



## **Assessment of Adherence to the Standard Specifications for Early Childhood Education in Anambra State**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study assessed the adherence to the standard specifications for early childhood education in Anambra state. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was used. The population for the study was the 1104 early childhood schools (public 987 and private 117) in Anambra state with 1104 head teachers as respondents. The sample for the study was 222 early childhood schools (public 198 and private 24). Stratified random sampling was used to draw the sample for the study. A researchers' designed questionnaire titled: "Assessment of Standard Specification on Early Childhood Education Questionnaire" (ASSECEQ) was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument was validated by three experts. A reliability coefficient of 0.84 was derived using the Cronbach alpha reliability technique. Mean statistics was used to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using z-test. Findings revealed that there are no suitable chairs and tables for pupils in early childhood education schools, the classrooms are not well illuminated/ventilated, the schools do not have well grassed spacious playground, the classrooms do not have in-built shelves, the schools do not have conducive spaces with mat or mattresses and the schools are not free from noise/pollution/hazards. It was therefore recommended that the Anambra State Ministry of Education insist on strict adherence of standard specification on physical facilities such as the playground, sufficient classroom, in- built shelves among others before approval of these schools.

**Keywords:** Early childhood school, standard specifications, instructional materials etc.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Early childhood education is the formal training given to youngsters between the ages of one to five in an instructive foundation. In Nigeria, Early Childhood Care, Development and education (ECCDE) is an aspect of the Universal Basic Education which was launched in 1999 to increase the access of children to basic education. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014:7) in her National Policy on Education defined ECCDE "as the care, protection, stimulation and learning promoted in children from age 0-4 years in a crèche or nursery". It also stated that, the purpose of ECCDE shall be to: effect a smooth transition from the home to the school; prepare the child for the primary level; provide adequate care, supervision and security for the children while their parents are at work; inculcate social and moral norms; inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and the use of toys etc; to develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit; to stimulate in the child good habits, including good health habits and teach the rudiments of number, letters, colours, shapes, forms etc.

The achievement of these goals depends to a great extent on the accessibility of the facilities. Physical facilities give and make a favorable situation for quality instruction and learning. Thus, physical facilities are materials or equipment designed to serve specific purpose. Universal Basic Education Commission (2013) described facilities as the physical and spatial enablers for teaching and learning. No learning can effectively take place without facilities. It is the sum total of the material things needed in the school to facilitate the process of teaching and learning. They include: land, building for

classrooms and offices, furniture, equipment, sick bay, portable water supply, electricity, toilet, playground and play equipment, fenced wall etc. Environment for early childhood school is very important because, it is where the learners and their teachers play and work. According to Nwabueze (2011) facilities in education become attainable when viewed in terms of their adequacy to the programme they were designed for, by satisfying both qualitative and quantitative educational programmes, which will aid the school to function well. Facilities are indispensable to teachers and learners. This is to ensure the development of learners in an environment that will encourage reflective thinking as they come in contact with both the indoor and outdoor facilities; as learning at this level deals with the use of concrete objects.

In this way, an ideal classroom environment permits kids to have free access to materials and movements, and ought to have learning that focuses and energize their encounters with pieces, sensational play, imaginative expressions, composing, manipulative, mathematics and science. Nigeria Education Research and Development Council (2010) stated that the space ought to suit both dynamic and calm exercises. The outdoor facilities on the other hand are those that are external in the school environment such as the playground, slides, swings, see saw, ladder and platform, bar beams, climbers, merry go round, security post, fenced wall etc, that offer the kids chance for socialization, sensory exploration, cognitive development and creative expression. These equipment/facilities must meet safety standard and development appropriateness. In line with this, Akinrotimi and Olowe (2016) agreed that, children must have access to a developmentally appropriate playground for at least 45 minutes daily, outdoor gross motor space should have a variety of surfaces such as sand, grass and black top. It was additionally expressed that, the furniture in the early childhood classroom ought to be child sized chair (one for each youngster) and one round table for every four kids; mat/beddings for resting.

The significance of instructional materials in the teaching and learning process at different levels of training particularly at pre-school where children need to assemble a solid establishment cannot be over emphasized. Instructional materials are any learning material or resources designed for effective teaching and learning process. They help the student to acquire skill, knowledge, and progress in intellectual development. Instructional materials might be printed or non-printed. Adebayo and Adigun (2018) described instructional materials as any device with instructional content or function that is used for teaching which includes books, text books, supplementary reading materials, audio and audio visual, and other sensory materials among others. It is anything that a teacher can profitably employ to facilitate his teaching and learning such as charts, pictures, chalk/white board, dolls, writing equipment (chalk, pencil, marker, crayon etc) erasers, rulers, alphabets block and cards, table and chair, first Aid kits, posters, brushes, number blocks/cubes, geometry shapes of various size, mathematics concept books, play dough/clay, cardboard, blunt scissors among others; they enable the child to identify and understand the concept of the subject matter.

In selecting instructional materials, the material should support, enriched, and extend the school curriculum and it should encourage informational, educational and recreational reading. Nigeria Education Research and Development Council (2007) identified the instructional materials for early childhood education programme evaluation to include curriculum (government approved), care givers manuals, teachers guide, toy making manual, time table, teachers note book (lesson note), black/white board, chalk/marker, alphabet and number blocks, pencils, crayon/water colours, brushes, drawing book or cardboard, chart, poster/pictures, bill board where children work are display, shelves etc, others are musical instrument such as flute, drums, whistles among others..

### **Statement of the Problem**

The goal of early childhood care and education is to provide every child a quality head start in life which is the foundational level of education. More so, the request for “early childhood care and education” has been on the increase especially with more mothers involved in pay jobs with little or no time to take care of the very young ones at home. The continued rise in the interest for this level of instruction doubtlessly has added to the multiplication of “early child education” centres in numerous places and buildings like private residential buildings, community halls, church premises, industrial and business premises etc. This is a cause for great concern with regards to their compliance with the standard specification required by law in the establishment of “early childhood care and education”. What, therefore bothers the researcher is the extent to which early childhood education centers adhere

to the standard specification on physical facilities and instructional materials for effective education delivery.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study set out to:

1. Investigate the extent to which early childhood education providers adhere to the standard specifications on physical facilities.
2. Examine the extent to which early childhood education providers adhere to standard specifications on the provision of instructional materials

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What is the level of adherence of early childhood education providers to the standard specifications on physical facilities in Anambra State?
2. What is the level of adherence of early childhood education providers to the standard specifications in the provision of instructional materials?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores in opinions of public early childhood school head teachers and private early childhood school head teachers on the level of adherence to standard specification on physical facilities.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores in opinions of public early childhood school head teachers and private early childhood school head teachers on the level of adherence to standard specification on the provision of instructional materials.

### **METHODS**

The research design used for this study was the descriptive survey design. The population for this study was the 1104 early childhood centres (public 987 and private 117) in Anambra state. The respondents were the 1104 head teachers of both public and private early childhood centres (public 987 head teachers and private 117 head teachers). The sample for the study was 222 early childhood centers (public 198 and private 24). Stratified random sampling was used to draw the sample for the study. A researcher designed questionnaire titled: "Assessment of Standard Specification on Early Childhood Education Questionnaire" (ASSECEQ) was used to gather data for the study. The questionnaire had two sections. Section A contained demographic data of the respondents while section B contained the questionnaire variables. Section B was divided into 2 parts to provide answers to the research questions on physical facilities and instructional materials. Section B had 18 items. The response pattern was structured on a four (4) point Likert type scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with values 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Cronbach Alpha reliability technique was used and 0.84 was the reliability coefficient derived. Mean statistics and percentage were used to answer the research questions. The criterion mean was 2.5. Any statement below 2.5 was rejected and above 2.5 was accepted. The hypothesis was tested using z-test statistics at 0.05 levels of significance. Any response therefore, with a calculated z-value above 1.96 was rejected and below 1.96 was accepted.

**Research Question 1:** *What is the level of adherence of early childhood education providers to the standard specifications on physical facilities in Anambra State?*

**Table 1: Mean scores, standard deviation and rank order of respondents' opinion on the level of adherence of early childhood education providers to the standard specification on the provision of physical facilities in Anambra state.**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Public head teachers N1 = 198 X1 SD1		Private Centres Head Teachers N2 = 24 X2 SD2		Mean Set (X1)(X2)	Rank Order	Decision
1.	The school has suitable Tables and chairs for pupils of different ages	2.40	0.82	2.58	0.86	2.49	1 <sup>ST</sup>	Low extent
2.	The school classrooms are well illuminated/ventilated	2.44	0.78	2.48	0.80	2.46	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Low extent
3.	The classrooms have in-built shelves/cupboards for pupils items	2.40	0.81	2.46	0.84	2.43	5 <sup>th</sup>	Low extent
4.	The school has sufficient classrooms	2.50	0.89	2.48	0.76	2.48	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Low extent
5.	The school has sufficient offices furnished with tables and chairs for teachers /administrative personnel's	2.04	0.85	2.32	0.83	2.36	7 <sup>th</sup>	Low extent
6.	The school is well fenced	2.04	0.70	2.38	0.72	2.21	9 <sup>th</sup>	Low extent
7.	The schools is free from noise/chemical pollution /other hazards	2.20	0.87	2.48	0.81	2.34	8 <sup>th</sup>	Low extent
8.	The school has well grassed spacious play ground	2.48	0.74	2.40	0.78	2.44	4 <sup>th</sup>	Low extent
9.	The school has a conducive space with mat or mattresses covered with bed sheet for sleeping	2.38	0.88	2.46	0.85	2.42	6 <sup>th</sup>	Low extent
	<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>2.37</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>2.45</b>	<b>0.81</b>			

The data on table I showed that for item 1, the mean response of public early childhood education head teachers was 2.40 while that of private early childhood education head teachers was 2.58. This indicated that public early childhood education centres in Anambra State do not have suitable tables and chairs for pupils of different ages while private early childhood education centres have suitable tables and chairs for pupils of different ages. With the mean set of 2.49, both the public and private head teachers of early childhood education centres in Anambra State agreed that their schools do not

have enough suitable chairs and tables for pupils of different ages. Also, items number 2 to 9 have mean sets that were below the criterion mean of 2.50. They were therefore regarded as low extent. This implies that early childhood education centres in Anambra State do not have; well illuminated and ventilated classrooms, their classrooms do not have in-built shelves/cupboards for pupils items, the schools do not have sufficient classrooms, the schools do not have sufficient offices which are furnished with tables and chairs, most of the schools are not fenced, the schools are not free from noise/chemical pollution, the schools do not have well grassed spacious play grounds and they do not have conducive spaces with mat or mattresses covered with bed sheets. With the aggregate mean of 2.37 and 2.45 for public ECE head teachers and private ECE head teachers respectively, it is obvious that both public and private ECE in Anambra State have not adhered to a high extent on the standard specification on physical facilities.

**Research Question 2:** *What is the level of adherence of early childhood education providers to the standard specifications on the provision of instructional materials?*

**Table 2: Mean scores, standard deviation and rank order of respondents' opinion on the level of adherence of early childhood education providers to the standard specifications in the provision of instructional materials in Anambra state.**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Public Centres Head Teachers N1 = 198 X1	Centres SD1	Private Centres Head Teachers N2 = 24 X2 SD2	Mean Set ( $\bar{X}_1$ )( $\bar{X}_2$ )	rank Order	Decision	
10.	The school has sufficient audio materials like radio	2.38	0.62	2.42	0.59	2.40	4 <sup>th</sup>	Low Extent
11.	The school has sufficient visual materials like musical toys/ posters/ charts/ instruments/ pictures	2.08	0.68	2.36	0.64	2.22	7 <sup>th</sup>	Low extent
12.	The school has sufficient audio /visual gadgets like television/ projectors etc	2.24	0.66	2.36	0.60	2.30	6 <sup>th</sup>	Low extent
13	The school has teacher's guide, manuals, lesson notes, story books etc	2.60	0.73	2.64	0.69	2.62	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Great extent
14	There are enough alphabets /number blocks, building blocks, cards, cubes etc	1.82	0.67	2.40	0.75	2.11	8 <sup>th</sup>	Low extent
15	The classrooms have sufficient water toughs	2.28	0.77	2.34	0.70	2.31	5 <sup>th</sup>	Low extent
16.	The classrooms are furnished with electronic boards	1.68	0.65	2.18	0.63	1.93	9 <sup>th</sup>	Low extent
17.	The classrooms are furnished with white board or chalk board	2.86	0.69	2.84	0.67	2.85	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Great extent
18	There are enough writing and painting materials such as crayons markers, pencils, chalks, erasers, card board etc	3,00	0.58	2.90	0.71	2.95	1 <sup>st</sup>	Great extent
	Aggregate	2.33	0.67	2.49	0.66			

Table 2 showed that items 10, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 16 have mean set scores that are below the criterion mean of 2.50. They were regarded as low extent of adherence to specification in the provision of instructional materials. While, items number 13, 17 and 18 have mean set scores which are above the criterion mean and they were accepted as high extent of adherence to standard specification in the provision of instructional materials. The result in table 4.2 therefore shows that ECE in Anambra State

do not have sufficient audio materials, they do not have sufficient visual materials, and ECE in Anambra State do not have enough audio/visual gadgets. Also they do not have enough alphabets/number blocks, they do not have enough water troughs in their classrooms and the classrooms of ECE in Anambra State are not furnished with electronic boards. On the other hand ECE in Anambra State have teacher's guide, manual, lesson notes, story books etc. Their classrooms are furnished with either chalk or white board and the schools have enough writing materials. With the aggregate mean scores of 2.33 and 2.49 for head teachers from public and private ECE respectively, it is obvious that the providers of ECE in Anambra State have not to a high extent adhered to the standard specification in the provision of instructional materials.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores in opinions of public early childhood school head teachers and private early childhood school head teachers on the level of adherence to standard specification on physical facilities.

**Table 3: z-test analysis of differences between the mean scores of the opinions of public and private early childhood centres head teachers on the level of adherence to standard specification on physical facilities.**

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	z-cal	z-critical	Decision
Public school head teachers	198	2.37	0.82	220	0.46	1.96	H <sub>01</sub> Accepted
Private school head teachers	24	2.45	0.81				
Total	222						

The result on table 3 shows that there is no significant difference between the mean scores in opinions of public early childhood education school head teachers and private early childhood education school head teachers on the level of adherence to standard specification on physical facilities in Anambra State. This is because the calculated z-test value of 0.46 was less than the critical z-test value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and at 220 degrees of freedom. Consequently, the null hypothesis was retained.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores in opinions of public early childhood school head teachers and private early childhood school head teachers on the level of adherence to standard specification on the provision of instructional materials

**Table 4: z-test analysis of differences between the mean scores of the opinions of public and private early childhood schools head teachers on the level of adherence to the standard specification on the provision of instructional materials.**

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	z-cal	z-critical	Decision
Public school head teachers	198	2.33	0.67	220	1.12	1.96	H <sub>01</sub>
Private school head teachers	24	2.49	0.66				Accepted
Total	222						

From the result on table 4, the z-calculated value is 1.12 which is less than the z-critical value of 1.96. This implies that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of public and private early childhood education schools' head teachers on their level of adherence to the standard specification on the provision of instructional materials in Anambra State. This was so because the z-calculated value

of 1.12 is less than the z-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and at 220 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis was therefore retained.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

There is no suitable chairs and tables for pupils in early childhood education schools, the schools do not have sufficient classrooms, the classrooms are not well illuminated/ventilated, the schools do not have well grassed spacious playground, the classrooms do not have in-built shelves/cupboards, the schools do not have conducive spaces with mat or mattresses, they do not have sufficient furnished offices and the schools are not free from noise/pollution/hazards.

There is adequate writing/painting materials, the classrooms were furnished with white board or chalkboard, the schools have teachers guide/manuals/lesson notes, the schools do not have sufficient visual materials, they do not have sufficient audio materials, they also do not have sufficient audio/visual materials and they do not have enough alphabets/number blocks/building blocks.

There is no significant difference between the mean scores in opinions of public early childhood school head teachers and private early childhood school head teachers on the level of adherence to standard specification on physical facilities.

There is no significant difference between the mean scores in opinions of public early childhood school head teachers and private early childhood school head teachers on the level of adherence to standard specification on the provision of instructional materials

### **DISCUSSIONS**

One of the findings on the study was hinged on adherence to the standard specification on physical facilities. The study examined the extent to which early childhood education providers in Anambra State have adhered to the standard specification on physical facilities. The study revealed that there were no suitable chairs and tables for pupils, no sufficient classrooms and they were not well illuminated/ventilated, they do not have well grassed spacious playgrounds, no in-built shelves/cupboards in the classrooms, no sufficiently furnished offices and schools were not free from hazards/pollution/noise. The early childhood education providers in Anambra State have not to a high extent adhered to the standard specification on physical facilities. This finding is similar to Ukala (2011) findings in the study on the resource capacity for the implementation of early childhood education in public and private pre-primary schools in Rivers State. The result of the study revealed that the physical resources for the provision of Early Childhood Education in public schools were inadequate while private schools were moderately adequate in the provision of physical facilities. Result from the hypothesis tested showed that there is no significant difference between the mean scores in opinions of public early childhood school head teachers and private early childhood school head teachers on the level of adherence to standard specification on physical facilities. Both public and private do not adhere to the standard specification on physical facilities.

Adherence of early childhood education providers to the standard specification in the provision of instructional materials constituted a concern to this study. The finding of the study revealed that, there were enough writing/painting materials, the classrooms were furnished with white or chalkboard, the schools have teachers guide/manuals/lesson notes, the schools do not have sufficient visual materials, they do not have sufficient audio materials, they also do not have sufficient audio/visual materials and the schools do not have enough alphabets/number blocks/building blocks. It was found out that early childhood education providers have not to a high extent adhered to the standard specification in the provision of instructional materials. These findings agree with Akene (2014) who examined the implementation of pre-primary education programme in Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed among others that instructional materials available to aid the achievement of pre-primary educational policy objectives in Nigeria were not available. It was also observed that there is no significant difference between the mean scores in opinions of public early childhood school head teachers and private early childhood school head teachers on the level of adherence to standard specification on the provision of instructional materials. This showed that non-adherence to the standard specification was not peculiar to public early childhood centres alone.

## CONCLUSION

From the results of the findings of this study, it was concluded that providers of early childhood education in Anambra State to a high extent have not adhered to the standard specification for the provision of physical facilities and instructional materials. This situation would never guarantee optimal performance of the pupils and their teachers. It would affect the achievement of the goal of per-primary education negatively.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Anambra State Ministry of Education should insist on strict adherence of standard specification on physical facilities such as the playground, sufficient classroom, in- built shelves/cupboards among others for approval of these centers.
2. The Anambra state Universal Basic Education Commission and agencies responsible for early childhood education should ensure adequate instructional materials for effective teaching and learning provided in all the pre-primary schools in Anambra State.

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