



## **FUNDING ISSUES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

In Nigeria, almost every year, 2% of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Universal Basic Education fund is given to pre-primary education and this money is often not easily accessible. The 2% dispensed to Early Childhood Education by the UBE Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) is grossly inadequate for fundamental instruction conveyance in compliance with global standards. This accounts for the paucity of public pre-primary (nursery) schools across the federation. This study examined the funding issues associated with early childhood education in Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design to observe and describe the funding situation of early childhood education programme in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised the infinite population of early childhood education programmes in Ebonyi State. The sample size of 347 teachers randomly chosen from nursery schools across the state provided the needed data for the study. The findings of this study revealed that both public and private ECCE programmes are grossly underfunded as perceived by major stakeholders from both public and private ECCE schools. The study recommended among others the establishment of the Ministry of Early Childhood Education at the federal level to enhance direct funding of ECE programs in the country.

### **Introduction**

Every preschool, pre-kindergarten, and similar early learning institution such as childcare or daycare centers aspires to provide a top-notch learning experience to young learners and their families. But it can be a costly ambition. Some logistics costs include furnishings, equipment, technology, utility bills, food and beverages, transportation, and costs for learning materials, which include classroom resources for teachers and school supplies for students. Payroll accounts for the majority of costs. Salaries for teachers, early childhood educators, teaching assistants, and substitute teachers (as needed). Studies have repeatedly shown that these are not adequately and sufficiently provided by the government as captured in the yearly budgetary allocations to early childhood education in Nigeria (Osakwe, 2009). The importance of adequate financing of early childhood education can't be overemphasized. In this regard, funding if

made available can be of immense benefit in the procurement of satisfactory assets. These assets incorporate; materials for teaching, offices, and stimulating, preparing and pre-preparing of staff (educators and guardians) improvement and sharpening of projects through workshops, immunization, encouraging, supervision and examination, report composing, productions, school suppers, and instructional booklets (Taofik, 2020).

As properly captured by Ijaiya (2011), early childhood training quality has been experiencing poor funding in Nigeria, this concomitantly resulted in deficient assets, with attendant diminished and insufficient management. For instance, (Ajayi, 2017), posited that in America, the evaluated expenditure for preschool is \$70 billion every year. Similarly, in Ireland, the financing for preschool children is 436.7 million Euros (\$580 million). Different nations that put



strong attention to school instruction are Brazil, Zambia, Niger, South Africa, and Ghana (Ramires, Paira & Almeida, 2013). According to Taofik (2020), In Nigeria, states and local governments are responsible for the financing of early childhood education including the training of staff under the federal government program.

The federal government has chosen to build the management of essential training with only 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund each year, subsequently setting up models to agree to by the states. Emmanuel (2013) criticized that the 2% dispensed to Early Childhood Education by the UBE Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) was inadequate for fundamental instruction conveyance. In this way, recommended an expansion to in any event 15%-20% to understand the arrangement proclamation of the Education for All No 1 Goal and UNESCO. In a similar vein, Edward, (2011), investigated the integrative financing of Universal Basic Education (UBE) and its powerful usage in the Central Senatorial District of Delta State of Nigeria. The investigation uncovered that arrangement of assets and offices in both early children training schools is not adequately provided by the government but only with the assistance of the Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs), and Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs).

In Nigeria, almost every year, 2% of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Universal Basic Education fund is given to pre-primary education and this monies are often not easily accessible. The 2% dispensed Early Childhood Education by the UBE Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) is grossly inadequate for fundamental instruction conveyance in compliance with global standards. This accounts for the paucity of public pre-primary (nursery) schools across the federation. To further shed more light on the general or overall poor funding of education in Nigeria, International Centre for

Investigative Reporting, ICIR, (2023), published the following data on public financing of education in Nigeria:

- Between 2001 and 2017, Nigeria allocated on average 1.97 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) to education.
- At 1.2 percent of GDP in 2021, the country's allocation to education is lower than other Sub-Saharan African countries.
- Only 7.2 percent of public expenditures were allocated to education at the federal level and 10.1 percent of the national budget (federal and state levels).
- Nigeria's allocations to education within the federal budget have decreased since 2015, despite the growing child population and increased demand for education.
- 36 percent or N792.4 billion of the education budget was underspent between 2018 and 2020.
- Between 2005 and 2021, over N48 billion in Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) funds were not accessed to improve basic education.
- Nigeria's spending on education is regressive and misaligned with international benchmarks that recommend the greatest spending at pre- and primary levels.
- Aids to education in Nigeria are less than three percent of the country's domestic expenditure on primary education.

The above data is not in line with the UNESCO recommendations that every developing nation should dedicate 15-20 percent of its annual budget to public education. This paper therefore, examined the funding issues in the implementation of early childhood education programme in Nigeria specifically, the paper investigated stakeholders' perception of the impact of funding on the outcome of the early childhood education programme.

There is ample research evidence that has shown that there is a tremendous effect of



early childhood education on children's affective, conceptual, and social improvement in later years (Gormley, Gayer, Phillips, and Dawson 2015; Rolnick and Grunewald 2014). Early childhood care Education (preschool training) in keeping with the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) is the care, safety, gaining knowledge of and stimulation promoted in children from age 0 – four years in a crèche or nursery. Kindergarten Education is a One-Year Education given to pupils elderly 5 before the duration getting into primary school.

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2012) specifies that Early childhood education ought to be included in mainstream schooling, and encourage extraordinary views on early childhood education through scholars. Children aged 3-five years start formal training from preschool training as presenting in day-care centers and nursery schools. Consequently, the preschool segment must be incorporated in all primary schools in Nigeria. It is developed by the informal traditional education given to pupils from 0-3 years which prepares them for school. It is worthy of note that the federal government of Nigeria is not directly involved in the founding of day-care centers and nursery schools, it is only an overseer for the:

- Provision and distribution of policy guidelines for the establishment and management of pre-primary institutions;
- Production and development of appropriate national curriculum and textbook in Nigerian languages;
- Approval of relevant supplementary reading materials and teachers/instructions' manual;
- Provision and approval of appropriate certification of work done and training received (FRN,2012).

In Nigeria nowadays, each public primary school is directed to combine the Early Childhood Education section into its school under the Universal Basic Education

(UBE) in 2004, which is managed and financed via the government and supported by the community, people, and overseas sponsorship. For example, World Bank 2008-2011 gave unique grants to three states in the Federation namely Kwara, Kano, and Kaduna to set up model Early Childhood Education facilities. The version is run in all public primary schools within the decided-on states.

In discussing anything about childhood education, it is pertinent to first clarify some concepts. Firstly, a child, that is, who is a child? If this can be established, then it will not be difficult to classify children into stages namely; early, middle, or later childhood. According to the National Child Welfare Policy of 1989, a child is anybody who is 12 years or below. But this has been modified a little recently. Thus, a child in Nigeria is now considered to be anybody below the age of 18 years. This appears to agree with the United Nations' age definition of a child. Nigerian law also regards anybody below the age of 18 years as a child (minor). In other words, anybody below the age of 18 years in Nigeria cannot vote or be voted for because he/she is still a child.

There are different names for the various establishments that take care of children at this stage. Such names as given by Kolawole (1989) and Maduewesi (1999) include:

**Daycare or Playgroup:** This establishment is for children below the age of three. There are many of them in urban centers in Nigeria. Working mothers use them as safe places to keep their children while they are at work. It can be home-based or center-based. In the case of home-based, it may be in the child's own home, a relative like grandparents' home, or somebody's (a babysitter's) home. This type of arrangement may be for-profit or non-profit. When it is center-based, it is no longer in the child's or a relative's home. It is an organized one which may also be for-profit or non-profit. It may be owned by an individual,



government, non-governmental organization, or faith-based.

**Crèches:** It is for children below three years. This establishment is usually located where the mother is working. They are usually available on the campuses of tertiary institutions, hospitals, markets, or big factories. For example, there is one within the Campus of the University of Ibadan and another one at the University College Hospital also in Ibadan. This is usually separated from the pre-primary and primary schools.

**Nursery School:** This is also known as pre-primary school establishment. This is usually for children between three and five years in Nigeria. Nursery schools are common in urban centers as well as small towns in Nigeria. They are owned mainly by private individuals, groups, faith-based and institutions.

**Kindergarten:** This normally refers to the school for children between five and six years. That is, children who are about to enter the primary school. This implies that such children must have completed their nursery school education. However, in Nigeria, people tend to take kindergarten and nursery schools to mean the same thing. Only a few schools separate them while many do not even operate the kindergarten. This is why many children proceed to primary school at the age of five after completing their nursery education. For our discussion here, we shall concern ourselves with the pre-primary or pre-school children's education. This is the age recognized in the National Policy on Education. This National Policy on Education (1998, 2004, 2013) refers to pre-primary education as the education given in an educational institution to children aged 3 – 5 plus before their entering primary school. In other words, we shall not be concerned much with the daycare or crèche.

Student learning outcomes are a result of the knowledge and skills that children gain from their educational journey. These outcomes are measured through assessments, tests, and

evaluations, and they are used to determine how well students have mastered the content and skills taught in their classes (Lui, J. et al, 2020)

Preschool education is a critical component of a child's early years, and it has been shown to have a significant impact on student learning outcomes. Research has found that children who attend high-quality preschool programs have higher cognitive, language, and social-emotional development than those who do not attend preschool. These benefits extend beyond the preschool years, with long-term impacts on academic achievement, college attendance, and even employment (Lam, et al., 2022).

One reason for the positive impact of preschool education on student learning outcomes is the focus on early literacy and numeracy skills. These skills are essential for success in later grades, and a strong foundation can set children up for success throughout their academic careers. According to Taofik, (2020), another key factor in children's evolution is the social-emotional development that occurs in preschool. Preschool provides a safe and nurturing environment where children can develop important social skills like sharing, taking turns, and resolving conflicts. These skills are essential for success in both academic and non-academic settings, as they help children build relationships, navigate social situations, and communicate effectively. Lack of adequate funding hampers the achievement of these goals in many pre-primary schools in Nigeria.

Preschool education also helps children develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By encouraging children to ask questions, explore their world, and engage in hands-on activities, preschool programs foster creativity, curiosity, and a love of learning. The early child care and education (ECE) system is underfunded in Nigeria, policymakers have not been willing to





acknowledge the true cost of creating a comprehensive ECE system. Proposals for ECE reform have also not focused primarily on improving access and affordability for families but have ignored the elephant in the room: Early care and education are substantially “funded” through low teacher pay and inadequate support for ECE teachers. In addition to being a serious injustice, the lack of adequate financial and professional support for ECE teachers compromises the consistency and quality of care children receive in most urban and rural pre-primary schools in Nigeria (Obiweluzor, 2015).

Children need consistent care from teachers who are well-prepared and well-supported before entering primary school. Working parents need access to dependable, high-quality, affordable child care. And we need to send a message that the work of teaching young children, even though performed primarily by untrained secondary graduates in most early childhood education centers, is a valuable and respected occupation in Nigeria. Early care and education should no longer be financed through low teacher pay.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Observed poor funding of early childhood education in Nigeria and its concomitant effects on the learning outcomes of preschoolers has attracted the attention of many scholars in recent times. Several studies have been conducted on why there is a disturbing decline in the learning outcomes of nursery school children specifically in literacy and numeracy (Obiweluzor, 2015) As part of the trend, there is a growing interest in

research to find out why Nigeria’s early childhood education system is not adequately funded. This study, therefore, intends to find out from stakeholders particularly teachers in early childhood education programmes their perception of the level of funding. To do this a research question was raised to guide the investigation.

### **Research Questions**

One research question guided the study. What is the situation of funding for the Early Childhood Education program in Ebonyi State?

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a survey research design to observe and describe the funding situation of early childhood education programs in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised the infinite population of early childhood education programs in Ebonyi State. The sample size of 347 teachers randomly chosen from nursery schools across the state provided the needed data for the study. One research instrument, a questionnaire titled: Funding Situation of Early Childhood Education Programme (FUSUECHIQUE) was validated, pilot-tested ( $N=20$ ,  $r = 0.82$ ), and used for the study. Section A of the instrument collected demographic information of the respondent while section B contained 20 items on the issue of funding early childhood education programs on which respondents were requested to rate the level of funding on a 4-point rating scale. Data collected to answer the research questions for the study were descriptively analyzed using mean and standard deviation.



## Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the funding situation of early childhood Education in Ebonyi State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean analysis of the funding situation of the nature of the ECE.

STAKEHOLDER REMARKS	N	X	$\bar{X}$	SD	
Public ECE	98	184	1.88	0.0026	Inadequate
Private ECE	249	533	2.14	0.01144	Inadequate
<b>Total</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>2.01</b>	<b>0.00832</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>

$r = 2.50$

The above table revealed the perception of teachers of the ECE in the study area which are the major stakeholders in the ECE education programme. As shown, public ECE teachers agreed that the funds made available for funding of public ECE in Ebonyi State were grossly inadequate as 98 respondents upheld. Private school teachers also reported that there are insufficient funds available for private ECEs in Ebonyi State as 249 of the respondents reported. This means that both the public perceived funding of ECE as grossly inadequate.

## Discussion of Findings

Early childhood education evolved in Nigeria about two decades ago as a special field of focus for development emanating from the provision of international instruments and declarations such as the Convention of the Rights of the Child 2003, the World Summit for Children 1990, the Education for All Declaration 1990 and the year Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000 to which Nigeria was signatory.

The present study indicated that the stakeholders in ECE perceived inadequate funding of ECE programs in Ebonyi state. To start with, public school teacher's response to the funding of ECE recorded a mean score of 184 (1.88) and a standard deviation of 0.0026 while that of public schools recorded a mean score of 533 (2.14) and a standard deviation of 0.01144. These values indicated that the perception of these teachers of the funding of ECE is inadequate as evidenced by the items used in the instrument (FUSUECHIQUÉ) for data collection. These findings align with that of Ijaiya (2011), who opined that early

childhood training quality endures poor funding in Nigeria, this prompted deficient assets, which brought about diminished and insufficient management.

This result is also in tandem with the critique of Emmanuel (2013) who criticized that the 2% dispensed to Early Childhood Education by the UBE Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) was inadequate for fundamental instruction conveyance. In this way, it recommended an expansion to in any event 15%-20% to understand the arrangement proclamation of the EFA No. 1 Goal. In contrast, Ajayi (2017) looked at what is obtainable in America where the estimated expense of giving quality preschool training is \$70 billion every year. In the same manner, in Ireland, the financing for preschool children is 436.7 million Euros (\$580 million). This is far ahead of what is obtainable in Nigeria. Different nations that put strong attention to preschool instruction are Brazil, Zambia, Niger, South Africa, and Ghana (Ramires, Paira & Almeida, 2013). In Nigeria, states and local governments are responsible for the



financing of early childhood education including the training of staff under the federal government programme. The federal government has chosen to build the management of essential training with only 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund each year, subsequently setting up models to be agreed to by the states. This implies that despite different types of funding, much more is still needed to be done for proper management of Early Childhood Education schools, quality teachers and caregivers, adequate supply of facilities and learning materials as well as to provide a conducive learning environment, monitoring/supervision of ECCE programmes, in addition to production and distribution of appropriate manuals, materials, and publications.

Furthermore, Roseline Olubor and Bridget Ogonor (2002) assessed the level of availability of play facilities in private pre-primary schools in three states of Nigeria, Delta, and Ogun States. Twenty-eight pre-primary schools were randomly selected for the study. The findings revealed that all the sample schools had toilets. Out of the 28 schools, only 20 had a merry-go-round. 22 had swings, 17 had slide-size saws, 10 had a sand train and 27 had balls. These five items are specifically for play. 21 had wash hand basins, 19 had a good water supply, 25 had a first aid kit and 13 had a sick bay each. These are necessary for the safety and convenience of the child during and after play. The findings further showed that only four schools out of the 28 schools studied had all the play facilities. One school had no balls even though Nigeria is a soccer country. Private schools charge fees yet they are unable to provide the facilities required for play. This is in agreement with the findings of this study.

### **Conclusion**

The well-being of children has been attracting the attention of individuals and organizations in different parts of the world. In Nigeria like many other developing countries,

many children of pre-school age have no access to the pre-school establishments. Since preschool establishments are owned and managed by private efforts, they are often too expensive for the average Nigerian family. This study established that there is poor funding of ECE programs in Ebonyi State. The aftermaths of the outcome of poor funding will have a cumulative implication on education as ECE constitutes the bedrock of qualitative and functional education in Nigeria if not urgently addressed.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings the following recommendations were made:

- (1) The government should increase the consolidated federal yearly budget on early childhood on education in Nigeria via the UBE from 2% to 15-20%. One viable pathway for increasing funding is to increase allocations to existing public funding streams at local, state, and federal levels, or to expand the scope and mandate of universally available publicly financed education to extend to children at birth.
- (2) The Ministry of Early Childhood Education should be established given the long-term contribution of ECE to the GDP.
- (3) Regular training and retraining of early childhood educators should be carried out by both public and private school managers on effective improvisation of local instructional materials ideal for the environment to augment the deficit of instructional materials as a result of poor funding.
- (4) One general public-private strategy is to provide avenues for nonprofits and profits that run ECE programs to obtain loan revenues at a lower cost from private and public sources that can be used for a variety of purposes. One of the problems of this strategy is the difficulty that many ECE providers are likely to encounter in paying back the loan amount, which is



why programs that provide loan guarantees or subsidies can be most useful.

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