



Inadequacy of Professional Care-giver in the Early Child Education Programme in Nigeria: Causes and Way Forward

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Abstract:

Purpose: This paper examined the causes of inadequate professional care-giver in the early child education programme in Nigeria.

Method: Content analysis method was adopted in the paper. Data used were secondary data. The data were sourced from online and print resources.

Findings: The study revealed that inadequate funding, shortage of tertiary institutions offering early child education programme, poor manpower planning, corruption and ineffective in-service/capacity building programme, poor motivation of care-giver and poor working environment are the causes of inadequate of professional care-giver in the public early child education programme in Nigeria.

Conclusion: The paper concludes that there are many causes of inadequate professional care-giver in the early child education programme which requires prompt government attention at all levels in order to ensure smooth achievement of the aims of the programme in Nigeria.

Recommendation: The government should increase the funding of education in Nigeria and give more attention to the early child education. This will help to improve the production of care-givers in the system.

Keywords: Care-giver, Education, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, Funding.

Introduction

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme is sub-component of the universal basic education programme launched in 1999 in Nigeria. Maduewesi (1999) views early childhood care education as the education offered to children who have not yet reached the statutory age of beginning primary school. He further maintained that it is a semi-formal education arrangement, usually outside home where by young children from about the age of 3 years are exposed through play like activities in a group setting through mental, social and physical learning suited to their developmental stages, until the mandatory age of government approved formal schooling. Ojameruaye (2010) defined Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as that which is the care and education of children from birth to primary school age (5+ or 6years), focusing on children's survival, growth, development and learning, including health, nutrition, hygiene, as well as cognitive, social, physical and emotional development. Estes (2004) describes the early years as a remarkable period of growth and development in the lives of children. In their submission, Oduolowu and Olowe (2011) noted that the early years of children are years of extreme vulnerability and tremendous potentials, during which

adequate protection, care and stimulation are essential to provide the foundation for well-being and development. In providing this foundation during the early years, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) becomes a key actor. From the above, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) can be defined as an organized form of centre or school that provides education that assists the child to develop in physical, social, psychological and mental. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is a form of education designed for Day-care, Playgroup, Crèche, Kindergarten and Nursery children.

The objectives of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) according to (Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) include: to effect a smooth transition from home to the school; to preparing the child for the primary level of education; to provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parent are at work (on the farm, in the market, office e.t.c); to inculcating social norms and values, to inculcating in the child the spirit of inquiring and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toy. **e.t.c.**; to develop in the children a sense of cooperation and team-spirit; and to aid learning of good habits and the rudiments of letters, numbers, colours, shapes and forms e.t.c. The realization of the objective of the early child education programme depends on the availability of the professional care-giver in the country. The care-giver are very important in the attainment of the goals of the early child education because they are the engine room.

The problem of shortage of professional care-giver is hindering the development of public Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Nigeria. A report by independent Newspapers (2019) submitted that there was a deficit of 135,319 teachers at the Early Childhood Care Development Education, 139,772 deficit in primary schools, and 2,446 shortage in Junior Secondary School across the nation. Also, Ogunode and Ojo (2021) observed that shortage of professional teachers (caregivers) is a major problem affecting the management of the early child education programme in Nigeria. **Care-givers** are professionals teachers trained to handle children. These caregivers are in short supply in many public early education centers. In the words of Adenike and Peter (2016) **unprofessional** teachers teach in the early education centers across the country. Revelation from different studies agreed that the early child education programme in Nigeria faces the problem of lack of professional teachers (Ogunode, 2020; Amadi, 2010; Amadi, 2013; Olaleye & Omotayo, 2009). Based on this submission, this paper discussed the causes of shortage of professional care-giver in the public early child education centres in Nigeria.

Concept of Professional Care-giver

A professional care-giver or a qualified care-giver /teacher is one that has the competences in terms of the requisite knowledge, skills, values and conduct established for teachers at the national and international levels. It does not mean any one who is able to read or write, or able to stand in front of the classroom with a piece of chalk facing the writing board and a group of pupils/students. To be a professional care-giver is to be a professional and the tenets of professionalism require that, among others, registered with the recognized professional teachers' body (Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria [TRCN]),the individual has undergone the relevant professional education and has proven expertise in theory and practice as defined by the national and international teaching standards. A professional care-giver must have been trained and certified to practice within a state or a country. A professional care-giver must have the relevant teaching skills and knowledge of managing the children.

In order to ensure production of adequate professional teachers in Nigeria, the Nigerian government declared in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) in section 72 stipulates that, all teachers in the Nigerian educational system should be professionally trained to produce teachers that are highly motivated, diligent and competent with intellectual and professional background for all levels of our educational system that enhance the spirit of enquiry and creativity. The objectives of teacher education are very laudable but it is faced with catastrophic challenges in its implementation and as such may not be tenable due to the type of apathy shown by various stakeholders at all levels. National Policy on Education (2013) also specified the steps to be adopted in the implementation of teacher education objectives but events seem to prove otherwise. The document asserts that all teachers in educational institutions such as Colleges of Education, Faculty of Education, Institute of Education,

National Teachers Institute, and Schools of Education in Polytechnics, National Institute for Nigerian Language (NINLAN) and National Mathematical Centre should be structured to equip teachers for the effective and efficient performance of their duties, effectively and efficiently resulting to higher productivity in instructional delivery but it is indeed still a dream to be actualized in the Nigeria history and policy implementation of teacher education.

Causes of Inadequate of Professional Care-giver in the Early Child Education Programme in Nigeria.

There are many factors responsible for inadequate professional care-giver in the early child education programme in Nigeria. Some of the factors include; inadequate funding, shortage of tertiary institutions offering early child education programme, poor manpower planning, corruption and ineffective in-service/capacity building programme, poor motivation of Care-giver and poor working environment are the causes of inadequate of professional care-giver in the public early child education programme in Nigeria.

Inadequate Funding

The poor funding of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is responsible for inadequate teachers (Ogunode, & Ojo, 2021). Adequate funding is very important in the management of educational programme especially the early child education programme. The development of the early child education programme depends on the amount of funds allocated for the administration and management of the programme. In Nigeria, inadequate funding have been a major problem facing the management of education especially the early child education programme. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) drives its budget from the ministry of education both at the federal, state and local government authority. Ogunode (2020) observed that the annual allocation for the administration of education in Nigeria is inadequate and it is below the recommendation of the UNESCO 26% for developing countries like Nigeria. Amadi (2013) opines that the government in spite of its efforts to set up policy framework for ECCE has not demonstrated enough commitment in terms of funding, monitoring and evaluation as well as establishment and management of ECCE schools, the bulk of which still belongs to private investors whose main objective is profit making. Ogunode, Jegede, and Ajape (2021) submit that inadequate funding is one major challenge facing the implementation of the early child education policies in Nigeria. The budgetary allocation for education in Nigeria is inadequate to implement the entire educational policies successfully, including the early child education.

Shortage of Tertiary Institutions offering Early Child Education Programme

Shortage of tertiary institutions offering programme on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is another **factor** responsible for the shortage of care-giver in the Nigerian Early Child Education centres. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is a new concept in the Nigerian educational system. The Early Child Education is just recently receiving attention for the government and international institutions. This makes the development of manpower in the programme slow. Ogunode and Paul (2021) submitted that limited teachers' education institutions in Nigeria is another factor responsible for shortage of professional teachers in the various educational institutions. The total numbers of higher institutions that specialize in teachers' production for the country is few and cannot produce the needed manpower requirement for the entire educational institutions. Ogunode (2020) observed that inadequate teachers in institutions is another factor contributing to the shortage of professional teachers in the Nigerian educational institutions. The total numbers of teachers in institutions in the country are not enough to produce the numbers of teachers needed in all the forms of Nigerian educational institutions. The number of Colleges of education, institutes of education and faculties of education in the country do not have the capacity required to produce the professional teachers for all the educational institutions in the country.

Poor Manpower Planning

Poor manpower planning for the Nigerian educational institutions is another cause of the inadequate care-giver in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Nigeria. Educational planning as a whole is confronted with many challenges and this is extended to the manpower planning sub-component in the ministry. Inadequate supply of professional teachers in the Nigerian educational sector is affecting the teaching quality. Almost all the Nigerian educational system have deficit of professional teachers. This problem is due to lack of comprehensive manpower planning in the educational sector. Planning of education in Nigeria and especially the planning of manpower for various educational system is always been faced with many challenges (Ogunode, 2020). Ogunode and Adamu (2021) pointed out that the Nigerian government through the various commissions established to oversee the administration of higher institutions in the country has not designed an implementable road map for the production of adequate manpower for the higher institutions in the country. The inability of these agencies to draw the strategic plans of ensuring the production of the right manpower for the higher institutions is responsible for the shortage of academic staff in the Nigerian public higher institutions. Research findings have also shown that Nigerian teachers are almost always in short supply in schools, and their turnover is high because they tend to leave the teaching profession if and when more attractive jobs become available in government, politics or private enterprises (Aghenta, 2001; Adeyemi, 2008). Lack of manpower planning, Brain-drain and poor working environment in the higher institutions in the country are responsible for inadequate lecturers and teachers (Ogunode, Ahmed, Gregory, & Abubakar, 2020).

Corruption

Corruption in the recruitment processes into the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is also responsible for the shortage of care-giver in most of the centres across the country. School administrators within the school and in the administrative level practice what is called ghost worker. Ogunode and Stephen (2021) observed that corruption in the administration of Basic education in Nigeria is responsible for shortage of professional teachers in the country. This is a situation where fake names are manufactured as care-givers which are used to collect salaries while actually the care-givers are not employed in the schools. This scheme is a form of fraud in school administration in Nigeria. This form of corruption is among the factors responsible for shortage of care-givers in most Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centres in Nigeria. Ogunode and Stephen, (2021) observed that many public primary schools in the country do not have adequate professional teachers due to the high rate of corruption in the administration. There are many corrupt practices responsible for the shortage of professional teachers in the public primary schools across the country. Funds diversion is one of the factor, the money released for the recruitment of qualified teachers and other human resources services are diverted by some officials and political officeholders. Another corrupt **practice** in the educational administration that is responsible for shortage of teachers is the problem of ghost workers. The ghost workers syndrome is another factor responsible for shortage of teachers in many primary schools in Nigeria. Ghost workers, is a situation where fake names are been used to collect salaries for teachers that are supposed to be employed in the school. This corruption practices is common in Nigerian educational sector. Egbefo (2012) observed that the senior staff such as the Head Teachers, Principals, Rectors, Provost and Vice-Chancellors who happen to be in charge of their institutions' fund are fond of transferring these fund to their personal bank account for their personal use. They are also involved in placing ghost workers on salaries and over invoicing of given contracts. In Kwara State, the state government has suspended a permanent secretary and four other senior officials over their alleged involvement in the recruitment of 'fake' teachers and suspicious deductions of workers' salary at the state Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). Another factors responsible for the problem of shortage of teachers in Nigerian primary schools is the recruitment process hacked by politicians who submit their candidates for employment even though some of the candidates are not qualified to be employed as teachers. Also, in Imo state, the Governor of Imo state, Hope Uzodimma observed that the state has uncovered over 100 ghost workers, including more than 60 "dead or non-existent persons" in its schools. It is a sad revelation that over sixty (60) persons on the payroll of the

board were found to be dead and non-existent, while another forty (40) persons who are no longer in the service of the State are still on the payroll of the State Government. Furthermore, the report disclosed that over sixty persons who have passed the retirement age of sixty-five (65) are still on the payroll of the Government, drawing salaries and allowances (Ogunode, 2020; The cable, 2020). Kanibin (2019) submitted that in the Nigerian educational context, ghost workers are employed, vouchers are inflated, sex for mark practiced, supplies of educational materials faked, ethnic based appointment and promotions practiced, withholding of retirement and salaries made common.

Ineffective in-service/Capacity Building Programme

In-service education is an important means of developing and improving care-givers' or teachers' efficiency and effectiveness. It could be in form of study leave for a period of time. In the case of study leave, it could be with pay or without pay. It could also be part-time or full time course in a tertiary institution. The other form of in-service education for teachers is by inviting some specialists in certain aspects of education to talk to the teachers. It could be on how to improve their teaching, school administration, curriculum planning and implementation among others. The teacher needs constant interaction with other professional colleagues in order to keep abreast of development in education. It is unfortunate that the current in-service programme in some basic education schools is not effective to support the development of the care-giver. Also, the capacity building programme designed for the training and retraining of care-giver in most states across is not effective as a result of poor funding and other challenges.

Poor Motivation of Care-giver

Poor motivation of teachers is another factor responsible for shortage of professional teachers in the Nigerian educational institutions. Nigerian teachers are poorly motivated and this is causing many professional teachers to leave the sector. Moshinkie (2001) defined motivation as the attention and effort required to complete a learning task and the application of new materials to the work site. Success or failure in education can be attributed to motivation, this is because a teacher may be motivated to increase or decrease the vigour of his activities (Ezenwa, 2006). Mmadike (2006) found excess workload; low morale; inadequate remuneration; unattractive prospects for promotion and inadequate working conditions as sources of job dissatisfaction among university teachers in Nigeria.

Poor Working Environment

The poor working environment in most public Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centres across the country is discouraging professional care-givers to pick up placement in the various centres. Many of the few professional care-givers in Nigeria do not want to work in the available early child education because the centers are not conducive and attractive. Most of them would rather pick up employment with international organization that deals with early child education in Nigeria. Musa (2019) lamented the facilities and the environment of many public early child education centers as unattractive and **need** government intervention.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the causes of inadequate professional care-givers in the public early child education in Nigeria. The paper concludes that inadequate funding, shortage of tertiary institutions offering early child education programme, poor manpower planning, corruption and ineffective in-service/capacity building programme, poor motivation of Care-givers and poor working environment are the causes of inadequate of care-giver in the early child education programme in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the causes identified, the following were suggested:

- a. The government should increase the funding of education in Nigeria and more attention be given to the early child education. This will help to improve the production of care-givers in the system.

- b. The government needs to establish more teacher education institutions and permit more tertiary institutions across the country to offer programme on early child education.
- c. The government should fight all forms of corruption in the administration and management of early child education. Recruitment in the educational institutions should be done objectively and void of political influences.
- d. The government should develop a strategic manpower blue print to give direction for the teacher manpower planning and implementation in the country. This will help to produce right quality of early child education care-givers in Nigeria.
- e. The government should make early child education centres conducive and attractive. This will motivate care-giver to work in the centres and reduce the brain-drain problems in the system.
- f. The government should increase the salaries of care-giver. This will help to retain the best brain in the early child education schools across the country.

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