

## **Early Childhood Education: Development, Challenges and Prospects in Nigeria.**

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### **Abstract**

*The early childhood education (ECE) comprises essential programme and activities which are critical to the holistic development, academic success and future achievements of children. ECE is recognized by the federal government that Nigeria, as a foundational and essential programme that Nigerian child must experience. This is why the government has given highly rated attention to it through various interventions that include formulation of policy documents and network of relationships among different sectors. Unfortunately various challenges are facing the early childhood (ECE) implementation and development in Nigeria. Therefore this paper tends to examine and discuss the issue of development, challenges and the prospects of the early childhood education in Nigeria context. It establishes that the federal government of Nigeria in its national policy on education has given official recognition to the development and provision of early childhood education in the country. This combined with a number of factors to give rise to an unprecedented expansion in the provision of child care and early childhood education institutions in the country. However, nearly all the early childhood education in the country is provided by private proprietors. It also identifies the inability of government among others to put effect most of the measure it stated in the National Policy on Education (FRN2012) which aimed at ensuring that the policy objectives are achieved. It has also established that the provision and development of early childhood education will have positive prospects on the educational development of children in later life in Nigeria.*

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**Keywords:** Education, Childhood, Development, Challenges, Prospects.

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### **Introduction**

Early years in life are widely accepted as the most important period during which children experience cognitive, language, perceptual, socio-emotional and motor development which they will need for future achievements and social functioning. This informs the reason why the periods of the early years need to be handled with all special and detailed attention. Estes (2004) has described the early years as a remarkable period of growth and development in the lives of children. In their submission, Oduolowu and Olowe (2011) noted that the early years of children are years of extreme vulnerability and tremendous potentials, during which adequate protection, care and stimulation are essential to provide the foundation for well-being and development. In providing this foundation during the early years, Early Childhood Education (ECE) becomes a key actor.

Generally, ECE is aimed at promoting holistic development of children from birth to age 8. According to Olowe, Kutelu, and Majebi (2014), ECE is any group programme that is designed to promote children's intellectual development, socio-emotional development, language development, physical development and learning from birth to age 8. Sooter (2013)

agreed with Mahuta (2007) by stating the aims of ECE to include fostering proper development of children, identifying and addressing their problems, harnessing their potentials, molding their characters, enhancing their learning and equipping them for life so that their actions are channeled towards positive personal, communal and global development. It is pertinent to note that all ECE activities and programmes are geared towards giving positive early experiences to children. This further underscores the importance of early years. The paramount importance of the early years is widely acclaimed injurious international documents and developmental goals such as UN Convention on the Right of the Child, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) goals among others. The government of Nigeria is among the member states that ratified these documents and goals, and this has made the government to come up with various interventions which are geared towards providing quality ECE for Nigerian children.

As part of the interventions of the government in ECE, there was enactment of UBE Act (2004) which has an expanded scope that includes programmes and initiatives for early childhood education and development (UNESCO-IBE, 2006). The UBE programme made provision for every public primary school to have a preprimary school linkage to cater for children, and this resulted in increased government ownership and participation in ECE provisions (UNESCO-IBE, 2006). Osanyin (2012) noted that there was the development of National Minimum Standard for Early Child Care Centres in Nigeria while. In the same vein, Oguntuashe (2010) reported the development of curriculum for in-service teacher training and IECD caregiver training manual. Another notable intervention is the development of a policy referred to as National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development that integrates interventions from various sectors to promote an integrated holistic approach to the development of the child (FGN, 2007). One other intervention that worth mentioning is the development of a unified early childhood education curriculum which was all encompassing and divided into two sections to cater for age 0-3 and 3-5 years respectively. Again, the federal government included ECCE programmes in curriculum of colleges of education. The most recent innovation seem to be the new National Policy on Education (2013 edition) in which the programme of ECE is brought under Basic Education injection 2. It is now divided into two programmes namely Early Childhood Care, Development and Education (E'CCDE) and Kindergarten Education.

Despite all these interventions and the efforts of the government, it is glaring that the implementation of ECE programmes is still affected by many challenges both at pre-primary school level and tertiary level. These challenges, as identified in this paper, relate to professional qualification of caregivers/teachers, resources, early childhood curriculum, professional development training, staff-child ratio and funding.

### **A Brief History of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, organized education of the child below primary school age did not receive official recognition until very recently, receive the attention it deserved. The concept of infant schools was introduced in Nigeria by the missionaries in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when such schools were set up in the Western and Eastern regions of Nigeria. Early Childhood education in the form of nursery school or pre-primary education as we know it today in Nigeria is largely a- post-colonial development. The semblances of it during the colonial era were the Kindergarten and infant classes, which consisted of groups of children considered not yet ready for primary education. As grouping for instruction in schools was not age-based during that period, some children aged six or even more, could be found in some of the infant classes (Tor-Anyiin, 2008). With the phasing out of infant classes, some parents began to feel the need for nursery schools.

During that period, (pre-independence) all efforts for provision of early childhood education were confined to the voluntary sector and received little or no support from the government (Tor- Anyiin, 2008). It was for the first time in 1977 with the introduction of 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 school. Gradually, early childhood institution stayed, and by 1985, Nigeria had about 4200 early childhood educational institutions. While by 1992 the number increased to about 8,300 (Federal Government of Nigeria/UNICEF 1993).

Nowadays, early childhood educational institutions are located in various places and buildings comprises of universities and Colleges, premises of some industries and business organizations, church premises, residential buildings with unprecedented expansion owing to the high demand for early childhood care and education by parents (Ejeh, 2006).

### **Concept of Early Childhood Care and Education**

Maduwesi (1999) refers to early childhood care and Education as the education offered to children who have not yet reached the statutory age of beginning primary school. He further maintained that it is a semi-formal education arrangement, usually outside home where by young children from about the age of 3 years are exposed through play like activities in a group setting through mental, social and physical learning suited to their developmental stages, until the mandatory age of government approved formal schooling. FRN (2004) refers to Early Childhood Care and Education (pre-primary education) as an education given in an educational institution to children aged 3-5 plus prior to their enrollment in the primary school.

### **Objectives of Early Childhood Education**

The objectives of early childhood education according to FRN (2004) are:

1. Effect a smooth transition from home to school
2. Prepare the child for the primary level of education
3. Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farm, in the market or offices)
4. Inculcate social norms
5. Inculcate in the child the spirit of inquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys and so on.
6. Develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit
7. Learn good habits, especially good health habits and.
8. Teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, form and so on thought play.

### **Basic Curriculum Provision of National Policy on Pre-Primary Education**

The FRN (2004) outlined some steps the government designed to achieve the objectives of preprimary education in Nigeria, which are as follows;

- i. Encourage private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education
- ii. Making provision in Teacher Training Institution for production of specialist teacher in Pre- primary education.
- iii. Ensuring that the medium of instruction will be principally the mother-tongue or the language of the local community.
  - a. Develop the orthography for many more Nigerian languages, and.
  - b. Produce textbooks in Nigerian languages, FRN reported that some of these developments are already being pursued in the University Departments of linguistics under the auspices of some state ministries of Education. This Language centre will be

- expanded so as to have wide scope;
- iv. Ensure that the main method of teaching in the pre-primary institutions will be through play and that the curriculum of teacher training college is appropriately oriented to achieve this.

### **Early Childhood Curriculum:**

Curriculum is the and how of any educational enterprise. It is the vehicle through which any educational programmes can be successfully implemented. The ECE curriculum is an important written plan that includes goals for children's development and learning, experiences through which they will achieve the goals, what staff and parents do to help children achieve the goals and, the materials needed to support the implementation of the curriculum (National Centre on Quality Teaching and Learning (NCQTL), 2012). The early childhood curriculum helps to ensure that staff or teachers cover important learning areas, adopt a common pedagogical approach and reach for a certain level of quality across age groups. These descriptions about ECE curriculum indicates that it is an indispensable material in the business of implementing ECE programme. Its indispensability spurred the government of Nigeria to see to the development and production of National Early Childhood Curriculum for Ages 0-5years by NERDC, with the support of UNICEF. This curriculum was launched in 2007. The unfortunate thing however is that this curriculum, since it was launched, is not found in almost all pre-primary schools in Nigeria. This is particularly true of privately owned schools. The non-availability of the National Early Childhood Curriculum for Ages 0-5years in pre-primary schools has been confirmed in findings of researches conducted in different states in Nigeria (e.g., Viatonu, et al., 2011; Amali, et al., 2012; Okewole, et al., 2013).

### **Early Childhood Education and its challenges**

Nigerian education system since independence can best be described as a system riddled with crisis. It is not strange for this to be so, because we had inherited the system from our colonial master (Eriba, 2011). Judged against this premise, it becomes very challenging for Nigerians to manage the educational system passed to them by the British. So the system becomes inundated with diverse crises since independence. According to Eriba (2011), the educational system has been in a state of permanent crisis that it has lost quality, efficacy and functionality over the years. Early childhood education in Nigeria is not left out in these crises which tend to make the gains of education less spectacular. The challenges which these problems have precipitated for the nation will be highlighted in few key areas so as to provide a framework for considered action by the stakeholders.

It is widely acknowledged that early childhood educators with- required professional preparation provide more developmentally appropriate, nurturing, and responsive care' and education experiences for young children (National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 2007). This aligns with the submission in an Issue Brief by National Governors Association Centre for Best Practices (2010) that the knowledge and skills of early childhood care providers and teachers are critical factors in their delivery of high-quality developmental and educational experiences to young children. In confirmation of this, Boyd (2013) reported the result of a study conducted in 2002 by National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (NICHD) and The Early Child Care Research Network (ECCRN) in which it was found that providers with BA degrees in ECE provided higher quality learning experiences for children in their care. This underscores the importance of giving children the opportunity to learn under professionally qualified caregivers/teachers. Unfortunately, the situation is contrary in most pre-primary schools in Nigeria. In privately

owned pre-primary schools, teachers with no training in ECE are often found in children classrooms. While in pre-primary sections of government owned public schools, old female teachers with no qualification in ECE are often seconded to children classrooms. Findings from various studies conducted by researchers in Nigeria have consistently confirmed this same situation (e.g., Olaleye & Omotayo, 2009; Amadi, 2013; Okewole, Iluezi- Ogbcd, & Osinowo, 2013; Osho, Aliyu, Okolie, & Onifade; 2014).

### **1. Proliferation of Early Childhood Institutions**

The official provision made in the National Policy on Education (FGN 2004) mandated the Government to encourage private efforts in the provision of early childhood education in the country. Moreso, owing to the high demand for early childhood education by parents, it does not take a long time for newly established early childhood institutions to grow and develop. According to Nwakaego (2007), it is becoming customary to operate a early childhood institution in every household, currently, early childhood education institutions are located in various places and buildings-campuses of some universities and colleges, premises of some industrial and business organizations, church premises, residential buildings some part or the whole of which are hired for use as early childhood schools (Ejeh, 2006). The flip side of this proliferation of early childhood institutions is that, the issue of standard and "regulations" have been waved off. The end result is that the young minds are offered "substandard" and "irregular" education that cannot breed egalitarianism and self-reliant individuals of the society and leaders of tomorrow.

### **2. Quality and Qualification of Teachers**

The quality of the teachers determines the strength of any educational system and the value of the learners (Okoro, 2004). In Nigerian early childhood institutions today, the teacher quality is generally low. It is only a few of the nursery schools especially those owned by educational institutions, private companies and wealthy individuals that can afford to engage the services of university graduate teachers and holders of Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) qualifications, competent and committed teachers and are also capable of retaining such teachers. Most others 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 Certificate or General Certificate (ordinary level) qualification. In a situation where most of the teachers in our early childhood institutions are unqualified and/or unprofessional, effective teaching and learning cannot be achieved.

**3. Resources and Funding:** When resources are available for ECE programme at pre-primary school level, it helps the caregiver/teacher to nurture and support the development of young children, and to successfully implement curriculum. According to Chukwbikem (2013), the quantity and quality of resources available for any educational programme would determine schools systems capacity for the implementation of the type of educational programme. What this implies is that resources are critical to successful implementation of tiny ECE programme. In spite of the fact that resources are critical to successful implementation of ECE programme, they are not found in many Nigerian pre-primary schools, especially in the pre-primary section of public primary schools that belong to the government. Many researchers in Nigeria who have assessed the resources that are available for ECE at pre-primary school level have confirmed this same situation through the findings of their studies (e.g., Viatonu, Usman-Abdulqadri, & Dagunduro, 2011; Amali, Bello, & Okafor, 2012; Okewole, et al., 2013; Osho, et al, 2014).

Funding needs to be given maximum consideration because it is very crucial to achieving



success in any educational enterprise. In ECE, adequate funds need to be made available for provision of many resources and activities which include stimulating materials for teaching, training and re-training of staff (teachers and caregivers), enrichment and sensitization of programmes through regular workshops, monitoring, feeding, immunisation, supervision and inspection, report writing, publications, school meals and training manuals among others (Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014). This indicates that the importance of funding to successful implementation of ECE in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. The sad thing however is that Nigerian ECE is ridiculously underfunded. This could be linked to the low budgetary allocation to the education sector in the nation. Perhaps, this is the reason for the report of The Good Planet Foundation (2013) on Nigeria that spending on essentials such as textbooks, instructional materials, in-service training, operations and maintenance is inadequate. The underfunding of ECE at pre-primary school level in Nigeria has been document in several academic papers and researches (e.g., Osakwe, 2011; Amali, et al., 2012; The Good Planet Foundation, 2013; Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014).

**4. Professional Development:** The teacher holds the key to successful implementation of any educational enterprise. This is why the federal government of Nigeria stated in NPE (2013) that no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013). Jibril (2007) has submitted that whatever input is made into an educational system in respect of management, resources, facilities and array "of instructional materials, will be of little avail if the teacher is unskilled, poorly trained or even ignorant. This is to say that whatever intervention the federal government of Nigeria makes to improve ECE will be of little effect if pre-primary school teachers are not given constant professional development. The professional development training is particularly needed as the almost all the teachers in the ECE at the pre-primary school level are either not trained or trained in other fields not relevant to ECE. Goble and Horm (2010) have submitted that whatever a person's profession is, the need for professional development is universal because professionals need to continually enrich their knowledge and increase their sense of professionalism over the course of their careers so as to implement current research based practice. According to Goble and Horm (2010), early childhood professional development brings to the forefront the significance of the early years for children's learning and development and highlights the central role early childhood educators play in children's successful outcomes. Unfortunately, the pre-primary school teachers in Nigeria in both public and private school seldom, receive professional development training. In fact, some researchers have confirmed that the teachers lack professional development training (e.g., Olaleye & Omotayo, 2009; Viatonu, et al., 2011). This lack of professional training for the teachers is liable to worsen the problems of implementing ECE in Nigeria. This is because almost all the teachers in Nigerian pre-primary schools are not professionally qualified.

#### **5. In-effective Supervision of Early Childhood Institutions**

No educational plan however excellent it may be can be effectively implemented if the school supervision is ineffective. State Ministry of Education officials are in principle, supposed to visit and inspect the physical plant, the human and other resources available in a proposed nursery school and if these are found to be adequate, the ministry would approve the school for operation. In most cases these visits are made a long time after the school had become operational and had been paying the prescribed taxes. The same is true in regard to teachers in nursery schools. Some of the people employed to teach the children are neither trained to teach nor do they know how to handle or relate to children.

To ensure effective implementation of any educational enterprise, supervision must be given

adequate attention. In regards to ECE, Awino (2014) noted that it is important to supervise in order to gather information from children, caregivers, parents, communities, and general ECE environment. Supervision of ECE can be used to correct errors, modify practices where necessary and motivate as well as encourage all involved in its implementation (Awino, 2014). Usually, the changes that result from supervision of ECE programme can strengthen the implementation of such ECE programme. Supervision in ECE leads to the holistic development of children enables efficient implementation of curriculum, checks whether the objectives of the programmes have been achieved, promotes maintenance of basic standards, identifies challenges and constraints, motivates, enriches and promote personal as well as professional growth all those involved (Awino, 2014). Despite the immense benefits that supervision has to offer the ECE, the Nigerian ECE at pre-primary school level is not provided with these benefits as it is usually left unsupervised. This cannot allow effective implementation of ECE programmes at pre-primary school level in Nigeria. Researchers have consistently lamented this lack of supervision in ECE (e.g., Osakwe, 2011; Nakpodia, 2011; Sooter, 2013).

### **6. Language Policy Implementation**

In spite of the laudable provision of the language policy nothing much seems to have been achieved. Firstly, the position of Nigerian language as a medium of instruction is hard to come by. The FGN/UNICEF (1993) reported that about 93.2% of teaching and learning in Nigeria preschools was done in English. The 6.8% use immediate language shows clear lackadaisical attitude towards the implementation of the issue of medium of instruction in mother-tongue of language of immediate community. This problem is likely to be connected with parents and pupils interest in English which has been in use since 1842, as well as its official position in Nigeria (Tor-Anyiin, 2008). The low literacy rate even in English indicates poor implementation of the language policy; he further maintained that lack of implementation of language policy has affected the quality of Nigeria Educational development.

### **7. Teacher-Pupils Ratio**

The policy position of teacher pupil ratio of 1:25 is also not implemented due to lack of supervision or monitoring. Indeed, since businessmen/women dominate this education sector, profit maximization is their main concern. As such, employing more teachers to maintain this ratio is not beneficial to them, hence, early childhood institutions have a ratio that depends on available children. This goes further to explain the accommodation problem of this educational level. Though higher institutions are now offering early childhood education courses, however, Government non encouragement in terms of scholarship and teachers' poor financial remuneration is blocking many of the opportunities to go for such courses and help man the institutions. Indeed, since, the proprietors are money conscious their payment is not encouraging to warrant many people take to the study of early childhood education (Tor-Anyiin, 2008).

Higher staff-child ratios, referring to a smaller number of children per staff, are usually found to enhance ECE quality and facilitate better developmental outcomes for children (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *undated*; Huntsman, 2008). When there is higher staff-child ratio, teachers are able to interact better with children, they experience less stress and they are able to provide more supports to different children's developmental domains. Huntsman (2008) noted further that higher teacher-child ratio makes children become more co-operative in activities and interactions and children also tend to perform better in cognitive and linguistic assessments. On the contrary, lower teacher-child ratio in ECE settings will make teachers to give less attention to children and they will not

give optimal performance. This will in turn affect children as children may experience neglect and poor development in all domains. The lower, teacher- child ratio is the scenario in Nigerian ECE at pre-primary school level. This has been reported in several papers and researches on ECE (e.g., Sooter, 2013; Osho, et al., 2014). In fact, in a report series to the UN Special Envoy for Global Education, it was specifically reported that classrooms in early childhood development (ECD) centers in Nigeria are crowded, with an average of more than 130 children per classroom in the North (The Good Planet Foundation, 2013).

### **8. Negligence on the Part of Government**

Of all the measures that Federal Government undertook in order to facilitate the achievement of the objectives of early childhood education, the only one it has effectively accomplished is the granting of permission for private efforts in the provision of early childhood education in the country, with virtually less or non-participation by the public sector. This, in addition to lack of supervision to ensure the maintenance of standards, has led to increases in numbers of early childhood education institutions in the country. Significant provision is yet to be made in public or private teacher training institutions in the country for the production of specialist teachers, it is doubtful if it can attract many clients, as neither the Federal nor any state government has established any nursery or early childhood schools where graduates of such a programme can be employed. Work in private nursery or early childhood institutions would probably have no attraction for specialist in early childhood education teachers because of low wages and job insecurity associated with teaching in such institutions (Ejeh, 2006).

### **9. Prospects**

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act (2004) has an expanded scope which includes programmes and initiatives for early childhood education and development. The UBE programme has made provision for every public primary school to have a pre-primary school linkage to cater for children aged 3-5 years. This linkage will serve as a strategy for getting children ready for school and school ready for children (Hua, 2010).

An inventory of ECC faculty in Nigeria conducted by FGN/NERDC/UNICEF in 2003 showed that most of the ECC facilities are private owned (42% of the sample population are private owned and 34% by the government, followed by 21% by local communities). Now that the Early Childhood Development Programme is covered by the UBE law, government ownership at state/LGA/community level is certain to increase, particularly regarding centre's catering for the 3- 5years olds.

Early childhood care has been included in the Bachelor's degree curriculum of the Faculty of Education of some of Nigeria's Universities since 1991. The concept has also been integrated in the syllabus of Colleges of Education throughout the country. In-services training on the early childhood development concept and learner centered pedagogy for handling young children is continually provided to teacher/caregivers in public ECC/ pre-school facilities in UNICEF supported 111 focus LGAs nationwide, However, only now it is being recognized that early childhood care and early stimulation is the basis upon which attainment of the child's fullest potential depends.

The Child Right Act (2003), the UBE Act (2004), the National Policy on Education, Food, Nutrition and Health are laws and policies which have given shape to different sectoral interventions on Early Childhood Care and development in Nigeria. Currently ^however, an Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) policy, that integrates interventions from the various sectors to promote an integrated holistic approach to the development of the child in its very earliest years.

Efforts are also targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children through community-driven and home based care and support for young children age 0-3 years supported by



UNICEF in 222 focus communities nationwide has boosted access of very vulnerable and disadvantaged children to early childcare and early learning (UNESCO 2007). Launching of the children and AIDS campaign in Nigeria with increased focus, care and attention to children affected by the HIV and AIDS scourge. Increased advocacy has been mounted with government and other stakeholders to ensure that young children are fully protected from the scourge of the disease.

According to UNESCO (2007), the curriculum for Early Childhood Education in Nigeria was reviewed and revised in 2003/2004 using an integrated bottom up approach, targeting children age 0-5 years. This revised curriculum has been approved for use by the government, and a training manual to facilitate use of the curriculum; is in process of development, the training manual is expected to promote the integrated approach and cover all sectoral interventions- health, nutrition, water and environmental sanitation, psycho-social care, early learning and creating a conducive environment for them to service, live, learn and reach their full potentials. It is not gainsay that a lot of caregivers/teachers in ECE at pre-primary school level in Nigeria are not professionally qualified. Even as the situation may be, there is a way forward. All the caregivers/teachers at the pre-primary school level in Nigeria would need to undergo professional development training from time to time. This is the only way by which ECE at pre-primary school level can be successfully implemented in Nigeria at the moment. Even though many of the teachers may be qualified in their respective fields which are often not in ECE, they would need the professional development training to equip them with necessary skills and knowledge required for effective development of ECE at the pre-primary school level. This training would help the teachers to understand the significance of the early years for children's learning and development and it would highlight the central role they are to play in children's successful outcomes. In relation to funding, these stakeholders would also need to be effectively involved. This is particularly important as it is often said that the federal government alone cannot singlehandedly provide all financial supports that the educational system requires. Each of the stakeholders would need to devise means of making fund available for ECE especially at the pre-primary school level. Whatever the government provides would therefore be strengthened by their own contributions. In regards to supervision, all the stakeholders would also need to be involved since they are working towards specific goals of ECE. However, there would be need to give them appropriate orientation on how they can carry out effective supervision of ECE programmes in their specific areas.

Again, evidences have shown lack of relevant resources for ECE at pre-primary school level. This also is not a problem that does not have solution. There would be need to involve all bodies that are networking to provide ECE for the Nigerian child. This is particularly necessary as ECE is no longer a one man affair in the country but inter-sectoral activities involving the parents/family, education sector, health sector, Ministry of Women Affairs, the media, community members, religious groups and legal sector among others. If all these stakeholders put all hands on deck towards providing resources for ECE at pre-primary school level, the issue of lack of resources will become a history.

Likewise, there is a way out of the challenge of not having the ECE curriculum in pre-primary schools. Meanwhile, it should be noted first of all, that the government produced and launched the National Early Childhood Curriculum for Ages 0-5 years in 2007 with believe that copies would be available to pre-primary schools in order to provide uniform ECE programme for all Nigerian children. This plan of the government did not change but could have been improperly executed by those saddled with the responsibility of disseminating the curriculum to schools. To overcome this challenges, there would be need to resort to using

the internet. The curriculum should be uploaded unto to the website of UBEC and information should be circulated to school administrators about this. It should be made mandatory for all pre-primary schools, both public and private, to ensure that the curriculum is available and used in the school.

The challenge of staff-child ratio can also be tackled. It should be realized that the federal government has given mandate to some colleges of education to ran pre-service training for those interested in specializing in the field of ECE. Some of these colleges have already produced one or two sets of graduates and there are universities such as University of Ibadan, which have been producing graduate in pre-primary education for over two decades. There would be need therefore to employ more professionally qualified ECE teachers from those already produced by the colleges and universities.

### Conclusion

There is no doubt about the fact that the implementation of ECE in Nigeria, especially at the pre-primary school level, is faced with diverse challenges. However, what needs to come to mind is that there is no problem without solution. This is to say that there are ways out of these challenges. Some practical steps, which have been put forward in this paper, would need to be given adequate consideration by relevant stakeholders if ECE must be successfully implemented in Nigeria.

The importance of a solid foundation in education is obvious; Early Childhood education is where the foundation is laid. Poor performance in the other levels of academic can be traced to this foundation level. So a thorough knowledge of what, and how education is been handled at this level is imperative. Therefore, government needs iron determination to implement the strategies that will necessarily enhance quality and quality development of early childhood/pre-primary education in Nigeria.

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