CONTENTS

i

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

1. The West Africa Journal of Education (WAJE) pioneered academic/professional publishing in the sub-region in the late 1950s. it has also nurtured and mentored a good number of academic Journals that have helped to broaden the scope of Educational research and information exchange over the years. WAJE, in its revived current form, has the goal of becoming the most widely cited Education Journal in the sub-region, in view of current efforts that are being made to enhance the quality of reports and other discourses published in it.

2. The new WAJE has the tripartite mission of:
(a) Promotion a culture of excellence in educational research

(b) Encouraging the exchange of profound and innovative ideas capable of generating creative practice in educational research and practice.

(c) Disseminating information on educational development that are not usually easily available to academics and practitioners.

3. The Journal will accordingly encourage the publication of the following categories of papers:
(a) Research papers that move away from orthodoxy and which really break new grounds in terms of methodology and findings.

(b) Essays and issues papers that contribute to re-orienting received idea, values, and practices.

(c) Documents emanating from national and international conferences, as well as from large-scale research works that emerging trends and thinking in educational development.

4. WAJE is published once - a year in any area of educational interest or relevant to needs of academics and practitioners.

NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS.

Contributors to the journal are to respect its avowed principle of QUALITY in all its ramifications and ensure that:

(a) RESEARCH PAPERS are technically and faultlessly designed, executed and reported, with a clear contribution to knowledge.

(b) ESSAYS AND ISSUES PAPERS analytically sound, presenting solidly original ideas that can positively influence change in educational thought, research and practice.

(c) The manuscript, which should include title, abstract, text, tables, figures, where necessary, should be typewritten on A4 size paper, with double-spacing and should not exceed 15 pages.

(d) The abstract should not be more than 250 words.

(e) Authors should use the latest publication manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) format.

(f) Papers which should be written on only one side should be submitted in triplicate (hard copies)

(g) Papers are bind peer-reviewed, each paper attracts an assessment fee of N2000.00 or $20.00.

(h) Neither the editor nor the editorial board shall be liable for article(s) lost in transit.

(i) The editor and the editorial board will not enter into correspondence with authors over rejected articles.

(j) Those whose articles are accepted for publication will be so informed as regards other commitments.

(k) Papers could be submitted at any time for publication in any subsequent issue.

Manuscripts should be submitted electronically to the:

The Editor, The West African Journal of Education (WAJE) c/o Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria using the following e-mail addresses: adamonuka@yahoo.com, ada.otuoze@gmail.com; biodgbile@yahoo.com; Moniquengozi@yahoo.com.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

1. Benedicta Leonora Akrono (Mrs) is of the Centre for Educational Policy Studies. University of Education Winneba, Ghana

2. Edison Pajibo is of the Centre for Educational Policy Studies. University of Education Winneba, Ghana

3. Odinko Monica N. (Ph.D) is of the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

4. Rashid Aderinoye. Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

5. Adams O.U. Onuka (Ph.D) is of the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

6. Esther O. Durowoju is in the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

7. Adegbile, Joseph Abiodun (Ph.D), Institute of Education. University of Ibadan, Nigeria

8. R. O. Akinbote (Ph.D) of the Department of Teacher Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

9. J. Gbenga Adewale (Ph.D) of the International Centre for Educational Evaluation, Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

10. Martins Fabunmi (Ph.D) of the Department of Educational Management, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

11. Yuliang Liu (Ph.D) of the Department of Educational Leadership, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Illinois, 62026, U.S.A

12. Akinwumi, Femi Sunday (Ph.D) is of the Department of Educational Management, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

13. V. A. ASURU (Ph.D) is of the Department of Psychology, Guidance and Counseling, Rivers State College of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

CONTENTS

v

Nigeria Pre- school Environmental Characteristics: A survey Study

Odinko, Monica N. (Ph.D)
Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Telephone number: 002347032276052
Email Address: moniquengozi@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study evaluated the environmental characteristics of preschool settings in Nigeria. The factors looked into include physical, human ad material environments of the pre-school settings, teaching-learning processes, organisation of activities, school location, as well as availability and use of teaching learning materials. The sample size consisted of 72 preschool settings, 2859 pupils aged 4 - 5 years. Schools were selected through stratified random sampling to en sure adequate representation of private, public, urban and rural schools. Three valid and reliable school observational instruments were used to obtain evidence on the variables of concern. Data collection involved the use of observational technique (structured instrument and unstructured, video camera) to generate evidence in 216 lessons observed in 72 schools. Data Analyses involved the used of frequencies, percentages and graphical illustrations. The result revealed that most preschool environments are characterized by inadequate provision of materials, decay in school building structures, teachers not trained to teach at this level, use of lecture methods instead of play as well as teacher-whole class interaction denominated by the teachers during instructional delivery.

Key words: pre-school settings, physical environment, material provision, human environment

Introduction

Pre-school children in Nigeria come from home environments of diversified characteristics. Because of these differences, these children would need school environments of high quality to augment that which the home is unable to provide as well as those factors that would make transition and adjustment come very easily. However, a lot of factors have been identified by preschool advocates, researchers and educationalists (Gura, 1996; UNESCO2005) as those that could help children under school going age overcome such shocks and adjust easily. Such factors include the environmental characteristics of the school setting. The environmental characteristics of any school setting are seen as important elements that could have some impact on the level of cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills attainments of children. Embedded in these characteristics are factors such as human, material and physical environments. Research findings on the effects of providing positive school environment on learners achievement are bound (UNCIEF, 2002; UNESCO, 2005). In this study however, these three environmental characteristics are viewed as the internal conditions of the classroom, which encompasses the amount of learning materials available, spaces provided, the level of conduciveness of the classroom areas provided; adult-child relationship and the child friendly nature of the classroom setting.

According to Okebukola (2000), a child friendly school environment is "a place where the learning environment is conducive, the staff are friendly and the health and safety needs of children are adequately met" (p. 22). Villalon, Suzuki, Herrera and Mathiesen, (2002) defined school environment to include "pedagogical resources and strategies as well as social interactions among children and also between adults and children" (p. 53). In the same light, the Global Guidelines for Early Childhood (Association for Childhood Education International, 2002) stipulates that a developmentally stimulating environment for pre-schoolers is one, which has the following characteristics:

aesthetically pleasing and attractive to the child, provides a variety of colours, textures, visual, dimensions, abundance of materials that promote problem solving, critical thinking and creativity for children with different talents and abilities; should have resource from the child's local environment for the child to use, among others (p. 2).

Further, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC 1998), a USA based organization, provides accreditation criteria for the Physical Environment Standard. It sees suitable environment for pre-schoolers as one that provides an appropriate and well-maintained indoor and outdoor physical environment. In the United Kingdom, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted 1998) utilize inspectors for monitoring and inspection of the quality learning experiences which children receive in nursery school settings. These inspectors usually comment on the learning resources and accommodation available in the educational setting. The Nigerian government also in its prescribed minimum standard recommends that the pre-school environment should be located in a place that is acceptable to the community, within walking distance from home, safe and secure and free from excessive noise.

With respect to material provision at this level of education, many early childhood researchers and educators believe that material provision at this level should be central to the early years environment (Bruce, 1997; Montessori, 1912; Gura, 1996) because they tend to have significant effects on children's behavioural and social development (Varol and Farran, 2006; Bennett, Elliot, and Peters 2005). They argue that it also gives pre-school children first-hand experiences. However, they emphasized that it needs to be wide ranging, both indoor and outdoor with natural and manufactured objects. To buttress its relevance, the National Association for the Education of Young Children confirmed the importance of direct first-hand interactive experience in their position statement on developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood programmes (Helm and Gronlund, 2000). Piaget (Henniger 2005) also stressed that hands-on manipulation of materials and real objects provide children at this stage with much information to assimilate and accommodate.

Classroom context (one-to-one, small group, whole class) and teacher-child interaction during instructional delivery have also been identified as predictors of participatory level of children during teaching-learning processes (Ayers, 1996; Curtis, (1997; Goldthorpe, 1998; Ofsted, 1998; Hayes 1999). Researchers have also argued that the environment in which children develop and learn as well as the choice of language and pedagogical methods

adopted by the teacher are important factors that determine the participatory level of the children in any teaching and learning situation (Prah, 2003; Brock-Utne, and Holmarsdottir, 2003; Obanya, 2004; Brock-Utne, 2005; Odinko and Williams, 2006). It thus seems that teacher-learner interaction could be promoted more in situations in which all those involved (particularly children) have no inhibitions in terms of language used. Therefore, the teaching-learning process involving pre-school children in the first language of the children is likely to reduce the incidence of one sided flow of interaction (teacher to pupil) in pre-school classrooms. To this effect, the Federal Government of Nigeria appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion and as well as for preserving cultures. As a result, the Federal Government recommended that the medium of instruction for pre-schoolers should be, the mother tongue (L_1) or the language of the immediate environment where the school is located while English language (L_2) is also introduced from the very beginning as a subject (FRN, 2004).

The right of the Nigerian child to education should go beyond the issue of access. The issue of quality (how well the school environments are prepared) is also important. At the moment there are indications that the Federal, the State as well as the Local Government functionaries whose duties are to supervise existing preschool institutions in Nigeria have very little empirically derived information on the characteristics and quality of care provided to young children in Nigerian pre-primary schools FGN/UNICEF, 2001; Agusiobo, 2002). This is probably because the country is characterized by paucity of empirical researches on cognitive development of children. The few existing studies in early childhood education in the country, despite their depth, focused on the importance of nutrition in physical and mental development of children (Federal Office of Statistic, FOS, 2000; Aina, T.A., Etta, F.E. and Zeitlin, M.F. (1992); reaching learning processes Odinko. (2007) as well as on the outcome variables of ECCD programs (Ndukwu, 2002; Agusiobo, 2002; ESA/UNESCO, 2003).

There is therefore a need to direct research efforts on input process variables (e.g. physical, human and material provisions, characteristics and quality of instruction) in preschool classrooms in Nigeria. The study, based on its aims, sought to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What are the environmental characteristics of preschool classroom settings in Nigeria with respect to: physical structures (classrooms) seating arrangements, organization of daily routines, resource provision, discipline, Language used during instructions, and Class rules.

2. To what extent are these material indicators available in the Urban/Rural as well as Private /Public schools observed?

Methodology.

This study is a survey type of evaluation (formative in nature) which made use of observational technique to generate evidence. Formative evaluation studies are carried out in

ongoing programs or activities with the intentions of using the feedback to alter or improve the quality of such programs (Ritchie, 2003). Thus, considering the research questions to which this study hoped to provide answers, observation method (structured) and a survey questionnaire were regarded as the best approaches for generating the needed data.

Observational method, according to Taylor and Bogdan (1998) produces both descriptive qualitative as well as quantitative data. The settings and people involved (teachers and pupils) are looked at holistically (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Thus, to enable the researcher have first hand information on pre-school classroom environments in Nigeria, the target audience were observed in their natural classroom settings and care was taken to ensure that all types of pre-school settings were represented (public, private, urban and rural schools). This design is used to enable the researcher have a first-hand information of what the pre-school environments really look like, while the choice of qualitative method in reporting the data collected is to enable the researcher present the information generated unfiltered.

Population and Sample

The target population comprised of children between the ages of 4-5 years in pre-school settings in Nigeria. The sample consisted of 15883 preschools, 72 practicing pre-school teachers working with the pupils from 400 pre-primary institutions from three states (Enugu, Kaduna and Oyo) in Nigeria. Participants were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation of private, public, urban and rural schools.

Instruments

Three instruments Classroom Interaction Sheet (CIS), School Background Inventory (SBI) and a Video camera were used to collect the needed information for this study. The Classroom Interaction Sheet(CIS) was used to record interaction patterns during the teaching of the core subjects (literacy, numeracy, social studies and science) while School Background Inventory (SBI) was used to identify the materials available and the extent of use in each school visited. The CIS, a category system scheme, is an adaptation of the Classroom Activity Sheet (Yoloye, 1978). It consists of 55 sub-categories, which were grouped under seven main behavior categories. The SBI was constructed by the researcher.

Before this study, the CIS have been used in a number of studies that ascertained the extent to which teachers and their pupils interact during instruction at the primary level of education (Yoloye, 1978; Okpala & Onocha, 1988; Ogunkola, 1998). However, for this study, the CIS was modified to suit pre-primary classroom activities in Nigeria. The modified version of the CIS and the SBI were pilot tested over a period of 8 days using two trained research assistants These schools were not part of the final study sample. The pilot test data showed that the observers did not have difficulty identifying and recording the behavior categories. In addition, the data produced inter-rater reliability values of 0.88 and 0.92 for the CIS and the SBI respectively.

The Video Machine

The Classroom Interaction Sheet (CIS) and the School Background Inventory (SBI) were supported by an electronic video machine which was directed at recording activities in the observed classrooms which might not be captured by the structured instruments. The type of machine used was not obstructive. It was also very easy to manipulate and move around.

Data Analysis

The Glaser & Strauss (1967) cited by Taylor & Bogdan (1998) ' fit and work' design for qualitative data analysis was used. According to them, by 'fit' they mean that the categories used in describing the events must be readily (not forcibly) applicable to and indicated by the data under study whereas by 'work' they meant that the categories observed must be meaningfully relevant to and able to explain the behaviour under study (pg. 138). The categories of interest include material provision, human, physical environmental characteristics as well as aspects of process variables, which focused on instructional delivery modes (nature of teacher-pupil interaction, class context and discipline). Sorting the data involved assembling all the evidences collected according to each category. This was manually done. To achieve this, all related data were placed together taking into cognizance the coding category. Nothing was discarded. Thus, discussions of data was structured according to the analytical procedures used to reduce the raw data into a concise interpretable form. The nature of the data generated gave rise to the use of different methods of data analysis. These include the SPSS and transcription methods. The SPSS was used for data generated with the structured instruments (CIS and TMI). These produced quantitative results whereas the video coverage of the lessons observed was transcribed and the information generated from the transcription produced the qualitative results.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1. What are the environmental characteristics of preschool classroom settings in Nigeria with respect to: physical structures provision, seating arrangements, organization of daily routines, resource provision, discipline, Language used during instructions, and Class rules.

General description of the Classroom Environment of the schools visited with respect to physical structures

1. **Types of Physical Classroom Environments Observed**
   It was generally observed that three types of preschools classroom environments exist in Nigeria. They comprised of those with basic physical classroom structures with the accompanying infrastructures, those with buildings but without the basic infrastructures and those where neither furniture nor buildings (open air classroom) were provided.

   In schools where structures were provided, they are usually long halls partitioned into rooms. Most of these rooms were not up to the recommended 35sq. meter per child (NAEYC, 1997). The rooms were overcrowded because of the number of children

allocated to each classroom space. Most of the schools (both public and private) did not adhere to the recommended 12:1 pupil to teacher ratio by the Nigerian government (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Thus, because of the number of children struggling for the available space, both teachers as well as the pupils found it difficult to move around freely. The situation was observed in both public (mostly in the rural location) and private schools (in the urban location). Further, most of the privately owned schools are located in residential homes with little or no adjustment made on the buildings to provide the needed comfort.

The physical environment of some of the government schools visited in the rural areas left much to be desired. Some schools, though situated in serine environments had no physical structures. The children and their teachers were kept under mango trees. The shades from the trees were used as classroom areas. The tree trunks provided support for the chalkboard. Neither seats nor desks were provided for both the teachers and the pupils. The children sat on empty cans, stones and blocks, which each Child brought from home. Whereas, in some schools, uncompleted buildings were used. Such structures were without roofs, windows and doors. Further, no seats or writing desks were provided for either the children or their teachers.

However, it is interesting to note that despite the inadequate provision of essential infrastructure by the Nigerian Government and individual owners of these schools, children who attended them, still showed the zeal and interest to learn. They performed their class tasks (writing or copying what the teacher wrote on the chalkboard) in spite of the discomfort they experienced- sitting on stones/cans/blocks and holding the exercise books in their hand (for those who have books) while those who do not have, wrote theirs on the ground. On the contrary, in some, the classroom environments were decorated with enough space for teachers and children to move around freely. These classrooms also had sufficient number of seats, desks and tables for the teachers and the children with some playthings for the children.

In all the schools visited, there were no designated areas in the classrooms for specific activities. For instance, there were no reading areas (with story books of different types with colourful illustrations or tapes/video tapes to accompany the books); writing areas (with pens, pencils of different colures, papers of different colours, sizes and shapes); role-play areas (with costumes to encourage story making or dramatization of any story told) nor science area (with a range of materials to encourage children to ask questions on how about things as well as discover the how of things themselves) .

2. **Resource Provision**
   In the area of instructional materials provision and use, all the classes observed, were lacking in supply. The materials provided in all the classrooms used were few commercially made charts on letters of the alphabets and numbers, Charts for teaching colours and shape identification along with those improvised by the class teachers.

Posters with pictures of people depicting different professions (doctors, nurses, police officers, lawyers, priests, etc), Nigerian past and present leaders, animals, and birds, among others hung on the walls of the classrooms. Children's drawings, paintings, etc. were also displayed on the walls with their names written by the teacher or the children themselves. All the materials available in most cases were very few.

During instructional delivery activities, it was noted that the teachers observed irrespective of the subject taught, did not in most cases, make use of instructional materials during teaching process. This tended to affect the participatory level of the children as well as the effectiveness of the lesson taught. For instance, all the numerical skill lessons observed (in such topics as counting of numbers) demanded the use of practical life experiences. Thus, teaching such topics to beginners, to a very great extent, demand the use of teaching materials with which the children should have had practical counting experience in associating the numbers with real-life objects thereby giving them first-hand knowledge with everyone being involved. Teachers most often used the children as teaching aids by asking some children to come out while they were counted. The children themselves resorted to using their fingers as counting materials to perform numerical tasks.

Teachers also had a feel of unavailability of basic facilities. In some classes, there were two to three teachers handling the day's activities with class sizes, which ranged from seventy-five to ninety-six. The teachers were given two to three chairs and only one table to share. As a result during grading they did their work standing while the children clustered around them.

3. Seating Arrangements

Generally, in most schools observed, the teachers' tables were positioned at the front (left or right hand side corner) of the classroom depending on where enough space was available. The tables served as storage facilities for the teachers' and pupils' books. The pupils were allocated seats in rows facing the teacher and the chalkboard. In some classes (in the northern region and some parts of western region), seats were allocated to pupils on gender basis because of religious beliefs.

However, in the Eastern and some parts of Western states used, such gender separation was non- existent. There were very few classrooms where seats were arranged in such a way as to encourage or enable children to work in pairs or groups. In some, children were paired (male and female) whereas in very many other classrooms, as many as ten children share a long bench with little or no space in between pupils.

This arrangement (seating in rows facing the chalkboard) was never adjusted or changed during the course of any lesson to give room for group works.

4. Organization of Activities

The preschool activities in Nigeria are highly structured. All the classes observed ran full day programmes, which lasted for five and half hours starting from eight o'clock in the morning to one-thirty in the afternoon. Each day has timetabled sessions that have a clearly defined beginning and end. The children were usually not free to choose what they would want to do at any particular point in time or when they wished. Usually, the mornings were started off with morning assembly (which usually takes place in an open space), after which children retire to wherever served as their classrooms. During the morning assembly, or morning devotion as it is referred to in some schools, prayers are said and general announcement made. This usually lasted for about twenty-five minutes or more.

Back in their respective classrooms areas, the classes observed started the day's activities with roll calls. Morning roll calls in each class enable teachers to know the children that were absent from school that particular day. This lasted in most classes for ten minutes or more depending on the class size.

Academic activities featured any of the subject areas in the curriculum as appeared on the timetable. Recommended schemes of work for each subject area were used in most of the schools visited. A time period, usually thirty-minutes, was allocated to each subject. With regards to subject fixtures in most of the classes observed, it was noted that literacy (English language) and numeracy (mathematics) usually featured in the morning hours whereas, science and other subjects were randomly fixed for both afternoon and morning periods. However, there were days when some core subjects (English language and Mathematics) were allocated double periods. Instructional activities in each subject area were limited to the allotted time.

Time /Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.00 8.25	Registration	And	Morning	Assembly	Assembly
8.30 8.55	News	Games	Music	Numbers	Numbers
8.55 9.25	Numbers	Games	Numbers	Numbers	CRS
9.25 9.30	SHORT	BREAK	SHORT	BREAK	BREAK
9.30 10.00	Music	Numbers	French	Letters	
10.00 10.30	Numbers	Numbers	Music	Letters	
10.30 11.15	LONG	BREAK	LONG	BREAK	BREAK
11.15 11.40	Phonics	Letters	Letters	Social norms	Elem. Science
11.40 12.05	Phonics	Letters	Letters	Elem. Science	Social norms
12.05 12.10	SHORT	BREAK	SHORT	BREAK	BREAK
12.10 12.40	Health	Library	CRS	Arts	Songs & Rhymes
12.40 1.00	Story Telling	Picture Reading	Yoruba	Writing	

Table 1: A sample of a weekly timetable in one of the school visited.

Playtime was seriously restricted to the time when it comes up on the timetable. It appeared twice each day. These were labeled as break period (long and short). These periods were used for "eating of snacks" and play by the children. Snack period comes first during the short period whereas playtime was during the long break, which usually lasted for thirty-five minutes. After the long break, academic activities continued until one-thirty p.m. on Mondays through Thursday and 12 pm on Fridays (in the Northern and some areas in Western region) during which the formal classes close officially. They close early officially on Fridays to allow the Muslim faithful attend Jumat service. In fact there was time for everything. The teachers' roles were to organize children's daily activities while the children just followed the rules. The teachers organized the lessons, planed the activities to be carried out by the children, taught the lessons and also determine when each child should stop performing the associated tasks. Children were never allowed or given the option of choosing what they would want to do.

1. Language use at the schools

It was generally observed that all the teachers used English Language as the language of instruction. The language of the children's immediate environment was minimally used. English language was widely used by the teachers even when it was clear that the children were not favourably disposed (in terms of understanding) to the language nor could the children communication fluently in the language. In fact it was noted that the children appeared to be inactive when explanations or instruction were given in English language. For instance, whenever question were asked by the teachers to the children in English Language, the children were seen to be silent because of their inability to make sense out of what the teachers had said. However, the reverse was usually the case whenever the same questions were asked in the children's first language. *Included are some of the excerpts on pupils' participation during instruction.*

T² WC³: O.K what is non-living things

WC T: Silence

T WC: Repeated the question again in L2

WC T: Stared at the teacher

T WC: Mee non living things mmh? (LI meaning you do not know non-living things?)

WC T: Silence

T WC: What we mean by non-living thing is something that cannot move from place
        to place, isn't it

WC T: silence

T WC: (in L1) what I mean by non-ling things is something that cannot move about,
        eat, run....... kinji kwoo? (is it clear)

WC T: eeh (meaning yes).

T WC: (in L¹) who can tell the things that cannot move

T WC: hands up with children shouting "aunty me" (in L¹)

P - T: "Kujera" (meaning chair)

T WC: Yes!

2P - T: "Dutse" meaning stone)

3P-T: "Takada" (L^1) (meaning book)
4P-T: "Kasa" (L^1 meaning chicken)
T WC: (Intercepting in English) Is Audu (name of the boy) correct?
WC T: silence
T WC: (In L^1) Yai de de ko? (meaning did Audu give the correct answer?)

This topic, which the teacher claimed to have taught before was then repeated taking more than half of the lesson time whereas the topic meant to be taught was talked about minimally. This was because the children appeared to be confused and resorted to silence each time the teacher tried to find out how much they understood the previous lesson using English language. However, it could be seen that as soon as the teacher switched over to the language the children were conversant with, the children responded.

2. Class Rules in preschool classrooms in Nigeria.

The key element in the organization of preschool classes observed was positive behaviours policy based on children observing rules and taking up responsibilities. Children were encouraged by their teachers to take control and be responsible for some of their behaviours/actions while the teachers ensured that the rules were obeyed as much as possible. For instance, in most classes, no child left the class without formal permission (either leaving without a card called "exit card" or without letting the teacher know). The card was usually hung on the wall near the blackboard or kept on the teacher's table. The absence of this card indicated that someone was out and as a result, the next person wanting to go out should hold on until the person with the card comes back.
In addition, children in some classes were given the responsibilities of distributing the writing exercise books to all members of the class before a writing task begins

3. Discipline at the schools.

Discipline at the preschool classrooms observed was not gentle. Physical punishments were sometimes exerted by the teachers on the children. The surprising thing about this was the reasons given for this. Based on the observations, the reasons include a child's inability to read, copy what the teacher wrote on the chalkboard properly, as well as children talking with one another in the classroom during instruction, among others. Children appeared to be tensed whenever their teachers brought out the sticks.

Derogatory words like 'you will never learn', 'shame on you', 'you do not know anything', as well as actions like flogging were also used by the teachers on the children as disciplinary measures. Included are some examples.
This excerpt was in a numeracy lesson during which time a pupil was asked by the teacher to come out and read to the whole-class.

T P: In L1, Class what did he say?
WC T: Laughed
T WC: Are we reading 'A, B, C'?
WC T: Continued laughing.

T P: Pointed at figure 'l' say one!
P T: "one" (inaudibly)
T P: Shouted at the boy, open your mouth!
T P: Pushed the pupil on the head.
P T: Wiped his tears and read two, ...eight ... got stock at 'nine'
P T: Kept pointing at eight.
WC T: Observed and laughed at him.
T P: (when will you ever know how to count 1, 2, 3....) pointed as he said "say nine"!.
P T: Nine.
P T: However he forgot the next number
T P: Ehe!
P T: Pointed at figure ten and kept quiet.

This type of negative reinforcement measures were prominently used during whole class teaching when a child was unable to provide correct answers to teacher's questions. The use of such words may end up causing more harm than good in the emotional development of the children on whom such words were used. They may begin to believe that really they can never learn!. This belief if internalized might affect the children's attitude towards schooling.

Disciplinary measures also included such actions as insisting that children must participate in every class task, to not allowing children to do what was of interest to them at any particular point in time as well as not allowing those who did not complete a particular class task to go out with others during break periods.

The preschool teachers observed never applied softer forms of control. Rather direct confrontations were used when trying to instil discipline on the preschoolers. Words like 'please could you' were never used by the preschool teachers observed when making demands from the children. Opinion of these children was never sought when certain decisions are being taken. For instance, phrases like 'would you like to....' or what would you like us to'..?, could make the children feel more relaxed and have a sense of belonging in their classroom environment rather than using commands like 'now all of you sit down', look at the board and fold your arms'. This attitude could, rather, bring about tension on the children.

4. Teacher child interactions in pre-school classrooms in Nigeria.

It is interesting to note the amount of teacher child interaction (at individual level) that go on in preschool settings in Nigeria. The result showed that most communications between the teachers and the preschoolers occurred at the group level during instruction. All the teachers used whole class interaction with minimal small group and one-to-one interaction featuring. The communication flow was usually from the teachers to the preschoolers with the preschoolers mostly at the receiving end. It is also worthy to note that the talking turns from the pupils either as a whole class or at individual level were mere responses to either the teachers' questions or directives/remarks. Pupils never initiated any of the talks recorded on their own nor did the talks emanate from questions asked by the preschoolers.

The talking turns from the children were usually monosyllabic words used in response to teachers' questions, remarks or instructions. It was however noted that interaction between

the teachers and preschoolers on one-to-one basis also occurred during whole class instruction, monitoring and grading of pupils' class task. Monitoring is said to be taking place whenever the teachers are found moving around the classroom assessing how the children are performing a given class task. Grading, however took place whenever the teachers scored what the children had written. During these periods, teachers tended to pay particular attention to those children who were unable to perform the class tasks by giving extra attention.

Teacher-pupil/small group interaction occurred whenever the teacher directed questions to small group of children on the same row or individual pupil and the group or pupil responded to the teacher.   Further, it was generally observed that the interactions, which, occurred, between the teachers and the preschoolers at individual level were very brief. This finding was not unexpected when one considers such factors as the adult-child ratio, the structured nature the daily activities and the unavailability of teaching materials in the preschool classrooms observed. With respect to adult-child ratio, the average class size of the schools visited was 48 children to one teacher hence their preferred use of direct instruction as well as whole class teaching to cope with the number of children under their care. Teachers who have relatively smaller number of children tended to spend more time and had longer interactions with them at individual level.

Q2: To what extent were these material indicators available in the Schools observed
The environmental indicators considered in this study included the human, physical and the material provisions available as at the time of the data collection exercise.
With respect to physical environment, three characteristics of physical environments were identified among the school visited. These include schools were the classroom areas are situated in completed building, those situated in uncompleted buildings and those where children are taught in open air. The extent to which these were provided in both private and public schools situated in urban and rural locations are as shown in Figure 1.
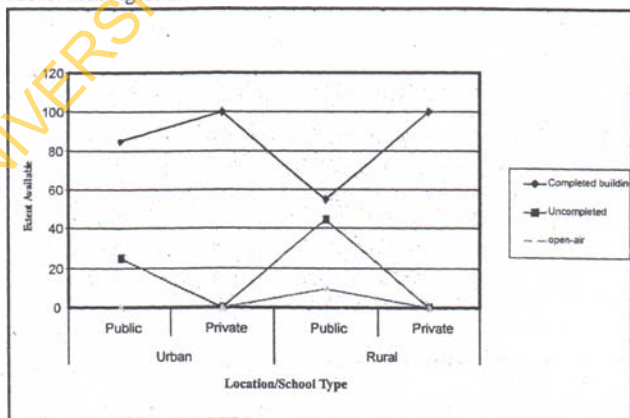

Figure 1: Extent of availability of Physical Structures

Figure 1, shows that private preschools visited irrespective of where they are located have physical structures (completed buildings, 100%) whereas the public schools are lagging in the provision of classroom areas. The public preschool in both urban and rural areas are characterised by uncompleted structures (42%) as well as open air classrooms (16%)

Material Resources Available

The material resources identified during the data collection exercise in the schools visited included, Toilet facilities, electricity, educational toys, teachers' tables, wall charts, flash cards, textbooks, storybooks, supplementary books, geometric shapes, enough seats to go round, child friendly furniture, chalkboards, art materials, official syllabuses. Extent of their availability in the school are as indicated in figure 2.
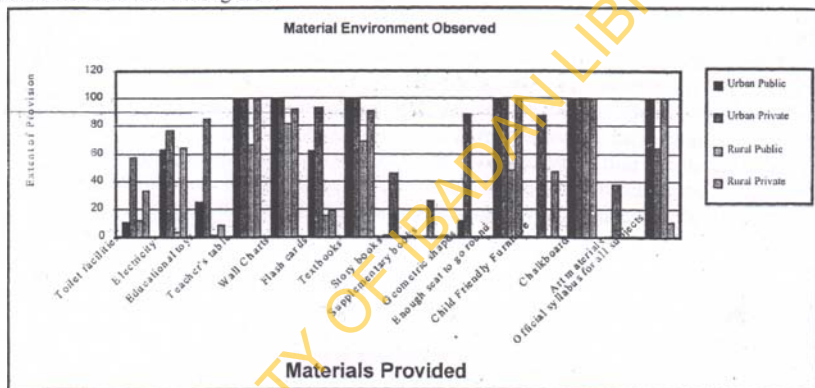

Figure 2: extent of availability of the resources provided

Information from Figure 2 indicates that, with respect to Toilet facilities, 10% of the public schools visited in urban location made provision for that; 58% in urban private; 16% in rural public and 36% in rural private. With respect to electricity, 61% of the public schools located in urban areas had electricity; 78% in urban private, 2% in rural public and 61% in rural private. Further, for educational toys, the figure shows that 21% of the public schools visited in urban areas had one type of educational toys or another in the classrooms, while 82% in urban private schools, less than 1% in rural public and 4% in rural private). However, with respect to availability of teachers' tables, all the private schools visited (100%) in both urban and rural location, had this item provided, whereas 62% of the public school in rural. However. 100% of the public schools in urban location had this item in the classrooms).

Wall charts were available in all the urban public/private schools visited (100%), 80% of the public schools visited in rural and 84% in rural private schools whereas with respect to flash cards, 60% and 88% urban public/private schools made provision for this respectively whereas less than 20% rural public and private schools did. Recommended textbooks were available (100%) in all public and private schools in the urban location but

were present in 65% and 85% in the rural public and private schools respectively. Storybooks which are also an important learning aid for children were almost none existent (less than 1% provision in public schools in the urban location, 41% availability in urban private schools whereas none was provided in the rural public/private schools visited). Also, with respect to supplementary books none was provided in the public schools irrespective of location whereas 22% of the private schools in urban location made provision for such materials while less than 1% of the private schools in the rural location made provision for such materials.

Furthermore, geometric shapes were available only in schools located in the urban areas 10% and 85% for urban public and private schools respectively, however, none was provided in the rural schools. Enough seats to go round were available (100%) in all the private schools in urban and rural locations as well as public schools in urban location but only 41% of the schools in the public schools in the rural location had enough seats for the preschoolers. Child friendly furniture was provided only in the private schools, 82% private urban and 42% in private rural whereas chalkboards were available in all the schools visited (100%). Art materials was available in only 38% of the private schools visited in the urban location while none of the public schools visited irrespective of the location did not. Official syllabuses in all the subject areas which should serve as a guide and encourage uniformity in all schools was available in all the public schools in the urban/rural location 100% whereas only 61% of the private schools in the urban location have this material while less than 10% of private schools in the rural location did not have them.

Direction of Interaction

Here attention was focused on recording the communication flow pattern observed during instructional delivery activities in the schools visited. The prevalent communication flow include one- to- one (Teacher to pupil/Pupil to teacher); whole class (Teacher to group/Group to teacher) and teacher to other (teacher discussing with a visitor). The results on direction of communication are presented in Figure 3.
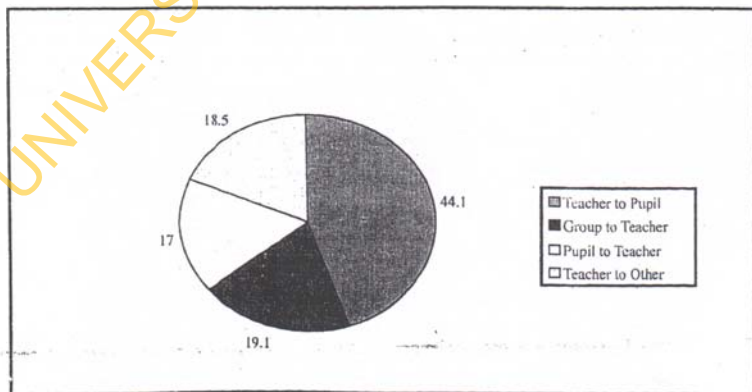
Figur 3: Pattern of direction of interactions observed

Figure 3 shows that majority of the talks emanated from the teachers and directed to the pupils (44.1%); followed by group responses to the teachers (19.1%)

Human Resources/Academic

The grouping factor are the practicing teachers who have any type of professional qualifications to teach in any level of education in Nigeria (holders of NCE, B.Ed, B.Sc/B.A. Ed certificates) and those who are not professionally qualified (holders of Primary; W.A.S.C; OND; H.N.D certificates). The number of teachers in the schools observed with these qualifications are as shown on figure 2.3.
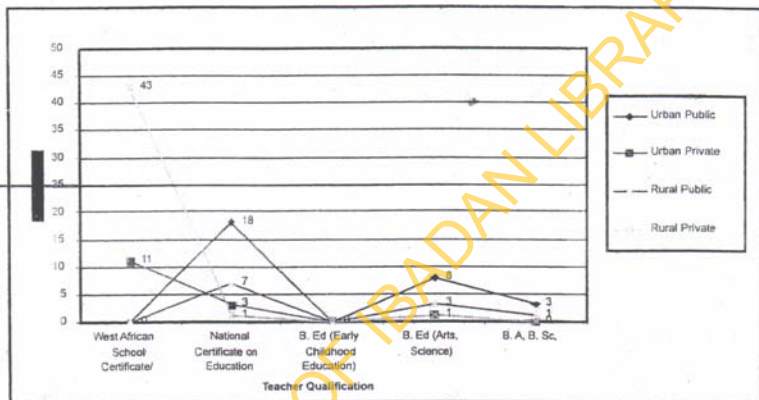

Figure 4: Extent of availability of qualified teachers

Figure 4, shows that majority of the teachers (54%) in the schools visited in the rural and urban locations (43% and 11%) are holders of second to the least qualification recommended by the Federal Government of Nigeria whereas 29% of the teachers had the National Certificate on Education (18% from public schools in urban location, 7% from rural pubic schools, while the remaining 3% and 1% are from urban and rural private schools. The figure also shows that majority of the graduate teachers (B.Ed; B.A; B.Sc) are working in public schools in both rural (8%) and urban (3%) whereas only 5% of them are in the private schools. It is interesting to note that the result revealed that none of the teachers (0%) employed to work with children in the schools visited had any training in early childhood education.

Conclusion.

The result presented showed the environmental characteristics of Nigerian preschool classrooms lacked quality. These inadequacies are unexpected considering the fact that the Nigerian government officials attended most worlds educational bodies conferences where issues pertaining to provision of quality education at all levels were discussed (NERDC,

2004). Secondly, it runs contrary to what was said to have been put in place by the government in lieu of achieving the EFA number one goal (Olorunfunmi, 2000). Most importantly, In addition, these types of provisions may not augur well with the development of Nigerian children when one considers the advantages associated with providing preschoolers with quality of the classroom-learning environment prior to their entry into formal schooling. Such advantages include that Children tend to learn better through actively interacting with their environment (Vandayar and Killen, 2006; Prah, 2003); positive relationship to children's math abilities (Broberg, Wessels, Lamb and Hwang, 1997); significant predictor of children's language ability and better math skills (NICHD, 2002; Piesner-Feinberg, Burchial, Clifford, Culkin, Howes, Kagan and Yazejian (2001); significant predictor of children's cognitive/linguistic progress as well as social development (Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart, Sammons, Melhuish, Elliot and Totsika (2006) among others.

References

Agusiobo, B.C. (2002). *Policy Regulation on Early Childhood Pre-school Education in Nigeria.* State primary education board, Kano State, Nigeria, 15 pp.

Aina, T.A., Etta, F.E. AND Zeitlin, M.F. (1992). *Child Development and Nutrition in Nigeria.* A Textbook for Education, Health and Social Service Professionals. Federal Ministry of Education and UNICEF, Lagos.

Association for Childhood Education International (2002). *Global Guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care in the 21st Century.*

Ayers, H. (1996) *Assessing Individual Needs: A Practical Approach*, London: David Fulton Publishers.

Bennett, P., Elliot, M. & Peters, D. (2005). Classroom and family effects on children's social and behavioural problems. *The Elementary School Journal*, 105(5), 461-499

Brock-Utne, B. (2005). *Learning through familiar language versus learning through a foreign language a look into some secondary school classrooms in Tanzania.* Paper presented at 8th UKFIET Oxford International Conference on Education and Development, 13th 15th September 2005.

Brock-Utne, B. and Holmarsdottir, H.B. (2003). Language Policies and Practices Some Preliminary Results from a Research Project in Tanzania and South Africa. In Brock-Utne, Desai and Qorro (eds) *Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa (LOITASA.* E & D Limited Dar-es-Salaam.

Brogberg, A.G., Wessels, H., Lamb, M. E., Hwang, C. P. (1997). Effects of day care on the development of cognitive abilities in 8-years-olds: a longitudinal study. *Developmental Psychology*, 33 (1), 62-69

Bruce, T. (1997) *Early Childhood Education*. London. Hodder & Stoughton

Curtis, R. (1997). *Classroom Interactions*. Research Summary Paper. Http://www.gsu.edu/~mstlls/res_rc.htm

ESA/UNESCO, (2003) *Pre-Diagnostic Bibliography Collation on Studies Proposed for the Nigerian Education Sector Analysis*. Federal Ministry of Education/SIBON Books Ltd. Nigeria.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004). National Policy on Education. Federal Ministry of Information Lagos, Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council. Yaba, Lagos Nigeria.

FGN/UNICEF, (2001). *Children's and Women's Rights in Nigeria: A Wake-up Call Situation Assessment and Analysis*. FGN/UNICEF Publication.

Goldthorpe, M. (1998) *Effective IEPs Through Circle Time* , Learning Development Aids.

Guba, E.G and Lincoln, Y.S. (1981). *Effective Evaluation: Improving the Usefulness of Evaluation Results through Response and Naturalistic Approaches*. Jossey-Balls Publications. San Francisco Washington, London.

Gura, P. (1996) *Resources for Early Learning: Children, Adults and Staff*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Hayes, D. (1999)   Foundations of Primary Teaching. 2nd (ed). The Crimwell Press, Trowbridge, Wilts.

Helm, J.H & Gronlund, G. (2000) Linking Standards and Engaging Learning in the Early Years. *Early Childhood Research and Practice*. 2 (1)

Henniger, M.L. (2005) Teaching Young Children: An Introduction. 3rd (ed) Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

Matlin, S.A. (2004) *Commonwealth Education Partnerships*. The Stationary Office, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

Montessori, M (1912) *The Montessori Method: Scientific Pedagogy as Applied to Child Education in "The Children's Houses"*. London, Heinemann.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (1998) *Overview of Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practice for Young Children*. A joint position paper of the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Downloaded from the

Internet at http://www.naeyc.org/resources/position_statements/psread0.htm

National Educational Research and Development Council, (NERDC, 2002) *National Minimum Standards for Early Child Care Centres in Nigeria*. Lokoja Kaduna Road, Sheda, Abuja.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Early Child Care Research Network (1996). Characteristics of infant child care: actors contributing to positive caregiving. *Early childhood Research Quarterly*, 11, 269-306.

Ndukwu, P.N (2002). *School and Teacher Factors as Determinants of Classroom Material Resources Utilization in Pre-primary Schools in Lagos, Nigeria*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Institute of Education University of Ibadan.

Obanya, P. A. I. (2004) Early Childhood Association of Nigeria Conference Goodwill Message. *Journal of Early Childhood Association of Nigeria, 1 (2)*

Odinko, M.N. & Williams, J.M. (2006). Language of Instruction and Interaction Patterns in Pre-Primary Classrooms in Nigeria. *Journal of Classroom Interaction*, Vol.41 (1) 22 32.

Ofsted (1998a) *The quality of education in institutions inspected under the nursery education funding arrangements*. London; Ofsted.

Ogunkola, B.J. (1998). Interaction Patterns in Primary School Science Classrooms in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. *African Journal of Educational Research*, 5 (1).

Okebukola, P (2000). The child-friendly school initiative as a new deminsion in educational development in Nigeria. A paper presented at the 7th Annual Conference on Educational Development in Lagos State (July 19, 2000).

Okpala N.P. and Onocha C.O. (1988)"Classroom Interaction Patterns: Nigerian Physics Teacher Trainees" Physics Education. *A Journal of the British Institute of Physics)*, 23, (5), 288-290.

Olorunfunmi, M.O.A. (2000) *Education For All: The Year 2000 Assessment Nigeria*, Federal Ministry of Education, Shehu Shagari Way, Abuja.

Piesner-Feinberg, E.S., Burchial, M.R., Clifford, R.M., Culkin, M.L., Howes, C., Kagan, S.L., and Yazejian, N. (2001) The Relation of Preschool Child-Care Quality to Children's Cognitive and Social Developmental Trajectories through Second Grade. *Child Development*, 72, (5), 1534 1553.

Prah. K.K. (2003). *Going Native: Language of Instruction for Education, Development and*

African Emancipation. In Brock-Utne, Desai and Qorro (eds) *Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa* (LOITASA. E & D Limited Dar-es-Salaam.

Ritchie, J. (2003). The Application of Qualitative Methods to Social Research. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers.* Ritchie and Lewis (eds.) SAGE Publication, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi.

Taylor, S.J & Bogdan, R. (1998) Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods. A guidebook and Resource. 3rd Edition. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

UNESCO, (2005) *Education for All Global Monitoring Report: The Quality Imperative.* UNESCO Publishing France.

UNICEF, (2000). *Defining quality in education.* Programme Division, Working Paper Series. Pp.42. UNESCO, Paris.
Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Institute of Education University of Ibadan.

Vandeyar, S. & Killen, R. (2006). Teacher-student interactions in desegregated classrooms in South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development.* Vol. 26, 382-393. Available online at www.sciencedirect.com. Accessed in August 2006.

Varol, F. and Farran, D. (2006). Early Mathematical Growth: How to Support Young Children's Mathematical Development. *Early Children Educational Journal,* Vol. 33, (6) 381-387. EJ. DOJ: 10.1007/S10643-006-0060-8

Yoloye, E.A (1978). *Evaluation for Innovation. African Primary Science Programme (APSP).* University of Ibadan Press.