AVAILABILITY AND UTILIZATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD LITERACY CURRICULUM IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN ORUMBA SOUTH L.G.A.

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Abstract
This study investigated the availability and utilization of instructional materials for the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum in public schools in Orumba South L.G.A, of Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study. The design was a descriptive survey. The population comprised of 110 pre-school teachers. A sample of 50 pre-school teachers were drawn using simple random sampling techniques. Instrument for data collection was a questionnaire which was developed by the researchers. The instrument was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient which yielded a value of 0.60 and 0.70 with an overall reliability of 0.65. Data collected were analyzed using percentage, mean and standard deviation. The major findings were: that some of the instructional materials were not available for in the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum and that teachers do not use some of the instructional materials. In conclusion, the teacher do not use instructional materials which would have helped them for gain information's, think, recall and also assimilate what they have been taught. This hinder the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum. Based on these findings, recommendation was made: The State Government and Parents Teacher Association (P.T.A) should join hands in providing instructional materials in early childhood education. Workshops and seminars should be organized at times to re-train teachers on how to use instructional materials.
Keywords: Early, childhood, teachers, literacy and instructional materials.

Introduction

Throughout the ages, education whether formal or informal has been recognized as an instrument for individual and societal transformation. This is the main reason why every society continuously strive to bequeath upon its successive generations education that is not only qualitative but functional as well. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) in her National Policy on Education recognizes education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. For education to actually serve its real purpose of societal transformation, the indispensable components of such education must include quality infrastructure in the form of conducive and adequate classrooms, quality instructors (teachers) at all levels who are highly motivated and plus relevant instructional materials, and curriculum (Okolo 2016).

To get the required result in education, there is the need for the society to lay a strong foundation at the early childhood level of education. This foundation should therefore be centered in the early development of the children. Early childhood education (ECE) is the education given in an education institution to children prior to their entering into the primary school. The early years are crucial for the development of an individual. It is the foundation for the success or failure of the whole system of education and any support given at this stage with appropriate practice helps to promote development (FRN 2013).

There was a time in the Nigeria educational system when there was no curriculum for children in early childhood education, children were taught based on the proprietors' initiative. Children were just sent to school to stay and wait for the parents or guardian to come back from their daily activities and pick them up. Recently as a result of modernization and globalization, early childhood curriculum came forth. With recent researches, it was found that 0-6 years is a critical period in the life of any child. The brain at this point develops faster than ever (Obioma 2013). Anything that the child learns here affects the Childs adulthood. As a result of this, it became important that children need to be provided with stimulating, friendly and safe environment.

Today, awareness on the part of teachers of young children in ensuring early childhood curriculum implementation cannot be over emphasized. At the simplest level, curriculum is defined as a course of study. According to Brewer (2012) and Estes (2011), Curriculum is everything that is taught and learned for most early childhood educators. Tanner, (2013) defines curriculum as a plan or programme of all experience which the learner encounters under the direction of a school. Similarly, Gatawa (2014), posits that Curriculum is the totality of the experiences of children for which schools are responsible. From these definitions above, it can be deduced that curriculum means all the experiences to which a learner is to be exposed under the guidance of a teacher. It is the teacher that implement the curriculum. In early childhood curriculum, it comprises of different forms which it is expected that the teacher makes use of it. The different forms of curriculum include literacy curriculum, numeracy curriculum among others. For the purpose of this study literacy curriculum will be discussed. According to Harnby (2015), literacy is the ability to read and write. According to Obidike, Enemuo and Onwuka (2019), literacy means the ability to use language, number, images, computer and other basic means to

understand, communicate, gain useful knowledge, solve mathematical problems and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture. On the other hand literacy curriculum are educative materials which teachers make reference to, in carrying out literacy activities in schools, (Nnamuch 2018). The author referred to it as instructional materials, instructional aids, instructional resources and instructional devices.

The literacy curriculum of a typical nursery school includes identification of pictures, picture reading, object recognition, alphabets, numbers, nursery rhymes, recognition and identify shapes, coloring, story time in some cases, rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic among others. The emphasis of most is on the intellectual development of the children much is devoted to the learning of alphabets, and memorization of facts, poems and some short passages from various books in English language than to recreational and social activities (Federal Ministry of Education 2013). However, literacy curriculum may not be progressive without adequate curriculum implementation.

According to Morris, Wooding and Grant (2011), implementation is a continuous process that includes a set of activities designed to put a program or activity into practice. The National Policy on Education (FRN 2013) referred curriculum implementation as to how the planned or officially designed course of study is translated by the teacher into earning experiences for the benefits of the learner. According to Onwuka (2015), Curriculum implementation entails putting into practice the officially prescribed courses of study to help the learner acquire knowledge or experiences. Curriculum implementation can also be referred to the stage when the curriculum itself, as an educational programme is put into operation by a required implementation agent. Onwuka (2015) identified the teacher as the agent in the curriculum implementation process by saying that Implementation is the manner in which the teacher selects and mixes the various aspects of knowledge contained in curriculum document or syllabuses. According to the author, implementation takes place when the teacher has constructed syllabus, prepares the teaching environment with necessary instructional materials, interact with the learner, which makes the learner acquire the planned knowledge, ideas, and attitudes aimed at enabling the learner function effectively in the society. The teacher needs to be committed and knowledgeable in the use of instructional materials while implementing the curriculum.

To a layman, instructional materials simply could be regarded as teaching aids employed by the teacher to improve the effectiveness of instruction. According to Eya and Ureme (2011) instructional materials are teaching materials which a teacher utilized in the course of presenting a lesson in order to make the content of the lesson understandable to the learners. The implication is that the use of instructional materials is inevitable if effective teaching and learning must be achieved.

Instructional materials are further categorized into diagrams, models, charts toys, cartoons, and maps among others. Others include radio, television, chalkboard, sustention boards. (Eze 2012). The author also gave brief history of instructional material in education and the importance such as gaining of information, retention, recall, thinking, reasoning, interest, imagination as well as better assimilation. Instructional materials are the backbone of whole range of the classroom communication and expedite teaching and learning through various senses of the teachers and learners (Okeke 2013). Hazel (2014), made it clear to show the value of visual materials. Visual materials includes: charts, chalkboard, textbook, models, pictures and flashcard among others. The author also said this "that what I hear I forget, what I see, I remember and what I do, I know" it is essentially important to teach pre-school children with materials (toys) which can be seen and handled by them.

When a teacher uses instructional materials in teaching, the learner interacts with those instructional materials and they learn from them. Oni (2016) stated that the availability and adequate use of instructional materials promote effective teaching and learning activities in the school while their inadequacy affects the academic performance negatively. According to Ikegulu (2014), instructional materials are used by teachers to enhance the quality of instruction and they help children to understand what has been taught. Availability is the fact that something can be bought, used, or reached, or how much it can be. While Utilization is the action of making practical and effective use of something. (Harnby 2015).

Statement of the Problem

State Government has brought many innovations in our basic school sector by introducing pre-primary education and its curriculum, yet the quality of primary education still dwindles. Observation made by the researcher shows that primary school pupils are having problem with their literacy curriculum. This could be as a result of teachers not making proper use of

instructional materials in teaching literacy curriculum. Despite the introduction of pre-primary education and its objectives which is expected to produce balanced and bright primary school pupils, pupils still perform below expectation. In most teaching and learning situations, teacher do not make use of instructional materials. They prefer "chalk and talk" method which rarely appeals to pupils' sense of vision and learning. However, the use of instructional materials has not received the necessary attention desired in early childhood education. Where there were instructional materials, pupil learn a lot because they see, touch and feel. These concerns motivated the researcher to carry out this study on the availability and utilization of instructional materials for the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum in Orumba South L.G.A. Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the availability and utilization of instructional materials in the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum in public schools in Orumba South L.G.A. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the availability of instructional materials for the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum in public schools in Orumba South L.G.A.
2. determine the utilization of instructional materials for the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum in public schools in Orumba South L.G.A.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What instructional materials are available for the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum in public schools in Orumba South L.G.A?
2. What instructional materials do teachers utilize in the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum in public schools in Orumba South L.G.A?

Method

The design of this study was descriptive survey aimed at investigating the availability and utilization of instructional materials in the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum in public schools in Orumba South. The population of the study comprised forty-two (42) government owned pre-schools and 110 pre-school teachers in Orumba South of Anambra State. The researchers used simple random sampling techniques by balloting to select twenty-five (25)

pre-primary schools out of the forty-two (42) pre-schools in Orumba South. Also, simple random sampling technique by balloting was use to select two teachers each from the 25 selected schools giving a total of fifty (50) pre-school teachers respondents. The instrument for data collection for the study was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers which had 28 items. The title of the questionnaire is "Instructional Materials Use for the Implementation of Early Childhood Literacy Curriculum (IMUIECLC)". The researchers formulated the questions from stated research questions. The questionnaire was made up of three sections, A, B and C. A dealt with personal data while section B had 14 items which focus on availability and section C comprised 14 items which sought information on utilization. The section B items on the questionnaire were structured using Available and Not Available while section C were structured using four point likert scale of Strongly Agree= 4, Agree= 3, Disagree= 2, and Strongly Disagree= 1. The validity of the instrument was established by three experts.

The data were trial tested with ten (10) teachers from Orumba North L.G.A. Cronbach Alpha Reliability Co-efficient was used to determine the reliability which yielded 0.60 and 0.70 for the two clusters. The overall reliability is 0.65. The researchers adopted face-to-face questionnaire administration to ensure that all the questionnaires were collected and none lost. A total of 50 questionnaires were distributed. The data collected from the study were analyzed using percentage, mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. Any item with percentage from 50 and above are available while item with percentage below are not available. This applies to research question one. For research question two a four-point scale were used. The mean cut off point for the items was 2.50. This means that any item with a mean of 2.50 and above was regarded as being agreed while those below the mean cut off 2.50 were disagree.

Results

Research Question I: What instructional material are available for the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum in public schools in Orumba South L.G.A.

Table 1: Percentage availability of instructional materials for the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum in public schools in Orumba South L.G.A.

S/N	ITEMS	Available %	Not Available %	Decision
1.	Desktop Word Walls	30	70	NA
2.	Journals	45	55	NA
3.	Reading Alphabet Teaching Charts	75	25	A
4.	Books	80	20	A
5.	Children's Dictionary	47	53	NA
6.	Nursery Rhyme Posters	80	20	A
7.	Calendar	90	10	NA
8.	Labels	70	30	A
9.	Newspapers	40	60	NA
10.	Coupons	47	53	NA
11.	Map	76	24	A
12.	Tape/CD Players	20	80	NA
13.	Music and Books on Tape /CD	20	80	NA
14.	Computer with Keyboard.	30	70	NA

A = Available.
NA = Not Available.

Table 1 shows that items numbers 1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14 are not available. This can be seen from their percentage of availability. They have percentage score below 50% which is the bench mark for availability. Also, items number 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 11 have percentage score of above 50% which is the bench mark for availability. These items show that they are available for teaching literacy in public schools in Orumba South L.G.A. In conclusion, this means that some of the instructional materials which help them in the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum were not available.

Research Question 2: What instructional materials do teachers utilized for the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum.

Table 2: Mean score of respondents on the instructional materials teachers utilized for the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum in public schools in Orumba South L.G.A.

S/N	Items: Instructional materials utilized by teachers	X	SD	Decision
15.	Desktop Word Walls	2.3	0.3	Disagree
16.	Journals	2.0	0.2	Disagree
17.	Reading Alphabet Teaching Charts	3.4	0.4	Agree
18.	Books	3.7	0.5	Agree
19.	Children's Dictionary	2.1	0.2	Disagree
20.	Nursery Rhyme Posters	2.5	0.4	Agree
21.	Calendar	3.8	0.4	Agree
22.	Labels	3.2	0.4	Agree
23.	Newspapers	1.9	0.3	Disagree
24.	Coupons	2.3	0.3	Disagree
25.	Map	3.6	0.4	Agree
26.	Tape/CD Players	1.8	0.3	Disagree
27.	Music and Books on Tape /CD	1.7	0.3	Disagree
28.	Computer with Keyboard.	2.4	0.3	Disagree
Cluster mean		**2.6**	**0.4**	**Agree**

Table 2 shows that items number 15, 16, 19, 23, 24, 26, 27, and 28 have the mean scores 2.3, 2.0, 2.1, 1.9, 2.3, 1.8, 1.7and 2.4 respectively which were below the cutoff point of 2.50 therefore were disagreed while items 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, and 25 have the mean scores of 3.4, 3.7, 2.5, 3.8, 3.2 and 3.6 respectively which were above cut off points 2.50 therefore were agreed. In conclusion this means teachers do not use some of the instructional material in teaching early childhood literacy curriculum which makes children to remember and retain what they have learn. The cluster mean also agreed that teacher do not use some of the instructional materials and the standard deviation scores attests to it.

Discussion

The findings in Table 1 revealed that some of the instructional materials which help in the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum were not available. Instructional materials (Tape/CD player, Music, Coupons) helped in gaining of information retention, recall, thinking, reasoning, interested imagination as well as better assimilation. The findings of this study is in line with Oni, (2016), who posits that the availability and adequate use of instructional materials

promote effective teaching and learning activities in the schools while their inadequate affects the academic performance negatively. Since the instructional material is not available, there is no how it can be utilized

The finding in Table 2 revealed also that teachers do not use some of the instructional material which help in the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum. The implication is that the use of instructional materials is inevitable if effective teaching and learning must be achieved. The findings are in line with that of Ikegulu (2014), who posits that instructional materials are used by teachers to enhance the quality of instructions and they help children to understand what has been taught. This is in line with Hazel (2014) who also made it clear to show the value of visual materials (charts, chalkboard, textbook, models, pictures and flashcard among others). The author also said this "that what I hear I forget, what I see, I remember and what I do, I know". It is essentially important to teach pre-school children with materials (toys) which can be seen and handled by them.

Conclusion

The schools do not have enough teaching and learning materials which help in the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum. Teachers do not make use of some materials which helps the children to retain what they have been taught. Finally, the teachers do not use instructional materials which help them to gain information's, think, recall and also assimilate what they have been taught. This hinder the implementation of early childhood literacy curriculum.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. The State Government and Parents Teacher Association (P.T.A) should join hands in providing instructional materials in early childhood education
2. Workshops and seminars should be organized at times to re-train teachers on how to use instructional materials.
3. Teachers should improvise materials for teaching literacy curriculum in early childhood.

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