

QUALITATIVE MANPOWER NEED IN THE EFFICIENT REDELIVERY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

BY

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Abstract

This study examined the qualitative manpower needs in the efficient redelivery and sustainability of early childhood care and education in Lagos State. The study adopts descriptive survey research design. The targeted population comprises of all preschool teachers in Lagos State. The sample of the study was 186 respondents with the use of multistage sampling technique to select the respondents for the study. One instrument was used for the study titled "Qualitative Manpower needs and Sustainability of Early Childhood Care Education Questionnaire" (QMnSECCEQ). Face and content validity was done by an expert in the department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Lagos State University of Education. The instrument was subjected to reliability test by the use of Cronbach Alpha and the coefficient values was $r = 0.79$. Findings shows that teacher's teaching/learning materials of the preschoolers in public schools are differs significantly from the teachers in private schools. Also, teacher's quality of teaching and learning is differs significantly from teacher's gender qualifications. The study recommended that, Graduate teachers without teaching qualification should endeavour to proceed on PGDE or Diploma Programme in ECCE to enhance their teaching method in Early Childhood Education and Teachers with professional qualification(s) at higher level should teach Early Childhood Education in the pre/primary schools.

Keywords: Manpower, Early Childhood Education, Teachers' Knowledge, Sustainability

Introduction

Early childhood learning and education (ECE) is an important piece of the composite of early childhood development services supporting a social ecology of 'nurturing care', which also includes adequate health, nutrition, early stimulation through responsive caregiving and protection, safety, and security. ECE services, including childcare, preschool, preprimary programs, and the early grades of primary school, generally address the age range of 2 to 8 in a child's life (although increasingly include care for younger children). They support teachers and caregivers to create safe, stimulating, and nurturing learning environments while also supporting parents to participate in their young children's growth, development, and learning. The foundations for lifelong learning are laid during each child's early years. It is clearly evident that children are developing more rapidly during the period from birth to age five than at any other time in their lives, shaped in large part by their experiences at home and around them. These early years of development are critical for providing a firm foundation in cognitive, language, and motor development, as well as social, emotional, regulatory, and moral development (NRC and IOM, 2000). In the same Vain Bush (2011) stated that the years between birth and ages five are the foundation upon which successful (or otherwise) lives are built. It alerts us to consider the quality of education in the early childhood years seriously.

At the global level, this fact is recognized and every nation is working assiduously towards providing quality early years education and care for the very youngest children. The development of indigenous manpower to serve as the propelling force for national growth and development is no doubt a key to Nigeria's socio economic and political development. Manpower utilization could be defined as "the existence of skilled and unskilled humans that need training or re-training to perform specific task in society". Thus, manpower development could be seen as organizational specific. This is because it is largely a function of organizational manpower needed or job specification.

That is, it could be viewed as the adaptation of the human resources available in the country to the needs, objectives and orientation of a given organization (Ahiauzu, 2011).

The success and quality of any educational system depends on the quantity and quality of manpower's input into the system. And the quality of education of a nation could be determined by the quality of her teachers. Since there is no educational system that can improve better than its teachers, the commitment of teachers to the system is a vital issue (Abe & Adu, 2013). Olaleye (2011) described a teacher as one who is trained in the art and science of importing knowledge and training to the youths that will make them become self-reliant and useful to any society in which they may find themselves. He is also a distributor of knowledge to his society. Adeyemi (2010) define teachers as a representative of the community and an academic specialist, a methodologist and character trainer who administer and run the school in order to achieve the aims of the bigger society.

Nigeria, in accordance with the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in Thailand in 1990, signed up in order to provide quality and comprehensive early childhood education and care for all preschoolers. Nigeria had early childhood centres prior to this but it was left to the private sector, which either provided sub-standard services or charged very high fees, thereby making this educational provision inaccessible to every child. This constitutes a step in the right direction in the provision of good early childhood education (Ahiauzu, 2011). According to Njaji (2013), a qualified teacher can be defined as one who holds a teaching certificate and/or licensed by the state, owns at least a bachelor's degree from a four-year institution and well qualified in his/her area of specialization. Moreover, Lydiah (2009) described a qualified teacher as one who possesses knowledge of: the subject matter, human growth and development, ethical values, instructional planning and strategies, assessment, learning environment, communication and advocacy, collaboration and partnership, continuous professional development, code of conduct and skillful use of information communication technologies. The issue of professionalism in teaching has been on course for quite some decades ago. Scholars argued the necessity of skilled teachers for effective learning. Fajonyomi (2007) emphasized that the success or failure of any educational programme rests majorly on the adequate availability of qualified (professional), competent and dedicated teachers. Seweje and Jegede (2005) noted that the ability of a teacher to teach is not derived only from one's academic background but it is based upon outstanding pedagogical skill acquired. This view is supported by Nkwodimah's (2003) submission that the teacher's quality will inevitably be seen in the citizens tomorrow. Ngada (2008), while remarking on teachers' qualities, observed that over 80% of respondents in a survey research were of the view that teachers are carriers of weaknesses. These weaknesses include, among others, inadequate exposure to teaching practice, poor classroom management and control, shallow subject-matter and lack of professionalism.

From Ajayi's (2009) point of view, the professional qualities of a teacher have to do with the following: mastery of the subject matter; sense of organisation; ability to clarify ideas; ability to motivate students; good imagination; ability to involve the students in meaningful activities throughout the period of teaching; management of the details of learning; and frequent monitoring of pupils' progress through tests, formal and informal, written and oral quizzes. The availability of professional teachers in our schools is low (Ngada, 2008). The reasons may not be farfetched. Teaching is seen as a dumping ground for unemployed graduates, irrespective of their area of specialization. This group of able bodied young men and women thus handle the job as a bye-pass venture to their desired ends. Consequently, their input on the job would be very low since it lacks the dedication demanded by the job. The few ones that seem to show little dedication neither lack the technical knowhow of teaching since they are nor trained on the job. The resultant effect on the students' performance is catastrophic. The major evil done by this is half-baked teachers and shallow-knowledge students who often perform poorly in their examinations. This eventually culminates to a decline in the national technological growth (Ogbonnaya, 2008).

A nation's economy is reflected on her standard of living, knowledge, longevity, food sufficiency, housing, good health care delivery system, etc. Eziefula and Umezuruike (2014), believe that "any nation that does not have the above for her citizen has economic problem". In his own view, Akoma (2011) opines that, "economic problem is the undesirable gap between the desired economic condition and the actual situation". He further explains that "Nigeria has economic problem because the nation's mode of production, power, consumption, import substitution, are in

disorder”. To transform the economy, “the government has to address the fundamentals by deciding which sectors should grow in which places and aligning infrastructure, innovation, human capacity building and other investments to make it happen” (Ezefula&Umezurike 2014). Azikwe (2008) believes, “it implies a change in a forward direction, a modification in the positive sense, and a change of an improvement”. A lot of variables may inhibit or hinder effective dissemination of knowledge to the understanding of the content by the pupils; such variables may be lack of qualified teachers, experience, teaching methodology, inadequate use of instructional materials among others. These weaknesses include, among others, inadequate exposure to teaching practice, poor classroom management and control, shallow subject-matter and lack of professionalism. Furthermore, because of the constraints imposed by limited financial assistance of the Nigerian government, academic downward pressure from the primary education systems and the prevailing parental beliefs about the effects of academic nursery on children's learning outcome, many private service providers have opted to hire minimally trained teachers and thus implement developmentally inappropriate practices. It is against the above background that this study seeks to determine the qualitative manpower need in the efficient delivery and sustainability of early childhood care and education (Azikwe, 2008).

Development is therefore, seen as, a process of change for the better. Sustainable development in another view implies constant and steady economic growth as a result of acquisition of knowledge and skills used for solving national problems that add value to lives and property. Simply put, it means “sustained social, economic, political, scientific and technological growth of a nation and its members (Ogbonnaya, 2008). Nwazor (2012) made an important point when he observed that the “ability of a country to follow sustainable development paths is determined to a large extent by the capacity as well as ecological and geographical condition”. According to him, “the fundamental goal of capacity building is to enhance the ability to evaluate and address the crucial question related to policy choices and modes of implementation among development options, based on the understanding of environmental potentials and limits of needs as perceived by the people of the country in question”. Interestingly, Ajayi (2006), captured the situations in the following words: The 21 century workforce lacks new knowledge, generally apathetic to globalization, reluctant to adopt IT, averse to multi-skills and change. 21 century workforce lacks ability to apply knowledge to real situation; frequency of job changes inhibits acquisition of meaningful experience.

Literature Review

Teacher's Role

Education is a very important human activity. It helps the society to fashion and model individuals to function well in their environment. The purpose of education is to equip the citizen, to reshape their society and promote fairness and equity. The success of any teaching and learning process which invariably influences pupil's academic achievement may depend on how effective and efficient the teachers are (Adeyemi, 2011). The individuals who comprise the early childhood care and education (ECCE) workforce are important providers of these early experiences. They form meaningful bonds with the children in their care, and their interactions, behaviors, and teaching practices all influence children's development, as well as their later school readiness (NRC, 2001; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2001; Pianta and Stuhlman, 2004). Ibara (2011) stated that teachers who are the personnel in charge of teaching and implementation of educational policy designed to attain educational goals cannot be neglected, if the educational goals, as well as the national development goals are to be attained. No matter how good an educational policy may be on paper, it may fail to accomplish its desired goal, if not properly implemented by teachers. Teachers are subjective insiders involved in classroom instruction, as they go about daily routine of instructing pupils, grading papers, taking their attendance, evaluating their achievement, as well as looking at the curriculum. Teachers interpret the aims and goals of education and educate the pupils in accordance with teaching. The quality output depends on the quality input, so the success and quality of any educational system may depend on the quality and quantity as well as the level of commitment of its teachers (Ibara 2011).

Teacher's Knowledge

This is another important measure in the pupils' classroom. Verloop, (2002) defined teacher knowledge as all profession-related insights which are related to a teacher's activities. He further argued that teacher knowledge is strongly related to individual experiences and that there are elements of knowledge that should be shared by all teachers of pupils of a certain age level. Jacob (2006) stated that at the most fundamental level, the teacher is expected to be a fountain of knowledge, an expert in his/her field with a thorough understanding of the subjects he instructs. The required depth of knowledge with in a particular field differs depending on the subject and grade level of the teacher. According to Owolabi (2012) initial education and training in areas such as early child development and early education increase the likelihood that practitioners are effective in promoting the educational, socio-emotional and healthy development of children. Qualifications can matter in terms of which skill sets and what knowledge are recognized as important for working with young children. The skills and staff traits that research identifies as important in facilitating high-quality services and outcomes are:

- (a) Good understanding of child development and learning;
- (b) Ability to develop children's perspectives;
- Ability to praise, comfort, question and be responsive to children;
- (d) Leadership skills, problem solving and development of targeted lesson plans; and
- (e) Good vocabulary and ability to elicit children' side as (Edu, 2012)

Not only the level of education but also the content of the staff's educational or training curriculum is important for the level of quality in ECCE. Specialized education is associated with better child outcomes and improved staff competences to provide suitable pedagogical learning opportunities. Specialization can refer to "any education or training focusing on early childhood education, child development or similar, above and beyond general educational attainments"(Litjens and Taguma, 2010).The impact of the teachers in the performance of the pupil is germane. Early (2007) revealed that teachers' attitudes towards teaching children had a bearing on how they delivered the subject and consequently impacted on how pupils performed. The teachers are the facilitators who are to impact into the pupils the concepts expected to be learnt. The teacher is the major manpower saddled with the responsibility of impacting the concepts considered fundamental to technology through the teaching of these basic concepts from the primary school.

Sustainable Early Childhood Care and Education

Early childhood refers to the period between birth and 8 years of life. The widely used term 'early childhood care and education'(ECCE) refers to a range of processes and mechanisms that sustain and support development during the early years of life: it encompasses education, physical, social and emotional care, intellectual stimulation, health care and nutrition. It also includes the support a family and community need to promote children's healthy development. The term 'Care' has been added in recognition of the fact that young children need care and nurturing. In addition to their health and nutritional needs, their psychosocial and emotional needs also have to be met adequately for their holistic development (Elliott, 2006).The term Education covers learning, a process of acquiring knowledge, skills, habits, attitudes, etc. It also indicates an important focus, viz., to prepare the young child to enter the formal educational stream/system (Elliott, 2006).

Shulman (2007) emphasized that the first eight years of a child's life is a period of tremendous growth and development. Brain connections multiply exponentially in the first three years, and the potential for ensuring optimal development is very high up to age 8. It is imperative that this true 'window of opportunity' is fully used and strengthened to ensure long-term benefits, not just for each individual child's development but also for the larger community. Research indicates that early childhood care and education can be a powerful instrument for helping to break the cycle of poverty in many countries (Arnold, 2004). Interventions in early childhood lead to a lifetime of gains and break the cycle of inequality that prevails in the lives of so many children and their families. Access to early

childhood education supports the right to a quality education by preparing children to make the most of their educational opportunities when they enter school. Early childhood care and education also is widely recognized as a significant pathway to inclusiveness and social equity in education, provided that the programmes are accessible to all sections of a society (Becher & Li, 2010; Miyahara & Meyers, 2008). Children who have participated in high quality early childhood care and education demonstrate considerable gains in social, educational, health and intellectual spheres, distinctively different from those who did not have early childhood care and education'. Research by Kimani (2013) has also indicated that if these early years are not supported by or embedded in, a stimulating and enriching physical and psychosocial environment, the chances of the child's brain developing to its full potential are considerably, and often irreversibly, reduced. This stage in life is also important as a foundation for the inculcation of social values and personal habits, which are known to last a lifetime. What follows logically is the crucial importance of investing in these early years to ensure an enabling environment for every child, and thereby a sound foundation for life, which is not only the right of every child but which will also impact, in the long term, the quality of human capital available to a country.

Factors Affecting Qualitative and Sustainability of Early Childhood Care and Education

The early childhood education workforce plays a pivotal role in expanding and improving early childhood care and education. However, there are many challenges associated with producing, attracting and retaining well-trained early childhood educators. These sections highlight some of these challenges.

1. Inadequate funding for Early Childhood Education Programme in Nigeria: Funding is the major problem of Childhood Education Programme in this country. The government finds it extremely difficult to release reasonable fund to this programme. Consideration is not given to acquisition of machines, tools and materials for practical which will enhance pupils' skill acquisition. This therefore makes it difficult for the pupils to acquire the appropriate skills. To achieve success in any public service, the issue of finance/funding cannot be overlooked. If education is poorly funded, it will affect the staffing, pupil: teacher ratio, the provision of infrastructure and the like, which would have a negative effect on what is likely to be the quality of the output. This is the reason why many developed nations make provision for the funding of the services for their preschoolers (Adediwura, 2007).

2. Teacher Factor: In paragraphs 23 to 27 of the UBE implementation guidelines, it is clearly stated that 'no educational system can rise above the level of its teachers', identifying the fact that laudable educational initiatives have collapsed previously simply because the 'teacher factor' was not taken seriously. This is the reason for the government's pronouncement that to ensure the success of UBE, teachers' issues would be taken into consideration, especially in the area of raising the level of teachers' general education. Students in most Nigerian colleges of education studying primary education studies (PES) are not trained for early child education contexts. The training these students receive makes them adequate for primary schooling only. The fact that the students are exposed to some child psychology courses is far from being sufficient to regard them as early childhood educators. Looking at the numerous universities in the country, it is apparent that only a very few institutions run early childhood education as a discipline at undergraduate level, a postgraduate level, or on a part-time basis. Though many teachers are said to be produced through the NTI programmes (Grade II and NCE), regular NCE, and even Pivotal Teacher Training Programmes (PTTP), which are mainly organized for the take-off of the UBE scheme, there are no qualified teachers on the ground to work in the early childhood care education centres in schools. So far this has occurred in both the public and private sectors (Alimi, 2010).

3. Manpower and Inadequate Staff: Most of those trained prefer working in companies. This is because of poor societal perception of teachers in the country in particular. Also, children at this level are so restless, extremely active and full of energy to expend. They are still dependent on adults for almost all their basic needs - physical, intellectual, and language, emotional and social skills - and therefore they require their full attention and diverse activities to help to satisfy their basic needs which some school lack.

4. Poor Supervision of Early Childhood Education Programme in Nigeria: The issue of supervision is vital in the process of implementing early childhood care education in Nigeria if success is to be attained. There is the need to

point out that laudable programmes with adequate facilities will eventually crumble if there is no supervision. Asikhia (2010) identified supervision as an indispensable management key of any organization or organizational programme.

5. Lack of adequate equipment and infrastructures: Like other educational programmes, early childhood education lacks modern equipment for proper training of the pupils. Most of the available equipment is obsolete and do not meet needs of the time. There exist few teachers' halls classrooms for the Childhood Education Programme. If available, there are few or no-desks for the pupils. In its totality, the learning environment is not conducive

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the school type and teacher’s teaching/learning materials of the preschoolers

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between teacher’s gender qualification and quality teaching and learning given to preschoolers

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The targeted population of the study consisted of all the preschool teachers in selected local government education authorities in Lagos State. The sample involved in the study is 186 preschool teachers. 102 Public and 84 private schools were selected through multistage sampling technique. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select three local government education authorities, this include among other; Amuwo-Odofin, Mushin and Ojo. Simple random was used to select 31 preschool teachers each from the three local government education authorities. Simple random sampling technique was used to three (3) schools and ten (10) teachers in each of the schools. One instrument was used for the study title “Qualitative Manpower needs ad Sustainability of Early Childhood Care Education Questionnaire” (QMnSECCEQ). Validity of the study was done through the face, content and constructs validity by the expert in the department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Lagos State University of Education, Epe Campus. The reliability of the instrument was done through the use of Cronbach Alpha techniques, and a reliability coefficient of 0.83 was obtained. Inferential statistics of t-test was used to test the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significant.

Results

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the school type and teacher’s teaching/learning materials of the preschoolers

Table 1:

T-test analysis of the difference between school type and teacher’s teaching/learning materials of the preschoolers

School Type	N	Mean	Std	df	t	Sig.	Remarks
Public School	102	88.32	3.482		184	12.37	.000 rejected
Private School	84	74.66	2.151				

Table 1 shows that there is no significant differences between the school type and teacher’s teaching/learning materials of the preschoolers (t = 12.37; df = 184; P>0.05). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is rejected. This implies that teacher’s teaching/learning materials of the preschoolers in public schools is differs significantly from the teachers in private schools. The teachers teaching/learning materials of those in public school is higher in mean rating (98.32) than those who are in the private schools (74.66). This is in line with (Ibara) 2011 opinion that quality output depends on the

quality input, so the success and quality of any educational system may depend on the quality and quantity as well as the level of commitment of its teachers. Kimani (2013) also indicated that if these early years are not supported by or embedded in, a stimulating and enriching physical and psychosocial environment, the chances of the child's brain developing to its full potential are considerably, and often irreversibly, reduced.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant difference between teacher's gender qualification and quality teaching and learning given to preschoolers

Teachers Gender	N	Mean	Std	df	t	Sig.	Remarks
Male	75	69.44	3.031				
					184	9.32	.000 rejected
Female	111	98.02	4.123				

Table 2 affirms that there is no significant difference between teacher's genders qualification and quality teaching and learning given to preschoolers ($t = 9.32$; $df = 184$; $P > 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 2 is rejected. This implies that teacher's quality of teaching and learning is differs significantly from teacher's gender qualifications. The female respondents have a higher mean rating (98.02) than the male respondents (69.44). Jacob (2006) stated that at the most fundamental level, the teacher is expected to be a fountain of knowledge, an expert in his/her field with a thorough understanding of the subjects he instructs. The required depth of knowledge with in a particular field differs depending on the subject and grade level of the teacher. This is in line with Owolabi (2012) assertion that, qualifications can matter in terms of which skill sets and what knowledge are recognized as important for working with young children.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Early childhood education is a vital tool in the developmental process of a society. All Nigerian children deserve the best, and education is the only legacy that can be given to set them on the road to optimal development. Manpower development is the building and enhancement of human resources through formal education and training. It is therefore an important prerequisite for national development. To work towards making early childhood education a reality in Nigeria, this study has addressed itself to issues that should be critically addressed by all the educational stakeholders in Nigeria. It can be concluded from this study that teacher's academic qualification only is not enough to positively affect development of pre/primary school pupils but a professional qualification in a specified field of study. Premised on the conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Graduate teachers without teaching qualification should endeavour to proceed on PGDE or Diploma Programme in ECCE to enhance their teaching method in Early Childhood Education. Teachers with NCE should strive to improve their knowledge in Early Childhood Education by acquiring additional qualification through in-service training or part-time or sandwich degree programme in the Universities around their place of working.
2. Teachers with professional qualification(s) at higher level should teach Early Childhood Education in the pre/primary schools.
3. Government should encourage the professional teachers especially in Early Childhood Education through incentives and worthwhile allowance.
4. Educational planners should provide adequate programmes, policies and curriculum for early childhood education.

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