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Contents

Language-in-Education Policy in Nigeria: The Reality of Teachers' Language Choices

Infrastructure and Economic Growth Nexus in Nigeria: A Macroeconometric Modelling Approach

Students Perception of Academic Staff Union of Nigeria Universities Strike Actions on their Academic Performance in the University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Effect of Discussion and Recitation Teaching Strategies on Senior Secondary School Students Achievement in Chemistry in Delta State, Nigeria

Early Childhood Care Development and Education: Impact, Challenges and Prospects in Nigeria

Comparative Analysis of Public and Private Secondary School Teachers' Level of Work Motivation in Ilorin, Nigeria

Effects of Trimesters System and Orientation Programme on Students' Grade Point Average in Abdul-Raheem College of Advanced Studies, Igbaja, Kwara State

Gender Effect of Simplex and Apcaw Strategy in Fostering Business Creativity Competence of Managers in Selected ICT Companies in Lagos State, Nigeria

Slide of Fortune: The Painful Story and Management Problems of Bendel Insurance Football Club of Benin City, Nigeria

French Language Teaching and Productivity Enhancement in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges

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Issues of Concern in Early Child Care Practices in Nigeria

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Editorial Comment

The ***Journal of Capital Development in Behavioural Sciences*** is now out with its third volume! Our conviction that the journal will definitely continue to wax stronger is being further justified. This two-numbers-in-one volume also contains rich articles that have been well edited by our team of erudite scholar-reviewers, editors as well as the obviously committed in-house editors at the prestigious College Press, Jericho, Ibadan which is the publishing arm of Lead City University and its subsidiaries. It is our assurance that you will find in the volume a fountain of well researched knowledge.

Thank you.

The Editorial Team

Contents **Pages**

Language-in-Education Policy in Nigeria:
The Reality of Teachers' Language Choices
Adetuyi, C.A. & Jegede, O.O. 1

Infrastructure and Economic Growth Nexus in
Nigeria: A Macroeconometric Modelling Approach
Onakoya, Adegbemi Babatunde and
Oseni Isiaq Olasunkanmi 19

Students Perception of Academic Staff Union
of Nigeria Universities Strike Actions on their
Academic Performance at the University
of Ibadan, Nigeria
Isah, Emmanuel A and Alao, Esther M. 36

Effect of Discussion and Invention Teaching Strategies
on Senior Secondary School Students Achievement in
Chemistry in Delta State, Nigeria
Ejedafeta A. Okurumeh 49

Early Childhood Care Development and Education:
Impact, Challenges and Prospects in Nigeria
Abdulwahab, R & Kuranga, A.Y. 67

Comparative Analysis of Public and Private
Secondary School Teachers' Level of Work
Motivation in Ilorin, Nigeria
Bello Ganiyu and Bello Ilias Ayo 78

Effects of Trimesters System and Orientation
Programme on Students' Grade Point Average
in Abdul-Raheem College of Advanced Studies,
Igbaja, Kwara State
Odunayo Joseph Braimah, Samsudeen Alabi Bankole,
and Ayinde Liasu Adekunle 94

Gender Effect of Simplex and Apcaw Strategy in Fostering Business Creativity Competence of Managers in Selected ICT Companies in Lagos State, Nigeria
Adekunle, A.R. & Adeigbe, Y. Kayode 110

Slide of Fortune: The Painful Story and Management Problems of Bendel Insurance Football Club of Benin City, Nigeria
Enaruna Edosa and Friday Imoohime Udugbai *126*

French Language Teaching and Productivity Enhancement in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges
Adebayo, Lukman Adedoyin 151

A Principal Component Analysis of Social Identity Measures in A Multi-Ethnic Context
Alex Igundunasse 161

Issues of Concern in Early Child Care Practices in Nigeria
Bukola A. Ojoko 164

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Faculty of Arts & Education, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria
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Early Childhood Care Development and Education: Impact, Challenges and Prospects in Nigeria

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Abstract
Early childhood care development and education is an early intervention programme that helps detect problems that might inhibit the growth and survival of the child by nurturing and providing basic skills and ingredients needed for over all development. This paper presents a conceptual frame work of early childhood care development and education and the under lying philosophy asstated in the policy documents. It further examined the impacts, challenges and future prospects of early childhood care and education programmes in Nigeria. It recommended that, recruitment of professional care givers, adopting baseline assessment and sensitization for stakeholders, providing reliable statistical data and figure, creating a child friendly environment, proper funding, monitoring and evaluation among others, will go a long way towards actualizing the lofty dream of early childhood programmes as a basic component of the on-going universal basic education scheme in Nigeria.

Key words: Impact challenges, early childhood care development and education

Introduction
Early childhood care and development programmes have continued to attract more attention in recent time, owing to policy inclusiveness geared towards integrating every Nigerian child irrespective of their

physical or cultural inclination into the four-walls of formal schooling in the on-going UBE scheme.

Therefore, The Federal Republicof Nigeria: National Policy on Education sees early childhood/pre-primary education as the education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. It includes the crèche, the nurseryand the kindergarten. As such, early childhood care development and education (ECCDE) is the care, protection, stimulation and learning promoted in children from age 0-4 years in a crèche or nursery (NPE 2004 and 2013).

According to Abdulwahab (2013), it is a life long education that revolves round the growth-survival of the child in line with their developmental milestones. It begins from the moment the child is conceived, delivered, brought home from the hospital and continues on when the child starts to attend play groups, kindergartens and nursery. Abdulwahab described early childhood education in form of a "black box of an aeroplane, car engine" that produces specific functions. It is similar to a factory or a laboratory where certain experimental tests are carried out; a foundation that upholds a structure, a wheel that fixed up tires, shock absorbers of a car and if early childhood care and education is put in place at the early years, it will help to ameliorate a certain degree of defective problems that might obstruct child growth and development.

In another related development, Nasir (2007) contended that, in developing countries, early children care tends to be associated with care services like nutrition, health and hygiene provided to young children. While in the developed world, early childhood care tends to be associated with social services provided for working mothers to cater for their children while they are at work

Policy objectives of early childhood care development and education in Nigeria

The Federal Republic Nigeria: National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development in Nigeria (2007:Pp1-5) puts forward that, research evidence abound from many fields of study that the care and support received by a child in terms of good health, nutrition and psycho-

social care and protection are crucial in the formation and development of intelligence, personality and social behaviour. Since Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) aims to integrate interventions from the various sectors, the objectives of the policy derive from the national policies on education, food and nutrition, health and the child right acts, as follows:

a. Provide care and support that will ensure the right of the child to:
   "Good nutrition and health" "Health and safe environment"
   "Psycho-social stimulation" "Protection and participation"
b. Inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys e.t.c.
c. Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while parents/ guardians are at work (on the farms, in the markets, offices, industry, e.t.c)
d. Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school.
e. Prepare the child to adapt successfully, when his or her current context changes.
f. Develop a healthy, well nourished adequately stimulated child able to achieve its fullest potentials
g. Contribute to reduction of high infant and U-5 mortality rate
h. Raise awareness of HIV/AIDs and promote protective behaviour among children including OVCS
i. Inculcate acceptable social and culturally appropriate norms, values and beliefs.
j. Raise awareness on IECD policy in all communities by 2015.
k. Build capacity of all stakeholders for IECD policy implementation.
l. Support existing legislations to reduce all forms of abuse and denial of children rights.
m. Establish and expand mechanisms for collaboration and coordination of IECD programme.
n. Provide guidelines and standards to ensure quality service delivery.
o. Establish a valid and reliable monitoring and evaluation system for all aspects of the IECD policy

p. Establish reliable management information system on IECD to facilitate research.
q. Build strategic partnerships with government at all levels, the private sectors, civil society organisation/NGOs, Development Partners and communities to mobilize resources for IECD implementation.
r. Promote community participation, ownership and sustainability.
s. Integration of Quranic system into IECCD

Impact of early childhood care development and education on Nigerian children

The children of today need to be prepared for the vastly complex and rapidly changing world of tomorrow. The role of ECCDE as a responsive partner in child's survival does not restrict only to school education of a child but rather extended for the promotion of useful education which would in turn prepare the child for preparatory living in and out of the school. For every Nigerian child to live to survive, grow, adapt and conform to globalize world, early childhood care development and education is required. Hence, the pre-school education is of immense significance as identified by Chijioke (nd): 94:95).

a. A source of happiness, security and care for young children.
b. Source of a good development of physical growth that makes pre-schoolers active.
c. Source of development of good language and social habits
d. Source of development of science and technological knowledge through special toys and gadgets which many parents may not afford
e. Source of good medical services
f. Forum for development of moral education and good emotional habits
g. Source of cognitive development in terms of their listening, speaking, reading, writing arithmetic skills through the power of play.

According to Nasir (2007) over time, two factors have made it necessary for societies to put in place a systematic process for the education, care and upbringing of children before they reach the school

age. He stated these two factors as: Women who traditionally are in charge of providing early care and education, have been entering paid employment in large numbers in almost every country. The second reason is the increasing number of children, particularly from poor families, who come to school without the basic experiences and nutritional status needed for success in the formal school. This has a significant impact on the development of children generally but disadvantaged children in particular.

Myers and Lander 1989, UNESCO 2005 in Nasir (2007) highlighted the following benefits of ECCD on the learner:

i. ECCD programme can have positive effects on the probability of children enrolling in school, help them make significant progress and improve their performances in the early year of primary school
ii. ECCD programme can achieve what is stated above because they are generally associated with chances of early enrolment in school programme, enhanced health and nutritional conditions and improved cognitive skills which generally improve the readiness of the child for the school
iii. ECCD programme also enhance the acquisition of social skills like interaction, co-operation, and tolerance by the child.
iv. Poor children and other disadvantaged children generally benefit more from the multifaceted and integrated interventions that ECCD programme contains.
v. ECCD enhances the chances of success in children who would otherwise have found it difficult to cope with the demands of the primary school because of their low level of preparedness.

Aparajita and Rita (2002) described ECCD as a lifetime of continuous learning and experiencing from birth to old age programme. They provide children a good start in life such as:

a. Fosters in children the natural need for discovery and curiosity; and their desire to learn form the basis of lifelong learning; such interest is as asset that stays with them for the rest of their life and help to do better in later life.

b. Respects and builds the parent to play the central role in child development
c. Supports parents in their skills as parenting, training on literacy, child development, health and nutrition, stimulate and create a good developmental environment for children.
d. ECCD programme go much beyond school readiness, by preparing children for life and encouraging them to be open to learn and for life's opportunities. It also increases the children's self confidence and other learning potential, improved social skills, more creative ways of thinking and problem solving.
e. Involves mostly mothers in the caring process thus builds confidence and encourages parenting skills and become involved in the children's learning and development.
f. Can reduce inequality in society by giving children from disadvantaged backgrounds a chance in life and in school.
g. Concerned with the holistic development of children. ECCD involved many people including family, and community members, and policy makers. It forms an important component of integrated development work. If children grow up from an early age in a stimulatingenvironment, they will experience the feeling of confidence and self respect that comes from being able to act as an independent human being.
h. Early stimulation and educational enrichment can promote creativity in young children. Early educational intervention providing stimulation and instruction during the pre-school years would make a difference in the children's preschool experiences.
i. The more experiences/exposures we give the child at this age, richer is the dividend. At no other stage is he able to benefit as much from an enriching environment as he can than at the pre-school stage.
j. Pre-school year is the period of socialisation. It affords the child opportunity of playing with other children and thus learns to share, wait for his turn and co-operate with others.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2008:5) opined that, the early childhood care and education programme targeted at the care and education of children aged 0-5+ is considered a period of great opportunity for growth and development. Therefore, any experience acquired at this stage of development may make or mar the child permanently; hence the specific targets of early childhood care education programme are to;

a. Provide excellent care and support for children.
b. Reduce mortality rates among Nigerian children
c. Reduce child malnutrition
d. Set early rhythm of learning in children
e. Improve enrolment, retention and learning achievements
f. Build the capacity of all stakeholders in early childhood care education
g. Reduce disease burden among Nigerian children

Challenges facing early childhood care development and education in Nigeria

Despites the above mentioned prospects, there are still some challenges militating quality service delivery of early childhood care education, as postulated by Tahir 2006 in Nasir (2007:8-9)

"The renewed attention that this component of the UBE is receiving is not without some implementation constraints. These include lack of awareness on the part of communities, administrator and other stakeholder, in adequate facilities and personnel; lack of transparency and commitments on the part of those responsible for its implantation at the federal and state levels. But by far the greatest challenge is likely to be teacher factor".

Other challenges facing ECCDE are lack of actual enrolment figure of school going children and most early childhood centres in the country are not duely registered and approved. Population explosion in schools, policy changes in the educational circles, poor funding, low quality feeding, poor learning environment /social factor, insufficient relevant teaching and learning materials to work with, inadequate professionals, poor state of infrastructural facilities, lack of awareness and sensitization of

parents to enrol their wards for early education, lack of proper care and super vision for children to work with, lack of Montessori teaching and learning materials, inadequate space for pre-school children, lack of modern indoor and outdoor facilities, lack of children's library books and literatures and most of early childhood centres are not fenced which sometimes warrant free exit of pupils from the school.

Therefore, the aforementioned challenges facing ECCDE in Nigeria could be minimized to the bearest level once the Government at any level signifies political intention and strong will towards investing fully on ECCDE programme in order to revive and redeem the image of an average child in line with global international best practices. The sacrifice involved requires proper funding which serves as the basic tool of fast tracking early childhood programmes in Nigeria and the world in general. There should be baseline awareness, sensitization and campaign for stakeholders on the need to enrol their wards for timely pre-school education. It is obvious that more early child centres are springing up without border, to make such centres more virile, there should be actual statistical figure of school going children for effective planning and that professional caregivers should be undertaken. In addition to this, Montessori facilities, modern indoor and outdoor equipment and viable ICT networking is required for child's teaching and learning. Proper fencing and secured environment is equally a veritable tool of retaining school going children. Above all, Effective monitoring and evaluation, collaborative synergy between and among stakeholders a home and abroad would ensure quality control and assurance of early childhood programmes as well.

Prospects of early childhood care development and education in Nigeria

According to Abdulwahab (2013), early childhood care development and education has long been identified as a lasting option of preparing the Nigerian child for better tomorrow. Therefore, it has come to stay. The task ahead is to look for a lime light at repositioning to strategize the field for the common good of all Nigerians. Abdulwahab identified some of the salient points that make early childhood education virile, as;

1. Early childhood as a basic component of universal basic education, signed into law under the UBE Act of 2004.
2. Early childhood is comprehensive, integrative and multi-disciplinary in nature, related to many areas of study such as home management and family living, food and nutrition, child development and care, health education (disease control, drug use, immunization, personal hygiene, water and environmental sanitation and sustainability), safety measures, creative arts e.t.c
3. It is an entrepreneur education for prospective care givers after graduation such as; quest to work as a birth attendants, nurse assistants, recreational specialist especially in the area of setting up recreational and amusement centres, child health aids, child care agencies such as UNESCO/ UNICEF etc.
4. It is backed-up with policy objectives as contained in the national policy for integrated early childhood development in Nigeria.
5. A reform brought about by NUC/NCCE towards the introduction of ECCDE in universities/colleges of education is indeed a ray of hope for the profession.
6. It has a wider-global intervention and international partnership.
7. Collaboration and coordination from stakeholders of education and supports from IDPs is equally a standing point for the profession.
8. Early childhood development is a holistic approach intended to attend to the child's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. It is therefore comprehensive and focuses on all child's developmental needs.

In addition, the prospects of early childhood care development and education lies strongly on its policy inclusiveness as contained in Federal Republic of Nigeria (2007:6) aiming at;

a) Coordinate and facilitate effective programme and service delivery on IECD policy by all stakeholders
b) Encourage parents and caregivers to let children enjoy the rights due to them under the Child Rights Act 2003
c) Collaborate with partners and contribute to the achievement of MDG 4: "Reduce Child Mortality" by promotion of key household practices for child survival growth and development

d) Ensure all communities adopt, participate and mobilize resources for implementation of the IECD programmes.
e) Ensure that all Religious groups and leaders and other Opinion leaders adopt, participate and mobilize resources for implementation of the IECD programmes.
f) Organize private sectors, civil society organizations and development partners to collaborate with implementing agencies to provide IECD services towards achievement of EFA by 2015.
g) Encourage relevant tertiary institutions to teach and do research in pre- primary education.
h) Ensure that the Mass Media and other Communication agencies assist in the implementation of IECD programmes.
i) Collaborate with the partners and contribute to the achievement of MDG6:" Combat HIV/ AIDS, malaria and other diseases" by limiting the impact of HIV/AIDS on OVCs.

Conclusion

We have discussed in this paper the important roles that early childhood care development and education play in the growth and survival of children prior to their entering the primary school. It equally examined the impact, challenges and prospects of the field. In achieving the development of a total child, requires capable men and women whose keen interest vendor on child education in other to effect a smooth transition of the child from home into a larger society. Therefore, to holistically put this in a good road map in schools demands the recruitment of qualified and competent hands who can painstakingly harness their potentialities to save our future generation from education blindness.

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