

# RE-ENGINEERING EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A TOOL FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SELF PRODUCTIVITY

By

**OLORUNMONU ADE MOODY**

*School of Education,  
Federal College of Education,  
Okene, Kogi State.*

## **Abstract**

*This paper attempts to examine the absolute awkwardness in the structure of the early childhood care and education that has formally introduced into the colleges of education and faculty of education in the universities. The set-up of the system in terms of the school environment, recruitment of teachers and the necessary materials for learning need re-engineering. Observation technique was adopted to identify the fact that the teachers are not trained, unfriendly and the quality of reception is not warm. The environment is not child-friendly which can hamper self-productivity and employment opportunities.*

Early childhood care education of the pre-primary school level has been erroneously conceived as being oriented towards preparatory school learning. This implies that it is a downward extension of the primary school education. This is at variance with Maduewesi, B. U. (1999) who posited that the nursery school is an upward extension of the primary school.

Osanyin (2002) advocated that the nursery experience, rather than mastery of academic skills, should enable the children to be enquirers, explorers, investigators and learners. The inclusion of early childhood care and education in the national policy of education shows government's interest and commitment towards the education at this level.

Early childhood education and care refers to the education given in an educational institution to children age 3 – 5 plus, prior to their entering the primary school. It includes crèche, the nursery and the kindergarten (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

Government's responsibilities are to promote the training of qualified early childhood care, education teachers in adequate numbers, contribute to the development of suitable curriculum supervise and control.

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### **Purpose of Early Childhood Care and Education for Self-Employment**

The objective of setting up early childhood care and education according to national policy for integrated early childhood development in Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2007) states that:

- i. Effect a smooth transition from home to school.
- ii. Prepare the child for the primary level of education.
- iii. Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets, offices etc.)
- iv. Inculcate social norms.
- v. Inculcate the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys.
- vi. Develop a sense of co-operation and team spirit.
- vii. Learn good habits, especially good health habits.
- viii. Teach the rudiments of numbers, letter, colours etc.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

**Engineering:** is the activity of designing things such as roads, railways, bridges or machines. This is applicable to professional organizations, education industries and even the agricultural sectors.

**Re-engineering:** refers to the ability to re-design to suit the purpose or objective of a particular programme in order for adequate effectiveness and efficiency.

**Employment:** is the ability to secure a gainful job which may satisfy the inner feelings of the individual or being fulfilled and engaged.

**Self-productivity:** is the enablement to satisfy oneself and contribute his or her quota to national development. It is an essential ingredient in the early childhood care and education development since a good and robust foundation will enhance effective nation building and good citizenry.

### **Re-engineering Early Childhood Care and Education**

The areas that may be re-engineered are:

- i. The personnel need training and orientation in the management of early childhood programme, for instance, the warmth and love to act as baby minders are most relevant for effective relationship between the teachers and the children.
- ii. The curriculum needs to be structured out so as to probe the minds of the children, explorative and enquiry.
- iii. The home environment must be enabling and satisfactory to the yearnings of the child.

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- iv. The methodology of teaching must include play away method and gadgets and materials must be assessable by every child.
- v. The school environment must be aesthetically designed to reflect an enabling environment where the child is stable in the mind and emotionally comfortable.
- vi. Supervision, according to Ofojebe (2007) is a process of assisting, directing stimulating and motivating teachers to enhance teaching and learning process in educational institutions.

For effective re-engineering, the national policy on education (2004) maintained that the objective of administration and supervision includes the followings:

- a. Ensuring adequate and effective planning of all educational services.
- b. Provided efficient administrative and management control for the maintenance and improvement of the system and
- c. Ensure quality control through regular and continuous supervision of instructional and other educational services.

Supervisors are responsible for creating an environment conducive for performance while individual teachers are responsible for self-actualization.

The term ‘supervisor’, according to Nwagbara (2005) passes for an individual who by virtue of his functions, carries out duties deal with managing both human and material resources within the school system and how they can be utilized. Supervisors should gear up towards getting teachers to have a feeling of satisfaction in their jobs.

It is expected, according to the National Policy on Education (2004) that the Inspectorate Division undertakes quality control but this being centralized may not reflect efficiency in the schools. It is therefore preferred that ECCE schools use on the spot control system by the school heads which will be monitored by the inspectorate.

- vii. Opportunities for entrepreneurship in early childhood care and education needs re-engineering which include:
  - a. Establishment of SSCE facilities and centres.
  - b. Consultancy services which involves
    - i. Monitoring and supervision
    - ii. Advisory and research
    - iii. Provision of services
    - iv. Vocation programmes
    - v. Training programmes
  - c. Establishing a non-governmental organization (NGO)
- viii. Child-friendly early childhood care education centres should be equipped to help meet the rights of the child to good health, care, nutrition, psycho-social stimulation, quality learning, safety and protection for optimum development.

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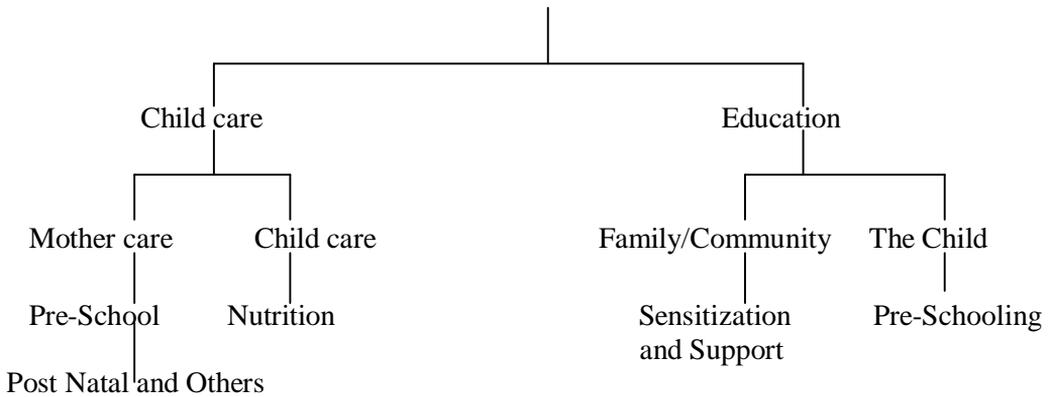
It is child seeking, child-centered, gender sensitive and inclusive. It is protective of the child and community involving. In such a centre, all essential stimulation and learning materials are available and effective learning activities take place. The care givers are friendly, highly motivated and interact effectively with the child and the parents.

- ii. Facilities of ECCE centres are to help meet the basic needs of the child for good health, care and nutrition, security, affection, interaction and stimulation for social, emotional, psychological, physical and cognitive development. The facilities of ECCE centres should include indoor materials (hard and soft) as well as the outdoor equipment.

**Re-engineering Scope of ECCE**

The scope of ECCE is more than the pre-schooling activities. Pre-schooling is only a small part of the enormous life style responsibilities that the society owed the young child.

Figure 1: Show Comprehensive Early Childhood and Education



Source: Adapted from Obanya, 2007: 40

Figure 1 shows that the attention has always been on the education aspect of the programme, practitioners have been neglecting the other aspect of the programme, the care dimensions of the programmes and the family community components of the child early education.

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Table 1 shows the situation of neglect and catered for dimensions of ECCE that needs re-engineering

S/No	Dimensions of ECCE	Neglected	Catered for
1.	Care and education	Care (60%)	Education (40%)
2.	Mother family care, child care	Mother and family (60%)	The child (40%)
3.	Socialization and education	Socialization (60%)	Education (40%)
4.	<b>Overall</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>16%</b>

Source: Adapted from Obanya, 2007: 41

The interpretation of the above table is that, the entire system has tended to cater more for the education component of ECCE as estimated 40%. Worse still, it is pre-schooling that has been receiving most of our attention. By implication, 16% for the coverage area of ECCE has been education hence, neglecting a huge chunk of 84% as diagrammatically shown below:

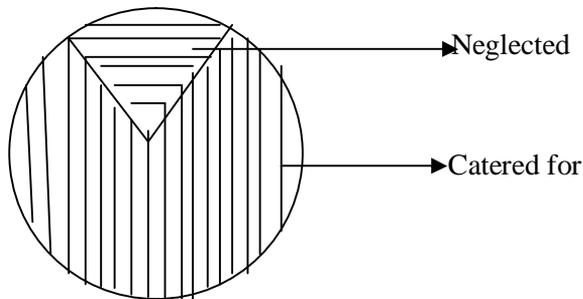


Figure 2: Shows the degree of “Catered for” and “Neglected”

**Conclusion**

Early childhood care and education has been recognized as part of basic education. It is important therefore to start the government owned early childhood care education on a solid foundation. Hence it needs absolute re-engineering in the area of management of teachers of ECCE schools, selection, training of teachers, supervision and control of teachers, performance evaluation and teachers motivation.

**Recommendations**

Usually the essence of human resource management is for effective service delivery. For effective re-engineering government should:

- i. Encourage more people to specialize in early childhood care education.
- ii. Encourage more universities to mount courses in early childhood care education and primary education at the degree level so that more teachers can be trained for this level.
- iii. Encourage more people to study education management in the pre-schools years.
- iv. Insist that every head teachers is a qualified early childhood education manager.

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- v. Develop educational policies that are achievable.
- vi. Establish early childhood care education unit every government public primary schools.

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