

## OVERVIEW OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE) TEACHER PREPARATION CURRICULUM CONTENT IN SOUTH SOUTH NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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### **Abstract**

The Early Childhood Education Teacher Preparation Programme in Nigerian universities as a field of study is relatively new. With the recognition and acceptance of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria, some Universities have taken it upon themselves to produce teachers in the field. Of a Hundred and four (104) Universities approved by the NUC in 2013, only twelve of them offer the Programme at undergraduate level. Considering the importance of the early years in a developing country like Nigeria, it becomes imperative to critically examine the Early Childhood Education Teacher Preparation Programme. This is with a view to determining not only the adequacies or deficiencies but also the suitability of the programme in meeting its desired goals. This paper is a descriptive evaluative study of Early Childhood Education Teacher Preparation Programme in South South Nigerian Universities. The purpose of the study was to establish the extent to which the implementation of the ECE teacher preparation programme in South South Nigerian universities have been achieved by examining course content, quantity and quality of resources/materials and problems in the implementation of the programme in this region. Interview schedule, Observation (EETPPOS) Schedule and Facilities Checklist (EETPPC) were used to assess the operation of Early Childhood Education Teacher Programme in the both regions. A content analysis was also carried out on the course content of the programme in the universities in the region. Data gathered were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative analysis depending on the nature of the different research questions. Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn; The Early Childhood Education teacher preparation courses are adequate in South South Universities. Facilities are inadequate, Methods/strategies employed by educators in achieving the objectives of the programme are inadequate in South South Universities. Some of the recommendations made include the need for Government and for University authorities to acquire more modern facilities, equipment's and resources for the Early Childhood Education departments. There is need for all Early Childhood Education departments to have well equipped resource centre or demonstration room where the trainee teachers can carry out some practicals. The methods of teaching need to be improved by educators among others.

**Keywords:** Evaluation, Early Childhood Education, Trainee Teachers, Teacher Preparation, Programme.

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The needs and values of early childhood education are numerous, caring and qualified early childhood teachers are paramount to the learning of the developing child. Osanyin (2012) stated that, it is necessary for teachers and caregivers to be aware of the developmental characteristics of the children with whom they are working. It is also imperative that teachers and caregivers gain understanding of the needs of children as they progress towards becoming well-adjusted, confident, and thoughtful learners. This is why the Federal Government affirmed in the National policy on Education (2014) section 2 (No: 12) that it will improve the quality of ECE by making provision for the training of qualified ECE teachers in adequate numbers and also, in section 2 (No: 14B) it affirmed further that, adequate provision for teacher education programme in ECE will be made available.

Teacher Education, according to Adegoke (2010), is a necessity not a luxury because, no meaningful development can take place without adequate man-power training of competent teachers who are products of effective teacher education programme. As long as there is the public demand for public education, the need for teacher education and its institutionalization will continue to be inevitable. Improving teacher preparation programme is now a worldwide concern. Modern societies now carry out strong and sturdy teacher preparation programme to provide a better future for her children (Oduolowu,

2009). The Indian government for instance, believes Early Childhood Education makes a positive contribution to children's long term development and learning and believes that their curriculum should be developmentally appropriate and ensured that the developmental needs of young children are catered for as such, their Early Childhood Education Teacher Preparation Programme is tailored to attain this. In Nigeria, the importance of qualified teachers especially Early Childhood Education cannot be over emphasized and should therefore be given top priority. The importance of teachers and teacher education has been clearly underscored in the national policy document which states that "No education can rise above the quality of its teachers".

The teacher preparation programme should be able to equip teacher trainee with the skills and competences for the job. However, research evidence and experience have shown that the teacher preparation programme lacks the vigor to equip the teacher trainee with the skills and competence they need for effective teaching and learning. This Okon (2008) noted that every year teachers are churned out of training institutions that are deficient in content and methodology.

There has therefore been increasing pressures to improve the quality of all three aspects of teacher education, namely, general education, field specialization and professional education (Adegoke, 2010; Adeosun, 2011; Ajelayemi, 2009 and Adepoju, 2008). This has been brought to bear on

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faculties and institutions offering teacher education programmes because their activities are service-oriented in that, they are preparing entrants into a profession - the teaching profession.

There is a growing concern that unless some urgent actions are taken to stop these problems (challenges) facing Early Childhood Education Teacher Preparation Programme in Nigeria, the goals of Early Childhood Education stated in the National Policy on Education would not be realized. Moreover, researching in Early Childhood Education Teacher Preparation Programme is crucial at the moment as the Federal Government of Nigeria is facing challenging times providing quality education for her young citizens. Some important issues facing the country's policy makers according to Onu, Obiozo, Agbo and Ezeanwu (2010) include inadequate planning and poor implementation of programmes, problems of accountability and management of scarce resources to shortage of qualified early childhood teachers and undefined curriculum.

It is vital to recognize and support the preparation of ECE teachers in order to prepare them in gaining skills to give the right education to the young citizenry and help schools deliver the curriculum that students need (Sofoyeke and Sopekan, 2008).

The ECE teacher preparation programme was formulated with the objective of producing qualified and competent teachers for pre-primary schools in the country who will be able to develop a multi-cultural curriculum for all

categories of children with particular respect for their needs and aspiration and administer the schools effectively.

This objective, it is hoped, would be achieved through a successful ECE teacher preparation programme. This is also how the objectives of pre-primary education as contained in the national policy on education (2004) could be achieved.

In Nigeria there exist the problem of gap between the quality of teachers and the practice of ECE. The existence of this gap has continued to put fears and set backs on the minds of parents and educationist over the consequences of lack of teachers quality and practice on the child.

Research has shown that Early Childhood Education Teachers in the country lack necessary competencies such as pedagogical skills for teaching literacy, numbers and basic science, managing different needs in the class, using alternative assessment tools to assess pupils learning, using various methods to facilitate learning and working as a team. They therefore advocate the need for improved teacher preparation which will lead to greater teacher effectiveness and ultimately improved pupils achievement.

Considering the importance of the early years in a developing country like Nigeria, it becomes imperative to critically examine the ECE teacher preparation programme thus, determining not only the adequacies or deficiencies but also the suitability of the courses in meeting its desired goals that is examining the relationship between theory and practice,

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training and work, the expected and the actual. In other words, has the programme been able to achieve its objectives.

### **Method**

**Research Question 1:** Sought the adequacy of contents of the ECE curricula in South South Universities.

A content analysis was carried out on the course content/listing of the two Universities that were employed for the study, University A and University B. The NUC minimum standard or bench mark for the early childhood programme was used for the content analysis.

### **Content Analysis**

#### **University X**

#### **Department of Early Childhood Education and Special Education (Early Child Education Unit),**

#### **University of Uyo**

In university of Uyo, Uyo. The course is housed in the department of early childhood and special education. It's philosophy is to train qualified personnel to teach, administer and manage pre-primary and primary education institutions. Its objectives include providing the students with understanding of teaching and learning processes in nursery and primary schools, developing in the students the knowledge skills and sensitivity to interact successfully with young children, their parents, guardians, community and organizations whose action affect children. providing the students with competences needed to assess the quality of caregivers in the society including child right issues,

enabling the students acquire competence in interpreting and implementing of policies on pre-primary and primary education in the right of national philosophy and global expectation of education at that level and preparing students to be able to implement or proffer suggestions on curriculum issues including change and innovations in pre-primary and primary education.

The courses offered to the students are in line with achieving the department's objective of the programmes and the objectives of pre-primary education as stated in the national policy on education, the number of credit units are in line with the NUC benchmark for nursery and primary education curriculum. Moral Education and the local language is however not included in the curriculum.

#### **University Y**

#### **Nursery and Primary Education Department, Delta State University, Abraka**

The rationale behind the provision of this programme in Delta State University, Abraka is to produce qualified and competent teachers for nursery and primary schools in the country. These teachers should be able to develop the curriculum for this level and administer the schools effectively. These teachers are trained to:

- Provide custodian services to young children when parents may be at work as stated in the National Policy on Education (2014).

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- To provide supplementary educational experiences to children from different socio-economic background. Finally, this course will train teachers that will develop a multi-cultural curriculum for all categories of children with particular respect for their needs and aspiration.
- The curriculum can be said to meet the objectives of the programme and the departmental objectives, the number of credit unit for the different courses are in line with the NUC minimum standard for nursery education programme but it lacks the local language learning and religious education.

Course title	No of credit units	Universities	
		X	Y
Social Studies in Elementary Education	2	√	√
Science in Elementary Education I	2	√	√
Curriculum Development and Evaluation	2	√	√
Language Art in Elementary Education	2	√	√
The Teaching of Values and Valuing in Elementary Education	2	√	√
Mathematics in Elementary Education I	2	√	√
Creative Arts in Elementary Education	2	√	√
Introduction to Music in Elementary Education	2	√	√
Mathematics in Elementary Education II	2	√	√
Method of Teaching Social Studies	2	√	√
Health Education	2	√	√
Supervised Teaching in Elementary Education	2	√	√
Method of Teaching Art in Elementary Education	2	√	√
Education Technology	2	√	√
Curriculum and Instruction II (Curriculum Theory and Practice)	2	√	√
Science in Elementary School II	2	√	√
Science and Society	2	√	√
Theories and Practice of Early Childhood Education	2	√	√
Method of Teaching Language Arts in Elementary School.	2	√	√
Method of Teaching Science in Elementary Education	2	√	√
Development Guidance Elementary School.	2	√	√
Seminar in Elementary Classroom Teaching	2	√	√
Continuous Assessment in Elementary School	2	√	√
Children Literature I	2	√	√
Social Psychology of Instruction	2	√	√
Special Research Project in Education	2	√	√
Research Methods: Data Processing, Statistics and Computer Usage	3	√	√
Curriculum and Instruction II	2	√	√
Test and Measurement	3	√	√
Organisation of Elementary Education	2	√	√
Guidance and Counselling	3	√	√
Seminar in Education	3	√	√

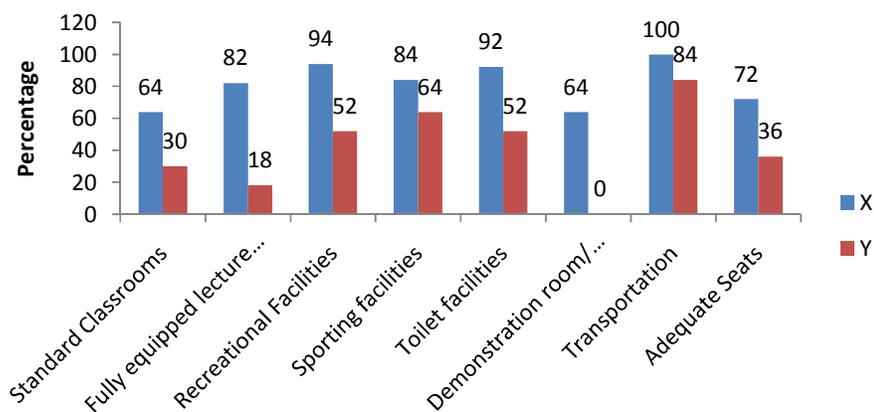
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**Research Question 2:** Assessed facilities that were adequately utilized for the Early Childhood Education Programme in South South Universities.

**Facilities /Equipments Available for ECE Programme in South South Universities**

Facilities/Equipment	University X	University Y
Standard Classrooms	64	6
Fully equipped lecture halls	82	18
Recreational Facilities	94	52
Sporting facilities	84	64
Toilet facilities	92	52
Laboratories (E.g. Language)	64	0
Transportation	100	84
Adequate Seats	72	36



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**Facilities /Equipments Available for ECE Programme in South South Universities** **Key:**

√	Available
X	Unavailable
X	UNIUYO
Y	DELSU

**Check List of Available Materials/Equipment for ECE Programme**

Material	X	Y
Instrument for designing programme		
Computer	√	√
Recorders	√	X
Health and nutrition package materials		
Weighing scales	√	X
Measuring cups/bottles	√	X
Clean water	√	√
Water, Environmental and Sanitation Package		
Toilet facilities	√	√
Waste Bin	√	√
Standard Classrooms	√	√
Well equipped lecture halls.	√	√
Sporting facilities	√	√
Recreational facilities	√	√
Instructional materials		
White board	√	√
Pictures	√	√
Textbooks	√	√
Projectors	√	√
Charts	√	√
Audio-tapes	√	√
Flash-cards	√	√
Videotapes	√	X
Television	√	√
Film stripe	X	X
Departmental Library	√	√
Resource room /children play house	√	X

**Research Question 3**

What are the instructional methods employed by educators in achieving the objectives of the programme in South South Nigerian Universities?

**Table 1: Observation of Classroom Teaching Activities**

	UNIVERSITIES	
	X	Y
<b>Teaching Methods</b>		
Lecture Methods	3	3
Discussion	2	2
Discovery	1	1
Project Method	1	1
<b>Teaching Skills</b>		
Presentation Skills	3	3
Involvement Skills	2	2
Participation Skills	2	2
Questioning Skills	3	2
Response Repertoire Skills	2	2
Provocation of self activities	2	2
Promotion of Self-development	3	2
Seeking Economy of time	2	2

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Key:

3	Very Good
2	Good
1	Poor
X	University of Uyo
Y	Delta state University

Students perception of instructional strategies employed by educators was determined by analysis of items 26, 22, 24 and 44 of the students questionnaire.

Table 1 reveals that lecture method was mostly employed by educators in South South Universities. Further, given the teaching skills listed, presentation was mostly employed by the lecturers.

**Table 2: Instructional Strategies Employed by ECE Educators**

S/N	Items on Instructional strategies employed by ECE programme educators.	Federal University N=40				State University N=60			
		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
21	The instructional strategies/teaching methods employed by your lecturers in teaching are ICT compatible	29	73	11	27	16	27	44	73
22	They adhere strictly to a particular method of teaching	26	65	14	35	38	63	22	37
24	The methods employed in teaching ECE courses in the department is adequate	38	95	2	5	29	48	31	52
44	Different teaching methods are employed in teaching the programme	26	65	14	35	50	83	10	17

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The table above indicates that 73% of respondents in federal universities agreed that instructional strategies are ICT compatible against the 27% that agreed in state Universities. Responses to item 22 indicated that 65% of those in Federal Universities agreed that they adhere strictly to a particular method of teaching against the 63% that agreed in state Universities. Relative to items 24 and 44, 95% and 65% that agreed in Federal Universities while 48% and 83% agreed in State Universities while the others disagreed. From the foregoing, it is inferred therefore, that there exists a slight difference in the instructional strategies employed in teaching ECE courses however, may not be significant.

**The Findings Revealed Among Other Things That:**

1. That the curricula contents are adequate for the programme in the South South Universities.
2. That facilities are inadequate for the programme in South South Universities.
3. The method for achieving the objectives of the Early Childhood Education programme in South - South Federal and State Universities in South South were inadequate.

**Conclusion**

The study has revealed that the ECE teacher preparation curriculum is adequate but there is the need to improve on the method of teaching so that the teachers will be able to acquire skills that will be relevant in the future.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study. The following recommendations were made.

1. More facilities should be provided for the programme in the South South Universities.
2. The need to improve on the method of teaching so that the teachers are able to acquire skills that will be relevant in the future.

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