

THE EXTENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION ASPECT AS PERCEIVED BY PRE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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Abstract

Pre-primary education is aimed at giving every child a proper educational foundation on which subsequent learning will be built upon. In order to actualize this, the government has mapped out measures in the National Policy on Education to help actualize this dream. Hence this study is aimed at determining the extent to which these measures have been implemented. Two hundred fifty two questionnaires were administered to pre-primary school teachers. The content validity was ascertained by two experts in test and measurement and its reliability was ascertained using Cronbach alpha, a coefficient of 0.77 was obtained. The research questions were analyzed using simple percentages. The hypotheses were tested using the t-test at 5% level of significance. The result of the study revealed that the measures mapped out by the government to actualize the goals of pre-primary education have not been fully implemented. Suggestions were made. One of which is that government should enforce the use of mother tongue as the principal medium of instruction at pre-primary level.

It is the desire of our nation, Nigeria to be among the first 20 Economies of the world. If this dream is to be actualized, investment in human capital resources becomes very crucial. One of the most important ways of investing in human capital is through

education. Education according to Osakwe (2009) is a process of systematic training and instruction designed to transmit knowledge and acquisition of skills potentials and abilities which will enable an individual to contribute efficiently to the growth and development of his/her society and nation. Quality Education most start from early childhood this is because it is a period of remarkable brain development which lays the solid foundation for subsequent learning.

Osakwe (2006) defines learning as a natural process of pursuing meaningful goals, discovery and constructing meaning from information and experience filtered through the learners' unique perceptions, thoughts and feeling. She further commented that the drive for curiosity is inherent in every child and can be developed to yield greater results by giving him/her early education.

Omozeghan (1995) defines pre-primary as education meant for children between the ages of 3 to 6 years. The National Policy on Education (2004) sees early education/pre-primary education as the education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. National Policy on Education is a policy statement with far reaching implications for education. There are many sections in the document dealing with different levels and aspects of education. The researchers shall focus on the implementation of Early Childhood/Pre-Primary Education in all government approved schools.

Statement of Problem

The National Policy on Education listed a number of measures to be taken by government to ensure the achievement of the objectives of pre-primary education. They include:

1. Encouraging community, private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education and establishing pre-primary sections in the existing public schools.
2. Make provision in teacher education for specialization in early childhood/pre-primary education.
3. Ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community.
4. Provide textbooks in Nigeria languages.
5. The method of teaching at this level shall be through play and that the teacher – pupils ratio shall be 1:25.
6. Set and monitor minimum standard for early child care centres in the country.

The pertinent question is; to what extent have government implemented these measures? The assessment of the implementation process is very crucial because it enable us to know if the implementation is progressive or not and what aspect of the programme that needs modification.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to observe the extent to which the measures stipulated in the National Policy on Education have been implemented towards actualization of the objectives of preprimary education in Nigeria, which include:

1. Encouraging community, private effort in the provision of pre-primary education
2. Establishing pre-primary sections in the existing public schools
3. Ensuring that the medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue as the language of the immediate community
4. Ensuring that the teacher - pupil ratio is 1:25

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. To what extent do Government encourage private efforts in provision of pre-primary education?
2. Are pre-primary schools available in all public primary schools?
3. To what extent have mother tongue/language of the immediate community used principally as medium of instruction?
4. To what extent have the school maintained Teacher-Pupil ratio of 1:25?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers' perception in terms of implementation of pre-primary education as stipulated in NPE (2004) by public and private schools in Delta State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers' perception in terms of implementation of pre-primary education as stipulated in NPE (2004) by public and private schools in Edo State.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers' perception in terms of implementation of pre-primary education as stipulated in NPE (2004) in both Delta State and Edo State.

Method

The research design was a survey type aimed at sampling the opinion of teachers on the implementation of the measures as stipulated in the NPE, in both schools in Delta and Edo State. A total of three hundred and forty two teachers were randomly drawn from one hundred and fourteen schools. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. It consisted of two parts namely the demographic data from respondents such as location of school, nature of school (public or private) academic qualification. The second part was a 16 items designed to measure teachers' opinion on implementation of stipulated measures by the government. The content validity was ascertained by two experts in test and measurement. Pilot study was conducted in Onitsha South local government of Anambra State. Its reliability was established using Cronbach alpha, a coefficient of 0.77 was obtained. The Cronbach alpha was used because it was dichotomously scored. The data was analyzed using simple percentages for the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using the t-test at 5% level of significance. The level of acceptance for the research questions is 50% and above.

Results

Table I: Level of Perception of Implementation of Pre-Primary Aspect of NPE by Pre-Primary School Teachers

S/N	Questions Item	Delta		Edo	
		Yes (% Response)	NO (% Response)	Yes (% Response)	NO (% Response)
1	Pre-primary education has been established in the school	138 (80.7)	33 (19.3)	129 (75.4)	42 (24.6)
2	Pre-primary education is accepted in the community	138 (80.7)	33 (19.3)	129 (75.4)	0 (0.0)
3	Parents have fully accepted pre-primary education	138 (80.7)	0 (0.0)	129 (75.4)	0 (0.0)
4	College of education in your state runs pre-primary education	0 (0.0)	171 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	129 (75.4)
5	College of education in your states assigns students of pre-primary to your school for TP in pre-primary classes	0 (0.0)	171 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	129 (75.4)
6	Mother tongue/language of immediate community is used as principally medium of instruction	30 (17.5)	108 (63.2)	15 (8.8)	114 (66.7)
7	Mother tongue/language of immediate community enhance understanding	81 (47.4)	0 (0.0)	60 (35.1)	57 (33.3)
8	English language is principally medium of instruction	108 (63.2)	87 (50.9)	114 (66.7)	0 (0.0)
9	Parents are happy with use of mother tongue or language of immediate community as medium of instruction	30 (17.5)	0 (0.0)	60 (35.1)	57 (33.3)
10	The school make use of text books written in mother tongue	0 (0.0)	81 (47.4)	0 (0.0)	129 (75.4)
11	The text books written in mother tongue are adequate in content and quality	0 (0.0)	81 (47.4)	0 (0.0)	129 (75.4)
12	The school make use of play method in teaching	138 (80.7)	57 (33.3)	129 (75.4)	0 (0.0)
13	Physical environment is suitable for the play method of teaching	27 (15.8)	108 (63.2)	33 (19.3)	97 (56.7)
14	The school adhere to teacher-pupil ratio of 1:25	87 (50.9)	42 (24.6)	103 (60.2)	27 (15.8)
15	The classroom size is enough to accommodate pupils	9 (5.3)	72 (42.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
16	Provision is made for smooth running of the programme in terms of funding	57 (33.3)	138 (80.7)	45 (26.3)	73 (42.7)
17	Provision is made for smooth running of the programme in terms of supervision	83 (48.5)	28 (16.4)	78 (45.6)	40 (23.4)
18	Provision is made for smooth running of the programme in terms of supply of qualified teachers	0 (0.0)	108 (63.2)	0 (0.0)	124 (72.5)

The results of the analysis from table I reveal that most colleges of education are not running programmes in childhood/pre-primary education. The mother tongue/language of immediate community is not used as principal medium of instruction. Even parents are not happy with the use of mother tongue especially in urban private and public schools in both Edo and Delta State. The table also reveal that there was no textbook written in mother tongue, even the physical environment is not suitable for the play method of teaching. The table also revealed that no provision is made in terms of funding and supply of specialist teachers in pre-primary education.

Testing the Hypotheses

Table II: t-test Comparison of the Mean Rating of Public and Private Teachers’ Perception of the Implementation of Pre-Primary Education in Delta State

School type	No	Mean	Standard deviation	Degree of freedom	t- cal	t-crit
Public	114	36.17	34.71	169	2.552	±1.974
Private	57	22.94	25.52			

Since the t-calculated is 2.552 which is greater than t-critical and falls outside the acceptance region, we reject the null hypothesis and thus there is a significant difference between the mean responses of teachers in private and public schools in Delta State in terms of their perceptions of the implementation of the pre-primary/childhood education as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (2004).

Table III: T-test Comparison of the Mean Rating of Public and Private Teachers’ Perception of the Implementation of Pre-Primary Education in Edo State

School type	No	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degree of Freedom	t- cal	t-crit
Public	114	33.4	32.5	169	2.019	±1.974
Private	57	23.5	25			

From table III, the t-test statistics is 2.019. This value is greater than the critical value and thus falls within the rejection region. The hypothesis is thus rejected indicating that there is significant difference in the mean rating of public and private teachers’ perception of the implementation of the pre-primary education in Edo State.

Table IV: T-test Comparison of the Mean Response of Teachers’ Perception of the Implementation of Pre-Primary Education in Delta State and their Counterpart in Edo State

State	No	Mean	Standard deviation	Degree of freedom	t- cal	t-crit
Delta	171	59.11	53.66	340	0.387	±1.967
Edo	171	56.9	51.9			

From table IV, the t-test statistic is 0.387 while the t-critical is ± 1.967 , the t-test statistic is less than t-critical hence we do not reject the null hypothesis which implies that there is no significant difference in mean responses of teachers in both Delta and Edo State in terms of their perception of the implementation of measures for childhood/pre-primary education as stipulated in National Policy on Education (2004)

Discussion

Findings from the study shows that the childhood/pre-primary education aspect of National Policy on Education has not been fully implemented as stipulated in NPE (2004). The policy document stated that the principal medium of instruction is mother tongue/language of immediate community. About 90% of the public and private schools visited reveal that the principal medium of instruction is English language. According to Ejieh (2006) no government (state or federal) in the country has taken action to ensure that mother tongue or language of immediate community is used for instruction in pre-primary schools as stipulated in NPE 2004. He further said that enforcing the use of mother tongue in schools will even run counter to the interest of parents of the children in such schools, as most of who are anxious for their children to acquire the official language (which is English) as early as possible. This is an indication that values and priorities of parents are at conflict with the provision of the National Policy on Education.

The study also reveal that the play method of teaching as stipulated in the National Policy on Education in pre-primary education is not effectively used, this could be as a result of lack of specialist teacher in the school. Moreover, of all the public school visited there was no single educational toy to play with. Most often the children are forced to sleep on the ground that they were disturbing.

The Teacher-Pupil ratio of 1:25 was maintained in all the public schools except for few private schools (about 23%) in which the ratio rose to 1:40. Another important observation made was that the classes were lumped together in public schools which is not conducive for learning. More so, there were no existing text books in mother tongues. Even when the textbooks (in English language) are available the ratio is 3:13 which is grossly not enough and may end up causing problems in the class.

The issues of supervision as stipulated in the NPE (2004), has not been fully implemented. The study reveal that officials from the ministry of education end up in the headmistress/Headmasters' office, and what interest them most is the lesson note, lesson plan and presence of teachers in the classes rather than inspecting the adequacy of physical, human and other resources available in the implementing the pre-primary education.

Conclusion

Available evidence suggests that early childhood education has a positive influence on educational development of children in later life. Barnett (2006), Rolnick and Grunewald (2003) are of the view that investment in early childhood education yields a high returns. Ivowi (2005) noted that the content of our curriculum is satisfactory while Offorma (2006) laments that the problem lies with the implementation process. Based on these the government should ensure that facilities needed for proper implementation are made available to children in schools and are properly supervised at regular intervals to enhance the quality of the educational programme.

Suggestions

If the objectives of pre-primary/childhood education are to be actualized, the government at various levels must ensure:

1. that relevant facilities and human resources are made available in both rural, urban public and private schools
2. the use of mother tongue/language of immediate community as the principal medium of instruction and ensure that is fully implemented irrespective of the school type
3. textbooks written in mother tongue should be made available to every pupil of pre-primary school level and such textbooks should be colourful to attract their attention.

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