



Early Childhood Education in Nigeria: Pedagogical Philosophy and Related Missing Links

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Abstract

This paper reiterates the importance of Early Childhood Education and Care and gives a graphic account of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria. It also highlights England Denmark, Germany, France, Japan, New Zealand, Argentina, Cuba, Brazil, Costa Rica, Panama, Finland and Hong Kong as some of the nations that have made remarkable progress in Early Childhood Education and their specific positions on pedagogical approaches and their underlying pedagogical philosophies. Against this backdrop, a review of the state of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria is made with a focus on pedagogical approaches, their underlying pedagogical philosophies and related issue in this level of education. Proffered suggestion include relevant authorities ensuring that the national Curriculum is readily available to all stakeholders and that it contains sufficient direction an instructions for teachers so that they can teach and make maximum impact. The paper is theoretical, based on literature review.

INTRODUCTION

Neurological research indicates that significant brain and behaviour development occurs during the first years of life, and that this is influenced by the quality and range of early experiences and interactions (Litjens and Taguma, 2010). They explain further that although the brain continues to develop throughout life, new learning never occurs at the same speed that it does during the early years. Depending on the nature of these experiences, children's future development can cover a wide spectrum (Harrison and Ungerer, 2005). By the time children enter primary school, their general cognitive, language, pre-reading and early numeracy skills already differ, and these differences are often maintained during further stages of development (cf. Anders et al., 2012;)

According to Litjens and Taguma, (2010) although children spend the largest proportion of their young lives in their direct home environment, out-of-home care has become increasingly popular since the 1980s, due to increasing awareness of the benefits of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). Consequently, a large proportion of children in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries now attend some form of childcare or early education (OECD, 2014a). Economists have argued that investment in ECEC programmes have long-term monetary and non-monetary benefits. The long-term returns of investment are highest when spent on the early years of education and include higher graduation rates in secondary education, lower drop-out rates, a larger share of people attending tertiary education, lower crime rates and costs, and even higher tax returns for governments (Heckman, 2006; Knudsen et al., 2006). ECEC has been found to have particularly beneficial effects on children who lack stimulation and support within their own family, i.e. disadvantaged or "at risk" children (Barnett, 2011; Burchinal et al., 2010; OECD, 2012; Smith, 2013). As a result of this, OECD member countries (including the United Kingdom) have strengthened their national focus on ECEC and increased their investments in the early years (OECD, 2012). Furthermore, international institutions like UNESCO and the World Bank have encouraged their members globally to invest in ECEC (Dahlberg and Moss, 2005).

European Commission (2014) also affirms that Early Childhood is the stage at which education can most effectively influence children's development and most European countries have committed themselves to providing an ECEC

place for all children (European Commission, 2014). In nine countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Poland and Switzerland), the last year or two of pre-primary education is compulsory and 93% of children attend ECEC before starting primary education. Incidentally, despite the importance of Early Childhood Education and Care as discussed in the earlier paragraphs, Sub-Saharan Africa is far behind North America, Europe, Part of Asia and the Caribbean in terms of the availability and quality of pre-primary education and access to this level of education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2010). This paper therefore is an attempt to look in-depth at the state of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria (being one of the Sun Saharan Countries) with particular focus on Pedagogical philosophy underpinning the pedagogical approach and related missing links in this level of education in Nigeria.

A Brief History of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria

The history of early childhood education in Nigeria can be traced back to the Christian Missionaries who introduced the Western Formal Education system to Nigeria in the 19th century (Fafunwa) 1974). During this era of Christian Missionaries in Nigeria, early childhood education was organized by church-members (particularly the wives of the Missionaries) for young children. On Sundays for about an hour, church attendants were organized into groups called Sunday school classes with one of the groups devoted to very young children. The earliest church based schools could be said to be actually formal schools in an informal setting. Teachers were attached to the groups and such teachers were usually experienced members of the church who had knowledge and ability to teach the class Holy Scripture. The class was held on Sunday morning between 10 and 11 a.m. The teachers normally start the teaching session by introducing a number of short choruses followed by prayer and short stories from the Bible. At the end of each story, questions were asked. The teaching sessions were always full of activities such as clapping of hands, singing, dramatization) etc. With the passage of time such Sunday Schools metamorphosed into the nursery school of the church. The classes were then subsequently conducted from Monday to Friday with the children of church members and non-members constituting the class.

The curriculum was largely based on the doctrines of the church but counting, memori-

zation, and songs were part of the content. The Schools then provided an opportunity for under-age children who did not gain admission into primary classes to have an early start. It also served as child-minding facility for parents who worked outside their homes. The School was run usually on church premises and the Teachers were paid from the church funds (Oduolowu, 2003). The other form of preschools was those established in the Government Reservation Areas by the wives of the Europeans living in the areas. It was considered the preserve of the children of the Colonial Officials. With the economic changes following rapid post-independence developments in Nigeria, more Nigerians started emulating the Europeans by sending their children to preschools (Kolawole, 1989; Oduolowu, 2003). In addition, the increase in the rate at which women picked up jobs outside their homes prompted the working mothers to send their children to preschool institutions where the children could be adequately cared for. In addition, the interest in preschool institutions grew because of the fact that the practice of putting children under the care of grandmothers, maids and hired house help was at that time no longer popular as a result of the evils associated with the practice whereby the house helps maltreat children (Maduewesi, 1999). Furthermore, increasing research evidences that formed part of the post-independence development show that children can benefit from the enriched opportunities from play associated with indoor and outdoor activities, the companionship of the other children, and the privilege of having trained and understanding adults to interact with, which preschool settings provide. This led to a rapid expansion of Preschool Education program in Nigeria in the last three decades of the 21st century (Obanya, 2002). This is due to the high level of awareness of the program and its inherent benefits. The government of Nigeria also demonstrated her awareness of the benefits of this program and interests it by featuring it in the National Policy on Education of 1977, revised in 1981, 1998, 2004 and 2013. In the 2013 edition of this document; the latest edition as at the time of working on this paper, government in Section 2 subsection 14h In that document, government has it that Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) is the care, protection, stimulation and learning promoted in children from age 0-5 years in a crèche or nursery education; education given in an educational institution to children aged 3 to 5. In subsection 18h, government has it that one year pre- primary education is the education given to children aged 5 prior to entering primary

school.

The term used in Early Childhood vary from country to country and from one sub region to another, from partner to partner or merely on the basis of the institutional focus of the subsector. However, all the terms stem from the combination of three key terms: early childhood care, development, and education. ECCE is the term used by UNESCO, ECD is the term most used in SSA region. Integrated development of young children is the term of used by countries UNICEF- supported programs in West and Central Africa (UNESCO, 2010)

According to Salami (2016), the following policy documents of the Federal Republic of Nigeria also have pronouncements on Early Childhood Education in the country:

- National Minimum Standard for Early Child Care Centres in Nigeria (NERDC, 2007)
- National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development in Nigeria (NERDC, 2017)
- Guidelines for Implementing National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development in Nigeria (FME, 2013)
- National Minimum Standards for ECD Centers (NERDC/UNICEF, 2004)
- National Early Childhood Curriculum for ages 0 – 5 (NERDC, 2012)
- One –year Pre- primary School Education Curriculum (NERDC, 2016)
- Teachers' Guide for the One year Pre- primary School Education Curriculum(NERDC 2016),
- Universal Basic Education 2004.

Oguntuase 2010; Akinware 2010; also report the achievement of ECCDE programme in Nigeria. They are listed below:

- Guidelines for establishment of ECC Centre/Resource Training Centre have been developed;
- A curriculum titled The ECCDE Curriculum was produced by NERDC and approved by the National Council on Education (NCE) in 1994;
- Based on the curriculum, about twenty-eight titles of pre-school Readers for different age-ranges have been produced and distributed in ECC Centers and nursery schools to assist the child in learning;
- A Handbook for care-givers has been produced – *Caring for the African Child*
- Training manual/Guides for lead trainers, child educators and caregivers (in collaboration with the Regional Resource and Training Cent-

re (RTRC), Kenya Institute of Education such as the modules on Child Development, Child Health, Food and Nutrition, ECCDE Childhood Resource Centre, Learn AS you Play, Supervision of Services for Children and so on;

-A textbook on Child Development Health and Nutrition in Nigeria was produced as a learning material for education, health and social services professionals;

-Survey reports on child rearing practices in 5 pilot states and 10 UNICEF assisted states have been written;

-ECCDE concepts have been infused into curriculum of Colleges of Education and ECC is now offered as courses at the undergraduate and post graduate levels of some universities in Nigeria;

-An Anthology of Nigeria songs, stories, games, poems, riddles and tongue twisters for children has been produced in form of Handbook for parents and Caregivers though,(Awaiting publication);

-Development of a Child Assessment Instrument (Awaiting Standardization), and

-Posters on Child Stimulation and Educational Development (CSED) have been produced and disseminated to ECC Centers and nursery schools.

-Baseline Surveys carried out in 19 out of 36 states.

-Textbook on ECD produced with an accompanying simplified text on "Caring for the African Child"

-Development of Growth Monitoring Chart.

-Development of Chart on Child Stimulation for Development.

-Development of a 23 page pre-school reader series.

-Inventory and Publication of ECD Facilities and Key Household practice (KHP) in Nigeria.

-Establishment of ECD centers in ALL states of the Federation.

Despite the achievement of the Federal Government of Nigeria in the area of Early Childhood Education including the various policy documents on this area of Education as highlighted in the earlier paragraph, as at 2018, the government is still silent on pedagogical philosophy underpinning the nation's Early Childhood Education and Care.

Pedagogy and Curriculum as Concepts

According to OECD, (2014b) Pedagogy (and pedagogical interactions) concerns

how adults in early year's settings engage with children to achieve developmental objectives, and what directs their methods. Specifically, pedagogy refers to "that set of instructional techniques and strategies which enable learning to take place and provide opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions within a particular social and material context. It concerns the *how* of adult and child interaction, which is particularly important in an ECEC context, given how children learn and develop during early childhood. How children learn and develop at this stage is subject not only to *what* is taught but more importantly, *how* it is facilitated (Anders, 2015) . Curriculum and pedagogy are not the same conceptually, but both terms have been used interchangeably in different countries (cf. Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). In its narrowest sense, the curriculum describes the content of early childhood education and care, such as the areas that should be taught in the ECEC setting, and/or the learning goals. They often cover the experiences children in ECEC settings should have, the educational and pedagogical philosophies behind the country's ECEC system or programme, the importance of child perspectives and family engagement, as well as quality management (OECD, 2014a).

The importance of Pedagogical Philosophy in Early Childhood Education

According to Nolan and Raban (2015), In the Western Countries, the major theorists in Early Childhood Education include Bronfenbrenner, Vygotsky, Piaget, Rogoff, and Skinner. The philosophies of these theorists inform and guide educators' work with young children, families and communities as they provide conceptual understanding of complex aspects of Early Childhood Education. They explain further that thinking critically about one's practice and then linking this to the pedagogical philosophy that inform that practice enable educators to act in a more informed way to change their practice for the better. This, according to them leads to praxis, which is defined as reflection and action coming together and thus performing a transformative process of change. The theories and the pedagogical philosophies of these theorists position children and their learning in particular ways which have ramifications for how educators teach. learn and understand child development. According to Essa and Young (1994), how we approach the education and care of young children depends to a large extent on what we believe children are like. Various theorists have

come up with views on children and relevant pedagogical principles. Programs for preschoolers' are often structured around underlying assumptions about the nature of children. For instance a belief that children learn actively by exploring their environment would result in a different type of early education program that is based on the idea that children learn passively by being taught specific information and skills. Similarly, a belief that children are basically unruly and need strict control would result in a different approach than the notion that children generally strive towards social acceptance. According to Miller, (2011) a number of early childhood program models have emerged over the years. These program models are founded on particular philosophical perspectives. These program models also describe typical goals, materials, roles and schedules. Some of these models are:

- Montessori programs
- Open Education
- Project Head Start
- Cognitively Oriented Curriculum
- Bereiter –Engelmann Models

These models differ in a number of ways, including their views of development. Each model represents a coherent approach to working with young children, and they specify a philosophical base, goals, instructional practices, methods and materials. In some cases, models are quite specific about the roles of teachers, children and parents in the programs while others are less rigid. In the same vein, Miller (2011) affirms that every educator knows that a valid curriculum model provides the theoretical or philosophical framework needed to operate an effective preschool education program.

The New Zealand Education Review Office (2010) also underscore the key role of pedagogical philosophy in its submission that it is the interweaving of many aspects of practice that contribute to good learning opportunities for infants, toddlers and young children. According to this office, in high quality services, it is the interrelationship among the following features, rather than any one on its own, that underpins the quality of education and care provided.- leadership, pedagogical philosophy, vision, relationship and interactions, teaching and learning, assessment and planning, professional learning, qualifications and support, self-review and management.

According to Hu & Szente 2009 cited in Ho (2015), influential philosophies introduced by theorists such as Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsky are well known and widely used in Early Childhood Education in China. Ho (2015) also maintains

that Teaching approaches such as High Scope, Reggio Emilia, and Montessori together with their underlying pedagogical philosophies have contributed to the foundation of contemporary Early Childhood Education by widening understanding of the principles and progression of how children learn. Specifically they have guided teachers in educational practices by accentuating important aspects considered as foundational in Early Childhood Education such as play, cooperation, independence, and learning by doing, parental involvement and concern for each individual child.

Philosophical approaches and Theories underpinning Early Childhood Pedagogy: Some Best Practices

Most countries that have made remarkable progress in ECCE recommend the type of approaches to education that institutions should adopt. Recommendations are usually quite broad, and institutions are free to choose their methods from these recommendations (European Commission 2014). Different philosophical approaches and theories underpin countries' ECEC systems. They are based on philosophical approaches and theories from renowned child psychologists, educators and philosophers. Wall, Litjens and Taguma (2015) gave the examples of curriculum approaches of Early Childhood Education in some countries that have left their marks on the sand of time in the area. They also highlight the pedagogical philosophies underlying the approaches. The examples are:

England

England's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework emphasizes mainly a play-based approach with individualised learning and integrated activities. The approach is based on child-centred and constructivist philosophies (Siraj-Blatchford and Nah, 2014). Practices of sustained shared thinking and adult-led activities are also major approaches being used and are based on Vygotsky's socio-cultural constructivism (Siraj-Blatchford and Manni, 2008). Vygotsky and Piaget's concept of "scaffolding" also provides important philosophical underpinning. The statutory framework provides the curriculum for the early years in England. This sets out the pedagogical approach for children's learning and development. Though the EYFS does not require practitioners to use particular pedagogies to support young children' learning and development, a guidance booklet for staff on pedagogy was developed in 2011. The guidance booklet only provi-

des examples of best practices leaving the choice of pedagogy to the responsibility of ECEC managers and staff. The EYFS requires only that the areas of learning must be delivered through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child initiated activities.

Denmark

In Denmark, a pedagogical approach is broadly provided through defined learning objectives in the educational curriculum for all ECEC aged children from birth to 6 years. The concept that “one size does not fit all” is a central premise of Denmark’s pedagogical approaches and practices for different ECEC settings and children of different backgrounds (OECD, 2014b) Denmark’s ECEC system emphasizes the socio-pedagogic tradition and a child-centred approach based on eclectic pedagogical philosophies. The socio-pedagogic approach in Denmark highlights the importance of dialogue between adults and children, as well as creative activities with discussions and reflections (OECD, 2012; OECD, 2014b).

Germany

The situation-oriented approach, which goes back to philosophies of Freire, Robinson, Zimmer and others, is key to Germany’s ECEC system and pedagogy. In addition, the influence of ideas, views and practices of other approaches, such as those of Humboldt, Fröbel, Montessori and Piaget, are reflected in the pedagogical principles underpinning the German curricula. In general, Germany’s curricular frameworks takes a child centered approach that emphasizes that learning in early childhood takes place in social, mainly play based situation (Zimmer 2007)

France

In France, curriculum and pedagogy are based on the theories and ideas of Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner, which are all based on constructivist philosophy, i.e. that learners construct new ideas/concepts based on their existing knowledge and that children learn in “stages”, based on previous knowledge they have gained (OECD, 2014a). The national curriculum provides pedagogical guidance for staff, which is also available in complimentary documents (OECD, 2014a; 2014b)

Japan

ECEC in Japan is guided by the “free childcare and education” or the “guiding childcare theory”, which holds that children learn

best when they feel free and supported by the teacher in a sympathetic way, while they interact with their environment and gradually build close relationships with peers (RCCADE, 2011). Interaction with children is often based on the “theory of three activities in preschool”, which posits three layers of activities, all of which emphasise children’s play:

Life that serves as the base: activities comprised of free play and guidance aimed at developing daily life skills.

Central activity: elements are extracted from the child’s play and reconstructed as educational, for example, in a cultural sense.

Systematised learning activities: which aim at directly teaching linguistic, mathematical or artistic concepts and skills.

These three categories are inspired by several philosophical approaches, including those of Montessori, Reggio Emilia² and the Developmentally Appropriate Practice,³ and are applied in a flexible manner, so they can be adapted to the needs of individual children (Anders, 2015).

All ECEC settings in Japan are subject either to an education or childcare curriculum,

Stipulated respectively in the 2008 Study for Kindergarten (for children aged

3 to 6) and the 2008 National Curriculum of Day Care Centers (for children from birth to 6 years) Though these curricula provides pedagogical guidance, as they do in France, New Zealand, England and Germany, ECEC staff in Japan are able to select pedagogical approaches and practices. However, several philosophical ideals in the curricula influence overall pedagogy / pedagogical approaches.

New Zealand

In New Zealand, all ECEC settings are guided by the *Te Whāriki* curriculum. The framework for this curriculum was influenced by *Te Ao Māori*, (the Māori culture), the philosophies of Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner and Rogoff. Flexibility in instruction/pedagogical practice is encouraged in order to develop different patterns in the *whāriki* (“mat”), which evolve and flow from these philosophical theories (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). In New Zealand, suggestions for good pedagogical practice include questioning children during activities (“ can you tell me what you are doing?”; “ How do you think you can solve this puzzle?”), modeling conversation and desired behaviours, and integrating literacy and numeracy learning into meaningful experiences, such as counting the number of bananas at lunch time or writing out colors while drawing

(ERO, 2013) Needs-based and age-appropriate pedagogical philosophies and practices are key aspects of New Zealand's early childhood curriculum. As such, activities are adopted and suited to children's functioning level, current knowledge and understanding and takes account of the children's age as well as their cultural, religious, linguistic, socio-economic and ideological background.

In the same vein, Aricescu et al (2014) posit that the curricular principles shared across Europe and based on common intellectual traditions can be summarized as:

Holistic pedagogical philosophy

Child centeredness

The child as a unique being

Inclusion and equality

They explain further that a survey also showed that almost all countries share philosophical antecedent as regards to pedagogy. The two theorists cited most often in the survey were Froebel and Montessori and their philosophies.

Kim (2004) also reveals that in Argentina, Cuba, Brazil, Costa Rica and Panama the constructive philosophy is predominant and this is reiterated in the curricula (UNESCO 2010). In South Korea, Child centered philosophy has become dominant in the area of early childhood education.

Jensen (2009) made it known that Finland's ECEC pedagogy and interpretations concerning the curriculum have been classified as belonging to the social pedagogical tradition which encourages play, relationship, curiosity and the desire to find meaning using activities valuing both children and educators in a co constructing environment (Jensen, 2009) Finland's model of ECEC is based on humanistic values, more precisely a child centered, holistic approach with emphasis on children's participation, democracy, autonomy and freedom.

Hong Kong

According to Shoemaker 1989 cited in Ho 2015, In the mid 1990's the Hong Kong government issued to all kindergartens the *Guide* CDC 1996. Among other things, it recommended that teachers adopt a thematic approach (an approach that views learning and teaching in a holistic way and reflect the real world which is interactive- The second edition of the *Guide* CDC ,2006), published ten years after the first strongly emphasized the use of child centered learning strategies reflecting global and local transformation of pre-primary education policies. In 1992 and 1998, the Education Department of Hong Kong govern-

ment published two booklets; *The Project Approach* (Kindergarten Section, 1998a cited in Ho 2015) and the *Project Approach- Hong Kong Experience* (Kindergarten Section, 1998b cited in Ho 2015) to promote the use of the approach. Teachers' curriculum and pedagogical practices are heavily influenced by government policy. In the two versions of the *Guide*, the CDC (2006) and the CDI (1996) viewed the project approach as a child centered approach and encouraged its adoption by kindergartens in Hong Kong. Child centered curricula and teaching methods are characteristic of both thematic and project approaches.

Pedagogical Philosophy underpinning Early Childhood Pedagogy: Current Situation in Nigeria, the Implications and Related Problems

As mentioned in one of the preceding paragraph, the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has come up over the years with several policy documents on Early Childhood Education. However, unlike what operates in countries that have gone very far in the area of Early Childhood Education, none of these documents prescribe or give guidelines, on curriculum approaches and pedagogical approaches with their underpinning philosophies for teachers at this level. Though Section 2, sub section 15h of the National Policy on Education has it that one of the objectives of the one year pre-primary education (education given to children aged 5 prior to entering primary school) is to teach the rudimentary of numbers, letters, colors, shapes, forms etc. through play and Section 2 sub section 17h of the same policy document states –“teach the rudiments of numbers, letters colors, shapes, forms, etc, through play. This allusion to play is rather too brief and incidentally it is the only pedagogical approach indicated in the National Policy on Education with respect to Early Childhood Education. The National Policy document is also silent on the various philosophies underpinning play as a pedagogical approach, the various theorist in the area of play as a pedagogical approach, and which one(s) of the theorists is recommended or suggested for Nigerian teachers at this level to use. This is more important because certain pedagogical practices can better stimulate children development (Wall, Litjens & Taguma 2015). According to Ejieh (2006), the play method of teaching that is advocated in the National Policy on pre-primary education is not effectively used in most of the schools, as most of the teachers simply provide the children with toys to play with mainly for recreational purposes and not for instruction. Incidentally while play based teach-

ing and learning is found to be an effective method in enhancing children socio- emotional and academic development, play has been found to mostly contribute to a child's development when it is regarded as meaningful; that is when it has the explicit purpose of teaching a child something such as puzzle or constructional materials. Research also indicate that unguided free play is often less effective in stimulating early learning as compared to guided free play. The brevity of the provision on play in the National Policy document leaves one in the dark as to the type of play that is being refereed to, neither is mention made of the philosophy underlying it.

Furthermore, while the countries that are globally acknowledged for their giant strides and successes in Early Childhood Education, have documents wherein specific pedagogical approaches and their underlying pedagogical philosophies are clearly stated and prescribed for teachers at this level and in some cases suggested to the teachers at this level for their usage, neither of these positions is taken by the relevant authorities in Nigeria concerning Early Childhood Education. The bottom line therefore is that the teachers are compelled to use their own initiatives concerning the pedagogical approaches and the underlying pedagogical philosophies to adopt. For the teachers that are not professionally qualified, the reality is that, in most cases, the initiative is not even there. For this reason, it is the innocent children that "suffer" by not getting value for their money and time. For teachers in the public schools, some of whom may be professionally qualified, the silence of the relevant authorities in Nigeria over the issue of pedagogical approaches and their underpinning pedagogical philosophies deprives teachers the necessary guidance or specific instruction concerning the philosophies of notable theorists on Early Childhood Education in their work with children, families and communities thereby making it difficult or impossible to have conceptual understanding of the complex aspects of Early Childhood Education. Consequently, the motivation for these teachers to change their practice for the better is most likely not to be there. This is because; this kind of motivation only comes when teachers reflect on their practice, and connect this with the theoretical perspectives that inform the practice. However, where these theoretical perspectives are not there in form of pedagogical philosophies to which teachers' attention can be drawn by way of specific instruction or alternatives suggested for consideration for usage as done in countries with enviable records in Early Childhood Education,

teachers will have nothing relevant to reflect upon with a view to performing in class as expected.

Ejeh(2006) points out that much of the shortcoming in Early Childhood and preprimary sector of Nigeria's education hinges on the failure of the Federal Government to implement most of the measures stated in the National Policy on Education in the area of Early Childhood and Pre-primary Education. He explains further that, of all the measures that the Federal Government undertook to take in order to facilitate the achievement of the effectiveness of Early Childhood and Pre-primary Education in Nigeria, the only one it effectively accomplished is the granting of permission for private effort in the provision of Early Childhood and Pre-primary Education in the country with very little participation by the public sector. According to him, this is in addition to lack of supervision to ensure the maintenance of standards. As at 2018, the observation of Ejeh in 2006 still remains valid. Similarly, In Osun State (one of the state thirty six states in the Federal Republic of Nigeria), the Governor; Rauf Aragbesola rejected Early Childhood Education programme. According to him, children of age three to five should remain under the custody of their parents and guardians. He argues that Federal Government could not force any state to accept its education policies because education is in the concurrent List of the nation's constitution (Osakwe 2017). In a situation where the bulk of the services of Early Childhood Education and Pre-primary Education is in the hand of the private sector with most of the staff not professionally qualified. The silence of the relevant authorities on the issue of pedagogical approaches and their underlying pedagogical philosophies is a critical missing link more so that Early Childhood and Preprimary Education in Nigeria is characterized by lack of supervision by the relevant authorities for the maintenance of standards. The specific instruction on which of the pedagogical approaches the teachers in Early Childhood and Pre-primary education are to use or the presentation of some alternatives for teachers at these levels to consider for use, clearly documented in the national Curriculum would go a long way in directing the teachers to arrive at the best pedagogical approach to adopt in teaching and the underlying pedagogical philosophy which if known will be reflected upon with a view to making the best use of the pedagogical approach.

Furthermore, where these pedagogical approaches and their underlying pedagogical philosophies are not presented either as alternatives for teachers to consider for usage or as pedago-

gical approaches with their underlying pedagogical philosophies which teachers are specifically instructed to use, the impetus will not be there on the part of the teachers to synthesis these approaches and underlying pedagogical philosophies with a view to adopting the one(s) that will enable them to teach with maximum impact. In the same vein, Salami (2016) rightly observed that Early Childhood and Preprimary Education curriculum can hardly be found in schools since the time it was launched and that this is particularly true of the private schools. This appalling situation is also confirmed by Musa, Abubakar and Danladi(2017) and the situation has not changed for the better. Even where pedagogical approaches and their underlying pedagogical philosophies are clearly documented in the curriculum either as alternatives from which teachers can chose or as options that teachers are instructed to use, the Curriculum that is not available in schools is as good as not being in existence. And where there is no national Curriculum, the obvious implication is that there will be no synergy amongst the one thousand and one schools operating this level of education. The consequent adverse effect of this on Early Childhood Education in Nigeria and the future of the children already in the system and those who will enter into could be very grave.

A 2014 report by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) cited in Osakwe(2017) shows that out of 64,406 public primary schools in Nigeria, only 28,026 has Early Childhood or Preprimary Education centers. For many that have the centers, the quality of the teaching /learning services and the enrolment is still not encouraging. Osakwe gives the example of K/Nasarawa Special Primary School in Kano- a government owned public school that has been in existence since 1960, where the Early Childhood Care and Development Center (ECCD) center is free , but many mothers could not afford to pay the # 1000.00 (less than 4 US Dollars) registration fee required. As a result of this, many children miss out on early childhood learning. According to Osakwe(2017), Swachet Sankey; UNICEF Nigeria Education Specialist reveals that the 2015 Lancet Study indicates that about 250 million children under five are at the risk of not reaching their full potential. According to Sankey cited in Osakwe(2017), Nigeria is among the top 10 countries that contribute to the 250 million children, and that lack of early childhood education results in about 25 percent reduction in average adult earning potentials.

Though Section 7, Section 118j and 121 (1- v) of the National Policy on Education have it

that persons with special needs shall be provided with inclusive education services but despite this, children with special needs in Nigeria are yet to be provided with the opportunity to benefit from inclusive education because the services are not there in public schools and hardly are they available in the private schools. This is also a major missing link in Nigeria's Early Childhood and Pre-primary Education especially if cognizance is taken of the observation of Phillips (2012) that if children with developmental delays or disabilities and their families are not provided with timely and appropriately early intervention, support and protection, their difficulties can become more severe-often leading to life time consequences, increased poverty and profound exclusion.

Summary, Conclusion and Suggestions

A key feature of Early Childhood Education and Care programme of the nations highlighted in this paper as some of those that have succeeded in this area of education is the provision of a national Curriculum with recommended or suggested pedagogical approaches and their underlying pedagogical philosophies clearly documented in the Curriculum. If Nigeria is to make more meaningful progress in this area of education, it is imperative that the recommended or suggested pedagogical approaches together with their underlying pedagogical philosophies which at present are clearly missing in her national Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care be decided upon by the relevant authorities and featured clearly in the national Curriculum document. Furthermore, the issue of the nation's National Curriculum document which up till now is not available in schools needs to be addressed without further delay. Among other things, the curriculum could be made available at relevant sites on the internet such that interested stakeholders can access the document at their convenience. The importance of Early Childhood Education and Care cannot be over emphasized as discussed in this paper. If millions of children who did not ask to be born will not continue to be sentenced to a future where they will never be able to realize their potentials because of lack of exposure to Early Childhood Education, government will need to emulate global best practices in Early Childhood Education and Care by giving necessary investments into this level of education manifested among other things by taking definite position on pedagogical approaches and their underlying pedagogical philosophies and allocating sufficient finance to this level of education.

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