

ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE EDUCATION IN NASARAWA STATE

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Abstract

The study assessed the Implementation of Early Childhood Care Education Programme in Nasarawa State. The purpose of this study is to assess Teachers' Qualifications and Teacher: Pupils ratio in the early childhood Care Education Centres in Nasarawa State.

The study employs descriptive survey research design. 12804 caregivers in Nasarawa State comprise the population for the study. The multi-stage sampling technique (comprises of proportionate, purposive and simple random sampling techniques) is used to sample ninety-three (93) Pre-primary schools and 388 caregivers for the study. The data collected is analysed using Percentages, and Frequency Count to answer the research question which is presented on Bar chart and Pie chart. Findings of the study reveal that Caregivers of CCDE centres in Nasarawa State are qualified for the implementation based on NCCE-ECCDE minimum qualification standards. Teacher: Child ratio in majority of ECCDE centres in Nasarawa State is however not in line with the NCCE-ECCDE minimum standard. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that effective implementation in terms of teachers' qualifications, teacher to pupils ratio in ECCDE Centres should be properly monitored for academic excellence.

Introduction

All over the world, the need to provide care and education for the child (the young mind) is important because childhood education provides a solid foundation for future development of the child and the entire society depends on it. It is in recognition of this fact that different education programmes have been developed and implemented to achieve proper child education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation-UNESCO (2005) declared that education is the right of every one, especially vulnerable groups, women and children. It is in this light that the Federal

Republic of Nigeria in National Policy on Education FRN-NPE (2013) clearly states that education is an instrument “par excellence” for effective national development.

In Nigeria, Education is in levels ranging from Pre-Primary to University education. Pre-primary or Early Childhood education is the education the child receives before entering into the primary school (NPE, 2004). It includes the Crèche, the Nursery and the kindergarten. In the same vein, Maduawesi in Awotu (2015) defines Early Childhood Education as a semi formal education arrangement usually outside the home, whereby young children of about three years are exposed through play-like activities in group setting to mental, social and physical learning suited to their development level. Early childhood education therefore can be seen as the education provided for children between 0-3 years of age in day care centres and for children between 3 years to less than 6 years in Nursery schools. It is a community based low-cost project for the holistic development of the child from 0-6 years that requires a comprehensive approach to the formulation and implementation of policies and programme for children, their parents and care givers with the purpose of protecting the children's rights in order to develop their full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potentials.

In this era, nursery and pre-primary schools have been set up to take care of early childhood education. The resemblances of it during the colonial era are the Kindergarten and infant classes, which consist groups of children considered not yet ready for primary education. As grouping for instruction in schools was not age-based during that period, some children, aged six or even more, could be found in some of the infant classes (Tor-Anyiin, 2008). With the phasing out of infant classes, some parents began to feel the need for nursery schools. In the period before independence (pre-independence) all efforts for provision of early childhood education were confined to the voluntary sector. It received very little or no support from the government (Tor-Anyiin, 2008). This situation continued until 1977 with the introduction of the National Policy on Education by the then military government of Nigeria. It was then that early childhood education was given official recognition and linked with the child's educational performance in Primary school. Gradually, early childhood institutions sprang up, and by 1985, Nigeria had about 4,200 early childhood educational institutions and subsequently in 1992, the number increased to about 8,300 (Tombowua, 2013). Similarly in 2015, Nasarawa State had about 1,310 Early Childhood Care Education (ECCDE) Centres and 24,178 pupils enrolled (Universal Basic Education Commission-UBEC, 2015).

Nowadays, early childhood educational institutions are located in various places and buildings; in campuses of universities and colleges, premises of some industries and business organisations, church premises, residential buildings with unprecedented expansion owing to the high demand for early childhood care and education by parents (Ejeh,2006).The Federal Government of Nigeria, (2004) in the National Policy on

Education recognises the fact that formal education of a child apparently starts from about the age of 3 years hence, the prescription of pre-primary education as contained in policy document. It is strongly believed that economic prosperity and the reduction of global poverty cannot be accomplished unless all children in this country can at a minimum age, complete a basic education of good quality (Tombowua, 2013). To this end therefore, the objectives of pre-primary education according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) in the National Policy on Education-NPE, (2013) are to;

- i. Effect a smooth transition from home to school;
- ii. Prepare the child for the primary level of education;
- iii. Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farm, in the market or offices);
- iv. Inculcate social norms;
- v. 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;
- vi. Develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit;
- vii. Learn good habits, especially good health habits and;
- viii. Teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes and forms among others through play. NCCE also states that pupils should be encouraged to acquire reading and writing skills and knowledge which are expected to complement the theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom.

In order to achieve these objectives, the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the National Commission for College of Education, FRN-NCCE, (2012) set out National bench mark for the implementation of ECCE Programme. Implementation is the conversion or transformation of general policies to concrete public policies. It includes those actions that are geared towards the achievement of the objectives of the policy. It involves outlining the activities in the programme as well as persons responsible for carrying out the activities (Achebe, 2004). Some of the salient benchmarks for implementation of ECCE programme as prescribed by NCCE-ECCE standard 2012 are as follows:

- i. Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) should be adopted as minimum teaching qualification in compliance with the provision of NPE and to ensure quality delivery in Pre-primary education, teachers in formal schools, retired nurses and retired teachers who already possess the minimum teaching qualification should be given preference in terms of appointment as ECCE teachers. Also, induction course of one or two weeks should be organised for newly recruited teachers;
- ii. Provision should be made in teacher's education programmes for specialisation in early childhood education;

- iii. It should be ensured that the main method of teaching at this level would be through play-like activities and that the curriculum of teacher education is oriented to achieve this, and to regulate and control the operation of pre-primary education, teachers of pre-primary schools are adequately trained and the essential equipment and materials are provided;
- iv. The medium of instruction should be principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community.
- v. Pupils/Teacher Ratio should not be more than 20:1 for 3-5 year old pupils;
- vi. Pupil-friendly environment should be provided, that is conducive learning environment with adequate learning materials being supplied promptly.
- vii. Playground facilities should be available in the centre such as sea-saw, slide, swing and so on;
- viii. Classroom Furniture/Infrastructural Facilities should be provided.
- ix. Monitoring officers in Local Governments (LGs) should visit ECCE Centres at least once a month. Officers from State Universal Basic Education Board-SUBEB should go at least, once in a quarter to each LG; External bodies such as Federal Inspectorate Division of State Ministry of Education, National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) are to go monitoring at least twice after 5 years; The LGs should report to State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) on monthly basis. The SUBEB should report to Federal Ministry of Education yearly. International Development Partners (IDPS) are free to monitor if they wish. Monitoring Vehicles are to be provided, at least 3 per State including Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Engine powered speed boat should be provided to the states in the riverine area in addition to vehicles, among others.

In order to determine the effectiveness of ECCDE programme, NCCE-ECCDE (2012) states that periodic assessment of the programme needs to be carried out. Assessment is a systematic and objective process of examining a completed design or on-going project or programme with the aim of determining its efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Emaikwu (2011) sees assessment as data-gathering strategies, analysis, and reporting processes that provide information that can be used to determine whether or not intended outcomes are being achieved. It is a fact finding activity that describes conditions that exist at a particular time. Of concern to the researcher is the need for assessment of ECCDE Programme in Nasarawa State in line with the prescribed benchmark which include: teachers qualification, method of instruction, medium of instruction, teacher to pupils ratio, availability of instructional materials, availability of playground facilities, availability of infrastructural materials and regular monitoring of the programme. Through the review of literature, the researcher observes that, there have been researches conducted in different States of the Federation to assess the implementation of this

programme among which are Chachaga LGA in Niger state; Uhunmwode LGA of Edo State and Epe LGA in Lagos State. The findings in these areas indicate that, though there has been collaborative effort/input of all stakeholders, including the government, parents/guardians, and school authorities, not much has been done in the proper implementation of ECCDE in these areas despite the global commitment. Extensive literature search shows no evidence of empirical assessment of the implementation of the ECCDE programme in Nasarawa State since its inception. It is against this backdrop that the researcher carries out an assessment of the implementation of ECCDE programme in Nasarawa state relative to the benchmark specified.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study:

1. What are the Teachers' Qualifications in the Early Childhood Care Centres in Nasarawa State?
2. What is the Teacher-Pupils ratio in Early Childhood Care Education centres in Nasarawa State?

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive research design. Descriptive design is one which aims at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner the facts or features of a given population. It is descriptive because the study collected data from the representative population in order to enable the researcher make valued judgement as to whether implementation of ECCDE programme in Nasarawa State is in line with the approved standard in achieving the programme objectives.

The population for the study is twelve thousand eight hundred and four (12,804) Caregivers in Nasarawa State comprising eleven thousand five hundred and twenty-six (11,526) caregivers and one thousand two hundred and seventy-eight (1278) Head Teachers of all the one thousand two hundred and seventy eight (1,278) Public Primary Schools in the education zones in Nasarawa State. (SUBEB, 2017). Out of these caregivers, 4268 teachers are from the Southern Education Zone, 4628 teachers from the Western Education Zone and 3908 teachers from the Northern Education zone.

The sample size for the study is 388 Caregivers. The sample size is obtained using Taro Yamane formula. The sample size comprises sixty (60) Head Teachers and three hundred and twenty-eight (328) Teachers. (See appendix C page 95). In order to arrive at the sample, a Multi-stage sampling procedure is used as the sample for the study is drawn at different stages. At the 1st stage, Purposive sampling technique is used to sample 93 Public Pre-Primary schools, 30 from Southern Education zone with 4268 caregivers, 38 from Western Education zone with 4628 caregivers and 25 from Northern Educational

zone with 3908 caregivers. At the second stage, proportionate Stratified random sampling technique is employed to select the number of the caregivers (head teachers and teachers) in each of the zones. This sampling technique is employed to ensure appropriate numbers of caregivers in the three Educational zones are represented.

At the last stage, simple random sampling technique is employed to select the 388 respondents. To achieve this, the researcher wrote 'A' and 'B' on different pieces of paper and put them in a basket. After thoroughly shaking the basket, the caregivers are asked to pick a paper one after the other. Only those that picked A are administered the questionnaire.

Instrument for Data Collection

A self-constructed questionnaire is used for the data collection. It has two sections: A and B. Section A of the questionnaire is used by the researcher to collect information from the Caregivers (teachers and head teachers) about their educational qualifications. The section has eight (8) items.

Section B: The Teacher:children Ratio has two (2) items and it is used by the researcher to elicit information on number of pupils to a teacher in each class in ECCE centres in the study area.

To ensure that the instruments measure what they are meant for, the instruments are subjected to face and content validation by three (3) experts; one from the Department of Educational Foundations and General studies and two from Measurement and Evaluation, Department of Educational Foundations and General studies, University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Benue State. The experts are requested to assess the relevance of the items in addressing the research questions bearing in mind the purposes of the study. Suggestions from these experts such as, getting more comprehensive list of instruction materials for the teaching of ECCDE and current text books of ECCDE; grouping of items separately for different respondents; getting the implementation blueprint and using the benchmark specified for some variables of the study are inculcated into this study.

The data for the study is collected with the aid of six (6) research assistants who are briefed by the researcher on how to carry out the administration. The direct delivery and retrieval method is employed in the administration of the questionnaires. The Checklist is used by the researcher to collect other needed data which could not be accurately gotten with the use of questionnaire such as information on availability. The percentage return rate obtained after collection is 100%.

The Data collected is analysed using frequency counts and percentages to answer the research questions raised for the study and bar charts and pie chart are used to represent

the data analysed. An average percentage of 50% which is the minimum benchmark for implementation of the ECCDE programme in each prescribed standard is used. A benchmark of 50% and above is considered implemented while below 50% is considered not implemented as regards to the items. For the items measuring availability, 50% and above is considered available for implementation while 50% below is considered not available for implementation

Results And Discussion

This chapter presents the results of the findings of the study. The results of this study have been organised to answer the research questions using Frequency Counts, Percentages and representation of some tables using Bar Chart and Pie Chart.

4.1 Results

The results are presented in line with the research questions as shown in table 1

4.1.1 Research Question 1: What are the Teachers' Qualifications in the Early Childhood Care Centres in Nasarawa State?

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of Teachers' Qualification

| SN | Qualifications | Frequency Counts | Percentage (%) |
|----|----------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Ph.D | 0 | 0.00 |
| 2 | M.Sc | 0 | 0.00 |
| 3 | B. ED/B.SC | 112 | 28.90 |
| 4 | HND | 20 | 5.10 |
| 5 | NCE | 234 | 60.30 |
| 6 | ND | 20 | 5.20 |
| 7 | SSCE | 2 | 0.50 |
| 8 | Others | - | - |
| | TOTAL | 388 | 100% |

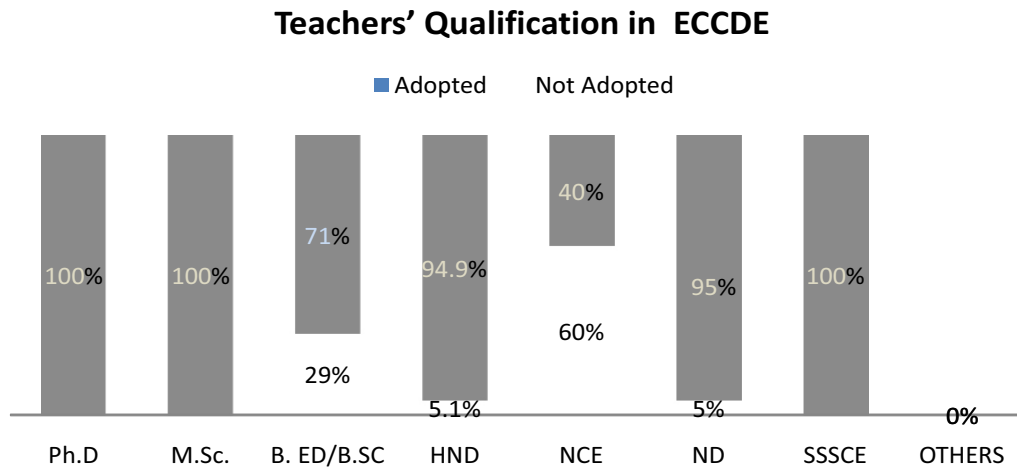


Figure 1: Bar Chart showing Teachers' Qualification in ECCDE CENTRES.

"**Adopted**" means Percentages of Caregivers with qualification in ECCDE Centres while "**not adopted**" means percentages of Caregivers without qualification in ECCDE.

Table 1 and Figure 1 above show that out of 388 head teachers and caregivers sampled, no single head teacher and teacher of ECCDE classes hold master degree (M.Sc), Doctor of Philosophy Degree (Ph.D) or SSCE. However, 112 (28.9%) of the Caregivers of ECCDE classes are degree holders, 20 (5.1%) of them hold Higher National Diploma (HND) as their highest qualification. Also 234 (60.3%) of them have Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) as their highest qualification and 20 (5.2%) of them have diploma while 2 (0.5%) of the teachers have ordinary level Certificate (GCE, SSCE, WAEC & NECO) as their highest qualification.

4.1.2 Research Question 2: What is the Teacher-Pupils ratio in Early Childhood Care Education centres in Nasarawa State?

Table 4: Frequencies and Percentages of Teacher-Child Ratio in ECCE Centres in Nasarawa state as prescribed by NCCE-ECCE.

| Teacher-Child ratio | Frequency (F) | Percentage (%) | Remarks |
|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1:10 | 8 | 2% | Not implemented |
| 1:15 | 30 | 7.8% | Not implemented |
| 1:20 | 70 | 18% | Not implemented |
| 1:25 | 50 | 12.9% | Not prescribed |
| 1:30 | 100 | 25.8% | Not prescribed |
| 1: above 30 | 130 | 33.5% | Not prescribed |
| Total | 388 | 100% | |

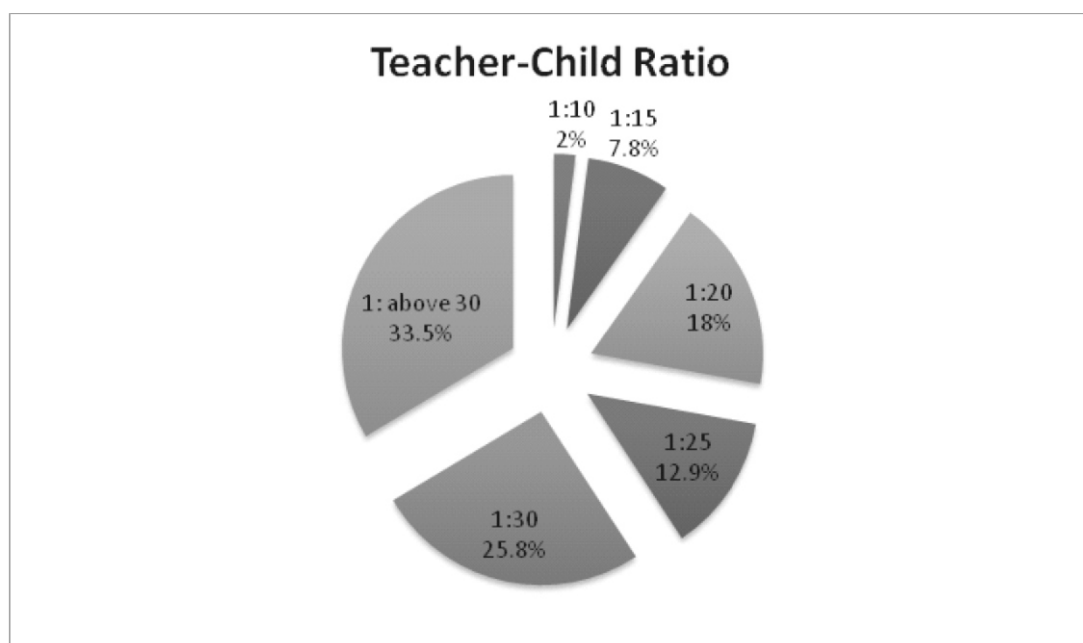


Figure 2: Pie Chart showing Teacher-Child Ratio.

Table 2 and figure 2 shows that 1:10, 1:15 and 1:20 which are the recommended Teacher-Children ratio constitute 2%, 7.8% and 18% of the caregivers and pupils respectively. 1:25, 1:30 and 1: 30 above constitute 12.9%, 25.8% and 33.5% which are not recommended in the benchmark for implementation

Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, discussions are made on each of the research questions of the study. Findings on table one reveal that majority of the caregivers of the ECCDE Centres in Nasarawa State have the minimum qualification (NCE) recommended for Early Childhood Care Education implementation. On this basis, it can be said that Nasarawa state to a large extent meet the standard on teachers' qualifications for effective implementation of ECCDE. This finding contradicts that of Osho, Aliyu, Okolie and Onifade (2014) who found that qualifications of teachers in ECCDE Centres are sparsely available for proper implementation. Owolabi and Abolarin in Odiagbe (2015) observe that the lack of qualified teachers can result in the production of low quality skilled manpower and this will have adverse effect on the development of the nation. However, the report of the authors is a contradiction to this study since the teachers are found to be qualified. The finding from this study will help to reveal to the relevant stakeholders that teachers at ECCDE centres in Nasarawa State have the minimum qualification of NCE as demanded of ECCDE benchmark for implementation of the programme. The result as observed could signified that, much attention was given to teacher's qualification in the process of recruitment for ECCDE by Nasarawa State Government.

Findings of the study from research question two in Table 2 show that most of the ECCDE learning classes in Nasarawa state have overpopulated classrooms. This means that the minimum teacher-pupil ratio in each ECCDE class as prescribed by the NCCE-ECCDE is not observed by the Centres in Nasarawa as teachers teach more than the required pupils in a class. The findings is in agreement with that of Osho et al, (2014) who in their study report that, enrolment in ECCDE centres is high and as a result the ECCDE classes are overpopulated. Viatonu et al (2012), Osho et al (2014) and Charles, Madu and Adigun (2016) submit that majority of the children in ECCDE centres need special and close attention which can only be attainable with a manageable class size. The pupils need a careful one-on-one relationship with their teachers. In Nasarawa State, as revealed by the findings, most of the centres have more than thirty-pupils per teacher in a class which makes it difficult for the teachers to have proper guidance of the pupils. This situation does not promote effective learning as the teachers cannot adequately handle more than the ratio of 1:10 for children between 1-2 years; 1:20 for children between 3-5 years as recommended by NCCE-ECCDE (2012). Hence for the

ECCDE centres in Nasarawa state, it can be inferred from this finding that implementation lags in this aspect.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers conclude that, effective implementation of ECCDE programme in Nasarawa State needs modification and improvement in areas of Teacher-Pupil ratio and infrastructural facilities. These areas need special attention for the programme to be considered a success in Nasarawa State. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. The stakeholders of ECCDE programme should, as a matter of urgency, look into the over population of the ECCDE Centres and classroom.
2. The Government should encourage strict adherence to the recommended teacher to pupils ratio in ECCDE Centres through the monitoring process.

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