

## **A SURVEY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TWO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION POLICIES IN PLATEAU STATE**

**BY**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of the study was to find out the implementation of the policy of establishing preprimary sections in public primary schools and the implementation of the national policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development in Plateau State. Fifteen Schools chosen through chance sampling were selected from five local government areas of the state. Seven research questions were raised. Observation and interview were used to collect data from headmasters/headmistresses of public preprimary schools. Analysis of data shows that the policy on establishment of preprimary sections in public primary schools has achieved 12.6 % implementation in Plateaus State and that integrated policy has been weakly implemented as the nutrition, health, social services are not adequately taken care of in the implementation. It was then recommended that government through the department of Early Childhood Education in the State Universal Education Board (SUBEB) should monitor the implementation of the policies as well as provide funds, political will, staff training and encourage community involvement to ensure full implementation.*

### **Introduction**

Apart from preprimary schools run by government institutions and work places in the form of Staff Schools, the effort towards the provision of early childhood education in Plateau had been in the hands of private individuals, organizations and religious bodies. However, with the review of the National Policy on Education of 2004, preprimary education was made an integral part of public primary schools with provision for all existing public primary schools to establish a preprimary section. Other policies and legislations on early childhood care and education that have given impetus to early childhood education

in the public sector in Nigeria include the Child Rights Act of 2003, the Universal Basic Education Act of 2004, the Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy of 2007, the National Child Policy of 2007, and the National Policy on Child Labor passed in July, 2013 by the National Assembly. These policies are in line with global trends of recognizing the significance of paying attention to the holistic development of the child. These policies stem from the need to domesticate and implement United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC) in Geneva, Switzerland in 1989 with Nigeria as a signatory ratified in 1991. The Organization of

African Unity (OAU) in 1990 adapted the Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) which Nigeria signed in 1999 and ratified in 2001 which required states to embrace not only the rights but also responsibility for the child. Nigeria then enacted the principles into law in 2003. Besides this, goal number one adapted by the Education For All (EFA) World Forum 2000 in Dakar, Senegal emphasized early childhood care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. The first goal number one for the Education for All was given as “expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children” Ravens and Aggio (2008, P1).

Nigeria as a signatory floated Universal Basic Education in 2000 and included early childhood education as an aspect of the programme. The UBE act was enacted in 2004. As a process of the implementation on the aspect that pertains to early childhood care and education, the country had to formulate the integrated Early Childhood Development policy of 2007 whose purpose is to “expand, universalize and integrate interventions from various sectors in early childhood development for effective implementation and coordination of programmes that will optimize development 0-5 years in Nigeria.” (NERDC 2007, p. 4)

With the Integrated Early Childhood (IECD) policy, it implies that public preprimary schools will run as integrated early childhood programmes. It will involve the

integration of health, nutrition, and educational services in the early childhood programme. The need to adopt an integrated approach to early childhood education in Nigeria stem from the multifaceted problems of the Nigerian child identified in the IECD policy as deprivation in the areas of good health, proper care, education and rights to basic requirements of life. The problem of the Nigerian child according to the NERDC (2007) manifest itself in high infant mortality rate and under five mortality rate of 109 and 217/1000 of live births, persistent high disease affecting very young children, malnutrition and less than 20% of children aged 0-5 having access to any form of organized childcare programme and/or preschool.

The State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) is charged with the responsibility of implementing the policies in the public primary schools in Plateau State. The state has 2,297 public primary schools and as at the session that ended 2012/2013, there were 292 public primary schools which have established the pre-primary section. The total number of pupils enrolled in these public primary schools was 9,636 pupils. However the state director in charge of the Early Child Education in the state issued directive to all public schools to compulsorily commence the preprimary section in September 2013 which marked the commencement of the 2013/2014 school session. The study was undertaken to find out the challenges public schools are encountering in establishing preprimary sections in the schools and to what extent these

preprimary schools are run as integrated early childhood education programmes.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The 2004 edition of the National Policy on Education requires all public primary schools to establish preprimary sections. The question is to what extent has Plateau State implemented this policy? Secondly, the government through the Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy of 2007 expects these public preprimary schools to be an integrated programme. Again, the question is to what extent have public preprimary schools run integrated programmes? Therefore, a survey of the implementation of the government policy on the establishment of preprimary sections in public primary schools in Plateau State is the concern of this study.

### **Purpose of this Study**

The study set out to investigate the implementation of government policy on the establishment of preprimary sections in public primary schools in Plateau State and to find out if these preprimary sections run integrated programmes or not.

### **The specific objectives are:**

1. To find out whether preprimary sections have been established in public primary schools in Plateau State.
2. To find out whether or not existing public preprimary schools run an integrated programme.

3. To investigate the challenges that public preprimary schools in Plateau State face.
4. To find out which curriculum is use in public preprimary schools in Plateau State.
5. To find out the number of teachers teaching in public preprimary schools with training in early childhood education.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the percentage of public primary schools in Plateau State that have established preprimary sections?
2. Which ministries and departments collaborate with public preprimary to achieve an integrated programme?
3. How are the nutritional needs of the pupils met in public preprimary schools in Plateau State?
4. What kind of curriculum do public preprimary schools use?
5. How many teachers of public preprimary schools have had training in early childhood education?
6. How are classrooms provided for in public preprimary schools?
7. What are the materials that the government provides for the public preprimary schools?

### **Methodology**

The study used survey design that collected data from five local government areas of Plateau State. The local governments were selected through chance sampling. In each local government, three schools were randomly selected giving a total of 15 public schools. The respondents consisted of the headmasters or headmistresses of

each school who responded to the interview questions.

### Instrument for Data Collection

The instruments used for data collection were interview and observation. The researcher constructed interview questions on year of commencement, number of classes and pupils in each class, furniture, toys, play equipment, the curriculum, number of teachers and their qualifications, caregivers and their qualifications, learning materials like textbooks, and how they were procured, other programmes that ensure the health and feeding of the pupils, the role of other ministries like the ministries of works, health, environment, agriculture, social welfare, water resources, women affairs and the community involvement in the preprimary section of the school.

An observation sheet which recorded observation on a four point scale was also constructed to observe physical infrastructure, facilities, classroom size, size of

seats, toys and interaction in the classrooms.

### Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher visited each school and interviewed the head teachers. The researcher recorded the responses that were given by the head teacher using anecdotal record. The observation of each classroom was recorded on observation rating sheet which had also been prepared by the researcher based on traits/things she set out to observe.

### Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

**Research Question 1:** What is the percentage of public primary schools running preprimary sections in Plateau State?

Data answering this question is presented in table 1.

**Table 1: Public Primary Schools with Pre-Primary Sections**

S/N	Pop. of 0-5 yrs (2006 census)	No. of Public Primary Schools	No. of Public Pre-Primary Section as at June 2013	No. of Public Pre-Primary Section as at June 2013	% of Public Primary Section with Primary Sections	Pop. of Children in Pre-School Programme (Private and Public)	% of Pupils in pre-primary schools	No. of Out of Pre-School	% Out of Pre-School
1	687,162	2,297	283	292	12.63	Private (43,295) + Public (9,636) = 52,931	7.70	634,231	92.30

**Research Question 2:** Which ministries and departments collaborate with public preprimary schools to achieve integrated programme?

**Table 2: Contribution of Collaborating Ministries**

S/N	Ministry	No. of Schools	%	Nature of Collaboration
1	Health	15	100	Immunization, Health talk
2	Water Resources	11	73.33	Sinking Boreholes and Wells
3	Women Affairs	9	60	Birth/Child Registration
4	Social Welfare	2	13.33	Awareness on child abuse; reporting abuse
5	School Meal	0	0	Each child brings his/her food
6	Agriculture	9	60	Awareness on Feeding
7	Environment	8	53.33	Trash Cans, Brooms, and packers

The Ministries of Health, Water Resources, Women Affairs and Agriculture have come to collaborate with the Ministry of Education in the preprimary schools.

**Research Question 3:** How are the nutritional needs of the pupils met in the public preprimary schools?

**Table 3: Methods of Feeding the Pupils**

S/N	Method	Number	%
1	NERDC for 0-5 years	2	13.33
2	EVANS	5	33.33
3	From Neighbouring Private Preschool	8	53.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Research Question 5:** How many teachers in public preprimary schools have had training in Early Childhood Care and Education?

**Table 4: Training Background of Public Pre-primary Teachers**

S/N	Academic Qualification	Number	%
1	NCE	34	94.44
2	NCE with Specialization in ECE	0	0
3	Diploma	0	0
4	B. Ed	2	5.55
5	Grade II	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

**Research Question 7:** What are the materials that the government has provided to the public preprimary classes?

**Table 6: Materials that the Government has Provided to the Public Preprimary Classes**

S/N	Materials	No. of Schools Provided	%
1	Textbooks	8	53.33
2	Curriculum	2	13.33
3	Desks and Chairs	15	100
4	Mattresses	8	53.33
5	Swings, 'merry-go-round', slides and other play facilities	8	53.33

### Results and Discussion

- As at the 2012/2013 session, Plateau State had 2,297 public primary schools, 292 of these had established preprimary sections, representing 12.63%. Out of a total of 687,162 children of 0-5 years in Plateau State (NPC, 2006), 52,921 representing 7.70% are enrolled in preschool programmes, while 634,231 representing 92.30% were outside of any formal form of preschool education.
- The ministries of Health, Water Resources, Environment, Agriculture and Women Affairs are collaborating with public preprimary sections of public primary schools towards achieving integrated early childhood programme.
- School meals are not served in any of the public preprimary school. Children bring their food from home.
- The curriculum used by public preprimary school is received from neighbouring private schools or Evans Curriculum for nursery schools obtained from bookshops. Only two schools of the sample preprimary schools

have the NERDC curriculum for 0-5 years.

- Teachers handling public preprimary schools in Plateau State have the minimum professional teacher certificate (NCE) but none of them have qualification in early childhood care and education.
- The classrooms used by preprimary section are either constructed by government or existing primary school classrooms are converted to nursery school classes.
- The government has supplied textbook, desks, chairs, mattresses, and play facilities like swings, slides, and merry-go-round to the public preprimary schools.

The policy of establishing preprimary sections in existing public primary schools is gradually being implemented in Plateau State. From 2002, government started public preprimary schools with 13 pilot or model pre-primary schools. The pilot/model preprimary schools remained the public preprimary schools until 2007 session when the Integrated Early Childhood

quality in public preprimary education and implement a truly integrated programme as per the Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) policy.

1. The Early Childhood Education department in the state Universal Basic Education board should pursue proper mobilization of the collaborating ministries and agencies in the implementation of an integrated programme. The backbones of a vibrant integrated early childhood programme according to Yanez (2011) are health, social services and education. The health sector should go beyond immunization to practical hygiene, provision of treated mosquito net, while the Ministry of Water Resources should provide clean drinking water for drinking and for use in standard built toilets. The Ministries of Agriculture and Education should work towards providing balanced school meals to children as the pupils who come to these public schools are mostly from poor families.
2. Teachers in pre-primary sections of public primary school who hold Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) or E. Ed, B. A. Ed, or B. Sc. Ed degrees should be given an induction course on Early Childhood Education for a minimum of 6 months to enable them acquire skills for caring and educating young children. The National Commission For Colleges of Education directed colleges of education to commence the training of teachers in Early Childhood Education. Because there is need on ground, the colleges of education should expand their student intake, yet maintaining high standard in output. Faculty of Education in Nigerian Universities should establish the department of Early Childhood Education to train expert teachers in the field.
3. The state government should set performance standards for early childhood education which will become the core of what defines early childhood education in the state. The set standards should be used to monitor and evaluate performance in Early Childhood Education in the state. These standards should also be used in the accreditation of any private or public preprimary school in the state.
4. More classrooms for early childhood education should be constructed in the pre-primary schools located in the urban centers and local government headquarters as classes in the urban areas seem to be large ranging from 50 to 80 in a class. The recommended teacher to pupil ratio for pre-primary classes in Nigeria is 1:25 (NERDC, 2009). The schools located in urban areas should have up to three or four arms of preprimary classes as the need demands.
5. Adequate funding. Virtually the success of everything in the preprimary section depends largely on the availability of funds. The state SUBEB should budget adequately for preprimary education in the state. The budget should take care of teacher training, provision of infrastructure such

- as spacious classrooms, provision of learning materials and play equipment. Above all school meal for children in public schools in the rural and urban slums should be budgeted for so that the children of the poor who come to school can eat nutritious meals at least for the time that they are in school. The state house of assembly can support this by approving without cutting down the budget for education and that of preprimary education in particular.
6. The government should have a political will to improve early childhood development through high quality early childhood education. This consideration should transcend partisan politics but look more at collective interest of society with a view of a better future for posterity. Quality early childhood education should be seen as an investment for higher quality in later education, better economic status for the beneficiaries of early childhood , less crime in society and better cohesion of families in the future.
  7. Communities should partner with government in the area of early childhood education. In an earlier research (Haggai, 2010), Haggai had found low participation of communities in Plateau State in early childhood education. Okengo (2011) attributed the success of the expansion of early education in Kenya to community participation and ownership. He found that community provision remained the largest form of services provided in that country; amounting to as much as 70%. Communities can be involved in identifying suitable location, setting up an early childhood education center and then mobilizing human and material resources for the construction and finishing as well as the development of play and learning materials.
  8. The government of Plateau State should seek strategic support from various development partners. Such strategic support from various development partners. Such strategic partners are in a position to give financial and technical support to early childhood programmes. Such partners should share the vision of the government concerning Early Childhood Education. The examples of such partners with interest and pursuit of qualitative early childhood programme include the Bernard Van leer Foundation, UNICEF and World Bank.



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