

# ACASE FOR GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NURSERY EDUCATION CURRICULUM

*George Kene*

## INTRODUCTION

The present economic complexities on modern living have made the families, especially the parents to ignore the basic background educational services they are supposed to perform. As a result of this, planned early childhood or pre-primary education has become an essential pan of child rearing experiences provided for the children of parents who can afford the cost. Early childhood experience plays a crucial role in the development of young children's later school success, social responsibility and work productivity. Research studies in some countries have found that young children living in **poverty** who participate in high-quality pre-school programmes are significantly more likely to graduate from high school and get a job and significantly less likely to commit crimes.

Although governments and parents today generally recognize the value of pre-school services, including kindergarten programmes, unfortunately, to date, only a limited number of societies, state and local **government** have invested heavily in high-quality early childhood programmes. World wide, parents are beginning to ask government to help provide early childhood services. The questions are; To what extent has this call been answered by our levels of government? Why should government be involved in the planning, controlling and implementation of Nursery, education curriculum?

Nursery or pre-primary education is the education given to children aged 3 to 5 plus prior to their entering the primary school,

Osanyin (1984:79) sees it as a school serving the needs of younger children by offering them experiences **adopted** to what is known about growth needs at these age levels. Through the provision of interest varied and stimulating play **materials**, pre-school setting assists in the unfolding of the child's mental powers and the promotion of special interests. It offers opportunities for children to meet and co-operate with other children. For this paper. Nursery education curriculum of any school consists of all the situations that the school may select and consistently organise for the purpose of bringing about changes in the behaviour of children as a means of developing the personality of the individuals. It includes both curricular and extra-curricular activities, which children have under the administration of the school, **Onwuka (1981:5)**.

## THE PURPOSE AND RELEVANT OF NURSERY EDUCATION

It is a known fact that the development of the young child is a continuous process that is affected by the events the child experiences. Nursery education is a good tool for responding to certain basic aspects of the child's fullest development. One of these aspects relates to the child's health. A good Nursery school offers food services to the child during the time he attends school. With the help of specialists the nursery school protects the young as far as possible from physical dangers and from contagious disease.

The pre-school education caters for language development in the young child. It provides certain conditions for the child if he is to develop the ability to use language. The basic purpose of the school is to create a climate in which the child can use the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community for comparing, describing, analysing and explaining. The child's intelligence can be influenced by the quality of his environment and experiences available to him. The natural exchange between the child and the inanimate and social environment forms the base for the more abstract thinking, spirit of enquiry and creativity that occurs at later ages.

Osanyin (1984:80) stated that the broad purpose of pre-school education is to help the young child to take his first firm steps in the journey through his school life with pleasure and confidence and so prepare for the world Webb (1974:113) has affirmed that children who have benefited from pre-school educational opportunities pass on to the next and they are ready and eager to accept the challenge of learning skills of reading, writing and number **QUALITY OF NURSERY EDUCATION IN THE STATE**

In the light of what prevails in this state presently, pre-primary provisions fall under a wide variety of agencies, hence different self-styled curricular or socialization settings provided by the private proprietors. The present system whereby Nursery schools are allowed to be established by individuals with varying degrees of curricular, sanitation, equipment and teaching standards is highly unsatisfactory and calls for government intervention and involvement.

In this study, it is found that some nursery schools are situated in dwelling houses, garages and even town halls as the best ones are located within the church premises. Evidently the planners have not taken into consideration the criteria for curriculum implementation, site selection accessibility, freedom from health and noise hazards as well as physical safety. The buildings are not primarily meant for such institutions. As a result of the non availability of space, the provision for outdoor activities is grossly inadequate. The classrooms are usually overcrowded the teachers are not trained and since **it is better** not to have nursery school at all than to have one that is being manned by an ignorant and incompetent teacher hence the curriculum is **messed** up at its implementation level.

**AISAMBRA STATE:**

| Schools      | Total           | F.S.L.C.      | Sen. Get.      | Grade 2       | Dip in       | N.C.E. Total |            |
|--------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
|              | No. of Teachers |               | orS.S.C.       | Cert.         | Educ.        | Percent-age  |            |
| A            | 9               | 2:33.3%       | 3:50%          | 1:16.7%       | 3:33.3%      | 100          |            |
| B            | 9               | 4:44.5%       |                | 1:11.1%       | 1:11.1%      | 100          |            |
| C            | 4               | 2:50%         | 2:20%          |               |              | 100          |            |
| D            | 8               | 2:25%         |                | 2:25%         | 1:12.5%      | 100          |            |
| E            | 3               | 2:66%         | 1:33.3%        |               |              | 100          |            |
| F            | 4               | 1:25%         | 3:75%          |               |              | 100          |            |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>34</b>       | <b>9:26.5</b> | <b>16:47.1</b> | <b>6:17.6</b> | <b>1:2.9</b> | <b>2:5.9</b> | <b>100</b> |

From this table it is seen that the highest proportion of the teachers are school certificate holders. School A has 50%, B = 44.5%, C = 50%, d = 37.5%, E = 33.3%. F = 75%. This proportion is followed by holders of First School Leaving Certificates. It is even more appealing to find N.C.E. holders as teachers in two of the schools visited. The Grade 11 teachers and N.C.E. in the schools are those who are looking for job and who as result of religious inclination and nearness to their homes decided to teach in the nursery school. Most of the School Certificate holders were women who have their children in the school and can be regarded as professional house wife. An interview with most of the teachers revealed that non of them like teaching in Nursery school. Since the experience a child has in a Nursery depends on the quality of the provisions in the school, this paper further highlights the fact that the schools are unable to employ qualified teachers and provide adequate materials for effective implementation of Nursery Curriculum hence the call for government direct involvement to provide model Public Nursery School in our state to ensure common standard for preparing the child for the public primary level of Education.

**GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NURSERY CURRICULUM**

Education has been recognised as a very powerful instrument which can be used by any nation to achieve a more rapid economic, social, political and cultural development. The question here is whether it is necessary for government to be involved in the planning of nursery education curriculum? Or whether such should be left to the forces of demand and supply like some other goods and services. However, the acknowledged role of education at any level in the overall development of the economy has caused it to be referred to as 'merit' good rather than 'private' good. As a merit good the social benefits do not accrue to the private individuals or firms that undertake to provide education but to the society as a whole or in part. Under normal circumstances, the private proprietors would attempt to minimize cost and maximize returns on his investment. He will only operate up to the optimal point thereby giving rise to under-utilization of available resources. He will be watching the cost of 'production' (implementation of nursery curriculum) and be setting the price accordingly. He may even cut down the supply to increase the price. This make prospective parents unable to afford the price. Therefore, to take proper care of the social benefits aspect and to ensure full utilization of resources, the state has to plan Nursery Education. Government involvement in Nursery education, planning and implementation enables more education to be supplied irrespective of cost of production or price paid by consumers. The objective of equalization of educational opportunities is best pursued by the government because of the nature of education as merit good

Government intervention in the planning and implementation of Nursery curriculum enables standards to be set through formulation of Universal Scheme of work or syllabus. It also enables control through the establishment of a central supervising body. This overcomes the claims by schools of assumed standards for their school outputs. If implementation of Nursery curriculum is left in the hands of private individuals, it would have been difficult to determine the standard of each school.

The different views of the purpose of early childhood services (education versus care) affect much of the way in which programmes are organised and supervised, since funding staffing, curriculum, ancillary services and links to other systems can vary dramatically. The presence of multiple agencies as sponsors for early childhood services in the state has led to problems regarding standardization and quality control.

Government involvement can provide the boost in cognitive and social skills that the next generation needs to guarantee its success in later life. With growing recognition of the value of Nursery services, middle class families will make sacrifices to pay for these services should government not provide them free or at low cost. Other families even though they may value such services highly, will not be so fortunate.

**RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION**

In recognition of the economic situation in the country' and the awareness for Nursery education, state and local governments should take over the control and management of Nursery education so that efforts should be directed towards eliminating the inequalities and deficiencies in the system as they exist today. This is in line with the Federal Government Policy Statement that any existing contradictions, ambiguities and lack of uniformity in educational practice in the different parts of the Federation should be removed to ensure an even and orderly development of the whole country.

One of the rational objectives for government involvement is to ensure that our teacher training colleges mount special programmes for producing teachers for this level of education.

There is also an urgent need for the government to regulate and control the operation of existing nursery school curriculum. In other countries where voluntary bodies establish nursery education, there is adequate supervision and where possible the Federal government should take over the cost of nursery education; this is a step in the right direction.

If encouragement should be given to private proprietors to operate nursery schools, government should regulate curriculum implementation, the training of the teachers to be used and the equipment to be provided, otherwise present exploitation of parents and unqualified children will continue to be prepared for primary school level hence **poor** standard of education will be unabated.

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