

Assessment of Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE) Curriculum Implementation Policies in Adamawa Central Education Zone, Adamawa State, Nigeria

Dr. (Mrs.) A.A. Bagudo, Hamidu Bala

Abstract: This study assessed implementation of Early Childhood Care Development Education (ECCDE) curriculum policies in Adamawa state, Nigeria. The study employed descriptive survey research design and two research questions guided the study. Two hundred and seventeen respondents were used from forty-four selected public primary schools in the study area. The instruments used for data collection were structured questionnaire (CIRQ) and checklist (CIRC) validated by experts. The reliability of the instruments was established using PPMC and a reliability coefficient index of 0.94 and 0.64 was obtained respectively. Data collected were analyzed using percentage, mean and standard deviation via SPSS. The findings revealed that majority 399 out of the 454 ECCDE teachers in Adamawa Central Education Zone were unqualified only 55 of the teachers were found to be ECCDE specialists. It was discovered that only 30 out of the 44 ECCDE centers visited have learning environments/physical settings requirements that were in harmony with the prescribed ECCDE minimum standard. Based on the research findings, it was recommended that additional 170 trained ECCDE teachers should be made by government in partnership with SUBEB. The unqualified ones should be sponsored for in-service training programme, workshops and seminars. Government in collaboration with non-governmental agencies should intensify efforts toward upgrading and maintaining ECCDE centers in the zone to best practice standard through renovation of dilapidated structures, painting and repainting of classrooms and establishment of additional free ECCDE centers to ease accessibility to all children.

Introduction

The success of any educational programme such as ECCDE depend heavily on adequacy of curriculum implementation. The curriculum includes standard, quality and quantity of various resources such as human resources, learning environment, teaching/learning resources, Infrastructural facilities, fund, as well as, involvement relevant stakeholders in ensuring effective implementation of ECCDE curriculum base on policy demands. Accordingly, Mazieobi cited in Mbeh, 2016 indicated the interrelationship of various concepts, services, personnels in implementation process

meant to put to action packed ideas or theories into practical reality. The ECCDE as practiced globally is multi-sectoral, multi-dimensional programme aimed at making education a birth right and a life-long pursuit. Therefore, ECCDE is no longer meant for only children from privileged families, rather it is to be accessible to all children including Nigerian children as documented in National policy on Education and contained in curriculum developed by NERDC in Nigeria.

History has shown that before the launching of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme on October, 30th, 1999 in Sokoto, by former President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, pre-school Education existed, but as private enterprise for only those interested and that had the means. In fact the general attitude then was that pre-school education was for the affluent members of the society such that it was run by few proprietors and proprietress as a lucrative business enterprise and to a large extent exclusively preserve for the children of the upper-class citizens” (Nzerebe, 2013, p.12). However, the situation is quite different today as provision is now made for it in the National Policy on Education. The policy document in Section 2, Sub-section 14-16, worth noting is that besides incorporating early childhood education in the National Policy on Education, a comprehensive ECCDE curriculum was also designed to equip children with the desired skills needed for smooth transition into primary level of education and later social life.

A cursory glance through existing literature on the concept early childhood care development and education reveals that different scholars have divergent views on the subject. For instance, The NPE in section 2, subsection 14-16 refers to early childhood care development and education as the care, protection, stimulation and learning promoted in children between the ages of 0 to 5 years in a crèche or nursery (FRN, 2013, p.7). There are different nomenclature in Early Childhood Care Development and Education, according to Cherry (2015) viewed it as a programme for time of remarkable physical, cognitive, social and emotional development in human life

span.Nakpodia (2011) considered it as a preparatory step for primary education, a starting point for the child's general development and the foundation of Nigerian education system. This can be deduced from the objectives of early childhood care development and education stipulated in National Policy on Education (NPE,2013) to include:

- a. effecting a smooth transition from home to school;
- b. providing adequate care and supervision of children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets, offices etc);
- c. preparing the child for primary education;
- d. Inculcating social norms;
- e. inculcating in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature and the local environment, playing with toys, artistic and musical activities;
- f. teaching co-operation and team spirit;
- g. teaching the rudiments of numbers, letters, colors, shapes, forms etc, through play;
- h. teaching good habits and especially good health habits (FRN, 2013).

Generally, ECCDE as a programme has well define objectives and well designed curriculum. Literature and research evidences available on adequacy of ECCDE curriculum and its implematation in Nigeria are not very many. In his view, Mahuta cited in Sooter (2013) and Akinrotimi (2016) suggested that the aims of ECCE should include fostering proper development of children, identifying and addressing their problems, harnessing their potentials, molding their character, enhancing their learning and equipping them for life so that their actions are channeled towards positive personal, communal and global development. In other to achieve the above mentioned objectives, the(ECCDE) policy came up with various strategies such as organizing annual training workshops, seminars and conferences for ECCDE teachers/caregivers, introduction of ECCDE programme in Colleges and Universitiestotrain ECCDE teachers, use of mother tongue as medium of instruction, production and distribution among; designing

the National Minimum Standard for ECCDE Centers; ECCDE Teachers/Caregivers guide, Integrated Early Childhood Curriculum for Ages 0-5 years and Training Manuals e.g. the Child Care handbook Manual, Toys making Manual, Child Development Handbook Manual (UBEC, 2013).

Subsequently, apart from the policy statements and the objectives of ECCDE by the Federal Government, other requirements to help in the execution of the ECCDE programme include the need for qualified teachers' as well as standard ECCDE learning environment. In this regard, El-Habib (2016) argued the qualified teacher is concerned with the teachers' knowledge of curriculum contents and competency in transmission, delivery or implementation of ECCDE to meet quality and standard marked by outcomes in children. In his view Oshimolowo (2014) maintained that,

It's important that caregivers and teachers in ECCDE institutions be deliberately trained in a recognize institution of education and must be registered member of Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN). He further stressed that beyond paper qualification, a good child caregiver must be experienced, patient, committed, must possess social skills, organization skills, record keeping skills, must be motivated to work, stay calm under pressure, have enough physical energy to keep up with children, have a sense of humor, feel a connection with the children and possesses a positive attitude.

In related development NPE (2016) stipulated that ECCDE teachers should preferably be holders of either the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) with specialization in ECCE, Professional Certificate in Education (PGCE), Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), Bachelor of Education ECCE or a retired ECCE teacher. Meanwhile, caregivers for children aged 0 to 3 years old, should be persons with basic literacy and

aged not less than 21 years, for children aged 3 to 5 years old, the caregiver should preferably be holders of Nigerian Certificate in Education NCE, a retired Nurse, teacher, other educated retirees or anyone with at least Senior Secondary School certificate and most not be less than 21 years old. It is disheartening that results from the few studies conducted in some parts of Nigeria revealed that most ECCDE teachers were untrained UNICEF (2015).

In addition, to relevance of qualified ECCDE teachers required for effective curriculum implementation, the availability of standard learning environments are very indispensable. Based on global standard, it is incumbent to make ECCDE learning environment appealing to children so that they will appreciate the take-off of their long academic journey which is very essential in maintaining their interest to remain schooling. ECCDE learning environment should be a developmentally standard environment. The environment should be beautiful with colored paintings of visual attraction, well ventilated classrooms, well fenced, a playground, child size chair, library building, age appropriate toilets facilities, portable drinking water etc for holistic development of children (UBEC, 2013 p. 22). Edglossary (2013) stressed that ECCDE learning environment is a standard and diverse physical location in which children learn, it further stated that since children learn in a variety of settings such as outside the school location and outdoor environments, the term is often used as a more accurate or preferred alternative to classroom, which has more limited and traditional connotations than a room with rows of desks and a chalkboard. Barbara (2014) sees learning environment as a physical setting where children learning takes place and further stressed that studies conducted in different parts of the world have shown that learning environment is one of the most important predictors of children achievement.

Looking at the provisions as stipulated in the NPE and the National Minimum Standard for ECCDE above there is every possibility to conclude that Nigeria, like any other

country in the world, has taken a step in the right direction, in providing education for young children who are to be potential citizens of Nigeria of tomorrow and prospective leaders of this great nation. But the fundamental question that needs to be asked is “to what extent have these requirements (qualified ECCDE trained teachers, standard ECCDE learning environment) been met in Nigeria in general and Adamawa Central Educational Zone in particular?” thus the focus this research work.

Historically, from year 2000 to date, Adamawa state has complied with the ECCDE policy directives through the setting up of a committee on the July 8th, 2008 to mobilize support for ECCDE implementation in all the public primary schools in the zone, as well as, supporting the passage into law the bill establishing Adamawa State Primary Education Board (ASPEB) i.e. AD Law No.3 of 2005 which later metamorphosed to Adamawa State Basic Education Board (ADSUBEB). Presently out of the five hundred and fifty five (555) public primary schools in the state, two hundred and forty six (246) schools has an established ECCDE out of which Adamawa central educational zone has a total of fifty five (55) centers in the zone (ADSUBEB, 2017). This is addition to other privately owned registered and unregistered centers (Nzeribe, 2013). Similarly, some Islamiyya schools have also incorporated ECCDE.

Documents and literature available in Adamawa state revealed the availability of policy, format, regulation and curriculum guiding the implementation of ECDE as obtainable Nationally. Adamawa state government has domesticated the ECCDE Programme bearing the differences and peculiarities that exist within the state as a heterogeneous society. This indicate that early childhood care development and education programme take cognizance of religious, cultural, home and individual as socio-economic differences. Therefore, the programme is not without challenges despite its loudable objectives According to Eijieh cited in Johnson (2015) some of the challenges facing ECCDE curriculum implementation in Nigeria include among others “teacher factor” i.e. lack of

ECCDE trained teachers, funding, un-stimulating learning environment and proliferation of unqualified teachers/caregivers etc. Amadi (2013) further identified other challenges of early childhood care development and education curriculum implementation requirements to include, ill equipped teachers and caregivers, government failure to demonstrate enough commitment in terms of funding, monitoring and evaluation, inadequate classrooms etc.

In assessing implementation of ECCDE in Adamawa therefore need to take cognizance standard set by Federal government of Nigeria. According to FRN (2016) main features of a standard ECCDE environment include the followings:

- a. Schools Location:** A place that is acceptable to the community (a home, community buildings such as civic centers, churches, mosques and existing schools or an ECCDE purposely built structure that is:
 - i. acceptable to community (within walking distance from home-a maximum of two kilometers).
 - ii. safe and secure environment (free from chemical and other hazards including free from excessive noise).
- b. School Surrounding:** Dry and not water logged, devoid of hazardous objects, beautiful and stimulating with flowers and plants.
- c. Classrooms:** Solid structures that do not pose danger to children, well ventilated with at least two doors.
- d. Classrooms Size:** Enough space, The classroom size (16 square meters) for 20-25 children with access to free movement to allow interaction with pupils while sitting arrangements should not be rigid like in primary school setting
- e. Classrooms floor:** Smooth but not slippery (has to be plastered with cement or with local material excluding cow dung and such harmful materials).
- f. Doors:** wooden or iron that can be locked.

- g.** Corners: for science, health and nutrition, drama, shopping, sleeping.
- h.** Furniture: Child-sized chair (one per child) and one round table per four (4) Children.
- i.** Mats: locally made beds, mattresses covered with Macintosh and Bed sheets.
- j.** Chalkboard: movable or fixed.
- k.** Gender-neutral IECD:charts/posters/pictures and children's work should be fixed on the wall.
- l.** Cupboards and shelves: for children items (enough to hold 25 children's items example, water bottles, food, bags).
- m.** Caregiver table or shelf.
- n.** Wall clock.
- o.** Toilets: Toilets should be available for teachers, caregivers and children with separate toilets for girls and boys. Each ECCDE centre should have potties and either a ventilated improved pit latrines or a surface water system toilets.
- p.** Playground:the playground should be:
 - i.** enough space for children to play (enough to take 20 to 25 children and two adults at a given time);
 - ii.** safe and secured;
 - iii.** may have grass or sand but not bushy or dirty;
 - iv.** devoid of waterlogged and;
 - v.** free from dangerous objects.
- q.** Fencing:
 - i.**facility should be fenced in a manner that prevents outside interference such as rampaging animals, and prevent children from staying outside.
 - ii.** the fence should be made with either, Concrete, mud, bamboo, raffia, corn stalk, wood, flowers hedge, plants.
- r.** Office Accommodation:

- i. safe secured space should be provided for safety of school records and materials.
- s. Security: Day and night security personnel and should be able-bodied and a responsible member of the community.
- t. Developmentally Stimulating Environment

Jacob (2012) stressed that a developmentally stimulating environment should:

- i. have opportunities for frequent and positive child adult interactions;
- ii. stimulate the child to play, explore and discover;
- iii. have opportunities for children to engage in active play and movement and;
- iv. be aesthetically pleasing and attractive to the child, have a variety of colors texture, surfaces, visual dimensions and perspectives.

Statement of the Problem

There is global concern and drive for early Child Care Development and education due to many short and long term benefits established from studies conducted on early childhood programmes like EPPE project, Head Start programs and early learning programmes abroad and in Nigeria. These achievements are attributed quality, standard in implementation of the programme. The Federal government of Nigeria has made policy provisions, regulations and curriculum for implementation of ECCDE in the country. The UBE ACT 2004 made ECCDE component of Basic Education programme. This implies that it should be available to all Nigerian children implemented in all the states at basic level. Over the years not much have been done to assess the programme in Adamawa state. The most important components of implementation includes personnels, environment, physical structures, infrastructures, and facilities available. Therefore, this research assessed Implementation of ECCDE in Adamawa state with view to identify level of compliance, achievements challenges and prospects.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study seeks to,

1. find out whether ECCDE teachers in Adamawa central education zone meet the qualification requirement for teaching in ECCDE school settings as contained in the minimum standard.
2. find out whether ECCDE centers in Adamawa central education zone meets the prescribed environmental/physical settings requirements for teaching and caring as contained in policy provision in Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions have been raised to guide the study,

1. To what extent do Early Childhood Care Development and Education teachers in Adamawa central education zone meets the qualification requirements for teaching in ECCDE school as stipulate?
2. To what extent do Early Childhood Care Development and Education centers in Adamawa central education zone meets the prescribed environmental/physical settings requirements for teaching and caring?

Research Design

The design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 487 participants in the 55 ECCDE centers from the five local education authorities in the study area. The sample of the study was 217 respondents proportionately selected from 44 randomly selected public primary schools ECCDE center in the zone.

Two structured instruments curriculum implementation requirements questionnaire (CIRQ) and curriculum implementation requirements checklist (CIRC) validated by experts in childhood education and measurement and evaluation from Faculty of

Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, were used for data collection. The questionnaire contained 20 items constructed on a four point Likert scale model of; strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The following scores were assigned to each scale of measurement: strongly agree = 4 points, agree = 3 points, disagree = 2 points and strongly disagree = 1 point. This was used to elicit information from the ECCDE head teachers/teachers, local/zonal supervisors, zonal ECCDE desk officer and the state UBEC coordinator. The designed Checklist contained ten items designed to assess standard of observed items including, school surrounding, classrooms size, floor, play ground, fencing, office accommodation, library etc. this was filled by the researcher together with the research assistants to have a direct and on the spot assessment of the ECCDE learning environment in this study area.

The instrument was validated through distribution of copies to 3 experts in childhood education, and in Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Education Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, for scrutiny. This was done to evaluate the content of the instruments as well as the extent to which the items in the instruments measure what they were intended to measure. Based on their advice and comments, some items in the instruments were modified and restructured. This covered the face and the content validity, after a trial testing of the instruments using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC), a reliability index of 0.94 and 0.96 was obtained which implied that the instruments were reliable for data collection. After administering the instruments the data were analyzed in a tabular form using frequency and simple percentage in analyzing research question No. 1 and the checklist findings. However, raw scores obtained from frequencies and percentages were converted to mean and standard deviation in the analyzing research question No. 2 via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1

To what extent do ECCDE teachers in Adamawa Central Education Zone meets the qualification requirements for teaching in ECCDE schools?

Table 1: Analysis of Research Question One

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Qualification(s)	(F)	(%)
S.S.C.E	134	29.5%
Grade II	158	34.8%
N.C.E (ECCE)	55	12.2%
N.C.E Others	47	10.4%
Diploma (EDU)	20	04.4%
Diploma Others	09	01.9%
B.ED	31	06.8%
Degree Others	00	0.00%
Masters Degree	00	0.00%
P.HD	00	0.00%
TOTAL	454	100%

Source: ADAMAWA SUBEB, 2018

Table 1 revealed that majority of the ECCDE teachers' in this study area did not possess the required qualification for teaching in ECCDE schools/centers. Majority 399 (87.9%) of the teachers were found to be SSCE/Grade II Certificate holders, only 55 (12.1%) of the teachers were found to be ECCDE specialist in contrast to the ECCDE teaching qualification requirements, which could affect the success of the programme curriculum implementation in this study area.

Research Question 2

To what extent do ECCDE centers in Adamawa Central Education Zone meets' the prescribed environmental/physical setting standard for teaching and caring?

Table 2: Analysis of Research QuestionTwo

Table 2: Analysis of Research Question Two

S/N	Items	S D		D		Response		F	%	Mean	Std.
		F	%	F	%	A	SA				
1.	The school is located within walking distance from the community settlement.	00	00	05	2.30	30	13.8	182	83.9	3.83	0.43
2.	School location is safe and secured (from excessive noise and pollution).	00	00	00	00	00	00	217	100	4.00	0.00
3.	The school is well fenced.	07	3.0	23	10.6	23	10.6	164	75.6	3.60	0.82
4.	The school is attractive with different varieties of colored paintings, images of visual attractions enough to stimulate interest.	00	00	20	09.2	25	11.5	172	79.3	3.72	0.60
5.	The school has a play-ground.	12	5.5	56	25.8	149	68.7	00	00	2.64	0.60
6.	The school has well ventilated classes, with windows and doorways.	00	00	05	2.30	11	5.1	201	92.6	3.90	0.45
7.	Classes have veranda and plastered floor.	00	00	15	6.9	10	4.6	192	88.5	3.80	0.60
8.	ECCDE schools are provided with basic sanitation in other to promote good health.	00	00	10	4.6	19	8.8	188	86.6	3.80	0.53
9.	ECCDE schools have access to portable drinking water.	21	9.7	00	00	01	0.5	195	89.9	3.73	0.90
10.	The school has enough toilets for all categories children ages (4-5yrs).	26	12.0	11	5.1	180	82.9	00	00	2.65	0.73
Interpretative scale		=2.50				Cumulative mean= 3.57					

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 2 revealed that the ECCDE learning environment/physical setting requirements in this study area meets the prescribed standard for teaching and caring as stipulated. Responses had shown that majority of the respondents acknowledged agreement that all the items 1 to 10 meet the ECCDE curriculum implementation requirements as they were found to be higher than the interpretative mean score of 2.50. None of the item was found to be less than the interpretative mean score of 2.50. Subsequently, since the cumulative mean score of 3.57, was found to be greater than the interpretative mean score of 2.50, by implication this means that, ECCDE learning

environment/physical settings requirements meet the prescribed ECCDE standards for teaching and caring in Adamawa central educational zone.

Discussion of Findings

The extent to which ECCDE teachers in Adamawa central education zone, meet the qualification requirements for teaching in ECCDE schools/centers as recommended

The result of research question one showed that despite government efforts on recruitment of teachers, majority 399 ECCDE teachers' in Adamawa central education zone were unqualified. Findings revealed that only 55 of the teachers met the prescribed ECCDE teaching qualification as required. This finding is in line with the findings of Charles Madu and Adigun (2016) who stated that among the challenges facing ECCDE programme implementation was inadequate trained qualified teachers and caregivers. This finding also agreed with the findings of Ngikundael (2016) who opined that shortage and absence of qualified teachers is one among the multiple challenges faced in manning Pre-primary schools.

The extent to which ECCDE centers in Adamawa central education zone, meets the prescribed environmental/physical settings requirements for teaching and caring ECCDE

The result of research question two showed that ECCDE learning environment/physical settings in this study area meets ECCDE curriculum implementation requirement for teaching and caring, which may not be unconnected to the state receiving, the National best performing state award in 2007 and 2008, as well as, the award for the zonal best performing state in 2010 from UBEC (Chukwulaka, 2010, p.11). The finding above can be connected to the contribution of local and International Development Partners (IDPs) in strengthening human resource capacity and creating conducive learning environment.

Conclusion

The extent of early childhood care development and education curriculum implementation in Adamawa central education zone cannot be toyed with, especially in the present quest for acquisition of science and technological advancement, which could be easily achieved through a well implemented quality early childhood education. Based on the results of the findings, it was concluded that despite ECCDE learning environment meeting the curriculum implementation requirements in view of their location, site, basic sanitation and toilet facilities etc. majority of the teachers teaching in the ECCDE schools are unqualified for the implementation of the ECCDE curriculum.

Recommendation

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. In partnership with the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) government should employ additional 170 ECCDE trained teachers/caregivers to fill in vacuum, while, subjecting the unqualified ones (ECCDE teachers) to in-services training programme, workshops, seminars, etc., to update their knowledge and skills for effective ECCDE curriculum implementation in this study area.
2. In collaboration with government, State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), Local and International Development Partners (IDPs) efforts towards maintaining standards of the ECCDE learning environment in this study area should be intensified, through renovation of dilapidated structures, construction and reconstruction, painting and re-painting of classrooms, building libraries, as-well-as establishment of additional ECCDE centers in villages to checkmate the ever increasing number of children enrollment.

Refereces

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