

## Child Friendly Schools in Nigeria the Role of the Teacher

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### **Abstract**

*A child friendly school may be considered as a place where learning environment is conducive, the staffs are friendly to children, and safety needs of the children are adequately met, thus the school, which is community based takes cognizance of the rights of all children, irrespective of gender, religious and ethnic affiliation, physical and mental abilities/disabilities and other cultural dissimilarities, the paper examined the role of the teacher with the above, features and characteristics of child friendly school in Nigeria, facilities required in the child friendly school. Framework of Right-Base child friendly school and objectives of child friendly schools and made some recommendations like: pre-primary schools be provide with the needed space, teaching learning equipment, health and sanitation facilities and teachers should be well motivated; individuals and companies should come into educational sector to help government build more schools of standard with low cost (School fees) to meet the exponential growth in population leading to overcrowded classrooms.*

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**Keywords:** CFS = Child Friendly School, Teacher, Role

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### **Introduction**

The school is a significant personal and social environment in the lives of its students (children). A child-friendly school ensures every child has an environment that is physically safe, emotionally secure and psychologically enabling.

Children are natural learners, but this capacity to learn can be undermined and sometimes destroyed. According to UNICEF (2009), a child friendly school recognizes, encourages and supports children's growing capacities as learners by providing a school culture, teaching behaviours and school curriculum content that are focused on learning and the learner.

Santrock (2006), stated that child friendly schools are aimed to develop a learning environment in which children are motivated and are able to learn; the (teachers) staff members are friendly, welcoming, concerned and attend to the health, social and emotional safety issues of the children. Teachers create effective and conducive classrooms, they are able to identify children that are not comfortable, find out the reasons for their discomfort and proffer alternative solutions as well as guiding the children on using the best case scenario to solve their problems.

The adoption of the convention in the Rights of the child by most of the world's countries has led the search for practical ways of translating many of the conventions ideas into concrete applications, particularly in the developing world. One of the initiatives that best capture a right-

based and participatory approach to educational development has come to be known as the child friendly school system. The children friendly school system is intended “as a way to give practical and easily understood meaning the key principles of the child Right convention and the commitments of the Dakar Framework of Action” (Bernard, 2005). The child friendly school (CFS) approaches have variously been adopted in many different places as a counterweight to the “effective schools” movement, which has been a powerful philosophy to improve school management and classroom practices during the last three decades.

John & Wheeler (2008) stated that, a school is considered “child friendly” when it provides a safe, clean, healthy and protective environment for the children, amongst others, at child friendly schools, child rights are respected, and all children including children who are poor, disabled, living with HIV or from ethnic and religious minorities are treated equally. At these schools, teachers are trained on child rights, while teaching method focus on a child centered approach. Lessons for children include essential life skills aimed at keeping them safe and building the skills they will need to fulfil their potential and contribute fully to society.

### **Concept of Child Friendly School (CFS)**

The developer of any nation depends on its younger ones. Society creates schools to educate this segment of the population. Since their education is important, school should be conducive in terms of taking care of all the needs for the children. A positive psycho emotional environment must be ensured if children are to attend school, to remain and to achieve.

UNICEF (2005) report indicated that 40% of children ages 6-11 years are not attending schools: 30% of those attending primary school drop-out and 54% only transit to Junior Secondary School. Many reasons have been cited as responsible for this situation. These include:

- i. The exponential growth in population leading to overcrowded classrooms.
- ii. Resources are spread thinly to the extent that teaching-learning materials are inadequate.

Olaleye (2009) further described the learning environment of the Nigerian child as one that lack basic amenities, space, teaching-learning equipment, health and sanitation facilities, substandard teaching methodologies and poorly motivated teachers. The economic Crunch has led many parents to withdraw (or not even enrol) children from school for economic activities (hawking, domestic servants etc.) or early marriage.

All these inadequacies lead to poor education which is the same as no education. The child then neither be literate nor be able to acquire critical like skills. But education must and should work for all children.

Olaleye (2009) stated that, in order to address this state of affairs the Nigerian Government worked with UNICEF to establish child friendly school. The concept of child friendly school is a comprehensive approach that relates all aspects of reforms in education and which puts the child at the centre of alternative in all school activities.

According to Janguza; Dodo & Mahmud (2012), the concept was developed to ensure quality and fairness to all children. In other words it is based on the convention of the rights of children (CRC). This concept has been adopted in 155 countries, the concept is thus multidimensional addressing total aspects of the child, and it provides quality education through promoting the rights of the learner to:

- i. Choose
- ii. Communicate
- iii. Experience
- iv. Think

- v. Explore
- vi. Ask questions and
- vii. Get response to his question

### **Objectives of Child Friendly Schools**

UNICEF (2005) enumerated the following as the objectives of child friendly schools (CFS).

- i. Improving net enrolment, retention and attainment,
- ii. Participating in non-formal and early child care
- iii. Reducing the number of girls out of school and improving their learning outcomes.
- iv. Promoting and mainstreaming gender sensitive child friendly education.
- v. Enhancing and integrating health, sanitation and hygiene education.

### **Principles of Child Friendly School on the other and include basic requirements in the following:**

- i. Water and sanitation
- ii. Tables and benches
- iii. Adequate textbooks
- iv. Safe learning environment
- v. Improve management and supervision
- vi. Higher quality education with better trained teachers.

Such a school would inspire a love of learning and create a sense of harmony between the school community and larger society. All these have bearing on the development of the child. However the school learning environment is significant for academic knowledge, such an environment not only consists of physical characteristics but also the norms, expectations of the total systems as well as the pattern of grouping for teaching and learning, this makes the classroom a critical focus for interpersonal and educational development of the pupils (Pierce 2002).

According to Janguza, Dode & Mahmud (2012), learning environment in accord with the objectives and dimensions of the child friendly school has to be, A Right-based in terms of protection from abuse and violence.

- i. Being healthy
- ii. Being loved
- iii. Treated with respect
- iv. Supported in education
- v. And to be free to express their opinions.

### **Feature and Characteristics of Child Friendly School in Nigeria:**

The characteristics of child friendly school:

A right-based child-friendly school has two base characteristics

- i. It reflects and realizes the right of every child. A child seeking school which are actively identify excluded children and help them enroll in school and be included in learning, treating children as subject with right and state as duty-bearers with obligation to fulfill these right and demonstrating, promoting as well as monitor the well-being of all children in the community.
- ii. It is a school that promotes and monitors the well-being of all children; it defends and protects all children from abuses and harm, both inside and outside the institution, sees

and understands the whole child in a broad context; this is concerned with what happens to the child before they enter into the school system.

**Features of child-friendly school:**

- i. It is inclusive of the children: it does not exclude discrimination or stereotype on the basis of difference. It provides education that is free and compulsory, affordable and accessible especially to families and children at risk. It respects and ensures equality of learning for all children especially girls, children of ethnic minorities and those affected by disabilities or victims of exploitation and violence.
- ii. It is effective for learning; it promotes good quality teaching and learning processes with individualized instruction appropriate to each child's developmental level, abilities and learning style, co-operative and democratic learning methods, it provides structured content and quality materials and resources. It enhances teacher capacity.
- iii. It is healthy and productive of children; the school ensures a healthy hygiene and safe learning environment with adequate water and sanitation facilities as well as healthy, classroom, policies and practices and the provision of health service such as nutritional supplementation and counseling. The school should be one that provides life skills i.e. health based education; promotes both physical and psycho-social and emotional health of teacher and learners. It should help to defend and protect all children from abuse and harm so that their experiences will be positive.
- iv. It is gender-sensitive; the school should promote gender equality in enrolment and achievement. It should eliminate gender stereotype guarantee girl-friendly facilities, curricula, texts and teaching learning processes. It should socialized girls and boys in a non-violent environment and encourages respect for each other on rights, dignity and equality.
- v. It is involved with children, families and communities; it is a child's centered school which promotes and encourages child's participation, creativity, self-esteem, self-confidence, psychological well-being and appropriate teaching/learning style and place the needs of the other actors in system. The curriculum content should be such that it responds to the learning needs of objective of the education system and the local context as well as traditional knowledge of families and the community.

The role of the teacher in child friendly school: according to Janguza, Dodo Mahmud (2012).

The specific roles for teachers of child friendly school are:-

- i. Making the class conducive to all learners
- ii. Maintaining updating health records of all learners
- iii. Ensuring a well-ventilated classroom, positive punishment methods and classroom rules in respect behaviour
- iv. Regular checking of attendance, addressing problem as they arise.
- v. Implementing the vision and mission of the school.
- vi. Ensuring child-centered approach through teaching and learning.
- vii. Assessing entry behaviour of the learners.
- viii. Using formative assessment.
- ix. Take into consideration learning needs of the child.
- x. Provide sufficient textbooks and teaching aids.
- xi. Make use of open ended questions and documents learning process and progress.

- xii. Engage in activities for further professional developments.
- xiii. Collaborate with other staff to identify strength and weakness of the children.
- xiv. Involve parents and communities in both class work and for meeting requirements of the school.

### **Facilities required in the child friendly school**

According to UNICEF (2009), child friendly school requires a number of facilities to achieve its purpose, below are the facilities needed to help in developing and achieving the concept of child friendly school.

- i. The facilities should encourage hygiene behavior: Hygiene behavior comprises several small actions, each with its own range of necessary preparations on where and how to take care of oneself hygienically. School rules are such that they often have to visit the toilet during their free playing time, therefore, water and sanitation facilities must be available, simple to use, provisions for hand washing and anal cleansing should be integrated into the entire package of facilities, and water and soap should be available at all times.
- ii. Have appropriate dimensions and adjustments for children adopting designs for children are about making facilities accessible and comfortable for them. Children are smaller and less strong than adults and therefore facilities for children require different dimensions than those for adult e.g. for children weight of doors or hole covers or strength needed to open tap or operate pump can make children not to use the toilets or hand wash stands, therefore appropriate dimension and adjustment need to be made for children.
- iii. Offer enough capacity and minimal waiting time: when there are no enough facilities for the large number of school children, children search for other places to urinate and defecate, “forget” to wash their hands, throw garbage on the ground or drink water from unsafe sources. Ensuring the right capacity is usually not a matter of applying a simple ratio. There are some other important factors that determine the required capacity besides the total number of school children, such as times when children are allow to go to the toilet/drink water/wash hand, the number of adults that are available to help the youngest children to go to the toilet.
- vi. Use appropriate locations for children: finding the right location requires looking at different practical, environmental and cultural aspects. It also requires balancing different consideration, setting priorities and participatory decision making. This can become difficult when different users have different preferences. The formal selection has to be made carefully. Even a well-designed facility faces the risk of not being used if it has a poor considered location.
- v. Address the gender-related needs and roles: for the children gender issues are not such an important issue as for adult. There is little sensitivity towards gender differences until the age of 8-10. For this facility there is need for separating male and female toilets or latrines. It is recommended to conduct participatory female sessions separately from the boys and men so that the girls and women can speak more freely.
- vi. Address the needs for children with physical disabilities: All over the worlds, exclusion of the disable from basic services and facilities, such as sanitation and safe water, can result in isolation, poor health and poverty. All too often special adaptations for disable school children are not incorporated into the design of sanitation and water facilities.

- vii. Stimulate children's leaning and development, and ensure that educational tools are designed in ways appropriate to different ages: learning and development can best be stimulated interactively. When this is done in a stimulating, playful manner, children will be eager to put their new knowledge hygiene and sanitation facilities can provide the opportunity for this interaction and are a potential extension of the learning environment.
- viii. Projects are designed with involvement of all: Active involvement of children, teachers, parents and communities (users) is essential in all phases of the design process; in most countries standardized designs are used for water and sanitation facilities in schools to reduce costs and control quality.
- ix. Have operation and maintenance plane: A well-design facility will lose its effect if it is not properly looked after a good operation and maintenance plan, will not only indicate who is responsible for cleaning. Maintenance and the costs involves, it will also ensure involvement of children, teachers, parents and the community, the continuous process of monitoring and improving hygiene practice at school.

### **Recommendations**

- i. Pre-primary (early childhood) schools should be provided with the needed space; teaching learning equipment's, health and sanitation facilities, and teachers should be well motivated.
- ii. Individuals and companies should come into educational sector to help government build more children friendly school with low cost (school fees) to meet the exponential growth in population leading to overcrowded classroom.

### **Conclusion**

There are different conceptualizations of child-friendly schools with some organizations emphasizing the physical and mental health of children and others giving more attention to education access, equity and quality.

The role of the teacher in the child friendly school therefore is that of having total control over the child and the environment to create the right learning environment, without violence, harassment and maintaining the dignity of the child.

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