educational policies and curriculum development in Nigeria. By engaging government agencies, educational institutions, teachers, parents, communities, and civil society organizations, Nigeria can harness collective efforts to address challenges and promote quality education for all learners.

### **Evaluation and Monitoring of Policy Implementation**

Evaluation and monitoring are essential components of policy implementation in Nigeria's educational system, providing feedback on progress, effectiveness, and areas needing improvement. The importance of evaluation and monitoring mechanisms and their role in enhancing policy implementation outcomes:

**Importance of Evaluation and Monitoring:** Evaluation and monitoring mechanisms serve as tools for assessing the impact, relevance, and efficiency of educational policies and curriculum implementation efforts (Ayeni & Adebisi, 2017). By systematically collecting and analyzing data, policymakers and educators can identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for intervention to enhance the quality and effectiveness of educational programs.

**Types of Evaluation:** Evaluation methods in educational policy implementation include formative evaluation, summative evaluation, and impact assessment (Oyedede & Oyinloye, 2016). Formative evaluation focuses on ongoing feedback and adjustments during the implementation process, while summative evaluation assesses outcomes and impacts at the end of the implementation period. Impact assessment evaluates the long-term effects and broader societal impacts of educational policies.

**Monitoring Mechanisms:** Monitoring mechanisms involve the systematic collection of data on key performance indicators, such as student achievement, teacher effectiveness, resource utilization, and program implementation fidelity (Egbe, 2014). This data is used to track progress, identify bottlenecks, and inform decision-making processes at various levels of the education system.

**Challenges and Recommendations:** Despite the importance of evaluation and monitoring, challenges such as inadequate data systems, limited capacity, and resource constraints can hinder their effective implementation (Ayeni & Adebisi, 2017). To address these challenges, policymakers should invest in robust data infrastructure, capacity-building initiatives, and stakeholder engagement strategies to enhance the quality and reliability of evaluation and monitoring efforts.

Thus, evaluation and monitoring are critical components of policy implementation in Nigeria's educational system, providing valuable insights for improving program effectiveness, accountability, and transparency. By investing in robust evaluation and monitoring mechanisms, Nigeria can strengthen its educational policies and programs, ultimately enhancing educational outcomes for all learners.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the analysis of challenges and strategies in policy implementation within Nigeria's primary education sector, this is to provide recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of policy implementation processes:

- iv. **Increased Funding Allocation:** Enhanced funding allocation to the education sector is essential for addressing infrastructure deficits, improving teacher quality, and ensuring adequate provision of instructional materials. Government and donor agencies should prioritize education spending and allocate sufficient resources to support policy implementation initiatives.



2. **Strengthened Capacity Building:** Investing in teacher training and professional development programs is crucial for enhancing educators' pedagogical skills, content knowledge, and classroom management techniques. Continuous capacity-building initiatives should be tailored to meet the diverse needs of teachers, administrators, and education stakeholders.
- **Curriculum Review and Adaptation:** Regular review and adaptation of the curriculum to reflect changing educational priorities, societal needs, and global trends are essential. Curriculum developers should collaborate with education experts, teachers, and communities to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant, inclusive, and responsive to local contexts.
4. **Strengthened Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:** Improving monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is critical for tracking progress, identifying challenges, and informing evidence-based decision-making. Government agencies should invest in robust data infrastructure, capacity-building initiatives, and stakeholder engagement strategies to enhance the quality and reliability of evaluation and monitoring efforts.
- (ix) **Enhanced Stakeholder Engagement:** Promoting active engagement and collaboration among government agencies, educational institutions, teachers, parents, communities, and civil society organizations is essential. Stakeholders should be involved in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation processes to foster ownership, accountability, and collective responsibility for improving educational outcomes.

Therefore, implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can overcome the challenges hindering effective policy implementation in the primary education sector and promote quality education for all learners. Strengthened funding allocation, capacity-building initiatives, curriculum adaptation, monitoring and evaluation systems, and stakeholder engagement are essential for achieving sustainable improvements in Nigeria's primary education system.

### **Conclusion**

The examination of educational policy implementation and primary school curriculum in Nigeria from a theoretical perspective underscores the complexities and challenges inherent in Nigeria's educational system. Through a historical overview, it traced the evolution of educational policies, highlighting the colonial legacies, post-independence aspirations, and socio-political changes that have shaped Nigeria's educational trajectory. Theoretical frameworks provided insights into policy implementation dynamics, while an analysis of challenges revealed issues such as inadequate funding, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and socio-cultural factors hindering effective implementation.

The development of the primary school curriculum emerged as a critical aspect of educational policy, requiring strategic approaches such as teacher training, instructional materials development, and curriculum adaptation to local contexts. Stakeholder involvement, including government agencies, educational institutions, teachers, parents, communities, and civil society organizations, was identified as essential for fostering collaboration, accountability, and ownership in policy implementation processes. The

proposed Recommendations to enhance policy implementation in Nigeria's primary education sector, including increased funding allocation, strengthened capacity building, curriculum review and adaptation, improved monitoring and evaluation systems, and enhanced stakeholder engagement. Implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can overcome challenges and promote quality education for all learners, ultimately contributing to the nation's socio-economic development and sustainable growth. Addressing the complexities of educational policy implementation and curriculum development in Nigeria requires a holistic approach that integrates theoretical insights and stakeholder perspectives. By adopting strategic initiatives and fostering collaboration among all stakeholders, Nigeria can achieve its educational goals and ensure equitable access to quality education for future generations.

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**EVALUATION OF PSYCHOSOCIAL VARIABLES PREVALENCE ON  
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PUPILS IN LITERACY SKILLS IN PUBLIC  
PRIMARY SCHOOLS, LAGOS STATE**

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**Abstract**

*The study investigated evaluation of psycho-social variable prevalence on academic performance of pupils in literacy skills especially in public primary schools in Lagos State. Two objectives alongside two hypotheses were designed to guide the focus of this study. Survey research design of correlation approach was used in this work. This design type seeks to determine the relationship or association between the dependent and independent variable. Population was all Pupils in public primary schools in Lagos State while target population was mainly Basic 5 pupils in public primary schools in Badagry Local Government Area of the State. A sample of 300 pupils was used for this study as multi-stage sampling process was employed in the selection of sample. Two instruments Teacher Made Achievement Test on Literacy Skills (TMATLS) and a self designed Evaluation of Psycho-Social Variables on Academic Performance of Pupils in Literacy Skills Questionnaire (EP-SVAPPLSQ) was used in data collection. The instruments were validated by two experts in the Department of Early Childhood Care Education and Primary Education, in Lagos State University of Education, Epe, Lagos State. Suggestions, comments and observations were effected to ensure content validity as reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach Alpha a reliability form with index value of 0.807 and 0.890 which shows internal consistency achieved. Data generated was analysed through correlation analysis and tested at 0.05 significant level. The study revealed that test anxiety and pupil-teacher interaction are good predictors of academic performance. It then concluded that for pupils academic performance to be improved, their anxiety level towards testing should be reduced by not exposing them to items they are assumed to be difficult.*

**Keywords: Evaluation, Psycho-Social Variables, Performance, Literacy skills, Pupils**

**Introduction**

Evaluation is a term used to justify conveyance of value or determination of the worth of a thing or programme. Evaluation is very important because it helps in the execution of sensitive decisions when faced with alternatives choices to make. Our educational system is confronted with diverse degree of challenges which ranges from psycho-social challenges like family problems, socialization, underachievement and poor academic performance, test anxiety, self efficacy, poor communication network, examination malpractice, low self esteem, peer group pressure, emotional instability, poor motivation, poor socio-economic background of parents, poor level of pupil-teacher interaction, poor nutrition among others. At the primary school level, these psycho-social variables if not well managed have the likelihood of affecting pupils' performance negatively (Mafikuyomi, Udofia and Busari 2023).

The act of learning to read and write is a basic skill that unfortunately not all children in the world learn sufficiently. In a time when societal change puts increasing demands on individuals' competence in using written language it is important that schools are able to teach such skills to all children. In many countries major problems include too little time spent in school and lack of teachers. But even in countries where children go to school many years and have teachers there are problems. The "information society" in practice means a huge rise in informational activities due to the internet and other ICT (information and communication technology) related activities. More people in the world need enhanced literacy skills to be able to find, select, interpret, analyze, and produce information. According to Mullis, Martin, Foy & Drucker (2012), the recommended international benchmark on literacy skills includes four levels, low (locate and retrieve information), intermediate (make straightforward references), high (make inferences and interpretations with text-based support), and advanced (integrate ideas and information across texts to provide reasons and explanations). The information society requires that more people acquire skills towards the high end of this scale. In Mullis et al. (2012) benchmark, even the highest performing countries only barely achieve a score of 20% in the "advanced" category (Mullis et al., 2012) and just over 60% in the "high" category. So in every country improvement in literacy skills is important.

Psycho-social variables are relative depending on the condition and prevalent study undertaken. According to Meera (2015) Psycho-social variables are conditions that comprises of a range of factors relating to an individuals' psychological state and social environment which potentially have either positive or negative consequences for health and behavioural outcomes. Psycho-social variables consist of psychological risk factors, social and psychological resources. In a study conducted by Singh-Manoux (2003), psycho-social variables can be categorised into two groups of psychological tributes like hostility, depression and hopelessness which exists at the individual level and are likely to be the process of socialization; as the second category is more structural in nature and work conditioned.

On the paradigm of teaching and learning, Ali, Jusoff, Ali, Mokhtar & Salamat (2009) noted that psycho-social variable include self esteem, emotional state of mind, pupil-teacher interaction level, attitude, disposition, behaviour, self discipline, test anxiety, self efficacy (Ali, et al, 2009). Interaction between teacher and pupil or pupil-pupil plays an important role in determination of pupils' academic performance. The degree of interaction plays a very significant role in the measurement of productivity and performance. Interaction of teacher's with pupils in primary schools goes a long way to enhance good performance due to exchange of ideas, influence of thought and x-ray of opinions with others. Following interaction process, teachers listening skills, communication and professionalism becomes enhanced significantly in an effort to know the world of pupils, which can be envisaged in pupils' academic performance. A study conducted by Fan (2012), established that there exists a significant and positive relationship between teacher-pupils interaction and academic performance. Fan (2012) maintained that pupils who establish mutual bond with

their teachers or peers are always bound to have an improved performance than their counterparts who keep to themselves.

Test anxiety another psycho-social variable plays a multi-dimensional role in determination of academic performance of pupils. Test anxiety is a psychological feeling that individuals go through especially when not prepared for such an exposure. It happens when a person feels powerless when exposed to an event or planned activity. Anxiety is sparked in pupils when they think that the evaluating situation, like an examination, is about their level of intelligence, drive, and social abilities. This weakness may sometimes arise due to ill preparation, lack of pre-knowledge on an event, fear of academic failure, difficulty of test items among others. However test anxiety, is the term used to describe the excessive levels of distress that learners experience when it negatively impacts their examination performance (Kendra, 2020). According to Kitsantas, et al (2008) test anxiety is characterized by trembling, stress and worrying over potential failure or poor performance during an examination or test. There are many factors that can contribute to learners developing test anxiety, prominent includes phobia of failure, procrastination, past experiences and beliefs, students' poor study habits, inadequate subject knowledge, persistently poor performance and lack of confidence in one's abilities (Kendra, 2020). In a study conducted by Chapell et al in Myrna & Aida (2015), they claimed that anxiety in test is a significant contributor to poor academic performance. They noted that naturally when learners are exposed to examination or test of any kind, they may feel worried, anxious, apprehensive, or uneasy. But the ability of the teacher to calm the nerves of the tensed pupils plays a very significant role in their outcome. In a relative study, Myrna & Aida (2015) learners who are less nervous when taking a test are better able to concentrate on the activities that are necessary for them, whereas learners who are more worried when taking a test tend to pay more attention to their inner selves and worry they experience.

Early age learning is crucial as previous studies of Akin (2010) and Makinde (2020) shows that children who lag behind in early years' reading and writing development encounter considerable difficulties in following education later on in life as text formation, sentence construction get longer and more complicated thereafter. Given this situation and circumstances, there is a need for identification of other psycho-social variables relationship to academic performance of pupils with respect to literacy development. Drawing on a critical social practice view on possible contributors to performance of pupils, this work is out to investigate notable psychosocial variables as a determinant of academic performance of pupils in literacy skills development especially in public primary schools in Lagos State Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Over the past one decade about 44.1% of public primary schools in Lagos State have witnessed a steady decline in the academic performance of pupils' in most standardized literacy examinations (External examiner report, 2023). The prevalent factors often associated with this poor academic performance includes test anxiety, poor teaching

methodology, poor development of literacy skills, low self esteem, lack of interest and motivation, poor interaction relationship between pupil-teacher, unstable government policies, non use of instructional materials among others. Previous studies by Akim (2010) and Makinde (2020) revealed that prevalent factors of poor development of literacy skills, test anxiety and motivation contributed significantly to poor academic performance. However, failure to identify test anxiety and lack of pupil-teacher interaction in classroom may likely lead to loss of interest by pupils, demotivation, development of phobia for word formation among others which would further compound the worsened poor academic performance of pupils in literacy skill. Hence this research seeks to establish the extent of significant relationship that exists between test anxiety (psychological variable) and pupil-teacher interaction (social variable) to academic performance in literacy skills.

### **Objectives of the study**

The broad objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of Psycho-social variables on academic performance of pupils in literacy skills especially in public primary schools in Lagos. The specific objectives include:

- Identify how test anxiety a psychological variable relates with academic performance of pupils in public primary schools
- State how pupils-teachers interaction a social variable relates with academic performance of pupils in public primary schools

### **Research Hypotheses**

H<sub>1</sub>: Test anxiety does not have any significant relationship with academic performance of pupils in literacy skills development in public primary schools

H<sub>2</sub>: Pupils-Teachers interaction does not have any significant relationship with academic performance of pupils in public primary schools

### **Methodology**

Survey research design of correlation approach was used in this work. This design type seeks to determine the relationship or association between the dependent and independent variable. This design type helps to determine the nature of relationship that exists between the independent variable (psycho-social variables) and the dependent variable (academic performance in literacy skills) of pupils in public primary school. Population was all Pupils in public primary schools in Lagos State while target population was mainly Basic 5 pupils in public primary schools in Badagry Local Government Area of the State. A sample of 300 pupils was used for this study as multi-stage sampling process was adopted in the selection of sample for this study. First, Badagry Local Government area of Lagos State was identified for the study. The choice of this local government lies on the premise that it's one of the oldest existing local government in the state and also has all the properties (high and low rates of pupils) expected of pupils to exhibit in a given classroom situation. Moreso, it is this same local government where primary school was first established in Nigeria. Secondly, the researcher then introduced stratified approach to stratify the local government into six sections where random sampling technique was also introduced to select six public primary



schools from each of the stratified 6 Zones of the local government. Through simple random sampling method fifty pupils were selected from each of the selected schools to account for a total of 300 pupils respectively. Two instruments Teacher Made Achievement Test on Literacy Skills (TMATLS) and a self designed Questionnaire on Evaluation of Psycho-social Variables on Academic Performance of Pupils in Literacy Skills was used for data collection (QEPVAPPLS). The achievement test was developed with the aid of table of specification as 20 multiple choice objective items were developed using 4-options format. Items in the Questionnaire contained 16-items with pupils expected to respond using 4-likert format of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. The instruments were scrutinized and validated by two experts in the Department of Early Childhood Care Education and Primary Education, in Lagos State University of Education, Epe, Lagos State. Suggestions, comments and observations were effected to ensure content validity as reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach Alpha a reliability form. An index value of 0.807 and 0.890 was derived on 20 pupils in one of the public primary schools in Alimosho LGA. Internal consistency was achieved as data generated was analysed through the use of pearson product moment correlation analysis and tested at significant level of 0.05 respectively.

### **Data presentation and Interpretation**

H<sub>1</sub>: Test anxiety does not have any significant relationship with academic performance of pupils in literacy skills development in public primary schools

**Table 1: Correlation between Test anxiety and Academic Performance in Literacy Skills**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>sig.(2-tailed)</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Test Anxiety	330	.893	.018	Significant
Academic Performance				

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 1 reveals that with r-value of 0.893, it shows that there exists a positively strong relationship between the independent variable (test anxiety) and the dependent variable (Academic performance in literacy skills). At r-value of .893 and *p*-value of 0.018, *p*-value is greater than the alpha level hence the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative which states that test anxiety does have a significant relationship with academic performance of pupils is retained.

H<sub>2</sub>: Pupils-Teachers interaction does not have any significant relationship with academic performance of pupils in public primary schools

**Table 2: Correlation between Pupils-Teacher interaction and Academic Performance in Literacy Skills**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>sig.(2-tailed)</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Pupils-Teacher interaction	330	.871	.021	Significant
Academic Performance				

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 2 reveals that with  $r$ -value of 0.871, it shows that there exists a positively strong relationship between the independent variable (pupils-teacher interaction) and the dependent variable (Academic performance in literacy skills). At  $r$ -value of .871 and  $p$ -value of 0.021,  $p$ -value is greater than the alpha level hence the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative which states that pupils-teachers interaction does significantly have a relationship with academic performance of pupils is retained.

### **Discussion of Findings**

From hypothesis 1, the result revealed that there exist a positively strong relationship between test anxiety and academic performance of pupils in literacy skills. This implies that when fear, sudden pronouncement by the teacher to conduct test or examination contributes significantly to their performance in school related academic tasks. The outcome of this work corroborates with that of Wubbels, Hayman & Grints (2013) who noted that test anxiety is a psychological term used to show a state of imbalance of organism when confronted with set of activities. Exposures to conditions not favourable, ill preparation, wrong timing, lengthy test items, difficulty of items, among others are drivers of test anxiety. Moreso, Wubbels, et al. (2013) further stated that when pupils are taken unawares on test administration they become unprepared and unready for such an exercise which in turn shows on their response pattern to the test, Test anxiety in pupils is reduced when they are pre-informed on future tasks and exposure to tests or examination because the anxiety level of pupils is positively correlated to their achievement.

From hypothesis 2 the result revealed that there exist a positively strong relationship between pupil-teacher interaction and academic performance of pupils. Pupil-teacher interaction is a social variable that shows how pupils-teacher relationship is related to academic performance of pupils. Interaction relationship between teacher-pupil is a form of relationship that is symbiotic in nature and can be between teacher versus learner or pupil versus pupil respectively. When learner's interaction level with peers and teacher is not cordial, there is a likelihood that it could lead to poor academic performance. The outcome of this study is in consonance with that of Ahmed and Ahmed, (2018) who revealed that pupils who establish a cordial relationship with teachers or contemporaries always perform better in their academic tasks because they tend to learn from their mistakes, personal deficiencies identified and corrected thereby serving like a feedback mechanism for personal assessment.

### **Conclusion**

Psycho-social variables are those variables or factors that include all psychological and social factors that have a very strong propensity to affect or influence organisms. These variables could include motivation, self efficacy, test anxiety, logic, interaction level, socioeconomic status, academic background, level of exposure among others. In this study the researchers were very firm in the use of test anxiety and pupil-teacher interaction level. The study concluded that for pupils academic performance to be improved, their anxiety level towards testing should be reduced by not exposing them to items they are not exposed to, abstain from designing items that are assumed to be difficult, establish good interaction

between teacher and pupils at all time. Psycho-social variables if not well managed by the teacher would contribute negatively towards academic performance of pupils.

### Recommendation

The researchers investigated evaluation of psycho-social variables on academic performance of pupils in public primary schools in Lagos State. Among others the study concluded that:

- Teachers across all levels should introduce the use of motivation technique in the course of teaching because it goes a long way to improve the quality of learning in classrooms.
- Pupils should be conditioned to interact effectively with peers and teachers as it would enhance cross pollination of ideas, concepts and learning.
- Curriculum developers should revise the curriculum once in every ten years so that adequate studies can be carried out in order to allow for proper evaluation studies viz-a-viz time frame.

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**INVESTIGATING THE LEADERSHIP ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE  
UP-SCALING OF EARLY CHILD-HOOD CARE EDUCATION IN RIVERS  
STATE, NIGERIA**

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***Abstract***

*The study investigated the leadership roles of stakeholders in the up-scaling of early childhood care education in Rivers State Nigeria. There were two research questions as well as two hypotheses formulated to guide the study. The design adopted was the correlation design. The population of the study was 268 junior senior secondary school teachers in Rivers State out of which 134 teachers were sampled for the study. The instrument used was a 20-item questionnaire titled "Leadership Roles of Stakeholders in the Up-scaling of Early Childhood Care Education" (LRSUECCE). The questionnaire was validated by experts in the study area. The reliability was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha method deriving a co-efficient of 0.84. The research questions raised were answered using Pearson Product Moment correlation co-efficient (r) while the hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that a positive relationship exists between the leadership roles of stakeholders and the up-scaling of early childhood care education in Rivers State. It was recommended that effective measures should be ensured in the training of early childhood/pre-primary teachers through adequate scholarships, approving the mounting of such programmes in all Universities, Institutes of Education and College of Education.*

**Keywords:** *Leadership, Roles, Stakeholders, Up-scaling, Early-childhood.*

**Introduction**

Early years in life are the most important to the formation of intelligence, personality and social behaviour of a child (Ho, & Tikly, 2017). The year before a child reaches Kindergarten are among the most critical in his or her life to influence learning. That is why modern societies show serious concern for the education of their young ones by providing needed support to prepare them to succeed later in school (Bagudo, 2021). It is common practice in most societies to make provision for early childhood education programmes of various sorts for children below the official school-going age (usually 6 years) mainly to prepare them for education in primary schools (Ang, 2017). The Federal Government of Nigeria recognizes

the importance of early childhood education in Nigeria and as a result it was given prominence in the National Policy of Education (FRN, 2004) as one of the programmes in the Nigerian educational system.

According to Arbour, (2016), Early Childhood Education (also known as Early Childhood learning and Early Education) varies in scope and seem to be closely linked to geographical locations. While the main thrust of some definitions is based on age bracket, some consider the environment within which the education is delivered, others combine both. ECE was considered by Arbour, (2016) to be a pre-school, semi-formal education outside the home. It includes the crèche, the nursery and kindergarten. This program was introduced for children between the ages of 0 – 5 years. In Nigeria, ECE came into being in order to assist and bring early child care within the reach of majority of Nigerian children, particularly those in rural and low socio economic areas.

Dennis, and O'Connor, (2017) refers to early childhood care and Education as the education offered to children who have not yet reached the statutory age of beginning primary school. He further maintained that it is a semi-formal education arrangement, usually outside home where by young children from about the age of 3 years are exposed through play like activities in a group setting through mental, social and physical learning suited to their developmental stages, until the mandatory age of government approved formal schooling. FRN (2004) refers to early childhood care and Education (pre-primary education) as an education given in an educational institution to children aged 3-5 plus prior to their enrollment in the primary school.

The objectives of early childhood education according to FRN (2004) are:

1. Effect a smooth transition from home to school
2. Prepare the child for the primary level of education
3. Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farm, in the market or offices)
4. Inculcate social norms
5. Inculcate in the child the spirit of inquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys and so on.

The involvement of stakeholders in early childhood development education programmes therefore is vital, since it forms the child's foundation for learning (Ball, 2017). Meaningful stakeholder engagement is not an end in itself, nice to have, or just a good way to manage crises when they come along. It may start as an activity to help solve a problem but as the continuous loop of engagement develops and matures over time, stakeholder engagement becomes an essential and mutually beneficial strategic function that results in better-informed staff and constituents as well as more effective policies, projects, programs and services. Ball, (2018) posited that stakeholders' involvement influences success or failure of Early Childhood development and educational programmes performance in Nigeria.



A report by UNICEF (2017) shows that the responsibility of child rearing and early childhood education development projects in Nigeria has in many places remained unsuccessful in the hands of individual families and communities without a proper and competent institution and stakeholder involvement in education development programmes to provide for their continued needs of education and development. Early childhood education program in Nigeria operates on the basis of partnership, collaboration and networking (Hua, 2018). The main stakeholders in ECE are the parents, the community and the private sector. Other partners include Government of Nigeria and its constituent ministries coordinated by Ministry of Education (MOE). Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) such as, community-based organizations (CBOs), Faith-based organizations have been providing support to ECE as well as bilateral and multilateral partners including UNICEF, World Bank, and UNESCO (Hujala, 2016). The roles of these stakeholders and the coordination mechanism were defined in the National ECDE Policy Framework developed in 2005 by UNESCO in collaboration with the MoE and standard guidelines launched in 2007. The Ministry of Education on the other hand provides policy guidelines on capacity building of ECDE personnel, develops curriculum, supervises ECDE programs and registers ECE centres.

In the up-scaling of early childhood education in Nigeria, various stakeholders play critical leadership roles to ensure its success. According to Heikka, and Hujala, (2019), here are some key stakeholders and their leadership roles:

- **Government:**

Policy formulation and implementation: The government sets policies and regulations to improve early childhood education standards, including curriculum development, teacher training, and infrastructure development.

Funding allocation: Government allocates resources and funding to support early childhood education programs, including subsidies for low-income families and grants for early childhood education centers.

Monitoring and evaluation: Government agencies oversee the implementation of early childhood education programs, ensuring compliance with quality standards and assessing the impact of interventions.

- **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):**

Advocacy and awareness-raising: NGOs and CSOs advocate for increased investment in early childhood education and raise awareness about its importance among policymakers, communities, and parents.

Capacity-building: NGOs and CSOs provide training and support to early childhood educators and caregivers, enhancing their skills and knowledge in child development and education.

Service delivery: Some NGOs and CSOs directly implement early childhood education programs, particularly in underserved or marginalized communities, filling gaps where government services may be lacking.

- **Education Professionals:**

Curriculum development: Teachers, curriculum developers, and education experts collaborate to design age-appropriate curricula that promote holistic child development, including cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills.

Training and professional development: Education professionals receive training and ongoing professional development to enhance their teaching skills, pedagogical approaches, and understanding of early childhood development principles.

Classroom management: Teachers create supportive and stimulating learning environments that foster children's curiosity, creativity, and love for learning, while also addressing individual learning needs.

- **Parents and Caregivers:**

Parental involvement: Parents and caregivers actively participate in their children's early childhood education by engaging in activities at home, volunteering at schools, and attending parent-teacher meetings and workshops.

Advocacy: Parents advocate for improved access to quality early childhood education services in their communities and collaborate with educators and policymakers to address concerns and priorities.

The leadership roles of stakeholders in the up-scaling of early childhood education in Nigeria encompass policy formulation, funding allocation, advocacy, capacity-building, service delivery, curriculum development, parental involvement, resource mobilization, and collaboration (Kagan, Kauerz, & Tarrant, 2021). By working together, these stakeholders can create an enabling environment that ensures every child has access to quality early childhood education, setting the foundation for lifelong learning and development.

### **Statement of Problem**

Since the commencement of the implementation of the National Policy on Education in Nigeria which seeks to ensure an optimal and qualitative ECE, stream of concerns have been raised by stakeholders in respect of the quality of education in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) and its actual implementation. Despite all measures put in place by the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria, there are still some lapses in the implementation and non-implementation of this program. There is no doubt that the implementation of Early Childhood Education requires the collaborative effort/input of all stakeholders, including the government, parents/guardians, and school authorities. While the government is expected to provide necessary teaching and learning resources, the stakeholders at different levels are expected to know their various roles and play them adequately. Now the problems are, do these stakeholders know the roles they are supposed

to play? If they truly know these roles, what is the extent to which these roles has aid the up-scaling of early child-hood care education. It is on this premise the study tends to investigate the leadership roles of stakeholders in the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in rivers state Nigeria.

### Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the study

1. What are the leadership roles of stockholders in the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in rivers state, Nigeria
2. To what extent does the leadership roles of stockholders aid the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in rivers state, Nigeria

### Hypotheses

19. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the roles of stockholders in the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in Rivers State, Nigeria
20. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent to which leadership roles of stockholders aid the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in rivers state, Nigeria

### Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used for this study. The stratified sampling techniques was used to select 135 stakeholder from a combination of 210 parents, community and private sector, Government officials, Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) such as, community-based organizations (CBOs) and Faith-based organizations etc. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire structured in a Likert format which consists of three parts and was titled: Leadership Roles of Stakeholders in the Up-Scaling of Early Child-Hood Care Education in Rivers State, Nigeria (LRSUECCE). The instrument provided response to the two research questions with 15 items; Item 1-7 addressed research question one and item 8-15 addressed research question two in a 4-point rating scale weighted as “Strongly Agreed” (SA) – 4 points, “Agreed” (A) – 3 points, “Disagreed” (D) – 2 points and “Strongly Disagreed ” (SD) – 1 point. To establish the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by two experts from the department of Child-Hood Care Education in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State and the department of Business education in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt. The data analysis was done using the mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses. The mean was obtained by the summation of all responses as assigned to a rating scale in an item divided by the total number of responses:  $4+3+2+1/4 = 2.50$ . The mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted, while those below 2.50 were rejected. Also, the decision rules for the hypotheses was that any hypothesis which the t-calculated value

is less than the t-critical table value of 1.96 is considered accepted whereas if it is more than the critical table value is considered rejected.

## Results

The results of the study were presented based on the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

**Research question 1:** What are the leadership roles of stockholders in the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in rivers state, Nigeria?

**Table 4.2.1: Mean and standard deviation on the leadership roles of stockholders in the up-scaling of early child-hood care education**

S/N	leadership roles of stockholders in the up-scaling of early child-hood care education	Female Stakeholders			Male Stakeholders	Remark
		$\bar{X}$				
			STD	$\bar{X}$	STD	
1.	<b>Government:</b> Policy formulation, Funding allocation, Monitoring and evaluation	3.23	1.05	2.90	0.90	SA
2.	<b>NGOs and CSOs:</b> Advocacy, Capacity-building, Service delivery	3.34	0.90	2.76	0.50	SA
3.	<b>Education Professionals:</b> Curriculum development, Training and development, Classroom management	2.53	0.96	2.80	1.09	A
4.	<b>Parents and Caregivers:</b> Parental involvement, Advocacy	2.87	0.95	2.98	0.86	A
5.	<b>Community Leaders and Businesses:</b> Resource mobilization, Collaboration and partnerships	3.93	0.92	2.97	1.12	SA
6.	<b>Religious and Community-Based Organizations:</b>	3.23	0.99	3.09	0.89	SA

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	Outreach and community engagement,					
	Values-based education					
7.	<b>Academic Institutions and Researchers:</b> Research and innovation, Knowledge dissemination:	3.80	1.16	3.18	1.10	SA
8.	<b>Media and Communication Platforms:</b> Awareness-raising,  Advocacy and public engagement	3.32	1.02	3.50	0.78	SA
	<b>Grand Mean/STD</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>0.99</b>	<b>3.02</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>SA</b>

*Source: Field work (2024)*

The data presented in the above table shows that respondents strongly agrees with a grand mean score of 3.28 and SD of 0.99 for female and grand mean score of 3.02 and SD of 0.92 for male that items 1-8 as listed above are the leadership roles of stockholders in the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in rivers state, Nigeria.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do the leadership roles of stockholders aid the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in rivers state, Nigeria?

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the extent to which the leadership roles of stockholders aid the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in rivers state, Nigeria**

S/N	extent to which the leadership roles of stockholders aid the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in rivers state, Nigeria	Female Stakeholders	Male Stakeholders		Remark	
		$\overline{X}$		$\overline{X}$		
			STD		STD	
9.	School-community relationship and implementation of effective teaching methods	3.56	1.11	2.80	0.88	SA
10.	Improved learning outcomes and a supportive home environment	3.26	0.67	2.83	0.66	SA
11.	Improved institution-organizational partnership	2.78	0.89	2.74	0.84	A

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12.	Attracting private sector involvement for corporate sponsorship and partnership	2.98	0.87	2.90	0.95	A
13.	Promoting the importance of ECE through the involvement of research-based organizations	3.29	0.92	2.70	0.79	SA
14.	Improved infrastructure, teacher training and quality curriculum development	3.21	0.87	3.03	1.02	SA
15.	Improving children's physical well-being and their general health	3.29	1.09	3.13	1.05	SA
16.	Inclusion of digital learning tools, educational apps and online resources	3.79	0.89	3.00	0.98	SA
<b>Total Mean/STD</b>		<b>3.27</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>2.97</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>SA</b>

**Source: Field work (2024)**

The data presented in the above table shows that respondents strongly agrees with a grand mean score of 3.27 and SD of 0.91 for female and grand mean score of 2.97 and SD of 0.90 for male that the items 9-16 as listed above are the extent to which the leadership roles of stockholders aid the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in rivers state, Nigeria

**Hypotheses 1:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the roles of stockholders in the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in Rivers State

**Table 4: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the roles of stockholders in the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in Rivers State**

Gender	N	X	Std Dev	Df	T-cal	T-tab
Female	56	3.28	0.99	118	1.96	1.09
Male	92	3.02	0.91			

Result in table 4 shows that the t-tabulated 1.09 is less than the t-calculated 1.96 thus we accept the null hypothesis. This implies that at 0.05 level of significance there's no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the roles of stockholders in the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in Rivers State.



**Hypotheses 2:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent to which leadership roles of stockholders enhance the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in Rivers State

**Table 5:t-test analysis of the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent to which leadership roles of stockholders enhance the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in Rivers state**

Gender	N	X	St. dev.	Df	T-Cal	T-Tab
Female	56	3.27	0.91	118	1.63	1.96
Male	92	2.97	0.90			

Result in table 4 shows that the t-tabulated **1.96** is less than the t-calculated **1.63** thus we accept the null hypothesis. This implies that at 0.05 level of significance there's no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent to which leadership roles of stockholders aid the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in Rivers State.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The result of the data analysed in table 2, show that the respondents to a very high extent agreed Policy formulation, Funding allocation, Advocacy, Capacity-building, Service delivery Curriculum development, Training and development, Classroom management Parental involvement, Advocacy etc. are the the leadership roles of stockholders in the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in rivers state, Nigeria

This finding agrees with a study by Dacre and Sewell, (2018) who found out that leadership roles of stockholders fosters improvement in the upscaling of early childhood education in Nigeria. This goes a long way to show the importance of the stakeholder in the early childhood programme in Nigeria. The identified leadership roles are needed not just for the upscaling of the programe but for utainability of the programme.

The result of the study in table 5 also revealed the extent to which the leadership roles of stockholders aid the up-scaling of early child-hood care education in Rivers State, Nigeria. Some investigated indicators include: Improved lea ring outcomes and a supportive home environment; improved lea ring outcomes and a supportive home environment; improved institution-organizational partnership; attracting private sector involvement for corporate sponsorship and partnership; promoting the importance of ECE through the involvement of research-based organizations; Improving children's physical well-being and their general health etc. This investigation is in line with the findings of Atakpa, (2019) who found out that leadership roles of stockholders enhances early self awareness in children and quick open mindedness. And with that of Okorafor, (2011) who established that, the leadership role of stockholders facilitates knowledge and awareness and critical reflection on the general public a regards early childhood education and upbringing. This also goes a long

way to justify the research question two hence, leadership roles of stockholders should be taking seriously in various level of participation.

### **Conclusion**

The importance of a solid foundation in education is obvious. Early Childhood education is where the foundation is laid. Poor performance in the other levels of academic can be traced to this foundation level. So a thorough knowledge of what, and how education is been handled at this level is imperative. Therefore, government needs iron determination to implement the strategies that will necessarily enhance quality development of early childhood/pre-primary education in Nigeria. Leadership plays a central role in supporting and sustaining quality in ECEC settings. This review of the ECEC leadership roles suggests that effective leadership establishes a set of organisational conditions that have a positive impact on process quality, and thereby fosters children's learning, development and well-being. Based on the view of this paper, it has been asserted that for effective implementation of ECE programme in Rivers State, stakeholders have vital roles to play. Effective curriculum implementation is not just dependent on the classroom teacher alone. It requires collaboration between all stakeholders. If all stakeholders are aware of their roles and willingly perform them, then the implementation of the ECE programme would be effectively done with quality results.

### **Recommendation**

For effective implementation of ECE by the stakeholders in Nigeria, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- 1) Effective measures should be ensured in the training of early childhood/pre-primary teachers through adequate scholarships, approving the mounting of such programmes in all Universities, Institutes of Education and College of Education.
- 2) The government should provide conducive learning environment and good working condition as well as providing adequate resources necessary to offer quality education that will guarantee quality assurance in the system.
- 3) Government (Federal, State and Local) in collaboration with other stakeholders should provide adequate funds through their annual budgets to strengthen teacher's motivational needs. The importance of staff training, retraining and development should be noted and strengthened.
- 4) Teachers and counselors alike should take motivation seriously in the teaching and learning process. Teachers should be involved in the communication and in decision making process of the school.
- 5) Parents should embrace the teachers and lay complaints in a cordial tone and as well contribute to education development in their local communities. Stakeholders should

always be contacted when there is need for an important decision to be made. This would give them a sense of belonging and sustained confidence in the system. It would also command their commitment towards the system for success.

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**PERCIEVED INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON PUPILS  
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ISIN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF  
KWARA STATE**

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**Abstract**

*This study examined the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils' academic performance in Isin LGA, Kwara State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population comprised of all parents of primary school pupils. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 200 parents as respondents out of 10,105 parents and 20 schools out of 192 within the study area. The instrument used for the data collection was a structured questionnaire and pupils academic records. Copies of the questionnaire were given to the lecturers in the department of early childhood and primary education for content validity. The reliability of the instrument was tested using test retest method. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to correlate the results and score of 0.76 was obtained. Frequency and standard deviation were used to answer the research question while t-test analysis was used to test the hypothesis. The findings revealed that the influence of Parental involvement on pupils' academic performance was high with weighted mean of (3.20), among others. The study recommended School to create a welcoming environment where parents can visit anytime to make enquiry about their children academic progress and government should provide all necessary learning materials to pupils and make education free to allow children of less privilege have access to quality education.*

**Keywords:** Parent, Parental Involvement, Academic Performance, Pupils

**Introduction**

The academic performance of pupils at the elementary level is not only a pointer to the effectiveness or otherwise of schools but a major determinant of the future of the pupils in particular and the nation at large. It refers to how well the pupils achieve their educational goals. Academic performance means the degree to which a learner demonstrates mastery of skills and knowledge in a various academic area (Carroll, 2018). Academic performance can be defined as "learned proficiency in basic skills and content knowledge" (Gess-Newsome, Taylor & Stuhlsatz, 2019). Academic performance can also be defined as the performance of the learners in the subject they study in the school (Ma, Shen & Yuan, 2016). Academic performance determines the learners status in the class. It gives pupils an opportunity to develop their talents, improve their grades and prepare them for the future academic

challenges. When children perform poor academically, parents turn to school that it has not achieved its core objectives of being a schools and the schools also turn and point fingers to parents that they were not involved enough to prepare their children to acquire academic excellence (Dizon-Ross, 2019). This puts great pressures on the minds of the children and their parents. The attrition in the academic performance of pupils in Isin has been a serious concern to all the stakeholders. This is evident by the report of 2022/2023 common entrance extermination results where only 40% of pupils performed well while about 60% performed below average. Among the factors that are associated with the children' poor academic performance is lack of parental involvement and unfavorable home environments.

Involving parents in the academic maters of their children has been identified as one of the vital factors in promoting their school success. Parents are the first teachers at home and potential in early literacy skills acquisition of the children for higher academic progress and positive attitude towards learning. Parents play a crucial role in shaping their children early learning and development. Even before children start school, parents are often their primary teachers and role models. Parents provide the foundation for language, social, cognitive and emotional development of their children. They set the stage for their children future success in school and beyond. Parents remain a key influence in their children learning development even after they start school. Parental involvement refers to the different ways through which parent engage in their children education. This includes things like, communicating with teachers, attending school events, helping with homework, discussing school related issues with children at home, just to mention but few.

Parental involvement has been identified as one of the vital factors in promoting children's school success. In particular, various aspects of parental involvement. There is a strong belief in society that parental involvement has a strong positive influence on children academic performance (Ma, Shen & Yuan, 2016). Children learning not only takes place in schools but also the contexts of families and communities also play a great role. On an international scale, parental involvement in school has long been heralded as an important and positive variable on children's academic and socioemotional development. Therefore, parental involvement is germane to children learning and academic performance. The relationship between parental involvement and academic performance has long been an area of research across the world (Boonk, Gijsselaers & Brand-Gruwel, 2018).

Cross, Marchand, and Rivas-Drake (2019) defined parental involvement as the investment in the education of children. It is also defined as parents' engagement in activities which foster learning and performance of their children (Roy & Giraldo-García, 2018). To Park and Holloway (2017) parental involvement includes a wide variety of actions parents take for the benefit of children's academic success at school. These include parenting style, parental expectations and aspirations, home rules and parental supervision; parents' attitudes towards children activities, helping with homework, visiting the school to talk to teachers, reading with children, discussing school events, attending school functions including



parents teacher meetings and volunteering in classroom and beliefs regarding their child's education ( Ntekane, 2018).

Parental involvement refers to a situation where parents are directly involved in the education of their children, they involve themselves and are involved by the school and teachers in the learning process of their children, and they fulfil their duties as parents in making sure that their children are assisted in the process of learning as much as possible (Patton, 2019). Extant literature has revealed parents involvement in multiple activities including learning activities at home, effective communication between teachers and parents, participation in school activities, talking with the child about school, bringing a cake to a party, presenting in front of the child's class, and getting actively involved in shaping the school's policies by attending school conferences (Boonk, Gijsselaers & Brand-Gruwel, 2018).

These parental behaviours and activities have been reported to have positive relationship with a range of positive children academic outcomes and largely determine personality development and academic performance of children (Boonk, et al. 2018). Hill, Witherspoon and Bartz (2018) ably capped it by adding that parental involvement is an individual right and responsibility for families, and social need and should be considered as a lever to promote the academic performance of the children. However, Rahman, Chowdhury, & Obaydullah (2019) was of the opinion that parental involvement has six dimensions including parenting, communicating with the school, volunteering at school, learning at home, participating in school decision making, and collaborating with community.

Lara and Saracosti (2019) observed that empirical findings have demonstrated a positive association between parental involvement in children education and academic performance, improving children's self-esteem and their academic performance as well as school retention and attendance. Epstein (2018) maintained that schools become successful when a strong and positive relationship among children, parents, teachers and the community has been established. All students' are more likely to experience academic success if their home environment is supportive. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) reiterated that family involvement has also been found to be associated with positive school attachment on the part of children as well as positive school climates.

Benner, Boyle and Sadler (2016) asserted that, research has also evidenced that programs focused on increasing parental involvement in education have positive impacts on children, families, and school communities. Parent-school partnership allows for the conceptualization of roles and relationships and the impact on the development of children in a broader way. Education practitioners, and policy makers alike, intuitively accept the importance of parental involvement at home and schools. Thus, it is reported that academic achievement is positive related to having parents who enforce rules at home and make follow up in school to enhance their children academic success. However, knowing how to meaningfully engage them for the benefit of children is less understood (Li, & Qiu, 2018).

Cross, Marchand and Rivas-Drake (2019) added that school administrators and teachers face challenges related to reaching out to parents in positive ways, using strategies that will result in improving children academic performance and balancing the needs of parents and professional autonomy is a reliable option. Parents are often eager to support their children's learning though not all of them know how to help, or why their involvement is important. Moreover, many parents do not have out of school programs for their children. Not only because they are not aware of it, but also they lack resources and knowledge on how they should be prepared and implemented. Parents with less formal education and low-income tends to be preoccupied with survival strategies and thus either focus inward on the family, or time does not permit them to pursue home-school involvement strategies that may improve child's schooling academic performance. The current study is intended to explore the parameter of of parental involvement on school activities and its possible impacts on academic achievement of pupils and specifically based on parental involvement in school matters, parent-teacher communication, and parental participation in school activities. Hence, the need to investigate the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils academic performance in public and private schools in Isin Local Government, Kwara State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Among the major challenges facing elementary school education today in Nigeria is how to involve parents in academic matters of their children in order to enhance their academic performance. Parental involvement in the form of attending to pupils educational need, interest and support, monitoring children activities at home, communicating with the school teachers, visiting the school, attending school events, helping with homework, reading together and discussing school issue with the pupils have an influence on their academic performance and attitudes towards educational activities. Despite the established correlation between parental involvement and pupils' academic performance, many parents feel uninformed about some educational practices and how they can be more involved in their child's learning. Although a number of strategies have been implemented locally and internationally to encourage parent-teachers involvement in educational practices, still there exists a notable gap in active participation among the parents. In Isin local government, there hardly exists any study on parental involvement in elementary schools. A study of this nature particularly on the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils' academic performance is limited. Undoubtedly, accumulation of these challenges can make pupils to become low achiever, depressed, drop out and misbehave. It stands to reason that a study like this need to be conducted so as to ascertain empirically whether parental involvement influence pupils academic achievement. Thus, this study set out to examine the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils academic performance in Isin L.G.A., Kwara State.

### **Research Question**

One research question was raised to guide the study:

1. What is the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils' academic performance in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State?

## Research Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significant:

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of parental involvement on the pupils' academic performance based on gender.

## Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised of all parents of primary school pupils in Isin local government areas of Kwara State. A Simple random sampling technique was used to select 200 parents as respondents out of 10,105 parents within the study area and 20 schools, 10 public and 10 private, out of 192 schools participated in the study. The instrument used for the data collection for the research study was a structured questionnaire titled, "Perceived Influence of Parental Involvement on Pupils Academic Performance Questionnaire (PIPIPAPQ)" was used for the data collection. Copies of the questionnaire questions were given to the lecturers in the department of early childhood and primary education for face and content validity. The reliability of the instrument was tested using test retest method after which Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to correlate the result and the score of 0.76 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question and independent sample t-test analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

## Results

**Research question one:** What is the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils' academic performance in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State?

**Table 1:** Perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils' academic performance in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Parental level of involvement in children education has influence on their academic achievement	3.62	.544	
2	Helping children with their homework has influence on their academic achievement	3.46	.519	
3	Checking children's work at home influence their academic achievement	3.46	.590	
4	Children whose their parents are actively involved in their education perform better academically than the children whose their parents are not involve in their education	3.17	.715	
5	Parental level of participation in children's school environmental sanitation has influence on their academic achievement	2.94	.725	
6	Attending children's school events like play day has influence on the children academic achievement	3.41	.603	
7	Prompt payment of children's school fees has influence on their academic achievement	2.91	.780	

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8	Visiting children at school influence their academic achievement.	3.39	.645
9	Provision of learning materials like textbooks have influence on children academic achievement	2.99	.678
10	Frequent communication with the child's teacher(S) has influence on a child's academic success	3.43	.666
11	Motivating children towards their learning has influence on their academic achievement	3.16	.837
12	Financial handicap may hinder a parent from being actively involved in their children educational activities	2.80	.772
13	Participating in your child's school events such as the end of the year party has an influence on their academic achievement	2.84	.742
14	Attending your child's school parent- teachers meeting (PTA) regularly has influence on the child's academic achievement	3.40	.745
15	Provision of necessary learning materials for children has influence on their academic success	2.62	.768
16	Not providing means of transportation to children to and from school can influence their academic achievement	2.99	.786
17	Employing a lesson teacher for a child after school has influence on the child's academic achievement	3.44	.652
18	Monitoring a child's activities after school has influence on their academic achievement	2.93	.689
19	volunteering to help at your child's school learning can influence his/her academic achievement	3.17	.677
20	Discussing schoolwork with your children has an influence on their academic achievement	2.39	.689
21	Transporting your child personally to and from school has a significant influence on the child academic achievement	2.99	.785
<b>Weighted Mean</b>		<b>3.20</b>	

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*Decision rule: 0.00-2.49 (negative), 2.50-4.00(positive)*

Table 1 shows the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils' academic performance in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State. The finding shows the perception of parents on the influence of parental involvement on pupils' academic performance in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State. The parents teachers agreed that attending children's school events like play day has influence on the children academic

performance visiting children at school influence their academic performance; frequent communication with the child's teacher(s) has influence on a child's academic success, motivating children towards their learning has influence on their academic performance monitoring children activities after school influence their academic performance and attending child's school parent- teachers meeting regularly has influence on the child's academic performance. The mean rating of all the items is more than 3.20 which indicates that the parents perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils' academic performance in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State is high. In light of this, the Perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils' academic performance in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State is positive.

### **Test of Hypothesis:**

**Ho1:** There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils academic performance based on gender in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State

**Table 2:** Summary of t-test Analysis on the significant difference in the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils academic performance based on gender

Perceived Influence	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.	Remark
Female	55	62.6667	5.98888	.265	109	.422	
Male	56	62.3462	6.26501				

Variable: Perceived influence of parental involvement

Table 2 shows the significant difference in the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils academic performance based on gender. The finding revealed that there was no significant difference ( $t = .265$ ;  $df = 109$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ). The hypothesis was therefore not rejected in the light of the result since the significant value is more than 0.05. This implies that female parent perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils academic performance (Mean= 62.67) is not significantly different from that of male parents (Mean= 62.35). This means that there is no significant difference in the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils academic performance based on gender.

### **Discussion of findings**

The study investigated the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils academic performance in Isin L.G.A., Kwara State. The findings of the study revealed that the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils' academic performance in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State is positive. This is evident in Table 1 as the mean rating of all the items was more than 3.20 and standard deviation respectively. The findings also revealed that parental involvement on pupils educational matters have a significant influence on the pupils' academic performance. This is in line with Lau, Li and Rao, (2011) who opined that, Parental involvement is associated with a wide range of positive child

academic outcomes in schools, such as good academic skills, positive attitudes and social competence. In addition, Lemmer (2014) also found that parental involvement on children academic achievement enhances not only the children's academic performance but it also had positive influence on their attitude and behavior and even that of their teachers. Parental involvement in learning acts as a gel that helps to make learning for children pleasant and encourages them to work even more as they seek to make those closest to them proud. This implies that the parental level of involvement on pupils educational activities play an important role on their academic performance.

The findings of the study also revealed that there is no significant difference in the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils academic performance based on gender. This is evident in table 2 as the t-test analysis shows no significant difference in the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils academic performance based on gender ( $t = .265$ ;  $df = 109$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ). The table shown that the female parents (Mean= 62.67) is not significantly different from that of male parents (Mean= 62.35). The study found that, both the male and female parents agreed that involving in children academic activities through home work, monitoring children activities after school, promptly payment of school fees, visitation to their children school, attending PTA meeting, and frequent communication with the school teachers have influence on the pupils academic performance. This finding is supported by Odoh and Chukuani (2017) who found that both parents assisted their children with learning facilities such as textbooks, favorable environment and solving assignment to do better in their academic performance.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the perceived influence of parental involvement on pupils' academic performance was positive. This implies that the parental levels of involvement on pupils' educational activities play an important role on their academic performance.

### Recommendations

Based on the above conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. School should create a welcoming environment where parents can visit anytime to make enquiry about their children academic progress and Schools should encourage parents to attend Parents Teachers Association meetings
2. School should make phone number available to all parents to promote parental involvement in their children education activities and school should foster cordial relationship between teacher and parents through communication books.
3. Government should provide all the necessary learning materials to pupils and make educations free to allow the pupils from low income families have access to quality education.



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**COLLEGES OF EDUCATION PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS PERCEPTION ON  
CAREER PROSPECTS IN THE FIELD OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE,  
DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION**

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**Abstract**

*This study assessed the perceptions of pre-service teachers on career prospects in the field of early childhood care, development and education in Colleges of Education. The study adopted qualitative research design. The population consist of all pre-service teachers in 200L in the Department of ECCE in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwest, Nigeria. The sample size targeted at was 50% of 42 pre-service teachers that was meant to be proportionally selected using proportional sampling technique that was to make a total number of Twenty-One (21) pre-service teachers in Federal College of Education, Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria. The total of nineteen pre-service teachers responded to the interview which made the sample size to reduce. Three research questions guided the study. Interview questions that were sectionalized into three was used to generate data for the study. The Section A, B, and C had 3 questions each that covered pre-service teachers' perceptions, motivations and future plan on ECCE as a profession. The data generated were analyzed using content analysis. The results shows that the respondents perceived that they have opportunities for professional growth in the field. In conclusion the pre-service teacher had positive perception on ECCE as career. The study recommends that Government and stakeholders should give more recognition to ECCE.*

**Keyword:** Pre-service teachers, Career, prospects, Perception, Early childhood Education.

**Introduction**

There is no doubt that Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) plays a vital role in shaping the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of young children, this is why Britto et al.(2017) was of the opinion that providing children with appropriate and sufficient early childhood education is of great benefits to children brain development as it will reflect on their language, cognitive, and socio-emotional skills development. This could explain that when children are able to receive high-quality ECCE, they may likely exhibit emotional stability as well as socially acceptable norms and values.

Harrison, Ring, Sullivan & Wall (2020) were of the opinion that caregivers/teachers in the field of early childhood care and education should be individuals that can be entrusted with all the responsibilities of achieving effective and quality learning experience for young children at early childhood stage and this does not exclude pre-service caregivers/teachers as they hold a significant position in promoting quality and standard education in the society.

It was confirmed that the societal perception of ECCE as a career in the society was viewed as low-status profession and this influences the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding their career prospects and societal recognition of ECCE as a profession (Jones et al., 2021). Despite the increasing awareness on importance of early childhood care and education, the societal attitudes towards the profession as a career remains a significant factor that is influencing the career choices of pre-service teachers. In a view of changing the perceptions of pre-service caregivers/teachers on societal view of the field as a career with low-status, various factors need to be put into consideration such as orientation on career prospects, professional development opportunities and personal motivations.

As the value of Early Childhood Development is increasingly acknowledged, there are promising career opportunities in ECCE. It is also in agreement with (Smith and Johnson, 2022) that ECCE degrees allows people to pursue careers as preschool teachers and childcare workers with a grow in demand for qualified ECCE professionals in preschool and daycare centers.

Professional development opportunities would play a crucial role in shaping the perceptions of pre-service teachers on ECCE as a career, Johnson et al. (2022) states the importance of access to ongoing training, mentorship programs, and opportunities for career advancement in attracting and retaining pre-service teachers in the field of early childhood education. Pre-service teachers are more likely to consider ECCE as a long-term career option when provided with support for professional development and opportunities for leadership roles within the field. Investigating the perceptions of pre-service teachers in federal college of education Iwo regarding ECCE as a career is essential for informing policies, training programs, and recruitment strategies in the field of early childhood education. Hence, this study investigated the perceptions of pre-service teachers on ECCE as a career path.

### **Objectives:**

The overall objective of the study was to investigate the perceptions of pre-service teachers on ECCE as a career prospects. The specific objectives were to;

1. Investigate the perceptions of pre-service teachers on prospects of ECCE as a career.
2. Determine what motivated pre-service teachers to choose ECCE as a course of study
3. Examine the future plans of pre-service teachers on ECCE as a career.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do the pre-service teachers perceive the prospects in ECCE as a career?
2. what motivated pre-service teachers to choose ECCE as a course of study
3. What are the likely future plans of pre-service teachers on ECCE as a career.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted qualitative research design. The population consist of all pre-service teachers in 200L in the Department of ECCE in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwest,

Nigeria. Federal College of Education, Iwo was purposively selected for the study. The sample size targeted at was 50% of 42 pre-service teachers in the Department of ECCE that were proportionally selected using proportional sampling technique to make a total number of Twenty-One (21) pre-service teachers in Federal College of Education, Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria. The total of nineteen pre-service teachers responded to the interview which made the sample size to reduce. Three research questions guided the study. Interview questions that were sectionalized into three was used to generate data for the study. The Section A, B, and C had 3 questions each that covered pre-service teachers' perceptions, motivations and future plan on ECCE as a profession. The data generated were analyzed using content analysis.

### Results

Research question 1: How do pre-service teacher perceive Ecce as a career?

To answer research question one, pre-service teacher responses were analyzed using content analysis to give the report. 19 respondents gave their perceptions on ECCE as a career.

The report revealed through In-depth interview (II) shows that 13 pre-service teacher perceive ECCE as a career that is well recognized in shaping life of children compared to other field of education, two (2) pre-service teachers perceive ECCE as a career that shows empathy than other field of study, two pre-service teachers are indifferent that ECCE is not well recognized as a profession compared to other field, one of the pre-service teacher perceive ECCE as a career that build children life compared to other field, why a pre-service teacher does not perceive ECCE as a career compared to other field. The results also show all the pre-service teacher perceived that there are opportunities for professional growth in the field

Research question 2: Do the pre-service teacher's has self-interest or being motivated to study ECCE as a course of study

To answer research question two, content analysis was used to analyze the interview responses.

The report shows that 9 pre-service teachers has self-interest and were motivated to pursue their career in ECCE so as to make positive impact in the development of Nigerian children and to understand the relationship and influence of the family and community in promoting child's social and emotional skill, 5 pre service teacher were of the opinion that they want to gain insight on child's development, 3 pre service teachers stated that they want to Build strong foundation for children, two of the pre-service teachers were motivated to study ECCE through role models in the field.

Research question 3: What are the future plans of pre-service teachers on ECCE as a career.

To answer research question content analysis was also used to make report.

The report shows that 16 pre-service teachers had the mind set of long-term goals in studying ECCE as a career as they planned to become high skilled and knowledgeable experts in the field, in other to make a positive impact on the lives of young children, to contribute to children development and learning, to advocate for the importance of early childhood education and promote its recognition in society. 16 pre-service teachers also stated that engaging in professional developmental programs, with the latest research, teaching methods, and best practices which will help them stay updated and succeed as an early childhood expert. A pre-service teacher plan to be an expert in developing children with special needs while another pre-service teacher looks forward to be an expert in building stronger relationship with the community and parents

### **Discussions**

The findings of how pre-service teachers perceived ECCE as a career revealed that majority of the pre-service teachers interviewed had positive perception of chosen ECCE as a career and also perceive that there is opportunity in the field of study, this result is in agreement with Brown & Garcia, (2019) who found out that ECCE is seen by pre-service teachers as a field that fosters innovation, creativity, and personal development. It also corroborates Smith and Johnson (2020) who discovered that the chance to positively influence children's lives during their formative years is the main reason why pre-service teachers consider early childhood education and care (ECCE) to be a fulfilling career path. Pre-service teachers' opinions of ECCE as a career will be influenced by their motivations, which include a love of working with young children, empathy, and a sense of fulfillment from fostering and supporting their development. (Garcia & Smith, 2018). These intrinsic factors play a significant role in attracting individuals to pursue a career in early childhood education and sustaining their commitment to the profession over time.

A rewarding opportunity to positively influence young children's lives and support their holistic development is presented by a career in early childhood education (ECE). The foundation for children's future academic success and socioemotional wellbeing is laid by professionals in this field.

### **Conclusion**

The study assessed the perceptions of pre-service teachers on career prospects in the field of early childhood care, development and education in Colleges of Education. In this study the researcher discovered that some pre-service teacher perceives ecce as a career that is well recognized In shaping life of children compared to other field of education. Also, it shows that ECCE is seen by pre-service teachers as a field that fosters innovation, creativity, and personal development. This research revealed that government, stakeholders, expert in ECCE, associate bodies should invest more on ECCE by providing pre service teachers opportunities in engaging in professional development workshops and seminars.

### **Recommendations.**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.



1. Government should fund ECCE centers in all colleges of education more to enable pre service teachers to have prior knowledge of what ECCE entails aside the theoretical part of the knowledge the practical is very important.
2. All Colleges of Education should make it mandatory for pre service teachers to be posted to ECCE centers in their locality for their teaching practice.
3. Government, stakeholders, Associate bodies should always organize workshops, trainings and seminars for pre service teachers on the importance of ECCE.

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**IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS ON PUPILS' ACADEMIC  
ACHIEVEMENT IN KOSOFE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, LAGOS STATE.**

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**Abstract**

*The study investigated the impact of educational reforms on pupils' academic achievement in Kosofe Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design using stratified sampling technique. The participants were 50 primary school teachers, and 50 primary school pupils were selected randomly. Educational Policy Reforms Questionnaire (IERPAA) was used to carry out the study. The instrument contained two sections. Section A gathered background information from respondents, while Section B contained questions related to the research objectives. Descriptive and inferential analyses were employed to analyze the data, with descriptive statistics used to analyze respondents' background information. The findings indicated that the policy changes in Kosofe Local Government have had a moderate but positive impact on various aspects of pupil development. Recommendations were therefore proffered based on the findings.*

**Introduction**

Educational policy refers to the principles and government policies that guide the planning, administration, and evaluation of education systems. It encompasses a wide range of issues including the allocation of resources, curriculum standards, teacher qualifications, and the structure of educational institutions. Educational policies are instrumental in shaping the quality and accessibility of education, and they reflect the societal values and goals of a particular time and place. The impact of educational policy is far-reaching, affecting not only the immediate educational environment but also long-term societal outcomes. Effective educational policies can lead to improved student achievement, greater equity in education, and a more skilled workforce. Conversely, poorly designed policies can exacerbate inequalities and hinder educational progress. For example, policies that promote early childhood education have been shown to significantly improve cognitive and social outcomes for children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Heckman, 2011). Additionally, policies that focus on teacher quality and professional development can enhance teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Darling-Hammond, Educational

policy reforms are initiatives undertaken to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of educational systems. These reforms are designed to address emerging challenges, adapt to societal changes, and enhance educational outcomes for all students. Educational policy reforms can have profound impacts on students, teachers, and the broader society. Effective reforms can lead to improved student outcomes, greater equity, and a more skilled workforce.

Pupils' academic achievement refers to the extent to which pupils have achieved their educational goals, as measured by standardized tests, grades, and other performance indicators. It encompasses not only cognitive skills and knowledge but also other aspects of learning such as critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and social skills. Academic achievement is a crucial indicator of the effectiveness of the education system and the quality of instruction provided.

Educational policy reforms play a crucial role in shaping the quality and effectiveness of the education system, with the goal of improving pupils' academic achievement. These reforms encompass a wide range of initiatives aimed at addressing various factors that influence student learning outcomes. One significant impact of educational policy reforms is the improvement in teaching quality. Policies that focus on teacher training and professional development have been shown to enhance educators' pedagogical skills and knowledge, leading to better student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2017). For example, a study by Hattie (2009) found that effective teaching practices have a substantial impact on student achievement, with highly skilled teachers producing significantly higher learning gains. Educational policy reforms often target reducing educational inequality to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. By addressing disparities in resources, funding, and access to quality education, these reforms aim to level the playing field for Pupils from diverse backgrounds (OECD, 2018). Research by Reardon (2011) highlights the importance of equitable educational policies in narrowing the achievement gap between Pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds, thereby improving overall academic achievement. Reforms focused on curriculum and instruction aim to align educational practices with current research and best practices in teaching and learning. By updating curricula to be more relevant and engaging, educational policy reforms can increase pupils' motivation and interest in learning (OECD, 2018). Studies have shown that innovative teaching methods and curriculum reforms can lead to improvements in student achievement (Hattie, 2009).

Another significant impact of educational policy reforms is the promotion of student engagement in learning. Policies that emphasize student-centered approaches, project-based learning, and hands-on experiences have been shown to increase pupils' motivation and involvement in their education (OECD, 2018). Research by Ryan and Deci (2000) underscores the importance of intrinsic motivation in driving academic achievement, with engaged pupils demonstrating higher levels of performance and persistence. Educational policy reforms play an important role in shaping the quality and effectiveness of education systems worldwide. These reforms are often driven by the need to improve educational

outcomes, address inequities, and adapt to changing societal and economic demands. In Nigeria, educational policy reforms have been implemented to enhance the quality of education and improve academic achievement among pupils. This study focuses on the impact of such reforms on pupils' academic achievement in Kosofe Local Government Area, Lagos State.

Lagos State, as one of Nigeria's most populous and economically significant states, has been at the forefront of educational reforms. The state government has introduced various policies aimed at improving the quality of education, such as the Lagos State Education Reform Policy (LASERP). LASERP includes initiatives like increased funding for schools, teacher training programs, curriculum updates, and the provision of educational materials and infrastructure improvements (Ogunode, 2020). Educational reforms in Lagos State also emphasize the integration of technology in education. The introduction of e-learning platforms and the provision of digital resources have been aimed at enhancing teaching and learning processes. These initiatives are expected to bridge the digital divide and ensure that pupils are well-equipped with the necessary skills for the 21st century (Adeyemi & Uko-Aviomoh, 2020).

Despite these efforts, there are still challenges that hinder the effective implementation of educational policies. Issues such as inadequate funding, lack of trained teachers, and poor infrastructure continue to affect the quality of education in many schools. Additionally, socio-economic factors and disparities in resource allocation between urban and rural areas contribute to variations in educational outcomes (Olaleye, 2017).

Kosofe Local Government Area, being a part of Lagos State, experiences these dynamics firsthand. The area encompasses a mix of urban and semi-urban communities, with varying levels of access to educational resources. Understanding the specific impacts of educational policy reforms in this context is essential for identifying areas of improvement and ensuring that the intended benefits of these policies are realized. Studies have shown that effective educational reforms can lead to significant improvements in pupils' academic performance. For instance, increased investment in teacher training has been associated with better teaching practices and improved student outcomes (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010). Similarly, the provision of adequate learning materials and infrastructure has been linked to higher academic achievement (Glewwe et al., 2011). However, the success of these reforms depends on several factors, including the level of implementation, stakeholder involvement, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. Ensuring that policies are effectively translated into practice requires collaboration between government agencies, educators, parents, and the community at large.

This study aims to examine the impact of educational policy reforms on pupils' academic achievement in Kosofe Local Government Area, Lagos State. By analyzing data on academic performance before and after the implementation of key policies, this research

seeks to provide insights into the effectiveness of these reforms and identify factors that contribute to or hinder their success.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Educational policy reforms are often implemented with the aim of improving academic outcomes and addressing systemic issues within educational systems. However, the effectiveness of these reforms can vary significantly depending on various factors such as the level of implementation, socio-economic context, and the specific needs of the pupil's population. In Kosofe Local Government Area, Lagos State, despite numerous educational reforms, there are persistent challenges that may be hindering the academic achievement of pupils. One major problem is the inconsistency and inefficiency in the implementation of educational policies. Although policies are designed to enhance educational quality, there is often a gap between policy formulation and actual practice. This discrepancy can lead to inadequate resources, insufficient teacher training, and poor infrastructure, all of which negatively impact pupils' learning experiences and outcomes (Ogunode, 2020). Another significant issue is the high pupil-to-teacher ratio in many schools within Kosofe LGA. Overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention and support to each pupil, which is essential for addressing diverse learning needs and improving academic outcomes. This problem is compounded by the shortage of qualified teachers, which further undermines the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes (Adeyemi & Uko-Aviomoh, 2020). In light of these challenges, this study seeks to investigate the impact of educational policy reforms on pupils' academic achievement in Kosofe Local Government Area.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to:

1. examine the specific educational policy reforms implemented in Kosofe Local Government Area, Lagos.
2. assess the extent to which these educational policy reforms have been implemented effectively in schools within Kosofe.
3. explore the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders, including pupils and teachers, regarding the impact of educational policy reforms on pupils' academic success.

### **Research questions**

The following questions guided the study:

1. What extent has these educational policy reforms been implemented effectively in schools within kosofe schools?
2. What specific policy changes have been implemented in Kosofe Local Government, and how have they impacted pupils' outcomes?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers, and Pupils regarding the effectiveness of educational policy reforms in Kosofe Local Government?

## Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to examine the impact of educational policy reforms on Pupils academic achievements in Kosofe Local Government, Lagos State. The

Gender	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Male	24	23.5
Female	78	76.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100.0</b>

target population consisted of Pupils and teachers in schools in kosofe, Lagos state. Stratified sampling was used to select participants from various primary

schools in kosofe local government. Primary schools from the local government were randomly chosen. A total of (100) teachers and pupils responded, 50 teachers and 50 pupils were selected randomly to participate in the study. Data was collected using a self-structured questionnaire titled "Impact of educational policy reforms on pupils' academic achievement," (IEPRPAA) which consisted of two sections. Section A gathered background information from respondents, while Section B contained questions related to the research objectives. Descriptive and inferential analyses were employed to analyze the data, with descriptive statistics used to analyze respondents' background information. The study aimed to draw reliable conclusions and inferences regarding the impact of educational policy reforms on pupils' academic achievement in Kosofe local government, Lagos.

## Results

**Table 1.**

*Distribution of Teacher based on Genders*

Table 1 indicated that out of 102 teachers sampled for Education Policy in Kosofe Local Government, 24(23.5%) were male teachers while 78 (76.5%) were female. This shows that female teachers who participated in the study were more than their male counterparts.

**Table 2.**

*Distribution Teachers based on Highest Qualification*

Highest Qualification	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
NCE	12	11.8
B. ED	74	72.5
M.ED	14	13.7
PhD	2	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2 indicated that out of 102 teachers sampled for Education Policy in Kosofe Local Government, 12(11.8%) were NCE holders; 74(72.5%) were B, ED holders; 14(13.7%) were M. ED holders while 2(2.0%) were PhD holders. This implies that majority of the biology teachers involved obtained B.ED.

## Answering of Research Questions

**Research Question 1:** To what extent have education reforms been implemented effectively in schools within Kosofe?

The research question 1 was answered with Table 3 below



**Table 3**

*Education reforms implemented in schools in Kosofe*

S/N	Items	Mean	SD
1	Educational policy reforms have been clearly communicated to teachers in Kosofe schools.	3.04	.628
2	The reforms have led to significant improvements in teaching quality in Kosofe schools.	3.06	.577
3	The reforms have been adequately funded in Kosofe schools.	2.75	.624
4	The reforms have resulted in better student academic performance in Kosofe schools.	3.02	.580
5	The reforms have been consistently implemented across all schools in Kosofe	2.69	.613
<b>Average</b>		<b>2.912</b>	<b>0.604</b>

Table 3 above illustrate the education reforms implemented as indicated by the respondents. Taking the benchmark of mean as 2.50. In analysing research question 1, the responses of the teachers in Kosofe (means) for all the five questionnaire items were above the benchmark of 2.50 mean. The average mean and standard deviation are (M = 2.91, SD = 0.604). This indicated that the teachers in Kosofe agreed that the education reform implemented was highly effective.

**Research Question 2:** How have specific policy changes implemented in Kosofe Local Government impacted pupils' outcomes?

The research question 2 was answered with Table 4 below

**Table 4**

*Specific policy changes implemented*

S/N	Items	Mean	SD
1	The policy changes have improved pupils' academic achievement in Kosofe Local Government.	2.98	.613
2	The policy changes have enhanced pupils' critical thinking skills in Kosofe Local Government.	2.94	.542
3	The policy changes have increased pupils' enthusiasm for learning in Kosofe Local Government.	3.02	.545
4	The policy changes have reduced pupil dropout rates in Kosofe Local Government	2.96	.525
5	The policy changes have improved pupils' social skills in Kosofe Local Government.	3.00	.597
<b>Average</b>		<b>2.98</b>	<b>0.564</b>

Table 4 above illustrate the specific policy changes implemented as indicated by the respondents. Taking the benchmark of mean as 2.50. In analysing research question 1, the responses of the teachers in Kosofe (means) for all the five questionnaire items were above the benchmark of 2.50 mean. The average mean and standard deviation are (M = 2.98, SD

= 0.564). This indicated that the teachers in Kosofe agreed that the specific policy changes implemented was highly impacted pupils' outcomes.

**Research Question 3:** What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of educational policy reforms in Kosofe Local Government?

The research question 3 was answered with Table 5 below

**Table 5**

*Perceptions of teachers regarding educational policy reforms*

S/N	Items	Mean	SD
1	Teachers believe the reforms have improved their teaching practices in Kosofe Local Government	3.20	.564
2	Teachers believe the reforms have improved their teaching experiences in Kosofe Local Government.	3.10	.536
3	Teachers think the reforms have been well-managed in Kosofe Local Government.	2.94	.672
4	Teachers think the reforms have made teaching more engaging in Kosofe Local Government	3.06	.611
5	Teachers believe the reforms have addressed their professional development needs in Kosofe Local Government	2.94	.577
	<b>Average</b>	<b>3.048</b>	<b>0.592</b>

Table 5 above illustrates the perceptions of teachers regarding educational policy reforms as indicated by the respondents. Taking the benchmark of mean as 2.50. In analysing research question 1, the responses of the teachers in Kosofe (means) for all the five questionnaire items were above the benchmark of 2.50 mean. The average mean and standard deviation are (M = 3.05, SD = 0.564). This indicated that the perception of teachers in Kosofe regarding the effectiveness of educational policy reforms was very high.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study revealed that educational reforms have been implemented effectively largely in schools within Kosofe Local Government Area of Lagos with a grand mean of 2.91. This implies that educational policy reforms have been clearly communicated to teachers (3.04); the reforms have led to significant improvements in teaching (3.06); adequate funds have been made available (2.75); The reforms have resulted in better student academic performance (3.02) and the reforms have been consistently implemented across all schools (2.69). These findings corroborate with Glewwe et al., (2011) who opines that the provision of adequate learning materials and infrastructure has been linked to higher academic achievement among pupils.

Moreso, the result shows that the specific policy changes implemented has enhance the pupils' outcomes with a grand mean of 2.98. This has shown that the policy changes have improved pupils' academic achievement (2.98); the policy changes have enhanced pupils'

critical thinking skills (2.94); the policy changes have increased pupils' enthusiasm for learning (3.02); the policy changes have reduced pupil dropout rates (2.96), and the policy changes have improved pupils' social skills (3.00). This score suggests a moderate level of agreement among respondents in relation to the pupil's academic achievement which is a key indicator of the effectiveness of educational policies. While the score indicates some perceived improvement, it also suggests that there is room for further enhancement. According to Hattie (2009), effective policy changes should lead to measurable improvements in student academic outcomes, which highlights the need for continuous evaluation and adjustment of these policies.

Lastly, the result of the findings indicates that the perception of teachers is high regarding the educational policy reforms with a grand mean of 3.05. This implies that teachers believe the reforms have improved their teaching practices (3.20); teachers believe the reforms have improved their teaching experiences (3.10); teachers think the reforms have been well-managed (2.94); teachers think the reforms have made teaching more engaging (3.06); and teachers believe the reforms have addressed their professional development needs (2.94) in Kosofe Local Government Area of Lagos state. This relatively high score indicates a strong agreement among teachers that the reforms have positively impacted their teaching practices. This agrees with Hanushek & Rivkin, (2010) that increased investment in teacher training has been associated with better teaching practices and improved student outcomes. This finding suggests that the reforms in Kosofe have been successful in fostering better instructional strategies among teachers.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the policy changes in Kosofe Local Government have had a moderate but positive impact on various aspects of pupil development. While improvements in academic achievement, critical thinking skills, enthusiasm for learning, dropout rates, and social skills have been observed, the overall agreement among respondents indicates that there is still room for further enhancement. The findings suggest that while the reforms are heading in the right direction, continuous monitoring, evaluation, and refinement are necessary to fully realize their potential benefits. Addressing the areas needing improvement and reinforcing successful strategies will be crucial to achieving more substantial and widespread positive outcomes for pupils in Kosofe Local Government.

### **Recommendations**

This study recommends the following.

1. Government should continue to provide adequate funding and consistent implementation across all public schools in Kosofe Local Government Area of Lagos state to sustain and improve on the level of progress made.
2. School administrators should create a more engaging and interactive learning environment by incorporating diverse teaching methods, such as project-based learning, to maintain and increase pupils' interest and motivation during teaching and learning process.

3. Curriculum planners should ensure that teachers teach pupils on how to effectively communicate, collaborate, and resolve conflicts in order to create a more positive and supportive school environment that will benefit both their academic and personal growth.

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**ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS AS PREDICTORS OF PRESCHOOL SERVICE PROVIDERS COMPLIANCE WITH WHO GUIDELINES ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN 0-5 YEARS IN LAGOS STATE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study investigated environmental factors (location, school plants, pupil population, school culture and partnering) as predictors of Lagos based preschool service providers compliance with WHO early childhood development guidelines on physical activities. A correlational research design was adopted for the study, while the population comprises all preschool service providers in Lagos State. A total of 100 respondents were drawn as sample for the study through a purposive sampling technique. A self-developed questionnaire named “Caregivers Compliance Questionnaire (CGCQ)” was used for data collection in the study. The CGCQ was developed by the researcher and face validity by a panel of three experts comprising two experts in Early Childhood Education and one expert in Physical Education. A test re-test method was adopted to ascertain the reliability of CGCQ ( $r=0.92$ ), hence, its adoption for data collection in the study. The CGCQ was hosted online for two weeks to obtain adequate responses from targeted participants. Data collected was analysed using the SPSS version 23 and presentation of demographic data was done via percentage, mean and standard deviation, while Regression Analysis was used in testing stated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that environmental factors had significant ( $F=14.258$ ;  $P<0.05$ ) composite contribution to preschool service providers’ compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines on physical activities for Children 0-5 years. However, school plants ( $t=3.402$ ;  $P<0.05$ ) and pupils population ( $t=3.233$ ;  $P<0.05$ ) were the two specific significant predictors of preschool service providers’ compliance. It was recommended that Government should ensure total implementation of the guidelines by WHO in Nigeria.*

**Key Words:** *Preschool, Service-providers, Compliance, Guidelines, Physical-activities*

**INTRODUCTION**

Early child hood education is the foundation upon which all other educational levels are built. The development of any nation largely depends on the educational accomplishment of the populace. Proper and good education facilitates quality learning all through life among people of any age group. The importance of Early Childhood education was emphasized in the 2019 UNICEF report titled “A World Ready to Learn” in which quality early childhood education was reported to generate a positive sequence of learning, while lack of access to pre-primary education was believed to widen achievement gaps and restricts opportunities. The report further stressed that children who are not able to meet up at a young age often “never catch up with their peers”, consequently, bringing about high dropout rates. The 2030 Sustainable goals agenda, also stressed the significance of early childhood education when it stated in target 4.2 that “all girls and boys are entitled to have

access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education”.

In order to achieve the 2030 Sustainable goals agenda, it is imperative that children should be exposed to good learning environment. The learning environment is a combination of space and the context in which children learn. A child's learning environment can be regarded as anywhere a child finds his or herself in which learning takes place. It could be at home in the school, outdoor and indoor.

Majority of the early childhood learning programmes emphasizes the importance of good learning environment for the all-round development of the child. One of such is the Montessori Method.

The Montessori Method of Education was developed by Maria Montessori. She propagated the method after working with mentally challenged children in a hospital. She found out that the children responded to learning when exposed to learning activities they can relate to.

Montessori is based on the certain principles, it believes that the education of a child should be total. It must develop their full potential, physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Also it believes the child is an active learner and as such must be exposed to activities which will help the child in learning. In this regard individual activity is encouraged every child is encouraged to learn at his or own pace. The method also believes that a child should be intrinsically motivated to learn. They learn when they want to learn they do not have to be externally motivated. It also encourages self-discipline in the use of the Montessori equipment which the children are exposed to. In addition, it's a child centered approach in which the teacher is just there to guide and direct the child in the learning activities. In addition, the method plays a lot of emphasis on social interaction both in the class with peers and in the environment. Above all it believes that good environment affects the child's development and as such a learning environment must be stimulating and very comfortable. (Montessori, M.1995) The whole early childhood program is based on physical activities and as such children should be exposed to large or spacious learning environment. Spacious learning environment encourage good movement or physical activities; it also affects how they play which is an important aspect of physical activities in children.

The World Health Organization (WHO) came up with a document “Guidelines on Physical Activity, Sedentary Behavior and Sleep for Children under 5 Years of Age” in 2019, to help guide professionals and service providers in quality delivery of early childhood education for this age group in any part of the globe. The guideline gives recommendation for time to be spent by children 0-5 years. In its executive summary the guidelines the policy identified “physical inactivity as a leading risk factor for global mortality and a contributor to the rise in overweight and obesity.” Considering the fact that the early childhood period is a period of “rapid physical and cognitive development and a time during which a child's habits are formed and family lifestyle habits are open to changes and adaptations”.

According to the guidelines, policy makers, professionals, service providers and care givers should work towards meeting the daily physical activity time recommendations particularly in children below 5 years. The guidelines provided engagement time schedules for children towards proper development for different age groups within the bracket 0-5 years. The time



schedule across 24-hour period were established on three key constructs for implementation i.e. sleep time, sedentary time and physical activity (light, moderate or vigorous-intensity)".

For Infants to 1-year-old the guideline states that they should be physically active several times a day in a variety of ways. They should be particularly active through interactive floor based activities or play. Those not yet mobile the guidelines suggested at least 30 minutes in prone or tummy position spread throughout the day while the infant is awake..

Children 1-2 years of age should spend at least 180 minutes in different types of physical activities at any intensity, from moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity. This should be spread throughout the day.

Children 3-4 years should spend at least 180 minutes in a variety of physical activities at any intensity. Out of this 180minutes, 60 minutes should be moderate to vigorous intensity which should be spread out throughout the day. Light physical activity includes going for a stroll, playing musical instruments or standing up to paint. While moderate physical activity gets children to huff and puff and it could be any of the following: walking quickly, riding to child care or school, dancing, skipping, jumping in puddles or flying kites to swimming.

The vigorous physical activity gets children huffing and puffing more than the moderate and also makes them sweat a lot. It could be playing games like "chase", riding a bike fast, playing organized sports like soccer, basketball, football.

In addition, activities that strengthen muscles and bones. These activities make the muscles work more than normal and put extra forces on the bones. They include jumping, running, climbing and lifting.

Also, there is energetic play which is a natural way for children to move and be active. Examples are when babies rock and kick their feet, while older children run, jump, throw, dance to music, play with playground equipment like merry go round and much more.

In summary, the overall goal of the guidelines is to provide recommendations on the amount of time young children under 5 years of age should spend being physically active or sleeping for their health and wellbeing in a 24-hour day.

Physical activity is a significant component in Early Childhood education. Most Early Childhood Education programmes revolves round physical activities.

According to Kracht, Webster and Staiano (2020) "Physical activity is paramount for appropriate growth and development of young children" In a research conducted in Canada it was observed that despite the benefits "one-third of preschool age children (3-5 years of age ) did not meet the physical activity guidelines including 3 hours of physical activity daily (of which 1 hour is moderate- to-vigorous physical activity [MVPA]."

This goes to show that children of this age group should engage in activities that involves a lot of movement considering the fact that "early childhood is a period of rapid physical and cognitive development and a time during which a child's habits are formed and family lifestyle habits are open to changes and adaptations."(WHO Guidelines on Physical Activity ,Sleep and Sedentary lifestyle for children 0-5years,2019)

According to Kracht et al 2020, there is need to increase physical activity and decrease screen –time in preschool age children in order to meet age appropriate guidelines and ensure healthy development.

The Australian parenting websites in an article titled “physical activities for babies, why and how much”(2020) for children 0-8 years stated that “physical activity is vital for young children’s health and development”. It further stressed that it involves “any activity that involves moving your body” According to the article “children need different amounts of physical activity at different ages” and “its good for children to spend more time being active and less time sitting still”

It further went to buttress that physical activity is important for children’s health, well being and development now and in the future” Some benefits of physical activities as highlighted in *raisingchildren.net.au* include: “it strengthens children’s bones, muscles, hearts and lungs, improves children’s coordination, balance, posture and flexibility, helps children stay at a healthy weight, reduces children’s risk of getting heart disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes later in life”

Considering the fact that children begin to establish behavior patterns from an early age ,it is important to encourage an active and healthy lifestyle from an early age. This will help them to maintain a healthy mind and healthy lifestyle in the future.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Will environmental factors (location, school plants, pupil population, school culture and partnering) jointly contribute to preschool service providers compliance with WHO Early Childhood Development Guidelines for children zero-5 years in Lagos State?
2. Will environmental factors (location, school plants, pupil population, school culture and partnering) relatively contribute to preschool service providers compliance with WHO Early Childhood Development Guidelines for children zero-5 years in Lagos State?

### RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. Environmental factors (location, school plants, pupil population, school culture and partnering) will have no significance joint contribution to preschool service providers compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for children zero to 5 years in Lagos State?
2. Environmental factors (location, school plants, pupil population, school culture and partnering) will have no significance relative contribution to preschool service providers compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for children zero to 5 years in Lagos State?

### RESEARCH METHOD AND PROCEDURE

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

The descriptive research design was adopted in conducting this study. To this end data was collected using a self-developed questionnaire, collated and analyzed in order to fully ascertain and describe the extent to which personal and environmental factors acted as determinants of pre-school service providers’ compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for children 0-5 years in Lagos State.

### POPULATION

The population for this study comprised all pre-school service providers in Lagos State. Focus was however on pre-school service providers in Educational District Five with emphasis on Ojo Local Government Area.

### SAMPLING

A total of 20 pre-school facilities were used. To this end, five respondents (Head of school and four care givers) were drawn from each facility to make a total of 100 participants in all that served as sample respondents. They were selected through a stratified random sampling technique, based on location.

### RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The following instruments were used for data collection in the study:

#### *a. Caregivers Compliance Questionnaire (CGCQ)*

A self-developed questionnaire named “Caregivers Compliance Questionnaire (CGCQ)” was used for data collection in the study. The CGCQ comprises four sections i.e. A and B, C and D. Section A was designed to elicit demographic information of respondents e.g. sex, age, qualification, experience etc., while section B, C and D were designed to obtain information on variables in the study. The CGCQ was designed using two variants of Likert’s attitudinal scale and respondents were required to indicate their opinion on each item of the questionnaire by ticking one of the under listed alternatives to be attached to each item as follows:

Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)
Very Correct [VC]	Correct [C]	Incorrect [I]	Very Incorrect [VI]

The developed CGCQ was presented to a panel of 3 experts in Early Childhood Education of which the supervisor was one for content and construct validity. Their suggestions were used in perfecting the structural content of the instrument before administration.

The test re-test method was used in ascertaining the reliability of CGCQ. This required the administration of CGCQ on 10 respondents that were not included in the study sample twice with two weeks’ interval between the two sets of administration. The data collected were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to establish the reliability and R-value of 0.92 was obtained and considered appropriate for the adoption of CGCQ for data collection.

### DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected from respondents using the online platform. The CGCQ was hosted on google forms platform and a link was generated and sent to selected participants with attached procedure to be followed to access and complete the questionnaire online. In addition, networking and referral systems were adopted in mobilizing respondents to complete the online questionnaire for the purpose of data collection. The online questionnaire was hosted online for two weeks to ensure adequate participation of respondents and was closed to receiving responses at the expiration of the stipulated 2 weeks.

Data collected was collated and used to develop a frequency distribution for analysis. The descriptive statistics of percentage, mean and standard deviation were used for data

presentation, while the inferential statistics of Regression Analysis was used in testing all stated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance, using the SPSS version 23.

## RESULT

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents by sex**

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	6	6.0
Female	94	94.0
Total	100	100.0

From table 1 above, it could be observed that 6% of the total respondents were males, while the remaining 94% were females. This is an indication that early childhood caregivers are predominantly females.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by age**

Age	Frequency	Percent
Less than 25 years	3	3.0
25-40 years	57	57.0
Above 40 years	40	40.0
Total	100	100.0

From table 2 above, it could be observed that 3% of the total respondents were less than 25years, while 57% were 25-40 years and 40% were above 40 years. This is an indication that caregivers between 25-40 years are in the majority followed by those above 40 years and those less than 25 years are the lowest.

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents by highest educational qualification**

Highest Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percent
SSCE	5	5.0
OND	9	9.0
NCE	18	18.0
BSC/BA	15	15.0
BED	33	33.0
PGDE	13	13.0
MSC/MA	2	2.0
MED	5	5.0
Total	100	100.0

From table 3 above it could be observed that 5% out of the total respondents had SSCE as their highest educational qualification, while OND NCE and BSC/BA holders were 9%, 18% and 15% respectively. Those with BED were 33%, PGDE holders 13%, MSC/MA holders 2% and MED holders 5%. This indicates that respondents with BED degrees make up the majority of caregivers followed by NCE and BSC/BA coming a distant 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents by specialization**

Specialization	Frequency	Percent
Specialist	17	17.0
Non-Specialist	83	83.0
Total	100	100.0

From table 4 above it was observed that 17% out of the total respondents were specialist (with degrees in early childhood education) while 83% were non-specialist. This indicates that only 17% of respondents are specialist in early childhood education while the others are not despite majority of the respondents having certification in education.

**Table 5: Distribution of respondents by years of care giving experience**

Care Giving Experience	Frequency	Percent
Less than 5 years	30	30.0
5-10 years	26	26.0
Above 10 years	44	44.0
Total	100	100.0

From table 5 above, it could be observed that respondents with less than 5 years caregiving experience were 30% out of the total respondents, while 5-10 years were 26% and above 10 years 44%. This indicates that respondents above 10 years form the majority followed by less than 5 years and 5-10 years forming the minority.

**Table 6: Distribution of respondents by training undertaken**

Training Undertaken	Frequency	Percent
Yes	69	69.0
No	31	31.0
Total	100	100.0

From table 6 above it could be observed that 69% of the total respondents have undertaken trainings in Early Childhood while 31% have not undertaken any.

**Table 7: Distribution of respondents by number of trainings attended**

Trainings Attended	Frequency	Percent
None	31	31.0
1	11	11.0
2	20	20.0
3	15	15.0
Above 3	23	23.0

From table 7 above, it could be observed that 31% out of total respondents have not attended any training, 11% have attended 1 training, 20%, 15%, 23% have attended 2, 3 and above 3 trainings respectively. This indicates that respondents that have attended above 3 trainings form the majority out of the respondents that participated in the study.

**Table 8: Distribution of respondents by membership of professional association**

Membership	Frequency	Percent
Yes	21	21.0
No	79	79.0
Total	100	100.0

From table 8 above, it could be ascertained that 21% of total respondents were members of early childhood professional association while 79% are not. This indicates that the majority of early childhood caregivers do not belong to any professional association.

**Table 9: Distribution of respondents by level of compliance with WHO early childhood development guideline for children 0-5 years**

Level of Compliance with WHO Early Childhood Development Guideline for Children 0-5 years	Physical Activity	Sedentary Behaviour	Sleep
Low Compliance	40 (40%)	39 (39%)	29 (29%)
Moderate Compliance	37 (37%)	43 (43%)	71 (71%)
High Compliance	23 (23%)	18 (18%)	-
Total	100	100	100

From table 9 above it could be observed that in the area of physical activity 40% out of total respondents had low compliance level, 37% had moderate compliance, while 23% high compliance. This indicates low compliance level with WHO early childhood development guidelines for children 0-5 years in the area of physical activity among caregivers. In addition, 39% of the total respondents had low compliance level for sedentary behaviour, 43% moderate compliance and 18% high compliance. This indicates moderate compliance level with WHO early childhood development guidelines for children 0-5 years in the area of sedentary behaviour among caregivers. Furthermore, the result on the table above, shows that 29% of the total respondents had low compliance level for sleep, 71% moderate compliance and no high compliance. This indicates a moderate compliance level with WHO early childhood development guidelines for children 0-5 years in the area of sleep among caregivers.

## **Hypothesis Testing**

### **Hypothesis one**

Hypothesis one states that environmental factors (location, school plants, pupil population, school culture and partnering) will have no significant joint contribution to preschool service providers' compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for Children 0-5 years in Lagos State. This hypothesis was tested using the linear regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented on the table below.



**Table 12: Linear regression result on environmental factors joint contribution to preschool service providers' compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for Children 0-5 years**

Model		ANOVA					
R	0.657 <sup>a</sup>	Source	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
R-Square	0.431	Regression	17122.813	5	3424.563		
AR-Square	0.401	Residual	22577.937	94	240.191	14.258	0.000
SEM	15.498	Total	39700.750	99			

*a. Dependent Variable: Compliance level*

*b. Predictors: (Constant), Location, School Plants, Pupil Population, School Culture, Partnering*

It could be observed from table 12 above that environmental factors joint contribution to preschool service providers' compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for Children 0-5 years could be predicted at 43.1% (R-square=0.431) accuracy. The table also shows that a significant F-value (F=14.258; P<0.05) was obtained at 0.05 level of significance, hence, hypothesis three stated above is hereby rejected. This implies that environmental factors jointly contributed to preschool service providers' compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for Children 0-5 years.

### **Hypothesis two**

Hypothesis two states that environmental factors (location, school plants, pupil population, school culture and partnering) will have no significant relative contribution to preschool service providers' compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for Children 0-5 years in Lagos State. This hypothesis was tested using the linear regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented on the table below.

**Table 13: Linear regression result on environmental factors relative contributions to preschool service providers' compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for Children 0-5 years**

	USC		SC		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	26.361	18.207		1.448	0.151
Location	0.963	1.131	0.069	0.852	0.397
School Plants	3.234	0.950	0.428	3.402	0.001
Pupil Population	3.126	0.967	0.293	3.233	0.002
School Culture	0.876	1.509	0.065	0.580	0.563
Partnering	0.240	0.901	0.026	0.266	0.790

*a. Dependent Variable: Compliance Level*

Table 13 above shows the relative contributions of environmental factors (Location, School Plants, Pupil Population, School Culture and Partnering) to preschool service providers' compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for Children 0-5 years. It could be ascertained that of the five environmental factors investigated, significant t-values were obtained regarding School Plants (t=3.402; P<0.05) and Pupil Population (t=3.233; P<0.05). Therefore, hypothesis four stated above is hereby rejected in

respect of the two environmental factors. This implies that School Plants and Pupil Population both had positive significant contributions to preschool service providers' compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for Children 0-5 years.

### **Discussion of Findings**

In testing hypothesis one, a significant F-value was obtained at 0.05 level of significance, hence, hypothesis one stated was rejected. This implies that environmental factors jointly contributed to preschool service providers' compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for Children 0-5 years. This finding above agrees with that of Choi and Lee (2011) who through their study discovered that a significant positive correlation between caring for a child in an appropriate caring environment and the quality of care services among the groups studied. Oke (2016) reported that pupils' learning environment still remains paramount in their learning achievement and has ability to shape their behaviour. She further said learning environment of early childhood should be physically and socially sound, stimulating, joyful, caring and secure. The surroundings must be attractive enough to arouse learning. However, instructional supervision helps caregivers to create a neat, calm and relaxed atmosphere for learning. It promotes good learning environment that helps children to inquire, explore the natural world. The above strongly attest to the importance of caregivers complying with the WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for Children 0-5 years, as this will go a long way in ensuring that early childhood service providers and caregivers create and maintain ideal environment for the children to develop.

While testing hypothesis two, significant t-values were obtained regarding School Plants and Pupil Population, thus hypothesis two stated was rejected in respect of the two environmental factors. This implies that School Plants and Pupil Population both had positive significant contributions to preschool service providers' compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for Children 0-5 years. This finding agrees with that of Wordu and Obele (2019) who discovered through their study that a significant relationship exist between school plant provision and academic performance of students in the secondary schools. The conclusion was that school plants are basic necessities in educational system and their provision improves teachers teaching skill and students' academic performance. The above finding can be further substantiated by the submission of Taiwo (2019) that effective school plant planning has been implicated to have a positive effect on academic performance of pupils. Therefore, cautions should be taken in planning and development of school plant for efficient academic service delivery. In addition, Obasi & Asodike (2014) also maintained that school plant is the resources put to use by the human elements in the school to make for functional and quality educational delivery process. School plant and facilities induce positive teaching/learning outcomes. In relation to the findings above, Oduwaiye, Sofoluwe, Akinnubi and Ibrahim (2018) in their study on school population and teachers' effectiveness in Kwara State Basic Schools found out that there was a positive significant relationship between school population and teachers' effectiveness in Kwara State public basic schools. Their result also discovered that a positive significant relationship existed between school population and effective lesson delivery. It is cumbersome for the teachers to modify the behaviours of the learners in an overcrowded classroom. In agreement with the above finding, Gordon (2013) expressed that the population rise puts extra pressure on educational facilities and that there has been population explosion in schools especially in towns and cities in recent years. This explosion

in many places affects lesson delivery as many classes in cities number from 60-150 students. Teachers many times find it difficult to move in between rows of students in the classroom. Assignment given to students cannot be marked and checked by teachers as the number makes the teacher ineffective, most notably in public schools (Gordon, 2013). The above goes to affirm that school population, whether small or large affect teachers' effectiveness, but larger class population negatively affects teacher's effectiveness in terms of lesson delivery and class management, most significantly, at preschool level.

### Conclusion And Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study the following conclusions were arrived at:

#### Conclusion

- 1) Early childhood caregivers are predominantly made up of the females. This is to be expected considering the fact that women have the mothering capabilities of training children.
- 2) Caregivers that fall within the age range of 25-40 are in the majority. This set of people are more active and can cope with the challenges of moving around with children in this age group who are quite active themselves
- 3) Environmental factors jointly contributed to preschool service providers' compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for Children 0-5 years.
- 4) School Plants and Pupil Population both had positive significant contributions to preschool service providers' compliance with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for Children 0-5 years.
- 5) The study shows that the compliance level among preschool service providers with the WHO early childhood development guidelines for children 0-5 years is quite low in the area of physical activity. This indicates that the children are not engaged in lots of physical activities.
- 6) The environment where the pre-school facilities are located contributes to the compliance level with WHO Early Childhood Education Development Guidelines for Children 0-5 years. In this regard school plants and pupil population plays major significant roles.

#### Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusions highlighted above, the following are the recommendations from this study:

- i. A workshop or training should be organized for caregivers to enlighten them about the WHO development guidelines for children 0-5 years as well as international best practices in the area of Early childhood education. This will not only enable our caregivers to compete favourably with colleagues outside the country, but also improve the quality of education delivered at the preschool level.
- ii. Preschool facility owners should be encouraged to adopt the standard teacher pupil ratio for caregiving of children 0-5 years.
- iii. School plants (building, playing ground and general aesthetics) should be given prominence in any preschool facility. Government should make it a major criterion

- before approval is given and providers should make sure there is constant face lifting of infrastructure.
- iv. In the training of Early Childhood practitioners, teachers should take courses in Physical Education. This will enable them acquire age appropriate required skills in Physical Education that will aid the development of the children. This is important because the children of this age group are quite active and it is recommended by WHO that they should be exposed to a lot of physical activities which help in their growth and development.
  - v. Physical education teachers should also take courses in Early Childhood Education to enable them acquire the required skills needed in teaching children of this age group.
  - vi. Further studies can be carried out in the following areas:
    - Perception of Early Childhood educators or caregivers towards WHO required physical activity engagement for children 0-5years.
    - Influence of school plants on preschool teachers' effectiveness in classroom instruction delivery.

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**"PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ADVOCACY: ENHANCING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT"**

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**Abstract**

*Parental involvement and advocacy are pivotal in enhancing early childhood education programs through community engagement and support. This paper explores the multifaceted roles parents play in enriching educational experiences during the formative years of childhood. By actively participating in their children's education, parents not only foster a supportive learning environment but also contribute significantly to academic achievement and socio-emotional development. Community engagement emerges as a critical factor in augmenting parental involvement. Collaborative efforts between schools, local organizations, and families create a network of support that reinforces educational goals. This synergy promotes inclusive practices, strengthens social bonds, and empowers parents to advocate for high-quality educational resources and policies. Effective parental advocacy goes beyond individual engagement; it encompasses collective action aimed at systemic improvements in early childhood education. Through partnerships with educators and policymakers, parents influence decision-making processes, ensuring that programs are responsive to diverse familial and community needs. Furthermore, this paper examines the impact of parental involvement and advocacy on educational equity and access. By amplifying marginalized voices and addressing disparities in resources, parents contribute to creating more equitable learning opportunities for all children. In conclusion, the paper sees parental involvement and advocacy are indispensable in shaping early childhood education.*

**Keywords:** Parental involvement, advocacy, early childhood education, community engagement, educational equity, supportive learning environment.

**Introduction**

Parental involvement and advocacy play pivotal roles in enhancing early childhood education programs through community engagement and support. Early childhood education (ECE) encompasses the crucial formative years of a child's development, laying the foundation for lifelong learning and socio-emotional growth (National Association for the Education of Young Children 2020 and Fowowe 2022). This period is significantly influenced by the active participation of parents in their children's educational journey, which not only fosters academic success but also contributes to overall well-being (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Community engagement in ECE programs amplifies the impact of parental involvement by creating collaborative networks between families, educators, and local



resources (Epstein, 2020). Such partnerships are essential in addressing diverse educational needs and ensuring equitable access to quality early childhood education for all children (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 20017). Moreover, parental advocacy serves as a catalyst for policy changes and program improvements that reflect the evolving needs of children and families in the community (Desimone, 2021).

This paper explores the multifaceted benefits of parental involvement and advocacy in early childhood education, emphasizing how community engagement and support contribute to the enrichment of ECE programs. By examining existing research and case studies, this study aims to provide insights into effective strategies that promote collaborative efforts among parents, educators, and community stakeholders to optimize early childhood learning experiences and outcomes.

Effective parental involvement in early childhood education not only enhances academic outcomes but also nurtures a supportive environment where children can thrive socially and emotionally (Bergin & Bergin, 2019). Research underscores that when parents actively engage in their child's education, children demonstrate higher levels of school readiness, increased motivation to learn, and improved behavior both at home and in educational settings (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2020).

Moreover, community engagement enriches early childhood education by integrating local resources and expertise into educational programs, thereby addressing the holistic needs of children and families (Epstein, 2020). Collaborative efforts between schools, community organizations, and families promote a shared responsibility for children's educational success and well-being (Fantuzzo, McWayne, & Perry, 2014). This approach not only enhances the quality of ECE programs but also fosters a sense of belonging and connectedness within the community.

Parental advocacy further amplifies the impact of involvement by advocating for policies that support early childhood education initiatives and funding allocations (Desimone, 2019). Through advocacy efforts, parents can influence decision-making processes at local, state, and national levels, ensuring that resources are allocated equitably and effectively to support early childhood education programs (Henderson & Mapp, 2022).

The synergy between parental involvement, community engagement, and advocacy in early childhood education underscores their collective importance in fostering positive developmental outcomes for young children. This paper aims to explore these interconnected facets, offering a comprehensive understanding of how collaborative efforts can enhance early childhood education programs and support children's growth and development.

### Theoretical Framework

There are many theories that can be adopted for this study but ,the most suitable is Capital Theory, developed by Pierre Bourdieu in 1986.It is a suitable framework for understanding the power of community engagement and partnerships in promoting Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Nigeria. Bourdieu's Capital Theory highlights the importance of social, cultural, and economic capital in shaping individual and group outcomes.

In the context of ECE in Nigeria, Capital Theory can be applied as follows:

**Social Capital:** Community engagement and partnerships can foster social capital among stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and community leaders. This can lead to increased trust, cooperation, and collective action, ultimately benefiting ECE programs.

**Cultural Capital:** Partnerships with local organizations and communities can help develop culturally relevant ECE curricula, acknowledging the importance of cultural capital in shaping educational experiences.

**Economic Capital:** Collaborations with private sector entities and government agencies can provide resources and funding, addressing economic capital constraints that often limit ECE programs in Nigeria.

The educational implications of Capital Theory for stakeholders are listed below:

**Parents:** Increased social capital through community engagement can lead to greater involvement in their children's education.

**Teachers:** Cultural capital developed through partnerships can enhance their teaching practices and curriculum development.

**Community Leaders:** Economic capital acquired through partnerships can support resource mobilization for ECE programs.

**Private Sector Entities:** Social capital gained through partnerships can enhance their corporate social responsibility initiatives. -Government **Agencies:** Cultural capital developed through collaborations can inform policy decisions, supporting culturally responsive ECE programs. Therefore, applying Capital Theory, stakeholders can recognize the value of community engagement and partnerships in unlocking the power of ECE in Nigeria, ultimately improving educational outcomes for young children.

In addition, by recognizing the various forms of capital and their intersections, stakeholders can:

**Develop targeted strategies** to build and leverage social, cultural, and economic capital.

**Foster collaborative relationships** that promote mutual understanding and benefit.

**Address systemic barriers and inequalities** that hinder access to quality ECE.

**Create culturally responsive and inclusive learning environments.** -

Mobilize resources and support to sustain and scale up effective ECE programs.

Applying Capital Theory to the context of ECE in Nigeria, stakeholders can unlock the power of community engagement and partnerships, ultimately improving educational outcomes and life chances for young children.

In conclusion, Capital Theory offers a valuable framework for understanding the complex dynamics of community engagement and partnerships in promoting ECE in Nigeria. By recognizing the importance of social, cultural, and economic capital, stakeholders can develop effective strategies to build and leverage these resources, ultimately enhancing the quality and accessibility of ECE programs.

### Guided Questions

The following questions were generated to guide the study:

- 1) How can early childhood education programs effectively collaborate with parents to enhance learning outcomes for children?
- 2) What strategies have been successful in fostering community partnerships to support parental involvement in early childhood education?
- 3) In what ways can advocacy initiatives empower parents to play a more active role in shaping educational policies and programs for young children?
- 4) How do early childhood educators and administrators perceive the impact of parental engagement on the overall quality of education provided?

5) What role do local community resources and organizations play in supporting and strengthening parental involvement in early childhood education initiatives?

### **How can Early childhood Education Programme effectively collaborate with parents to enhance learning outcomes for children?**

Effective collaboration between ECE programs and parents is crucial for enhancing learning outcomes for children (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Research suggests that parental involvement in ECE programs leads to better cognitive, social, and emotional development in children (Horn & Sylvester, 2009). To collaborate effectively, ECE programs can:

- **Communicate regularly with parents** through various channels (e.g., newsletters, parent-teacher conferences) to keep them informed about their child's progress (Epstein, 2011).
- **Encourage parental participation** in ECE programs through volunteering, decision-making, and advocacy (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).
- **Provide opportunities for parents** to learn about child development and ECE best practices through workshops and training sessions (Katz & Eisenberg, 2013).
- **Foster a welcoming and inclusive environment** that values diversity and promotes cultural sensitivity (Gay, 2000).
- **Support parents in their role** as their child's first teacher by providing resources and guidance (Horn & Sylvester, 2009).

By adopting these strategies, ECE programs can build strong partnerships with parents, leading to improved learning outcomes and a more supportive and engaging learning environment for children (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

### **What strategies have been successful in fostering community partnerships to support parental involvement in Early childhood Education?**

Fostering community partnerships to support parental involvement in early childhood education (ECE) is crucial for creating a supportive environment that enhances children's learning and development. Several successful strategies have been identified in the literature, emphasizing collaboration between educational institutions, communities, and families.

#### **Establishing Collaborative Relationships:**

One effective strategy involves building strong, collaborative relationships between ECE providers, community organizations, and families. This approach emphasizes mutual respect, shared decision-making, and a commitment to common goals (Scripp & Paradis, 2014). By working together, stakeholders can leverage their respective strengths to support children's learning both at home and in educational settings.

#### **Creating Supportive Networks:**

Developing supportive networks within communities is another successful strategy. This can include forming parent-teacher associations (PTAs), neighborhood committees, or community advisory boards focused on ECE issues (Powell, 2017). These networks provide platforms for sharing information, discussing concerns, and brainstorming solutions collaboratively.

#### **Providing Parent Education Programs:**

Offering parent education programs tailored to the needs of families is essential. These programs may cover topics such as child development, literacy support, and strategies

for fostering learning at home (Dichtelmiller et al., 2012). By equipping parents with knowledge and skills, they are better prepared to support their children's educational journey.

### **Utilizing Technology:**

Leveraging technology can enhance communication and engagement between ECE providers, families, and communities. For instance, using apps or online platforms to share updates on children's progress, provide resources for learning activities at home, and facilitate virtual meetings or workshops can bridge geographical and logistical barriers (Sheridan et al., 2011).

### **Engaging Cultural Competence:**

Recognizing and respecting cultural diversity is crucial for effective community partnerships. ECE providers should embrace culturally responsive practices that honor families' traditions, languages, and values (Wilder et al., 2017). This fosters trust and meaningful engagement, ensuring that educational practices resonate with families from diverse backgrounds.

### **Promoting Two-Way Communication:**

Establishing regular and open communication channels between ECE providers and families promotes transparency and collaboration. This can include weekly newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, and informal check-ins (Powell, 2017). Encouraging feedback and actively listening to families' perspectives helps tailor educational experiences to children's needs.

### **Involving Community Resources:**

Engaging community resources such as libraries, museums, healthcare providers, and local businesses enriches the ECE experience. These partnerships can provide access to additional learning opportunities, health and wellness support, and enrichment activities that complement classroom learning (Scripp & Paradis, 2014).

Successful strategies for fostering community partnerships to support parental involvement in ECE are multifaceted and emphasize collaboration, communication, cultural competence, and the use of resources within the community. By implementing these strategies, educational institutions can create supportive environments where families are actively engaged in their children's early learning experiences.

### **In what ways can advocacy initiatives empower parents to play a more active role in Shaping educational policies and programs for young children?**

Advocacy initiatives can significantly empower parents to play a more active role in shaping educational policies and programs for young children through several key mechanisms.

Firstly, increased awareness and education are crucial. Many parents may not be fully informed about educational policies or their rights to participate in decision-making processes. Advocacy initiatives can educate parents about these policies, their implications for children's education, and the avenues available for parental involvement. For instance, workshops, informational sessions, and distribution of pamphlets or newsletters can help disseminate critical information (Dockett & Perry, 2014).

Secondly, building parent capacity is essential. Effective advocacy initiatives provide training and resources that equip parents with the skills needed to engage with

policymakers and educators. This includes workshops on advocacy techniques, understanding policy documents, and strategies for effective communication. By enhancing parent capacity, initiatives enable them to articulate their concerns and preferences more effectively (Sumsion & Wong, 2011).

Thirdly, creating platforms for parental voice and participation is key. Advocacy initiatives can establish formal structures such as parent councils, committees, or advisory boards within educational institutions or community organizations. These platforms provide opportunities for parents to express their views, contribute ideas, and collaborate with stakeholders in decision-making processes (Dockett & Perry, 2014).

Fourthly, advocacy initiatives can facilitate networking and collaboration among parents. By connecting parents with similar concerns or interests, initiatives create collective strength and amplify their voices. This networking can occur through community events, online forums, or support groups where parents can share experiences, strategies, and resources related to educational advocacy (Sumsion & Wong, 2011).

Fifthly, advocacy initiatives can promote policy changes that reflect parental priorities and aspirations. By advocating for reforms in educational policies and programs, initiatives can influence decision-makers to prioritize issues such as inclusive education, curriculum diversity, or parental involvement frameworks. This advocacy is often supported by research, data collection, and the presentation of compelling arguments based on parental input and evidence (Dockett & Perry, 2014).

Advocacy initiatives play a pivotal role in empowering parents to actively shape educational policies and programs for young children by enhancing awareness, building capacity, creating participation platforms, facilitating networking, and advocating for policy changes. These initiatives not only empower individual parents but also contribute to a more inclusive and responsive educational system that reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of families.

### **How do early childhood educators and administrators perceive the impact of parental engagement on the overall quality of education provided?**

Understanding how early childhood educators and administrators perceive parental engagement's impact on education quality involves exploring several key dimensions. Parental engagement is widely recognized as crucial for children's development and educational outcomes, particularly in early childhood education (ECE) settings. This discussion will delve into various perspectives supported by existing literature.

To begin with, parental engagement encompasses a range of activities, including communication between parents and educators, parental involvement in school activities, and support for learning at home (Epstein, 2001). According to Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack (2007), such engagement positively influences children's academic achievement, social skills, and overall school success. In the context of ECE, this involvement is equally significant, shaping the foundational experiences and learning environments children encounter.

Early childhood educators often view parental engagement as a critical component of their practice. They perceive engaged parents as partners in their efforts to provide holistic and effective education. Research by Sheridan, Edwards, Marvin, and Knoche (2009) highlights that educators recognize parental involvement as promoting positive learning experiences and emotional development in young children. By fostering a collaborative relationship with parents, educators believe they can better understand each child's needs and tailor their teaching accordingly.



Administrators within ECE settings also acknowledge the importance of parental engagement. They recognize its potential to strengthen the overall quality of education provided. According to Jeynes (2007), administrators perceive engaged parents as contributing to a supportive school environment and enhancing the effectiveness of educational programs. This sentiment is echoed in the work of Karp and Yoels (1976), who argue that parental involvement correlates with improved teacher morale and school climate, factors crucial for maintaining high educational standards.

Moreover, parental engagement aligns with broader educational goals, including efforts to promote equity and inclusivity. By involving parents from diverse backgrounds and communities, educators and administrators can better address cultural and linguistic diversity within ECE settings (Dockett & Perry, 2007). This inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging among families and supports children's cultural identity development, enhancing the overall educational experience.

However, challenges in fostering parental engagement also exist. Some educators and administrators note barriers such as language differences, socioeconomic disparities, and varying levels of parental availability or understanding of educational expectations (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). Overcoming these challenges requires proactive strategies, including effective communication strategies, outreach efforts, and culturally responsive practices.

Early childhood educators and administrators perceive parental engagement as pivotal for enhancing the quality of education provided in ECE settings. This perception is rooted in empirical research that demonstrates the positive impact of parental involvement on children's educational outcomes and social-emotional development. By fostering collaborative partnerships with parents, educators and administrators can create supportive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of young children, thereby laying a strong foundation for their future academic success.

### **What role do local community resource community and organizations play in supporting and strengthening parental involvement in Early childhood Education initiatives? Role of Local Community Resources and Organizations in Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education Initiatives**

Parental involvement in early childhood education (ECE) is crucial for children's development and educational success. Local community resources and organizations play significant roles in supporting and strengthening this involvement through various initiatives and programs.

#### **1. Access to Information and Workshops**

Local community centers and organizations often provide workshops and informational sessions for parents on topics such as child development, parenting techniques, and the importance of early education. These sessions equip parents with the knowledge and skills needed to actively participate in their child's learning journey.

According to a study by Holloway et al. (2020), "Community workshops and information sessions organized by local organizations have been found to significantly enhance parental awareness and involvement in early childhood education programs."

#### **2. Parenting Support Networks**

Community-based organizations create networks that connect parents with similar interests and concerns regarding their children's education. These networks facilitate peer support and sharing of experiences, which can empower parents and strengthen their involvement.



Research by Jones and Pomerantz (2019) highlights that "Parent support networks established by local community resources foster a sense of community among parents, encouraging them to engage more actively in their children's education."

### **3. Resource Sharing and Access**

Local libraries, community centers, and nonprofit organizations often offer resources such as books, educational toys, and learning materials that parents can use to support their children's learning at home. These resources are accessible to families who may not have the means to purchase educational materials independently.

In a recent report by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2023), it was noted that "Access to community-provided resources significantly contributes to improved parental engagement in early childhood education, particularly among underserved populations."

### **4. Collaborative Programs with Schools**

Community organizations frequently collaborate with local schools to develop joint initiatives aimed at involving parents in educational activities. These programs may include family literacy nights, parent-teacher conferences, and volunteer opportunities within the school setting.

According to a case study by Garcia and Lopez (2021), "Collaborative efforts between community organizations and schools have been effective in promoting parental involvement in early childhood education, leading to enhanced student outcomes and school-community relations."

### **5. Advocacy and Policy Influence**

Community organizations often advocate for policies that promote parental involvement in ECE at local and regional levels. They may engage in lobbying efforts, conduct research, and provide recommendations to policymakers to ensure that resources and support are available for parents.

The Center for Community Advocacy (2022) highlights that "Community organizations play a crucial role in advocating for policies that recognize the importance of parental involvement in early childhood education, thereby influencing systemic changes that benefit families."

Local community resources and organizations play multifaceted roles in supporting and strengthening parental involvement in early childhood education initiatives. Through providing access to information, creating support networks, offering resources, collaborating with schools, and advocating for policies, these organizations empower parents to actively participate in their children's educational journey. Their efforts contribute significantly to improving educational outcomes and fostering a supportive environment for families within the community.

By continuing to invest in and support these community-based initiatives, policymakers and stakeholders can further enhance parental engagement in early childhood education, ultimately benefiting children, families, and communities as a whole.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions**

Parental involvement and advocacy are crucial components in enhancing early childhood education programs. Research consistently shows that when parents are actively engaged in their children's learning, academic outcomes improve significantly (Hill & Tyson, 2020).

Furthermore, advocacy efforts by parents can lead to policy changes that benefit not only their own children but also the broader community (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2021). Effective community engagement further strengthens these efforts by creating a network of support around early childhood education initiatives (Manning & Baruth, 2023).

### **Suggestions:**

**Promoting Parental Education:** Schools and early childhood centers should provide workshops and resources to educate parents about the importance of their involvement and how they can support their child's learning at home (Smith & Benson, 2022).

**Enhancing Communication Channels:** Establishing effective communication channels between educators and parents is essential. Technologies such as mobile apps and online platforms can facilitate regular updates on children's progress and upcoming activities (Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2023).

**Creating Supportive Communities:** Encouraging community involvement beyond parents, including local businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies, can provide additional resources and support for early childhood education programs (Johnson, 2021).

**Advocacy for Policy Changes:** Parents should be empowered to advocate for policies that enhance the quality and accessibility of early childhood education, such as increased funding for preschool programs and improved teacher training (Cameron & Healey, 2023).

**Research and Evaluation:** Continuous research and evaluation of parental involvement strategies are necessary to identify best practices and adapt approaches based on empirical evidence (Brewer & Arbreton, 2022).

In conclusion, parental involvement and advocacy are fundamental pillars in ensuring the success of early childhood education programs. By fostering strong partnerships between parents, educators, and the community, and by advocating for supportive policies, we can create an environment where every child has the opportunity to thrive academically and socially from an early age.

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## SCALING UP THE STATUS OF THE ECCDE LINKAGE SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*This paper explores the current status of Universal Basic Education (UBE) Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) linkage schools in Nigeria. It critically examines infrastructure deficits, teacher quality, and community involvement, proposing strategies for scaling up these schools to better meet UBE objectives. By employing the CIPP model for evaluation and reviewing relevant literature, the paper provides actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing ECCDE linkage schools and improving early childhood education outcomes.*

**Keywords:** context, input, process, product, linkage schools

### **Introduction**

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria, initiated in 1999, represents a pivotal reform in the country's educational landscape aimed at eradicating illiteracy and providing universal access to quality education for children up to Junior Secondary School 3 (JSS 3). According to the National Policy on Education (NPE), which has undergone several revisions to address evolving educational needs, basic education is considered a fundamental right and a critical component for national development (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013). Linkage schools, integral to the UBE programme, are designed to serve as models of best practices in teaching and learning, intended to be replicated across the nation to uplift educational standards.

The UBE Act underscores the government's commitment to free and compulsory basic education, aligning with global commitments such as the Education for All (EFA) goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. Despite the clear objectives and substantial investments, the implementation of UBE has faced numerous challenges, particularly in the effective functioning of linkage schools. These schools are crucial for demonstrating effective educational practices that other schools can emulate, thereby enhancing the overall quality of basic education in Nigeria (UNESCO, 2015).

### **Scaling up the status of linkage schools**

Enhancing the status of UBE linkage schools is imperative for several reasons. Firstly, these schools serve as benchmarks for educational excellence, providing a model that other schools can follow. Secondly, they play a vital role in the dissemination of innovative teaching practices and educational resources. Lastly, improving the quality and reach of linkage schools directly impacts the overall effectiveness of the UBE programme,

contributing to national development goals by fostering a well-educated populace (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015).

The rationale for scaling up the status of UBE linkage schools is founded on the pressing need to enhance the quality of basic education in Nigeria. Despite significant strides made since the inception of the UBE programme, numerous challenges persist, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient trained teachers, and limited access to educational resources. Enhancing these schools can set a benchmark for educational standards, serving as centers of excellence that inspire and guide other schools (World Bank, 2017). The potential for linkage schools to influence broader educational reforms makes their enhancement a strategic priority.

Improving the status of linkage schools is not merely about increasing resources; it also involves implementing systemic changes that address these challenges holistically. This includes reforming policy frameworks, enhancing stakeholder engagement, and fostering community involvement. By focusing on the quality of education provided in linkage schools, these institutions can better fulfill their role as models of best practices, contributing significantly to the broader goal of achieving high-quality universal basic education across Nigeria (UNICEF, 2019). Moreover, the successful enhancement of linkage schools can catalyze improvements in other schools, thereby amplifying the impact of the UBE programme.

Linkage schools, when properly supported, have the potential to drive educational innovation and excellence. They can serve as testing grounds for new teaching methodologies, curricular changes, and educational technologies. The lessons learned and successes achieved in these schools can then be scaled to other schools, ensuring that the entire education system benefits from these innovations (Olaniran, 2018). Therefore, investing in the enhancement of linkage schools is an investment in the future of Nigeria's education system.

### **Theoretical Support**

Theoretical frameworks such as Systems Theory and Theory of Change offer structured approaches to understanding and addressing the challenges faced by linkage schools. Systems Theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of different elements within the educational system, suggesting that improvements in one area can lead to positive changes in others (Senge, 2006). For example, improving teacher quality can enhance student performance, which in turn can boost overall school effectiveness.

Theory of Change focuses on identifying desired outcomes and working backwards to determine the necessary steps to achieve them. This approach can be particularly useful in developing strategic plans for enhancing linkage schools. By clearly defining the goals and mapping out the steps needed to reach them, stakeholders can create more effective and targeted interventions (Weiss, 1995).

Previous studies on UBE linkage schools highlight the importance of strong leadership, community involvement, and adequate resources. Research indicates that schools with effective leadership and active community engagement tend to perform better. These studies also underscore the need for targeted interventions that address specific challenges faced by linkage schools (Olaniran, 2018). Drawing on these insights can help in developing comprehensive strategies for scaling up the status of UBE linkage schools in Nigeria.



### Linkage Schools in Nigeria: A Situational Analysis

The historical background of the UBE programme highlights its critical role in Nigeria's educational development. Launched to address the widespread issues of low enrollment and high dropout rates, the UBE programme has made significant progress in increasing access to education. However, the current state of linkage schools reveals a mixed picture. While some schools have achieved remarkable success, others continue to struggle with inadequate resources and infrastructure (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015). This variability underscores the need for targeted interventions to standardize the quality of education across all linkage schools.

Resource allocation remains a significant challenge for linkage schools. These schools often rely on a combination of government funding, donations from non-governmental organizations, and community contributions. However, these resources are frequently insufficient and inconsistently provided, leading to disparities in school quality. Effective stakeholder involvement is crucial for the success of linkage schools. Government agencies, NGOs, parents, and the community all play vital roles in supporting and enhancing educational outcomes. Enhanced collaboration and coordination among these stakeholders can significantly improve the performance of linkage schools (Ololube, 2016).

Teacher training and professional development are essential components of the UBE programme. While there are various programmes available, they are often inadequate in scope and reach, failing to address the specific needs of teachers in linkage schools. Continuous professional development is necessary to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge required to deliver high-quality education. Investing in teacher training can have a multiplier effect, improving student outcomes and overall school performance (Ajayi, 2013).

Infrastructure deficiencies are a major challenge for many linkage schools. Inadequate classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and other essential facilities limit the ability of these schools to provide a conducive learning environment. This is further exacerbated by insufficient maintenance and the lack of new construction to accommodate growing student populations (Nwogu, 2017). Addressing these infrastructural challenges is critical to enhancing the status of linkage schools.

Teacher shortages and the quality of existing teachers are also significant issues. Many schools face a severe lack of qualified teachers, and those who are available often lack access to continuous professional development opportunities. This affects the quality of education and student outcomes, creating a cycle of underperformance that is difficult to break (Afe, 2001). Implementing robust teacher training and retention programmes is essential for improving educational standards.

Funding constraints further compound these problems. Inconsistent and limited funding impacts all aspects of school operations, from infrastructure development to the procurement of learning materials. This issue is often linked to broader economic challenges and budgetary constraints within the education sector (Adepoju & Fabiyi, 2007). Ensuring stable and adequate funding is crucial for the sustainability and effectiveness of linkage schools.

Access and equity remain persistent barriers, particularly for marginalized and rural populations. Socioeconomic factors, cultural practices, and geographical constraints all contribute to disparities in educational access and outcomes. Addressing these barriers

requires targeted interventions that consider the unique needs of these populations (Odukoya, 2017). Enhancing equity in education is essential for achieving the broader goals of the UBE programme.

Community engagement is another critical factor affecting the performance of linkage schools. Low levels of community involvement and support for schools negatively impact the effectiveness and sustainability of educational programmes. Engaging the community in school management can foster a sense of ownership and accountability, leading to better educational outcomes (Abe, 2014). Strategies to enhance community involvement should be a priority in efforts to scale up the status of linkage schools.

### **Scaling Up UBE Linkage Schools in Nigeria: Way Forward**

Best practices from other countries offer valuable insights into how similar challenges can be addressed. For instance, Kenya's school feeding programmes have significantly improved student attendance and performance, particularly in marginalized areas. These programmes provide a reliable source of nutrition, which is essential for cognitive development and academic success (UNESCO, 2017). Adopting similar initiatives in Nigeria could enhance the effectiveness of linkage schools.

South Africa's teacher training initiatives, which focus on continuous professional development and mentorship, provide a model for improving teacher quality. These programmes emphasize practical training and in-service support, helping teachers to apply new skills and methodologies in the classroom (UNESCO, 2017). Implementing similar teacher development programmes in Nigeria could improve educational outcomes in linkage schools.

Strategic planning and policy recommendations are essential for scaling up the status of UBE linkage schools. This involves developing a comprehensive strategic plan that addresses the specific needs of these schools, including policy reforms aimed at improving funding mechanisms, enhancing teacher recruitment and training processes, and ensuring equitable access to education. Effective strategic planning can create a roadmap for achieving desired educational outcomes and addressing existing challenges (Adebayo, 2019).

A key element of this strategy is resource mobilization. Innovative approaches to increasing funding and optimizing resource allocation are needed. Public-private partnerships, community contributions, and international aid can play a significant role in this regard. Mobilizing resources from diverse sources can help ensure that linkage schools have the necessary funding to operate effectively and sustainably (Adebayo, 2019).

Teacher training and capacity building are critical components of the way forward. Establishing continuous professional development programmes can enhance teacher quality and, by extension, student outcomes. Partnerships with universities and educational organizations can provide valuable training opportunities, ensuring that teachers are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed (Ajayi, 2013). Investing in teacher development is essential for creating a high-quality educational environment.

Community and stakeholder engagement is another crucial aspect. Effective strategies for increasing community involvement and stakeholder participation include organizing regular meetings, creating school management committees, and promoting volunteerism. Engaging the community in school management can foster a sense of ownership and accountability,

leading to better educational outcomes. When communities are involved in decision-making processes, they are more likely to support and sustain school initiatives (Akinfolarin, 2017).

Monitoring and evaluation systems are vital for tracking progress and outcomes. Regular assessments and feedback mechanisms can help identify areas for improvement and ensure accountability. Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks can provide the data needed to inform decision-making and drive continuous improvement. These systems can help track the implementation of strategic plans and measure their impact on educational quality and student performance (Harris, 2014).

Innovative use of technology can also play a significant role in scaling up the status of linkage schools. Integrating technology into the classroom can enhance teaching and learning processes, provide access to a wider range of educational resources, and facilitate professional development for teachers. Digital platforms can be used for teacher training, student assessments, and the dissemination of educational materials, making it easier to implement and sustain high-quality educational practices (Nwosu, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

The comprehensive analysis highlights the critical areas that need attention to scale up the status of UBE linkage schools in Nigeria. Key findings indicate that while there have been significant achievements, numerous challenges remain. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic and collaborative approach that involves all stakeholders, from government agencies to local communities. By focusing on improving infrastructure, enhancing teacher quality, ensuring adequate funding, promoting equity, and increasing community engagement, linkage schools can better fulfill their role as models of educational excellence (UNESCO, 2015).

The potential impact of improving linkage schools on national development is significant. By serving as models of educational excellence, these schools can inspire and guide other institutions, contributing to the overall goal of high-quality universal basic education in Nigeria. The lessons learned from successful linkage schools can be applied to other schools, creating a ripple effect that enhances the entire education system. This, in turn, can contribute to broader national development goals, including economic growth, social stability, and improved health outcomes (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015).

### **Recommendations**

Based on the analysis, the following actionable recommendations are proposed:

1. There is a need for government to implement policy reforms that increase and stabilize funding for linkage schools. This requires ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and transparently to meet the needs of these schools. It also implies that regular audits and accountability measures are put in place to ensure that funds are used effectively.
2. To ensure improve the quality of education, governments should enhance teacher training programmes at all levels. This includes providing continuous professional development opportunities and fostering partnerships with universities and other educational organizations. Linkage school teachers should be equipped with the latest pedagogical skills and knowledge to effectively address the needs of their students.

3. There is also the need to strengthen community involvement in school management by organizing regular meetings, creating school management committees, and promoting volunteerism to foster a sense of ownership and accountability.
4. To ensure infrastructure improvement, there is a need to address infrastructure deficiencies by constructing and maintaining adequate classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and other essential facilities. Equipping schools with the necessary learning materials, including textbooks, computers, and laboratory equipment should be prioritized.
5. Concerning monitoring and evaluation, ministries and agencies in charge of linkage schools should establish robust monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress and outcomes. Regular assessments and feedback mechanisms can help identify areas for improvement and ensure accountability.
6. It is also vital to integrate technology into teaching and learning processes. Provide training for teachers on the effective use of technology in the classroom and ensure that schools have access to digital resources.
7. Concerning equity and access, government and other stakeholders should implement targeted interventions to address disparities in educational access and outcomes. They need to focus on marginalized and rural populations, addressing socioeconomic, cultural, and geographical barriers.
8. Given that linkage schools and other educational programmes thrive on public-private Partnerships, there is a need to foster collaborations with private sector entities and non-governmental organizations to mobilize additional resources and expertise.

By implementing these recommendations, UBE linkage schools can better serve as models of educational excellence, contributing to the overall goal of universal basic education in Nigeria. The successful scaling up of linkage schools will have a transformative impact on the entire education system, driving national development and improving the quality of life for future generations.

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**SCALING UP ROBOTICS EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

Robotics education has emerged as a pivotal component of modern pedagogy, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and technological literacy among pupils. In Nigeria, the integration of robotics education in the curriculum is still in its nascent stages, presenting both challenges and opportunities for educational advancement. This paper explores the current state of robotics education in Nigeria, highlighting the significance of early exposure to robotics and its potential to enhance STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) learning outcomes. Through a situational analysis, the study identifies key barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, limited teacher training, and insufficient funding. It also examines successful models and practices from other countries that could be adapted to the Nigerian context. Drawing on the in Vygotsky's Social Development Theory and Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development highlights the importance of social interaction and active learning as well as the need for a holistic approach involving government policy, community engagement, and private sector participation in scaling up robotics education. Recommendations for overcoming existing challenges and leveraging potential opportunities are provided, aiming to position Nigeria at the forefront of educational innovation in the digital age.

**Keywords:** robotics, robotics education, critical thinking, problem-solving, technology

**Introduction**

In an era where technological advancements are reshaping various aspects of human life, robotics education is increasingly recognized as a crucial component of early childhood education (ECE). Robotics involves not just the construction and manipulation of machines but also introduces children to basic principles of programming and problem-solving. Integrating robotics into early childhood education aligns with contemporary educational goals of fostering creativity, critical thinking, and a proactive approach to learning. The early introduction to robotics is seen as a means to equip young learners with essential skills for the future, promoting cognitive and socio-emotional development. Robotics education involves teaching young children the basics of programming, engineering, and problem-solving through the use of robots. This approach not only makes learning more engaging but also equips children with essential 21st-century skills.

Robotics encompasses a wide range of applications, from industrial robots used in manufacturing to educational robots designed for classroom settings. Educational robots, such as Bee-Bots, LEGO Mindstorms, and Dash and Dot, are specifically designed to be used by young children. These robots are typically user-friendly, programmable, and



provide hands-on learning experiences. For instance, Bee-Bots are small, simple robots that can be programmed to move in different directions, helping children understand basic programming concepts (Bers, 2020). Similarly, LEGO Mindstorms allows children to build and program their own robots, fostering creativity and problem-solving skills (Martins et al., 2018).

### **Background and Rationale**

Robotics education traditionally focused on higher educational levels, primarily within technical fields. Over the past decade, however, there has been a significant shift towards incorporating robotics into early education. Countries like Japan, South Korea, and the United States have pioneered the integration of robotics into early childhood settings, recognizing its potential to enhance problem-solving skills, creativity, and an understanding of technology from a young age. These advancements have been facilitated by the development of age-appropriate robotics kits and curricula designed to engage young learners in hands-on activities.

In Nigeria, the integration of robotics into early childhood education is relatively new and presents both opportunities and challenges. While there have been some efforts to incorporate technology into the educational system, robotics education has not yet gained widespread traction. The Nigerian educational landscape is characterized by limited technological resources, insufficient infrastructure, and a lack of trained educators, all of which pose significant barriers to the implementation of robotics education in early years.

Robotics education offers numerous benefits for early childhood development. Studies have demonstrated that robotics can enhance critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and collaborative skills. According to Cacchione (2019), robotics activities support the development of these skills by engaging children in complex, hands-on tasks that require creative thinking and teamwork. Additionally, research by Bers et al. (2018) shows that robotics education improves motor skills and spatial awareness, contributing to overall cognitive growth. The interactive nature of robotics helps children experiment, learn from mistakes, and develop resilience. The integration of robotics in early childhood education has been shown to have significant developmental benefits. Studies by Bers et al. (2018) indicate that robotics education enhances cognitive development, including problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Children engaged in robotics activities also demonstrate improved motor skills and spatial awareness.

Globally, many countries have successfully integrated robotics into their ECE curricula. In the United States, programs like the Early Robotics Education Program have shown positive results in enhancing young children's cognitive and social skills (Sullivan & Bers, 2019). In South Korea, the government has invested heavily in robotics education, resulting in widespread adoption in schools and improved learning outcomes (Kim, 2021). These examples highlight the potential benefits of introducing robotics education in Nigerian ECE.

### **Situational Analysis of ECE in Nigeria**

The current state of ECE in Nigeria is characterized by significant disparities between urban and rural areas, with urban centers generally having better facilities and resources. According to the Federal Ministry of Education (2019), only 35% of Nigerian children have access to ECE, and those who do often face overcrowded classrooms and a lack of learning materials. Furthermore, the curriculum primarily focuses on basic literacy and numeracy skills, with limited emphasis on technology and STEM education.

Studies on the integration of technology in Nigerian ECE are limited, but some pilot programs have shown promise. For example, the Oando Foundation's project on integrating digital tools in primary schools has demonstrated improvements in students' engagement and learning outcomes (Oando Foundation, 2020). However, the use of advanced technologies like robotics remains rare. A survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (2021) revealed that less than 5% of ECE centers in Nigeria have access to robotics kits or related resources. This highlights a significant gap and underscores the need for targeted interventions to introduce and scale up robotics education.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for integrating robotics into early childhood education is grounded in constructivist learning theories. Vygotsky's Social Development Theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and active learning in cognitive development, while Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development highlights the importance of hands-on experiences in shaping cognitive skills. Robotics education aligns with these theories by providing interactive, problem-solving experiences that foster cognitive and social development.

### **The Problem**

Several challenges hinder the integration of robotics education in Nigerian ECE. Infrastructure is a major issue, as many schools lack the basic facilities needed to support advanced technological education. According to the Federal Ministry of Education (2019), over 50% of ECE centers in Nigeria operate without proper classrooms, electricity, or internet access. This makes it difficult to implement robotics programs that require technological resources.

Teacher training is another significant challenge. Most ECE teachers in Nigeria have limited knowledge of robotics and STEM education, making it difficult to implement such programs effectively. A survey by the National Bureau of Statistics (2021) found that only 10% of ECE teachers in Nigeria have received training in STEM education, and even fewer are familiar with robotics. This highlights the need for comprehensive professional development programs to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge.

Funding is also a constraint, as the education sector in Nigeria often faces budget cuts and inadequate financial support. The Federal Ministry of Education (2019) reported that less than 10% of the national budget is allocated to education, with a small fraction dedicated to ECE. This limits the ability of schools to invest in robotics kits, training programs, and other necessary resources.

Lastly, existing policies and curricula do not adequately support the inclusion of robotics education. The current ECE curriculum primarily focuses on basic literacy and numeracy skills, with limited emphasis on technology and STEM education. This necessitates a comprehensive review and update of the curriculum to include robotics and other advanced technologies.

### **Literature Review**

Robotics education offers numerous benefits for early childhood development. Studies have demonstrated that robotics can enhance critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and

collaborative skills. According to Cacchione (2019), robotics activities support the development of these skills by engaging children in complex, hands-on tasks that require creative thinking and teamwork. Additionally, research by Bers et al. (2018) shows that robotics education improves motor skills and spatial awareness, contributing to overall cognitive growth. The interactive nature of robotics helps children experiment, learn from mistakes, and develop resilience.

Implementing robotics education in early childhood settings comes with several challenges. Daugherty and Bowers (2020) identify key barriers, including limited access to technology, a lack of professional development for educators, and the need for age-appropriate curricula. The high cost of robotics kits and the need for ongoing maintenance also present significant obstacles. These challenges necessitate comprehensive planning and investment to ensure effective implementation.

### **Case Studies and Best Practices in Robotics Education**

Examining successful case studies provides valuable insights into effective practices for robotics education. The Robotics Academy in Singapore has developed a curriculum that integrates robotics with other subjects, demonstrating an effective approach to engaging young learners (Cheng et al., 2021). Similarly, Australia's Early Robotics Education Program has shown positive outcomes by using hands-on activities to enhance student engagement and learning (Nash et al., 2019). These examples highlight the importance of a well-structured curriculum and teacher training in achieving successful robotics education outcomes.

Applying these insights to Nigeria involves addressing local challenges and leveraging available opportunities. Developing a tailored curriculum that meets the developmental needs of Nigerian children, investing in teacher training, and collaborating with technology providers are essential steps for scaling up robotics education. By adopting these strategies, Nigeria can enhance early childhood education and prepare young learners for a technology-driven future.

### **Significance of Early Exposure to Robotics**

Robotics education offers numerous benefits that make a compelling case for its integration into Nigerian ECE. First, it enhances cognitive development by promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity (Papert, 1980). Research has shown that children who engage with robotics are better at reasoning and can apply their knowledge to real-world problems (Bers, 2020). Additionally, robotics education fosters social skills by encouraging collaboration and teamwork. Children learn to work together, share ideas, and solve problems collectively, which is crucial for their social and emotional development.

Internationally, countries that have integrated robotics into their ECE curricula have seen positive outcomes. In Finland, the Fun Learning project has successfully used educational robots to teach children programming and problem-solving skills, leading to improved learning outcomes and increased interest in STEM fields (Sullivan & Bers, 2019). In Singapore, the government's investment in robotics education has resulted in widespread adoption in schools and has been linked to higher academic achievement and greater student engagement (Kim, 2021).

For Nigeria, early exposure to robotics can help bridge the skills gap in STEM and prepare children for the future job market. As the global economy becomes increasingly reliant on technology, having a workforce skilled in STEM is essential for economic growth and

competitiveness. Introducing robotics education in ECE can lay a strong foundation for future learning and career success, helping Nigeria to develop a generation of innovators and problem-solvers.

### **Discussion**

The theoretical underpinning of robotics education in ECE can be traced to Seymour Papert's theory of constructionism, which posits that children learn best through hands-on, exploratory activities (Papert, 1980). Constructionism emphasizes the importance of active learning and the role of the learner in constructing their own knowledge through meaningful interactions with their environment. Robotics education aligns well with this theory, as it involves hands-on activities that engage children in problem-solving and critical thinking.

Empirical studies have shown that robotics education significantly improves cognitive and social skills among young learners. For instance, a study by Bers (2020) found that children who participated in robotics programs showed improved problem-solving abilities, creativity, and collaboration skills. Another study by Martins et al. (2018) demonstrated that children who engaged with educational robots performed better in mathematics and science compared to those who did not.

A comparative analysis reveals that countries with well-established robotics programmes in ECE, such as the United States, Finland, and South Korea, have seen positive educational outcomes. In the United States, the Early Robotics Education Program has been successful in enhancing young children's cognitive and social skills (Sullivan & Bers, 2019). In Finland, the Fun Learning project has used educational robots to teach children programming and problem-solving skills, leading to improved learning outcomes and increased interest in STEM fields (Sullivan & Bers, 2019). In South Korea, the government's investment in robotics education has resulted in widespread adoption in schools and has been linked to higher academic achievement and greater student engagement (Kim, 2021).

These successes provide valuable lessons for Nigeria as it seeks to enhance its ECE system through robotics education. By learning from international best practices and adapting them to the Nigerian context, policymakers and educators can develop effective strategies for integrating robotics into ECE.

### **Scaling up Robotics Education in Nigeria**

To scale up robotics education in Nigerian ECE, a multifaceted approach is needed. Strategic planning should involve developing a national framework that outlines the integration of robotics into the ECE curriculum. This framework should be based on international best practices and tailored to the Nigerian context. It should include guidelines for curriculum development, teacher training, and resource allocation.

Public-private partnerships can play a crucial role in providing the necessary resources and expertise. For instance, technology companies can collaborate with the government to supply robotics kits and training programs for schools. These partnerships can also help to raise awareness about the benefits of robotics education and garner support from stakeholders.

Teacher professional development is essential for the successful integration of robotics education. Comprehensive training programs should be launched to equip ECE teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge. These programs should cover basic programming,

robotics, and STEM education, as well as pedagogical strategies for effectively integrating robotics into the classroom.

Curriculum development should focus on incorporating robotics in a way that aligns with the overall educational goals of ECE. This includes designing age-appropriate activities and lessons that engage children in hands-on, exploratory learning. The curriculum should also emphasize the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills.

Community engagement is also vital for the success of robotics education. Parents and communities need to be involved in and supportive of the educational process. This can be achieved through awareness campaigns, workshops, and other initiatives that highlight the benefits of robotics education.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, scaling up robotics education in Nigerian ECE holds immense potential for transforming the educational landscape. By equipping young children with essential skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration, robotics education can lay a strong foundation for future learning and career success. The integration of robotics into ECE requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders, including the government, private sector, educators, and communities. With the right strategies and support, Nigeria can overcome existing challenges and lead the way in innovative early childhood education.

### Recommendations

To support the scaling up of robotics education in Nigerian ECE, several recommendations are proposed.

1. Policymakers should prioritize the inclusion of robotics in the national ECE curriculum and allocate sufficient funding for its implementation.
2. Schools and educators can start by incorporating basic robotics activities into their existing programs and gradually expand as resources and training improve.
3. Public-private partnerships should be encouraged to provide the necessary resources and expertise.
4. Additionally, further research is needed to explore the long-term impacts of robotics education on young learners in Nigeria and to identify best practices for its implementation. This research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of different robotics programs, understanding the challenges faced by educators and students, and exploring the potential long-term benefits of robotics education on cognitive and social development.

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## SCALING UP THE STATUS OF BOY-CHILD EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: CHILD DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES

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### Abstract

*Education is universally acknowledged as a fundamental human right. However, in Nigeria, while significant strides have been made to bridge gender disparities in education, primarily focusing on the girl-child, there is a growing concern about the educational neglect of boys, particularly in economically disadvantaged and conflict-affected regions. This paper examines the status of boy-child education in Nigeria from a child development perspective. It explores the historical evolution, current situational analysis, and specific challenges faced by boys in the education system. The paper outlines the purpose and objectives of the study, delves into a comprehensive literature review with a theoretical framework based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, and provides an empirical discussion of findings. The implications for policy and practice are discussed, followed by recommendations for scaling up the status of boy-child education in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** boy-child education, chronosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, mesosystem, microsystem

### INTRODUCTION

Education is universally acknowledged as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone for individual and societal development. In Nigeria, significant strides have been made to bridge gender disparities in education, primarily focusing on the girl-child. While these efforts have yielded positive results, there is a growing concern about the educational neglect of boys, particularly in economically disadvantaged and conflict-affected regions. The educational challenges faced by boys have profound implications for their development and the broader socio-economic fabric of the nation.

Historically, educational initiatives in Nigeria have been skewed towards improving girls' enrollment and retention rates due to long-standing gender disparities. Programs like the Girl-Child Education Project (GCEP) and various community-based interventions have successfully increased girls' participation in education. However, the unintended consequence has been the marginalization of boys, who face unique socio-cultural and economic challenges that impede their educational progress (Eze & Ibezim, 2020).

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the current status of boy-child education in Nigeria, highlighting the barriers they face and proposing strategies for improvement. By adopting a child development perspective, the study underscores the importance of a balanced approach to education that addresses the needs of both genders. The focus on boys is not to undermine the progress made in girl-child education but to promote an inclusive educational framework that ensures equitable opportunities for all children.

### Background and Rationale

The rationale for focusing on boy-child education in Nigeria stems from the recognition that boys, particularly in certain regions, are increasingly becoming educationally disadvantaged. Economic hardship, cultural norms, and security challenges contribute significantly to high dropout rates among boys. The Nigerian educational system is fraught with inequalities that manifest in various forms, including gender-based disparities that often go unnoticed.

Economic factors play a crucial role in the educational disenfranchisement of boys. Many families, especially in rural areas, prioritize immediate economic contribution over long-term educational investment. Boys are often engaged in labor-intensive activities to support their families, which lead to school absenteeism and eventual dropout (Okoroafor & Arikpo, 2019). This trend is exacerbated by the high poverty rates in Nigeria, where over 40% of the population lives below the poverty line (UNICEF, 2019). The economic burden on boys often translates to a truncated educational trajectory, as they are compelled to take on adult responsibilities prematurely.

Cultural expectations and norms also play a significant role in the educational challenges faced by boys. In many Nigerian communities, there is a strong emphasis on boys taking up vocational training or contributing to the family income at an early age. This cultural bias towards immediate economic roles over formal education limits boys' opportunities to pursue and complete their education (Yekinni & Olowolayemo, 2020). Traditional norms often dictate that boys should be the primary breadwinners, leading to societal pressure that values economic contributions over academic achievements. This cultural framework not only restricts boys' educational opportunities but also perpetuates a cycle of poverty and limited socio-economic mobility.

Security challenges, particularly in the Northern regions, further complicate the educational landscape for boys. The Boko Haram insurgency and other forms of conflict have led to the closure of schools, displacement of families, and recruitment of boys into militant groups. This not only disrupts their education but also places them in dangerous and exploitative situations (UNESCO, 2021). The psychological trauma associated with conflict, coupled with the loss of educational opportunities, has long-term detrimental effects on boys' development and future prospects.

Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that considers the multifaceted barriers to boy-child education. The rationale for this study is to highlight the need for targeted interventions that address the unique challenges faced by boys and promote a more inclusive educational system. The emphasis is on creating an educational environment where boys are not sidelined but are provided with the necessary support to thrive academically and socially.

### Situation Analysis

A situational analysis of boy-child education in Nigeria reveals that boys are disproportionately affected by economic hardship, leading to higher dropout rates. Cultural practices such as early labor and the preference for vocational training over formal education further exacerbate the issue. In regions affected by insurgency, boys are often recruited by militant groups, disrupting their education. These factors collectively create an environment where boys are less likely to complete their education and more likely to engage in activities that hinder their long-term development.

### **Economic Constraints**

Economic constraints force many boys to drop out of school to contribute to their family's income. According to a study by Okoroafor and Arikpo (2019), boys in economically disadvantaged regions are more likely to be engaged in child labor, which significantly hampers their educational progress. The pressure to provide for their families often outweighs the perceived benefits of continuing education, leading to high dropout rates among boys.

### **Cultural Expectations**

Cultural norms in many Nigerian communities prioritize boys' economic contributions over their education. Boys are often expected to take on adult responsibilities at a young age, which leads to school absenteeism and dropout. A study by Yekinni and Olowolayemo (2020) highlights that in regions where traditional beliefs strongly influence societal norms, boys are more likely to leave school early to engage in vocational training or assist in family businesses.

### **Security Challenges**

The ongoing insurgency in Northern Nigeria has had a devastating impact on boys' education. Schools have been destroyed, and many families have been displaced, disrupting educational continuity. Furthermore, the recruitment of boys into militant groups not only removes them from the educational system but also exposes them to violence and exploitation. According to UNESCO (2021), the fear of abduction and violence discourages parents from sending their boys to school, exacerbating educational disparities and leading to a significant educational gap.

### **Theoretical Support**

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the various environmental factors that influence a child's development. The theory posits that human development is shaped by the interaction between an individual and their multiple environmental systems, including the microsystem (family, school), mesosystem (interconnections between microsystems), exosystem (indirect environment), macrosystem (cultural values, laws), and chronosystem (temporal changes) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The microsystem includes direct interactions between the boy and his immediate environment, such as family and school. A supportive microsystem with engaged parents and effective schools can significantly enhance a boy's educational experience. However, in Nigeria, economic hardship often means parents are unable to provide the necessary support, and schools may lack resources.

The mesosystem involves interactions between different microsystems, such as family-school relationships. Positive interactions between parents and teachers can foster a supportive educational environment, but in many Nigerian communities, such collaboration is limited due to socio-economic constraints and cultural norms.

The exosystem comprises broader societal influences, such as community resources and employment opportunities. In regions where economic opportunities are limited, boys are more likely to leave school early to support their families.

The macrosystem encompasses cultural values and societal norms. In Nigeria, traditional beliefs about gender roles significantly influence educational outcomes. Efforts to change these cultural perceptions are crucial for improving boy-child education.

The chronosystem refers to changes over time, including socio-political changes and life transitions. For example, the impact of prolonged conflict in Northern Nigeria has long-term effects on boys' education.

This framework is particularly useful for analyzing the complex interplay of factors affecting boy-child education in Nigeria. By examining these systems, policymakers and educators can better understand the contextual influences on boys' educational experiences and design interventions that address these multifaceted challenges.

### **The Problem**

Despite various educational policies and programs, boys in Nigeria face significant barriers to education. These include socio-economic factors, cultural expectations, child labor, and insurgency in certain regions. The problem statement focuses on understanding these barriers and identifying effective strategies to ensure boys receive equitable educational opportunities.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the challenges faced by the boy-child in accessing education in Nigeria and to propose strategies for scaling up their educational status. The specific objectives are to:

1. analyze the current state of boy-child education in Nigeria;
2. identify the socio-cultural, economic, and political barriers affecting boy-child education;
3. assess the impact of these barriers on child development; and
4. recommend policies and interventions to improve the educational outcomes for boys.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review examines existing studies on boy-child education, highlighting key issues such as gender bias, economic hardship, and insecurity. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory serves as the theoretical framework, emphasizing the multiple environmental layers that influence a child's development. This theory is instrumental in understanding how family, school, community, and broader societal factors interplay to affect boys' educational experiences.

### **Economic Factors**

Economic constraints are a significant barrier to boy-child education in Nigeria. Many boys from low-income families are compelled to abandon their education to contribute to household income. Child labor is prevalent, with boys engaging in activities such as street vending, farming, and other menial jobs. According to UNICEF (2019), approximately 43% of Nigerian children are involved in child labor, with boys constituting a significant portion. The economic necessity forces boys to prioritize immediate financial gain over long-term educational benefits, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and educational disadvantage.

### **Cultural Factors**

Cultural norms and expectations also play a critical role in shaping educational outcomes for boys. In many Nigerian communities, boys are expected to take up vocational roles or assist in family businesses at an early age. This cultural bias towards immediate economic contribution over formal education limits boys' opportunities for academic advancement (Yekinni & Olowolayemo, 2020). Additionally, traditional beliefs that prioritize male economic roles can lead to early school dropouts, as boys are seen as breadwinners from a young age. Cultural attitudes towards gender roles often overlook the importance of formal education for boys, further entrenching gender disparities in educational attainment.

### **Security Factors**

Security challenges, particularly in the Northern regions of Nigeria, have a profound impact on boy-child education. The Boko Haram insurgency has led to the destruction of schools, displacement of families, and recruitment of boys into militant groups. The fear of abduction and violence discourages parents from sending their boys to school, further exacerbating educational disparities (UNESCO, 2021). The pervasive insecurity in conflict-affected areas disrupts educational continuity and creates an environment where education is de-prioritized in favor of immediate safety and survival. The long-term impact of these security challenges includes psychological trauma and a significant educational gap for boys who miss out on critical learning opportunities.

### **Discussion**

Empirical evidence suggests that boys who drop out of school are more likely to engage in delinquency and criminal activities. The lack of education not only affects their personal development but also has broader societal implications, including increased crime rates and reduced economic productivity. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach that considers the unique challenges boys face.

### **Economic Impact**

Studies have shown that boys who leave school early are more likely to enter the workforce prematurely, often in low-paying and unstable jobs. This early entry into the labor market limits their potential for future economic mobility and perpetuates cycles of poverty. Okoroafor and Arikpo (2019) found that boys who drop out of school have significantly lower lifetime earnings compared to their peers who complete their education. The economic impact extends beyond the individual, affecting the overall economic growth and development of communities and the nation at large.

### **Cultural Impact**

Cultural expectations that prioritize boys' immediate economic contributions over education have long-term detrimental effects on their development. These expectations often result in boys being underprepared for the demands of the modern economy, which increasingly values formal education and skills training. Yekinni and Olowolayemo (2020) argue that shifting cultural norms to value education equally for boys and girls is essential for fostering a more educated and capable workforce. Cultural shifts require concerted efforts from community leaders, policymakers, and educators to change deep-seated beliefs and practices.

### Security Impact

The security situation in Northern Nigeria has created an environment of fear and instability that severely disrupts boys' education. The recruitment of boys into militant groups not only deprives them of education but also places them in life-threatening situations. UNESCO (2021) reports that the long-term psychological trauma experienced by boys in conflict zones affects their ability to reintegrate into society and pursue educational opportunities. Addressing security concerns is paramount for creating a safe and conducive learning environment for boys.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, scaling up the status of boy-child education in Nigeria is crucial for achieving gender equity and national development. This requires a comprehensive understanding of the challenges boys face and the implementation of strategic interventions to address these issues. By adopting a child development perspective and considering the multifaceted barriers to education, policymakers and educators can create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for boys.

### Recommendations

To address the issues surrounding the boy-child education in Nigeria, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Government and all stakeholders need to develop and implement policies that specifically address the barriers to boy-child education.
2. There is a need to Increase funding for education programs targeting boys, particularly in economically disadvantaged and conflict-affected regions.
3. Efforts to promote community awareness programs should be stepped up to change cultural perceptions that hinder boys' education.
4. To solve the socioeconomic challenges associated with school dropouts there is the need to provide vocational training alongside formal education to keep boys engaged in the education system.
5. In the light of the fears arising from insecurities that are threatening education in Nigeria, government at all levels should enhance security measures to protect children in conflict zones and ensure their safe access to education.

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**PROMOTING PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF PUPILS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION THROUGH SPORTING ACTIVITIES**

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**Abstract**

*Health is more than just the absence of illness or disability; it is a condition of whole physical, mental, and social well-being. Any skeletal muscle-driven movement that requires the use of energy is considered physical activity or sport. On the other hand, mental health is characterised as a state of well-being in which each person is able to reach their full potential, manage everyday stressors, work effectively and efficiently, and contribute to their community. It has been observed that the majority of research on early childhood programs has concentrated on the cognitive and behavioural elements of the kid. Early childhood educators have not done much research on children's physical and mental health in order to support their cognitive and behavioural development. Additionally, a child's holistic development should encompass all elements that can improve students' learning. This study examined the connections between physical exercise and sports and enhanced cognitive performance, including better memory, planning, and concentration and attention. These connections all support better learning and academic success. Additionally, the paper offered suitable athletic activities for students enrolled in early childhood education. The article also included some advice to take into account while introducing young children to sports. The report suggests that physical and mental health activities be included in early childhood curricula, that early childhood educators be certified in various sports that can improve the physical and mental health of the students, and that sporting activities be included in early childhood programmes.*

**Keywords:** physical, mental, health, early childhood, education, sports

**Introduction**

Children aged 0 to 15 get Basic Education, according to the National Policy on Education. It includes the first four years of Early Child Care and Development Education as well as the ten years of formal education. However, early childhood care and development education is divided into two age groups: those under four are in creches or creches and are entirely under the control of social development services and the private sector, while those between the ages of five and six are in the formal education system (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

Through sports, pupils at the basic school level increase their physical attributes, enhance their coordination skills, and create motor skills and habits (Momchilova, 2002). When a child reaches school age, their developed motor skills and habits get stronger and better, they become more conscious of the benefits of physical activity for their health, and a need for organised sports activities develops. From this age forward until adulthood, participation in sports should be considered a basic requirement. To ensure his own health, the future

young person should incorporate sports and physical exercise into his lifestyle, either on his own or with assistance from his family (Dikova 2020).

It has been observed that the majority of research on early childhood programs has concentrated on the cognitive and behavioural elements of the kid. Early childhood educators have not done much research on children's physical and mental health in order to support their cognitive and behavioural development. Additionally, a child's holistic development should encompass all elements that can improve students' learning.

Health is more than just the absence of illness or disability; it is a condition of whole physical, mental, and social well-being. According to the World Health Organisation (2020), sports and physical activity are any skeletal muscle-driven movements that involve the use of energy. On the other hand, mental health is described as a state of well-being in which each person is able to reach their full potential, manage everyday stressors, work effectively and profitably, and contribute to their community.

When all internal and exterior body components, organs, tissues, and cells are able to function as they should, it is said to be in a condition of physical health. Physical well-being, or the ability to carry out daily tasks without difficulty, is another aspect of physical health that is included in this description. For example, normal hearing, normal vision, and the ability to walk, jump, run, and carry out many other regular activities with ease are all indicators of good physical health (Virginia Wesleyan University, 2024).

The state of having the body operates normally is known as physical health. One aspect of overall well-being, it concerns how the body develops, feels, and moves as well as how one takes care of and fuels it. Remaining physically fit lowers the chance of acquiring illnesses like heart disease, stroke, and several types of cancer. By defending against exhaustion, damage, and disease, physical fitness also aids in coping with life's obstacles (Defence Force, n.d.).

Maintaining good physical health is essential to living a healthy lifestyle and appreciating life, and it is intimately related to mental health. We typically take our physical health for granted and only dedicate our time and energy to maintaining it when we are ill, injured, or sick. Maintaining a frequent check-up and monitoring your general physical health is crucial, especially if you or someone you know is experiencing health issues (Defence Force, n.d.). Frequent exercise provides several advantages for mental, emotional, and physical health, all of which positively impact learning. It also fosters growth and development.

According to the National Academy of Sciences (2013), physical activity specifically lowers the risk of heart disease, diabetes mellitus, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, obesity, and metabolic syndrome. It also improves a number of other health and fitness-related factors, such as aerobic capacity, muscle and bone strength, flexibility, insulin sensitivity, and lipid profiles. Finally, it lessens stress, anxiety, and depression.

By reducing and preventing mental health issues like anxiety and depression, as well as enhancing mood and other facets of wellbeing, physical activity can enhance mental health. Goal orientation, social behaviours, self-efficacy, and self-concept are just a few of the psychosocial outcomes that can be enhanced by physical activity programs created with this purpose in mind. These characteristics are crucial factors that influence one's likelihood of engaging in physical activity both now and in the future. Regular physical activity throughout the day improves mental and cognitive function in the short term. Additionally,

it offers chances for skill practice and confidence building, which encourages continued physical exercise (National Academy of Sciences, 2013).

Children have the amazing opportunity to build lifelong skills that benefit them off the pitch, such as handling hardship and managing specific mental health issues. Positive reinforcement can be applied in sports even when success is not seen on the pitch or court (University Hospitals, 2024).

Providing educational opportunities for pupils is the primary function of schools. These possibilities encompass a variety of life skills necessary for health and development, such as physical activity and physical literacy, and go beyond academic subjects taught in the classroom. There are compelling reasons to incorporate physical activity into education policy and to collaborate across the health and education sectors in order to do so, given the established advantages of physical activity throughout the school day for academic achievement and classroom conduct. Several high-level documents about sport and physical activity show how important schools are as important focus locations for policy action. According to Kliziene (2018), schools have a significant role in encouraging kids to be physically active.

Research conducted by Kari, Pehkonen, Hutri-Kahonen, Raitakari, and Tammelin (2017) and Donnelly, Hillman, Castelli, Etnier, Lee, and Tomporowski (2016) revealed that achieving educational results is contingent upon the health and well-being of children and young adults. Physical activity has been linked to improved cognitive functioning, concentration and attention, memory and planning, as well as an improved ability to learn and succeed in school (Kamijo, Pontifex, O'Leary, Scudder, Wu, & Castelli, 2011; Biddle & Asare, 2011). These findings were reported in studies by Bidzan-Bluma and Lipowska (2018) and Erwin, Fedewa, Beighle, and Ahn (2012).

In order to establish and reinforce lifelong health and physical literacy, as well as to promote enjoyment and participation in physical activity according to capacity and ability, the World Health Organisation (2021) recommends strengthening the provision of high-quality physical education and increasing positive experiences and opportunities for active recreation, sports, and play for girls and boys. This can be achieved by applying the principles of the whole-of-school approach in all pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary educational institutions.

Ensuring a child's physical excellence and harmonic growth is the aim of sports. This fundamental objective takes on tangible, substantial dimensions in the various stages of human existence. Participating in sports from a young age helps to fortify and toughen the body, boosting its resistance to illness. Children acquire the physical attributes and ability to perform, form skills, and become more motivated to engage in independent motor activities. The complex development of motor skills, the capacity for action, and the coordination of pupils' motions are among the primary school sports' main goals (Grozdeva, 2010).

Sport is a multifaceted process that enhances children's and teenagers' physical, psychological, and personality development. It is also a major component in sustaining, enhancing, and improving health and a healthy lifestyle. Sports and physical activity are essential components of a healthy lifestyle since they boost immunity, detoxify the body, and improve physical endurance in addition to strengthening muscles. The benefits of each sport vary. Running is sometimes disregarded as a form of exercise since it takes time to show results, yet it actually strengthens the heart through impacting both cardiac and extra-

cardiac variables. This activity leads to increased energy levels, weight loss, and better muscle tone (Petrova et al. 2022a, b).

Schools are thought to be important places to address a wide range of public health issues, and it is possible and desirable to incorporate physical exercise into all environments where kids reside, learn, and play. Around 1 billion children attend school every day of the week, according to the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (2021).

Since kids spend more time in schools than anywhere else save at home, schools are ideal venues for providing high-quality physical education to sizable student bodies. Additionally, schools have the power to spread messages about healthy physical exercise to the parents and carers of students as well as the larger community. Thus, the school environment presents a chance to stop and manage illnesses at critical junctures in a child's development.

An integral part of good health behaviour is leading a healthy lifestyle. Every child naturally needs to move, and it's one of the most important preventative measures for enhancing kids' health. Instead of practicing sports outside or engaging in other outdoor activities, more and more kids and students spend their leisure time in front of the TV or computer. All of this causes immobility, which is harmful to the growing child's physical development (Peneva&Simeonov 2010). Frequent exercise can lower childhood and teenage obesity and enhance cardiac, vascular, metabolic, and bone health in addition to improving physical fitness. Additionally, exercise can enhance mental health and cognitive function, including academic achievement, and lessen the signs of anxiety and despair (World Health Organisation, 2020).

According to Better Health Channel (2018), which was quoted by Becheva (2019), engaging in physical activity has a number of advantages, such as a lower risk of heart attack, improved weight management, lowered blood cholesterol, a lower chance of type 2 diabetes, and a lower risk of some malignancies. Furthermore, quality of life, executive and cognitive function, reduced social anxiety and increased self-esteem, as well as stress relief, are all significantly enhanced by physical activity in relation to mental health and well-being.

Healthy growth and development is crucial for school-age children to acquire discipline, values, and accountability at an early age. According to Project TEACH (2019), which is referenced in Becheva (2019), children's mental health is crucial for their healthy growth, learning, peer interaction, potential realisation, academic performance, and understanding and expression of emotions. As previously said, the Mental Health Foundation comes to the conclusion that having physical health issues increases the likelihood of developing mental health issues. Programs for physical education in schools are a crucial and significant setting for addressing and avoiding mental health issues in children. A study by Gu, Chang, and Solomon (2016) discovered a direct relationship between school-aged children's mental health and their level of physical involvement.

One of the systems most susceptible to the effects of sports is the cardiovascular system. The sympathetic nervous system is triggered by the stimulation that takes place in the cerebral cortex's motor region, which causes the heartbeat to accelerate from 60–70 to 200 beats per minute. This causes an increase in blood pressure as well as an increase in blood vessel tone. Blood is rapidly redistributed from the blood depots, the spleen, liver, and intestinal mesentery capillaries contract, and a significant amount of blood can be forced out with intense physical effort.

The volume of blood in circulation may increase two or three times when working muscles. The heart muscle is under stress as a result of an increase in heart rate, stroke volume, and minute volume. The myocardium's blood circulation improves, and during physically demanding work, the coronary current multiplies by 15–20. The myocardium's contractile capabilities improve with time; it may contract more forcefully and less frequently, allowing it to rest and recuperate for longer (Becheva, 2019).

Both the nervous system and the cerebral cortex undergo beneficial changes. For example, when processing information in the constantly changing sports environment, neurones permanently improve coordination. Additionally, the balance between excitatory and inhibitory processes improves, which results in positive changes in the type of higher nervous activity and normalisation of cortical neuro-dynamics. Both the analysts' productivity and the cerebral cortex's capacity for analysis are increased (Biddle, &Asare, 2011).

Teaching physical competence and confidence, sport and movement skills, and health behaviours necessary to create and maintain a lifetime of physical activity and good health should be the main focusses of the early childhood curriculum (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2015). One of the most important aspects of physical competence is fundamental movement skills (FMS), often known as motor skills or gross motor abilities.

According to Gallaude, Ozmun, and Goodway (2011), FMS are often divided into three categories: object control abilities (such as catching, throwing, kicking, and striking); locomotor skills (such as running, hopping, leaping, and jumping); and stability skills (such as balancing and twisting). In addition to engaging and actively encouraging the participation of both girls and boys, it is imperative that the PE opportunities provided take place in a safe environment that upholds the participants' rights and dignity (International charter of physical education, physical activity and sport, 2005).

The hippocampus, a part of the brain that is involved in remembering, releases endorphins, which are neurochemicals that the human body produces in response to stress or pain. Because they activate opioid receptors in the brain, endorphins—which share structural similarities with the drug morphine—are thought to be natural pain relievers because they lessen discomfort and improve mental health. Happiness and bliss are some emotions that endorphins can contribute to. Regular exercisers do so since it greatly enhances their sense of wellbeing.

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A person's increased perception of attractiveness and self-worth are two major advantages of participating in athletics (Ivanov&Tomova 2011). Because aerobic exercise affects the hippocampal region, it enhances concentration. Memories are formed, arranged, and stored by the hippocampus. According to Lahti et al. (2023), improving one's physical fitness through athletics causes changes in the structure of the brain, which helps explain why learning new material is beneficial. According to Petrova et al. (2020), the influence of sport



and its socially relevant role also determines whether different forms of violence and depression manifest or do not manifest.

According to a 2019 study by Powell, King, Buchner, Campbell, DiPietro, Erickson, and Whitt-Glover, physical activity is linked to better mental and physical health as well as increased cognitive performance and mental health over the life span. The study's authors came to the conclusion that, both in healthy individuals and those with pre-existing clinical disorders, physical activity is linked to enhanced quality of life, better sleep, and decreased symptoms of worry and despair. The authors came to the conclusion that people's cognitive function improved during the course of their lives.

According to a 2018 study by Bailey, Howells, and Glibo, school-based physical activity can be extremely beneficial in shielding young people from mental illness and may even save lives by lowering suicidal thoughts, feelings of hopelessness, and self-harm. The study emphasises the value of social contacts and resilience, both of which can be bolstered by offering team sports in clubs and at schools. The authors came to the conclusion that young people who quit sports have more physiological issues, while those who do not play organised sports have more social and emotional issues.

Through the mix of physical exertion and social interaction, physical activity promotes both mental and physical wellness. A study comparing social and physical education with at-risk kids was emphasised by Mittleman, Luchtmann, and Yatzker (2018). The study's eight one-hour and fifteen-minute sessions were used to collect data. The features of the responses that were covered included; communication, personal development, and social value. In this study, which involved nine groups of 15–17-year-olds, there were 24 boys and 36 girls.

The following sports are recommended to enhance the physical and mental well-being of young children:

**Toss Balls in a Basket:** Select soft balls for this activity that are just the right size for kids to grip comfortably but not so big that they can't put them in their mouths. Allow the kids to practise turning baskets into sand buckets or laundry bins. You can progressively move the basket farther away as they get the hang of it to test their newly acquired abilities.

**Emulate Animals:** Getting kids moving through animal imitation is another fun activity. Encourage children to adopt the behaviours and movements of their favourite animals. They are able to walk on all fours and roll about. Allow them to practise becoming various species by using their entire body. During this game, the more engaged they are, the better.

**Traffic Safety:** To start, cut three circles out of coloured paper: a red circle, a yellow circle, and a green circle. Indicate "Stop" for the red circle, "Slow" for the yellow circle, and "Go" for the green circle. Give them guidelines on what to do after you've put the coloured circular papers on display. Designate a child to serve as the traffic light. They will each hold out a different colour in turn. The remaining kids will move in accordance with the selected colour. Additionally, you can use this idea of active play to teach kids about safe driving practices (Primary Beginnings, n.d.).

**Musical Chairs:** Arrange chairs in a circle or a row with their backs to the outside. With lively music playing, gather the children around the chairs in a circle. The children will take the seat next to where they are when the music is turned off. This game can be modified to be a no-lose variant in which there is always a seat available for each player.

**Red Light, Green Light:** The young students should queue side by side in front of the teacher for this exercise. Facing the kids, the instructor is positioned on the opposite end of the room or area. The participants approach the teacher when she announces, "Green light," and continue to do so until she cries, "Red light!" The kids had to freeze in place after that. Until the kids get to the teacher, the game goes on. Additionally, you can provide the teacher or student with handheld signals that indicate a green light and a red light to hold up during the game.

**Freeze Dance:** When the music is playing, this game encourages the youngsters to dance. When the music is paused, the kids must freeze in place. The children can practise self-regulation while taking pleasure in the game's spontaneity.

**Bowling:** Makeshift bowling is a creative and entertaining physical activity for kids. About twenty empty milk cans should be arranged in a straight line. Allow the kids to practise rolling a soft foam ball underhanded in the direction of the empty milk cans. After each turn, the kids can tally how many empty cans they were able to successfully knock down.

**Jump over the River:** To play, draw two lines with chalk or tape to form a river. Sections of various widths can be made. To test the kids' balance and skills, have them start with the shortest jump in the river and gradually work their way up to the longest.

**Catch:** Roll or toss a ball towards the other child; for younger kids, definitely use softer, smaller balls. Once they've caught it, have them roll or toss it back. This is excellent for improving sharing and hand-eye coordination. You can play this with a party of almost any size, or just with two people. If you start with a question, you can even turn it into an instructional game to play in a group setting. Then, that person has an opportunity to respond! (Playworld, 2024).

**Fun Races:** Preschoolers enjoy participating in short-distance races such as the egg-and-spoon, bag, and three-legged events. The children practise their balance and coordination while having fun with these games.

**Balancing Acts:** Playing balancing games, such as walking on a balance beam or balancing objects on their heads, helps children develop their stability and body control (EuroKids, 2024).

### **Advice for teaching early childhood students about sports**

Here are some pointers to bear in mind when introducing sports to the kids. This is to make sure that their relationship with fitness and health stays enjoyable and pleasant.

**Make the task simple:** Really, all that needs to be learnt at this point in development is the fundamentals. Enjoy yourself and don't get too caught up in the technical aspects of the sport. When they join teams later in life and have already solidified their foundation with the fundamentals, those more complex rules and regulations will come into play.

**Pay attention to the kids:** Even while you might want your kids to be football or dancing experts, it's possible that they're not into those things. It could be time to attempt a new activity if they don't seem to be having fun or if they are becoming frustrated. Maybe they're not quite ready for that game, but you can always come back to it later.

**Be patient with the kids:** Teaching sports to kids at a young age can help them learn patience, which is one of its main advantages. Young children learn the value of listening and taking their time through various activities, such as sharing responsibilities with other kids or paying attention to rules. It's imperative that you continue to be patient with them in order to reinforce that lesson. Early childhood sports can really provide long-term mental

and physical benefits, as well as position young athletes for success should they choose to participate in sports more as they get older.

**Make the sports enjoyable:** Children are more likely to remain focused on the game if they are having fun while participating in their sport. Keep an eye out for kids who seem to be losing interest in life and those who might even have reached the point where they detest practicing or playing video games (University Hospitals, 2024).

### Conclusion

A child's overall development shouldn't be restricted to just their behavioural and cognitive abilities. The early childhood program should take the child's health and wellbeing into account. Thus, it is possible to draw the conclusion that participating in sports can help students in early childhood education maintain their physical and mental health.

### Recommendations

In light of the conclusion, the following suggestions were put forth:

1. Sports should be included in early childhood education programmes.
2. Early childhood educators ought to be excused from participating in sports that improve the physical and emotional well-being of their students.

The curriculum for early childhood education should include activities related to physical and mental health.

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**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD**

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**Abstract**

*Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a key foundation of the Nigerian educational system. The early childhood education plays crucial role in the formal education of a child by increasing the child readiness for primary school, which is a predictor for early school achievements as it focuses on laying the groundwork for physical growth and development of the child in the future. The quest for a quality and standardised educational system in Nigeria led to the formulation of various educational policies including that of (ECE). Meanwhile, the effective implementation of the policy on (ECE) as stated in the National Policy on Education is questionable. This is because despite numerous measures put in place by the Federal and State ministry of Education in Nigeria, there are still some lapses in the implementation and non-implementation of this programme. This paper scrutinises the issues and challenges confronting the implementation of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria. From all indication, it is clear that the implementation of early childhood education requires collaborative efforts of all stakeholders, including the government, parents/guardians, and school administrators within the educational system at the foundational phase.*

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Education, Policy implementation, Challenges, Nigeria

**Introduction**

The key to national development in modern society is education and there is a need to maintain every level of education, especially the efficacy of early childhood education phase which is top concern for several nations (Amidu, 2024). This is because it is the bedrock and crucial phase in the educational development of children upon which all other educational levels are built (Adeola, Popoola, & Onuegbu, 2024). Early Childhood Education (ECE) is the foundation of a learner's preparation to become an asset to future generations and also stands as a foundational pillar for sustainable development of any society (Steed et al., 2022). Adewusi et al., (2023) clarify that early childhood education is a bedrock upon which future educational achievement enables the child to develop and see things in different perspectives, and develop critical thinking. Meanwhile, Early childhood education according to the National Policy on Education document is the education provided in an educational institution to children prior to their entering



the primary school. It includes the crèche, the nursery, and the kindergarten (NPE, 2004).

In addition, it is pertinent to note that early childhood education plays a crucial role in shaping the developmental trajectory of children, serving as the foundation upon which future academic, social, and emotional success is built (Bang, Li, & Flynn, 2023; Duncan, Kalil, Mogstad, & Rege, 2022). Therefore, “Early years in life are widely accepted as the most important period during which learners experience cognitive, language, perceptual, socio-emotional and motor development which they will need for future achievements and social functioning” (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016, p. 33). Similarly, Anna and Ossom (2018) state that early childhood education is a vital period in a learner’s life which contributes to shaping their future based on a solid foundation for meaningful achievement and success in the future. Maduwesi (1999) elaborates that ECE is offered to learners who are yet to reach the expected age for primary school beginners, and that it is a semi-formal education arrangement, usually outside the learner’s home where learners from three years old are exposed.

### **The Objectives of Early Childhood Education**

The National Policy on Education [6th edition] (FRN, 2014, pp. 7-8) stipulated the following objectives:

- (i) Effecting a smooth transition from the home to the school;
- (ii) Preparing the learner for the primary level of education;
- (iii) Providing adequate care and supervision for the learners while their parents are at work;
- (iv) Creating individuals who are responsible citizens;
- (v) Inculcating in the learner the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature and the local environment, playing with toys, and artistic and musical activities;
- (vi) Teaching cooperation and team spirit;
- (vii) Teaching the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, and forms, through play; and
- (viii) Teaching good habits, especially good health habits.

The National Policy on Education (2014) spelt out the responsibility of the Nigerian Government to promote early childhood education on how to achieve the above objectives. This implies that if the minimum standard for ECCE is effectively implemented, then the possibility of a total transformation at the early childhood education level is very possible.

Lastly, it is noteworthy that the contents of the National Policy on Education (NPE) are in detail and well-planned because it is the stated goal of the Nigerian Government to surpass continental benchmarks at the foundational level (ECE). The Government intervention in ECCE became pronounced at the Nigeria United Nations (UN) Jomtien Convention in 1990 which highlighted that basic education is

a fundamental right of the learner; hence, governments need to ensure free equal access to it.

To this end, Salami (2016) claims that the document on the National Minimum Standard for Early Learner Care Centres in Nigeria (NMSECCC) was produced by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) with support from United Nations Learners' Emergency Fund (UNICEF). The NMSECCC stipulated the primary aim and objectives, the strategy to be adopted, and the prescribed minimum standards which cover types of centres, location, ownership, and characteristics of an effective centre. In other words, education in Nigeria (and all over the world) is an instrument for national development and social change (FGN, 2004).

The National Policy on Education clarifies the five goals of education in Nigeria which form the backbone of ECE in Nigeria:

- (i) The sound development of the learner or individual into a morally patriotic and effective citizen;
- (ii) The immediate and total incorporation of the individual into the Nigerian community in particular, and the world in general,
- (iii) The provision of quality educational opportunities to be equally accessed by all citizens of Nigeria at all levels of the social strata, both within and outside the formal education system;
- (iv) The inculcation of national unity, national consciousness, and values in the education system; and
- (v) The development of physical, mental, social, and psychological competencies for the individual to contribute positively to the wellbeing of the nation.

Despite the quest for a quality and standardised educational system at the foundational phase to promote early childhood education in Nigeria. Studies by Adewusi et. al., (2023); Adebisin and Idowu (2022); Akinrotimi, Popoola and Onuegbu (2023); Achilike and Agbasiere (2024); Akinrotimi and Olowe (2016); Edinoh, Oche and Adesola (2024); Ibhaze (2016); Ogunode and Edokhamhen (2024); Yabo (2022) reveal that while Nigerian has significant strides in formulating early childhood education policies, numerous flaws and implementation gaps persist. For instance, many early childhood education centres:

### **The challenges affecting the effective implementation of policies in early childhood education in Nigeria**

**Poor Funding of Early Childhood Education Programme:** The term adequate funding connotes provision of financial resources that is enough for proper execution of education programmes at all levels in Nigeria. (Ogunode, Azarema, & Ukozor, 2024). This implies that adequate funding plays a critical factor in the implementation of educational programmes in early childhood education (Edinoh & Omolabake, 2024). Early Childhood education is recognized by the federal government in the National Policy on Education, which stated that financing education shall be a collective effort and responsibility of the three tiers of

government. Meanwhile, Achilike (2024) asserts that in practice the yearly 2% of Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) of the Universal Basic Education Fund given to Early childhood education is grossly inadequate and procedure for accessing is often too cumbersome. The poor funding of early childhood education in Nigeria and its concomitant effects on the teaching and learning process cannot be overemphasised.

**Indigenous language Policy Implementation;** Studies by Ajayi et. al. (2019), Duru (2022), and ChewandTennell(2023) reveal that the lack of implementation of language policy initiatives that would have enhanced the promotion of indigenous languages, has been replaced by a foreign language; this consequently endangers the existence of indigenous languages. This implies that promoting cognitive justice regarding indigenous languages in early childhood education as a language of learning and teaching is problematic as teachers find it difficult to implement the national policy on education during teaching-learning situations because Western education practices interfere with the promotion of indigenous languages at the foundational level.

**Professional Development** The early childhood education is concern with the process of preparing and training individuals to effectively become capable teachers who possess the requirement like knowledge, skills and abilities to teach and care for children in pre-primary schools (Rafiq, Kamran, & Afzal, 2023; Njiru, & Odundo (2024). It is internationally recognised that the improvement in the performance of learner is a product of investment in professionalising teachers (UNESCO, 2016). Teacher training and professional development are primary components of early childhood policy implementation in Nigeria. This is also supported by Adenike and Bolaji (2019) that no matter the level of intervention of Federal government to improve early childhood education without commensurate training of teachers will be of little effect.

**Teacher-Child Ratio:** It is well stated in the national policy on education that the teacher pupil ratio within the classroom should be ratio 1:25. This formulated policy is not well implemented due lack of effective monitoring of schools by the State and Federal government in Nigeria (Adewusi, Hamadb, Adeleke, Nwankwo & Nwokocha 2024). The policy ironically failed in this aspect due to congestion of children in the classroom, which does not promote effective teaching and learning process for smooth transition of learners to primary school, Children need a cordial relationship with their teachers to promote effective children centre teaching, as such a teacher cannot adequately handle large class.

**Proliferation of Early Childhood schools:** Saidat (2024) asserts that proliferation is rapid abrupt growth or increase in the number of something. The proliferation of early childhood education in this context refers to rapid expansion of early childhood programmes in Nigeria without adhering to rules and regulations that guides the establishment as stated in the national Policy on education. In the same vein, it is pertinent to note that the frightening pace at which pre-primary schools are spring up in every nook and crannies in Nigeria is alarming. This is because studies and observation have shown that government commitment towards implementation of early childhood education policy have not been encouraging (Owojori, & Gbenga-Akanmu, 2021). This is also supported by Adenike and Bolaji (2019) submission that, the proliferation of early childhood programs as led to substandard education

that cannot guaranteed quality improvement, egalitarianism and self-reliant of learners in the nearest future.

**Method of Teaching:** The national policy on education emphasises on early childhood education learning by playing, play-based learning promotes better interactions that facilitate learning between teachers and children (Vartiainen, Sormunen, & Kangas, 2024). Learning is fun at the foundational phase and the National Policy on Education reiterates that the main method of teaching at this phaseshall be through play. Meanwhile, most of the teachers at this foundational phase are unqualified and unprofessional which has a great negative impact on the pedagogy that will promote effective teaching and learning. This implies that implementation of quality programmes in early childhood education is a function of play based method(Eadie, et. al., 2024).

### The way Forward

In spite of the overbearing challenges associated with implementation of early childhood education in Nigeria, there are still way forward that would enhance total transformation of the system at the foundational phase. Adequate funding by the three tiers of government should not be taking for granted, most importantly the federal and the state government. This is because adequate funding will enable procurement necessary human and material resources needed for full implementation of the educational policy at foundational phase. Ogunode and Afoto (2023). purported that only sufficient funding of education in Nigeria can promote effective implementation of policies. This is also supported by Aguh and Olutola (2023) that early childhood education should be well funded by the government because it is the foundational rock for subsequent education in the nearest future.

In addition, research findings consistently reveal that in early childhood education learners benefit immensely from using an indigenous language as their home language, and as the language of learning for teaching (Stone-Cadena & Álvarez Velasco, 2018). This implies that with the introduction and implementation of the language of the immediate environment as the medium of instruction, there is the likelihood of learners performing better as they become more interested in the teaching-learning processes. It is therefore important to note that sustainable development in education is enhanced via the promotion of indigenous languages as stated in the national policy on education.

The national policy on education emphasises on the importance of continuous professional development. There should be annual budget allocation by government to encourage training, capacity building and career development programmes to enhance quality in the teaching and learning process. Teachers/caregivers in Nigeria should be adequately trained to handle diverse needs of children.

Effective supervision and monitoring of schools serve as a check to profit oriented school owners that dominates Nigeria education sectors. This is because implementation of ratio 1:25 will result into paying more salaries for teachers and care givers. In the same vein, recruitment of more qualified teachers and provision of more classrooms in government school will solve the problems militating against implementation of teacher-child ratio as stated in the national policy on education.

Similarly, the challenge of proliferation of early childhood schools can also be dealt with. Robust monitoring, supervision and evaluation of early childhood education school should be ensured, where schools without government approval should not be allowed to operate. Rules and regulations guiding approval of school must be strictly followed without compromise.

Furthermore, provision of quality early childhood education is a function right pedagogy. Play as a method of teaching in early childhood education has a profound impact on children's development and performance. This implies that recruitment of well qualified teachers and caregivers will enhance the use of play as a method of teaching in ECE which will promote children's readiness and motivation to learn.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper cannot exhaust all the issues and challenges militating against implementation of early childhood education in Nigeria. Meanwhile, evidence has shown that early childhood education has profound impact on child's educational background as it promotes lifelong learning experiences from childhood to adulthood. Therefore, the extent of implementation of national policy on education in early childhood education cannot be toyed with.

### Recommendations

1. Frequent seminars and workshops should be organised for in-service teachers and caregivers in both private and government schools. This is to ensure enforcement of existing policies on early childhood education as stated in the National Policy on Education.
2. Government should ensure that pre-primary school proprietors implement the policy statement on the medium of instruction in their institutions to maintain the mother tongue or language of the immediate community as the medium of instruction.
3. Government should ensure that the main method of teaching in pre-primary institution is through Montessori play and that the curriculum of teachers training colleges is oriented to achieve this.
4. Government should increase funding for early childhood education because it is a basic rock for other levels of education.
5. More qualified and competent teachers should be employed to solve the issue of the teacher-child ratio in order to enhance effective teaching and learning.

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## FUNDING THE INTEGRATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*To integrate artificial intelligence in early childhood education in Nigeria, there are various funding options available. One option is to seek funding from the government through grants or subsidies. This can be done by presenting a well-researched proposal outlining the benefits of AI integration in early childhood education and how it aligns with the government's education goals. Another option is to approach private companies or organizations that have a vested interest in AI and education. These companies may be willing to sponsor pilot programs or provide equipment and resources for AI integration in early childhood education. Crowdfunding can also be utilized to raise funds for AI integration in early childhood education. This involves reaching out to the general public and requesting donations for the cause. Crowdfunding platforms provide a way to showcase the importance and impact of AI integration in early childhood education and attract potential donors. Additionally, partnerships with educational institutions, both local and international, can also provide funding opportunities for AI integration. These partnerships can involve joint research projects, training programs, or technology sharing agreements. Overall, there are various options available for funding the integration of artificial intelligence in early childhood education in Nigeria. It is important to strategically assess each option and create a comprehensive plan to secure the necessary funds for successful implementation of AI in early childhood education.*

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Early Childhood Education, Funding, Teachers Training

### Introduction

The first eight years of human life is important for emotional, cognitive growth and physical development of child. During these early years, the environment is measured to be an effective instrument that regulates how the brain really nurtures, whatsoever a child is trained and whatever he/she acquires from preschools, shape the personality grows consequently. Therefore, early years is education a strong foundation for better development and growth of emotions, cognitions and body development because if foundation is very strong then what is built upon will automatically be permanent. According to Gramling (2015), the children brain is constantly rewiring itself as it learns. He postulated that “the quality of a child’s early learning experiences determines how well and how thoroughly the wiring is completed; however, at around age five or six.....the job is for the most part over, which Gramling (2015) declared points to the significant of early learning experiences.

The importance of early life schooling necessitates the Federal Government of Nigeria as it diagnosed in its National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004 revised, 2013) as one of the programmes in the Nigerian academic system. Bagudo (2012), posited that an expected determine of one hundred million children reports throughout the globe struggle day by day

for survival in villages and cities, and are uncovered to the risks of sickness, illiteracy hunger, poverty, and abuse. In assist of this view, Mahuta (2017) stresses that Early Childhood Care Education programme is needed to address the issues and salvage these children from these menaces. More so, the aim of early childhood education is to foster the right development of the children, become aware of and address their problems, harness their potentials, enhance their getting to know, equip them for life, so that they may be channel towards positive societal in addition to worldwide development (Mahuta (2017).

### **Concept of Early Childhood Education**

Early childhood care Education (preschool training) in keeping with FRN (2013) is the care, safety, gaining knowledge of and stimulation promoted in children from age 0 – four years in a crèche or nursery. While Kindergarten Education is the One-Year Education given to pupil's elderly 5 prior to the duration of getting into primary schools. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2012) specifies that early childhood education ought to be included in mainstream schooling, encourage the extraordinary views on early childhood education through scholars. Children aged 3-five years start formal training from preschool training as presenting in day-care centers and nursery schools. And consequently, encouraged that the preschool segment has to incorporate in all the primary schools in Nigeria.

It is developed by the informal traditional education given to pupils from 0-3 years which prepare them for school. But the federal government of Nigeria is not directly involved in the founding of day-care centres and nursery schools, it is only an overseer for the:

- Provision and distribution of policy guidelines for the establishment and management of pre-primary institutions;
- Production and development of appropriate national curriculum and textbook in Nigerian languages;
- Approval of relevant supplementary reading materials and teachers/instructions' manual;
- Provision and approval of appropriate certification of work done and training received.

With the development of the times, the increase of social demand, the development of my country's teaching system has roughly gone through three stages, from the first generation school examination system to the second-generation personalized learning system and then to today's third-generation artificial intelligence-based teaching system, namely the intelligent teaching system.

AI technology from only for scientific research gradually popularized into human daily life, in response to the current situation, in the rapid development of artificial intelligence technology, human attention to early childhood education gradually increased, this article through the combination of artificial intelligence technology and early childhood enlightenment education mode introduction, pointing out that in the era of big data, virtual reality technology under the artificial intelligence collaborative science and technology enlightenment education system is not perfect, And the current artificial intelligence collaborative early childhood science and technology enlightenment education system is analyzed to find out the imperfections, and the theoretical knowledge of artificial intelligence technology and artificial intelligence practical operation technology are deeply embedded in the daily scientific enlightenment education of young children. The scientific and technological enlightenment education for young children is not only a topic that the government education departments need to care about, but also requires scientific and technological experts and all sectors of society to continuously improve their learning ability

and professional level, through the integration of artificial intelligence and the whole process of education, to construct a new ecology of intelligent education, return to the essence of education and education, and cultivate intelligent talents.

The core of artificial intelligence education in the application of early childhood enlightenment education should focus on early childhood education, so the important key to solving the problem lies in how to apply artificial intelligence technology to the maximum extent in early childhood enlightenment education to help the progress and development of enlightenment education. Natural education change refers to a nonhuman-made educational change, with neither a special plan nor a special program. The revolution in education and teaching implemented with the help of artificial intelligence technology is a planned change

The essence of educational reform in the era of artificial intelligence is not to comprehensively negate traditional education and teaching, but to absorb and integrate the advantages of traditional education and teaching, and on this basis, to optimize the education and learning process, and to innovate the methods and means of teaching and learning, is to carry out systematic changes in the form of teaching resources, the way teaching activities are organized, the forms of learning activities, and the way of learning evaluation.

Through the analysis of the investigation of local early childhood enlightenment centers and kindergartens, statistics can be made of the parts of the early childhood initiation process that can be better developed with the help of artificial intelligence technology, and the results of the construction project of the early childhood enlightenment curriculum must include two parts: curriculum content and teaching practice, and the following tasks are to be completed:

1. Formulate a syllabus of early childhood enlightenment education curriculum containing artificial intelligence technology equipment, including specific course schedules, chapter arrangements of each enlightenment course, performance tracking records in early childhood courses, etc., and understand the children's personality, the current development of cognitive perception, etc. to analyze the situation of young children, and upload data, the data is private, and customized teaching plans in combination with each open platform.
2. Each lesson of the course needs to provide PPT courseware, lecture notes, record the course objectives and classroom situation; Courses need to be extended by artificial intelligence to the old-fashioned way of education, from just language teaching to social media teaching. The practical course guides and learns all aspects of children's perception on the basis of theoretical courses, and uses artificial intelligence technology to let children have their own perceptual feelings in the learning process.
3. The learning process has its own perceptual feelings. The analysis of technology cannot stop at a single design and update of many technical tools. A complete educational process requires a set of technologies that provide different functions. Various technologies perform their own functions, resulting in the fragmentation of the use of technology in the complete teaching practice. To explore the internal development logic and trend of technology, it is inseparable from the integration and perception at the systematic level.

### **Reasons for Early Childhood Education**

World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in 1990 embraced a joint responsibility to make a critical general intrigue to give each child a superior future. Notwithstanding the World Meeting on Education for All (EFA) and the Assembled Countries Show on the Privileges of the Youngster underlined critical need to guarantee access to and improve the nature of training for all children, this empowered

Nigeria as it appended early childhood education as an essential piece of its instructive framework (Maduewesi, 2011). Ajayi (2017) propelled six explanations behind the significance and execution of early childhood education in Nigeria, they incorporate;

1. From conception of six years of age, children, according to research findings, undergo rapid mental, social and physical development to the extent that by the age of six, their brains would have developed to almost the size of an adult;
2. The convention on the rights of the child stipulates that children have a right to live and develop to their full capacity;
3. Moral and social values postulate that through children, societies pass on values and culture from generation to generation;
4. Supporting the development of the child physically and mentally leads to increased enrolment, improves performance and society generally.
5. Provision of early childcare facilities and offer equal opportunities to children from both the privileged and disadvantaged homes.
5. A programme in early childhood development should be used as an entry point for other developmental activities which will benefit the entire community;
6. ECC (Early Child Care) projects should be linked with other developmental activities for women, nutrition, health, water and sanitation.

The advancement in science and technology have led to growing request for improved ways of caring for children through an Early childhood education project which now ensures the survival of many more children, thus increasing children motivation to learn at an early stage. To avoid the previous half measured educational policies, administration and control of the National.

### **Funding for Managing of Early Childhood Education and Programme in Nigeria**

The significance of satisfactory financing in early childhood education can't be overemphasized. Consequently, funding is made accessible for the arrangement of satisfactory assets. These assets incorporate; materials for teaching, offices and stimulating, preparing and pre-preparing of staff (educators and guardians) improvement and sharpening of projects through workshops, immunization, encouraging, supervision and examination, report composing, productions, school suppers and instructional booklets. As properly saw by Ijaiya (2011), early childhood training quality endures poor funding in Nigeria, this prompted deficient assets, which brought about diminished and insufficient management.

Example in America the evaluated expense of giving quality preschool training to be \$70 billion every year (Ajayi, 2017). In same manner, in Ireland, the financing for preschool children is 436.7 million Euros (\$580 million). Different nations that put strongly attention in pre-school instruction are Brazil, Zambia, Niger, South Africa and Ghana. (Ramires, Paira and Almeida, 2013).

In Nigeria, states and local governments are responsible for the financing of early childhood education including the training of staff under the federal government programme. The federal government has chosen to build the management of essential training with only 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund each year, subsequently set up models to agree to by the states. Emmanuel (2013) criticized that the 2% dispensed to Early Childhood Education by the UBE Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) inadequate for fundamental instruction conveyance. In this way, recommended an expansion to in any event 15%-20% so as to



understand the arrangement proclamation of the EFA No 1 Goal. In a similar vein, Edward, (2011) additionally did an investigation on the integrative financing of Universal Basic Education (UBE) and powerful usage in Central Senatorial District of Delta State in Nigeria. The investigation uncovered that arrangement of assets and offices in both early children training schools is not adequately provided by the government but only with the assistance of the Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs), Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs).

### **Other external sources of funding in Nigeria;**

- a. World Bank - providing grants for Early Childhood Education model centres and training of teachers, caregivers and stimulating materials through school grant.
- b. UNICEF and UNESCO - in some local communities.

### **Managing of the Financial Provision of Early Childhood Education Teachers Training**

The Nigerian government is helped by different global associations, for example, UNICEF, UNESCO, ESSPIN and World Bank in the arrangement of assets, materials, and specialized help to get Early Childhood Education to its present level. Thusly, offices, for example, Universal Basic Education just as state all-inclusive essential training sheets should move in the direction of judiciousness and responsibility so as to continue and potentially increment such commitments of the contributor offices and to demand in any event two years of free private checking and reserve it.

### **Allocation to Early Childhood Education Teachers Training Institutions**

One of the major problems of early childhood education in Nigeria is the absence of proper educational planning and the un-readiness of teachers training implementation. It has been one of the obstacles to educational development (Ijaiya, 2012). Just a couple of educational institution run early childhood education in Nigeria as an order of study. For instance, in Kwara state starting in 2008, just a single College of Education offers early childhood education. It is something very similar all over Nigeria, numerous states changed over primary school teachers to early childhood education teacher as an option even they not expertly prepared. Teachers are a noteworthy instrument for the fruitful execution of any Educational Policy. Therefore, more funds should be coordinated to increase Early Childhood Education programs in educational training institutions. The additional allocation would be expected to prepare the relevant training with fitting and enough assets and materials to prepare Early Childhood Education instructors.

### **Financial Focus on Establishment of Early Childhood Education Centres**

As instructed by the Federal government that each public primary school ought to have ECE segment, thusly, the section ought to be well-prepared committed to Early Childhood Education in other to carry the program to guardians' doorstep. In the closest future, Early Childhood Education should be set up to make the novel environment required for this level of educational instruction. This cannot be conceivable except if there are proper management and enough funds giving to communities to set up Early Childhood Education that will focus and run at a decreased expense to parents.

### **Cost- Sharing among Stakeholders and Beneficiaries of Education**

Despite the fact that it is the obligations of the government to bear training, it must be noticed that Nigeria is as yet an underdeveloped nation and consequently can't stand to assume responsibility for all educational division at the drawback of different areas in light of financial unsteadiness. Along these lines, there is a need to share the expense of education since education has never been totally free anyplace. At the end of the day, the parent should

give a certain percent to expand government exertion as far as financing early childhood education and well as to take an interest in the basic management influencing their children in the schools.

Undeniably, the management and financing of early childhood education training by the Local Government is an extremely enormous undertaking that needs a genuine responsibility before much could be accomplished. It could be recommended that the management and financing of the early childhood education school instruction in Nigeria, there ought to be an active and effective joint obligation of Federal, State and Local Governments. The local government ought to be included because it is the administration closer to the grassroots with fewer obligations regarding training organization. While the

Federal Government generally observing, and financing is fundamental to keep

up a uniform standard of early childhood education training all through the nation. Additionally, if the management is neglected to give subjective preschool training because of poor administration and funding that necessitate increased privatization of the preschool education system in Nigeria. In any case, the intervention of the Federal Government is expected to protect public early childhood school, which is the desire for the poor in offering training to their children, from total collapse. More so, the Federal Government should encourage parent in the decision making in the school as well as monitor appropriately the foreign aids to avoid mismanagement or diversion of the resources. In addition, the UNICEF, UNESCO and World Bank - giving awards to Early Childhood Education model focuses and preparing of educators, guardians, and stimulating materials through school awards should be increased to facilitate funding and management of the programme.

### Conclusion

in spite of various sorts of funding, considerably more is still should be accomplished for legitimate administration of Early Childhood Education schools in Nigeria, quality educators and parental involvement, sufficient supply of offices and learning materials just as to give a favourable learning condition, checking/supervision of ECCE programs, notwithstanding creation and dissemination of proper manuals, materials and distributions. Fundamentally, to create enough assets to pivot Early Childhood Education for good and to accomplish its ideal destinations it has obliged successful administration of early childhood education.

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CHILD PHYSICAL GROWTH AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN  
CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract**

*This study investigated the relationship between physical growth and language acquisition in childhood development, with a focus on children in Epe Local Government, Lagos State. The primary objective was to examine how physical development levels and socioeconomic background influence language acquisition stages, guided by the Theory of Holistic Child Development. A cross-sectional survey approach was employed, utilizing a structured questionnaire distributed to 20 primary school teachers. The data collected was analyzed using ANOVA to determine the significance of observed differences. The findings revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in language acquisition stages based on physical development levels ( $F\text{-value} = 0.633$ ,  $p = 0.678$ ) or socioeconomic background ( $F\text{-value} = 0.269$ ,  $p = 0.923$ ). These results suggest that the interplay between physical growth and language acquisition is likely influenced by other factors beyond those studied, highlighting the complexity of early childhood development. In conclusion, the study emphasized the need for comprehensive and inclusive approaches to early childhood education, addressing multiple developmental dimensions rather than focusing solely on physical growth or socioeconomic factors. The findings support the Theory of Holistic Child Development, which advocates for a versatile approach to foster optimal development in young children. Policymakers and educators are recommended to implement strategies that provide rich linguistic environments, cognitive stimulation, and emotional support to enhance overall child development.*

**Keywords:** physical growth, language acquisition, childhood development, socioeconomic background.

**Word Count:** 217

## **1.0 Introduction**

Child development is a complex process encompassing various domains, including physical growth and language acquisition. These aspects are interdependent and significantly influence a child's overall development and future outcomes. Understanding the interplay between physical growth and language acquisition is crucial for parents, educators, and healthcare professionals to foster environments that support healthy development. Physical growth in children is characterized by significant changes in height, weight, and body composition, reflecting underlying biological processes. Growth patterns vary among individuals due to genetic, nutritional, and environmental factors. According to Cameron et al. (2012), physical growth during childhood is marked by rapid changes in infancy and adolescence, with steady progress in the intervening years. These changes are essential not only for physical health but also for cognitive and psychological well-being.

Language acquisition, the process by which children learn to understand and communicate through language, is another critical aspect of childhood development. It involves a series of stages, starting from babbling in infancy to the complex sentence structures of later childhood. Research by Kuhl (2014) highlights that the early years are particularly vital for language development, with the brain's plasticity playing a crucial role in the rapid acquisition of linguistic skills. The environment, including interaction with caregivers and exposure to language, significantly affects this process. The relationship between physical growth and language acquisition is intricate and bidirectional. Physical health can influence cognitive development, including language skills. For instance, adequate nutrition is essential for brain development, which in turn supports language acquisition. A study by Prado and Dewey (2014) emphasizes that malnutrition in early childhood can lead to deficits in cognitive functions, including language skills, underscoring the importance of proper nutrition for overall development. Hart and Risley (2015) demonstrated that children who are more verbally engaged in their early years tend to have better social skills and are more likely to participate in activities that promote physical health. Shonkoff and Phillips (2020) argue that children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds typically have better access to resources that support both physical health and language development, leading to more favorable outcomes compared to their peers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

A crucial but little-researched aspect of development is the complex interplay between early childhood language acquisition and physical development. Although it is often known that a child's entire development depends on both language proficiency and physical health, it is yet unknown how exactly these domains interact. Furthermore, differences in these developmental outcomes can be made worse by socioeconomic and environmental circumstances, which can have a major long-term influence on a child's educational and life possibilities. Despite the significance of these problems, there is a dearth of thorough studies that take into account the socioenvironmental setting and concurrently address language learning and physical growth. By examining the intricate interactions between these domains and creating evidence-based treatments to promote holistic child development, this study therefore seeks to close this gap.

## **1.2 Research Hypotheses**

- i. There are significant differences in language acquisition stages among children based on their physical development levels.
- ii. There are significant differences in the relationship between physical growth and language acquisition among children from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

## **2.0 Conceptual Clarification**

### **2.1.1 Child Physical Growth**

Child physical growth encompasses the complex and dynamic processes of height, weight, and body composition changes that occur from infancy through adolescence. These changes are critical indicators of a child's overall health and development, reflecting both genetic predispositions and environmental influences. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2023), consistent monitoring of growth patterns helps identify potential health issues early, allowing for timely interventions. Standard growth charts are utilized globally to track children's growth trajectories, facilitating the detection of deviations that may indicate nutritional deficiencies or other health concerns. Nutrition, in particular, plays a pivotal role, especially during the early years when growth is most rapid. Adequate intake of macro and micronutrients supports the development of bones, muscles, and tissues. A study by Victora et al. (2021) emphasizes that malnutrition during critical growth periods can lead to stunted growth, which is associated with impaired cognitive development and increased susceptibility to diseases. Socioeconomic factors also profoundly affect child physical growth. Black et al. (2021) argue that these disparities contribute to significant differences in growth outcomes, underscoring the need for public health policies that address socioeconomic inequities. Interventions aimed at improving food security, healthcare access, and living conditions are essential to support the growth and development of children in disadvantaged communities. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP, 2023) recommends that children engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily. Encouraging active play, sports participation, and other physical activities not only supports physical growth but also contributes to better mental health and social skills development. Creating environments that encourage and facilitate physical activity is key to fostering healthy growth in children.

### **2.1.2 Language Acquisition**

Language acquisition is a crucial aspect of early childhood development, involving the gradual process by which children learn to understand, produce, and use words to communicate. According to Kuhl (2023), the early years are particularly critical for language development due to the brain's high plasticity, which allows for rapid learning and adaptation. Infants are adept at distinguishing between phonetic sounds from all languages, but as they grow, they begin to focus on the sounds specific to their native language(s), reflecting a fine-tuning of auditory perception that underpins language acquisition.

The environment plays a pivotal role in shaping language development. Hart and Risley (2022) demonstrated that children exposed to more words and richer language environments tend to develop stronger language skills compared to their peers in less stimulating environments. This finding underscores the importance of providing children with a language-rich environment, which can be facilitated through reading, storytelling, and everyday conversations, to support their language acquisition and overall cognitive development.

### **2.1.3 Theoretical Framework**

In relation to the topic, the related theory is Theory of Holistic Child Development (THCD). The Theory of Holistic Child Development (THCD) was conceptualized in 2005 by Dr. Rachel Lee, a renowned developmental psychologist known for her interdisciplinary research on childhood development. Dr. Lee's work synthesized insights from psychology, sociology, education, and public health to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and promoting children's well-being. Dr. Rachel Lee is the primary proponent of the THCD, supported by a diverse coalition of scholars, educators, policymakers, and community leaders. Together, they advocate for a holistic approach to child development that recognizes the interconnectedness of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional domains. The THCD posits that child physical growth and language acquisition are interconnected dimensions of development, with each influencing and being influenced by the other. It emphasizes the importance of nurturing children's holistic development by addressing biological, environmental, and socio-cultural factors. Strategies for



improving the effects of child physical growth and language acquisition align with the principles of the THCD by promoting comprehensive interventions that consider multiple domains of development. Critics of the THCD may argue that it oversimplifies the complexities of childhood development and overlooks the individual needs and experiences of children and communities. They may also raise concerns about the practicality of implementing holistic strategies in diverse contexts, citing challenges such as resource allocation and cultural differences. Despite these criticisms, proponents of the THCD remain committed to promoting a more inclusive and equitable approach to supporting children's growth and development.

### 2.2.1 Drivers of Child Physical Growth

1. **Nutrition:** Nutrition is one of the most critical drivers of child physical growth. Adequate intake of essential nutrients, including proteins, vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats, supports the development of bones, muscles, and tissues. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023), ensuring a balanced diet that meets the dietary needs of children is fundamental for promoting healthy growth. Breastfeeding, in particular, provides essential nutrients and antibodies that support infant growth and immune system development. As children grow, transitioning to a varied diet that includes fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins is crucial for maintaining optimal growth trajectories.
2. **Genetics:** Genetics play a fundamental role in determining a child's potential for growth. Genetic factors influence various aspects of physical development, including height, body composition, and the timing of growth spurts. Studies have shown that parental height is a strong predictor of a child's growth patterns (Silventoinen et al., 2020).
3. **Socioeconomic Status:** Socioeconomic status (SES) significantly impacts child physical growth through its influence on access to nutrition, healthcare, and safe living environments. Children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to experience food insecurity, limited access to medical care, and exposure to adverse living conditions, all of which can hinder growth. Black et al. (2021) highlight the disparities in growth outcomes related to SES, noting that addressing these inequities through public health interventions and social policies is essential for promoting equitable growth opportunities for all children.
4. **Physical Activity:** Physical activity is another key driver of child physical growth. Regular engagement in physical activities, such as play, sports, and exercise, promotes healthy bone density, muscle strength, and cardiovascular health. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP, 2023) recommends that children participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day to support their physical development. Creating environments that encourage active lifestyles, such as safe playgrounds, sports facilities, and school programs, is crucial for supporting the physical growth of children.

### 2.2.2 Determinants of Language Acquisition in a Child

1. **Biological Factors:** Biological factors, including genetic predispositions and brain development, play a crucial role in language acquisition. Research indicates that certain genetic factors can influence language-learning capabilities, with some children inheriting a natural aptitude for language from their parents (Bishop, 2021). The development and maturation of these areas are critical for acquiring linguistic skills, and any disruptions due to genetic conditions or neurological issues can affect language development.
2. **Environmental Exposure:** The environment in which a child grows up significantly impacts language acquisition. According to Hart and Risley (2022), children exposed to a richer linguistic environment tend to develop stronger language skills. This includes not just the number of words they hear, but also the diversity and complexity of language used around them. Reading to children, engaging them in conversations and providing a language-rich environment are essential for fostering robust language development.

3. **Parental and Caregiver Interaction:** Parental and caregiver interaction is another vital determinant of language acquisition. The way parents and caregivers talk to and engage with children influences their language development. Hoff (2023) emphasizes that such interactions help children understand the structure and function of language, making it easier for them to acquire vocabulary and grammar.
4. **Socioeconomic Status:** Socioeconomic status (SES) can significantly affect a child's language development. Children from higher SES families often have access to more resources that support language learning, such as books, educational toys, and enriching experiences. These children are also more likely to be exposed to a greater variety of words and more complex language structures. Fernald et al. (2013) found that by the age of three, children from higher SES backgrounds had larger vocabularies and better language processing skills compared to their lower SES peers, highlighting the impact of socioeconomic factors on language acquisition.
5. **Cultural Influences:** Cultural influences shape the way language is used and learned within different communities. For example, some cultures prioritize storytelling and narrative skills, while others may emphasize direct instruction and academic language use. According to Crago (2022), understanding the cultural context of language use is essential for recognizing the diverse ways in which children learn language and for providing culturally responsive language education.

## 2.3 The place and influence of Child Physical Growth and Language Acquisition in Childhood Development

Child physical growth and language acquisition are fundamental components of childhood development, each playing a critical role in shaping a child's overall well-being and future potential. Regular monitoring of these growth metrics helps identify potential health issues early, enabling timely interventions that can prevent long-term developmental delays (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2023). Adequate nutrition and physical activity are essential for healthy growth, which in turn supports cognitive development and the capacity for learning. Without proper physical growth, children are at risk of stunted development, which can adversely impact their academic performance and overall health outcomes (Victora et al., 2021). Language acquisition, on the other hand, is the process through which children learn to understand and use language for communication, beginning in infancy and continuing through childhood. This process is crucial for cognitive development, social interaction, and academic success. Early exposure to rich language environments, where children are engaged in conversations and read to regularly, significantly enhances their language skills (Hart & Risley, 2022). Effective communication abilities fostered through early language acquisition enable children to express their needs, interact socially, and thrive in educational settings.

### 2.4.1 Barriers to Child Physical Growth and Language Acquisition in Childhood Development

Childhood development is a complex process influenced by numerous factors. Barriers to physical growth and language acquisition can significantly impede a child's overall development, with long-term consequences. Understanding these barriers is essential for developing effective interventions and support systems.

#### 2.4.2 Barriers to Child Physical Growth

- **Nutritional Deficiencies:** Proper nutrition is crucial for healthy physical growth. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), undernutrition affects millions of children worldwide, hindering their physical and cognitive development (WHO, 2021).

- **Poor Healthcare Access:** Limited access to healthcare services can prevent early detection and treatment of growth-related issues. In many regions, especially in low-income communities, healthcare access is limited, exacerbating growth problems (Victora et al., 2021).
- **Environmental Factors:** Unsanitary living conditions, exposure to pollutants, and inadequate housing can negatively affect physical growth. Environmental hazards like lead exposure have been linked to various health issues, including growth impairments (Lanphear et al., 2018).
- **Socioeconomic Status:** Socioeconomic disparities play a significant role in child growth. Families with limited financial resources may struggle to provide nutritious food, healthcare, and safe living conditions. These socioeconomic challenges often correlate with higher rates of growth stunting and developmental delays (Black et al., 2013).

### 2.4.3 Barriers to Language Acquisition

- **Limited Language Exposure:** Children need rich and varied linguistic input to develop language skills. In environments where children are not frequently spoken to or read to, language development can be significantly delayed. Hart and Risley (1995) demonstrated that children from lower-income families often hear fewer words and have less complex language interactions, impacting their vocabulary growth and language skills.
- **Hearing Impairments:** Undiagnosed or untreated hearing impairments can severely affect a child's ability to acquire language. Early detection and intervention are crucial for children with hearing issues to ensure they receive the necessary support to develop language skills (Yoshinaga-Itano et al., 2017).
- **Parental Education and Literacy:** Parents' education levels and literacy significantly impact children's language development. Parents with higher education levels are more likely to engage in activities that promote language development, such as reading to their children and engaging in complex conversations. In contrast, parents with lower literacy levels may struggle to provide the same level of linguistic stimulation (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2012).
- **Cultural and Linguistic Barriers:** In multilingual environments, children may face challenges in acquiring language if there is inconsistency in language use at home and in educational settings. Additionally, cultural attitudes towards language use and literacy can influence the emphasis placed on language development in the home environment (Paradis et al., 2011).
- **Developmental Disorders:** Conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and developmental language disorder (DLD) can impede language acquisition. Children with these disorders often require specialized interventions and support to develop their language skills effectively (Leonard, 2014).

### 2.5 Practices and Strategies for improving the Effects of Child Physical Growth and Language Acquisition in Childhood Development

Implementing programs that promote access to nutritious foods and encourage regular physical activity can support healthy physical growth and overall development in children. Schools, community organizations, and healthcare providers can collaborate to provide educational resources and activities that promote healthy eating habits and active lifestyles. Additionally, creating safe and accessible spaces for physical activity, such as playgrounds and sports facilities, can encourage children to engage in regular exercise, which supports optimal growth and development. Early intervention programs that focus on language development can help mitigate language delays and support children's linguistic skills. For example, incorporating movement-based games and activities that incorporate language learning objectives can engage children in

both physical and cognitive development simultaneously. Similarly, incorporating language-rich storytelling and discussions into physical education classes or outdoor playtime can enhance children's language skills while promoting physical activity. Providing support services, such as access to affordable healthcare, nutritious food assistance programs, and early childhood education initiatives, can help level the playing field and ensure that all children have the opportunity to thrive.

### **3.0 Research Methodology**

This study employed a quantitative research design utilizing a cross-sectional survey approach. The design was chosen to facilitate the collection and analysis of data from a sample of primary school children in Epe Local Government, Lagos State, to examine the relationship between physical development and language acquisition, as well as the influence of socioeconomic factors on this relationship. The study sample consisted of 20 primary school teachers from various schools within Epe Local Government, Lagos State. These teachers were selected using a purposive sampling technique, ensuring that they had sufficient experience and interaction with children to provide relevant observations and assessments. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to the teachers. The questionnaire included items designed to assess both physical development and language acquisition in children, as well as the socioeconomic background of the children's families. Each item was rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). Data were analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test for significant differences in language acquisition stages based on physical development levels and to examine the influence of socioeconomic factors on the relationship between physical growth and language acquisition. ANOVA was appropriate for this study as it allowed for the comparison of means across multiple groups and the determination of statistically significant differences.

The study aimed to provide insights into the complex interplay between physical and language development and the impact of socioeconomic factors, ultimately contributing to the development of evidence-based interventions for holistic child development.

### **4.0 Analysis**

#### **4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Findings**

**Table 1.1:**

S/N	ITEMS	X	SD
<b>Differences in language acquisition stages among children based on their physical development levels</b>			
1	Children with higher physical development levels demonstrate better vocabulary skills.	3.50	0.81
2	Physical development positively correlates with sentence structure complexity in children.	2.75	1.16
3	Motor skill development enhances children's ability to form coherent sentences.	3.35	0.93
4	Advanced physical development is linked to quicker language acquisition in early childhood.	3.55	0.69
<b>Differences in the relationship between physical growth and language acquisition among children from different socioeconomic backgrounds</b>			
5	Children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds show better language acquisition due to improved physical development.	3.00	1.24
6	Socioeconomic status affects the rate of physical growth and subsequent language development in children.	3.20	1.11
7	Environmental factors associated with socioeconomic status impact both physical and language development in early childhood.	3.40	1.05

8	Differences in physical development due to socioeconomic status result in varying language acquisition outcomes among children.	3.30	1.03
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**Sources: Field Survey, 2024**

Table 4.1 shows the frequency of the respondents opinion and a mean score of 3.50 indicates that, on average, respondents agreed that children with higher physical development levels demonstrate better vocabulary skills. The standard deviation of 0.81 suggests a moderate level of agreement among the respondents, indicating that while most teachers generally agreed with this statement, there was some variability in their responses. Also, the mean score of 2.75 suggests that respondents were somewhat neutral but leaned slightly towards agreeing that physical development positively correlates with sentence structure complexity in children. The higher standard deviation of 1.16 indicates a relatively wide range of responses, showing significant variability in how strongly teachers felt about this correlation. Furthermore, the mean score of 3.35 shows that respondents generally agreed that motor skill development enhances children's ability to form coherent sentences. The standard deviation of 0.93 reflects a moderate level of variability in responses, suggesting that while most teachers agreed with this statement, there were some differing opinions.

A mean score of 3.55 indicates that respondents agreed that advanced physical development is linked to quicker language acquisition in early childhood. The lower standard deviation of 0.69 shows a relatively high level of agreement among respondents, indicating that the majority of teachers consistently supported this statement with less variability in their responses. More so, the mean score of 3.00 indicates that respondents were neutral regarding the statement that children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds show better language acquisition due to improved physical development. The high standard deviation of 1.24 suggests a considerable variability in responses, indicating differing opinions among teachers on this statement. However, another mean score of 3.20 suggests that respondents leaned towards agreeing that socioeconomic status affects the rate of physical growth and subsequent language development in children. The standard deviation of 1.11 indicates a relatively high level of variability in responses, showing that teachers had diverse views on the impact of socioeconomic status. A mean score of 3.40 shows that respondents generally agreed that environmental factors associated with socioeconomic status impact both physical and language development in early childhood. The standard deviation of 1.05 reflects a moderate level of variability in responses, suggesting some differing opinions among teachers, though most leaned towards agreement. Lastly, a mean score of 3.30 indicates that respondents agreed that differences in physical development due to socioeconomic status result in varying language acquisition outcomes among children. The standard deviation of 1.03 shows a moderate level of variability, suggesting that while most teachers agreed with the statement, there were some differing opinions.

**4.1.1 Testing of Hypotheses**

**ANOVA TABLE ON DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION STAGES AMONG CHILDREN BASED ON THEIR PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT LEVELS.**

**TABLE 1.2**

Variable	Sum of Square	DF	MS	F	SIG
Language acquisition stages among children based	11.53	5	2.307		
Error	51.014	14	3.644	0.633	0.678
<b>Total</b>	<b>62.550</b>	<b>19</b>			

From Table 1.2, it can be deduced that the F-value of 0.633 with a significance level of 0.678 indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in language acquisition stages among



children based on their physical development levels. A p-value greater than 0.05 (in this case, 0.678) suggests that the differences observed are likely due to random variation rather than a true effect of physical development levels.

**ANOVA TABLE ON DIFFERENCES IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHYSICAL GROWTH AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AMONG CHILDREN FROM DIFFERENT SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS**

**TABLE 1.3**

Variable	Sum of Square	D F	MS	F	SIG
Relationship between physical growth and language acquisition among children from different socioeconomic backgrounds	7.336	5	1.467		
Error	76.464	14	5.462	0.269	0.923
<b>Total</b>	<b>83.800</b>	<b>19</b>			

From Table 1.3, it can be deduced that The F-value of 0.269 with a significance level of 0.923 indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the relationship between physical growth and language acquisition among children from different socioeconomic backgrounds. A p-value greater than 0.05 (in this case, 0.923) suggests that the differences observed are likely due to random variation rather than a true effect of socioeconomic background.

**4.2 Discussion of Findings**

The overall interpretation of the responses suggests that primary school teachers in Epe Local Government, Lagos State, generally perceive a positive relationship between physical development and language acquisition in children aged 4-7 years. The level of agreement was strongest for the link between advanced physical development and quicker language acquisition (Item 4), while there was more variability in responses regarding the correlation between physical development and sentence structure complexity (Item 2). The responses suggest that primary school teachers in Epe Local Government, Lagos State, generally perceive a relationship between socioeconomic status and both physical and language development in children aged 4-7 years. The highest level of agreement was on the impact of environmental factors associated with socioeconomic status (Item 7), while there was the greatest variability in opinions on whether higher socioeconomic backgrounds directly result in better language acquisition through improved physical development (Item 5). The overall trend indicates that teachers recognize the significant role of socioeconomic and environmental factors in shaping physical and language development outcomes.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) results for the relationship between physical development levels and language acquisition stages among children yielded an F-value of 0.633 with a significance level of 0.678. These results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in language acquisition stages among children based on their physical development levels. The high p-value (0.678) further suggests that any observed differences are likely due to random variation rather than a true effect of physical development levels. This finding implies that the stages of language acquisition in children are not significantly influenced by their levels of physical development. Despite the intuitive expectation that physical development might correlate with language skills—considering that both are crucial aspects of early childhood development—this study did not find sufficient evidence to support such a relationship. The lack of significant differences suggests that language acquisition stages may be influenced more by other factors such as cognitive development, educational interventions, and family environment rather than physical development alone.



The results highlight the importance of a holistic approach to early childhood education that considers a broad range of developmental factors. Educators and policymakers should focus not only on physical and motor skill development but also on providing rich linguistic environments, cognitive stimulation, and emotional support to facilitate language acquisition. Further research could explore the interaction of multiple factors and their combined effects on language development to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

The ANOVA results for the relationship between physical growth and language acquisition among children from different socioeconomic backgrounds produced an F-value of 0.269 with a significance level of 0.923. These results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the relationship between physical growth and language acquisition based on socioeconomic background. The very high p-value (0.923) suggests that any observed differences are likely due to random variation rather than a true effect of socioeconomic background.

This finding suggests that the relationship between physical growth and language acquisition in children is not significantly affected by their socioeconomic background. While it is well-documented that socioeconomic factors can impact various aspects of child development, this study did not find significant evidence to support the idea that socioeconomic status influences the interplay between physical growth and language acquisition. The results indicate that the influence of socioeconomic factors on early childhood development might be more complex and multifaceted than the scope of this study could capture. It is possible that while socioeconomic status affects physical growth and language acquisition independently, it does not significantly alter the relationship between these two domains. This could imply that interventions aimed at improving language acquisition should focus on addressing direct influences such as educational resources, parental involvement, and quality of early childhood education, regardless of socioeconomic background.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the findings from this study suggest that neither physical development levels nor socioeconomic background significantly alter the relationship between physical growth and language acquisition in children aged 4-7 years. These results underscore the need for comprehensive and inclusive approaches to early childhood education that address a wide array of developmental factors beyond physical growth and socioeconomic status.

The findings from this study suggest that neither physical development levels nor socioeconomic background significantly alter the relationship between physical growth and language acquisition in children. The lack of significant differences observed in the ANOVA results indicates that the interplay between these two developmental domains is likely influenced by other factors beyond physical growth and socioeconomic status. This highlights the complexity of early childhood development and the necessity of considering multiple dimensions when designing educational and developmental interventions.

These results underscore the need for comprehensive and inclusive approaches to early childhood education. Rather than focusing solely on physical growth or socioeconomic factors, educators and policymakers should address a wide array of developmental aspects to support holistic child development. This includes providing rich linguistic environments, cognitive stimulation, and emotional support, as well as ensuring access to quality early childhood education regardless of a child's socioeconomic background. Such a multifaceted approach is essential to fostering optimal language acquisition and overall development in young children.

## **2.8 Recommendation**

To address the barriers to child physical growth and language acquisition, comprehensive interventions should be implemented at community, educational, and policy levels. Governments

and non-governmental organizations need to collaborate to provide food assistance programs, nutritional education, and regular health check-ups, particularly in low-income areas, and enhance healthcare infrastructure to ensure access to preventive and curative healthcare. These efforts will help mitigate the adverse effects of malnutrition and environmental hazards on physical growth, providing children with the foundational support needed for healthy development. Simultaneously, early childhood education programs must integrate evidence-based strategies that promote rich linguistic environments. Schools and educators should receive training on language development and methods for incorporating language-rich activities into their curricula. Additionally, community programs should educate parents on engaging in meaningful verbal interactions and reading activities with their children. Tailored educational resources and support systems should address cultural and linguistic diversity to bridge the gap in language acquisition for children from multilingual backgrounds. By implementing these recommendations, barriers to both physical growth and language development can be significantly reduced, fostering an environment where all children have the opportunity to thrive linguistically and academically.

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**PARENT-TEACHER COLLABORATION ON PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S  
DEVELOPMENT OF NUMERACY SKILLS IN IBEJU-LEKKI LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT AREA OF LAGOS STATE**

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**Abstract**

*Number is particularly important to later success in school mathematics, as number and related concept make up the majority of mathematics content covered in later classes. Besides, numeracy skills development is crucial for individual to navigate everyday life by equipping children with problem-solving, critical thinking and financial literacy among others. However, inspite of the importance of aforementioned numeracy skills, literature has shown that many children still enter school without adequate development of these numeracy skills. This situation has been traced to factors such as teacher's pedagogy, parental factors, learner factors and physical factors among others. The study therefore investigated the effects of parent-teacher collaboration on preschool children's development of numeracy skills in Ibeju-Lekki Local Government Area of Lagos State. The study adopted the pretest-posttest control group quasi experimental design with 2x2x2 factorial matrix. Purposive sampling technique was used to select two pre-primary public schools in Ibeju-Lekki Local Government Area. The school selected have preschool sections and the number of children selected in each school is 30. Three instruments were self-developed and used for the study, two of these instruments were stimulus guide for instructional strategies and Achievement Test on the Numeracy Development of Preschool Children ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ). Three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of Significance. Data collected were analyzed using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). There was a significant main effect of treatment on number and operational skills ( $F_{(1,55)} = 16.96$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ). Those pupils exposed to teacher-parents collaboration performed better in number and operations (mean = 19.20) than those exposed to conventional strategy (mean = 13.68). There was a significant main effect of treatment on geometry skills ( $F_{(1,55)} = 4.24$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ). Those exposed to teacher-parents collaboration activities performed better in geometry (mean = 3.49) than those exposed to conventional strategy. There was no significant main effect of treatment on measurement skills. There was no significant main effect of gender on preschool children's development of numeracy skills. Also, none of the 2-way interactions was found to be significant. Parent-teacher collaboration activities are effective strategies for enhancing numeracy development skills of preschool children. Therefore, parent-teacher collaboration should be adopted by teachers as a teaching-learning strategy in preschools. Parents should create a home environment that encourages learning.*

**Key Words:** Parent-teacher collaboration, Numeracy development skills, Preschool children, Gender.

**Word Count:** 363

### Introduction

Education is indeed a social system; even the most individualized form of education is identified with social factors. The interface network among learners, teachers, administrators, and parents is the social texture of education programmes with respect to structure and process. The participation of parents and the society is one of the features of an effective school. In such schools, the child's family and society participate in teaching and learning activities and in the school's decision-making process. Additionally, they serve as sources that help develop the school's activities.

It is not possible for the school's educational programmes to be effective without the participation of the child's family. The family provides the child with informal education, while schools impart formal education to the child. It is very important for informal and formal education to complement each other, so as to enable children to attain social goals. The family must participate in the formal education process in order to achieve these goals. Cooperation between parents and teachers builds a better relationship between both parties. The child's education, which was initiated at home, takes shape at school; it is shaped further in social circles. Good education is contingent on the coordinated effort of these three entities and particularly on strong ties between the school and the family. (Myende and Nhlumayo, 2022, Vural, 2004)

The earliest years of life are particularly important because vital development occurs in all domains during this period (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). Many studies suggest that early learning contributes to the brain's developing architecture (Blakemore and Frith, 2005) and underpins the development of intellectual schemas (Sylva, 1994). Well before entering school, the young child acquires learning dispositions as well as key cognitive skills (Sylva and Pugh, 2005), especially in an environment where parents are full of expectation for their children.

The emphasis on meeting the expectations of parents in preschool education clearly implies a greater involvement by parents. This involvement has emerged as a widespread response to increased pressure for reform and democratization across the entire educational spectrum in many countries such as the UK, Australia, and Norway (Dimmock et al., 1996). In the US, parental involvement has stemmed from concerns about social justice, particularly in relation to federal initiatives aimed at promoting equity and equality among poor people, Blacks, disabled people, and other minority groups (Dimmock et al., 1996).

Olatonye and Ogunkola (2008) posit that traditionally, parental involvement in education included contributions to their children's home-based activities (like helping with homework, encouraging reading and school attendance), and school-based activities (like attending Parents Teachers' Association meeting, Parent/Teacher conferences, and participating in fund raising activities). Uzoechina and Obidike (2008) contend that parental involvement in children's education now is manifested in their interest in school activities and active participation in children's school work. Some of these activities are fund-raising, inter-house sports, involvement in school's decision-making, information dissemination, monitoring of children's school and enforcing pupils and staff discipline.



However, there has also been considerable debate about the precise nature of this involvement (Baker, 2014, Ball, 1994). School staff members may be ambivalent because of the perceived threat to their professional status (Edwards and Knight, 1994). Parents may be nervous about assuming increased responsibilities for which they feel untrained and unprepared. Because of legislation and budgetary controls, parents may not have much actual power and it may not be of the kind they want (Stacey, 1991). Parents may trust the staff implicitly to establish the curriculum and organize the classroom, but may face immediate concerns about issues related to individual children and staff-parent communication, especially if things appear to go awry.

Uzoechina and Obidike (2008) added that parental involvement is not a friendly acquaintance with teachers but obligations from parents. This participation must be seen in area of development of educational policies and curriculum issues that affect the destiny of children. A high level of parental involvement will no doubt goad primary education to more effective and more efficient performance. Despite the various ways in which parents may be involved in students' education, many studies have shown that many parents because of one reason or the other cannot effectively be involved thereby become obstacles to their children's educational attainment.

Research has indicated that there are positive academic outcomes stemming from parent involvement ranging from benefits in early childhood to adolescence and beyond (Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, and Walberg, 2005). Researchers have used a variety of ways to measure academic achievement such as report card grades, grade point averages, standardized test scores, teacher ratings, other cognitive test scores, grade retention, and dropout rates.

It has been shown that children whose parents are involved in early childhood or participate with their children in early childhood programmes, such as Head Start, have higher cognitive and language skills than do children whose families are not involved or part of such programmes. Also, children who participate in early childhood programmes that had strong family collaboration are more likely to be better prepared for school. Most importantly, benefits continue to be evident even later, as these children have fewer class retentions and are more likely to graduate from high school.

There is continuous argument about whether or not parental involvement in homework affects pupils' achievement at school. For example, a study from the United States has explored the effects of different types of parental involvement in homework and found that different forms of support (such as support for children's autonomy) are associated with higher test scores, whereas others (such as direct involvement) are associated with lower test scores (Sharp and Benefield, 2001). Beyond simply eliminating distractions, parents can help to create an effective learning environment for their children, as international studies have found that children can have distinct preferences for different learning environments (Sharp and Benefield, 2001) and it may be useful for study environments to be based on children's individual learning styles (Greiser, 1999).

The most consistent predictors of children's academic achievement and social adjustment are parent expectations of the child's academic attainment and satisfaction with their child's education at school. Parents of high-achieving students set higher standards for their children's educational activities than parents of low-achieving students. (Burns, et al, 1992) Therefore, it is important for the teachers to suitably evaluate the child's family environment and engage in communication with the responsible family members to provide better



education. The preschool years are important for the development of many skills used later in life, but some of the most valuable lifelong skills children acquire during this time are skills like language, verbal, writing, numeracy, social, and science (Wilcox, et.al.,2001). Numeracy skill is very important because of its known importance in the further learning of various topics.

Numeracy in preschool children has to do with the understanding and ability to reason with number. Though there are clearly limits to preschool children's capacity to reason numerically at certain levels, but there are many fundamental numeracy concepts that are fully within their grasp (Lave, 1988; Rogoff, 1990). These concepts, when taken together, provide a sound foundation for further conceptual understanding. However, the situation is somewhat unique at the preschool level- for very young children, these prior conception have been primarily acquired in the absence of intentional or formal instruction. Therefore, it is necessary to identify and structure initial activities according to what children have acquired naturally through interaction with their environment, and provide well- planned opportunities for children to build upon their informally acquired knowledge and abilities, or even to help them from their initial constructions at the earliest ages.

According to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM, 2000), two major areas of mathematics on which to focus are: (1) number including whole number, operations, and relations, and (2) geometry, spatial thinking, and measurement.

Working with number (such as learning to count) is the primary goal of many early childhood programmes; however, when given the opportunity, children are capable of demonstrating competence in more sophisticated mathematics activity related to whole numbers, operations, and relations. Operations and relations are extensions of understanding number. The operations core includes addition and subtraction. According to Zhou and Wang (2004), Children will open their eyes to a new world when they understand the characteristics of numbers; and as soon as they start using symbols, they obtain important pre-conditions and possibilities for their mathematics education.

Since number work is designed to promote numeracy skills, it is therefore important that children at the preschool level are properly exposed to the concepts taught in the subject during the early years (Russell, 2012). Relevant number activities are also relevant to the science activities. As children learn to classify, and group and as they think about functions and relationships, they are learning both maths and science.

In addition, aside from solving problems in application and in practicality, skills in expressing a number as an object of thought and disassembling a number form the basic knowledge of arithmetic (Hunting, 2003), children will become aware of addition when they mix a group of objects with another group of objects, and they will recognize subtraction when they remove one or several objects from a group of objects (Butterworth, 2005). Educator's can help children to grasp the meaning of operations such as addition and subtraction by presenting them various problems (Ktoridou, Eteokleous and Gregoriou, 2005).

Geometry, spatial thinking, and measurement make up the second area of mathematics that is emphasized for young children. According to Freudenthal (1973, Gerjard and Melander, 2018), "Geometry is grasping space. And since it is about the education of children, it is grasping that space in which the child lives, breathes, and moves. The space that the child must learn to know, explore, and conquer in order to live, breath and move better in it.

Children's foundational mathematics involves geometry or learning about space and shapes in two and three dimensions (such as learning to recognise shapes in many different orientations, sizes and shapes). A fundamental understanding of shapes begins with experiences in which children are shown varied examples and nonexamples and understand attributes of shapes that are numerically relevant as well as those that are not. As children progress along the teaching-learning path, they need opportunities to discuss and describe shapes into pictures and eventually learn to take apart and put together shapes to create new shapes.

Importantly, children's knowledge of measurement helps them connect number and geometry because measurement involves covering space and quantifying this coverage. Later, children can compare lengths by measuring objecting with manipulable units, such as centimetre cubes.

Number is particularly important to later success in school mathematics, as number and related concept make up the majority of mathematics content covered in later grades. However, it is important to point out that concepts related to number (and operations and relations) can also be explored through geometry and measurement. In addition, geometry and measurement provide rich contexts in which children can deepen their numeracy reasoning ability. However, inspite of the importance of developing of the aforementioned numeracy skills; researchers have shown that many children still enter school without adequate development of these numeracy skills (Seo and Ginsburg, 2004)

The importance of good parent-teacher collaboration has been well documented. According to Henderson and Berla (1994), "the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status but the extent to which that student's family is able to: (1) Create a home environment that encourages learning; (2) Express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers; and (3) Become involved in their children's education at school and in the community. Families who receive frequent and positive messages from teachers tend to become more involved in their children's education than parents who do not receive this kind of communication (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001).

Both parents and teachers have an important role to play; their roles do not replace but rather complement and reinforce the other's role, thus providing the pupil with a consistent message about numerical activities. Thinking of parents and teachers as "partners" refers to this mutual effort toward a shared goal.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Over the past two decades, a quiet revolution in developmental psychology and related fields has demonstrated that children have skills and concepts relevant to mathematics learning that are present early in life, and that most children enter school with a wealth of knowledge and cognitive skills that can provide a foundation for mathematics learning. At the same time, these foundational skills are not enough; children need rich numeracy interactions, both at home and at school in order to be well prepared for the challenges they will meet in elementary school and beyond. The knowledge and interest that children show about number and shape and other mathematics topics provide an important opportunity for parents and preschool teachers to help them develop their understanding of mathematics. However, literatures have shown that too many children not only start behind, but they also

begin a negative and difficult to change path in early numeracy skills development with negative long term effects. This is shown in poor performance in elementary mathematics and negative attitude to it in post-primary schools. Parent-teacher collaboration has been found to be a factor which may enhance or discourage the development of the early numeracy skills.

The study therefore examined the effect of parent-teacher collaboration on preschool children's development of numeracy skills in selected schools in Ibeju- Lekki Local Government Area, Lagos state.

### **Research Hypotheses**

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant main effect of treatment on preschool children's development in (a) number and operational skills, (b) geometry skills and (c) measurement skills.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant main effect of gender in preschool children's development in (a) number and operational skills, (b) geometry skills and (c) measurement skills.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on preschool children's development in (a) number and operational skills, (b) geometry skills and (c) measurement skills.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a pretest-posttest, control group quasi-experimental research design. The target population for this study consisted of preschool children in Ibeju-Lekki local government area of Lagos State. Purposive sampling technique was used to select two schools. The criteria for the selection were based on the following: The school must have a communication path between parents and teachers. The school must have a preschool section, whereby the preschool children's age fall between 3 and 5 years among others. Three research instruments were developed and validated to gather the data namely: (1) Preschool Mathematics Achievement Test (PMAT) with  $\alpha=0.84$ ; (2) Teacher / Parents Collaboration Instructional Guide (TPCIG) and (3) Conventional Strategy Instructional Guide (CSIG). Data collected were analysed using

### **Results**

**Table 4.2: Distribution of Children Based on Gender and Treatment Groups**

Treatment	Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Control Group	Male	17	28.3
	Female	13	21.7
Experimental Group	Male	23	38.3
	Female	7	11.7

Table 4.2 shows that 28.3% of male and 21.7% of female children were involved in the control group while 38.3% of male and 11% of female children were involved in the experimental group.

### **Testing the Null Hypotheses (Effect of Treatment on Pupils' Numeracy Skill)**

H<sub>01(a)</sub>: There is no significant main effect of treatment on preschool children's development in number and operations skills.

**Table 4.3a: Summary of Analysis of Covariance on Number and Operational skills**

Dependent Variable: Post Number and Operation

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Squared	Eta
Corrected Model	1668.816 <sup>a</sup>	4	417.204	22.335	.000	.619	
Intercept	1352.899	1	1352.899	72.427	.000	.568	
Prenumop	584.287	1	584.287	31.280	.000	.363	
Treatment	316.847	1	316.847	16.962	.000	.236	
Gender	1.788	1	1.788	.096	.758	.002	
treatment * gender	10.202	1	10.202	.546	.463	.010	
Error	1027.367	55	18.679				
Total	18605.000	60					
Corrected Total	2696.183	59					

Table 4.3a reveals that there is a significant main effect of treatment on number and operational skills ( $F_{(1,55)}=16.96$ ;  $P<0.05$ ). Therefore  $H_{01(a)}$  is rejected. Table 4.4a reveals the magnitude of performance across the groups.

**Table 4.4a: Estimated Marginal Means on Number and Operations**

Variable	Mean	Std. Error
INTERCEPT		
Prescore	12.567	---
Postscore	16.439	.613
TREATMENT		
Control	13.676	.841
Experimental	19.201	.972
GENDER		
Male	16.248	.694
Female	16.630	1.015

Table 4.4a shows that those pupils exposed to Teacher / Parents Collaboration Instructional Guide (TPCIG) performed better in number and operations (mean = 19.20) than those exposed to Conventional Strategy Instructional Guide (CSIG) (mean = 13.68).

**H<sub>01(b)</sub>:** There is no significant main effect of treatment on preschool children's development in geometry skills.

**Table 4.3b: Summary of Analysis of Covariance on Geometry skills**

Dependent Variable: Post Geometry

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Squared	Eta
Corrected Model	21.543 <sup>a</sup>	4	5.386	2.767	.036	.168	
Intercept	118.145	1	118.145	60.706	.000	.525	
Pregoe	12.498	1	12.498	6.422	.014	.105	
Treatment	8.259	1	8.259	4.244	.044	.072	
Gender	.309	1	.309	.159	.692	.003	
treatment * gender	.799	1	.799	.411	.524	.007	
Error	107.040	55	1.946				

Total	699.000	60				
Corrected Total	128.583	59				

Table 4.3b reveals that there is a significant main effect of treatment on geometry skills ( $F_{(1,55)} = 4.24$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ). Therefore  $H_{01(b)}$  is rejected. Table 4.4b reveals the magnitude of performance across the groups.

**Table 4.4b: Estimated Marginal Means on Geometry**

Variable	Mean	Std. Error
INTERCEPT		
Prescore	2.250	---
Postscore	3.082	.198
TREATMENT		
Control	2.673	.257
Experimental	3.492	.302
GENDER		
Male	3.161	.223
Female	3.003	.328

Table 4.4b shows that those pupils exposed to Teacher/ Parents Collaboration Instructional Guide (TPCIG) performed better in geometry (mean = 3.49) than those exposed to Conventional Strategy Instructional Guide (CSIG) (mean = 2.67).

**H<sub>01(c)</sub>:** There is no significant main effect of treatment on preschool children's development in measurement skills.

**Table 4.3c: Summary of Analysis of Covariance on Measurement skills**

**Dependent Variable: post measurement**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Squared	Eta
Corrected Model	109.567 <sup>a</sup>	4	27.392	2.522	.051	.155	
Intercept	246.963	1	246.963	22.741	.000	.293	
Premeas	62.720	1	62.720	5.776	.020	.095	
Treatment	24.944	1	24.944	2.297	.135	.040	
Gender	15.495	1	15.495	1.427	.237	.025	
treatment * gender	.001	1	.001	.000	.994	.000	
Error	597.283	55	10.860				
Total	2237.000	60					
Corrected Total	706.850	59					

Table 4.3c reveals that there is no significant main effect of treatment on measurement skills ( $F_{(1,55)} = 2.30$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ). Hence, the hypothesis 1c is not rejected. Table 4.4c reveals the magnitude of performance across the groups.

**Table 4.4c: Estimated Marginal Mean on Measurement**

Variable	Mean	Std. Error
INTERCEPT		
Prescore	4.017	---
Postscore	4.862	.468

TREATMENT		
Control	4.153	.608
Experimental	5.571	.711
GENDER		
Male	5.424	.528
Female	4.301	.775

Table 4.4c shows that those pupils exposed to Teacher/ Parents Collaboration Instructional Guide (TPCIG) performed better in measurement (mean = 5.57) than those exposed to Conventional Strategy Instructional Guide (CSIG) (mean = 4.15).

**H<sub>02(a)</sub>:** There is no significant main effect of gender on preschool children's development of number and operational skills.

Table 4.3a reveals that there is no significant main effect of gender on preschool children's development in number and operational skills ( $F_{(1,55)} = .096$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ).

**H<sub>02(b)</sub>:** There is no significant main effect of gender on preschool children's development of geometry skills.

Table 4.3b reveals that there is no significant main effect of gender on preschool children's development in number and operational skills ( $F_{(1,55)} = .159$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ).

**H<sub>02(c)</sub>:** There is no significant main effect of gender on preschool children's development of measurement skills.

Table 4.3c reveals that there is no significant main effect of gender on preschool children's development in measurement skills ( $F_{(1,55)} = 1.427$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ).

**H<sub>03(a)</sub>:** There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on preschool children's development in number and operational skills.

Table 4.3a reveals that there is no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on preschool children's development in number and operational skills ( $F_{(1,55)} = .546$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ).

**H<sub>03(b)</sub>:** There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on preschool children's development in geometry skills.

Table 4.3a reveals that there is no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on preschool children's development in geometry skills ( $F_{(1,55)} = .411$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ).

**H<sub>03(c)</sub>:** There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on preschool children's development in measurement skills.

Table 4.3a reveals that there is no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on preschool children's

## **Discussion of Findings**

### **Effects of Treatment on Preschool Children's Development of Numeracy Skills**

The main focus of this study is to investigate the effects of parent-teacher collaboration on preschool children development of numeracy skills. Based on hypothesis one that says there is no significant main effect of treatment on preschool children development in (a) number and operational skills, (b) geometry skills and (c) measurement skills.



Findings reveal that there is significant main effect of treatment (that's Parent-teacher collaboration) on preschool children's performance in number and operations and geometry skills. Those that were exposed to parent-teacher collaboration had higher scores in number and operations and geometry activities than those exposed to the conventional strategy.

This might be as a result of the fact that those children in the experimental group (with parent-teacher collaboration) were able to learn these skills from both the caregivers (teachers) in school and their parents at home. They were exposed to these skills in the school and home-works that actively involved the parents (Parental Activity Guide (PAG)) were given on how to actively involve in each of the teaching and learning process of the pupils. This set of children performed better than the control group (without parent-teacher collaboration) whereby homework was not sent home. This corroborates a recent finding of Ginsburg Block, Manz and McWayne (2010) that identified specific parental involvement activities, like increasing positive communication between the home and school, providing home-based support for learning, and providing home-based celebrations for accomplishments, as essential to supporting positive mathematics outcomes in children.

Again, this finding supports the finding of Sanders and Sheldon, (2009); and Yan and Lin, (2005) that parental involvement directly affects their children's math achievement. Again, this finding supports the finding of Shirvani (2007) that parental involvement contributes significantly to achievement of both primary and secondary school students in math.

Findings also reveal that there is no significant main effect of treatment (parent-teacher collaboration) on preschool children's development in measurement skills. This finding negates the findings of Griffin, Case, and Siegler (1994) which reported that parent's active participation in small group numeracy activities led to improvement in their children's numeracy skills. This might be as a result of the fact that the skills in measurement in numeracy is better acquired through practical experiences. It seems the parents might have not exposed the children to this skill in practical way at home. For the collaboration strategy to work better on measurement, it seems more effort is required from the teachers.

#### **Effect of Gender on Preschool Children's Development in (a) Number and Operational skills, (b) Geometry skills and (c) Measurement skills**

Hypothesis two compared the relative performance of boys and girls in both experimental and control groups (with parent-teacher collaboration and without parent-teacher collaboration). The findings have revealed that there was no significant main effect of gender on the preschool children's development in number and operations; geometry; and measurement skills. This implies that Gender have nothing or little to do with Preschool Children's development of numeracy skills when collaboration strategy is used. This finding might be as a result of the fact that both boys and girls were able to acquire the numeracy skills from several activities at home and in the school at the same rate and in a less abstractive way. This buttress the findings of Inomesia, (1999) that there was no significant sex difference in the students' performance in science subjects when effective instructional strategy is used.

#### **Interaction Effect of Treatment and Gender on Preschool Children's Development in (a) Number and Operational skills, (b) Geometry skills and (c) Measurement skills**

The focus of hypothesis three was on whether or not the treatment and gender interacted in such a way that affected preschool children's development of numeracy skills. The findings

have revealed that there is no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on numeracy skills.

This means that gender of the children has little or no effect on numeracy skills. What really determines development of numeracy skills on children is parent-teacher collaboration. This research finding is in agreement with Friedel, Cortino, Turner, and Midgley (2010) which reports that parental involvement in its many and varied ways is a vital parameter for increasing children's mathematics achievement. This implies that irrespective of Gender difference in children, the Experimental treatment is more effective than the control.

### **Conclusion**

The study reveals that parent-teacher collaboration activities positively affect children's development of numeracy skills. The use of this teaching strategy has been observed to enable the children interact effectively with their learning environment and therefore constructing their own knowledge.

It is paramount to mention that teachers also need to be very close to parents and clearly define their roles as early as their children join school. When parents are involved, children achieve more and everyone benefits in the sense that the school is recognized, parents have faith in the teachers and children are willing to stay. Parental involvement is a crucial force in children's development, learning, and success at school and in life. Parental involvement in their children's academic achievement yields positive academic outcomes ranging from early childhood throughout adolescence and beyond.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Classroom Teaching**

In teaching mathematics, the parent-teacher collaboration approach has a vast implementation for the teaching and learning in Nigeria primary schools. It also encourages acceptable classroom behaviour and ensures that the child completes schoolwork.

#### **Parents**

Parents should provide resources, monitor their wards, and volunteer in school events; develop good relationship with teachers and head teachers. Keep school well informed about homework, and child development. Parents should attend school events, help in the classroom, ask questions about curriculum and syllabus; and provide good home environment and teach their children at home.

Parents should receive training, resources, and support on culturally appropriate ways to create learning environments at home that foster high expectations for children's success in mathematics, among other things.

#### **Teacher Education Programmes**

Teachers need to improve on modalities of sensitizing both parents on how to be involved in their children's academic performance and for the students to appreciate their parents' participation despite the challenges.

There should be programmed teacher parent conferences where such forums would have teachers reporting in areas that need to be addressed and parents giving feedback and areas that would require improvement both at individual and school level.

### The Government

The government in conjunction with the Ministry of Education should encourage parental involvement programmes in which the school administration of the public primary schools could join forces in sourcing for motivational speakers.

Government should mandate schools in clear terms on how and where to involve parents in curriculum delivery, periodically train school staff and parents in those areas and provide incentives, provide a benchmark for assessing parental involvement in curriculum delivery, and conduct research on effective school-parent partnerships.

### School Administrators

School staff (head teacher, assistant head teachers and teachers) should honour parents by validating any level of involvement or contributions they make. Organize open day as effective mechanisms for commitment, raise consciousness and build school-family skills, recognize contributions and make an attempt to learn about parents' strengths, skills, talents, and experiences.

### Curriculum Planners

Curriculum planners should change the organizational processes and culture, and help to increase parent knowledge and involvement of curriculum, provide regular feedback to parents on curriculum issues, pupils' progress and resource needs and foster school-community relationship. There is a need for schools and parents to collaborate for effective curriculum implementation.

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## AN EXPLORATION OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND SUPERVISION OF PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*Preschool education in Nigeria has evolved gradually over the years. It started as originally as an informal set up of high-quality until the colonial era. An exploration of the legal framework of the preschool institutions, showed that the preschools are governed by policies which provides a foundation for ensuring quality and educational safety. The National Policy on Education, (FRN, 2014) recognizes the Integrated Early Child Care Development (IECD) Policy and guide for the establishment of preschool institutions in Nigeria. This study looked at the standard and quality of the services provided by the preschool using the IECD policy as a major yardstick for the establishment of preschool institutions in Nigeria. The IECD policy gave a high quality of standard for the establishment and smooth running of the preschools. However, there are some major challenges that affect the smooth running of the preschools such as insufficient government support, lack of supervision and so on which further affects the implementation of the IECD policy. The study further reviewed the IECD policy and gave some suggestions for the effective and smooth running of the preschool institutions and the areas for improvement.*

**Keywords:** preschool institutions, IECD policy.

**Word Count:** 208 words.

### Historical Background

Preschool education in Nigeria has undergone significant evolution over the years, reflecting the country's changing social, economic, and educational landscape. The traditional forms of early childhood education have existed within Nigerian communities for centuries. The traditional societies had an informal setting which allowed children learn through play, storytelling and apprenticeships, (Omolewa, 2017). The formalized preschool education began to take shape during the colonial period.

During British colonial rule, missionaries and colonial administrators introduced Western-style education systems, including primary and secondary schools. However, formal early childhood education was not initially prioritized within this framework. Instead, informal and culturally rooted methods of childcare and early learning predominated, often within the family or community setting (Omolewa, 2017).

It was not until Nigeria gained independence in 1960 that efforts to establish formal preschool institutions gained momentum. The government recognized the importance of early childhood education in laying the foundation for future learning and development. The government then established the National Commission for UNESCO and the Federal Ministry of Education (UNESCO, 2015). In the following decades, various initiatives such as National Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme were launched to expand access to preschool education and improve its quality.

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy recorded that the Nigerian government adopted the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) as part of their efforts towards recognizing and adopting ECE. The government also introduced the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy, focusing on children from birth to age 8.

One significant milestone was the adoption of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program in 1999, which aimed to provide free and compulsory education for all Nigerian children, including those at the preschool level. The UBE program emphasized the importance of early childhood care and education (ECCE) as an integral component of the education system.

In terms of legislation, the National Policy on Education (NPE) has served as a guiding framework for preschool education in Nigeria. Initially formulated in 1977 and subsequently revised in 1981, 1998, and 2004, the NPE outlines the government's goals and objectives for education at all levels, including early childhood education.

In addition to national policies, individual states within Nigeria have enacted their own laws and regulations pertaining to preschool education Sanni and Akinsanya, (2019). These include provisions for the registration, supervision, and quality assurance of preschool institutions, reflecting the diverse needs and contexts within the country.

Overall, the historical trajectory of preschool education in Nigeria reflects a gradual shift from informal, community-based approaches towards formalized, regulated systems. While challenges remain in terms of access, quality, and equity, ongoing efforts are being made to strengthen the legal and policy frameworks governing preschool education and ensure that all Nigerian children have the opportunity to receive a solid foundation for their future learning and development.

### **Legal Framework for Registration**

The registration of preschool institutions in Nigeria is governed by a combination of national laws, policies, and guidelines, as well as regulations established by state governments. These legal frameworks provide the basis for ensuring that preschools meet specified standards of quality, safety, and educational provision. Below are key components of the legal framework for registration:

- **National Policy on Education (NPE):** The NPE serves as a foundational document outlining the government's objectives and principles for education at all levels, including early childhood education. According to the NPE, the Early Child Care and Development Education spans over the period of (0-4 years) situated in daycare or crèches, fully in the hands of private sector and social development services. It emphasizes the importance of providing quality early childhood care and education to all Nigerian children as part of the overall goal of achieving universal basic education.
- **Child Rights Act:** The Child Rights Act, which was enacted in 2003, aims to protect the rights and welfare of children in Nigeria. It includes provisions related to the establishment and regulation of childcare facilities, including preschools, to ensure the safety, well-being, and development of children.
- **Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Act:** This Act, also known as the National Minimum Standards for Education Act, provides guidelines for the establishment, registration, and operation of educational institutions at all levels, including preschools. It sets forth minimum standards for infrastructure, staffing, curriculum, and other aspects of educational provision.
- **State Laws and Regulations:** In addition to national legislation, individual states within Nigeria may have their own laws, policies, and regulations governing preschool education. These state-level frameworks may supplement national standards and address specific regional or local needs and priorities.



### **a. The National Policy of Education**

The preschool is recognized as the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in the National Policy on Education, (FRN, 2014). It means the care, protection, stimulation and learning promoted in children from age 0-4 years in a crèche or nursery. The operational objectives of the ECCDE is to:

- ix. Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school.
- x. Prepare the child for the primary level of education
- xi. Provide adequate care, supervision and security for the children while their parents are at work
- xii. Inculcate social, moral norms and values
- xiii. Inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and the use of toys, etc.
- xiv. Develop a sense of co-operation and team spirit
- xv. Stimulate in the child good habits, including good health habits; and
- xvi. Teach the rudiments of numbers; letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc., through play.

Technically, the preschools in Nigeria is aimed at preparing the child for the primary education and the rigours of the future. It helps to keep the child safe and adequately provided for while the parent is at work and unavailable. Preschools instills the sense of cooperation, team-spirit, social, moral and the ethics of the immediate environment into the child. The preschool arouses the interest of the child in making enquiry, exploring the nature and self-learning. Lastly, the preschool is supposed to stimulate good habits in the child, teach the basic rudiments needed for the primary schools through play.

### **b. Policy Guidelines and Regulations for Implementation**

The National Policy stated the guidelines for achieving the outlined objectives of the preschool. The stated guidelines by the government to achieve these objectives are to;

- Set and monitor minimum standard for ECCDE centres;
- Develop and disseminate curriculum materials such as the Integrated Early Child Care Development (IECD) Policy, National Minimum Standard for the established establishment of Early Child Care Education Centres, IECD Curriculum, IECD Implementation Guidelines and all other materials that will enhance the implementation of ECCDE;
- Encourage both community and private efforts in the establishment of ECCDE centers based on set standards.
- Make provision in teacher education programmes for specialization in early child care and education, and for retaining of teachers;
- Ensure that the curriculum of teacher education is oriented towards play-way method;
- Ensure that the ECCDE Centers adopt the following caregiver infant ratios: i. Creche shall be 1:10 ii. Nursery 1:25
- Develop suitable curriculum for nationwide implementation;
- Supervise and control quality of ECCDE centers
- Make provision for the production and effective utilization of learning and instructional materials in adequate numbers; and
- Ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community; and to this end will:
  - o Develop the orthography of more Nigerian languages; and
  - o Produce textbooks, supplementary readers and other instructional materials in Nigerian languages.

To regulate the ECCDE centres, the government shall develop suitable ECCDE curriculum for nationwide implementation, supervise and control the quality of ECCDE centres, make provision for the production and effective utilization of learning and instructional materials in adequate numbers and ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue or language of the immediate community. The guideline for the Early Child Care and Development Education according to the National Policy on Education, states that the centers are to adopt the caregiver infant ratios of 1:10 for the crèche and 1:25 for the nursery. Obiweluzor, (2015) critiqued that the National Policy on Education, (2012) specified some guidelines for pre-primary education in Nigeria but it does not recognize the need for policy to guide the children of ages 0-3 years of age. However, the revised edition (6<sup>th</sup> edition) of the NPE, 2014 stated some guidelines for operations of ECCDE for children of ages 0-4 years a one-year education programme for ages 5 years.

Based on personal experience, majority of the preschools available for children between the ages of 0-4 years are private establishments. A lot of these institutions are handled by individuals or an organization under a uniformed umbrella (i.e. as a subset of a school). Only a few of these institutions stand as a lone private preschool. Although, the government according to the policy takes responsibility for a one-year pre-primary education of the child but a lot of parents would prefer that their child continues to adapt to the private preschool the child has been acquainted to rather than disturbing the child's smooth transitioning from the home to the school. Therefore, the pre-primary preschool fails it function greatly.

In addition, the availability and the standards of this one-year preschool seems to be in the policy alone without adequate provisions because no specific institute of such has been recognized in majority of our immediate community. From residual knowledge, government taxes are not paid on the preschool aged children and a uniformed curriculum is provided by the state ministries of education to be implemented by the institutions.

### **Standards and Criteria for Registration**

The registration of preschool institutions in Nigeria involves meeting specific standards and criteria to ensure quality, safety, and effectiveness (Fartro, 2020). These include:

1. **Safety and Security:** Preschools must prioritize the safety of children, with furniture having rounded edges to prevent injuries and first aid materials kept out of children's reach.
2. **Developmental Appropriateness:** Tables and chairs should be appropriately sized for children to ensure comfort and accessibility.
3. **Accessibility:** The preschool environment should be child-centered, with resources easily accessible to foster independence and self-confidence.
4. **Intellectual Stimulation:** The learning environment should encourage exploration, play, and communication, with didactic materials that promote experimentation and collaboration.

#### **c. Registration Process and Regulations**

The Integrated Early Child Care Development (IECD) Policy outlines the registration process for preschools. Key steps include:

- i. Submission of an expression of interest and reference letters to the Regulator for Childminding Services.
- ii. Completion of an application form and submission of required documents, such as pre-registration training certificates, first aid certificates, medical certificates, criminal records, and identity verification.
- iii. Issuance of a valid certificate of registration by the Institute of Early Childhood Development (IECD).

- iv. Display of the registration certificate in a visible and accessible manner.

The IECD policy mandates regular inspections to ensure that preschools conform to national standards. These inspections, conducted at least every six months, verify the quality of services and the availability of required documentation.

### **d. Inspection and Supervision of the Preschools according to the (IECD) Policy**

The preschool institute and the personnel who is in direct contact with the child is referred to as the Childminder in the Integrated Early Child Care Development (IECD) policy is expected to, in accordance with the Institute of Early Childhood Development Act 2014,

- be subjected to inspection to determine whether the quality of service that he or she renders conforms to the national standards stated under these regulations;
- be subject to inspection at least once every six months;
- in addition to the certificate of registration, have readily available during inspection, documents such as medical and criminal records.

The IECD which serves as the blueprint for the government on the preschoolers ensures that, according to the above stated policy, some government agencies are expected to carry out routine inspection at least every six months to oversee the quality of service the childminder renders to the children left in his/her care in line with the national standards. Also, during the inspection the childminder is expected to produce upon request the certificate of registration, his/her medical and criminal records. This is to ensure that the children in his care are from any health hazard that could be contracted from him as well as certify him medically fit for the job. The childminder should not be a criminal. Parents and guardians should be rest assured that no harm would come the way of their children from the childminder.

### **e. Challenges of Preschools in Nigeria**

Despite the established legal frameworks and policies, preschool institutions in Nigeria face several challenges:

1. **Lack of Supervision and Inspection:** There is often inadequate supervision and inspection to ensure effective implementation of policies, leading to varying standards of preschool education (Obiweluzor, 2015).
2. **Insufficient Government Support:** The reliance on private institutions for preschool education means that government support and funding are limited, affecting the quality and accessibility of services.
3. **Poor Social Services:** Many Nigerian children suffer from poor nutrition, inadequate healthcare, and lack of access to safe water and sanitation, impacting their overall development.
4. **Inconsistent Implementation:** The implementation of policies varies across regions, with some areas lacking adequate facilities and trained personnel.

## **15. Review of the Integrated Early Child Care Development (IECD) Policy in Nigeria**

### **a. Implementation Status**

The IECD policy in Nigeria represents a significant effort by the government to formalize and regulate early childhood care and education (ECCE) across the country. The policy aims to provide a structured framework for the establishment, operation, and supervision of early childhood care facilities, ensuring that children receive quality care and educational preparation before entering primary school.

### **b. Progress and Achievements**

- i. **Policy Framework:** The IECD policy outlines clear objectives and guidelines for ECCE, emphasizing the importance of early childhood development in preparing children for formal education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

- ii. **Regulatory Standards:** It sets minimum standards for infrastructure, staffing, curriculum, and health and safety measures in ECCE centers, aiming to standardize practices across diverse socio-economic and regional contexts (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).
- iii. **Implementation Efforts:** Government initiatives, such as training programs for ECCE educators and periodic inspections of facilities, demonstrate efforts to enforce compliance with the policy's standards (Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria).

### c. Challenges and Lapses

- **Inadequate Supervision and Monitoring:** Despite the policy's provisions for inspections, there are reports of inconsistent enforcement and inadequate monitoring of ECCE centers nationwide (Obiweluzor, 2015). This inconsistency leads to varying standards of care and educational quality.
- **Resource Limitations:** Many ECCE centers, particularly in rural and underserved areas, lack adequate resources, including trained personnel, instructional materials, and infrastructure that meets the policy's standards (Obiweluzor, 2015; Sanni & Akinsanya, 2019).
- **Funding Constraints:** The reliance on private institutions to provide ECCE services, coupled with limited government funding, restricts the expansion and improvement of ECCE facilities across the country (Sanni & Akinsanya, 2019).

### d. Areas for Improvement

To enhance the effectiveness and impact of the IECD policy in Nigeria, several areas require attention:

1. **Enhanced Supervision and Compliance:** Strengthening the capacity for regular and rigorous inspections of ECCE centers to ensure adherence to established standards (Obiweluzor, 2015).
2. **Investment in Infrastructure:** Increasing government investment in ECCE infrastructure, particularly in marginalized communities, to improve facilities and access to quality early childhood education (Sanni & Akinsanya, 2019).
3. **Professional Development:** Providing continuous professional development opportunities for ECCE educators to enhance their skills and knowledge in line with modern pedagogical practices (Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria).
4. **Public Awareness and Participation:** Promoting community involvement and awareness of the importance of ECCE, encouraging partnerships between government, NGOs, and private stakeholders for sustainable development (Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria).

### Recommendations

1. **Regular Inspection and Monitoring:** The government should conduct routine inspections of private preschool institutions to ensure they are meeting the standards and requirements outlined in the National Policy on Education.
2. **Proper Care and Safety:** The government should ensure that children in preschools are properly cared for and safe during their time in school. This can be achieved by implementing safety protocols and regularly monitoring the well-being of children.
3. **Implementation of Mother Tongue Instruction:** The government should ensure that the mother tongue is used as the medium of instruction in preschools, as stated in the policy. This will help promote linguistic diversity and cultural heritage.
4. **Registration and Regulation:** The government should establish a system for registering and regulating preschools, as recommended by the IECD policy. This will help control the standards and quality of preschool education.

5. Collaboration between Government and Private Institutions: The government should work closely with private preschool institutions to ensure that they are meeting the requirements and standards outlined in the policy. This can be achieved through regular communication, training, and support.

### Conclusion

Preschool is the education provided for children before the appropriate school age. It is the variety of active learning activities structured for children between the ages 0-5 years. In Nigeria, this level of education is recognized and adequately provided for in the National policy of education. One major objective of the preschool is to help ease the transition of the child from home to school before the appropriate school age. The child is also prepared for the rigors of the primary schools as well as the other levels of education. This policy however, has given the responsibilities of caring for the child to the private institutions. Although, it allocated some responsibilities to the government, a large portion of the job is left for private institutions which has made it very easy for these individuals run the preschools as they deem fit. It is however recommended that the government ensure the effective implementation of the policy by carrying out routine inspection as stated in the IECD policy, ascertain that the children placed in the preschools are properly taken care of for the period of being in the school and also, the mother tongue which has been slated as the medium of instruction in the policy should be well implemented. Adequate provisions should be made for the registration of the preschools by the appropriate ministries and departments as recommended by the IECD policy. This would give a control to the level of standards expected of a preschool and a regulated number of preschools that is suitable for the states and their local governments.

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