

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

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## ABSTRACT

The study examined the utilization 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 questionnaire with reliability coefficient of 0.82 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 for effective teaching, some of the available resources were underutilized while some were not utilized at all. The study concluded that poor utilization of 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 and well utilized.

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

## INTRODUCTION

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

As postulated by Radhikar (2020), Early childhood education or pre-primary school education is the branch of education that is tailored towards imparting knowledge to children below primary school age (6 years of age). Radhikar stressed that this type of education lays the foundation on which effective growth and development of children take place. The author further 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 primary goal 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 goal. 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.

In education, 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. Chukwubuikem (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.

In any early childhood educational institution, resources are needed to enhance their productivity. Consequently, Evy, Sunyito and Etin (2020) posit 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. 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, proper human and utilization material resources are very essential since they are needed for the realization of the objectives of that level of education.

Utilization of resources for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum is another critical factor that needs to be evaluated. Utilizing resources that are available in schools is paramount in teaching and learning especially in pre-primary schools (early childhood education) due to the fact that a lot of experiences are embedded in those resources and those experiences cannot be unraveled if the resources are not utilized. Abdullahi (2013) described educational resources as materials or tools locally made or imported which could make tremendous improvement on a lesson if intelligently used. This statement indicates that utilizing resources while teaching in the classroom makes teaching and learning meaningful and worthy.

According to Federal Republic of Nigeria, (FRN, 2007) in the National Early Childhood Curriculum for Ages 0-5 Years, the material resources needed for the implementation of the curriculum are personal file, birth record, weight scale, tape rule/measurement, growth chart, health record, merry go round, slides, balls, mats, rocking horse, various toys, sand tray, music box, charts, building blocks, radio, television, clean water resources, first aid box, tape recorders and story books. Resources such as personal file, birth record and health record need to be provided for each child, while other resources should be provided in a quantity that will make it accessible to the learners simultaneously depending on the population of the learners.

On the other hand, the human resources needed for the implementation of the curriculum are teachers/caregivers, curriculum developers, teacher assistants, special education professionals, guidance counselors, school administrators, health and safety personnel, professional development trainers, assessment and evaluation specialists, language and cultural specialists, speech and language therapists, child psychologists and facility maintenance staff. The number of human resources recruited ought to be enough to give individual attention to each learner. These resources when provided in schools if properly utilized will help to equip children with the necessary knowledge, skills and experiences they need to be prepared for primary level of education and for general growth and development, thereby implementing the curriculum.

While stressing the importance of using variety of instructional resources, Santrock (2014), indicated that people receive experiences through all the five senses (touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight). He added that if teachers can appeal to more than one sense at a time, their message is likely to be understood and accepted more permanently. He further explained that different materials appeal to different people, therefore when planning lessons, teachers must not concentrate on memory work alone, but also on hearing, seeing, touching, doing and making. To ensure quality instructional delivery for the benefit of both teachers and learners, early childhood education and care require appropriate utilization of a judicious mix of both print, audio, visual, audio-visual and other materials. These materials include but not limited to textbooks, journals, magazines, periodicals, wall charts, posters, pictures, maps, globes, filmstrips, slides, projectors, graphs, radio, tape recorders, televisions, flash cards, chalk, marker among others (Chukwu, Eze and Agada, 2016).

Infrastructural resources (facilities) on the other hand are very essential in the delivery of quality early childhood education. Shively (2017) opined that for learning objectives to be achieved, it must be supported by adequate facilities and infrastructure. Facilities and infrastructure such as buildings, classrooms, tables, chairs, garden or school park are all vital in the effective delivery and implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum (Gallagher & Clifford, 2020). The implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum is strongly influenced by the conditions of educational facilities and infrastructure owned by schools and also by optimizing their management and utilization (Khikmah & Mukminin, 2017). Cassey (2015) noted that good infrastructural facilities are expected to create clean, beautiful and conducive school environment for both teachers and learners. He added that it is also expected that the availability and optimal utilization of adequate learning tools or facilities are for the benefit of children's education and teaching process in schools both in the urban and rural areas.

All these mentioned above are key initiatives spelt out in the report of the education sector of the National Technical Working Group for Nigeria's vision 20:20:20 programme for achieving the objectives of Early Childhood Education and Care Curriculum, but are yet to be implemented in public schools. This indicates that government has paid less attention to the implementation of ECEC curriculum in public pre-primary schools located in both urban and rural areas and this needs to be properly addressed if the objectives of early childhood education and care curriculum will be achieved. It is worthy to note that gender of teachers has a significant role to play in this level of education as regards children in the early childhood stage of life.

Gender has been observed as an important factor that influences teacher productivity and this is of paramount interest because females are gradually taking over and dominating the teaching profession in pre-primary school level of education. This observation was noted by Akiri (2018) who reported that females consist of about 75% of teachers in Nigeria. Consequently, it seems the phenomenon of gender differences in the teaching profession has over the years formed a significant part of the general discussion in different parts of the world. According to Akiri, in some parts of the world especially Africa, people generally associate certain professions with males and if females are found in such professions, it is regarded as abnormal and vice versa. In supporting this view,

Sara, Louise and Annika (2022) asserted that males are encouraged to take jobs like engineering while females are encouraged to enlist in jobs that are mostly accepted as female oriented such as teaching. Consequently, this may influence their professional practices, efficiency and performance on their jobs. Odoh (2016) revealed that male teachers found in the pre-primary level of education tend not to last long in the profession because at that level, a high sense of love and care is needed in order to handle young children and teach them to achieve the objectives of early childhood education and care curriculum. He emphasized that the skills needed to achieve this are mostly found in female teachers who are either wives, mothers or prospective mothers.

In African culture, the task of taking care of children lies solely on the shoulders of women which gives them an edge over their male counterparts and has consequently made the teaching profession especially at the pre-primary school level to be the business of women only (Ike, 2021). It is important in this study as regards the availability and utilization of resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in pre-primary schools.

## OBJECTIVES

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

Determine the utilization 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 questionnaire 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 structured questionnaire developed by the researchers titled “Questionnaire for the Utilization of Resources for the Implementation of Early Childhood Education and Care Curriculum” (QURIECECC) with reliability coefficient of 0.82 was used for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of two sections, A and B. Section A dealt with utilization of available material resources with 22 items, while section B dealt with utilization of available human resources with 11 items. In order to elicit responses from the respondents, both sections had a four-point rating scale – (4) Very Highly Utilized (VHU)-4 points, (3) Highly Utilized (HU)-3 points, (2) Seldomly Utilized (SU)-2 points and (1) Not Utilized (NU)-1 point. 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 utilization 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	4 VHU	3 HU	2 SU	1 NU	Total	X	S	Decision
1	Personal file (statutory record)	95	63	22	-	180	2.85	.855	UT
2	Birth record (statutory record)	45	72	18	45	180	2.50	1.272	UT
3	Classroom	153	27	-	-	180	2.55	.574	UT
4	Tape rule/measurement	84	63	24	9	180	2.55	.574	UT
5	Growth chart	-	54	36	90	180	1.80	.874	NU
6	Health record (statutory record)	108	54	18	-	180	3.50	.673	UT
7	Merry go round	108	36	27	9	180	2.94	1.247	UT
8	Slides	117	36	18	9	180	2.55	1.239	UT
9	Balls	99	72	9	-	180	3.45	.742	UT
10	VIP toilets	81	63	36	-	180	3.25	.769	UT
11	Rocking horse	-	18	9	153	180	1.25	.624	NU
12	Various toys	90	36	27	27	180	2.60	.972	UT
13	Sand tray/buckets	153	18	9	-	180	2.55	.912	UT
14	Music box	-	9	9	162	180	1.15	.478	NU
15	Charts (standard size)	27	63	54	36	180	2.53	.975	UT
16	Building blocks	81	45	36	18	180	2.52	1.052	UT
17	Weight scale	153	18	9	-	180	2.52	.511	UT
18	Television	-	18	9	153	180	1.25	.624	NU
19	Clean water resources (utility)	54	54	18	54	180	2.58	1.205	UT
20	First Aid Box	72	54	27	27	180	2.95	1.074	UT
21	Fire extinguisher	98	32	13	37	180	2.53	.460	UT
22	Pre-primary books	54	99	27	-	180	2.55	1.074	UT

VHU – Very Highly Utilized, HU – Highly Utilized, SU – Seldomly Utilized, NU – Not Utilized.

Table 1 indicates that the most available material resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum are utilized in pre-primary schools in Enugu State.

**Table 2:** Mean responses on the utilization 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	4	3	2	1	Total	X	S	Decision
		VHU	HU	SU	NU				
1	Teachers/caregivers	85	95	-	-	180	3.55	.815	UT
2	Curriculum developers	18	27	18	117	180	1.68	1.044	NU
3	Teacher assistants	95	85	-	-	180	3.30	.716	UT
4	Special education professionals	18	27	27	108	180	1.72	1.021	NU
5	Guidance Counselors	45	63	27	45	180	2.60	1.117	UT
6	School administrators	99	81	-	-	180	3.25	.769	UT
7	Health and safety personnel	9	18	45	108	180	1.60	.863	NU
8	Speech and language therapists	-	9	9	162	180	2.15	.478	NU
9	Child psychologists	-	-	18	162	180	2.10	.301	NU
10	Nutritionists	103	77	-	-	180	3.50	.593	UT
11	Facility maintenance staff e.g. cleaners, electricians, etc.	36	45	36	63	180	3.50	1.148	UT

Table 2 shows that the out of the 11 available human resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum, only six (6) are properly utilized in public pre-primary schools in Enugu State.

**Table 3:** Independent sample test: Rating on the utilization 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	

Total Score	Equal variances assumed	.269	.604	1.270	178	.206	3.000	2.363	-1.662	7.662	P-Value greater than 0.05
	Equal variances not assumed			1.131	5.273	.307	3.000	2.652	-3.713	9.713	

**Decision:** Since the P-value (0.206) is greater than the significance level (0.05), the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, the researchers concluded that there is no significant difference between the responses of male and female teachers on the extent of utilization of material resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in Enugu State.

**Table 4:** Independent sample test: Rating on the utilization 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							
Total Score		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Decision
									Lower	Upper	P-Value greater than 0.05
Total Score	Equal variances assumed	.847	.359	1.048	177	.296	-1.593	1.521	-4.595	1.408	
	Equal variances not assumed			-.819	5.207	.449	-1.593	1.946	-6.537	3.350	

**Decision:** Since the P-value (0.296) 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 on the extent of utilization of human resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in Enugu State.

## DISCUSSIONS

After analysis of data collected from the respondents, it was found that the available material resources are utilized while the ones that are not available are not utilized due to their unavailability. Based on this outcome, it is obvious that the available material resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in public pre-primary schools in Enugu State are utilized. The study has also shown a no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers on the extent of utilization of material resources for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum. The teachers all agreed that the available materials are utilized while the unavailable ones are not utilized and this is not good for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum. The finding of this study is in line with that of Mbagala and

Shukia (2019) who revealed that many material resources necessary for early childhood education are not utilized because of the fact that they are not available. It was also supported by Ibukun, Oludele and Ikumola (2023) who maintained that government does not provide necessary material resources for public pre-primary schools in their states due to negligence. However, the reason for the unavailability of these materials is inadequate funding, inefficient resource management, lack of improvisation, poor storage and carelessness in handling of resources, among others. In other words, the unavailability of material resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum is detrimental to the system since it hinders the proper implementation of the curriculum and this reduces the Nigerian education sector to nothing because the early childhood level of education is the bedrock of every other level, therefore there is serious need for the stakeholders in education sector to focus on this level in order to uplift the system.

After analysis of data collected from the respondents, the findings revealed that the available human resources such as teachers/caregivers, teacher assistants, guidance counselors, school administrators, nutritionists and facility maintenance staff are utilized because they are available while curriculum developers, special education professionals, health and safety personnel, speech and language therapists and child psychologists are not utilized because they are not available and the teachers perform these tasks in the course of delivering their duties. Based on this outcome, it is obviously clear that all the necessary human resources are not made available for utilization in pre-primary schools for the proper implementation of this curriculum. On the test of hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers on the extent of utilization of human resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in pre-primary schools in Enugu State, the result from Table 8 has the grand mean of 2.0 which is also less than the cut off mean 2.50. This showed that both male and female teachers agreed that the available human resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in pre-primary schools are utilized while the ones that are not available are not utilized. This finding is in line with Isukpa (2022) who lamented that there is gross non-utilization of human resources necessary in schools which hinder the implementation of educational objectives. This can significantly affect the quality and success of educational programs especially at the pre-primary level. However, several factors can contribute to this which include lack of qualified personnel as a result of inadequate training of teachers and care givers in early childhood education methodologies, mismatch between qualifications and early childhood education requirements such as hiring general education teachers without specialization in early childhood, limited access to professional development or training, ineffective deployment of available staff such as assigning ECE-trained teachers to unrelated duties, low budget allocation to ECE programs thereby limiting hiring and training opportunities, inability to offer competitive salaries thereby causing qualified professionals to leave for better paying jobs in other sectors, perception of early childhood education as babysitting rather than a critical educational foundation, limited career growth opportunities for ECE professionals and marginalization of early childhood education in national priorities among others. All these factors need to be looked into by government and other stakeholders in order to raise the standard of early childhood education by ensuring that all the necessary human resources are utilized for proper implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum.

## CONCLUSION

Most of the available material resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in pre-primary schools in Enugu State are utilized while others are not utilized because they are not available. Equally, the available human resources needed for the implementation of early childhood education and care curriculum in pre-primary schools in Enugu State are utilized while others are not utilized because they are not available

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher suggests the following recommendations:

School administrators in pre-primary schools in Enugu State should ensure that the few available material resources are properly utilized to serve the number of pupils in their respective schools. They should also encourage the teachers to improvise some of those material resources where necessary. This implies that active and dedicated teachers and school administrators need to be employed.



The researcher recommends that all educational institutions in Enugu State such as universities and colleges of education should have early childhood education departments where teachers can be trained for pre-primary schools. This will go a long way to ensure that teachers and other personnel needed for early childhood education are provided in adequate quantity and quality.

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