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Challenges Faced by Implementation of Earlychildhood Curriculum in Nigeria and way Forward

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Abstract: *The early child education programme was introduced into the Nigerian educational system to provide a sound and solid foundation for the children. Curriculum was developed for the implementation of the problem in Nigeria. This article discussed challenges facing the implementation of the early childhood education curriculum in Nigeria. Secondary data and primary data were adopted for the paper. The paper identified inadequate funding, shortage of caregiver, inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of instructional materials, inadequate copies of early child curriculum scheme, ineffective supervision and poor capacity building as challenges hindering effective implementation of early child curriculum in Nigeria. Based on these challenges, the following recommendation were made to address the challenges facing the implementation of early child curriculum in Nigeria: adequate funding, employment of adequate caregivers, provision of infrastructural facilities, provision of instructional materials, provision of national curriculum, ensure effective supervision and constant training and retraining programme for caregivers in the centers.*

Keyword: *Curriculum, Challenges, Early Child Education, Implementation, Problem.*

Introduction

The Nigerian educational system comprises of the basic education, the junior secondary school education, senior secondary school education and the higher education. According to Ahmed, Ajemb & Ogunode (2021) Basic Education is the education given to children aged 0-15 years. It encompasses the Early Child Care and Development Education (0-4) and 10 years of formal schooling. Early Child Care and Development Education however is segmented into ages 0-4 years, situated in daycare or creches, fully in the hands of the private sector and social development services, whilst ages 5-6 are within the formal education sector.

Basic Education, to be provided by Government, shall be compulsory, free, universal and qualitative. It comprises: 1-year of Pre-Primary, 6 years of Primary and 3 years of Junior Secondary Education. The post basic education include the secondary school and tertiary education. Each of these educational institutions has its curriculum according to their programme. The curriculum are planned and designed for implementation in the school by the various implementers. There have many issues concerning curriculum planning, designing and implementation in Nigeria. It is imperative to look at the various possible challenges facing the implementation of early child education curriculum in Nigeria.

Concept of Early Child Education

The early childhood education is an organized education designed to prepare the children for basic education. Early childhood education is the first education children receives as formal. The contribution of the early child education to the social economic, political and technology advancement cannot be underestimated (Ogunode & Ojo, 2021). Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) defined early childhood care education (preprimary education) is an education given in an educational institution to children aged 3-5 plus prior to their enrollment in the primary school. Federal Republic Nigeria (2013) outlined the following as the objectives of early childhood care education:

- 1) Effecting a smooth transition from home to the school
- 2) Preparing the child for the primary level of education
- 3) Providing adequate care and supervision for the children while their parent are at work (on the farm, in the market, office e.t.c)
- 4) Inculcating social norms and values
- 5) Inculcating in the child the spirit of inquiring and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toy. e.t.c.
- 6) Developing in the children a sense of cooperation and team-spirit.
- 7) Learning good habits and the rudiments of letters, numbers, colours, shapes and forms e.t.

The achievement of the stated objectives of early childhood education and care in Nigeria is brought about via the following means:

- a. establishing pre-primary sections in existing public schools and encouraging both community and private efforts in the provision of early childhood education;
- b. making provision in teacher education programmes for specialization in early childhood education;
- c. ensuring that the medium of instruction will principally be the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community; and to this end: (i) developing the orthography for many more Nigerian languages; and (ii) producing textbooks in Nigerian languages;
- d. ensuring that the main method of teaching in the childhood education centres will be through play, and that the curriculum of teacher education is appropriately oriented to achieve this;
- e. regulating and controlling the operation of early childhood education – to this end, the teacher pupil ratio is set at 1:25;
- f. setting and monitoring a minimum standard for early childcare centres in the country;
- g. ensuring full participation of government, communities and teachers' associations in the running and maintenance of early childhood education facilities.

Concept of Curriculum

Okudishu (2013) defined curriculum as the combination of instructional practices, learning experiences, and students' performance assessment that are designed to bring out and evaluate the target learning outcomes of a particular course. A detailed plan for instruction set by policy-makers. A selection of information, segregated into disciplines and courses, typically designed to achieve a specific educational objective. Obanya, (2012), views curriculum as the high-sounding formulation that would however need to be broken down to the specifics of how to go about it. The conceptualization, the planning, the tools and facilities, the pedagogy, the organizational/management strategies needed to specify 'how to go about it' is the real concern of Curriculum. In other words, whenever we descend from the high fall tin world of professionally couched educational objectives to the ground level, school and classroom level of ensuring that students genuinely learn, we are engaging in curriculum work. Adeyemi (2008) noted that curriculum is very important to the school system, because it the curriculum that the entire system depend on to measures it progress or failure. So, the government and every other stakeholder that are involve in the curriculum planning and implementation must be serious with it. John observes that curriculum is the bed rock of the society because the socio-economic and the political future of any country directly or indirectly depend on the curriculum. Therefore, curriculum is the life wire of the country. Ogunode & Ohibime (2021) sees curriculum is an organized and planned programme meant for the development of the society and to be learnt through educational institutions. Curriculum must be planned for an effective implementation.

The early childhood curriculum was design to meet the need of the children considering their age and interest. According to Okewole, Iluezi-Ogbedu & Osinowo (2015) the curriculum of E.C.E. is guided by the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) which defines early childhood education as education given in an institution, to children primary school. Okewole, Iluezi-Ogbedu & Osinowo (2015) and Nwagbara (2003) noted that the curriculum of E.C.E. is mentally compartmentalized into two important parts, namely; (i) the physical development and (ii) Child stimulation. These two compartments cater for (a) physical (b) socioemotional (c) intellectual (d) aesthetic and (e) special needs of the child. The curricula before and after the rebirth of democracy in Nigeria are basically the same except for the integration of emergent sensitivity, increased child rights and nutrition education.

Concept of Implementation

Ohiare, Ogunode & Rauf (2021) noted that the concept of implementation means different thing to different people. Implementation is the act of executing a programme, policies or a project. Implementation is a project management tool use to describe the process of systematically carrying out programme, projects or policies as designed and as planned. Implementation is done in many institutions especially in the educational institutions where different programmes, policies and projects emerged every day. Implement ation is very important in the educational institutions because its' makes programme, policies designed and projects a reality. Ogunode Wula (2021) saw Implementation of programme as the act of carrying out that programme as planned. It is the process of executing the policies, programme and planned document. Adeyemi (1995) viewed implementation as the stage where the formulated policies and prepared plan document are executed. It is the most difficult stage of the policy planning process. During implementation, it is helpful if those involved observe and assess the process. This is because changes could be necessary so as to achieve the desired objectives. Various aspects of implementation to consider include staffing, directing and controlling.

Concept of Curriculum Implementation

Onyeachu (2008) looked "Curriculum implementation as the process of putting all that have been planned as a curriculum document into practice in the classroom through the combined efforts of teachers,

learners, school administrators, parents as well as interaction with physical facilities, instructional materials, psychological and social environments". Curriculum implementation as the task of translating the curriculum document into the operating curriculum by the combined efforts of the students, teachers and others concerned, that is, curriculum implementation demands concerted efforts of end-users of the curriculum for its effective implementation at all levels in order to achieve the desired goals while Chikumbi & Makamure (2000) viewed curriculum as putting into practice the officially prescribed courses of study, syllabuses and subjects. Okebukola (2004) defined curriculum implementation as the transition of the objectives of the curriculum from paper to practice. That is, only effective curriculum implementation ensures achievement of the objectives for which the curriculum was designed to attain. Ivowi (2004) supported the definition by defining curriculum implementation as the translation of theory into practice, or proposal into action. Also Garba (2004) defined curriculum implementation as putting the curriculum into work for the achievement of the goals for which the curriculum is designed. Obanya (2004) saw implementation of curriculum as day-to-day activities which school management and classroom teachers undertake in the pursuit of the objective of any given curriculum.

Ogunode & Ojo, (2021); Daniel-Kalioi, B. (2019); Njodi (200) noted that Nigeria's education sector is facing many challenges mainly because successive governments failed to properly implement the various policies so far introduced. Ogunode & Ojo, (2021) opined that each government introduced its new policy on education thereby abolishing an existing one. These acts of policy summersaults throw the educational institution and their administrators structure into confusion. Also, Daniel-Kalioi, (2019), Nwankwaola (2018) and Daniel-Kalio (2018) lamented that the problem is not so much about making sound policies but it is with poor policy implementation.

Challenges of Facing Implementation of Early Child Education in Nigeria

For the purpose of this paper, the following would be considered as challenges facing the implementation of early child curriculum in Nigeria: inadequate funding, shortage of caregiver, inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of instructional materials, inadequate copies of early child curriculum scheme, ineffective supervision and poor capacity building.

Inadequate Funding

Inadequate funding is a major problem hindering effective implementation of the early child curriculum in Nigeria. This submission is confirmed by Ogunode & Ojo, (2021) and Ogunode (2020) who noted that adequate funding is very important in the management of educational programme especially the early child education programme. The development of the early child education programme depends on the amount of funds allocated for the administration and management of the programme. In Nigeria, inadequate funding have been a major problem facing the management of education especially the early child education programme. The Early child education programme drives its budget from the ministry of education both at the federal, state and local government authority. Amadi, (2013) opines that the government in spite of its efforts to set up policy framework for ECCE has not demonstrated enough commitment in terms of funding, monitoring and evaluation as well as establishment and management of ECCE schools the bulk of which still belongs to private investors whose main objective in profit making. Ogunode, Jegede, & Ajape (2021) submits that inadequate funding is one major challenge facing the implementation of the early child education policies in Nigeria. The budgetary allocation for education in Nigeria is inadequate to implement the entire educational policies successfully, including the early child education. The poor funding of the early child education is responsible for inadequate teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of instructional materials and poor quality of education.

Shortage of Caregiver

Adequate Caregivers is required for the effective implementation of early child education curriculum. It is saddening to see that many early child education centres are not having adequate caregiver. The implementation of the curriculum depends on the availability of the Caregivers. A report by independent Newspapers (2019) established that there was a deficit of 135,319 teachers at the Early Childhood Care Development Education, 139,772 deficit in primary schools, and 2,446 shortage in Junior Secondary School across the nation. Several challenges have been identified as clogs in the realization of good access, equity and quality of education in Nigeria. This problem is reaffirmed by Ogunode & Ojo, (2021) who submitted that shortage of professional teachers (caregivers) is a major problem affecting the management of the early child education programme in Nigeria. Care-giver are professionals teachers trained to handle children. These caregivers are in short supply in many public early education centers. Also, Ogunode, Jegede, & Ajape (2021) lamented that inadequate professional teacher is a big problem preventing the implementation of early child education policy in Nigeria. There are limited professional teachers available in the country that specialized in early child educational program. Professional teachers are needed in large number to successfully implement the educational programme relating to teaching and learning.

Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Inadequate infrastructural facilities is also responsible for the poor implementation of the early child education curriculum in Nigeria. Curriculum implementation needs adequate facilities in order to achieve its objectives. Ohiare, Ogunode & Rauf (2021) observed that infrastructural facilities are very important in the implementation of teaching and learning programme especially for programme like curriculum. Infrastructural facilities need for the implementation of teaching, researching and community service programme in the educational institutions include stable light, stable internet service, water, administrative offices, lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, ICT facilities, hostels etc. Amadi, (2013) cited Eresimadu & Eze, (1998) who disclosed that facilities such as classrooms, libraries, staff, laboratories, and furniture are grossly inadequate in a greater number of the ECCE schools. Also, Amadi, lamented that in many public early child center facilities in use are uncompleted buildings, makes shifts and car garages that are poorly ventilated most of which have only mats as furniture. This situation can never guarantee effective teaching and learning of these *tender lings* whose lives are further jeopardized. Ogunode & Ojo, (2021) opined that inadequate infrastructural facilities are another big challenge preventing effective management of the early child education in Nigeria. Ogunode, Jegede, & Ajape (2021) observed that inadequate infrastructural facilities like classrooms, chairs, tables and laboratories is another problem preventing effective implementation of the early child educational policies in Nigeria. According to the early child educational policies as stated in the working document, the policies read that the government shall provide adequate infrastructural facilities to the children to learn in an environment that is comfortable. Inadequate infrastructural facility is one major problem preventing effective implementation of educational policies in Nigeria. No meaningful teaching and learning can take place without adequate infrastructural facilities available (Ogunode, Jegede, & Ajape 2021).

Shortage of Instructional Materials

Ogunode, Akin-Ibidiran & Ibidiran (2021) observed that shortage of instructional materials is another problem affecting implementation of early child education programme curriculum in Nigeria. Many care giver in public early child education centres do not have adequate instructional materials like picture, charts, diagrams and toys for the implementation of the curriculum. Instructional material resources are educational aids that helps the teachers to teach well and learners learn well. Ogunode & Ojo, (2021) lamented that inadequate instructional materials is a very big problem facing the management of early

child education programme in Nigeria. Instructional material resources are educational aids that helps the teachers to teach well and learners learn well. Adenike & Peter (2016) stressed that when resources are available for ECE programme at pre-primary school level, it helps the caregiver/teacher to nurture and support the development of young children, and to successfully implement curriculum while Chukwbikem (2013), acknowledge that the quantity and quality of resources available for any educational programme would determine schools systems capacity for the implementation of the type of educational programme.

Inadequate Copies of Early Child Curriculum Scheme

Many early education centers in Nigeria do not have the curriculum of early child education programme. This problem of un-accessibility to adequate copies is affecting the implementation of the programme. Adenike & Peter (2016) submitted that curriculum is what and how of any educational enterprise. It is the vehicle through which any educational programmes can be successfully implemented. The ECE curriculum is an important written plan that includes goals for children's development and learning, experiences through which they will achieve the goals, what staff and parents do to help children achieve the goals and, the materials needed to support the implementation of the curriculum (National Centre on Quality Teaching and Learning (NCQTL), 2012). The early childhood curriculum helps to ensure that staff or teachers cover important learning areas, adopt a common pedagogical approach and reach for a certain level of quality across age groups. These descriptions about ECE curriculum indicates that it is an indispensable material in the business of implementing ECE programme. Its indispensability spurred the government of Nigeria to see to the development and production of National Early Childhood Curriculum for Ages 0-5years by NERDC, with the support of UNICEF. It is unfortunate that these documents are not provided adequately to all the early child education centres that need them for the implementation. Ogunode & Ojo, (2021) noted inadequate national curriculum is another problem facing the management of early child education programme in Nigeria. The early child curriculum was designed by the federal government and it contains all the things children are expected to learn in the centers. Also, Ogunode & Ojo, (2021) posited that inadequate national curriculum is another problem facing the management of early child education programme in Nigeria. The early child curriculum was designed by the federal government and it contains all the things children are expected to learn in the centers

Ineffective Supervision

Ineffective supervision of early child education programme in Nigeria is among the factors responsible for poor implementation of the curriculum. Early child Care Development Supervision according to Ogunode, Akinsua-Ajape, Jegede (2021) is the process of systematically ensuring that the aims and objectives of the programme are been achieved through helping the caregivers and administrators to improve in the programme's handling and children. Early child Care Development Supervision is the act of helping the teacher or caregiver improve in taking care of the children and helping the administrators to achieve the objectives of the programme. The Early child Care Development Supervision must be supervised and the objectives must be realized. It is unfortunate that the supervision of the programme is ineffective. Ogunode, etal (2021) cited Adenike & Peter (2016) who noted that despite the immense benefits that supervision offers the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) programme, the Nigerian Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) at pre-primary school level never provide benefits as it is usually left unsupervised. Many researchers have consistently lamented this lack of supervision in ECE (Adenike & Peter 2016; Osakwe, 2011; Nakpodia, 2011; Sooter, 2013). There are many factors responsible for poor supervision of early child education in Nigeria. Ogunode,etal (2021) identified poor funding as one major problem facing the supervision of the early child education programme in Nigeria. Supervision of education in Nigeria is under-funded, and this is affecting the quality of education, especially the early child education. Poor funding of supervision of education is one

of the major factors responsible for the poor quality of supervision of the early child education programme. The budgetary allocation devoted to education has been considered to be grossly inadequate considering the phenomenon of increase in students' enrolment and increasing cost, which has been aggravated by inflation. A serious problem confronting Nigerian public education today is that of a scarcity of fund. Government financial policies on education have therefore been subjected to constant review, intending to allocate more resources to public education. Also, Akabogu (1991) pointed out that the number of schools and teachers to be supervised are much not proportional to the number of supervisors. This problem of shortage of supervisors has affected the frequency of supervision of schools and the quality of supervisory services in the educational institutions.

Poor Capacity Building of Caregiver

Ogunode, Akin-Ibidiran & Ibidiran (2021) submitted that poor capacity development of care giver in public early child education centers is another problem responsible for poor implementation of the early child education curriculum in many public early child centers across the country. Capacity development is very important for care giver, school administrators and supervisors due to the facts they are all stakeholders in the administration and management of early child education programme. Curriculum implementer at the level of early child education needs constant training and retraining since they are handling children. The early child education curriculum is one of the complex and difficult curriculum to implement in the classroom or playroom. Care giver need to upgrade their knowledge and skills regularly to be able to implement the curriculum. Care giver should attend conferences, training and workshops to improve their capacity for instruction delivery. Okewole, Iluezi-Ogbedu & Osinowo (2015) observed that constraints facing the staff in implementing the curriculum are: poor leadership/management, poor welfare package, lack of in-service programmes such as workshops, seminars, conferences to update and upgrade the staff.

Way Forward

The following recommendation were made to address the challenges facing the implementation of early child curriculum: adequate funding, employment of adequate caregivers, provision of infrastructural facilities, provision of instructional materials, provision of national curriculum, ensure effective supervision and constant training and retraining programme for caregivers in the centers.

- a. The government should increase the funding of the early child education programme. This will aid effective implementation of the curriculum in the country.
- b. The government should employ more (caregivers) and post them to early child education centers where is need for more caregivers across the country. This will help to implementation of the curriculum.
- c. More infrastructural facilities like admin blocks, offices, staff rooms, classrooms, chairs, tables, stable light, water, ICT facilities etc should be provided in all the early child centers.
- d. Adequate instructional materials like toys, diagrams, charts, pictorials should be provided in all the early child education centers.
- e. The government should provide adequate national curriculum to all early child centers in the country.
- f. The government should ensure that the supervision of all early child education centers are done regularly and effectively.
- g. The government should ensure that constant training and retraining programme be organized for the care giver in all public early child education.

Conclusion

This paper examined challenges facing the implementation of the early child education curriculum in Nigeria. The paper identified inadequate funding, shortage of caregiver, inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of instructional materials, inadequate copies of early child curriculum scheme, ineffective supervision and poor capacity building as challenges hindering effective implementation of early child curriculum in Nigeria. In order to address these challenges, the following recommendation were made: adequate funding, employment of adequate caregivers, provision of infrastructural facilities, provision of instructional materials, provision of national curriculum, ensure effective supervision and constant training and retraining programme for caregivers in the centers.

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