



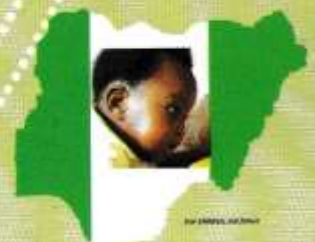
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## **MANAGERIAL CONSTRAINTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Abstract**

*The importance of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. It is a foundation training that offers an opportunity for children's acceleration in all aspects of development. Due to its importance, the Federal Government made some provisions in National Policy on Education (2013) for the realization of its objectives. However, the management of this programme is grossly inadequate hence there is a wide gap between the policy and practice. This work investigated the managerial constraints in Early Childhood Education. Descriptive survey research was used for the study. The population was all the teachers in Yenagoa, Capital of Bayelsa State. The sample size was 200 head- teacher/proprietors. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The data was analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation. The findings revealed employment of non-professional and unqualified teachers, lack of infrastructure among others as the managerial problems in Early Childhood Care and Education. Findings also indicated that children's developments are affected due to these managerial problems. Some recommendations were made to bridge the gap.*

### **Introduction**

Education starts from the cradle. Experts in knowledge state that catching children young with quality education remains a veritable tool for life long development. The future of every nation's socio-economic, technological and political wellbeing lies with the quality of children's

education because they are the leaders of the future generation. If they have a shaky foundation in terms of education, it might affect their lives when they become adults and in turn affect the nation in all round development.

Children all over the world should be given early childhood education. Early childhood care and education is the pre-primary care and education given to aid physical, mental and social growth and development of the child. According to Maduewesi (2005), early childhood care and education is conceptualized as the encompassing the overall development, the childcare and education of children below the age of six (6) years.

Early Childhood Care and Education according to Ojameruaye (2010) sees it as that educational programme which is the care and education of children from birth to pre-primary school age of five (5) plus some months. In other words, ECCE, is the education from birth to the period of exposure to primary schooling experience in the formal, informal and non-formal setting. The care in this context is given from around the age of two (2) when cognition begins to manifest that is the acquisition of mental knowledge by the use of reasoning institution and perception. It is based on this assertion that Maduewesi states that to achieve early childhood education, adequate attention must be given to early childhood care and development.

This form of education is the one captured in various ways according to National Policy on Education (NPE), Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) as Day Care, Play Group, Crèche and kindergarten.

Early Childhood Care and Education according to Ojamaruaye (2010) covers very diverse arrangements from parenting programmes to community based provision and formal pre-primary education, often in school. However, a lot of variables have pushed the childhood care and education to formal school system for instance, in Nigeria, due to increase in working women and the drift to the cities in search of white-collar job; childhood care and education are no longer the major responsibilities of the families. In short, it is in response to the need for childcare arrangements for working mothers that pre-school began to spring up in Nigeria around 1960s (Maduewesi, 2005). Secondly, the child needs more stimulation and learning opportunities than parents and communities can offer in the computer age.

Today, Early Childhood Care and Education is an integral part of formal education in the whole world. In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (2013) gave recognition to Early Childhood Care and Education. However, ECCE is yet to receive practical and serious government's attention. This is because the government is not directly involved in the establishment

of day-to-day running of the programme, but encourages private efforts to do so. The importance of ECCE according to Abdulrhman (2011) is therefore not yet well appreciated except the private individual proprietors whose aim of involvement in the programme is profit making rather than its contribution of the socio-economic growth of the country. Generally, several decades of research findings clearly demonstrate that high quality; developmentally appropriate care of Early Childhood Care and Education programme produces short and long term positive effects on children's cognitive and social development, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2014).

Specifically, Children who experience high quality stable child care engage in more complex play, demonstrate more secure attachments to adults and other children, and score higher in measures of intellectual ability and language development. Early Childhood Care and Education predicts academic success, adjustment to school and reduced behaviour problems for children in the first grade. A growing body of research according to (NAEYC, 2014) indicates that more developmentally appropriate teaching in pre-school and kindergarten predicts greater success in the early grade.

Discussing the importance of pre-school programmes, Ige (2011) states that pre-school age corresponds to a critical period of rapid physical, cognitive and psychological development of the child. The quality and intensity of care, nutrition and stimulation a child receives during this period determines to a large extent the level of physical and cognitive development a child can attain. It is due to the importance of Early Child Care and Education to Nigeria children that the Federal Government, individuals, governmental and non-governmental organizations among others, involve themselves seriously in the provisions of Early Child Care and Education.

Today, the demand for ECCE programme has continued to increase not only in response to the critical necessity of education experience it gives during the early years but the none repetition of class during the primary education.

The recognition and inclusion of Early Childhood Care and Education in the National Policy on Education according to Ede (2013) is an evidence that government has an intention to give every Nigerian child higher quality education. To highlight this, it made the following provisions in the National Policy on Education (2013) to ensure the success of the programmes. These provisions include to:

- Establish pre-primary section in existing public schools and encourage both community/private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education.
- Make provision in teacher education programme for specialization in early childhood education.
- Ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and to this end, will
  - (a) Develop the orthography of many more Nigerian languages and
  - (b) Produce textbooks in Nigerian languages
- Ensure that the main method of teaching at this level shall be through play and that the curriculum of teacher education is oriented to achieve this, regulate and control the operation of pre-primary education.  
To this end, the teachers-pupil ratio shall be 1:25.
- Ensure full participation of government, communities and teachers associations, in the running and maintenance of Early Childhood Care and Education facilities (FRN, 2013).

These are very beautiful provisions but critical observation shows that the quality of the Early Childhood Care and Education is not encouraging. The quality is very low; the low standard may be due to some variables which may include among others, management factors.

This study aimed at looking into the constraints in Early Childhood Care and Education: Implications for child development. These constraints may include the following points:

- The quality of ECCE in Nigeria is influenced by the caliber of teachers. We are already aware that majority of the Early Childhood Care and Education Centres in Nigeria are privately owned and that the interest is on how to maximize profits. As a result, most of the proprietors usually employ non-professional and unqualified teachers whom they can pay very low salaries in order to maximize profits. It has been observed that the teachers and care-givers of majority of pre-school centres are generally people who did not specialize at all in higher institution, and those who did not even have any educational qualification. According to Abdurhaman (2011) about 85% of the teachers do not possess basic education due to lack of competency and knowledge of child care and development do not handle the

toddlers adequately. Many of them flog children, expose them to health hazards, and even teach in a language of foreign environment thereby thwarting government's provision.

- Lack of space may be another challenge to pre-school education: Observations show that majority of private schools lack enough space for classrooms, playing ground, and other offices. In many of these schools, two different classes such as pre-primary and nursery one are combined in one class without proper seating arrangements. This combination of classes brings confusion on which curriculum to be used. Common knowledge reveals that Early Childhood Care and Education is usually dominated by playing and games activities to enhance physical and social development. Unfortunately, majority of the private schools may not have playing ground or fields. This problem defeats the vision in NPE and denies the children the opportunity to exercise their bodies and socialize during games. Due to lack of space, many classroom instructions are done outside, under the trees; this could be exposing the children to harsh weathers.
- Lack of permanent sites could also be another factor that plagues private schools: Many proprietors of Early Childhood Care and Education run their schools in temporal sites such as hired rooms in public yards, town halls, uncompleted buildings and batchers that have no doors and windows. Adequate learning may not be possible in such distractible and uncondusive environments.
- Lack of infrastructure could be another problem in pre-school programme. As stated earlier, the running of Early Childhood Care and Education is dominated by private sectors whose major aim is to maximize profits, and disregard the benefits of the children.

The proprietors may be more interested in the number of children enrolled in their schools without thinking about adequate desks, chalkboards, tables, availability of power plants and school bus. Sometimes, about six children may share a desk meant for three pupils. Sometimes also such desk may not be appropriate for the age of most of the children. It is also common to see many children sitting on mats and others standing up. All these may make learning difficult as the children may experience discomforts. It has been observed that very few private day care and nursery schools in the cities in Nigeria have school buses, while few that are situated in the rural areas may not even think of purchasing any one. Children may therefore trek under

sunshine and rain to and fro school especially children of low socio-economic families. These children may be exposed to road accidents, cold and even kidnapers. The unavailability of generators and chalkboards of course retard learning and learning activities.

- Unavailability of instructional materials and games equipment may be a problem facing private day care centres and nursery schools. Such materials include; toys, text books, charts, flat pictures and pebble project. Many private nursery schools and day care centres may lack games equipment, books and other learning materials. Unfortunately, according to Santrock (2004) play group, crèche and kindergarten cannot do without these materials as they need them for mental and physical stimulations. Such schools according to Maduewesi (2005) are bare and dull as children are restricted into repeating dull rhymes and lines which have no meaning to them.
- Poor supervision and monitoring may not also help matters: Many teachers and care givers may not be committed to their duties and may not be supervised regularly by their employers. Majority of these staff members may have shops and sheds in the markets where they shuttle to from school claiming to have gone for school or breast run. Others may teach in more than one school and shuttle between them. How these teachers succeed is that few may be in the school taking care of the children to sleep to avoid noise making while others are away. Another day, it will be the turn of others.
- The proprietor on their own see the school as other business centres and do not keenly supervise or monitor the activities of the teachers partly because they are not interested in quality education, and partly because they do not have any knowledge of what children care entails.

### **The Implications of the Constraints on Child Development**

The implications of the constraints on the overall development of the children cannot be overstressed.

The presence of non-professional and unqualified teachers, caregivers and even proprietors can be devastating to the development of children. It can result to nutrition deficiencies and developmental retardation. This is because these people may lack the adequate knowledge of handling infants' nutrition and what their developmental changes require.

- Overcrowding due to lack of space may expose children to contagious diseases and infections. Converting tree sheds to classroom exposes children to environmental hazard that may lead to health problems, and developmental dysfunction.
- The combination of two grades in one class leads to inappropriate use of curriculum. Any one being used becomes either too low for higher grade or too high for lower grade, which does not help in intellectual development. Researches by Owiduoki, (2010) show that lack of infrastructure such as desks can be dangerous to children's development. Inadequate desk forces children to share seats and squat during classroom instruction. This constant squatting, standing up and bending down can affect spinal cord leading to musculoskeletal deformities. Learning can also be affected and intellectual stimulation denied.
- Lack of instructional materials such as toys, flat pictures, models etc and games equipment in pre-schools may have adverse effect on the developing child. They may not have opportunities of developing friendliness, self esteem, curiosity and mental creativity (Santrock, 2004).

### **Statement of Problem**

According to Sani (2013) children who experience high quality stable child care engage in more complex play, demonstrate more secure attachments to adults and other children, and some higher in measures of intellectual ability and language development. ECCE predicts academic success, adjustment to school and reduced behavioural problems for children in the first grade. A growing body of research according to 'NAEYC' indicates that more developmentally appropriate teaching in preschool and kindergarten predicts greater success in early grade. The rate at which nursery schools are springing up these days has been a source of worry to the researcher, where batchers, compound houses, backyards of motor parks, inside market sheds and even churches have been converted to nursery schools and the type of teachers these 'so call proprietress' employ to teach to teach in those schools was what made the researcher to embark on this study.



### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the constraints in Early Childhood Care and Education. Specially, the study sought to:

- (1) Identify the constraints in Early Childhood Care and Education.
- (2) Find out how these constraints affect the development of children.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

- (1) What are the constraints in Early Childhood Care and Education?
- (2) How do these constraints affect child development in Early Childhood Care and Education?

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

Descriptive survey research was adopted for the study.

#### **Population of the study**

The population was the entire head teacher/proprietors in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, a population of one thousand one hundred and sixteen head-teachers and proprietors: Bayelsa State Ministry of Education (2014).

#### **Sampling and sampling Technique**

A simple random sampling technique was used to select two hundred (200) head-teachers/proprietors in two educational districts in Yenagoa and Bisani in Bayelsa State. One hundred head-teachers/proprietors in each district comprised 50 male and 50 female head-teachers/proprietors. Two hundred questionnaires were administered and one hundred and eighty nine were returned and analysed.

#### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument for data collection was the researcher made questionnaire, Called Managerial constraint in early childhood education (MCEE). Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data. The questionnaire comprised 18 research items and had a four-point Likert scale of Agree (AG)-4, Strongly Agree (SA)-3, Disagree (DG)-2 and Strongly Disagree (SDG)-1.

The criterion for mean was 2.50. So any item with a mean of 2.50 and above was accepted, while those below were rejected.

**Results****Research Question One:**

What are the constraints in Early Childhood Care and Education?

**Table 1**

*The Constraints in ECCE*

| S/N | ITEMS   | $\bar{X}$   | SD   | DECISION |
|-----|---|-------------|------|----------|
| 1.  | Teachers who are Colleges of education graduates will teach children better than a school set holder. | 3.82        | 0.92 | accept   |
| 2.  | Enough space for pupils' sporting activities could help active in the classroom.                      | 2.89        | 0.68 | accept   |
| 3.  | When teachers are motivated they will put in their best.  | 1.89        | 0.84 | reject   |
| 4.  | Most private schools are in their permanent site.   | 3.25        | 0.72 | accept   |
| 5.  | Instructional materials are good teaching aids if available and accessible.                           | 3.18        | 1.01 | accept   |
| 6.  | Teaching and learning can be effective if teachers use instructional materials                        | 1.90        | 0.89 | reject   |
| 7.  | Adequate infrastructure can affect teaching and learning.   | 3.71        | 0.65 | accept   |
| 8.  | There is serious supervision and monitoring by proprietors in the school.                             | 3.73        | 0.74 | accept   |
| 9.  | Teachers employed by proprietors have the knowledge of Early Childhood Care and Education.            | 2.56        | 0.79 | accept   |
| 10. | Most proprietors are involved in other businesses.  | 1.78        | 0.86 | reject   |
|     | <i>Cluster mean</i>   | <i>2.78</i> |      |          |

**Acceptance**

The result in table I revealed that respondents rated 7 out of the 10 items, as the constraints in ECCE' since they have the mean ratings of 2.56 points and above. Using the cut-off point of 2.50 for acceptance the result indicated that the study perceived the 7 items as constraints in ECCE.

**Research Question Two**

How do these constraints affect children's development in ECCE?

**Table 2: The Constraints on child Development**

| S/N | ITEMS  | $\bar{X}$ | SD   | DECISION |
|-----|--|-----------|------|----------|
| 1.  | When non-professional and unqualified teachers teach children the children may not have proper development.      | 2.88      | 1.03 | accept   |
| 2.  | Children are not motivated when they are taught without instructional materials                                  | 2.13      | 0.81 | reject   |
| 3.  | Lack of child size seats can result to spinal cord or pelvic deformities.  | 2.73      | 0.74 | accept   |
| 4.  | Receiving lessons outside classroom exposes children to disease that may affect their health and development     | 3.82      | 0.71 | accept   |
| 5.  | Lack of toys, and other learning material affect mental, social and physical stimulations negatively             | 3.70      | 0.79 | accept   |
| 6.  | Receiving lessons in batchers can spread disease that retard development   | 2.05      | 0.69 | reject   |
| 7.  | When toddlers do not play games and other physical activities, their physical and motor development are crippled | 2.78      | 0.62 | accept   |
| 8.  | Lack of adequate feeding and nutrition retards all aspects of development  | 3.26      | 0.62 | accept   |
|     | <b>Cluster mean</b>  | 2.92      |      |          |

**Acceptance**

The data in table 2 indicated that the respondents rated 6 items out of 8 as the areas children's developments are affected due to the constraints since they have the mean score of 2.73 points and above. Using the cut-off point of 2.50 for acceptance the result revealed that the respondents saw the 6 items as the areas children's development are affected.

## **Discussion**

The data in table 1 which revealed the constraints suggests that the respondents perceived some of the identified factors as the constraints in ECCE. In other words, the presence of non-professional and unqualified teachers, lack of space, lack of permanent sites, unavailability of instructional materials, lack of infrastructure, poor supervision and monitoring and lack of knowledge of Early Childhood Care and Education are the perceived constraints. The lack of knowledge of Early Childhood Care and Education by the workers and the proprietors support the assertion of Onwiduoki (2010) that many proprietors, teachers and caregivers of pre-schools do not have any knowledge of qualifications in the area of ECCE. However, they go into the business believing that childcare and education do not require any special training so far one has been a parent and trained one's own children. As a result, their poor knowledge leads to poor quality of ECCE.

The data in table 2 showed the areas identified as the effects of the constraints on child development. The respondents perceived that lack of instructional materials like toys and games equipment could affect intellectual, physical and social stimulations and retard them.

Employment of non-professional and unqualified teachers could bring about nutritional deficiencies, mental, physical and language developmental retardation. Lack of space and other infrastructures could bring about diseases, infections, and deaths, musculoskeletal and physical deformities, spinal dysfunction and spinal bifida. The combination of grades due to lack of space does not help in mental stimulation and development.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings in this study, the following recommendations have been made to bridge the gap between policy and practice in ECCE.

- **Employment of Professional Teacher and Caregivers:** Private proprietors should have the interest of the children and quality education at heart and employ capable and professionally qualified teachers and care givers who can handle the nutritional and tremendous developmental changes in children to boost their over all development.
- **Establishment of National Commission for ECCE:** This body should ensure that quality pre-education is obtained in the country by accrediting the private schools and by setting minimum standard.

- Establishing of Private Schools by the Government: The three tiers of government should provide model pre-primary schools in strategic areas of their jurisdiction for proprietors to emulate.
- Provision of Facilities and infrastructures: The National Commission for Early Childhood Care and Education should in its accreditation exercise mandate private schools to have permanent sites, provide adequate and appropriate facilities and infrastructure.

### Conclusion

The importance of Early Childhood Care and Education cannot be over emphasized. The future of every nation's socio-economic, technological and political wellbeing lies with the quality of children's education because they are the leaders of the future generation. If they have a shaky foundation in terms of education, it might affect their lives when they become adults and in turn affect the nation in all round development. Hence, if the beginning is smooth and qualitative at this early stage of learning then the children will become better leaders in future.

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