
The effects of in-service training for caregivers in the 21st century and the implementation of early childhood education curriculum in Oyo-South Senatorial District of Oyo State

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Abstract

This paper investigates the effects of in-service training for caregivers towards the implementation of early childhood education curriculum in Oyo-South Senatorial District of Oyo State. It adopted the survey research design method due to the descriptive nature of the work. The population of the study comprised of caregivers and educated parents who have children (between the ages of 0-5) in private and public early childhood education centres in Oyo-South Senatorial District of Oyo State. The purposive sampling technique was used to select one hundred (100) caregivers and one hundred (100) educated parents in Oyo-South Senatorial District of Oyo State. A research instrument titled "Questionnaire on the Effects of In-service Training for Caregivers towards the Implementation of Early Childhood Education Curriculum in Oyo-South Senatorial District of Oyo State" was designed to collect data from the respondents. The data collected were analyzed using mean scores to test each research question. 2.50 was accepted as the criterion mean for the responses. The result revealed that in-service training for caregivers in the 21st century is not yet worth boasting of, thus effective implementation of the early childhood education curriculum remains uncertain due to several factors among which inadequate training for caregivers was identified. It was therefore recommended that seminars and workshop should be frequently organized for in-service caregivers for them to be well updated and groomed to cope with 21st century children learning needs.

Key words: In-service training, caregivers, Implementation, Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Education Curriculum

Introduction

The significance of early life care and educational activities to holistic child development cannot be undermined, as this vital period is the foundation for which child's cognitive, language, perceptual, socio-emotional and motor development will be built for future achievements and social functioning. This informs the reason why the periods of the early years need to be handled with all special and detailed attention. Estes (2015) has described 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 Education (ECE) becomes a key actor.

Historically, early childhood care started as an informal activity in Nigeria. The idea was brought up by the missionaries when they introduced the infant schools in the early 20th century in the western and eastern regions of Nigeria. In complement to this style of education, the locals also engage in babysitting (that which a layman in Nigeria calls nanny), a business whereby a person cares for one or more babies or children for a short period of time in place of their legal guardians and receives daily, weekly or monthly pay from the guardians or parents as dues for service rendered. With the phasing out of infant classes, some parents began to feel the need for nursery schools.

During that period, (pre-independence) all efforts for provision of early childhood education were confined to the voluntary sector and received little or no support from the government (Tor- Anyiin, 2008 in Tombowua, 2013). It was for the first time in 1977 with the introduction of National Policy on Education by the then military government of Nigeria that the importance and need for early childhood education was given official recognition and linked with the child's educational performance in primary school. Gradually, early childhood institution stayed, and by 1985, Nigeria had about 4200 early childhood educational institutions, while by 1992 the number increased to about 8,300 (Federal Government of Nigeria/UNICEF 1993 in Tombowua, 2013).

Nowadays, early childhood educational institutions are located in various places and buildings campuses of universities and Colleges, premises of some industries and business organizations, church premises, residential buildings with unprecedented expansion owing to the high demand for early childhood care and education by parents (Ejeh, 2006 in Amadioha, 2017).

The paramount importance of the early years is widely acclaimed in various international documents and developmental goals such as UN Convention on the Right of the Child, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (now Sustainable Development Goals) and Education for All (EFA) goals among others. The government of Nigeria is among the member states that ratified these documents and goals, and this has made the government to come up with various interventions which are geared towards providing quality ECE for Nigerian children.

As part of the interventions of the government in ECE, there was enactment of UBE Act (2004) which has an expanded scope that includes programmes and initiatives for early childhood education and development (UNESCO-IBE, 2006). The UBE programme made provision for every public primary school to have a preprimary school linkage to cater for children, and this resulted in increased government ownership and participation in ECE provisions (UNESCO-IBE, 2006). Osanyin (2012) noted that there was the development of

National Minimum Standard for Early Child Care Centers in Nigeria while. In the same vein, Oguntuashe (2010) reported the development of curriculum for in-service teacher training and IECD caregiver training manual. Another notable intervention is the development of a policy referred to as National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development that integrates interventions from various sectors to promote an integrated holistic approach to the development of the child (FGN, 2007). One other intervention that worth mentioning is the development of a unified early childhood education curriculum which was all encompassing and divided into two sections to cater for age 0-3 and 3-5 years respectively. Again, the federal government included ECCE programmes in curriculum of colleges of education. The most recent innovation seems to be the new National Policy on Education (2013 edition) in which the programme of ECE is brought under Basic Education in Section 2. It is now divided into two programmes namely Early Childhood Care, Development and Education (ECCDE) and Kindergarten Education.

Despite all these efforts and interventions of government, quality implementation of Early Childhood Care and Education curriculum has been hindered by many challenges both at pre-primary school level and tertiary level. Among these challenges as identified by Akinrotimi and Olowe (2016) includes professional qualification of caregivers/teachers, resources, early childhood curriculum, professional development training, staff-child ratio and funding.

In the contemporary Nigeria, the need for high-quality delivery of early childhood care and education is growing rapidly in response to changes in work, family patterns and child learning pattern (Early and Winton in Okeke, 2012). Advocates of developmentally appropriate early childhood education are increasingly interested in promoting effective implementation of curriculum. However, the achievement of the goals of the early childhood education curriculum is contingent upon the availability of caregivers trained and prepared to meet the individual needs of children with a wide range of abilities (Kempe, Cornea and Fox in Okeke, 2012). Unfortunately, there is scarcity of teachers who are adequately prepared to meet the challenges of handling early childhood schools. Alabi and Ijaiya (2018) opined that early childhood education curriculum is facing the challenges of ineffective delivery by untrained caregivers. He stressed that most, if not all caregivers in both private and public schools with early child centres are not certified, specialized or prepared educators in the field of early child care and learning. In privately owned pre-primary schools, teachers with no training in ECE are often found in children classrooms while in pre-primary sections of government owned public schools, old female teachers with no qualification in ECE are often seconded to children classrooms. Olaleye and Omotayo (2019) submitted that it is not that trained caregivers are not available but the untrained ones are preferred by the private school authorities to render cheap labour. This problem of using untrained caregivers in most early childhood centres in Nigeria has been an impediment to the implementation of early childhood education curriculum in the 21st century despite the fact that so many higher institution in Nigeria have produced if not enough but above average graduate in the field of early childhood education. Thus, the aim of this paper is to assess the effects of in-service training for caregivers in the 21st century and the implementation of early childhood education curriculum in Oyo-South Senatorial District of Oyo State

Statement of the problem

It has been noted that the 21st century children are ones whose interest for learning can only be caught with ICT-driven facilities and well designed play based system. For these ones to be trained in their early life, the in-service caregivers who have been found not to be professionally qualified, skillful, knowledgeable, experienced and inclined to ICT-driven

facilities may hinder effective implementation of the early childhood education curriculum goals. This posed the writer to assess the effects of in-service training for caregivers in the 21st century and the implementation of early childhood education curriculum in Oyo-South Senatorial District of Oyo State.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this paper is to ascertain the followings:

1. Identify the quality level of in-service caregivers in the 21st century
2. Assess the effect of in-service training for caregivers in the 21st century
3. Determine the effects of in-service training for caregivers in the 21st century and its impacts on the implementation of early childhood education curriculum in Oyo-South Senatorial District of Oyo State
4. Suggest ways through which in-service training for caregivers can improve for effective implementation of early childhood education curriculum in the 21st century

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the quality level of in-service caregivers in the 21st century?
2. What are the effects of in-service training for caregivers in the 21st century?
3. What effects would in-service training for caregivers in the 21st century has on the implementation of early childhood education curriculum in Oyo-South Senatorial District of Oyo State?
4. What are the ways through which in-service training for caregivers can be improved for effective implementation of early childhood education curriculum in the 21st century?

Conceptual framework

The in-service caregivers in the 21st century

In-service caregivers are those who are practicing the act of caregiving in an established early childhood education centre. They provide care to infants and toddlers in line with the centers guideline. They are trainers of children between the ages of 0-5 years. In Nigeria today, majority of the in-service caregivers are not qualified professionals in the field of early childhood education. They are either into the system because they are unable to secure employment in their area of study or have no tertiary school certificate (Okewole, Iluezi-Ogbedu and Osinowo (2015).

As a result of technological advancement and digitization in teaching and learning processes, the in-service caregivers in Nigeria who have been found not to be professional now have to face another challenge in the use of ICT-driven facilities to meet up with the learning needs of the 21st century children. Since many caregivers begin working with little or no experience in caregiving, training is a critical part of preparing to perform their responsibilities efficiently and effectively. Quality training allows caregivers to feel confident in their work, and in turn, it helps clients to feel well cared for and more satisfied with service rendered.

Concept of early childhood education

Maduwesi in Amadioha (2017) refer to early childhood care and 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. FRN (2004) refers to early childhood care and Education (pre-primary education) as an education given in an educational institution to children aged 3-5 plus prior to their enrollment in the primary school.

Early Childhood Education (ECE - also Nursery Education) is a branch of education theory which relates to the teaching of young children (formally and informally) up until the age of about eight (Wikipedia 2017). In recent years, early childhood education has become a prevalent global issue, as many countries have come to realize the importance of educating their citizens from the earliest age possible. Early Childhood Education is more than a preparatory stage assisting the child's transition to formal schooling It places emphasis on developing the whole child - attending to his or her social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs - to establish a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing and it is during this period that a child goes through the most rapid phase of growth and development: Their brains develop faster than at any other point in their lives, so these years are critical.

Objectives of Early Childhood Education

The objectives of early childhood education according to FRN (2004) in Tombowua (2013) are:

1. Effect a smooth transition from home to 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 (on the farm, in the market or offices)
4. Inculcate social norms
5. Inculcate in the child the spirit of inquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys and so on.
6. Develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit
7. Learn good habits, especially good health habits and.
8. Teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms and so on through play.

Factors Affecting Effective Implementation of Early Childhood Education Curriculum

Quality and Qualification of Teachers

The quality of the teachers determines the strength of any educational system and the value of the learner (Okoro in Olaleye and Omotayo, 2019). In Nigerian early childhood institutions today, the teacher quality is generally low. It is only a few of the nursery schools especially those owned by educational institutions, private companies and wealthy individuals that can afford to engage the services of university graduate teachers and holders of Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) qualifications, competent and committed teachers and are also capable of retaining such teachers. Most others employ a few NCE teachers (if any at all), who are usually underpaid, while others employ mainly Grade Two teachers and secondary school leavers with school Certificate or General Certificate (ordinary level) qualification. In a situation where most of the teachers in our early childhood institutions are unqualified and/or unprofessional, effective implementation of the early childhood education teaching and learning cannot be achieved.

Proliferation of Early Childhood Institutions

The official provision made in the National Policy on Education (FGN 2004) mandated the Government to encourage private efforts in the provision of early childhood education in the country. Moreso, owing to the high demand for early childhood education by parents, it does not take a long time for newly established early childhood institutions to grow and develop. According to Nwakaego in Olaleye and Omotayo (2019), it is becoming customary to operate early childhood institution in every household. currently, early childhood education institutions are located in various places and buildings-campuses of some universities and colleges, premises of some industrial and business organizations, church premises, residential buildings some part or the whole of which are hired for use as early childhood schools (Ejeh in Tombowua, 2013). The flip side of this proliferation of early childhood institutions is that, the issue of standard and “regulations” have been waved off. The end result is that the young minds are offered “substandard” and “irregular” education that cannot breed egalitarianism and self-reliant individuals of the society and leaders of tomorrow.

Professional Development

The teacher holds the key to successful implementation of any educational enterprise. This is why the federal government of Nigeria stated in NPE (2013) that no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013). Jibril (2007), in Akinrotirni & Olowe (2016) has submitted that whatever input is made into an educational system in respect of management, resources, facilities and array of instructional materials, will be of little avail if the teacher is unskilled, poorly trained or even ignorant. This is to say that whatever intervention the federal government of Nigeria makes to improve Early Childhood Education will be of little effect if preprimary school teachers are not given constant trainings.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a survey design due to the descriptive nature of the research

Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population of the study comprised of caregivers and educated parents who have children in private and public early childhood education centres in Oyo-South Senatorial District of Oyo State. Out of all, one hundred caregivers and one hundred (100) educated parents were purposely selected to form the sample of the study, therefore the purposive sampling techniques was adopted.

Research Instrument

A Questionnaire on the effects of in-service training for caregivers in the 21st century and the implementation of early childhood education curriculum in Oyo-South Senatorial District of Oyo State was developed by the researcher. The instrument was made up of two parts, namely part A and B. Part A contained caregiver’s/parent’s data while Part B contained items on the effects of in-service training for caregivers in the 21st century and the implementation of early childhood education curriculum in Oyo-South Senatorial District of Oyo State

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The instrument was given to experts in instrument design to examine its face and content validity. In the process, some items were modified, some removed, while few others were added. The reliability of the questionnaire was established at 0.65.

Administration of the Instrument

The instrument was self-administered to one hundred caregivers and one hundred (100) educated parents in both private and public early childhood education centres in Oyo-South Senatorial District of Oyo State.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using mean scores for the research questions. 2.50 was accepted as the criterion mean for the responses

Results and Discussion

Research question 1: What is the quality level of in-service caregivers in the 21st century?

Table 1: mean scores of the quality level of in-service caregivers in the 21st century?

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	I am skillful in using play based method to train children	3.45	A
2	I am a trained specialist in Early childhood care and learning	1.10	D
3	I can use ICT-driven facilities for child learning	1.52	D
4	I always attend seminars and workshop related to early childhood programmes	1.24	D
5	I have long experience in childhood care and education	2.85	A
6	I am aware of the goals of early childhood education curriculum	2.11	D
7	I can use both first and second language reasonably for child learning	1.74	D
	Cluster mean	2.00	

Items on the above table were stated to assess the quality level of in-service caregivers in the 21st century. Since the grand mean of 2.00 is below the criterion mean of 2.50. This shows that the quality level of in-service caregivers is not worth boost of. Responses on item 2, 3, 4 and 6 revealed that majority of the in-service caregivers in the 21st century are untrained and have less ability to use ICT-driven facilities for child learning. Also, they do not attend seminars and workshop and are not aware of the goals of early childhood education curriculum. This result agrees with the position of Tombuwua (2013) that in a situation where most of the teachers in our early childhood institutions are unqualified and/or unprofessional, effective teaching and learning cannot be achieved. In the same line, Akinrotimi and Olowe (2016) posit that the professional development training is particularly needed as almost all the teachers in the ECE at the pre-primary school level are either not trained or trained in other fields not relevant to ECE.

Research question 2: What are the effects of in-service training for caregivers in the 21st century?

Table 2: Mean scores on the effects of in-service training for caregivers in the 21st century?

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	In-service training allow caregivers to meet with their colleagues and share experiences	2.95	A
2	In-service training helps caregivers to acquire relevant knowledge and skills needed to cope with every children	3.12	A
3	In-service training expose caregivers to ICT-driven facilities for early child learning	3.29	A
4	In-service training boost caregivers' professionalism	3.24	A
5	In-service training exposes caregivers to various child learning strategies	2.85	A
	Cluster mean	3.09	

Since the grand mean of 3.09 is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50, thus, items on the above table revealed that in-service training has great effect on the 21st century caregiver in the aspect of gathering and sharing experiences, acquiring knowledge and skills needed to cope with children learning challenges, exposure to ICT-driven facilities for early child learning, boosting caregivers' professionalism and exposure to various child learning strategies.

Research question 3: What effects would in-service training for caregivers in the 21st century has on the implementation of early childhood education curriculum in Oyo-South Senatorial District of Oyo State?

Table 3: In-service training for caregivers in the 21st century and its impacts on the implementation of early childhood education curriculum

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	In-service caregiver who have not been trained cannot use play based method for child care and learning effectively	3.21	A
2	In-service caregivers in Nigeria early childhood education centres are fair in child care	2.51	A
3	In-service caregivers in Nigeria early childhood education centres use conventional method of instruction	3.65	A
4	In-service caregiver cannot train the 21 st century children effectively until they are trained	3.21	A
5	Untrained in-service caregivers cannot identify child developmental needs in the 21 st century	3.24	A
6	Untrained in-service caregivers can make use of ICT-driven facilities to aid child learning	1.22	D
7	In-service caregivers who are not trained do not always have target goals to attain in children	3.04	A
	Cluster mean	2.86	

Table 3 shows that 6 of the items have been rated positive and the ratings are above the criterion mean of 2.50. Based on the analysis of the table where cluster mean of 2.86 which was above the criterion mean of 2.50 was reached. It means the quality level of in-service caregivers which have been found in table 1 as unfair, have adverse effect on the implementation of the goals of early childhood education curriculum. Thus, In-service training for caregivers in the 21st century would have positive impacts on the implementation of early childhood education curriculum. Even the item 6 which was disagreed revealed that untrained in-service caregivers cannot make use of ICT-driven facilities to aid child learning. Based on the response on each item, the in-service caregivers in the 21st century if not trained cannot be able to implement the early childhood education curriculum effectively. This aligns with the submission in an Issue Brief by National Governors Association Centre for Best Practices (2010) that the knowledge, experience, qualification and skills of early childhood care providers and teachers are critical factors in their delivery of high-quality developmental and educational experiences to young children. Also in support, Amadi (2017) submitted that 21st century children learns with various ICT facilities and thus needs caregivers/teachers with such knowledge.

Research question 4: What are the ways through which the quality of in-service training for caregivers can be improved for effective implementation of early childhood education curriculum in the 21st century?

Table 4: Mean scores on the ways through which the in-service training for caregivers can be improved for effective implementation of early childhood education curriculum in the 21st century

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	In-service caregivers in the 21 st century are expected to enroll for early childhood education programmes in higher learning institution	3.21	A
2	In-service caregivers in the 21 st century are expected to always attend workshops and seminars on early child development	3.18	A
3	In-service training for caregivers in the 21 st century should be sponsored by government and other early childhood education stakeholders	3.57	A
4	In-service caregivers in the 21 st century are expected to be a specialist in the field of early childhood care and learning	3.08	A
5	In-service caregivers in the 21 st century are expected not to be a slave to one method of instructional strategy	3.23	A
6	In-service caregivers in the 21 st century are expected to be a solver of child learning problems	3.45	A
7	In-service caregivers are expected to be skillful in the use of various kinds of play-based learning system	3.76	A
8	In-service caregivers are expected to focus more on the use of board for child learning	2.01	D
	Cluster mean	3.18	

In table 4, since the grand mean of 3.18 is above the criterion mean of 2.50, with 7 of the items agreed to, this shows that in-service caregivers are expected to be trained and retrained in all ramifications for professionalism to be attained in the field of early childhood education. Though, item 8 was disagreed but revealed that in-service caregivers are not expected to focus more on the use of board for child learning. This result corroborates with the recommendation of Obidike (2012) that effective measures should be ensured in the training of early childhood/pre-primary teachers through adequate scholarships and approving the mounting of such programmes in all Universities, Institutes of Education and College of Education. In the same vein, Amadioha (2017) that training and retraining of in-service teachers/caregivers should be taken serious towards effective implementation of the goals of the early childhood education curriculum.

Conclusion

The importance of early childhood care and education to holistic foundational development of children around the ages of 0-5/6 years is very undoubtful. Therefore, the extent of implementation of early childhood education in Nigeria cannot be toyed with, especially in the present quest for technological advancement and digitalization. Having confirmed by previous studies that majority of caregivers/teachers in both private and public early childhood centres were not professionally qualified yet they are still very much in the system. The result of this finding revealed that for the in-service caregivers to be functional and effective in the implementation of the early childhood education curriculum, there is need for them to be trained and retrained for the purpose of professionalism and attainment of the goals of the ECE curriculum.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the followings are recommended:

1. The ministry of education should make law restricting private and public pre-school authorities from recruiting untrained caregivers to take up early child training.
2. Since it is obvious that majority of the caregivers in both private and public pre-schools are either secondary school graduate or one who specialized in field other than early childhood, thus, there is need for the in-service caregivers to compulsorily take up early childhood education program in higher learning institutions. To make this easy for them, government should sponsor the program.
3. Seminars and workshop should be frequently organized for in-service caregivers so that they will be well updated and groomed to cope with 21st century children learning needs
4. Government should ensure that there is a supervisory body that will be charged with the responsibility of ensuring that in-service caregivers are certified, specialized and trained for effective implementation of the ECE curriculum.

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