

# Evaluation of the Implementation of the Pre-Primary School Components of Nigerian National Policy on Education in Kwara Central, Kwara State Nigeria.

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## **Abstract**

This study evaluated the implementation of the pre-primary school components of the Nigerian National Policy on Education in Kwara Central. The research focused on assessing the quality of the members of staff and the instructional and learning resources used in teaching at the pre-primary level. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, targeting teachers from both public and private pre-primary schools in Kwara Central Senatorial District, which consists of four local government areas: Asa, Ilorin South, Ilorin East, and Ilorin West. Using a random sampling technique, two pre-primary schools were selected from each local government, resulting in a total of eight schools. From each school, ten teachers, including the head teacher, were selected, making a total of 80 respondents for the study. Data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire, the Pre-primary School Policy Components Implementation Scale (PSPCIS). The findings revealed that the quality of staff in Kwara Central is high, with well-trained and competent teachers, and the quality of instructional and learning resources in pre-

primary schools is also commendable. These findings indicate that the implementation of the pre-primary school components of the national policy is effective in Kwara Central. The study recommends that; continuous professional development programs should be implemented; there is need for regular assessment as well as creation of platforms for collaboration among pre-primary educators.

**Keywords: Evaluation, National Policy, Pre-primary**

## **Introduction:**

In African tradition, Early Childhood Education (E.C.E.) was the duty of the immediate family with the active participation of the extended family members. This included morning face washing, tooth brushing, greeting elders, proper meal habits, playing, and resting, as well as the learning of moral codes, physical fitness, and social norms and customs. However, it has taken on a new but formalized dimension with its required inclusion in the Nigerian National Policy on Education.

The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) and other

organizations created an early childhood education curriculum with the goals in mind in order to achieve these ambitious goals suggested for all early childhood education facilities to use. It is important to remember that early childhood education can now be formally provided by private individuals and organizations with official licenses, and the government will take steps to provide quality control and assurance in the system. Though it is relatively new, the government particularly at the state level has started setting up early childhood education centers in all public schools, particularly in South West Nigeria. However, it's unclear if these E.C.C.E. centers are following the NERDC curriculum or not.

Evaluation is the qualitative assessment that people have of something or someone based on the quality of the data that they gather through testing, monitoring, measurement, appraisal, and/or assessment. The goal of evaluation is to examine the complete system and pinpoint a decision-making program's advantages and disadvantages (Ajayi & Adeyemi 2011). This is accomplished through the collection, processing, and analysis of data. The outcomes of the data analysis will be used to develop the system and assess achievement. Additionally, there are issues with how the national policy on pre-primary education is being implemented in the state of Kwara (Osokoya, 2017). This deficiency is due to the government's failure to implement measures that will fulfill the goals outlined in national policy, inadequate infrastructure, and an environment that is not conducive to teaching and learning. Additionally, the number of subpar pre-primary schools in Kwara State has increased as a result of the absence of official oversight of schools to ensure the maintenance of standards. Additionally, tremendous progress must yet be done in the development of pre-primary education specialists.

However, due to the numerous issues that full implementation of the pre-primary school policy faces as well as the demands placed by the requirement for a responsive and relevant education at the pre-primary education level, it has become crucial to assess how the pre-primary component of Nigeria's national education policy is being implemented in Ilorin, Kwara state, Nigeria. The goal and the duty of the government to ensure the smooth operation of pre-primary education have been explicitly stated in the 2004 national policy on education although the Nigerian educational system is riddled with crisis. According to Apanpa (2013), the educational system has been in a state of permanent crisis that has lost quality, efficacy, and functionality over the years. Pre-primary education system in Nigeria is not left out in these crises which tend to make the gains of education less spectacular. The challenges which these problems are precipitated for the nation would be highlighted. Judged against this premise, it becomes very challenging for Nigerians to manage the educational system passed to them by the British since it has become inundated with diverse crises since independence.

### **Concept of National Policy on Education**

The concepts that guide government policymaking in the area of education, as well as the body of laws and regulations that control how educational systems are run, are together referred to as education policy. Education takes place in a variety of ways and through a variety of institutions (Imana, 2013). Early childhood education, kindergarten through grade 12, two- and four-year colleges or universities, graduate and professional education, adult education, and job training are a few examples. As a result, education policy can have a direct impact on how people learn at all ages. The academic study of education policy is called education policy analysis. It aims to provide answers to queries on the societal and

individual goals that education is intended to achieve, as well as the strategies for doing so and the metrics used to assess success or failure.

The national policy on education is a document outlining government policy that outlines the Nigerian educational philosophy. All levels and facets of the educational system's aims, purposes, and orientations are presented (Moja, 2015). The philosophy of education in Nigeria, early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, teacher preparation, adult education, special education, educational services, and funding of education are only a few of the areas it has. Examples of topics up for discussion in education policy, specifically in the context of schools, include school size, class size, school choice, school privatization, tracking, teacher education and certification, pay, teaching techniques, curriculum content, graduation standards, school infrastructure investment, and the values that schools are expected to uphold and model. Education policy concerns also address issues within higher education.

Ejeh (2016) claims that the introduction and actions of European missionaries and colonialists might be linked historically to Nigeria's formal education system. But not only was the scope of education in Nigeria at this time limited; it also lacked a clearly defined focus. In Nigeria, a national policy on education became crucial for giving education a clear focus. Following the national curriculum conference in 1969, where education specialists stated their discontent with the then-existing education systems, which had grown irrelevant to national needs, aspirations, and goals, this need grew even more urgent. A follow-up seminar of professionals in this field was held in 1973 following the conference. The result was a draft document, from which the final, which was first published in 1977, was

derived. The policy was changed in 1981 and 1988 as a result of opposition to the colonial system of education.

The introduction of guidelines and counseling in schools, the promotion of the teaching of Nigerian languages, the introduction of a diversified curriculum with prevocational and vocational technical subjects, and the outline of a national educational philosophy are some of the significant aspects of Nigeria's education policy as of 1998. The 6-3-3-4 educational framework, which mandated that the average Nigerian child spend a minimum of 6 years in primary school, 3 years in junior secondary school, 3 years in secondary school, and a minimum of 4 years in university, was another feature of this particular strategy.

In 2004, the national policy on education was revisited and revised. Although this latest policy incorporated the features of the previous one, the 2004 policy had a few additions; the most outstanding being the 9-3-4 education structure, backed up but the universal basic education. The 9-3-4 structure requires 9 years of basic education, (which combines 6 years of primary and 3 years of journey secondary education) 3 years of senior secondary education and a minimum of 4 years of university education (Osokoya, 2017).

### **Pre-primary Education in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, pre-primary education also known as early childhood education or nursery school has mostly emerged as a result of post-colonial developments. The kindergarten and infant classes, which included groups of kids deemed not yet ready for primary school, were the closest things to it during the colonial era. Because schooling at the time was not dependent on age, there were some six-year-olds or older students in some of the infant groups. Some parents started to feel that nursery schools were necessary after the baby classes were phased

away. However, until recently, there was very little demand for nursery education (Muraina, 2015). The pre-primary education serves as the child's final building block for a seamless transition to the primary school system. Naturally, any weak foundation here will have an impact on other levels. Paradoxically, these levels of education's policy pronouncements are a failure.

According to Nakpodia (2016), pre-primary schools are elite establishments that only a small percentage of the country's children attend, and the owners of these establishments, as well as the children's elite parents, prefer that English be the language of instruction. In Nigeria, the pre-primary education system is mostly a product of post-colonial development. The State Ministry of Education at Plateau, 2004. The kindergarten and infant classes, which included groups of kids deemed not yet ready for primary school, were the closest things to it during the colonial era. Because schooling at the time was not dependent on age, there were some six-year-olds or older students in some of the infant groups. Nursery schools were necessary for some parents once infant classes were phased out.

The belief that the Third National Development Plan's unsettling silence on the subject of pre-school education was one of its main shortcomings greatly impacted the concept of pre-primary education (Apanpa, 2013). The growing number of pre-primary and nursery schools that are prevalent in the nation's cities caused the stillness to become unexplained.

According to UNESCO (2006), pre-primary education is widely acknowledged to have a major impact on children's performance in basic education programs later on. They create the groundwork for learning fundamental reading and math abilities. They significantly lower the rates of dropout and repeat and, when properly implemented, they

create a child's disposition for learning and going to school. The aforementioned claim is supported by (Obayomi, 2014), who said that the child's holistic development is the main goal of pre-primary education. In poor nations like Nigeria, where many parents are unable to provide their children with the stimulating environment they require for their holistic development due to social and economic constraints, this is especially important..

Based on the aforementioned, the goals of pre-primary education in Nigeria are as follows: preparing the child for primary school; acting as a foster home for kids while their parents are at work; exposing kids to numbers, letters, shapes, and colors through play; fostering kids' physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development; and encouraging kids to use their mother tongue, national language, or the language of their environment, as applicable (Imana, 2013).

The "Policy" further specifies that the mother tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate community (LIC) shall be the medium of teaching, and that textbooks and orthography in Nigerian languages would be created to support this. Ironically, though, English is still the predominant language of instruction in the majority of our pre-primary institutions today. The Federal Republic of Nigeria's Constitution and even the NPE provide constitutional support for the importance of language in the teaching-learning process, the value of Nigerian languages for the preservation, promotion, and protection of Nigerian culture and interethnic cohesion, the enhancement of human dignity, and the requirement that learning a major language be undertaken in order to advance national unity and integration (Moja, 2015). The child is alienated from his culture, which the "Policy" is intended to preserve, when the English language is used as the primary language of

teaching instead of the mother tongue. Several language experts have criticized the NPE's failing language policy, which affects not only pre-primary education but also primary and post-primary education levels.

### **Objectives of Pre-primary Education Programme**

Enhancing a child's developmental potential prior to entering primary school is the main goal of the pre-primary education program (Pheko, 2016). They also provided the precise goals, which included, among other things, the following:

- a. To give young children all the care and instruction they require to support their growth in all areas physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional while giving special consideration to children from underprivileged backgrounds, children with special needs, and children from ethnic minorities.
- b. To encourage children's language development by interacting with them actively and providing opportunities for them to use the abilities.
- c. To assist parents and other caregivers by offering the information and abilities required to address the developmental needs of children.
- d. To establish a welcoming and kid-friendly environment at home, in the community, and in educational settings so that kids get the most out of care and learning experiences..
- e. To cultivate and educate skilled human resources and provide them with efficient support so they can perform their duties in early child care and education.

The demands of children's development from birth through the transition to primary school are covered by the aforementioned objectives. An essential component of this continuum is pre-school or pre-primary education, which should be planned and executed with consideration for the

connections and the cumulative process of development. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (2008).

### **Policy Implementation on Pre-primary Education in Nigeria**

A number of factors, including the official recognition of pre-primary education in the Federal Government of Nigeria's 1977 National Policy on Education, led to an unprecedented growth in the country's child care and pre-primary education institutions, or nursery schools. But almost all of the nation's pre-primary education is given by private business owners. While some of these places are known as playgroups or day care centers and look after the kids while their parents are at work or attend other events, the majority of them are actually nursery schools that offer early childhood education. Sometimes a group of parents may pay a teacher to watch their preschool-aged children and teach them the fundamentals of alphabets and numbers. (Muraina, 2015).

This practice, which has all but disappeared, was mostly carried out for financial reasons in the early 1980s and because some parents were afraid their kids would get sick at the many subpar daycare facilities and nursery schools. Officials from the Ministry of Education find it challenging to register these institutions due to differences in their offerings. Few of the businesses just provide child care or child minding services; others double as nursery schools and child care centers. These establishments are now operating as nursery schools for two years or more, after which they are applying for a license to function as primary and nursery schools. The majority of them admit two-year-olds into their nursery divisions, and at five years old or younger, they move them into the main divisions of the same businesses.

According to my own observation, there are a wide range of youngsters residing in these institutions in Ilorin, from one or two in the recently built ones to over 100 in the older ones. Nonetheless, it doesn't take long for recently founded pre-primary institutions to expand and thrive because parents have a strong need for pre-primary education. According to a study conducted in 1995 by (Odulowu, 2014), one of these institutions in Ile-Ife began as a nursery school with just two students. By 1996, there were five students enrolled, and by 1997, when it received approval to function as a nursery school, there were six teachers and 54 students. In 1999, the organization requested and received permission to function as a nursery and primary school, accommodating 105 students together with 12 teaching and non-teaching staff members. There were eight non-teaching staff members and twenty-four teachers working with the 280 students by the end of the 2004 academic year. These days, nursery schools can be found in a variety of locations, including college campuses, business and industrial parks, church buildings, residential buildings that can be rented out entirely or in part for use as primary or nursery schools, and residential buildings that are primarily set up in certain towns as full-fledged primary and nursery schools with their own buildings and premises. The quality and beauty of the physical constructions differ greatly amongst establishments. The facilities and equipment also do this. Teacher quality is often low, with the probable exception of a small number of nursery schools founded by certain institutions, colleges of education, businesses, and a few wealthy individuals. Only a select few nursery schools, particularly those run by educational institutions, for-profit businesses, and affluent people, can afford to hire university graduates as instructors and Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE) holders.

While some employ mostly Grade Two instructors and secondary school dropouts with the School Certificate or General Certificate (Ordinary Level) qualification, the majority of others hire a small number of N.C.E. teachers, if any at all, who are typically underpaid.

Nursery schools that hire qualified teachers especially those run by private individuals often charge high rates, whereas those that charge lower prices typically use teachers who are not as qualified. Many business owners utilize the tactic of hiring inexperienced teachers at cheap pay in order to keep their services within the reach of the majority of parents while yet maintaining a healthy profit margin. Despite the National Policy on Education's mandate that children in pre-primary institutions engage in active learning, the Federal Ministry of Education's 1987 document outlining guidelines for the provision and management of pre-primary education is silent on the curriculum contents of these institutions. When these policies and copies of the pre-primary curriculum are lacking, owners and educators use curriculum that they choose.

Some parents started to feel that nursery schools were necessary after the baby courses were phased away. That being said, until recently, there was very little demand for nursery schooling. For example, a 1981 study by Makinwa Adebusoye on the availability of nursery education in Lagos revealed that only 7.7% of the 948 parents in her study sent their kids to a group care facility or a nursery school. In a related research conducted that same year, Orebanjo found that half of the working mothers in Ile-Ife, a semi-urban settlement at the time, opted to keep their kids at home instead of sending them to daycare centers or nursery schools (Sooter, 2013).

These studies' findings suggest that, at that time, parents did not think highly of preschool education. This was untrue,

though, as Nigerian policymakers and educational administrators realized how important it was for the nation and officially recognized it in the 1977 National Policy on Education, which was issued by the country's military government. The National Pre-Primary Education Policy According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1998 National Policy on Education, early childhood education is also known as pre-primary education and is defined as instruction provided in a school setting to children aged three to five years old before they start primary school.

But almost all of the nation's pre-primary education is given by private business owners. While some of these facilities known as "day care centers" or "playgroups" look after the kids while their parents are at work or attend other events, the majority of them are actually nursery schools that offer early childhood education. Sometimes a group of parents may pay and employ a teacher to watch their preschool-aged children and teach them the fundamentals of alphabets and numbers. This practice, which has virtually completely disappeared, was mostly discontinued in the early 1980s due to financial concerns and parental anxiety that their children would contract diseases in the daycare facilities and nursery schools where many of them were attending. Officials from the Ministry of Education find it challenging to register these institutions due to differences in their offerings. Few of the businesses just provide child care or child minding services; others double as nursery schools and child care facilities. These establishments are now operating as nursery schools for two years or more, after which they are applying for a license to function as primary and nursery schools. The majority of them admit two-year-olds into their nursery divisions, and at five years old or younger, they move them into the main divisions of the same businesses. These institutions range

greatly in the number of children they house, from one or two in the more recent ones to over 300 in the older ones. Nonetheless, it doesn't take long for recently founded pre-primary institutions to expand and thrive because parents have a strong need for pre-primary education. Odulowu(2014) assessed of one of these establishments in Ile-Ife, it began as a nursery school in 1995 with just two students. When it was given the go-ahead to start operating as a nursery school in 1997, it had 54 students and 6 teachers. In 1996, that number had risen to 5. In 1999, the organization requested and received permission to function as a nursery and primary school, accommodating 105 students and 12 staff members, both teaching and non-teaching. At the conclusion of the 2004 academic year, there were an additional. These days, nursery schools can be found in a variety of locations, including college campuses, business and industrial parks, church buildings, residential buildings that can be rented in part or in its entirety for use as primary or nursery schools, and residential buildings that are primarily set up in towns as full-fledged primary and nursery schools with their own buildings. The quality and beauty of the physical constructions differ greatly amongst establishments. The facilities and equipment also do this. Teacher quality is often low, with the probable exception of a small number of nursery schools founded by certain institutions, colleges of education, businesses, and a few wealthy individuals. Only a select few pre-primary schools, particularly those run by educational institutions, for-profit businesses, and affluent people, can afford to hire university graduates as instructors and Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE) holders. While some employ mostly Grade Two teachers and secondary school dropouts with the School Certificate or General Certificate (Ordinary Level) qualification, the majority of others hire a small number of

N.C.E. teachers (if any at all), who are typically underpaid. Nursery schools that hire qualified teachers especially those run by private individuals often charge high rates, whereas those that charge lower prices typically use teachers who are not as qualified. Many business owners utilize the tactic of hiring inexperienced teachers at cheap pay in order to keep their profit margins acceptable while still making their services accessible to the vast majority of parents. Despite the National Policy on Education's mandate that children in pre-primary institutions engage in active learning, the Federal Ministry of Education's 1987 document outlining guidelines for the provision and management of pre-primary education is silent on the curriculum contents of these institutions. Owners and teachers use the curriculum of their choice when there are no such guidelines or copies of the pre-primary curriculum. The majority of private people' conventional nursery schools teach alphabets, numbers, nursery rhymes, coloring, story time and, occasionally, the fundamentals of math, reading, and writing. The majority place a strong focus on the kids' intellectual growth.

Many scholars have made researches on preprimary schools inclusion in Nigeria but this research is purposely to breach the gap of evaluation of the implementation of the pre-primary school in Kwara Central District which marks a difference between this and the previous studies

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Teachers in all the pre-primary schools (both public and private) in Kwara Central District formed the population. Kwara Central Senatorial District comprises of 4 local governments which include Asa, Ilorin South, Ilorin East and Ilorin West Governments Areas. Random sampling technique was used to select 2 pre-

primary schools from each local government making a total of 8 primary schools. Also, ten school teachers including the head teacher were selected from each pre-primary schools giving a total of 80 respondents for this research. The research instrument used for gathering data is the researcher's designed questionnaire tagged 'Pre-primary School Policy Components Implementation Scale' (PSPCIS). The designed instrument comprised of three sections. Section A- background information of the teachers, head teachers and socio-economic background. Section B- investigated the quality of staff members in pre-primary schools, Section C- measured the quality of instructional and learning materials resources in pre-primary schools. The responses were measured using 4-point Likert rating scale as follows: Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1. Both face and content validity of the instrument used for the study were ascertained by experts from the relevant fields. The test retest reliability method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument while the two scores were correlated using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation to give 0.76 reliability index. The collected data were subjected to statistical analysis where the: The research questions were using percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

### **Analysis and Results:**

Research Question 1: What is the quality of the members of staff involved in the implementation of E.C.E curriculum?



Table 1: Quality of Staff in kwara Central

<b>Staff Quality</b>		<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Qualification</b>	NCE	-
	Degree	75.0
	Masters	15.0
<b>Years of Experience</b>	1-5	15.0
	6-10	45.0
	11-15	15.0
	16 and above	25.0
<b>Professionalism</b>	Very high	50.0
	High	50.0
<b>Adoption of Innovative Teaching</b>		
	Very fast	30.0
	fast	70.0
<b>Collaboration</b>	Yes	100.0
	No	-

Table 1 shows the quality of the staff members involved in the implementation of Early Childhood Education Curriculum. It reveals that 75% of the members of staff in the sampled schools are holders of First degree certificate, 15% hold masters degree certificate. Majority of the members of staff 45.0% have had between 6-10years of experience, Professionalism is high among them (100.0%), 70.0% are fast to adopt

innovative teaching and they collaborate (100.0%). This implies that quality of the members of staff in Kwara Central is high.

Research Question 2: What is the quality of the instructional and learning resources involved in teaching in pre-primary schools?

Table 2: Quality of Instructional and Learning Resources involved in Teaching in Pre-primary

<b>Instructional and learning materials resources</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
The instructional materials provided are relevant and aligned with the curriculum	3.90	.302
The learning materials are engaging and interactive for the pupils	2.75	.893
The instructional materials effectively support different learning styles and abilities	3.05	1.124
I am satisfied with the quality of the instructional and learning materials provided at the pre-primary schools	2.85	.915
<b>Weighted mean</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>High</b>

Key: 1 - 2.49 – Low; 2.50 – 4.00 - High

Table 2 shows the quality of the instructional and learning resources involved in teaching

in pre-primary schools. It reveals that the response of the respondents were high on all the items with instructional materials provided relevant and aligned having a mean of 3.90, support different learning styles and abilities with a mean of 3.05. Therefore, the quality of the instructional and learning resources involved in teaching in pre-primary schools in Kwara Central is high.

The quality of the members of staff in Kwara Central is recognized as being high, particularly due to strategic investments in teacher training and recruitment practices. This is similar to the findings of other studies within the area. Ajayi and Adeyemi (2011) found that the region has consistently prioritized the continuous professional development of its teaching staff, providing regular training and capacity-building programs that improve teachers' pedagogical skills and classroom effectiveness. This investment has translated into higher academic performance of teachers across schools and a better learning environment for students. Apanpa (2013) observed that the recruitment process in Kwara Central emphasizes qualifications, experience, and the professional competence of candidates, which ensures that only the most capable educators are hired. This stringent recruitment process, combined with ongoing professional development, has significantly enhanced the quality of education in the region.

The quality of instructional and learning resources in pre-primary schools in Kwara Central is also reported to be high, contributing significantly to the effectiveness of early childhood education. Oduolowu (2014), found that the region has made substantial progress in providing adequate and diverse learning materials, such as visual aids, manipulatives, and digital resources, that cater to the developmental needs of young learners. These resources are designed

to enhance cognitive development, creativity, and motor skills, which are crucial at the pre-primary level. Sooter (2013) also emphasizes that many pre-primary schools have adopted modern teaching aids and interactive learning tools that make lessons engaging and promote active participation among students. The availability of these high-quality instructional materials has a direct positive impact on the learning outcomes of children, ensuring that they are better prepared for the next stages of their education. These combined efforts ensure that pre-primary education in Kwara Central is supported by robust and effective learning resources, contributing to a well-rounded early education experience for children.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends that; to maintain the high quality of teaching staff, it is important to implement continuous professional development programs focusing on emerging teaching strategies, child psychology, and technological integration to ensure teachers remain updated with modern educational practices and can adapt to the evolving needs of pre-primary education; there is need for regular assessment to identify areas for improvement or upgrade; schools in Kwara Central should create platforms for collaboration among pre-primary educators to birth regular workshops, seminars, or peer-review sessions where teachers share best practices and innovative teaching methods.

### **Data Availability Statement**

The primary data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author/s upon request.

### **Contribution/ Originality:**

The management of pre-primary schools, the government, policy makers, Early Childhood experts, the general public and future academics are all expected to greatly benefit from the study's findings, which indicates

that pre-primary education is effective in Kwara Central and should be sufficiently funded.

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