

Availability of Resources for the Implementation of Early Childhood Education and Care Curriculum in Pre-primary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the availability of resources for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in pre-primary schools. Descriptive survey research design was used. Two research questions and two null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. The population of the study consisted of 487 public pre-primary school teachers teaching in the six education zones in the seventeen local government areas of Enugu State. The sample for the study was 195 pre-primary school teachers. A checklist with reliability coefficient of 0.87 was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while t-test was used to analyze the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Results revealed that many resources were not available at all in public pre-primary schools while some are available but very few in number and thus not enough. The study concluded that inadequate human and material resources in public pre-primary schools implies that the early childhood education and care curriculum is not being well implemented in public pre-primary schools. Thus, the researchers recommended that government should pay more attention to pre-primary schools in their states by ensuring that all the necessary materials needed for this level of education are adequately provided.

Keywords: Child Education and Care, Availability, Human and Material Resource, Curriculum Implementation, Pre-primary Schools.

Background of The Study

In the life of every child, the early years are the most important periods during which development takes place in areas such as cognitive, language, perceptual, socio-emotional and motor development for their future achievements and for adequate social functioning. This is the most crucial period of every child's life. Whatever children experience during this period has tremendous impact on their learning, development and future achievements. This is why the early years of every child needs to be handled with every special care and attention. Osanyin (2012) described the early years as a remarkable and critical period of growth and development in the lives of children. Oduolowu and Olowe (2017) opined that the early years of children are years of extreme vulnerability and tremendous potentials, during which adequate protection, care and stimulation are essential to provide the foundation for well-being and development. They further noted that it is in recognition of this that modern societies show serious concern for the education of their young ones by providing the needed support that will adequately prepare them to succeed later in school.

According to United Nations (2015) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2016), one of the major outcome targets of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG) is the access to quality early childhood development, care and education for all children. This has made it very imperative to give young children quality care, nutrition and stimulation they need for healthy growth and holistic development and these can only be provided through Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) program which starts from birth and ends at age five.

Early childhood education or pre-primary school education according to Radhikar (2020) is defined as the branch of education that focuses upon imparting knowledge to children below primary school age (6 years of age). According to him, this type of education lays the foundation on which effective growth and development of

children take place. He maintained that whatever children learn at this stage remains throughout their lives as long as they implement the knowledge in an efficient manner. Furthermore, he stated that children are trained in areas such as reading, writing, numeracy, oral communication, thinking skills, logical reasoning, problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, job tasking planning and organizing. Children are trained in these areas from the initial stage so that they are able to grab these skills as they grow older.

The purpose of early childhood education is to prepare the child for a smooth transition into the primary school education. Therefore, such education needs all the resources both human and material in order to achieve this purpose. Resources can be seen as useful or valuable possessions or means of support for man in making a living. They can also be considered as any item that will aid, stimulate and motivate the learner as well as simplify the processes of classroom teaching. Resources are those things that can be used to satisfy human needs. It is any physical or vital entity of a limited resource that needs to be consumed in order to derive benefits (Isukpa, 2022). Anaele, Amadi and Obed (2016) opined that resources are materials, services, individuals or other assets that are transformed to produce benefit and, in the process, may be consumed or made unavailable.

Furthermore, educational resources refer to materials, services, teachers, support staff or other assets that are transformed to produce benefit in teaching and learning and in the process may be consumed by the educational institution. These resources help to nurture and support the development of early literacy and numeracy in children from birth to five years. Chukwubikem (2019) is of the opinion that these resources should be based on sound contemporary international research. According to her, these informative and practical materials should suit a range of early childhood settings and should provide examples of how parents, care givers and practitioners can create stimulating environment for their children, thereby making use of the most critical period of rapid development in learning.

Resources are needed by any early childhood educational institution in order to improve their productivity. Evi, Sunyito and Etin (2020) asserted that material resources in early childhood education include messages, people, materials, tools, techniques and the environment. In their opinion, learning based on various sources is a learning strategy that gives learners the opportunity to acquire and build their knowledge through interactions with various learning resources. They see learning based on various learning resources as an educational model that has a broader meaning than the learning model; this means that learning resources are things that are used to support learning activities. Availability of such resources, both human and material is critical for the successful implementation of any educational program because they are needed to provide a conducive teaching and learning environment, purchase relevant instructional and learning materials and pay staff.

Human resources are the set of people who make up the workforce of an organization, business sector, industry or economy. According to Ikechukwu, Ukah and Okpo (2019), human resources are the manpower or workforce required by a nation or organizations to enable it achieve its pre-determined objectives or to serve the purpose for which it was established. Human resources in the educational sector are different categories of personnel that provide different services in the teaching and learning process. It includes specialists or professionals, highly skilled and experienced staff and non-professionals. Isukpa (2022) observed that no matter how beautiful the program and assets of an organization or institution may be, without human resources, the attainment of the institution's goals and objectives would be very difficult. This implies that human resources are the significant resources of any established organization. Williams (2013) observed that human resources concentrate on human beings whose behaviours and performance in any organization is influenced by the perception, capabilities, motivation and environmental contingencies. In education, human resources are those personnel who aid or assist in imparting knowledge and skills into the learner. Human resources cannot operate without material resources; both complement each other.

Amie-Ogan and Osazuwa (2020) emphasized that since the formative years of a child is very paramount and of great value to the child and the society in general, therefore, a key element in the delivery of quality early childhood education is the provision of adequate quality material resources. According to them, material resources are physical resources utilized by educational institutions in the process of implementing educational programmes. They act as ancillaries for the achievement of educational goals and objectives. Educational material resources are an integral part of a well-organized school system. It could be described as any material used to facilitate the overall teaching and learning process in schools. They include textbooks, visual aids, charts,

maps, chalk/whiteboard, playground and other materials applicable in the education system. Abdulkareem and Fasasi (2013) described material resources as the tangible resources that can easily be seen and observed in any educational institution such as classroom, staff office, vehicles, health centers, library, instructional facilities and so on which directly or indirectly contribute to the achievement of educational goals and objectives. In early childhood education, material resources are very essential since they are needed for the realization of the objectives of that level of education.

Very essential to the issue of resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum is their availability. Availability of these resources is critical to the development and learning of children because, they help the care giver/teacher to support and effectively implement the curriculum. Chukwubikem (2019) noted that the quantity and quality of resources available in a school for any educational programme determines the school's system capacity for the implementation of the educational programme. Obanya (2013) also asserted that educational resources are didactic material things which are supposed to make teaching and learning possible. This is why the Federal Government of Nigeria specified in the 6th edition of National Policy on Education, the dissemination of Early Childhood Education and Care Curriculum to schools as one of the ways to ensure its effective implementation (FGN, 2014). Ayot and Patel (2016) submitted that availability of teaching resources helps teachers to teach effectively in order to increase learning, to generate more interest and to create a situation where the learners would fully engage in classroom activities. Tarimo (2013) lamented that the slow process of ordering and supplying educational resources was the number one factor or determinant of teachers' non-commitment to the implementation of early childhood education curriculum. This shows that it is very important that educational resources are made available in schools if the curriculum must be implemented. It is necessary for teachers to have sufficient indoor and outdoor resources in order to engage in effective teaching and learning of children. It is therefore the role of the teacher to create an environment that invites learners to observe, to be active, to make choices and to experiment by properly utilizing the resources at his disposal.

As part of the efforts towards improving the quality of life of the Nigerian children, besides incorporating early childhood education in the FRN (2014), a comprehensive Early Childhood Education and Care Curriculum was designed for implementation to equip children with the desired skills needed for effective primary education and social life. Despite all these efforts, experiences have shown that the level of implementation of this curriculum has been very low in pre-primary schools owned by government in Nigeria especially in the areas of making the resources needed to implement the curriculum available. Based on this, the following questions come to mind: Are there available resources for the implementation of this curriculum in public pre-primary schools and if yes, what is the extent of utilization of the resources? It is against this background that the researcher determined to assess the availability and utilization of resources for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in pre-primary schools.

Objectives

1. Determine the availability of the material resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in pre-primary schools in Enugu State.
2. Determine the availability of the human resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in pre-primary schools in Enugu State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was adopted because it is appropriate for a study involving the use of checklist for data collection (Abonyi, Okereke, Omebe, Anugwo & Nnachi, 2022). The area of the study is Enugu State, Nigeria. The choice of this area was due to the fact that the area houses many civil servants in the urban areas whose children are enrolled in pre-primary schools. This makes it possible to determine the extent of availability of the resources for implementing the early childhood education and care curriculum. The population of the study consisted of all the 487 pre-primary school teachers teaching in the six (6) education zones which make up the seventeen (17) local government areas in Enugu State. The total sample for the study was 195 pre-primary school teachers (8 males, 187 females). To select the sample, cluster sampling with multi stage approach was used to select 5 LGAs out of the 17 in the state. In each LGA, purposive sampling

technique was used to select the schools with male and female teachers for the study. A self-constructed checklist titled “Checklist for the Availability of Resources for the Implementation of Early Childhood Education and Care Curriculum” (CARIECECC) with reliability coefficient of 0.87 was for data collection. The checklist consisted of two sections; A and B. Section A was on the availability of material resources with 22 items while section B dealt with availability of human resources with 11 items. Both sections had a two-point scale to elicit responses from the respondents on the availability of both material and human resources – (1) Available (AV) (2) Not Available (NA). out of the 195 administered instruments, 180 were returned valid; amounting to 92.3% return rate. The data collected were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics. Research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using t-test at an alpha level of 0.05.

Results

Table 1: Mean responses on the availability of material resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in pre-primary schools in Enugu State. N=180

S/N	Items Required	Number Needed	Number of Pupils	Available	Not Available	Total	$\bar{X}$	S	Decision
1	Personal file (statutory record)	1 per child	30	180	-	180	3.50	.000	AV
2	Birth record (statutory record)	1 per child	30	180	-	180	3.50	.000	AV
3	Classroom	3	30	180	-	180	3.50	.301	AV
4	Tape rule/measurement	5	30	93	87	180	2.55	.478	AV
5	Growth chart	5	30	63	117	180	1.35	.478	NA
6	Health record (statutory record)	1 per child	30	101	79	180	2.55	.358	AV
7	Merry go round	6	30	125	55	180	2.50	.401	AV
8	Slides	4	30	110	70	180	2.65	.478	AV
9	Balls	10	30	180	-	180	3.00	.000	AV
10	VIP toilets	3	30	117	63	180	2.85	.358	AV
11	Rocking horse	3	30	27	153	180	1.15	.000	NA
12	Various toys	20	30	172	8	180	2.60	.491	AV
13	Sand tray/bucket	3	30	180	-	180	3.20	.401	AV
14	Music box	3	30	57	123	180	2.00	.000	NA
15	Charts (standard size)	15	30	135	45	180	2.75	.434	AV
16	Building blocks	30	30	143	37	180	2.50	.501	AV
17	Weight scale	3	30	162	18	180	3.15	.358	AV
18	Television	3	30	27	153	180	1.15	.358	NA
19	Clean water resources (utility)	2	30	180	-	180	3.40	.491	AV
20	First Aid Box	2	30	180	-	180	3.75	.434	AV
21	Fire extinguisher	2	30	94	86	180	2.52	.000	AV
22	Pre-primary books	30	30	180	-	180	3.70	.460	AV

Table 1 indicates that most of the material resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum are available but not in the right quantity that should be enough for the number of pupils who use them.

Table 2: Mean responses on the availability of human resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in pre-primary schools in Enugu State. N=180

S/N	Human Resources	Number Needed	Number of Pupils	Available	Not Available	Total	$\bar{X}$	S	Decision
1	Teachers/caregivers	2 in a class	30	180	-	180	3.90	.301	AV
2	Curriculum developers	2 in a school	30	36	144	180	1.20	.401	NA
3	Teacher assistants	1 in a class	30	171	9	180	2.95	.219	AV

4	Special education professionals	1	30	27	153	180	2.15	.358	NA
5	Guidance Counselors	1	30	117	63	180	3.66	.477	AV
6	School administrators	3	30	180	-	180	2.85	.358	AV
7	Health and safety personnel	1	30	28	152	180	1.05	.219	NA
8	Speech and language therapists	1	30	9	171	180	2.05	.219	NA
9	Child psychologists	1	30	80	100	180	2.15	.358	NA
10	Nutritionists	1	30	180	-	180	3.50	.460	AV
11	Facility maintenance staff e.g. cleaners, electricians, etc.	3	30	180	-	180	3.85	.470	AV

Table 2 shows that out of the 11 human resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in public pre-primary schools in Enugu State, only six (6) are available; yet, not enough to cater for the number of pupils in the schools.

Table 3: Independent sample test: Rating on the availability of material resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in public pre-primary schools in Enugu State.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Decision
									Lower	Upper	
TotalScore	Equal variances assumed	.230	.632	2.418	178	.017	2.448	1.012	.451	4.446	greater than 0.05
	Equal variances not assumed			2.868	5.508	.031	2.448	.854	.313	4.583	

Decision: P-Value = 0.017 is greater than 0.05 hence we do not reject. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the responses of male and female teachers on the availability of material resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education in pre-primary schools in Enugu State.

Table 4: Independent sample test: Rating on the availability of human resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in public pre-primary schools in Enugu State.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Decision
									Lower	Upper	
Total Score	Equal variances assumed	4.545	.034	-.927	178	.355	-.557	.602	-1.745	.630	
	Equal variances not assumed			-.586	5.130	.583	-.557	.952	-2.986	1.871	

Decision: Since the P-value 0.355 is greater than the significance level (0.05), the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the responses of male and female teachers regarding the availability of human resources for the implementation of early childhood education curriculum in Enugu State.

DISCUSSION

The findings as presented in Table 1 revealed that material resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum are available in public pre-primary schools in Enugu State but not enough to match the number of children they are meant to serve which by implication means that they are very much below the bench mark. On the test of hypothesis, the result on Table 5 showed that both male and female teachers agreed that material resources are available in public pre-primary schools but the quantities are not enough in pre-primary schools. This finding is in line with Egbo and Osuji (2025) who conducted a study on availability and utilization of educational resources in the implementation of the early childhood education curriculum among public early childhood centres in Enugu Education Zone. Their findings revealed that while some resources such as classrooms and textbooks were moderately available, other critical learning materials like art supplies, educational games and visual aids were insufficient. This finding corresponds with the present study in the sense that both studies discovered that the material resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education curriculum are available in pre-primary schools but not sufficient to cater for the number of pupils who need them in the classroom. In other words, insufficiency in the availability of those material resources could be as a result of lack of fund from the government which hinders the procurement of enough material resources. This also affects the purchasing power of heads of schools who no longer receive monthly imprest (running cost) which they could use to procure some necessary material resources needed in early childhood classrooms. Some governments allocate limited budgets to early childhood education while giving priority to primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education.

Lack of improvisation by teachers is another factor that causes insufficient material resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum due to the fact that some teachers lack the sense of creativity and commitment needed to improvise materials they could use in the classrooms instead of waiting until already made ones are bought. Another reason for insufficient material resources in early childhood education is improper storage of such materials and carelessness in handling them. This can directly contribute to the shortage or lack of resources by reducing their lifespan, increasing cost and limiting access to such resources. This can happen through damages, increased wear and tear, loss and misplacement thereby reducing the overall quality of early childhood education. Effective resource management which includes training of staff and setting up proper storage system is essential to prevent this. When some of these critical issues such as adequate funding, improvisation by teachers, proper storage and handling of material resources in pre-primary schools are taken care of, schools will have enough material resources for proper implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum.

In respect to human resources available, it was revealed that all the human resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum are available in pre-primary schools in Enugu State but not enough. Majority of the schools do not have pre-primary school teachers while some of them have very few numbers of teachers. In such schools, teachers from the junior primary classes are mainly used in pre-primary classes while in some cases, teacher assistants are used to do the work of teachers. Facility maintenance staff were not found in the schools as their regular staff rather, they are always hired any time the need arises. Nutritionists were members of the communities who sell edible items in the school premises and not employed as regular staff. Based on this outcome, it is obviously clear that the human resources needed in pre-primary schools are available but not enough to cater for the number of pupils available in the schools thereby limiting the proper implementation of this curriculum. This is further corroborated by the hypothesis result which showed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers on the availability of human resources needed for the implementation of early childhood and care curriculum in public pre-primary schools in Enugu State, the result from Table 6 showed that both male and female teachers agreed that human resources are available but not enough to cater for the responsibilities in pre-primary schools in Enugu State. The result of the hypotheses supports the conclusion made from the research questions. This finding is in line with the study carried out by Igbinomwanhia (2021) on human resource availability in early childhood educational development in Nigeria. The study revealed that human resources were not available in the right numbers in pre-primary schools. He emphasized that laudable educational initiatives had collapsed simply because the human resource factor was not taken seriously by the government. This agrees with the findings of this present study in the sense that both studies discovered that human resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum are not sufficient enough. This could be caused by several

factors such as low salaries, limited professional training opportunities, poor working conditions, low social and professional status, geographical disparities, policy and administrative gaps, high mobility rate of staff, among others. This shows that government has a lot of responsibilities towards ensuring that individuals are given opportunities to equip themselves with knowledge and skills needed in early childhood education system. They also need to review salaries and working conditions, ensure constant training and workshops for staff and make favorable policies that will attract individuals to pre-primary schools. When government gives more attention to pre-primary schools in these areas mentioned, lack of human resources will be a thing of the past.

However, the findings of this study disagree with the findings of Selemani, Peter and Adam (2022) on a study on adequacy of human resources on the implementation of early childhood education in public pre-primary schools in Meru District, Tanzania as the results revealed that human resources were adequate to implement early childhood education. They stated that most of the teachers were competent in various areas which included early childhood classroom management, communication with pupils in pre-primary classes, ability to identify and respond to the individual needs of pre-primary school children among others noting that the government has good policy implementation strategies which help them to ensure that early childhood education curriculum objectives are achieved. This finding differs from the present study in the sense that both studies were conducted in different countries. The finding of the previous study showed that the government of Tanzania takes early childhood education seriously by making adequate provision for human resources needed in early childhood education centres while in Nigeria, the reverse is the case. In order words, Nigerian government at all levels need to sit up and give more attention to early childhood education by preparing, recruiting and retaining staff in pre-primary schools in order to ensure that early childhood education and care curriculum is being implemented.

CONCLUSION

In line with the findings, the researchers concluded that the material resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum are not enough for the number of pupils in pre-primary schools in Enugu State. It is obvious that the objectives of early childhood education curriculum cannot be achieved without providing all the necessary material resources in the right quantity. Furthermore, the necessary human resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum are not enough in pre-primary schools in Enugu State. Human resources are the life wire of any organization or institution. In early childhood education, human resources cannot be overlooked since they help to achieve the objectives of early childhood education thereby implementing the curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the study findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Enugu State government should start paying more attention to pre-primary schools since they have made a lot of policies on that. They should ensure that those policies are implemented in all the public pre-primary schools in the state for the achievement of the objectives of early childhood education curriculum.
2. Instituting pre-primary education needs adequate preparation in terms of providing both human and material resources. Therefore, Enugu State government should ensure that necessary resources are made available in adequate quantity in all the pre-primary schools since it is the bed rock of other levels of education.

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