

Full length Research Paper

Problems encountered in the management of nursery and primary schools in Delta State, Nigeria

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The study examined the problems encountered in the administration of nursery and primary schools in Delta State. The research findings were collected through the use of questionnaire which was distributed to the proprietors and proprietresses of the five selected schools. These nursery and primary schools are owned by the government and private individuals. Findings show that these schools are confronted with such problems as shortage of funds, inadequacy of some school facilities, shortage of teaching staffs and lack of cooperation by the parents. It was therefore recommended that the administrators should present their problems to the government in terms of finance so as to meet the objectives of nursery and primary education. Parents also should cooperate with administrators to take care of their children at home and also help in providing adequate materials for the children.

Key words: Problems, management, pre-school education, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Formal education begins from nursery or pre-primary education which is the education given in day care centers and nursery schools to children aged between 0 to 6 years. It is enriched by the informal traditional up-bringing given to the children of age 0 to 3 years which prepares them for school. The government is not directly involved in the establishment of daycare centers and nursery schools.

The foundation of education of the child is the pre-school education which forms an integral part of his or her early education which may be formal or informal and which is given in an educational institution to children aged 3 to 5 years plus prior to their entering into the primary school (National Policy on Education, 2004). This educational level of the child provides for the physical, motor, health, nutritional, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional and social development of the pre-school child. If child education can provide these vital necessities which are fundamental in human life, it is not therefore unlikely to have an important and strong relationship with the pupils' performance at the primary school level and perhaps at

the secondary and tertiary levels (Nakpodia, 2003).

The Universal Basic Education Act of 2000 cites nursery education (ECE) which has to do with early education of children between ages one to five as an integral part of basic education. It represents the first important step in achieving the goals of education for all (EFA). Since it is the foundation for a life-long education, government is expected to be actively involved in providing it for the younger children. Evidence on the ground, however, has shown that parents, private individuals and religious bodies constitute the largest proprietorship of ECE, while government agencies provide a paltry 10%. Adenipekun (2004) notes that this abysmally low government's participation in proprietorship of daycare centers and nursery schools deny the poor, disadvantaged and marginalized groups access to ECE (Early Children Education). In fact, the nursery education which falls under pre-primary education, provides for physical, health, nutritional, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional and social development of the pre-school child (Nakpodia, 2003).

Primary means first and the first stage of formal education. Primary education studies as a field of study has attracted much attention and concern from the government, educationists and parents because this primary education level is most crucial and fundamental to

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Nigeria's future educational stability. It serves as the springboard and holds the key to the success or failure of the whole system of our education. Its popularity is evidenced by the launching of the universal primary education (UPE) by the federal government in 1976. Though its implementation is not without hitches, it has recorded tremendous success hence; federal government has taken various devices and means to protect this level of education.

Today, the federal ministry of education has established a National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) with its headquarters in Kaduna. The state ministries of education have their own units of this board. Local government authorities also have their constituted bodies charged with the coordination of primary education matters along the state and Nigeria's formulated policies.

Primary education studies are also becoming popular in Nigerian tertiary institutions. A good number of Nigerian universities and colleges of education have units or departments that teach or undertake research activities related to primary education. In fact, two or four universities in Nigeria now offer courses leading to a degree in primary education. Our colleges of education are not left out in this race to improve the quality of education at the primary school level by introducing the course in their curriculum. Most of these colleges of education are of the view that every trainee teacher ought to be exposed to the content, methods, evaluations and administration of education in "the foundation years" of our school system. From these explanations, it thus seems apparent that the study of primary education has gained more attraction and interest among researchers in the Nigerian educational scene.

Statement of problem

One of the shortcomings of primary education is that there are unqualified teachers who did not attain their degrees from the university, polytechnics and colleges of education. Also, primary education is suffering from lack of finance from the state government. This contributes to the lack of basic instructional materials e.g. textbooks, well equipped libraries, and facilities which include chairs, desks and tables in primary schools.

In the primary schools, some of the pupils sit on the floor to receive lessons while others stand. Some even have to bring chairs from their homes and after school, they take them back. Some chairs do not have desks to write on, this is common in public schools. Overcrowded classrooms are another major problem. There is not enough space for proper teaching and learning to take place and not enough ventilation. The problem is compounded by the uncontrolled enrollment of children in schools.

Further problem is the mushrooming of private primary

schools in the country, which could have been a solution to the problem but these fees are so much that these kinds of schools are meant for the rich only. The average or poor families cannot afford such exorbitant fees.

Research questions

The following questions were raised in the study:

- (1) Are the problems encountered in the management of nursery schools similar to those encountered in the management of primary schools in the state?
- (2) Does lack of competent teachers pose a problem in the management of nursery and primary schools in the state?
- (3) Does the lack of school facilities pose a problem in the management of nursery and primary schools in the state?

Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- (1) The problems encountered in the management of nursery schools are different from those faced in the management of primary schools in the state.
- (2) Lack of competent teachers does not pose a problem in the management of nursery and primary schools in the state.
- (3) Inadequacy of school facilities materials does not pose a problem in the management of nursery and primary schools in the state.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The importance of early years in education has received recognition for many years and the significance of these years in the lives of the children is beyond argument. In Nigeria, the demand for this early childhood education has now taken a new turn. The society now realizes the importance of the nursery years for the subsequent growth and development of the child and the effects of lack of care and education of those children throughout their lifetime.

Nursery education as a new era of educational institution in Nigeria is therefore likely to be confronted with some problems. Weber (2005) in his studies on human intellectual development across cultures has shown that the role of early learning situation of children is important through play devices like toys and other learning materials. Penfield (2004) argues that the early age is the best age for learning second and third languages in nursery and primary institutions. Children have the greatest opportunity of learning languages other than

their mother tongue. Such acquisition of other ethnic languages will promote interpersonal understanding between one child and the other, widen their chances of making friends and lay a good foundation for healthy inter-tribal and inter-ethnic relationships. According to Lawal (2006) nursery education in Nigeria is purely and entirely informal and is left to private operators, parents and the local community.

The primary level of education is important because it is the key to the success or failure of the education system as a whole. Primary education is at the heart of the concept of basic education which is the dominant idea behind the concept of universal education. Its popularity is evidenced by the launching of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) by federal government in 1976. Today, in recognition of its impact on subsequent levels of education, the national education commission like other commissions has been established. It has coordinating authorities at the state and local level to implement nationally formulated policies.

Plato advocated that at the primary stage for children seven to ten years old, the curriculum should include games, gymnastics and sports, music, arts and crafts, story-telling for moral and spiritual development. Quintilian states that the teacher is a model and should also assume the position of a parent. Hence, teachers in nursery and primary schools have in the last two decades received greater attention and concern from the government, educators and parents in the state and Nigeria as a whole.

Concept of nursery education

Formal education begins from nursery or pre-primary education which is provided by daycare centers and nursery schools to children aged between 3 to 5 years. It is enriched by the informal traditional upbringing given to children from 0 to 3 years which prepares them for school. As alluded to earlier, government is not directly involved in the establishment of daycare centers and nursery schools.

The foundation of education of the child is the pre-school education which forms an integral part of his or her early education, which may be formal or informal and which is given in an educational institution to children aged 1 to 5 years prior to their entering the primary school. This educational level of the child provides for the physical, motor, emotional and social development of the pre-school child. If the child's education can provide these vital necessities which are fundamental in human life, it is not therefore unlikely to have an important and strong relationship with the pupil's performance at the primary school level and also at the secondary and tertiary levels (Nakpodia, 2004).

The Universal Basic Education Act of 2000 cited pre-primary or nursery education which has to do with the

early education of children between ages 1 to 5 years as an integral part of basic education. It represents the first important step in achieving the goals of education for all (EFA). Since it is the foundation for a lifelong education, government is expected to be actively involved in providing it for the younger children. Evidence on ground has shown that parents, private individuals and religious bodies constitute the largest proprietorship of ECE.

While government agencies provide a paltry 10%, Adenipekun (2004) notes that this abysmally low government's participation and involvement in proprietorship of daycare centers and nursery schools deny the poor, disadvantaged and marginalized groups access to ECE.

The concept of primary education

Primary education studies as a field of study has attracted much attention and concern from the governments, educationists and parents because this primary education level is most crucial and fundamental to Nigeria's future educational stability. It serves as the springboard and holds the key to the success or failure of the whole system of our education. Its popularity is evidenced by the launching of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) by the federal government in 1976. Though its implementation is not without hitches, it has recorded tremendous success hence federal government has taken various steps to protect this level of education.

The federal ministry of education has established a National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) with its headquarters in Kaduna. The state ministries of education have their own units of this board. Local government authorities also have their constituent bodies charged with the coordination of primary education matters along states and nationally formulated policies.

Primary education studies are also becoming popular in Nigerian universities and other tertiary education. A good number of Nigerian universities and colleges of education have units or departments that teach or undertake research activities related to primary education.

Pre-primary or nursery education

- (1) Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school
- (2) Prepare the child for the primary level of education
- (3) Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work
- (4) Inculcate social norms
- (5) Inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys etc.
- (6) Develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit
- (7) Teach good habits, especially the basic of a healthy lifestyle.

(8) Teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colors, shapes, forms etc through play.

Primary education

The general objectives of primary education in Nigeria are:

- (1) The inculcation of permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively.
- (2) The laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking
- (3) Citizenship education as a basis for effective participation and contribution to the life of the society
- (4) Character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes
- (5) Developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment
- (6) Giving the child the opportunity for developing manipulative skills that will enable him or her to function effectively in the society within the limits of his or her capacity.
- (7) Providing basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

THE CONCEPT OF MANAGEMENT

The concept of management can be defined in many ways. This is so because management has many literatures with myriads of definitions; and no one of these can be said to be so good that it can represent an error proof concept capable of being used, quoted and adopted as the best. As there are many definitions of management so are there many authors on the subject. Observation shows that though there are many definitions of management one thing is common and glaringly clear about all of them. That is management is about the accomplishment of organization objectives/ goals through the utilization of people or members of the organization.

Ifechukwu (1986) cited by Yesufu and Ihimekpen (2009) defines management as the act of getting things done through efficient planning, organizing, controlling and coordinating of activities of people in the organization. To be able to attain these goals and objectives, it is only appropriate that those in the organization move in the direction that the organization is primarily established to attain. This, by implication, calls for the concept of planning.

Associated closely with planning is organizing. This means that planning shall be meaningless if the people, materials, money and other activities are not properly organized. It means that the organization must be organized in terms of departments, work relationships, financial resources, and infrastructural and interpersonal

relationships in the organization. Without proper organization of people, infrastructure, roles and status etc, the establishment is sure to fail.

Good management, as earlier defined, must be characterized by the existence of control. Control should be understood to mean the process of monitoring, identifying and evaluating the planned standards and what is eventually going on. Control is the process of ensuring that all activities are on course as planned and that all identified deviations are quickly or promptly rectified or resolved. Effective control and coordination can only be done if people are properly motivated.

Principles of management

1. Responsibility: This principle is concerned with the idea that at all times and at all levels of management all persons in their own area of specialization and status must act responsibly. That is every member in an organization must know his or her area of authority.
2. Delegation of authority: This is the process through which a subordinate to a super ordinate is entrusted with some responsibility backed up by some authority with which they said subordinate is able to carry out the assigned responsibility. The transfer of responsibility and authority is usually influenced by the subordinate's competence, expertise, position of responsibility and roles.
3. Communication: Most of the organizations are open social systems and as such there must be ways of passing information from one source to the others. The process of disseminating information from person to another person is known as communication. Effective communication allows and encourages the smooth and fast flow of information in the organization. Communication is premised on the idea of democracy. This means that it allows many to partake in the organization's management.

Pressure to expand nursery and primary schools in Nigeria

In Nigeria today, there are more illegal than approved nursery and primary schools and they keep on springing up in one form or the other. The question as to what led to the expansion of these illegal nursery and primary schools must be considered. The answer seems to lie in various economic and social changes which have put pressure on the structure of the family and the roles of its various members, especially the mother.

Children from smaller families need the companionship of others of a similar age. Even in the three or four child family, the spacing of children is likely to limit the school going age of siblings.

The second important change is the consistent trend

towards early marriage. This has meant that the family responsibilities of women are over at an earlier stage in their lives than in the past. The lack of status involved in the full-time care of young children at home is a frequent complaint of mothers.

Changes in patterns of employment are also beginning to have a direct effect on the mothers' desires and abilities to take full responsibility for the care of their children. Lastly, the decline of the extended family has probably contributed to the isolation felt by the young mother and the extent to which she alone must take responsibility for her children.

Facilities in nursery and primary schools

As stated earlier, facilities are referred to both human and non-human facilities. Human facilities include the school personnel ranging from the headmaster or headmistress, the class teachers and the school helpers to the non-teaching personnel. A quarterly journal of the Federal Ministry of Education Vol. 4, No. 2 states that the headmasters should have training in childhood education and at least five years of teaching experience and administrative experience in a pre-school institution. Class teachers should be trained in the area of childhood education. The non-teaching staff includes the nursing sisters or medical doctors, clerks, messengers, drivers, cleaners, typists, security men etc.

Non-human facilities include the school buildings and other materials and equipments in the school. These facilities are to facilitate the growth, development and acquisition of nursery and primary scholars, school administrators must provide a conducive environment. A one story bungalow should be more appropriate for a nursery school and a large environment or building will be appropriate for primary schools.

The classrooms should be well ventilated and spacious enough to accommodate indoor activities and to facilitate easy movement. Apart from the classrooms, rooms should be provided for staff, toilet facilities for children and adults, a sick bay, kitchen and others. Materials such as charts, posters, light weight child-size movable chairs and tables, picture books, and plastic clay for creative activities are provided, as well as playing materials such as toys, football and various equipments.

Establishing nursery and primary schools in Nigeria

The importance of nursery and primary education cannot be overemphasized in the life of the child. As a result, we advocated for the establishment of more nursery and primary schools in villages, towns and urban cities. We also suggest adequate governmental practical support in the establishment of nursery and primary education in Nigeria. However, individuals, religious bodies, clubs,

organization, and association of women of various background, etc, should be involved in the establishment and organization of nursery and primary schools in Nigeria. In addition, they should take into consideration some of the recommendations of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) on the issue of establishing nursery and primary institutions (Okorodudu and Okorodudu, 2002).

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Research design

Since this research is descriptive, a survey design was therefore used, which investigated the various aspects of the problem studied. Descriptive survey collects and analyzes information in a national setting

Population

These are 90 public nursery and primary schools in Delta State. These are the schools sponsored by the government.

Sample

For the purpose of this study, five schools were randomly selected of which two are financed by individuals and churches while the other three are owned by the government.

Instrument

Questionnaire were used as the basic instrument for data collection, headmasters or proprietors of these schools were made the respondents since the focus of the study is the problems facing the management of the schools and they are therefore in the best position to supply information. The questionnaire was divided into five sections. The first section deals with the general information about the school, the second section deals with the information about the proprietor or proprietress. The third section deals with the information about the teachers, while the fourth section is concerned with the available facilities in the schools. And the last section deals with the various shortcomings of the public nursery and primary schools(Appendix).

Validity of the instrument

The researcher's instrument was validated by experts who are experienced persons in the field of educational planning and management. Their suggestions, comment, criticism and remarks were used to validate and improve the content of the instrument.

Reliability of the instrument

The reliability of the instrument was established using split half technique. The instrument was administered ones to a sample of 20 public nursery and primary schools outside the study area. Their

Table 1. Are the problems encountered in the management of nursery schools similar to those faced in the management of primary schools in the state?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage	Hypothesis
Yes	66	88	
No	9	12	Rejected
Total	75	100	

Hypothesis 1: The problems encountered in the management of nursery schools are different from those faced in the management of primary schools in the state.

Table 2. Does inadequate/lack of competent teachers pose a problem in the management of nursery and primary schools in the state?

Items	Yes	%	No	%	Total	Hypothesis
Question 7 Are there enough teachers to teach the pupils in the school?	57	76	18	24	75	
Question 8 Are there more female teachers than male teachers in nursery and primary school?	63	84	12	16	75	REJECTED
Question 9 Are there competent teachers in your nursery and primary schools?	42	56	23	44	75	
Total	162	72	63	28	225	

Hypothesis 2: Inadequate/lack of competent teachers does not pose a problem in the management of nursery and primary schools in the state.

responses were collated and analyzed on the basis of even and odd number item. The paired even and odd number item scores were collated using Pearson „r“ statistic and yielded reliability coefficients of 0.84 and 0.85 respectively for each section of the instrument. Both coefficients were stepped up using Spearman Brown prophesy formula $r^2 = 2r/1+r$ which revised the coefficient of reliability to 0.87. These high positive reliability coefficients were indications or evidence of the reliability of the constructed instrument.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of seventy-five respondents were sampled for this study and data collected were presented after being analyzed with the simple percentage method.

From Table 1, 66 respondents representing 88% of the sample agreed to the fact that the problems in management of nursery and primary schools are similar (same). However, only 9 respondents making up 12% of the sample responded negatively. This implies that problems encountered by school heads/administrators in the management of nursery and primary schools are quite similar or the same. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected since the percentage of positive responses outweighs that for negative responses.

In Table 2, 162 respondents were affirmative which constitute 72% of the total responses as “YES”. On the other hand, only 62 responses were negative and this comprises 28% of the total response obtained during the investigation. The information to a large extent shows that the lack of inadequacy of competent teachers pose a problem in the management of nursery and primary schools. The null hypothesis is also rejected; the percentage for positive responses (72%) is more than the percentage obtained for negative responses (28%).

In Table 3, whereas 155 positive responses were obtained (68.9% of total response) out of the 225 responses, only 70 responses (representing 31.1% of total responses) were negative. The implication of the analysed data signifies that facilities/materials pose a problem in the management of nursery and primary schools. As shown in Table 3, the null hypothesis is rejected since the data presented indicates a fairly higher percentage of positive responses than negative answers.

From the results, we were able to present the data obtained as shown in Tables 1 to 3, after careful analyzes using the simple percentage method which were interpreted for easier understanding. Furthermore, we discuss the results of our findings using the works of

Table 3. Does the lack of inadequacy of school facilities/materials pose a problem in the management of nursery and primary schools in the state?

Items	Yes	%	No	%	Total	Hypothesis
Question 10 Are there enough facilities for the pupils to use?	55	80	15	20	75	
Question 11 Does lack of instructional materials pose a problem in the management of nursery and primary schools?	60	60	30	40	75	REJECTED
Question 12 Are the instructional materials well kept?	50	66.7	25	33.3	75	
Total	155	68.9	70	31.1	225	

Hypothesis 3: The lack of inadequacy of school facilities/materials does not pose a problem in the management of nursery and primary schools in the state.

other authors and research findings from previous investigations as a database for valid judgment and decision-making.

From Table 1, the data obtained revealed that the problems school heads encountered in the management of nursery schools are quite similar to those found in the management of primary schools.

From Table 2 the information contained shows a significant higher percentage of positive responses (68.9%) than negative responses (31.1%). This implies that lack of funds/finances poses a problem in the management of nursery and primary schools. Further-more, the finding is in line with the opinion of Chukunweiken (2002) who showed that the Nigerian primary education is being crippled due to declining financial support from government and individuals.

The data presented in Table 2 showed that the lack and inadequacy of competent teachers poses a problem in the management of nursery and primary schools. This is in cognizance with the findings of Omoraka et al. (1997) who stated that the insufficient number of qualified or professionally trained teachers in nursery and primary schools does to a large extent affect managerial efficiency in such schools.

A critical look at Table 3 will reveal that the data obtained for the third research question and hypothesis indicates more positive responses (about 68.9%) which implies that the lack of school facilities is one of the managerial problems encountered by proprietors and proprietresses of nursery and primary schools. This result collates with the opinion of Peretomode, (1991). In his words; "the unavailability of educational facilities in our primary schools can jeopardize the success of the whole system... from administrative function to teaching and learning."

Finally, the findings of this research revealed that the prevalence of pupils and teachers' indiscipline also poses a serious problem in the management of nursery and primary schools in the sampled area. This is not different from the opinion of Peretomode, (1991) who stated that indiscipline is a cankerworm that cripples the effectiveness of managerial and administrative function in our nursery and primary schools.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With all the problems encountered in the management of nursery and primary schools in Delta state, Nigeria, it is therefore the view of this research to bring forward a few recommendations for the development of nursery and primary education so that their objectives are not defeated.

The establishment of nursery and primary schools should be eliminated from the profit oriented enterprise; rather school owners or government should be concerned with the teaching and learning of the children. The administrators should manage the generated fund judiciously so that they are able to provide adequate facilities needed for the children.

Parents must or should also cooperate with the proprietor/proprietress by paying their children's school fees so as to reduce the problem of finance. Apart from this, they must contribute their own effort to ensure the development of these schools.

From the research findings, it is evident that the government has not done enough to encourage nursery and primary education in terms of finance, provision of adequate materials, support and supervision.

Efficient organization of the space available in the

nursery schools and selection of suitable equipment are of great importance if the nursery and primary schools are to be effective. Therefore, the school administrators must provide a conducive environment.

Since at the early age children are very susceptible to infections, it is recommended that daily health inspections be conducted by the teacher or nurse in the school. The parents must also see to the health of their children as they must be properly taken care of at home before going to school.

The teachers must be paid regularly and only professional and qualified teachers should be employed. Therefore, if nursery and primary education is to be effective, there must be provision for adequate facilities for the schools and the class teachers should be trained in the area of nursery and primary schools.

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APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEADMASTERS / PROPRIETORS AND TEACHERS OF NURSERY AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Instructions: Please, indicate your response against each statement by ticking () in the appropriate column.

Section I

Information about the school

1. State the year the school was established

2. Is the school in your locality public or private
3. Is the school well equipped with materials to motivate pupils to learn?
Yes No

Section II

Information about the school proprietor/proprietress or head teachers

4. Is the school headmaster/proprietor efficient in managing the school? Yes No
5. Does the school headmaster/proprietor have administrative skills in managing the school?
Yes No
6. Is the headmaster in your school a graduate teacher? Yes No

Section III

Information about the teacher in the nursery and primary school

7. Are there enough teachers to teach the pupils in the schools? Yes No
8. Are there more female teachers than male teachers in nursery and primary school? Yes No
9. Are there competent teachers in your nursery and primary schools? Yes No

Section IV

Information of school facilities in nursery and primary schools

10. Are there enough facilities for the pupils to use? Yes No
11. Does lack of instructional materials pose a problem in the management of nursery and primary schools? Yes No
12. Are the instructional materials well kept?
Yes No

Section V

General information

13. Should nursery and primary school pupils be encouraged by all in the community? Yes No
14. Does nursery and primary schools in your community lack proper management? Yes No
15. Are the facilities available enough to motivate pupils in the schools? Yes No
16. Has the government done enough to encourage nursery and primary schools in your locality?
Yes No
17. Are there enough space management in nursery and primary schools in your area? Yes No
18. Are parents regular in the payment of their children fees? Yes No
19. Is daily health inspection conducted by teachers on the pupils in the schools? Yes No
20. Are teachers paid regularly in nursery and primary schools in your locality? Yes No