

ASSESSMENT OF STATE GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN ENHANCING
QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA
LAWAL Oluwaseun Temitope, Ph.D & OYEWUMI Nasimot Opeyemi

**ASSESSMENT OF STATE GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN
ENHANCING QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND
EDUCATION IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA**

LAWALoluwaseun Temitope, Ph. D

School of Early Childhood and Primary Education,
Federal College of Education,
Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria.
E-mail: lawalot@fceiwo.edu.ng
Tel. +2348163323965

&

OYEWUMI Nasimot Opeyemi

School of Early Childhood and Primary Education,
Federal College of Education,
Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria.
Tel. +2348050957515

Abstract

The study assessed the quality of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme provided for children in Osun state. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The sample size comprised 300 public Basic schools in the state. A checklist was used to collect data for the study. The data obtained were analyzed using frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The results revealed that there was no provision of Pre-nursery, Nursery 1 and Nursery 2 classes in all the public basic schools in Osun state, very low percentage (10%) of the school had Pre-basic classes, there was availability of age appropriate curriculum for children of age 6-7 in Pre-basic class and basic 1-3, most of the schools had 60% of the instructional materials but not being used regularly. It can be concluded that the government is yet to provide full ECCE programme for young children in public basic schools in Osun State. It is recommended that the government should give ECCDE programme more priority in all the government owned basic schools in the State.

Keywords: Children, Early Childhood Care and Education, Quality, Public, Basic Schools

Introduction

Globally, education for young children has been the major priority of the governments and other stakeholders in education, as it is viewed to be the foundation and bedrock for other levels of education. Young children education is referred to as Early Childhood Care and Education in every country including Nigeria as it provides children between the ages of 0-5years with all that they require for their

transition into formal education setting (FRN.NPE 2013). Early Childhood Care and Education is a type of education that is directed towards the holistic development of every child, which must be provided without any form of sentiment or disparity. Soother (2013) states the goals of ECCDE which are identifying and resolving problems related to children health and challenges, promoting proper development of children, moulding of their character, equipping them for future and promoting their early learning opportunity.

This stage of education is recognized in all international documents and developmental goals. It is also being recognized in the National Policy on Education in Nigeria since its formulation in 1977 but it is being referred to as Pre-primary education in the policy which only covered children of age 6-7. Early Childhood Education was reviewed in the policy on education and included in Nigerian educational system formally through the policy and this was done in order to provide all children between the ages of 0-6 years the opportunity of accessing quality education from their early age (Akinrimisi, Adeyemi and Iroegbu 2020). In the National Policy on Education (2013) ECE programme was placed under Basic Education in section (2) and presently it has been divided into two programmes namely; Early Childhood Care and Education and Kindergarten Education which is also being referred to as Pre-basic education. Research had confirmed that children who experiences quality early childhood care and education in early years do have a quality and meaningful foundation in preparation for basic school and other levels of education.

To achieve quality early childhood care and education for children in any nation, it is very important to know that it goes beyond the traditional method of education children experience at home and not just the role of caregivers, teachers and parents alone but it involves the government as the major stakeholder in providing public education for all. Some of the roles of government in achieving quality early childhood care and education according to National Policy on Education includes: establishment of school for young children; encouraging both community and private individuals in establishment of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCDE) centers; providing learning and instructional materials; ensuring that the mother tongue is the language of instruction and producing textbooks and other instructional materials in Nigerian languages (FRN, 2013).

In the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations set a benchmark for all countries 'to ensure there is access to high-quality pre-primary education at least a year before normal primary school by 2030' (UN, 2015). It was however, observed that there is an existing inequality between countries when measuring the number of children who have access to ECCE across the globe. United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) laid emphasis on benefits of high-quality early childhood education centres and also notes that just half of the world preschool children receive quality ECE (UNICEF, 2019). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation UNESCO (2022) also notes that there must be a clear commitment to aligning benchmarks into education systems and ensuring that all children has accessibility to high-quality early childhood education.

It has been observed by researchers that in Nigeria educational provision for young children by government in the early years has not been encouraging due to the facts that the focus of government is majorly centered on primary education and other levels of education. This has always been the trend since 1977 when the National Policy on Education was first published. The World Bank (2013) gave analysis report of Early Childhood Development programmes that affect young children between age 0-6 in Nigeria using four (4) states as a case study (Bauchi, Ekiti, Kwara and Oyo). The report covered 16 Local government Areas in Ekiti state and all the 33 Local Government areas in Oyo state but no data was found on provision of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for young children in the two states while Bauchi and Kwara states were able to have ECCE covered at 4% and 1% levels in their states (World Bank, 2013).

Government commitment towards provision of quality Early Childhood Care and Education for the young children seems to be limited and this must have led to various challenges being experienced in other levels of education in Nigeria. Nevertheless, it is observed that there have been recent efforts by government to improve early childhood care and education, especially for children between ages 2 - 6 which involve increase on investment in the sector and improvement on access to early childhood care and education by young children. From the foregoing it can be evident that children are meant to be provided with quality early childhood care and education as it serves as an important step in climbing the ladder of education in any country. Meanwhile, children can only have accessibility to quality early childhood education when government and other stakeholders in education make necessary provision for establishment of ECCDE classes in all government owned basic schools. This could explain that ECCDE is totally meant for all children in every country without any form of segregation in terms of geographical location, ethnicity, race, sex, colour e.t.c.

There has been an advocacy on promoting quality educational standard in Nigeria. This can only be achievable when there is provision of solid educational foundation for children from ECCE level. In the recent, researches pointed out some factors that might have contributed to low academic performance of learners at the upper basic and secondary school levels of education in Nigeria. It was discovered that poor location of early childhood education centres, poor pre-primary education, overcrowded classroom, inconducive environment are part of the factors that contribute to the problems. Lawal and Babajide (2020) discovered that the quality of pre-school education provided for children in Oyo State is below quality as many facilities provided for children did not meet with National Minimum Standards for Establishment of ECCDE Centres. It can be deduced from this finding that certainly there are some factors that has been hindering quality of ECCE in Nigeria. There is no doubt that government is the major provider of public schools education across the federation, despite that it is important to assess the involvement of Osun State Government towards providing quality education for young children of age 0-5 in

the public basic schools.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to determine the educational provision available for young children in Osun State. The specific objectives are to:

- a. examine the level of Early Childhood Care and Development Education provided for young children in Osun State public Basic schools;
- b. investigate the provision and appropriateness of ECCDE curriculum available for young children in Osun State public Basic schools; and
- c. determine the availability of instructional materials provided for young children education in Osun State public Basic schools.

Research Questions

- a. To what extent has the government provided Early Childhood Care and Development Education classes for young children in Osun State public Basic schools?
- b. What type of ECCDE curriculum is made available for the children in the schools and how appropriate is it to their age?
- c. Is there provision of instructional materials by government for young children education in Osun State public Basic schools?

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all 1,252 public basic schools in Osun State. Multi-stage sampling procedure was employed for the study. The sample size comprised 300 public Basic schools. The three Senatorial Districts in Osun State were used for the study. In each of the Senatorial Districts, five (5) Local Government Areas were selected using simple random sampling technique. In each of the Local Government Areas twenty (20) public

Basic schools were randomly selected to make a total of 300 schools. A self-designed observation checklist titled Investigation on Provision of Early Childhood Education for Young Children Checklist (IPECEYCC) was used to collect the data for the study. The instrument has three sections: Section A consists of the school bio-data, Section B contains 8 items on level of ECE provided in the schools and 8 items on availability of age appropriate curriculum while Section C contains 20 items on availability of instructional materials in ECCDE classes. The checklist was validated and tested for reliability and found reliable with a reliability coefficient of 0.76. The data obtained were analyzed using frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

Results

Research Question 1

To what extent has the government provide Early Childhood Care and Education classes for young children in Osun State public Basic schools?

This research question was answered using frequency count, percentage, means and standard deviation to analyse the data collected.

Table 1 showing the extent of government provision of ECCE classes for young children in Osun State

S/N	Items	Available (Frequency)	Percentage (%)	Not Available (Frequency)	Percentage (%)	Total No. of Schools	M(Sd)
1.	Pre-Nursery	-	-	300	100	300	2.0±00
2.	Nursery 1	-	-	300	100	300	2.0±00
3.	Nursery 2	-	-	300	100	300	2.0±00
4.	Pre-Basic	30	10	270	90	300	1.8±32
5.	Basic 1	300	100	-	-	300	1.0±00
6.	Basic 2	300	100	-	-	300	1.0±00
7.	Basic 3	300	100	-	-	300	1.0±00

Table 1 above shows the extent of government provision of ECCE classes for young learners in Osun State as all 300(100%) public basic schools in Osun state has no availability of pre-nursery, nursery 1 and nursery 2 classes. Only 30(10%) out of 300 schools operates pre-basic classes while all the 300(100%) schools has lower basic classes 1-3

Research Question 2

What type of ECCE curriculum is made available for the children in the schools and how appropriate is it to their age? To answer this research question, frequency count and percentage were used to analyse the data collected on ECCE curriculum availability while report was given on observation of age appropriateness of available curriculum.

Table 2 showing availability and age appropriateness of curriculum

S/N	Items	Available (Frequency)	Percentage (%)	Observation on Age Appropriateness of Curriculum
1.	Pre-Basic	25	83.3	Pre-primary curriculum available is appropriate for children of age 5 -7 in the class but no curriculum is available for children below age 5
2.	Basic 1	240	80	Appropriate
3.	Basic 2	100	33.3	Appropriate
4.	Basic 3	90	30	Appropriate

Table 2 above shows that there is availability of pre-basic classes curriculum in 25 (8.3%) schools and it is age appropriate for children between age 5-7 only, 240(80%) of the school has curriculum for basic 1, 100(33.3) has for basic 2 while 90(30%) has for basic 3 and the curriculum available in basic1-3 were age appropriate.

Research question 3

Is there provision of instructional materials by government for young children education in Osun State public Basic schools?

This research question was answered using frequency count, percentage, means and standard deviation to analyse the data collected.

S/N	Items	Available (Frequency)	Percentage (%)	Not Available (Frequency)	Percentage (%)	Total No. of Schools	M(Sd)	Ranking
1.	Pictures	250	83.3	50	16.7	300	1.16±37	7th
2.	Baby dolls	5	1.7	295	98.3	300	1.98±12	16th
3.	Play dough	NIL	-	300	100	300	2.0±00	-
4.	Flash cards	295	98.3	5	1.7	300	1.01±12	1st
5.	Puzzles	220	73.3	80	26.7	300	1.26±44	9th
6.	Charts	295	98.3	5	1.7	300	1.0±12	1st
7.	Games	160	53.3	140	46.7	300	1.46±49	12th
8.	Story books	25	8.3	275	91.7	300	1.91±27	13th
9.	Technological devices	NIL	-	300	100	300	2.00±00	-
10.	Coloured Chalk	295	98.3	5	1.7	300	1.0±12	5th
11.	Ball of various shapes and size	260	86.7	40	13.3	300	1.13±34	6th
12.	Building blocks	260	75	77	25	300	1.25±43	8th
13.	Musical Instruments	5	1.7	295	98.3	300	1.92±12	14th
14.	Word blocks	215	71.7	85	28.3	300	1.28±45	10th
15.	Magnetic Letters	NIL	-	300	100	300	2.00±00	-
16.	Number blocks	210	70	90	30	300	1.30±45	11th
17.	Scale	275	91.7	25	8.3	300	1.08±27	4th
18.	Pattern blocks	5	1.7	295	98.3	300	1.98±12	14th

Table 3 showing the availability of instructional materials made available by government in the schools.

Table 3 shows that highest number 295(98.3%) of the schools has flash cards and charts, 285(95%) Abacus, 275(91.7%) scale, 270(90%) coloured chalk, 260(86.7%) balls of various shapes and sizes, 250(83.3%) pictures, 225(75%) building blocks, 220(73.3%) puzzles, 215(71.7%) word blocks, 210(70%) number blocks, 160(53.3%) games, 25(8.3%) story books, 5(1.7%) baby dolls, musical instruments and pattern blocks while 300(100%) of the school has no play dough, technological devices, magnetic letters and pattern puzzles.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that there is no provision of Pre-nursery, Nursery 1 and Nursery 2 classes in all the public basic schools in Osun State, very low percentage of the school had Pre-basic classes and the reason for the low percentage was that the government only made available a Pre-basic class in just a school in each Local Government Areas in the state and it is being referred to as ECCE classes, although there are some children whose ages are between age 2-6 in the Pre-basic class, this corroborated the findings of Osho, Aliyu, Okolie and Onifade (2014) who found out that there is no availability of crèche/daycare and pre-nursery classes in government owned schools in North-Central Nigeria. It also agreed with the statement of Domike and Odey (2012) who stated that neither the Cross River State nor Federal Government made provision for establishment of Nursery schools in the public primary schools.

The findings further revealed that there is availability of curriculum for Pre-basic classes and basic 1-3 but majority of the school has for basic 1 and minority had curriculum for basic 3. All the curriculum available were age appropriate except for Pre-basic class curriculum which was appropriate for children between age 5-6 and inappropriate for children who were below age 5 in the class, the findings negates Okewole, Iluezi-Ogbedu and Osinowo (2015) who mentioned that there was no availability of recommended ECCDE curriculum in Osun state basic schools. The reason for the availability of the curriculum might be that in an effort to provide quality ECCDE for children the government of Osun had provide some of the basic schools with the curriculum recommended by Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). The findings corroborated that of Lawal and Babajide (2020) who found out that the curriculum available for pre-school children in Oyo State is not age appropriate for all the children as it is only meant for children in Pre-basic class (age 6-7).

The findings also revealed that majority of the school had 60% availability of the instructional materials observed in the State. This negated the findings of Osho, Aliyu, Okolie and Onifade (2014) who found out that there was no availability of teaching and learning materials in almost all the schools in Chanchaga in the North Central of Nigeria. It also negates that of Akinrotimi and Olowe (2016) who discovered that there was no ECCE learning resources found in Nigerian public primary schools. Despite the availability of the instructional materials in the schools, it was observed that most of these materials are kept in a box at the

headmistress/headmaster office. Also, it was observed that some materials like flash cards and games are improvised by the teachers.

Conclusion

Based on the findings in this study, it is evident that there is low provision of early childhood education but there is no provision of ECCDE classes for children below the age of five in all the basic schools in the state. Also, the pre-basic classes provided are only available in thirty basic schools in the whole state and there is no availability of age appropriate curriculum for young children below age 5. Although, it can be said that there is provision of instructional materials in most of the schools but they are not being regularly used by the teachers. It can be concluded that the government of Osun is yet to provide full ECCDE programme for young children in public basic schools in Osun state Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

The government should give ECCDE programme more priority in all the government owned basic schools this would allow young children whose parents cannot afford private basic schools to have access to quality foundation in education and enjoy their full right to education. State government should make efforts to renovate some abandoned classes available in most of the schools in the state as it will create opportunity of providing ECCDE classes for young children below the age of five in all the local government. The quality assurance department in the State Universal Basic Education Board should carry out regular evaluation on basic schools in order to know the essential needs of learners and teachers in terms of recommended curriculum and instructional materials. Finally, the government can collaborate with International Organizations or Non-Governmental Organisations on supporting the provision of standard ECCDE programme for young children in public basic schools.

References

- Akinrimisi, A.R.; Adeyemi, B.A.; and Iroegbu, V.I. (2020). Assessment of government's involvement in implementation of national policy on early childhood education in Nigeria. *Journal of Early Childhood Care and Education (JECCE)*, 3(2), 72-87.
- Akinrotimi, A.A. and Olowe, P.K. (2016). Challenges in implementation of early childhood education in Nigeria: The way forward. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(7), 33-38
- Domike, G. C.; and Odey, E. O. (2012). The critique of the implementation of early childhood education in Cross River State- Nigeria. *Global Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 1192), 79-86
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). National Policy on Education (4th Ed.) Lagos: NERDC Press.

- Lawal, O.T. & Babajide, B.E. (2020). Assessment of pre-school educational qualities in public primary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Early Childhood Association of Nigeria. (JECAN)* Vol. 9(1), 65-76.
- Okewole, J. O.; Iluezi-Ogbedu, V. A.; and Osinowo, O. A. (2015). An evaluation of the implementation of early childhood education curriculum in Osun state. *Journal of Education and Practice. Vol.6(4), 48-54*
- Osho, L. O.; Aliyu, N.; Okolie, O. and Onifade, O. (2014). Implementation of Early Childhood Education: A case study in Nigeria. *Universal Journal of Educational Research (UJER). Vol. 2(2), 119-125. DOI:10.13189/ujer.2014.020203*
- United Nations (UN), (2015). Transforming our world. The 2030 agenda for sustainable development . New York: UN General Assembly. Retrieved on 10th February 2023 from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>.
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), (2019). A world ready to learn: *Prioritising quality early childhood education*. Retrieved on 10th February 2023 from <https://www.unicef.org/media/2521/a-world-ready-to-learn-prioritizing-quality-early-childhood-education.pdf>.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), (2022). “Setting Commitments: National SDG4 benchmarks to transform education, 2” Global Education Monitoring Report Team. Retrieved on 10th February 2023 from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382076>.
- World Bank, (2013). Federal Republic of Nigeria Early Childhood Development: Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) country report. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/20145>

This study was sponsored by TETFUND Institution Based Research grant (IBF)