

## NIGERIAN CHILD AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES.

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### **Abstract**

*Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) is to foster the proper development of the children, identify and address their problems, harness their potentials, mould their character, enhance their learning, equip them for life challenges, so that their actions are channelled towards positive, personal, communal and global development. For children to succeed in their education certain services including support services must be made available and assessable to these children as educational aids in their learning and help in enhancing their life purposes. This paper therefore examines the role of educational support services in the development and advancement of childhood education in Nigeria. The paper examined the objectives of (ECCDE) as enunciated in National Policy of Education and the program activities provided for them. The paper identified relevance educational support services to be provide to children and the benefits to learners in the learning process. The paper concluded by suggesting ways of providing support for effective educational learning achievement of ECCDE in Nigerian pre-primary schools.*

**Keywords:** Nigerian Child, Educational Support Services, Early Childhood Care, Development, Education.

### **Introduction**

In every modern society it is believed that education is the key to national development and there is a need to maintain every level of education especially the pre-primary stage, because it is the bedrock upon which all other educational levels build, once a child misses that early stage it is usually difficult for the learner to get back to the basics (Olagunju, 2016). Pre-primary education is a common practice in most societies; they make provision for early

childhood education programs of various types for children below the official school age (usually 6 years) mainly to prepare them for the rigors of primary education and beyond. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) in her National Policy on Education defined pre-primary education as the education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. It comprises the crèche/day care (0-2years), nursery/play group (3-5years) and kindergarten (5-6years). The purposes include to effect a smooth transition from the home to the school; prepare the child for the primary level of education; provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the market, offices, etc); inculcate social norms; inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys, etc; develop a sense of co-operation and team spirit; learn good habits, especially good health habits; At school, particularly at the pre-primary level, the children ought to be taught according to the provisions and guidelines of the National Policy on Education, (FRN, 2013), which recommends teaching of rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, among others, through play. It consists of activities that facilitate a child's learning, growth and development. This level of education is important as it strengthens the child's self esteem and provides positive learning experiences as well as opportunities to interact with peers in diverse ways.

According to Oke, Maigari and Okoli (2018) who stressed that Pre-primary education provides the environmental influences that gradually interact with the developing abilities and dispositions of young children to form all aspects of their personalities- social, emotional, affective, moral, physical, intellectual, creative abilities, among others. Therefore, this level of education is not academic- oriented (Olagunju, 2012), but a play level during which children are prepared through play, for actual schooling. It is more of a social service, and custodian in nature, it can be provided by the government, community or private individual. It may be integrated into a primary school or can stand alone.

Education is an instrument for national transformation, security and development. It is the cornerstone of open societies. It lays the groundwork for the future direction of peoples' lives and societies they live in. It is a fundamental human right and essential for the exercise of all other human rights and for social, political and economic participation amongst others.

Education is the process of facilitating learning for knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits of a group of people and imparted to other people through storytelling, discussion, teaching, training or research (Oke, 2011). It takes place under the guidance of educators, but learners may also educate themselves in a process called AUTODIDACTIC learning (the act of learning about a subject or subjects in which one has had little to no formal education). However, any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks feels or acts may be considered educational.

### **Forms of Education**

There are two basic forms of education in which children are involved in the learning process, this include; Formal and Informal education.

**Formal education:** The hierarchically structured, chronologically graded 'education system', running from primary school through the university and including, in addition to general

academic studies, a variety of specialised programmes and institutions for full-time technical and professional training (Oke, 2011).

**Informal education:** The truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment - from family and neighbours, from work and play, from the market place, the library and the mass media.

In our Nigerian setting where ethnics (culture use to be and is a basis for people relation), where culture and tradition is a basic form of knowledge every child is “suppose” to acquire through various forms of learning which is considered informal in our present day society. In our prehistoric settings, informal education played a vital role in transferring values, history, skills, beliefs etc. from one generation to another and it was a primary form of education as adults (elders) trained the young in knowledge and skills deemed necessary to fit and carry out societal expectations (Olagunju, 2016).

This was achieved without the existence of schools, institutions or other forms of formal or organised learning but was achieved basically orally and through imitation. Storytelling was also an important form and was achieved through larger crowd similar to what we describe as a school in our present day society. These forms i.e. oral, imitation, storytelling can be described as the available educational support services / programs because they supported children growth and learning of required knowledge and other information they will use to perform societal duties and fulfilling their desired ambitions.

Early years in life are the most important to the formation of intelligence, personality, social behaviour of a child. That is why modern societies show serious concern for the education of their young ones by providing the needed support to prepare them to succeed later in school and life as a whole (Ejeh, 2006). It is common practice in most societies to make provision for early childhood education programme of various sorts for children especially those below the official school-going age (usually 6 years) mainly to prepare them for education in primary schools (Obidike, 2012). The Federal Government of Nigeria recognises the importance of early childhood education in Nigeria and as a result it was given prominence in National Policy of education (FRN, 2004) as one of the programme in the Nigeria educational system. Bagudo (2008) posited that reports across the globe revealed that an estimated figure of one hundred million children struggle daily for survival in villages and cities and are exposed to the risks of hunger, poverty, disease, abuses and above all illiteracy. In support of this view, Mahuta (2007) stresses that the need to address these problems and salvage these children and the next generation of children from these menace, has necessitated the programme of Early Childhood Care Development and Education.

Mahuta (2007) also stated that the aim of ECCDE is to foster the proper development of the children identified and address their problems, harness their potentials, mould their character, enhance their learning, equip them for life challenges, so that their actions are channelled towards positive, personal, communal and global development.

For children to succeed in their education (including both formal and informal) certain services including support services must be made available and assessable to these children as educational aids in their learning and help in enhancing their life purposes.

### **Purpose of Child Education**

The importance of child education cannot be overemphasized; it enables children to improve on their self-confidence since they are given opportunity to interact with their peers and adults too. Child education enhances independence and helps curb the tendency of children that are highly aggressive during group activities. Children's interactions with their peers and adults help to widen their scope of understanding and they also gain mastery of the world around them. Child education is vital to the child, parents and society because it permits smooth transition from home to school, because it enables the child to feel free to interact with other people outside his immediate family members. Oke, Maigari and Okoli (2018) stressed that pre-primary school helps to sharpen the children's cognitive domain through learning rhymes and songs; while playing on the slides and swings help in physical development and build their muscles. Structured play with building blocks and puzzles, baby dolls, and teddy bears helps in emotional development of the children.

National Policy on Education (FGN 2013) states the objectives of pre- primary education as follows:

- a. Effecting a smooth transition from home to school,
- b. Preparing the child for the primary level of education,
- c. Providing adequate care and supervision for the child while their parents are at work,
- d. Inculcating social values or norms,
- e. Inculcating in the child the spirit of inquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys etc.,
- f. Developing a sense of cooperation and team spirit,
- g. Learning good habits especially good health habits,
- h. Teaching the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms etc, through play.

### **Educational Support Services and Early Childhood Care and Development Education**

Educational supports services can be and are provided by Educational Support Systems (ESS) for children in order to succeed in their general education. These support systems according to Dehgani, and Hamideh, (2011) are required to include an Educational Support Team (EST) and a range of support and remedial services which could include instructional and behavioural interventions and accommodations. Developing programs which can implement and maintain these support services is vital and would reduce the pressure on the government for supervision and monitoring of progress especially in funding, expenditure, grants etc for schools.

Programs such as:

- Behavioural Intervention Strategies
- Accommodations Strategies
- Instructional Strategies
- Language learning programs amongst others

These are some of such programs that are used in developed countries to provide that needed support services that aid schools in supporting child growth in their formal education and learning process.

“Our mission is to be a passionate Student-centred team that advocates for and guides students to succeed in a Global market through strategic learning In a multicultural environment.”

(Educational Support Services, Lehigh Carbon Community College)

In Nigeria, organised education for children below school age did not receive official recognition until very recently, received the attention it deserved. The concept was introduced in Nigeria in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1977, with the introduction of the National Policy on Education by the then Military government of Nigeria that the importance and need for early childhood education was given official recognition and linked with the child’s educational performance in primary schools especially (Udoh and Edem 2011).

The growth of the Nigerian education system from what it was to what it is now is an achievement which deserves recommendation especially with the vast economic, political and religious crisis the country has and is experiencing. Children especially suffer the most from such crisis with little or no attention given to them. These children are exposed to all sorts of harms including psychological, physical, mental and possibly death (Akpa, Haggai and Maina, 2018).

Providing the right education which includes good environment, facilities, models, support services would not just aid the child’s learning but enhance learning in all aspects, grooming the child to become a better committed and patriotic citizen of the country. As is said “better services better output” would be the result of good educational support services in our educational system with its results not needed to be publicized but enjoyed by its benefactors.

### **Benefits of Educational Support Services to Early Childhood Education.**

Some benefits of these qualitative educational support services on the Nigerian child would include;

1. Rehabilitate children with bad orientation and help in correction where necessary
2. To meet the needs of children in the learning process
3. To provide intervention on an individual, family and small group basis
4. To assist in the early identification of children with special needs, and social, emotional, learning and communicating concerns
5. To assist teaching staff and parents to provide an environment which enhances learning
6. To provide workshops and in servicing for school staff, other professionals, and parents with respect to children's learning, social and emotional difficulties
7. To foster interagency cooperation and partnerships with community-based services

These among others are some of such benefits of providing qualitative support services in the educational system on our children and future of tomorrow.

### **Conclusion**

Education support programmes cannot be provided by the government alone but with the help of both the public and private sector investing in children’s education and driving the

will to creating a better Nigeria and a better world. The quality of a teacher determines the strength of an education system and the value of the learners. In the Nigerian education system today, the quality of teachers assigned to children is generally low. It is only a few of the schools owned by educational institutions, private companies and wealthy individuals that can afford to engage the services of university graduates as teachers and holders of Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) qualifications, competent and committed institutions are also capable of retaining such teachers. Most others just employ a few NCE teachers (if any at all) who are usually underpaid, while others employ mainly Grade two teachers and secondary school leavers with school certificates or general Certificates (ordinary level) qualifications. In a situation where teachers are unqualified and/or unprofessional, effective teaching and learning especially cannot be achieved. This is just one case amongst the many cases of low or bad educational support service and the country suffers these in the educational system.

### **Recommendations**

The paper recommended that the education stakeholders and functionaries should always:

- a. Encourage private efforts in the provision of education and related services
- b. Make provision in Teaching and Teacher Training Institutions for production of qualitative, effective, efficient, committed and dedicated teachers as not just tutors but models to children
- c. Ensure that the medium of instruction will be principally the mother-tongue or the language of the local community
- d. Ensure that the main method of teaching is the well suited and pupil-oriented and the curriculum of the teacher training colleges is appropriated toward that.

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