

Assessment of the Extent of Compliance with the Curriculum and Instructional Materials in the Early Childhood Care and Education Centres in Anambra State

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Abstract

This study sought to assess of the extent of compliance with the curriculum and instructional materials provisions and practices in the early childhood care and education (ECCE) centres in Anambra state. Evaluative research design was adopted in the study. A total of 60 ECCE centres in Anambra State were involved in the study. The instrument for data collection was a Kit on the Evaluation of the extent of compliance with the curriculum and instructional materials provisions and practices in the ECCE centres in Anambra state, with direct observation and unstructured interview. The instrument was validated by experts and experienced personnel and used to collect data. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. The reliability estimate.76. Percentages, frequency count and mean statistics were used to answer the research questions, while chi-square and student t-statistics were used to test the null hypothesis. The major findings of the study were that: the private and public ECCE centres operate similar curriculum and instructional material provisions. Among the educational implications of the findings of the study was that well established and well managed ECCE services in both public and private centres could ensure uniformity in curriculum content and curriculum implementation.

Keywords: *Extent, compliance, curriculum, instructional materials, provisions, practices, childhood education, Anambra state.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Effective compliance to the set minimum standards for early childhood care and education(ECCE) program in Anambra State will ensure that children are given the necessary nutrition and health care, linguistic, security, stimulation; protection and education at an early age to enable them attain their fullest potentials. Ikemi

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and Oja (2001) stressed the need for adequate facilities in ECCE centres as unavoidable if meaningful learning is to take place. This is why Ozoji (2005) explains that where materials and equipment are lacking, the child in the class merely drifts through the class achieving nothing. Health and nutrition are indispensable for the overall development of a child. Hence, Health and nutrition conditions must be complied with in the provision and delivery of ECCE as clearly articulated by the minimum standards.

Given the importance of ECCE program, the Federal Government of Nigeria evolved a National minimum standard on early child care centres in Nigeria (Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council, NERDC). The minimum standards are prescribed by NERDC as guidelines for the operation of pre-primary schools. To ensure that children have access to ECCE, the minimum standards on ECCE also specify that the Child Care Centres (CCC) should be accessible. Accordingly, Federal Government of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) has also resolved to monitor, regulate and control the operations of ECCE centres nationwide in line with the minimum standards.

The FGN/UNICEF (1993) situation and policy analysis (SAPA) study reported that 80% of pre-primary institutions were owned by private business and partners. In these centres, the curriculum guidelines were not found, teachers were not professionally qualified and instructional materials were hardly available. Also, the national planning commission (2001) had earlier reported that the inspection of ECC facilities to monitor compliance with established reputations is rare in practice and in many parts of the country non-existent. NPC went further to observe that the facilities received little attention, the qualities leave much to be desired and that high fees excluded majority of the children.

NERDC/UNICEF (2003) inventorization of ECC facilities reported inadequacy of learning materials, unqualified personnel and unconducive environment as part of the problems faced in ECCE delivery across Nigeria. In addition, quality control which is the statutory function of government performed by education officers in the ministries of education was weak. The operators were therefore left to do it their way.

Maduwesi (2005) in her studies on what the schools are doing in FCT, Abuja reported that the contents of the scheme of work were far from the curriculum prescription, no uniformity in content was observed, toys were not common, classes lacked colour and outdoor equipment was hardly used, as the few available ones were dysfunctional and crudely fabricated. The caregiver/teachers were untrained and unqualified and the activities revolved around singing and clapping.

In a national study reported some years earlier, NPC/UNICEF (2001) noted that only 15% of the pre-primary schools sampled applied the national guidelines for establishing pre-primary schools and only 34% of them had functional playgrounds. Ogomaka (2007) in his studies in Imo state on medium of instruction in pre-primary schools, indicated that two out of ninety nursery schools visited used a mix of Igbo and English language, only 5 out of 90 school teach Igbo as a subject (5.6%) and 80 out of the 90 schools adopted English language as the medium of instruction. He further reported that charts and posters dotted the walls of the classrooms and some of the pictures show scenes that are not locally relevant to the children and most of the rhymes recited by the pupils are in English language. In the same study by Ogomaka (2007), 68 (72%) of the 94 teachers encountered in the 40 ECC centres in the rural areas have ordinary level certificates and only 25 (12.5%) out of the 200 teachers and head teachers In the 50 ECC centres sampled in the urban areas have qualifications in pre-primary and primary education methods.

The Federal Government of Nigeria through NERDC prescribed a national minimum standard to guide the implementation and operation of ECCE centres across the country. The guidelines bordered on location, ownership, instructional materials, government involvement, parental and or community involvement, the nature of playground, fencing and office accommodation. This then introduces the need for the assessment of the extent of compliance with the curriculum and instructional materials provisions and practices in the early childhood care and education (ECCE) centres in Anambra state. Therefore, this study determined the extent of compliance with the curriculum and instructional material provisions and practices in the ECCE centre.

Research Questions

To guide the study, the researchers questioned the extent of compliance with the curriculum and instructional material provisions and practices in the ECCE centres in Anambra State.

Hypothesis

The public and private ECCE centres do not differ significantly in compliance with the curriculum and instructional materials provisions.

Design of the Study

The design of the study is evaluative survey. It is designed to evaluate the extent of compliance with the curriculum and instructional material provisions and practices in ECCE centres in Anambra state (public and private). The evaluative model adopted in this study is the Stufflebeam's logic model.

II. Sample and Sampling Procedures

The sample size for the study consists of 20 private and 40 public ECCE centres drawn from the six education zones in Anambra State. The multistage sampling technique would be adopted in the selection of the sample for the study. This is because the population involved is large and it is spread over a wide geographical area. In the first stage, three out of the six education zones were randomly selected viz – Awka, Ogidi and Onitsha Education zones. Each of these zones has not less than three local government areas.

In the second stage of selection, three local government areas were randomly selected viz – Awka South, Oyi and Onitsha North local government areas. In the three local government areas, there are a total of fifty privately owned ECC centres and eighty publicly owned ECC centres.

In the third stage, a total of twenty privately owned centres and forty publicly owned ECC centres were randomly selected using simple balloting with replacement procedure. These are made up of nineteen ECCE centres located in the rural communities and forty-one ECCE centres located in the urban communities and they formed the sample for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection for this study is a kit on the evaluation of the extent of compliance with the curriculum and instructional materials provisions and practices in the early childhood care and education (ECCE) centres in Anambra state (KECIMPEA). It is a combination of questionnaire, observational schedule, (evidence form) and structured interview. The evidence form was used to collect evidence on the key issues to make judgments about compliance to the national minimum provisions in each centre.

The instrument was developed by the researcher with the information got from the review literature and the provisions of the national minimum standard for ECCE in Nigeria.

A four (4) point rating scale will be used both for indicating the extent of problems in the questionnaire and the pitched judgment in the evidence form as follows:- Strongly agree (SA) 4 points; Agree (A) 3 points; Disagree (DA) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point

The instrument was given to three (3) lecturers at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka: two (2) were professionals in Childhood Education and another expert in Educational Measurement and Evaluation to ascertain the face-validity of the KIT. After a critical scrutiny of the items of the kit, their comments and corrections helped in the final development of the instrument.

To ensure the reliability of the instrument, 30 copies of the questionnaire were administered to 10 proprietors in privately owned and public ECCE centres selected from urban and rural areas in Enugu State. Data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha method to find the internal consistency of the instrument. Cronbach Alpha is used for instruments that are not scored dichotomously. The internal consistency estimate for the various clusters of the instrument was .85.

Method of Data Collection

The method of data collection involved a combination of extensive direct observation with interview as well as use of questionnaire. The practice of using multiple methods of data collection is often an appropriate and helpful technique and different methods (such as observation and interviewing), different data sources and even multiple investigators with varying theoretical perspectives can be used).

The researcher and/or assistant visited the sampled centres and used the evidence form to collect evidences of the key issues through direct observation and unstructured interview. The observational and interview data were immediately transcribed into a rating scale using the pitched judgment five point rating.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools of percentages and frequency count, and mean scores, in order to provide answers for the research questions. The minimum level for compliance with the national minimum standard for operating ECCE centres was assumed to be 50%. The chi-square and t-test statistics were used to test the null hypothesis formulated for the study at .05 levels of significance. The square and t-test statistics were used to determine if there were significant differences in the mean scores of respondents.

III. RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in line with the research questions and hypothesis that guided the study.

Research Questions

What is the extent of compliance with the curriculum and instructional material provisions and practices in the ECCE centre?

Table 1: Number and Compliance of Curriculum and Instruction Materials in ECCE Centres by Ownership

Curriculum and Instructional Materials (Facilities) (Key Issues)		Ownership						
		Private			Public			
		Compliance	N	%	Dec.	N	%	Dec.
1. i. Government approved curriculum with caregiver manual, teachers' guides available and in use	Not	13	68.4	Not	12	30.0		
	Complied	6	31.6	Com.	25	70.0	Com.	
	Complied							
ii. Time-table	Not	5	25.0		3	7.5		
	Complied	15	75.0	Com.	37	92.5	Com.	
	Complied							
iii. Chalk	Not	-	-		-	-		
	Complied	20	100.0	Com.	40	100.0	Com.	
	Complied							
iv. Blackboard	Not	-	-		-	-		
	Complied	20	100	Com.	40	100.0	Com.	
	Complied							
v. Slates	Not	8	40.0		23	57.5	Not	
	Complied	12	60.0	Com.	17	42.5	Com.	
	Complied							
vi. Cardboard sheets available in each class	Not	1	5.0		21	52.5	Not	
	Complied	19	95.0	Com.	19	47.5	Com.	
	Complied							
vii. Instructional materials such as:								
viii. Charts	Not	18	94.7	Not	24	64.9	Not	
	Complied	1	5.3	Com.	13	35.1	Com.	
	Complied							
ix. colorful posters	Not	1	5.0		19	47.5		

	complied	19	95.0	Com	21	52.5	Com.
	Complied						
x. Flash cards	Not	1	5.0		21	52.5	Not
	complied	19	95.0	Com.	19	47.5	Com.
	Complied						
xi. Building blocks	Not	3	15.0		18	45.0	
	complied	17	85.0	Com.	22	55.0	Com.
	Complied						
xii. Abacus	Not	2	10.0		25	62.5	Not
	complied	18	90.0	Com.	15	37.5	Com.
	Complied						
xiii. Counters	Not	19	95.0	Not	22	55.0	Not
	complied	1	5.0	Com.	18	45.0	Com.
	Complied						
xiv. Musical instrument available in the centre	Not	13	65.0	Not	9	22.5	
	complied	7	35.0	Com.	31	77.5	Com.
	Complied						
xv. Classroom smooth but not slippery (plastered with cement or other local materials)	Not	14	70.0	Not	19	47.5	
	complied	6	30.0	Com.	21	52.5	Com.
	Complied						
xvi. Classroom size at least 16m ² for 20-25 children for play and interaction and well ventilated with at least two windows	Not	4	20.0		2	5.0	
	complied	16	80.0	Com.	35	95.0	Com.
	Not						
	complied						
	Complied						
xvii Available corners for:							
xvii Nature	Not	1	5.0		2	5.0	
	complied	19	95.0	Com.	38	95.0	Com.
	Complied						

xix. Science	Not complied Complied	14 6 6	70.0 30.0	Not Com.	20 20 20	50.0 50.0	Com.
xx. Health	Not complied Complied	0 20 20	0.0 100.0		8 32 32	20.0 80.0	Com.
xxi. Nutrition	Not complied Complied	1 19 19	5.0 95.0		18 22 22	45.0 55.0	Com.
xxii Drama	Not complied Complied	15 5 5	75.0 25.0	Not Com.	29 11 11	72.5 27.5	Not Com.
xxii Shopping	Not complied Complied	19 1 1	95.0 5.0	Not Com.	38 2 2	95.5 5.0	Not Com.
xxi' Sleeping	Not complied Complied	16 4 4	80.0 20.0	Not Com.	37 3 3	92.5 7.5	Not Com.
xxv Dressing	Not complied Complied	20 0 0	100.0 0.0	Not Com.	34 6 6	90.0 10.0	Not Com.
xxv Kitchen etc	Not complied Complied	14 6 6	70.0 30.0	Not Com.	29 10 10	74.4 25.6	Not Com.
xxv Gender neutral and sensitive charts, posters, pictures available	Not complied Complied	18 2 2	90.0 10.0	Not Com.	35 4 4	89.7 10.3	Not Com.
xxv Child-sized chairs (one per child) and one table per four children available	Not complied	20 0	100.0 0.0	Not Com.	38 1	97.4 2.6	Not Com.

	Complied						
xxi: Statutory records (attendance registers, admission registers, child folders, inventory of centre property caregiver records books etc)	Not complied	18	90.0	Not	23	57.5	Not
	Complied	2	10.0	Com.	17	42.5	Com.
xxx Safe and second office accommodation for storage of center records and instructional materials	Not complied	13	65.0	Not	23	59.0	Not
	Complied	7	35.0	Com.	16	41.0	Com.
	Complied						

The data presented in Table 1 above indicate the number and availability of curriculum and instructional materials owned by private and public ECCE centres in Anambra State. The data show that fifty percent or more of the private ECCE centres had availability of timetable, chalk, chalkboard, slates, cardboard sheets, colorful posters, flash cards, building blocks, abacus, classroom size at least 16m² for 20-25 children for play and interaction well ventilated with at least two windows, nature corner, health corner and nutrition corner, as indicated by items ii, iii, iv, v, vi, ix, x, xi, xii, xvi, xviii, xx, and xxi, while the remaining fifteen items indicated non availability of the required curriculum and instructional materials. The data also indicate that fifty percent or more of the public ECCE centres had government approved curriculum with teachers' guides, timetable, chalk, chalkboard, colorful posters, building block, musical instruments, classroom smooth but not slippery (plastered with cement or other local materials), classroom size at least 16m² for 20-25 children for play and interaction and well ventilated with least two windows, nature corners, science corner, health corner and nutrition corner, as indicated by items i, ii, iii, iv, ix, xi, xiv, xv, xvi, xviii, xix, xx, and xxi while the remaining fifteen items showed non availability of the required curriculum and instructional materials. Items 2ii and iii show that chalk and chalkboard were available in all the 20 private ECCE centres and 40 public ECCE centres.

Table 2: Chi-square Test on Number and Compliance with the Curriculum and Instructional Materials Provisions of ECCE Centers

	Source	Cal. Value	df	Asymp Sig. (2-tailed)
i.	Government approved curriculum with caregiver manual, teachers' guides available and in use	7.545	1	.005
ii.	Time-table	3.317	1	.069
iii.	Chalk	.	.	.

iv.	Chalkboard	.	.	.
v.	Slates	1.642	1	.200
vi.	Cardboard sheets available in each class	15.567	1	.000
vii.	Instructional materials	-	-	-
viii.	Charts	7.174	1	.007
ix.	colorful posters	13.089	1	.000
x.	Flash cards	15.567	1	.000
xi.	Building blocks	5.734	1	.017
xii.	Abacus	16.648	1	.000
xiii	Counters	11.928	1	.001
xiv	Musical instrument available in the centre	10.308	1	.001
xv	Classroom smooth but not slippery (plastered with cement or other local materials)	2.790	1	.095
Xvi	Classroom size at least 16m2 for 20-25 children for play and interaction and well ventilated with at least two windows	3.113	1	.078
xvii	Available corners for	-	-	-
xviii.	Nature	.000	1	1.000
xix.	Science	2.221	1	.136
xx.	Health	7.089	1	.008
xxi.	Nutrition	11.928	1	.001
xxii.	Drama	.043	1	.836
xxiii.	Shopping	.000	1	1.000
xxiv.	Sleeping	1.901	1	.168

xxv.	Dressing	5.193	1	.023
xxvi.	Kitchen etc.	.126	1	.723
xxvii.	Gender neutral and sensitive charts, posters, pictures available	.001	1	.975
xxviii	Child-sized chars (one per child) and one tale per four children available	.837	1	.360
Xxix	Statutory records (attendance registers, admission registers, child folders, inventory of centre property caregiver records books etc.)	7.368	1	.007
xxx.	Safe and second office accommodation for storage of center records and instructional materials	.203	1	.652

The results presented in Table 2 show the influence of ownership on the number and compliance of private and public ECCE centres with the curriculum and instructional materials the provisions as required in the national minimum standards for ECCE. The results show that the private and public ECCE centres in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their curriculum and instructional material provisions in compliance with the requirements of the national minimum standards for ECCE. The calculated chi-square values of 3.317, 1.642, 2.790, 3.113, .000, 2.221, .043, .001, 1.901, .126, .001, .837 and .203 in respect of items 2 ii, v, xv, xvi, xvii, xxviii and xxx are significant at .069, .200, .095, .078, 1.000, .136, .86, 1.000, .168, .723, .975, .360, and .652 levels respectively and therefore not significant at .05 levels of significance. One can also see from the table that the calculated chi-square values of 7.845, 15.567, 7.174, 13.089, 15.567, 5.734, 16.648, 11.928, 10.308, 7.089, 11.928, 5.193 and 7.368 in respect of items 2 i, vi, viii, ix, x, xi, xii, xiii, xiv, xx, xxi, xxv and xxix are significant at .005, .000, .007, .000, .000, .017, .000, .001, .001, .008, .001, .023 and .007 levels and therefore, significant at .05 levels of significance. Items iii, and iv were constant and therefore not computed. Since the calculated chi-square values for exactly half of the items were not significant at .05 levels of significance and two of the items were not calculated because both chalk and chalkboard were available in all the private and public ECCE centres, the null hypothesis of no significant difference is retained. This means that both the public and private ECCE centres comply with the curriculum and instructional material provisions as required by the national minimum standards for ECCE centres.

IV. Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study were discussed under the following headings: Extent of compliance with the curriculum and instructional material provisions and practices in the ECCE centre.

The result of the study indicates that both public and private ECCE centres complied with the curriculum and instructional material provisions as required by the national minimum standards for ECCE centres. The private and public ECCE centres in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their curriculum

and instructional material provisions in compliance with the requirements of the national minimum standards for ECCE.

In ECCE centres, the curriculum guidelines were not found, teachers were not professionally qualified and instructional materials were hardly available which agrees with the finding of the FGN/UNICEF/UNESCO (1993) in a situation and policy analysis (SAPA) study report. Also, the National Planning Commission (NPC) (2001) reported that the inspectors of ECCE facilities to monitor compliance with established regulations are rare in practice and in many parts of the country non-existent.

The finding also agrees with the NERDC/UNICEF (2003) inventory of ECCE facilities which reported inadequacy of learning materials, unqualified personnel and un-conducive learning environment as part of the problems faced in ECCDE delivery across Nigeria. The finding is also in line with the finding of Maduwesi (2005) who carried out a study on what schools are doing in FCT, Abuja and reported that the contents of the scheme of work were far from the curriculum prescription.

V. Conclusions

From the findings of the study and discussion that followed, the researchers came to the conclusion that both the public and private ECCE centres comply with the curriculum and instructional material provisions as required by the national minimum standards for ECCE centres. The private and public ECCE centres in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their curriculum and instructional material provisions in compliance with the requirements of the national minimum standards for ECCE.

The findings of this study have some educational implications for ECCE proprietors, Federal and State Governments, pupils and the society. The results of this study reveal that both public and private ECCE centres did not comply with the required number of curriculum and instructional materials in their centers with regard to the national minimum standards for ECCE. A well-established and well managed ECCE centres in both public and private centres could ensure that the contents of the scheme of work meet the curriculum prescription. Effective monitoring could also lead to uniformity in curriculum contents and curriculum implementation.

The findings of the study could have some educational implications for the private proprietors of ECCE centres. It could make them to accept that for the preprimary schools to be well administered, government would not stop at approving the establishment of the schools but could monitor the activities in the private ECCE centres to ensure that they adhere strictly to the minimum standards set out for running the early childhood education. In the light of the finding, the researcher makes the recommendation that the Federal and State governments should allocate adequate funds to the education sector, to take care of even the early child care education level to enable it provide some essential services to the pupils. Adequate provision of personnel services to acceptable minimum standard depends on adequate provisions of funds to these early child care level of education.

Limitations of the Study

- The conclusions and generalization of this study could be limited by some respondents not being interested in the study, as such they filled the questionnaire haphazardly, which implies that their responses may not be the true position of things in the public, private, urban and rural ECCE centres.
- The difference in the ownership and location of ECCE centres under study could be a limitation to a study of this nature. Generalizing from the opinions of proprietors and caregivers/helpers from public, private, urban and rural ECCE centres on the same issue may not show the true state of early child care delivery services.

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