

**INSTRUCTIONAL FACILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY  
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN EDO CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT,  
EDO STATE**

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**Abstract**

This study was carried out to find out the availability and adequacy of instructional facilities for effective implementation of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Esan Central Senatorial District of Edo State. Fifty four (54) public and Twenty Seven (27) private pre-primary schools were purposely sampled to participate in the study. The study was restricted to only schools that have ECE sections. Only teachers who taught in the ECE section were randomly selected as participants. Data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. Results showed that facilities were available but did not meet the required National Minimum Standard. The study therefore recommended proper funding of ECE by government and private owners so that ECE centres can be properly equipped.

A solid foundation is the key to the success of any enterprise. A good architectural building starts from its solid foundation and any nation that is determined to achieve greater education heights must pay adequate attention to its early childhood education. Early Childhood Education (ECE) has been variously defined by education under the names as nursery School, pre-school and pre-primary school education. Maduewesi (1999) sees early childhood education as:

...a semi – formal for education arrangement usually outside the home, whereby young children from

about the age of three are exposed, through play like activities in a group setting, to mental, social and physical learning suited to their developmental stage, until the mandatory age of government approved formal schooling.

The National Policy on Education (2004) in Section 2 paragraph 9 refers to it as pre-primary education. It defines it as education given in an educational institution to children aged 3 to 5+ prior to the entering the primary school. The experiences which children gains during this period of development could affect the child positively or

negatively. This fact lends credence to the importance of exposing children to formal early childhood education. Children whose early life development receives support are more productive in later life. They repeat classes less often in primary school, they complete primary school more often, they require less remedial programmes and they are less susceptible to truancy and criminal tendencies (UNICEF, 1998; Mwaura, 2010). Therefore, investing in early childhood education appears to be a rational way to tackle the massive failure rates that we observe in our children's performance in West African School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and others.

According to Heckman and Masterov (2007), skill begets skill, learning begets learning. Early disadvantage, if left untreated, leads to academic and social difficulties in later years. Advantages accumulate; so do disadvantages (Heckman and Masterov, 2007). Fully 90 percent of a child's postnatal brain growth occurs between birth and age three (Shonkoff and Philips, 2000). Neuroscientists as well as social scientists now know that fundamental skills begin to develop in infancy and are well established by the time children enter kindergarten. This include cognitive skills like development of language, but also "character" skills such as attentiveness, motivation, self-control and sociability (Heckman and Masterov, 2007).

Early intervention is crucial. The skills developed in early childhood form the basis for future learning and labour market success, making early childhood a critical time of human capital accumulation (Naudeau, kataoka, Valerio, Neuman & Elderleslle, 2011). Delays in cognitive and overall development well before a child enters primary school often have long-lasting consequences for children, their families and society at large, and they are more costly to remedy. Conversely, evidence from many countries shows that quality early childhood education can narrow the "opportunity divide" and reduce poverty, ethnic and linguistic disadvantages (UNESCO, 2010a).

Children who do not receive guidance in monitoring or regulating their behaviour during early years have greater chance of being anxious, impulsive and behaviourally disorganized when they reach school (UNICEF, 2001). This implies that early childhood education cannot only benefit all children, but also help compensate for young children's negative experiences as a result of conflict, lack of stimulation or nutritional inputs. More than 200 million children in developing countries under the age of 5 are exposed to these multiple risks that negatively affect their development (Naudeau et al, 2011).

Investing in young children is both the right and smart thing to do. Advocates argue, with increasing

evidence, that early childhood education should be a major priority on a country's development agenda, a major contributor to breaking cycles as the Education For All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set out (Naudeau et al 2011; UNESCO, 2011a). Positive impacts of early child education on readiness for further education is well documented, leading to a growing view that it should be seen as a public good (OECD, 2006). The impact of early childhood education is stronger for children from poor families in terms of lower drop-out and repetition rates than from those more advantaged children (NESCO, 2007).

Again, early life intervention enables the child to bond not only with his/her parents but provides an important point of entry into the child's community. This of course prepares the ground for social mobilization, civil engagement, participation, patriotism and the like (Oguntuashe, 2010). Results of recent research show that providing children with varied perceptual and motor experiences at an early age affects positively the structure and organization of neural pathways in the brain during the formative period favourably affecting learning of all kinds later in life.

According to Oguntuashe (2010), early childhood education can be used as vehicles for fostering integration and harmony among ethnically and religious diverse groups as children

quickly learn to accommodate one another without prejudice to these factors as well as others like physical challenges. Malaysia has exploited this medium to great advantage (Oguntuashe, 2010).

Despite the overwhelming case for building strong early foundations, early child education remains a peripheral concern within education systems in Nigeria, characterized by insufficient resources and fragmented planning and implementation, provision of infrastructure, equipment, facilities and play materials for such centres. Recently, early childhood education level has been formalized as part of the system of education in Nigeria and many public primary schools have established it. (Adeyemi & Atunma, 2006; Okoro, 2006). Yet the major players in the provision of pre-primary schools are the private individuals. Anything, it seems goes at this level (Obanya, 2004; & Okoro, 2006). Some of the pre-primary schools, despite that they are government approved; operate in environments that are never child friendly. Some operate in abandoned government quarters, uncompleted story building, garages and in extreme cases under grass thatched huts etc. sometimes with furniture that are not child-sized (Okoro, 2006).

The preschool children need a lot of objects to play with whether they are playing as individuals or groups. For indoor activities they need wooden or

plastic objects of different sizes, colours and shapes, body dolls, musical instruments, toy, utensils, water, sand, plasticines, jar clay, discs, toy cars, lorries etc. the list is endless, depending on the ingenuity of the preschool teachers. These materials and equipment are needed in pre-school for children's play, and play is the business of early childhood (Papalia, Olds & Feldman, 2002). Play in early childhood is an essential seed which bears fruit over the entire life. Child's play is more than just fun and games. It is closely linked to children's intellectual, social, emotional and physical development (Okobah, 2009).

Play provides a natural and a defining attribute of infancy and childhood. It is universal and it communicates powerfully whether it is intended to do so or not. Thus, play is scaffolding for drawing out and enlarging the child's learning, cognition, language, emotion and personality (Oguntuashe, 2010).

In addition, play can become a veritable instrument/technique for enculturation of the child (Oguntuashe, 1996). Children with special needs can overcome their challenges by situating training programmes aimed at influencing attention processes, information scanning strategies and control over impulsive behaviours in the context of play and playing things (Oguntuashe, 1985) as play constitutes the natural context for the discovery and

mastery of skills in children. These benefits of play in child's learning in pre-school can only be achieved if the instructional facilities and equipment are available in ECE centres in Nigeria.

The problem of this study is that it is not certain if there are facilities in early child care centres which will enhance effective implementation of the National policy on Early Childhood Education (ECE). The focus of this study was to examine the available facilities and what may constitute a challenge to effective implementation of the early childhood education in Edo Central Senatorial Districts, Edo State.

The study only covered play ground and classroom facilities in early child care centres.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. Fifty four (54) public primary schools which had early childhood sections were purposely selected from all public schools and twenty seven (27) private schools that had the pre-primary section. A teacher, each was randomly selected from the caregivers in the respective schools. Teachers were the actual implementers of the early childhood programme hence their selection as subjects of the study are justified.

The instrument used for the study was a check list of selected instructional materials for physical,

cognitive and affective development of the pre-school child. The instrument was face validated by two experts in early childhood education in Faculty of Education at Ambrose Alli University, Edo State, located in the senatorial district where the study was conducted. The selected materials was based on the Modularized Training Guide to facilitate

the training of Lead Trainers for Early Child Care and Education programme in Colleges of Education; and the National Millennium Standard for ECE centres in Nigeria. The respondents were required to tick if the facilities were available or not. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the data collected.

### Results

The results are presented under availability of resources and adequacy of play space.

**Table 1: Availability of Resources in Public and Private Pre-Primary Schools**

| Items             | Public school<br>N = 54 |         | Private school<br>N = 27 |        |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---------|--------------------------|--------|
|                   | Available               | %       | Available                | %      |
| Play ground       | 54                      | 100.00% | 19                       | 70.4   |
| Slides            | 18                      | 33.3    | 22                       | 81.5   |
| See-saw           | 0                       | 0.0     | 21                       | 77.8   |
| Merry-go-round    | 0                       | 0.0     | 18                       | 66.7   |
| Sand play area    | 42                      | 77.7    | 14                       | 51.9   |
| Water play area   | 0                       | 0.0     | 6                        | 22.2   |
| Swing             | 51                      | 94.4    | 24                       | 88.9   |
| Building blocks   | 8                       | 14.8    | 27                       | 100.00 |
| Rocking horse     | 0                       | 0.0     | 0                        | 0.0    |
| Mattresses        | 15                      | 27.7    | 25                       | 92.6   |
| Mats              | 54                      | 100.00  | 24                       | 81.5   |
| Dolls             | 50                      | 92.3    | 22                       | 91.5   |
| Radio             | 12                      | 22.2    | 20                       | 74.1   |
| TV                | 4                       | 7.4     | 21                       | 77.8   |
| Mirror            | 5                       | 9.3     | 15                       | 55.6   |
| Films             | 0                       | 0.0     | 8                        | 28.6   |
| Songs/Rhymes Book | 40                      | 74.1    | 23                       | 85.2   |
| Home Corner       | 37                      | 68.5    | 25                       | 92.6   |
| Toys              | 54                      | 100.00  | 27                       | 100.00 |
| Toy computers     | 5                       | 9.3     | 25                       | 92.6   |

Based on the table, results of the analysis of responses in both public and private pre-primary schools showed that there were playground facilities in for Early Childhood Education implementation. All 54 (100%) respondents from public school stated that playground was available in contrast to only 19 (70.4%) in the private school that stated playground was available. There were no facility as the rocking horse in both public and private schools sampled. In the public pre-schools the following materials were not available: sea-saw, merry-go-round, water play area, and films. In the public pre-school materials like sand play area (77.7%), swing (94.4%), dolls (92.3%),

songs/Rhymes Books (74.1%), and Toys (100.00%) were available). But other materials in public-pre-schools that were available were scanty. In private pre-schools, quite a number of these materials were available. But materials like water play area (22.2%), films (29.6%) were scanty. However, the results from the table revealed that none of the schools whether public or private had 100% availability of the basic facilities recommended in the National Minimum Standard. The implication of this finding is that availability of physical facilities would constitute a huge barrier in implementation of early childhood education.

**Table 2: Adequacy of Play Space and Classroom Facilities**

|  | Public school<br>N = 54 |      | Private school<br>N = 27 |      |
|--|-------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|
| Enough play space for 20 – 25 children and 2 adults  | 51                      | 94.1 | 15                       | 55.6 |
| Play space secured   | 20                      | 37.1 | 14                       | 51.9 |
| Play space water logged  | 43                      | 79.6 | 21                       | 77.8 |
| Play space is free from dangerous objects  | 37                      | 68.5 | 24                       | 88.9 |
| Classroom Facilities:<br>Classroom facilities have solid structures that will not collapse | 52                      | 96.3 | 20                       | 74.1 |
| Classrooms are well-illuminated so that children and see clearly in every part of the room | 30                      | 55.6 | 19                       | 70.4 |
|  |                         |      |                          | 441  |

|  |    |      |    |      |
|--|----|------|----|------|
| Classrooms are well-ventilated; they have at least 2 doors and windows | 32 | 59.3 | 23 | 85.2 |
| Sitting arrangement allows for free movement                           | 38 | 70.4 | 22 | 81.5 |

Based on the table 94.1% respondents in public schools stated that there was enough play space to accommodate 20 -25 children and two adult at a time; whereas 55.6% of private schools respondents said they had adequate space. On security, 37.1% of respondent in public schools said the play space is secured; and 51.9% of respondents in private schools also said the play space is secured. Again, 79.6% respondents in public schools said the play space is not water logged, similarly 77.8% of respondents in private pre-schools said the play space is not water logged.

On dangerous objects, 68.5% of respondents in public schools said the play space is danger free, while 88.9% of respondents in private schools also said so. Furthermore, 96.3% of respondents in public schools said that classroom facilities have solid structures that will not collapse, and 74.1% of respondents from private school stated so. On illumination, 55.6% of respondents in public schools said the classrooms are well illuminated and 70.4% of respondents in private schools hold the same position. Moreover,

59.3% and 85.2% of both public and private schools said the classrooms were well ventilated; and 70.4% and 81.5% of both school said sitting arrangement allows for free movement.

**Discussion**

Availability of resources and adequacy of play space and classroom facilities are displayed in table 1 and 2 respectively. The information in table 1 indicates that both public and private schools had 100% availability of materials as recommended in the National Minimum Standard. This signifies an enormous challenge facing the implementation of early childhood education in Edo Central Senatorial District in Edo State. The finding shows that materials which enhances play the business of early childhood (Papalia, Olds & Feldman, 2002) are inadequate. Such inadequacy may cause problem to children’s intellectual, social, emotional and physical development. If this kind of situation is not ameliorated, the development of language, character, attentiveness, motivation, self-control and sociability (Heckman & Masterov, 2007) may not be possible.

In table 2, we discovered that 55.6% of respondents said that they have adequate space for 20 – 25 children are 2 adults. This is below standard. The experience is that some private schools are operated in very narrow spaces and covered quarters which were not originally meant for schools. This finding here is in support of what of Okoro (2006) said about some pre-schools in Nigeria.

The study also revealed that both public and private pre-schools do not enjoy water tight security. This is because 37.1% and 51.9% of respondents of both public and private schools respectively said. Most of the public schools operate in open space with a lot of thorough fare because of lack perimeter fence. This may likely expose play space to environmental abuse including dumping of wastes, nails, broken bottles which constitutes health hazards to children and adults. Literature evidence shows that play constitutes the natural context for discovery and mastery of skills in children (Oguntuashe, 1985) and enculturation (Oguntuashe, 1996b) and physical development (Okobah, 2009). Consequently, play space must be hazard free and highly secured and protected from external incursion.

### **Conclusion**

A house that is on a faulty foundation cannot stand the test of time and space. So if the pre-primary education is recognized as the foundation stone of our entire

educational enterprise, then it should be reinforced, adequately equipped and funded. The study has shown that facilities for implementation of early childhood education are inadequate. They do not meet the National Millennium Standard of the Nigerian Policy on Early Childhood Education. The study therefore concludes that both government and private school owners should properly fund early childhood education. As the twig is bent the tree will grow (Lazar & Darlington, 1982).

### **Recommendations**

In the light of the findings of the study the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should must change its attitude of supervisory to proper funding of pre-primary schools as it is done in some western countries – Britain, Finland and Belgium (Ojala, 1989)
2. Considering the important role which equipment and teaching and learning materials play in the life of young children (Oduolowu, 2003), it is necessary that these materials are available in good quantity and quality for proper implementation of early childhood education.
3. Parents, NGOs and other major stakeholders should assist in providing adequate and essential educational materials for learning.



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