



Influence of Early Childhood Care Education on the Academic Performance and Retention of Primary School Pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State

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ABSTRACT

The researcher assessed the influence of early childhood care education on the academic performance and retention of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State. The study formulated two objectives, they include finding out the influence of ECCE program on the academic performance of primary school pupils and the influence of ECCE program on the retention ability of primary school pupils in Zaria City. The study employed descriptive survey design, using eight hundred and forty six (846) teachers and thirty one head teachers (31), making the total of eight hundred and seventy seven (877) teachers and head teachers derived from thirty one (31) primary schools found in Zaria City as the population of the study. The sample size for the study was two hundred and seventy eight (278), the sample size was determined using Sample Size Scale preferred by Research Advisers (2006), and simple random sampling was used for the sample selection. Questionnaire containing twenty (20) items statements was designed by the researcher which serves as an instrument for data collection. The instrument was validated, pilot tested and found reliable at 0.76 reliability coefficient. The data collected from the field was subjected to analysis using mean and standard deviation, as well as chi-square for research questions and hypotheses respectively. Findings of the study revealed that; Early Child Care Education program has influence on the academic performance and retention ability of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State. Having found the foregoing, the researcher recommended that; parents should enroll their wards in early child care education programme before they attend the age of six (that is primary school age) to enable the children perform academically better when they proceed to primary school level; and teachers, parents, government and school owners should put more effort to further improve the standard and academic activities of early child care education programme, since it is capable of increasing the retention ability of the recipient.

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INTRODUCTION

In every modern society, it is believed that education is the key to national development and there is a need to maintain every level of education especially the pre-primary stage because it is the bedrock upon which all other educational levels build. Once a child misses that

early stage it is usually difficult for the learner to get back to the basics. Pre-primary education is a common practice in most societies, they make provision for early childhood education programmes of various types for children below the official school age (usually 6 years) mainly to

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prepare them for the rigors of primary education and beyond.

It should be noted that not everyone is in support of early childhood education. Robinson et al. (1998) hold the view that young children are not mature enough to learn complex task or skills that are required of them in the pre-school programmes. On the other hand some research evidence shows that early childhood education has a positive influence in children's affective, conceptual and social development in later years (Baker 1973).

Despite the different views on early childhood by scholars, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) stipulates that it should be included in the mainstream of formal education. Formal education begins from pre-primary education as provided in day-care centres and nursery schools to children aged 3 through 5 years. It is enriched by the informal traditional upbringing given to children from 0 through 3 years which makes them ready for school. Although the government is not directly involved in the establishment of day-care centres and nursery schools, it maintains oversight for the:

1. provision and distribution of policy guidelines for the establishment and management of pre-primary institutions;
2. Production and development of appropriate national curriculum and textbook in Nigerian languages;
3. Approval of relevant supplementary reading materials and teachers/instructors' manuals; and
4. Provision and approval of appropriate certification for work done and training received.

It is based on the aforementioned the researchers were prompted to examine the influence of early childhood care education on the academic performance and retention of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State.

Statement of the Problem

The influence of early childhood education on pupils' academic performance and retention ability has been an issue to various stakeholders and researchers in education. Early

childhood education is an activity that takes place before formal school and the aims is the versatile development of child's personality and also helping the child to be ready and mature for a smooth transition to school that is primary school without hitches. As early childhood programme encompasses both qualitative education and care, which should not be separated but provided in a complementary fashion. Quality early childhood education will earn children a position or a mind of readiness to learn in a formal and non-formal setting, disposition to learn refers to development of social skills and behavior in formal education environment and is also related to the fact that children will start schooling on a solid footing or foundation so as to develop their potentials.

Much concern has been generated about the effect of retention on the future academic performance of pupils in school. One of the most important controversial factor in education today is the decision to retain pupils on the basis of their academic performance on a given test or observation. Most educators favour retention for two major reasons; to remedy inadequate academic progress and to aid in the development of pupils who are judged to be emotionally immature. There is need to find out how early childhood education influence academic performance and retention in the school.

Objectives of the Study

The research work aimed at finding out the influence of early childhood education on the academic performance and retention of primary school pupils in Zaria city. Specifically the research objectives are to:

1. Ascertain the influence of ECCE program on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State; and
2. Find out the influence of ECCE program on the retention ability of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

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1. How does ECCE program influences academic performance of primary school pupils in the Zaria City, Kaduna State?
2. What influence does ECCE program has on retention ability of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were used to guide the study:

1. There is no significant influence of ECCE on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State; and
2. There is no significant influence of ECCE on the retention ability of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early childhood care and education is considered to be utmost important. This is realized by all the members of the community irrespective of their social background and occupations. The first three years of the life of individual are considered to be crucial. At this stage, the child develops the connections to lead to advancement, whether the parent are educated or not, it is vital for them to possess efficient knowledge regarding how to implement the functions of growth and development, and recognize the significant of education. When they will be aware of various strategies in terms of child development, they will be able to render an effectual contribution. Parents are the ones, who are dedicated and responsible to a major extent for the operative growth and development of their children until the age of three. Children are close to their mothers and depend upon them for implementation of all activities and functions (Warren 2007).

When children reach the age of four they begin to realize that outside their home also there is a world which they have to get acquainted with early childhood education helps the pupils to develop their mental capacity and improve their skills and abilities. The social

requirements of an individual begin to augment as he grows. Early childhood education is significant as it makes provision of knowledge and information that aims at the overall development of the individual. This area has brought into existence the work of many theorists, researchers, educationists and economists. Individuals and organizations, who have developed keen interest and enthusiasm in this area, have worked towards its advancement. The problems relating to economic growth and productivity have been a matter of concern and early childhood education is a direct concern as it renders a significant contribution towards the development of future citizen (Calman, 2005).

Early Childhood period is a crucial period in the development of any individual. A child, right from conception is a unique individual with a special characteristics and no children are completely alike in everything not even the identical twins. The early years from 2 to 5 years are critical in children's development. During this period their physical, mental and cognitive development undergoes great changes making significant development. They move from dependence to independence improving marvelous on their motor skills control. They also move from their non – verbal communication to talking with people. During this period they enjoy playing, listening to stories, songs, imitating and learning, trying out new things and enjoying in adventure. They also learn to trust adults more and build partnership with their playmates. Early Childhood period is very crucial in any society and taken to lay good foundation for a child, so as to grow into his/her full potential and contribute to the society.

The period is seen as a turning point in child development for building human capital in the form of the basic social, cognitive and scholastic skills needed for educational achievement. ECE is also seen as a preventive measure to reduce the incidence of remedial classes, or level repetition, getting assigned to special – education classes, and later dropping out of school. As an equity issue ECE is viewed as an equalizer between rich and poor a way of providing children from disadvantaged backgrounds some of the human capital builders

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experienced by children from more advantaged households (Baji, 2015).

The period of early childhood is until the age of eight years. One of the reasons that early childhood is regarded up to the age of eight is to enable him or her acquire a smooth understanding of the entire education from the level of play group to pre-primary, and from pre-primary to level of primary. The early childhood education is an organized form to a major extent. The teachers and the other members of the pre-schools, who are involved in this education are required to be systematic and methodological in their workings and conduct. It requires efficiency in its format and implication.

Early childhood care and education evolved in Nigeria about two decades ago as a special field of focus for developmental intervention. The Government's resolve to pay special attention to this area of human development emanated from the provisions of international instruments and declaration such as the convention on the Right of the child, The world summit for children, The education for All; Declaration and the Millenium Development Goals which presently metamorphos to sustainable Development Goals to which Nigeria was signatory. (Bagudu, 2012).

The aim is to create an enabling environment for the Nigerian child to thrive and develop to his/her fullest potential in line with the national goal and aspiration of building a virile and healthy nation full of bright opportunities for all citizens. This calls for the collaboration of all sectors to ensure fulfilment of all the rights of the Nigerian children. Unfortunately, sectoral collaboration is yet to be synergically coordinated to ensure optimal benefits to all children in Nigeria.

The main purpose of early childhood care and education cannot be over emphasized; it enables children to improve on their self-confidence since they are given opportunity to interact with their peers and adult too, early childhood education enhances independence and helps cut the tendency of children that are highly aggressive during group activities. Children's interactions with their peers and adults help to widen their scope of understanding and they also gain mastery of the world around them

and enhances their retention and performance. Early childhood education is vital to the child, parents and society because it permits smooth transition from home to school because it enables the child to feel free to interact with other people outside his immediate family members. The pre-primary school helps to sharpen the children's cognitive domain through learning hymes and songs; while playing on the slides and swings help in physical development and build their muscles. Structured play with building blocks and puzzles, baby dolls, and teddy bears helps in emotional development of the children. (Maduewesi, 2011).

Nigeria's National Policy on Education has made some tremendous achievement in the area of the official recognition of pre-primary level of education in the policy document and this has made it possible for the establishment of pre-primary schools in Nigeria. This has raised the status of pre-primary education to the lime light, and it is no longer a backyard issue. As rightly stated by Maduewesi (2011) that recognition of the importance of pre-primary education by the federal government has led to a new awareness of the importance of young children as a group requiring and desiring care.

ECCE in Nigerian Policies: Frameworks and practice

ECCE first developed as a concept and practice. However, to secure legal framework for its implementation across the various parts of Nigeria, it needed to be backed up by policies. The two major policies that serve as the framework for practice of ECCE in Nigeria, are the National Policy on Education and the Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD). The policies are based on United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN 1989) to which Nigeria became a signatory in 1990.

The first policy, the NPE, was developed in 1977. Since then, it has been revised six times to respond to national and global demands and changes in the educational sector. The last edition of that policy was printed in 2014. The policy document is described as "a statement of intentions, expectations, goals and standards" for delivering education in the country. (FGN, 2014). The second policy is the Integrated

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Early Childhood Development (IECD) which took effect in 2007. And, whereas the first policy provided specifications and standards for education at various levels in the country, the latter policy (IECD) pays particular attention to ECCD.

The integrated approach means that it is no longer the Federal Ministry of Education and the relevant state-level commissions that will be involved in ensuring the realization of the objectives of ECCE. Instead, several other ministries are included among the stakeholders whose duties include ensuring quality ECCE. According to FGN (2015), this integrated approach involves creating a forum whereby interventions from the following "line ministries" are also considered as crucial: Ministries of Health, environment and housing, women affairs, information and communication, finance, agriculture and water resources, and national planning commission. Together, these components of the government are, each, expected to provide some interventions for the cognitive, physical, social, moral and emotional development of the child.

Another feature of the 'integrated' approach to ECCE is that there is a very broad list of stakeholders involved in the implementation of the goals and objectives of the policy. These are: (i) Parents and Caregivers, (ii) Community members and Leaders, (iii) Religious groups and Leaders, (iv) Relevant Government Ministries and Agencies – at the Federal and State-levels. Such as, Ministries of Education, Women Affairs, Health, Information and National Orientation Agency, Agriculture, Labour, Internal Affairs, Environment and Sanitation, Water Resources and Affiliated Agencies, Justice, and Local Governments. Other stakeholders are: (v) Social Organizations, (vi) Private Sector Organizations, (vii) International Development Partners, (viii) the Media, (ix) Tertiary Institutions, (x) Policy makers and Legislators, (xi) National Population Commission.

Objectives and Rationale for ECCE into Nigeria's Education System

The Early childhood care and education project is definitely positioned to

address the following objectives (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN). 2014).

1. Effecting a smooth transition from home to the school.
2. Preparing the child for the primary level of education.
3. Providing adequate care and supervision for the children while their parent are at work (on the farm, in the market, office etc).
4. Inculcating social norms and values
5. Inculcating in the child the spirit of inquiring and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toy, etc.
6. Developing in the children a sense of cooperation and team spirit.
7. Learning good habits and the rudiments of letters, colours, shapes and forms etc.

These are laudable objectives that can only be realized if the curriculum is prosecuted by specialist teachers equipped with an in-depth knowledge of child psychology and pedagogical skills to know what to do and at the right time. (Amadi, 2013). The spirited efforts to formally launch Early Childhood Care and Education through solid policy frameworks could be situated in the Global (United Nations) plan of protecting the rights of the child. He opines that this forward thrust was occasioned by the barrage of national and international conventions on child's right protection. Zabini, (2012), argues that from birth to age of 6 years' children develop half of their intelligence that they would use in adulthood. Similarly, Maduwesi (2011), posits that the first 6 years of life in critical to the development of all cognitive accessories useful in later stages of life from these psychological and philosophical perspectives.

Concept of Academic Performance

Academic performance is the measurement of pupil achievement across various academic subjects. Teacher and educational officials typically measure achievement using classroom performance graduation refers and results from standardized tests.

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According to Wikipedia (2013), academic performance is the outcome of education, it is the extent to which a pupil has achieved their educational goals. While Novad and Abdullah (2016), define academic performance as that knowledge gained which is assessed by marks by a teacher and or educational goals set by Academic achievement or academic performance is the extent to which a pupil or learner or school has attained their short or long term educational goals completion of educational benchmarks such as primary, secondary, college and bachelor's degrees represent academic achievement.

Academic achievement or performance is commonly measured through examination or continuous assessment but there is no general agreement on how it is best evaluated or which respects are most important; procedural knowledge such as skills or declarative knowledge such as facts.

Furthermore, there are inconclusive results over which individual factors successfully predict academic performance, element such as test anxiety, environment, motivation and emotions require consideration when developing models of school achievements. Now, schools are receiving award based on its students' academic achievements.

METHODOLOGY

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation analyses on the influence of ECCE program on the academic performance of primary school pupils in the Zaria City, Kaduna State.

Subjects	N	Mean	SD
Head Teachers	15	2.844	0.923
Teachers	263	2.631	0.810
Total	278	2.73	0.866

Table one opined the respondents' views on the influence of ECCE program on the academic performance of primary school pupils in the Zaria City. The result revealed that, the total mean of 2.73 is more than the decision mean of 2.5. Thus, ECCE program has influence on the

The researcher used descriptive survey research design. Using the total of eight hundred and forty six (846) teachers and thirty one head teachers (31), eight thousand eight hundred and seventy seven (877) teachers and head teachers derived from thirty one (31) primary schools found in Zaria City as the population of the study. The sample size for the study was two hundred and seventy eight (278), the sample size was determined using Sample Size Scale preferred by Research Advisers (2006), and simple random sampling was used for the sample selection. Questionnaire was designed by the researcher which serves as an instrument for data collection. The instrument was validated, pilot tested and found reliable at 0.76 reliability coefficient. The data collected was subjected to analysis using mean and standard deviation, as well as chi-square for research questions and hypotheses respectively.

RESULTS

In order to answer the research questions descriptive statistical analysis was presented using mean and standard deviation.

Research Question 1: How does ECCE program influences academic performance of primary school pupils in the Zaria City, Kaduna State?

academic performance of primary school pupils in the Zaria City, Kaduna State.

Research Question 2: What influence does ECCE program has on retention ability of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State?

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Table 2: Mean and standard deviation analyses on the influence of ECCE program on retention ability of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State.

Subjects	N	Mean	SD
Head Teachers	15	3.001	0.822
Teachers	263	2.766	0.798
Total	278	2.88	0.901

Table two revealed the respondents' views on the influence of ECCE program on retention ability of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State. The result opined that, the total mean of 2.78 is more than the decision mean of 2.5. Thus, ECCE program has influence

on the retention ability of primary school pupils in the Zaria City, Kaduna State.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of ECCE on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State.

Table 3: Chi-square analysis on the influence of ECCE on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State.

N	χ^2_{cal}	Df	α	P-value	Decision
278	21.100	6	0.05	0.01	Significant

The result on table three above revealed the P-value of 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance. This means the p-value calculated at 0.01 is less than alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that, there is no significant influence of ECCE on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State is rejected. This shown that

the ECCE has significant influence on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of ECCE on the retention ability of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State.

Table 4: Chi-square analysis on the influence of ECCE on the retention ability of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State.

N	χ^2_{cal}	Df	α	P-value	Decision
278	16.121	6	0.05	0.03	Significant

The result on table four revealed the P-value of 0.03 and 0.05 level of significance. This means the p-value calculated at 0.03 is less than alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that, there is no significant influence of ECCE on the retention ability of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State is rejected. This shown that the ECCE has significant influence on retention ability of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Finding of research question one revealed that, ECCE program has influence on the academic performance of primary school pupils in the Zaria City, Kaduna State, and the

result of hypothesis one also revealed that, the p-value calculated at 0.01 is less than alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that, there is no significant influence of ECCE on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State is rejected. This shown that the ECCE has significant influence on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State. This finding is in agreement with Okewole, Iluezi-Ogbedu & Osinowo, (2015) who said that; early child care education promotes learning in all areas.

Result on research question two opined that the ECCE program has influence on the retention ability of primary school pupils in the Zaria City,

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Kaduna State. The result of hypothesis two also revealed the P-value of 0.03 and 0.05 level of significance. This means ECCE has significant influence on retention ability of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State. This result is in conformity with Zabini (2012), who opined that from birth to age of 6 years' children develop half of their intelligence that they would use in adulthood.

CONCLUSION

The researchers concluded that, Early Child Care Education program has positive influence on the academic performance and retention ability of primary school pupils in Zaria City, Kaduna State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the researcher recommended as follows:

1. Parents should enroll their wards in early child care education programme before they attend the age of six (that is primary school age) to enable the children perform academically better when they proceed to primary school level; and
2. Teachers, parents, government and school owners should put more effort to further improve the standard and academic activities of early child care education programme, since it is capable of increasing the retention ability of the recipient.

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