Assessment Of Structure And Practice Of Quality Assurance In Early Childhood Education And Development Inekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study identified the structure of existing policy meant to ensure quality delivery of Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) in Ekiti State, Nigeria. It determined the stakeholders' assessment of effectiveness and efficiency of the framework put in place, and as well examined pupils performance in core subjects in ECCDE centres in Ekiti State and finally investigated the challenges facing quality assurance in early childhood centres in Ekiti State. These were with a view to providing information on quality delivery of Early Childhood Education in Ekiti State.The study adopted cross sectional descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised of all ECCDE operators, Ministry Officials (both State and local government area), parents of the early childhood education centres. The sample size comprised 600 respondents from all the three senatorial districts in Ekiti State. Three instruments were used for data collection. Questionnaire on structure and Practice of Quality Assurance in Early Childhood Education (QSPQAECE); an inventory on Types of Early Childhood Education and Development Services (TECEDS); and Record of Pupils Performance in Core Subjects (RPPCS). Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, simple percentage and Relative Significance Index (RSI). The results indicated that Day care services Health Monitoring service, activities centres and centre –based were the existing structure policies meant to ensure quality delivery with 94.3%, 90.2%, 89.3% and 89.0 respectively. Also the results showed that 38.2 % of pupils possessed good performance in English Studies while 30.9% of pupils demonstrated good performance in Mathematics. Finally, the results showed that quality assurance evaluators rarely visit early childhood education centres, quality assurance evaluator failed in enhancing effective implementation of the childhood education curriculum, and most handlers in childhood education centres are not trained professionally in childhood education. These were the major challenges facing quality assurance in ECCE in Ekiti State with RSI Values of 0.80, 0.79 and 0.78 respectively.The study concluded that quality delivery of (ECCDE) in Ekiti State was very low.

Introduction

It can be argued that early child care and education existed even before the advent of the European missionaries. Before the introduction of Islamic and Western education, every community in Nigeria had its traditional pattern of education that ensured socialization and intergenerational transmission of cultural heritage. Although, there is no record of any written policy or regulation guiding the operation of this set of activities, it is possible to trace some semblance of unwritten policies which are transmitted by oral tradition from one generation to another. Afolabi, Alao, Aladejana, Popoola and Ometeso (2005) recalled that in Pre-colonial Nigeria, particularly in Yoruba land, the care of the infant was made the exclusive preserve of the mother and that the child is considered part of the mother's body until the age of six. Consequently the onus of early child care and education lies on the mother. They also added in later pages that traditions like this were transmitted from one generation to another via riddles, folklores, proverbs and idioms.

The establishment of formal Early Childhood Care and Development efforts in Nigeria started with the British colonial masters (Osho, AliyuOkolie&Onifade, 2014), during which church premises served as the venues for the schools, organized by missionaries, with their wives often in charge of their children and those of their members. A section of Sunday schools was also dedicated for focusing on these children (NOUN, 2006). In fact, the

first school was established by Mr. and Mrs. De Graft in Badagry and was named "Nursery of the Infant Church" (Akanbi, 2012). Even, at this point, there were no framework, policy or regulation designed to guide such establishment. Although, some other reasons may be raised, this may be due to some observations made by Akanbi (2012). According to the author, the primary objective of the early Christian Missionaries was to convert Africans to Christianity via education.Consequently, the establishment of missions was always followed by the opening of primary schools. The author argued that sound education was not the primary aim but rather, education that will allow the recipients to serve the providers.The curricula and other elements were largely determined by each denomination to suit their needs and no mission talked about early childhood care and education because it has no direct usefulness to their "business". The colonial government paid little attention to sound education and was merely interested in using the products of the mission schools as clerks, messengers and interpreters. All the pre-independence policies on education such as the 1882, 1887 and 1916 education ordinances, the 1920 Phelps – Stoke Commission on Education, 1926, 1948 and 1952 education ordinances (Fabunmi, 2005) essentially ignored early child care and education.

Developments in the political sphere occasioned by the Richards Constitution of 1946 divided Nigeria into three regional administrative units, decentralized educational administration and classified it as a regional service (Osokoya, 1987). The various regional governments made laws which became the basis of regional activities and policies in education. The Western Region made the first attempt in 1955 by the proclamation of a free, Universal and compulsory Primary Education (UPE) scheme for the entire western region, followed by the Eastern Region in 1957 and the North in 1962 (Akanbi, 2012).

The National Policy on Education promulgated in 1977 and revised in 1981, 1998, 2004, 2007and 2014is perhaps the first educational policy that actually included early childhood care and development in its provisions. The document defined what is meant by early childhood care and education with the framework of education development in Nigeria. It also gave the objective of this programme and listed a number of measures to be taken by government to ensure the achievement of the objectives of Pre-primary education such as encouraging private efforts in the provision of Pre-primary education; making provision in Teacher Training institutions for production of specialist teachers in Pre-primary education. This was to ensure that the medium of instruction will be principally the mother-tongue or the language of the local community; ensuring that the main method of teaching in Pre-primary institutions will be through

play; and regulating and controlling the operation of Pre-primary education, ensuring adequate training of staff and provision of essential equipment (Amali, Bello & Okafor, 2012).

Global concern for ECCDE, particularly, the World Conference on Education For All (EFA) which held in Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990 acted as a catalyst for more positive actions (World Conference on Education for All EFA, 1990).Amakievi (2013) also opined that the expanded vision of the conference with regard to basic education in Article v recognized that learning begins at birth and calls for early childhood care and initial education which can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities, or institutional programmes. These account for the reason why early childhood care and education was included in the Universal Basic Education launched in September 1999 by Obasanjo-led administration as a product of the Jomtien Conference on Education for All (EFA). One of the main goals of the Conference is to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and another is to ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality (Akanbi, 2012).

The provisions of the revised 2004 National Policy on Education as well as global attention on a comprehensive care of children through a multi-sectoral approach contributed to the development of' the National Policy For Integrated Early Children Development (IECD) in Nigeria. The National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) was developed and adopted in 2007 to accommodate children between the ages of 0 to 5 (Osho, et al, 2014). The policy adopted a holistic approach in which the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) collaborates with the Ministries of health, Environment and Housing, Women Affairs, Information and Communication, Finance, Agriculture and Water Resources, and National Planning Commission to provide intervention for the cognitive, physical, social, moral, and emotional development of the child (Amakievi, 2013). It is based on the premise that ECE for these children, which caters for their physical, mental and social development, is heavily dependent on families and caregivers support (OshoAliyu Okolie, & Onifade 2014).

This stand-alone policy is expected to bridge observed gaps in existing sectoral policies, for instance the National Policy on Education and the UBE Act both of which did not make specific provisions for children age 0-3years (UNESCO, 2006). According to Amakievi (2013), the policy was designed to achieve

multisectoral objectives like providing care and support that will ensure the rights of the child to good nutrition and health, healthy and safe environment, psycho-social stimulation as well as protection and participation. It is also designed to inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys; provide adequate care and supervision for the children while parents guardians are at work (on the farms, in the markers offices industry, etc); effect a smooth transition from the home to the school; prepare the child to adapt successfully when his or her current context changes; and develop a healthy, well nourished and adequately simulated child who is able to achieve its fullest potentials. Others include to contribute to the reduction of high infant and U-5 morality rate; to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and promote protective behaviour among children including Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) and to inculcate acceptable social and culturally appropriate norms, value and beliefs. (NERDC 2007) (See Appendix 2 for others). He concluded that the objectives are in consonance with those of the 2004 National Policy on Education except that the IECD Policy is more encompassing and adopts a multi sectoral approach to realizing its goal and objectives.

With the passage of time, the pre-school establishments that were run by private individuals and groups continued to expand. This was as a result of their being patronized by some Nigerian elites who have either travelled abroad or working with the colonial administration or the private companies. They realised the importance of pre-school education and were able to pay the fees charged. Such was the situation in the pre-independent Nigeria With the establishment of universities in the post-independence Nigeria and with more Nigerians taking up top management positions in the Civil Service (mainly housed in the Federal secretariat located in Lagos), the various corporations and the multinational companies and above all, more foreign inventors came into Nigeria in large numbers with their families. Also, they realized more workers both academic and non-academic were recruited, the foreigners and Nigerian workers needed pre- school establishment for their children. This led to the establishment of nursery schools in the new Universities.

Over the years, considering the phenomenal growth rate in childbirth and the increasing population of the Nigerian children; the proliferation of Early Childhood Education (ECE) operators to offer the in-loco-parentis service became a reality. The situation got worsened by the emergent change in the family roles as mothers (the first-ordained ECE operator) relatively abandoned their divine call in the quest to "win bread" for the family. The Machiavellian hunt for profit among others by most of these ECE (Business) operators and deviation from the policy direction became a heart-burden to various stakeholders. Hence, the standardization and quality assurance of early childhood education in Nigeria becomes eminent, Subuola (2017).

Moreover, the concern for quality assurance in early childhood education in Nigeria has been at the core of the motivating forces for reforms in early childhood education. Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) see quality assurance in early childhood education as the total of the features of educational process, product or service on its performance, in customers or clients perception of that performance. It is not just a feature of a finished product or services in early childhood education but involves a focus on internal processes and outputs and includes the reduction of wasted and the improvement or productivity in the development of early childhood education in Nigeria.

According to the Federal Ministry of Education (2016), the ideals that underpin quality assurance in early childhood education are:

i. Provision of early childhood education acts in the interest of learners their parents, and to encourage high quality in early childhood education centres;

ii. To provide impartial, evaluative and diagnostic, assessing quality and compliance, and providing a clear basis for improvement;

iii. The purpose and the procedures to be used in early childhood education are communicated clearly to the stakeholders;

iv. Early childhood education is carried out objectively by those who have sufficient and relevant professional experience, expertise and training;

v. To ensure that quality assurance principles are met and quality of early childhood education is improved

vi. To inform early childhood education administrators, policy makers and other education practitioners about the quality of early childhood educational provision;

vii. To inform appropriate targeting of early childhood education resources to ensure more value for money and better results; and

viii. To eliminates all risks to learners by taking proper account of assessment of safeguards on health, well-being, and the needs of learners, especially the vulnerable and those with special needs.

Moreover, Fadokun (2005) characterized quality assurance in Nigeria early childhood education by three interrelated and interdependent strands which are;

(i)   Efficiency in the meeting of its educational goals,

(ii)   Relevance to human and environmental conditions and needs in early childhood education,

(iii)   Something more" that is the exploration of new ideas, the pursuit of excellence and encouragement of creativity in Nigeria early childhood education.

With regards to early childhood education, the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) views quality assurance in early childhood education from different perspectives. The first is from the internal criteria of the system such as profile expiration and the external criteria which are the fitness and relevance of such an early childhood education to its environment. Arikewuyo (2004) views quality assurance in early childhood education to be judged by both its ability to enable children perform well in life and relevance to the needs of children, parents, community, and the society as a whole. He finally concluded that quality assurance in early childhood education serves as determination of gradations based on standard of excellence beneath which a mark of inferiority is imposed or adduced and above which grades of superiority are defined on the later life of the children in adulthood stage.

Ejieh (2006) reported that nowadays, nursery schools are located in various places and buildings such as campuses of some universities and colleges, premises of some industrial and busppiness organizations, church premises, residential buildings some part or the whole of which are hired for use as nursery schools only or both nursery and primary schools.Some are set up mainly in some towns as full-fledged nursery and primary schools with their own building and premises. He even contended that the physical structures vary widely in terms of quality and aesthetics from one establishment to another;so do the facilities and equipment. If there are policies in place and they are properly implemented, these observations may have been different. Now that the observation has been made and no punitive measures or effort to whip such operators into line is visible, quality assurance frameworks need to be explored, assessed and strengthened.

Research suggests that quality is the most significant factor underlying the degree and the persistence of the impact of early childhood education (Wall, Litjens & Taguma, 2010). They posited that quality assurance systems, along with monitoring, would influence pedagogy particularly when consequences are attached. These, they believe, would provide insights into whether a curriculum is well implemented, the staff's knowledge of subjects, staff practices, and even child development and outcomes are other factors to be considered.

Ekiti State was chosen for the study for some reasons, which include the fact that Osun State which is the base of the researcher did not offer early-childhood Education in its public schoolsagain Ekiti State which proves itself as a the fountain of knowledge that need to ensure quality in the it educational Institution particularly in it early childhood centres need to be verified of the claim.

Statement of the Problem

There are evidences that the origin of early childhood care and education can be traced to the effort of the early missionaries to convert Sunday school classes to formal schools. The schools were organized by wives of the missionaries for their children and the children of their members in mission houses. As more Europeans came into Nigeria either as Missionaries, traders or members of the colonial administration, the demand for pre-school establishment increased. This type of school was very common in different parts of Nigeria up till about 1955 when the free primary education was introduced in the Western Region, first of its kind in the country. The pre-school establishments that were run by private individuals and groups continued to expand. This was as a result of their being patronized by some Nigerian elites who had either travelled abroad or are working with the colonial administration or the private companies. They realized the importance of pre-school education and were able to pay the fees charged.

In recent times, it appears as if the governments and other citizens of the country are beginning to realize the significance of early education to the development of the individual. In fact, the Nigerian federal government has directed that childhood education centres should be established in all the six geo-political zones of Nigeria to further strengthen the motivation for ECCDE. However, the existing state of early childhood education is fraught with some deficiencies. The subject of infrastructures and facilities appear among the topical issues that require assessment and improvement. Facilities, in this case extend beyond structures, items of fixtures and fitting. It encompasses human facilities with adequate and appropriate requisite skills for qualitative early childhood development services. In other words, as peculiar to education generally, conducive and safe environment, qualitative workforce, organized curriculum of programmes and institutional factors are very germane to any quality early education in any developing country of Africa.

Another facet of ECCDE in Nigeria is that the organization structure of early childhood centres such as religious/ faith-based and non-profit/ civil groups

usually dictate the standard/ benchmark of the programme, hence the pace of early childhood education in the countrypresents different outcomes.The changes and progress in elementary education in Nigeria mainly manifest in urban centres while rural communities are obviously neglected. The causes and bases for these conditions are not substantially known through any empirical investigation.

Funding issue is another major factor behind the current state of ECCDE in the emerging economy. In order to reap a robust benefit of early childhood education in a developing economy, empirical studies are required to ensure and straighten the current policies and programme of Early Childhood Care and Education.Attitudes among teachers, parents and education officers towards early childhood teaching as pedagogy that promotes quality rather than treating it as an inferior and cheap option also constitutes a barrier.

Furthermore, there seems to be a substantial gap in early childhood literature, especially in the developing nations like Nigeria and this reinforces the imperative need for a thorough research on the strategies and policies for a qualitative early childhood education research initiatives in Nigeria. Consequently, this study, provide a template for a qualitative Early childhood Care and Development Education, andproffer solution to lingering problem on ECCE in the country and also fill this vacuum by drawing on the approaches adopted in the previous studies on the subject. It is against this background that the study assessed structure and practice of quality assurance in Early Childhood Education and Development in Ekiti – State Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study was designed to explore the structure of existing policy and practice of quality assurance in early childhood education and development in Ekiti – State Nigeria. Specifically, the study is designed to:

a. examine the structure of existing policy meant to ensure quality delivery of ECCD in Ekiti-State, Nigeria;
b. determine the stakeholders' assessment of effectiveness and efficiency of the framework put in place in Ekiti State; and
c. examine pupils performance in core subjects in ECCDE centres; and
d. investigate the challenges facing quality assurance in early childhood education and development in Ekiti-State, Nigeria?

Research Questions

In order to address the study the following research questions are diligently answered.

1. What structure of existing policy meant to ensure quality delivery of ECCDE is observable in Ekiti State of Nigeria?
2a. How effective are the quality assurance frameworks put in place in Ekiti State?
2b. How efficient are the quality assurance frameworks put in place in Ekiti State?
3. What are the pupils' performance in core subjects in ECCDE centres in Ekiti State?
4. What are the challenges facing quality assurance in early childhood education and development in Ekiti State?

Scope of the Study

The study covered all the three senatorial districts of Ekiti State of Nigeria that is, Ekiti North, Central and SouthSenatorial Districts .These include the Ministry Official in both State Ministry of Education and the Local Government Education authority LGEA, Proprietors, Care givers and the parents.

Methodology

This aspect explains the research design, population and sample, research instrument, description and validation of instrument, data collection and Methods of data analysis.

Research Design

The study is a mixed method research inculcating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analyses. It adopted a survey research design. A survey research design is commonly used whenever data is collected from a segment of a population in such a way that the result obtained from the data analysis can be generalized on to the whole population. In this study, data were collected from selected ECCDE centres in Ekiti State,Nigeria and the result obtained speak for all the ECCDE centres in the study area. Also in this study, the researcher does not manipulate any of the variable but rather explore then in such a way as to report the current state of the construct in the study area.

Population

This study is designed to survey the structure and practice of quality assurance in Ekiti State of Nigeria. Ekiti State has 904 registered early childhood centres, totaling 1727 (source UNICEF desk officer Ekiti State Ministry of Education).The researcher also visited the ministry of education of each of the three senatorial district of Ekiti Statefrom which a list of all registered ECCDE centres operating in each of the senatorial districts were obtained. Also record of pupils performance were collected in English and Mathematics from all the schools in Ekiti State. This serves as the basis of selecting the centres for the study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

To select the research participants, a multistage sampling technique were adopted. This involved a combination of criterion, stratified random and snowball sampling techniques.In each of the senatorial district of Ekiti Nigeria. All together the study sample comprised 600 respondents. From the three senatorial districts inthe state that were randomly selected. From each of the selected senatorial districts,two hundred respondents participates in the study. This comprise fifty officials from the State Ministry of Education (SMOEs) and Local Government Education Authorities (LGEA) who are directly involved with operationalizing ECCDE programmes, one hundred operators of ECCDE facilities across ownership types, and location (rural and urban) were also selected by snowball sampling technique to participate in the study. Finally, fifty parents were selected by convenience as part of the responding participants.

Research Instruments

In a study, the researchersmade use of both primary and secondary data. The primary data were based on field survey through structured questionnairesand inventories administered with the aid of research assistants. The secondary data involved a review of previous studies that are relevant to the study. An in-depth interview was also conducted on the respondents. The primary data required in this study were obtained using three types of instrument.

(1)   **Inventory –** Two inventory were used, one of the inventories which was designed for operators of the ECCDE centres to seek information on the types of early childhood development services they undertake, the available facilities and other curricular specifics in their centers. The second inventory meant for SMOE and LGEA officials to seek information on local registration policies, types of early childhood development services common in their area, quality assurance frameworks adopted and possible effects of ECCDE programmes on school enrollment, retention and leaners' performance in primary education.

(2)   The second instrument comprises three types of questionnaire. The first was designed to be responded to by relevant SMOE and LGEA officials to reinforce the information provided on thetypes of early childhood development services commonly provided, the extent to which these services implement the National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development, the quality of early childhood development services, factors influencing qualitative early childhood development services and the impact of the ECCDE programmes on school enrollment, retention and performance.

The second questionnaire used for the operators of the ECCDE centres to reinforce the information provided on thetypes of early childhood development services commonly provided, the quality of early childhood development services, their awareness of and attitude to certain provisions of the National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development, the challenges they confront in the management of the ECCDE centres and implementation of the policy as well as the factors influencing qualitative early childhood development services and their perceived impact of the ECCDE programmes on school enrollment, retention and performance. The third questionnaire was designed to obtain information from the parents concerning thetypes of early childhood development services they enjoy, the quality of early childhood development services, their awareness of and attitude to certain provisions of the National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development, the challenges they confront in the making use of the ECCDE centres and their perceived impact of the ECCDE programmes on school enrollment, retention and performance.

(3)   Third instrument was the record of performance of the pupils in core subject (English and Mathematics).

Qualitative data collection from ECCDE centre operators and parents was done through the use of unstructured interview to determine the quality of early childhood development services and challenges confronted in the course of implementing the provisions of the National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development.

Validation of the Instruments

Factorial validation was adopted for validating the instruments for this study. To achieve this, 50 copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents in Ondo state and the data collected from the pilot administration of the questionnaire were subjected to factor analysis. Starting with the original data matrices and using multiple correlation as the estimates of communalities, principal factors were extracted after interacting of communalities. Factors with eigenvalue greater than 1 were remained for rotation and this procedure yielded 2 and 4 factors for the inventory and questionnaire respectively. Although, more than one factor were extracted in each of the

cases, there was a dominating first factor in each section. It be therefore be concluded in line with the recommendations of Wiberg (2006) that the instrument is valid enough for use in this study.

Reliability of the Instruments

To measure the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach's alpha, split-half and Spearman-Brown reliability estimates were obtained from the SPSS 17 software. The first set of data collected was subjected to reliability analysis and the values obtained were as presented in Table1. Whenthe item total correlation was scanned items found to have values greater than the original value of Alpha were deleted and the reliability analysis was repeated until no other item possessing higher values could be found. The table also shows the split half reliability values obtained for each of the sections for the first half and the second half, as well as the spearman –brown coefficient reliability estimates.

Table1Reliability statistics of the sections of the questionnaire

Reliability Statistics		Inventory	Questionnaire
Cronbach's Alpha		0.817	0.793
Split –half	1st half	0.828	0.803
	2nd half	0.823	0.815
Spearman Brown		0.805	0.790

Results

Research Question 1: What structure of existing policy meant to ensure quality delivery of ECCDE is observable in Ekiti State of Nigeria.

To address this research question, the operators of different ECCD establishments were explored through the rating scale on all the instruments meant for the Ministry officials, parents and ECCD centre operators. Their responses were analyzed descriptively and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2:Structure of Existing Policy meant to Ensure Quality Delivery of ECCDE in Ekiti State of Nigeria.

	Services	Operator(s)								No response	
		Min of Edu /public schs		Religious organisations		NGO/ Welfare organisations		Private individuals			
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	f	%
1	Day care services	566	94.3	14	2.3	9	1.5	8	1.3	3	0.5
2	Kindergarten	60	10.0	12	2.0	30	5.0	498	83.0	0	0.0
3	Nursery	71	11.8	22	3.7	25	4.2	482	80.3	0	0.0
4	Centre-based	534	89.0	49	8.2	13	2.2	4	0.7	0	0.0
5	Rural community based centres	514	85.7	72	12.0	10	1.7	4	0.7	0	0.0
6	Rural market based periodic centres	480	80.0	102	17.0	18	3.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
7	Home-based	24	4.0	555	92.5	17	2.8	4	0.7	0	0.0
8	Mobile	502	83.7	86	14.3	12	2.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
9	Church-based	41	6.8	534	89.0	21	3.5	4	0.7	0	0.0
10	Growth monitoring	529	88.2	46	7.7	25	4.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
11	Leisure-time/ activity centre	536	89.3	48	8.0	16	2.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
12	Health Monitoring	541	90.2	55	9.2	4	0.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
13	Nutritional supplementation	529	88.0	63	10.5	9	1.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
14	Parent education	519	88.0	69	11.5	8	1.3	4	0.7	0	0.0
15	Parental support	505	84.2	62	10.3	30	5.0	3	0.5	0	0.0

Source: Field Work 2019

Table 2presents the structure of early childhood care and education establishments meant to ensure that quality education is impacted that level. The table also shows that .all the respondents unanimously agreed that most of the types of the ECCDE establishments were operated by the Ministry of Education Public school systems as accented to by the largest proportions of the respondents for each of the types listed except for Kindergarten and nursery schools which were reportedly largely operated by private individuals. Also the respondents indicated that Church-based and home-based educational services were largely operated by religious organisations. NGOs and welfare organisations were not known to largely operate any major type of ECCDE establishment. Only 5% of the respondents appear to recognize their involvement in the operation of kindergarten centres and parental support services while another 4.2% seem to claim that they participate in growth monitoring aspects of the

early childhood educational services. From the foregoing, therefore, the quality assurance in the different types of the early childhood education services appears to be largely vested in the Ministry of Education and public school system, while those of the kindergarten and nursery schools were operated by private individuals and those of the Church-based and home-based educational services were largely operated by religious organisations.

Research Question two: How effective are the quality assurance frameworks put in place in Ekiti State?

To answer this Research Question, two approaches were adopted. In the first approach, the responses on the statements bordering on effectiveness in the section B of the instrument administered on the Ministry officials and operators of early childhood education centres were analyzed descriptively and theresult is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Effective Quality Assurance Frameworks put in Place in Ekiti State?

	Yardstick used for quality assurance in early childhood education	Effective		Not Effective		No response	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	All school administrators and leaders' efforts should be channeled towards improving the achievement of the learners in their care	432	96	18	4	0	0
2	Every school should actively engage in School self- evaluation which focuses on how well the school is doing and how it can be improved.	276	61.3	114	25.3	60	13.3
3	Every school should have a School development plan which is based on rigorous School self-evaluation and External evaluation which spells out the areas for improvement	327	72.7	108	24	15	3.33
4	Every school should have a School Based Management Committee (SBMC) or other community body which actively support and influence school improvement	333	74	117	26	0	0
5	Every school should have Learners'/Students' Representative Council (SRC) which actively support and influence school improvement	429	95.3	15	3.33	6	1.33
6	Ensure the head teacher and all other staff who work with learners undertake appropriate child protection training	381	84.7	57	12.7	12	2.67
7	Empower leaders at all management levels to be more accountable for the progress of the school.	264	58.7	120	26.7	66	14.7
8	SS-e provides the basis for planning, developing and improving schools.	231	51.3	138	30.7	81	18
9	The school should periodically fill the School Evaluation form (SEF)	237	52.7	108	24	105	23.3
10	The SEF shall be used as the basis for External Evaluation and takes full account of and contributes to School Self Evaluation	336	74.7	60	13.3	54	12
11	Schools should present the Self Evaluation Forms of their School self-evaluation on demand to external Quality Assurance evaluators	351	78.0	54	12.0	45	10
12	The Quality Assurance Evaluators shall carry out External Evaluation in teams with a minimum of 2 evaluators and maximum of 5, depending on the size of the school	375	83.3	60	13.3	15	3.33
13	The external evaluation comprises three stages of Pre- school evaluation, the External Evaluation proper/on-site visit and post evaluation.	360	80.0	33	7.33	57	12.7

Source: Field Work 2019

Table 3shows the respondents' views on the effectiveness of different yardsticks used for quality assurance in Ekiti state. It also shows that most of the yardsticks were said to be effective by the largest percentage of the respondents. However, three of the yardstick were not identified as been effective by a considerable percentage of the respondents. These include that "SS-e provides the basis for planning, developing and improving schools." Which was described as in "not effective" by 30.7% of the respondents, that "Empower leaders at all management levels to be more accountable for the progress of the school" by 26.7% and "The school should periodically fill the School Evaluation Form (SEF)" by 24.0% of the respondents. It can be seen that many respondents described these three yardsticks as not been effective. Further to confirm the effectiveness of the whole quality assurance frameworks, the level to which the pupils were able to acquire the basic educational outcomes were explored from the responses given by parents and operators of childhood education centres.

To this end, a score of 1 was allotted when the pupils were found not able to acquire a given outcome at all, while 2 was allotted when the outcome was found to have been acquired sparingly. A score of 3 was allotted when the pupils were found to have acquired the outcome fairly well and 4 when they were able to acquire it very well. The scores were cumulated and made to constitute a measure of the level to which the pupils were able to acquire the basic educational outcomes. The measure was categorized in such a way that any respondent who produce an aggregate score of 8 or less was said to mean that the pupils have only acquired the educational outcomes sparingly, while those who scored 9 to 16 indicated that the pupils have acquired the educational outcomes fairly and score of 17 to 24 were said to mean that the educational outcomes have been acquired moderately while any score above 24 was said to stand for acquiring the educational outcome very well. These categories were then analyzed descriptively and the result is presented in Table below:

Table 4:Level to which Children Acquire Basic Educational Outcomes

Level	Frequency	Percent
Sparingly	19	4.2
Fairly	51	11.3
Moderately	209	46.4
Very well	171	38.0
Total	450	100

Source: Field Work 2019

Table 4present the level to which pupils in Ekiti state early childhood education centres have acquired the requisite educational outcomes. It can be seen from the table that the largest percentage of the respondents (46.4%) indicated that the pupils have acquired the educational outcomes moderately while 38.0% believed that the pupils have acquired them very well. Only 4.2% claimed that they have only acquired them sparingly while 11.3% claimed that they have acquired the outcomes only fairly well. It can be concluded that most of the respondents believed that proper acquisition of the educational outcomes

expected from early childhood educations centres have been acquired by pupils in Ekiti state and it can be inferred that the quality assurance frameworks put in place have achieved its objectives.

Research Question 3: How efficient are the quality assurance frameworks put in place in Ekiti state?

To answer this research question, the responses on the statements bordering on efficiency in the section B of the instrument administered on the Ministry officials and operators of early childhood education centres were analyzed descriptively and the result is presented in table 5 below.

Table 5: Efficiency of Quality Assurance Frameworks for Ekiti State Early Childhood Education Centres

	Yardstick used for quality assurance in early childhood education	Efficient		Not Efficient		No response	
		F	%	F	%	f	%
1	All school administrators and leaders' efforts should be channeled towards improving the achievement of the learners in their care	97	96	46	4	7	0
2	Every school should actively engage in School self- evaluation which focuses on how well the school is doing and how it can be improved.	107	71.3	41	27.3	2	1.33

3	Every school should have a School development plan which is based on rigorous School self-evaluation and External evaluation which spells out the areas for improvement	86	57.3	50	33.3	14	9.33
4	Every school should have a School Based Management Committee (SBMC) or other community body which actively support and influence school improvement	103	68.7	43	28.7	4	2.67
5	Every school should have Learners'/Students' Representative Council (SRC) which actively support and influence school improvement	99	66	39	26	12	8
6	Ensure the head teacher and all other staff who work with learners undertake appropriate child protection training	122	81.3	21	14	13	8.67
7	Empower leaders at all management levels to be more accountable for the progress of the school.	88	58.7	34	22.7	28	18.7
8	SS-e provides the basis for planning, developing and improving schools.	113	75.3	37	24.7	0	0
9	The school should periodically fill the School Evaluation form (SEF)	97	64.7	36	24	17	11.3
10	The SEF shall be used as the basis for External Evaluation and takes full account of and contributes to School Self Evaluation	107	71.3	25	16.7	18	12
11	Schools should present the Self Evaluation Forms of their School self-evaluation on demand to external Quality Assurance evaluators	123	82	16	10.7	11	7.33
12	The Quality Assurance Evaluators shall carry out External Evaluation in teams with a. minimum of 2 evaluators and maximum of 5, depending on the size of the school	120	80	23	15.3	7	4.67
13	The external evaluation comprises three stages of Pre- school evaluation, the External Evaluation proper/on-site visit and post evaluation.	117	78	13	8.67	20	13.3

Source: Field Work 2019

Table5shows the responses of the research participants on the efficiency of different yardsticks used for quality assurance in Ekiti state. It also shows that the largest percentage of the respondents indicated that most of the yardsticks were said to be efficiently administered by. However, three of the yardsticks were not generally considered so, by considerable percentages of the respondents. These include that "Every school should have a School development plan which is based on rigorous" which was described as "not efficient" by 33.3% of the research participants, "Every school should have a School Based Management Committee (SBMC) or other community body which actively support and influence school improvement" described as not efficient by 28.7% and "Every school should actively engage in School self- evaluation which focuses on how well the school is doing and how it can be improved" by 27.3% of the respondents. It can be seen that many respondents described these three yardstick as not efficient in their administration.

Research Question 4: What are the pupils' performance in core subjects in ECCDE centres in Ekiti state?

To answer this research question, the sessional average performance of pupils in English language and Mathematics were collected from six ECCDE centres (two from each senatorial district) in Ekiti state and examined. Those who scored average of 39 or lower were said to possess poor performance, while those who scored 40 to 59 were said to perform fairly and those who scored 60 to 69 were said to possess good performance while those who scored 70 and above were said to possess excellent performance. The results are presented in tables 6 and 7.

Table6: ECCDE Pupils' Sessional Average Performance in English Language

School		Descriptive statistics				Student performance matrix			
	N	Min Score	Max. Score	Mean score	SD	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1	18	20	86	61.31	15.69	6	6	5	1
2	19	50	85	66.42	9.53	3	8	8	0

3	17	40	68	55.80	10.32	5	7	5	0
4	18	45	83	66.35	11.34	2	9	7	0
5	19	41	78	63.65	17.15	7	5	6	1
6	19	43	69	68.85	17.08	7	7	5	0
ALL	110	20	86	63.73	13.51	30 (27.3%)	42 (38.2%)	36 (32.7%)	2 (1.8%)

Source: Field work 2019

Table 6 presents the performance of the pupils in English language in the schools under study. It can be seen from the table that the minimum scores of all the pupils was 20% while the maximum score was 86%. The mean scores of individual schools were presented but the general mean was 63.73% with a standard deviation of 13.51. It can also be seen that the largest percentage (38.2%) of the pupils possess good performance in English studies while 32.7% of the pupils' performance was found to be fair. However, 27.3% of the pupils were found to perform excellently while only 1.8% of the pupils were said to have performed poorly.

Table7: ECCDE Pupils' Sessional Average Performance in Mathematics

School		Descriptive statistics				Student performance matrix			
	N	Min. Score	Max. Score	Mean score	SD	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1	18	30	96	67.62	16.42	6	6	5	1
2	19	50	85	66.33	9.02	7	5	6	1
3	17	40	62	51.3	8.08	5	7	5	0
4	18	29	86	63.12	15.18	5	8	5	0
5	19	31	89	64.05	14.86	6	5	7	1
6	19	37	82	65.12	12.92	5	7	6	1
ALL	110	30	96	62.92	12.74	34 (30.9%)	38 (34.5%)	34 (30.9%)	4 (3.6%)

Source: Field Work 2019

Table 7 presents the performance of the pupils in Mathematics in the individual schools under study. It also shows the combined performance of all the pupils together. It can be seen from the table7 that the minimum scores of all the pupils was 20% while the maximum score was 86%. The mean scores of individual schools were presented but the general mean was 62.92% with a standard deviation of 12.74. It can also be seen that the largest percentage (34.5%) of the pupils possess good performance in Mathematics while 30.9% of the pupils' performance was found to perform excellently and another 30.9% performed fairly.

However, only 3.6% of the pupils were said to have performed poorly.

Research Question 5: What are the challenges facing quality assurance in early childhood education and development in Ekiti state.
In order to answer this research question, the responses of the Ministry officials and childhood education centres operators and proprietors to the questionnaire on the challenges Facing Childhood Education Centres (CFECE) were analyzed descriptively and the resultswere presented in Table 8

Table 8:Challenges Facing Quality Assurance in Early Childhood Education and Development in Ekiti State

		SA		A		D		SD		RSI	Rank
		f	%	F	%	f	%	F	%		
1	Quality Assurance evaluators rarely visits early childhood education centre	291	64.6	49	10.9	27	6.0	76	16.9	0.801	1
2	Quality Assurance evaluators are not usually appointed from childhood education teachers	72	16.0	273	60.7	49	10.9	52	11.6	0.698	5
3	The evaluators commonly focus on other sundry issues whenever they visit the centres rather than on quality of provision, practices and facilities.	40	8.9	260	57.8	14	3.1	136	30.2	0.613	9
4	Implementation of childhood education	36	8.0	289	64.2	31	6.9	94	20.9	0.648	7

	curricula varies from one centre to another.										
5	Most handlers in childhood education centres are not trained professionals in childhood education	130	28.9	279	62.0	21	4.7	6	1.3	0.781	3
6	Quality Assurance Evaluators do not inform the centres before visiting	26	5.8	274	60.9	42	9.3	108	24.0	0.621	8
7	The feedback on quality assurance evaluation do not get to school to be used for improvement.	39	8.7	37	8.2	262	58.2	112	24.9	0.502	12
8	Many handlers in Childhood education centres are usually poorly paid and hence do not put in their best.	24	5.3	261	58.0	31	6.9	127	28.2	0.593	10
9	Since most centre operators are private, emphasis are usually placed on "settlement" rather than ensuring quality.	13	2.8	228	50.7	82	18.2	123	27.3	0.568	11
10	The frequency of quality assurance evaluation of childhood education centres is too low to ensure quality	113	25.1	289	64.2	23	5.1	23	5.1	0.771	4
11	Many centre operators are not aware of their quality assurance responsibilities	22	4.9	280	62.2	107	23.7	29	6.4	0.651	6
12	Quality Assurance Evaluation helps in enhancing effective implementation of the childhood education curriculum	138	30.7	269	59.8	22	4.8	13	2.8	0.787	2

Source: Field Work 2019

Table 8shows that identified challenges confronting quality assurance in early childhood education and development centres in Ekiti state. It can be seen from the table that the most popularly identified challenge is the fact that "Quality Assurance evaluators rarely visits early childhood education centres" with an RSI value of 0.801 and was strongly canvassed by 64.6% of the respondents. This was closely followed by the understanding that "Quality Assurance Evaluation helps in enhancing effective implementation of the childhood education curriculum" which also had a high RSI value of 0.787 and was strongly canvassed by 30.7% of the research participants. However the least popularly identified challenge was that "The feedback on quality assurance evaluation do not get to school to be used for improvement" which had the least RSI value of 0.502.

Discussion of Findings

Assessing the quality assurance frameworks in childhood education has become imperative in the light of the fact that its provision may take different forms and are currently being operated by variety of practitioners in different types of location and space. It therefore follows that if the pupils enrolled in childhood education centres are to be able to acquire the requisite educational outcomes, quality assurance provision must be strictly observed. However, research has not documented the structure and practice of quality assurance frameworks put in place for early childhood education in Ekiti State. Consequently Research

Question 1 was posed to explore the structure of existing policy meant to ensure quality delivery of ECCDE is observable in Ekiti State. This majorly refers to the several types of early childhood education services provided for pupils in Ekiti State with the view to exploring their existence as well as their operators in the State. Consequently, parents were asked to identify the types of early childhood education services they enjoy and this was supported by the responses of Ministry officials with the regards to the types of early childhood education services they come across when they are on field work in the state. The results show that virtually all types of the early childhood education services presented were present in the state and that all the respondents unanimously agreed that most of the types of the ECCDE establishments were operated by the Ministry of Education Public school systems as accented to by the largest proportions of the respondents for each of the types listed except for Kindergarten and nursery schools which were reportedly largely operated by private individuals. Also the respondents indicated that Church-based and home-based educational services were largely operated by religious organisations while NGOs and welfare organisations were not known to largely operate any major type of ECCDE establishment. From the foregoing, therefore, the quality assurance in the different types of the early childhood education services appears to be largely vested in the Ministry of Education and public school system, while those of the

kindergarten and nursery schools were operated by private individuals and those of the Church-based and home-based educational services were largely operated by religious organisations. Obiweluozor (2015) also confirm that crèche, nursery and kindergarten forms were the only types of early childhood education that are currently provided by private entrepreneurs.

Research Question two was posed to determine the extent to which the quality assurance frameworks put in place in Ekiti State can be said to be effective. The results showed that most of the yardsticks were said to be effective by the largest percentage of the respondents. Except for three of the yardsticks which were not identified as been effective by a considerable percentage of the respondents. These include that "SSE (School Self Evaluation) provides the basis for planning, developing and improving schools.", "Empower leaders at all management levels to be more accountable for the progress of the school" and "The school should periodically fill the School Evaluation form (SEF)". The Quality Assurance and School-based Support Division Education Bureau (2015) and FME (2016) described SSE as a core element of school-based management (SBM), under which schools are to be held accountable for the provision of quality education. It employs a range of evaluation tools, such as the Performance Indicators (PI), Key Performance Measures (KPM) and questionnaires of the Stakeholder Survey, which are updated from time to time to serve schools' needs and tie in with the development of new education initiatives. According to the Bureau, schools conduct a holistic review with reference to the PI areas to examine their major strengths and areas for improvement by means of an evidence-based and data-driven evaluation to feedback on strategic planning and draw up major concerns for the next school development cycle. Schools then set out the development focuses with related strategies in the School Development Plan (SDP), devise implementation details in the Annual School Plan (ASP), report on the progress made in the School Report (SR), and conduct a holistic review of their SDP at the end of their school development cycle to inform forward planning. These procedure along with filling its forms and empowering leaders in the school were found not to be effective as quality assurance yardsticks for early childhood education in Ekiti State.

It was believed that if the yardsticks were effective as stipulated, then the pupils should have acquired requisite educational outcomes expected of early childhood education centres. Consequently, the level to which the pupils were able to acquire the basic educational outcomes were explored from the responses given by parents and operators of childhood education centres. The results showed that most of the respondents believed that proper acquisition of the educational outcomes expected from early childhood educations centres have been acquired by pupils in Ekiti State and it can therefore be inferred that the quality assurance frameworks put in place have achieved its objectives. Previous studies have confirmed this findings for instance Olaleye and Omotayo (2009) found that the quality of learning outcomes in Ekiti state early childhood education centres is averagely high with aspects of assessment continuous assessment, Records keeping and parents having access to learning outcome.

Research question 3 was posed to explore the efficiency with which the quality assurance yardstick was deployed for early childhood education in Ekiti state. The results showed that most of the yardsticks were said to be efficiently administered. However, three of the yardstick were not generally considered to have been efficiently deployed, by considerable percentages of the respondents. These include that "Every school should have a School development plan which is based on rigorous", "Every school should have a School Based Management Committee (SBMC) or other community body which actively support and influence school improvement" and "Every school should actively engage in School self- evaluation which focuses on how well the school is doing and how it can be improved". It can be seen that many respondents described these three yardstick as not efficient in their administration. It is the opinion of this researcher that this must have been as a result of certain challenges confronting early childhood education in the State. Consequently, Research Question 4 was posed to explore the probable challenges. The results showed that the most popularly identified challenge was the fact that "Quality Assurance evaluators rarely visits early childhood education centres" while the least popularly identified challenge was that "The feedback on quality assurance evaluation do not get to school to be used for improvement". This result is consistent with the findings of Assan (2014). The author alluded to the fact that it was difficult to properly implement quality assurance provisions as a result of the fact that the evaluators who are supposed to see to the proper implementation rarely visit the centres usually complaining of logistic barriers and when they do focus more on pecuniary gains, leaving out the necessity to ensure that the operators carry out the needful.

Research Question 5 was posed to determine the performance of pupils in early childhood education centres in Ekiti State particularly in the two core subjects of English Language and Mathematics. The results showed that most of the students performed well in the two subjects at excellent, good and fair levels. This can be interpreted to mean that the pupils have been able to acquire expressive, communicative and manipulative skills which the two subjects stand to

inculcate. This can be said to promote the achievement of one of the major objectives of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that the quality assurance in different types of Early Childhood Education services appears to be

RECOMMENDATIONS

The state government to arise strongly and be alive to their responsibilities in the area of quality provision of Early Childhood Education by improving on the provision of Nursery and Kindergarten education in the state against the organization existing system of living the level of private and religious sects.

A functional School Based Management Committee (SBMC)should be to put in place to update school development plan in the Early Childhood centre and the need for regular review of the plan so as to incorporate new ideas and plan.

Finally, Government should endeavour to renovate schools; make them home-like and be friendly to both pupils and the care givers. Besides, necessary teaching-learning materials should be equally provided.

largely vested in the hands of Ministry of Education and public Schools, while those of the kindergarten and Nursery Schools were operated by private individuals and those of the faith based and home-based educational services were largely operated by religious organization.

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