

Historical Analysis of Federal Government Innovations in Early Childhood Education in Nigeria, 1977-2008

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Abstract

Federal government innovations in Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Nigeria, 1977-2008 set out to examine and explain the status of this level of education, the improvements and innovations that have been successfully implemented as well as the challenges and how they can be remedied. The Federal Government (F.G) was instrumental to the inclusion and recognition of E.C.E. in the National Policy on Education (NPE), involvement of State Governments in E.C.E., establishment of the Early Child Care curriculum, establishment of pre-primary sections in existing public primary schools, stipulation of teacher pupil ratio of 1:25 per class, adoption of a multi-sectoral approach to the implementation of the ECCDE and the development of the National Policy for Integrated Early Children Development (IECD) in Nigeria. The dearth of trained teachers with specialization in Early Childhood education, partial implementation of the policy on ECCDE, job insecurity and poor salaries at this level, inadequate assistance through Corporate Social responsibility (C.S.R.) by Corporate Organizations to ECCDE are some major challenges militating against ECCDE in Nigeria. With the spread of ECCDE into the rural areas there would be a gradual improvement on its services delivery.

Introduction

Educating young person is a universal and critical concern of every human group that has to be organized and implemented on a sustainable basis. This is because each succeeding generation is expected to acquire knowledge, skills, indeed culture from their predecessor, and improve on them where the need arises in order to meet their needs and cope with other challenges.

Education is a serious enterprise that is usually planned and managed. Consequently, policies are generated from the ideas of the group to direct, control and guide the achievement of the group's goals and objectives in divers facets of human activities. This discourse on early childhood education in Nigeria has its thrust on the analysis of Federal Government's intervention and innovations since the production of her first National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1977. This policy has been revised several times, in 1981, 1998 and 2004. Several ideas and challenges stimulated these revisions as would be shown in the discussion. In what state

was childhood education before the emergence of the NPE in 1977? What status was it accorded in this NPE? What improvements if any have been made in childhood education in Nigeria given the various revisions of the NPE since 1977?

What are these innovations and how have they been success fully implemented for the development of childhood education in Nigeria? Are there still challenges in this aspect of education and how can they be remedied?

Definition of Terms

Innovation and early childhood education are key terms used in this discourse that require some explanations for clarity and ease of understanding. The dynamism of human groups or societies is universal and produce new ideas, ways of doing things, methods and so on. Innovation is the introduction of something new and this can be an idea, method or device as found in all societies (Merriam-Webster, 2004).

It essentially depicts a change in the ways things were previously done.

The term Early childhood education has been used severally for children of different age brackets who are yet to attain the school- going age. It is partly for this reason that they are referred to as preschoolers and they attend pre-school, pre-primary, institutions or nursery schools among others. Maduewesi (2005) defined early childhood education as encompassing the overall social, physical, and intellectual development and education of children below the age of six years. To Ejieh (2006), it is the pre-school education programmes of various sorts for children below the official school-going age (usually six years) mainly to prepare them for education in primary schools. The education given in an educational institution to children aged 3 to 5 plus prior their entering the primary school (Federal Republic of Nigeria, NPE 1977, 1981 and 1998) is early childhood education. The 2004 revised edition of the NPE has a similar definition for early childhood education but specifically includes the crèche, nursery and kindergarten as other institutions for such education. Here, it implies that younger persons are to be taught in formal settings as in the crèche from one year and six months to two years.

Early childhood education in this discourse refers to any informal, formal or non-formal education provided for children from birth before primary school-going age in which the curriculum enables them to acquire social skills and develop both physically and intellectually, as a foundation for life and transition into primary School. Antecedents to Federal Government's Intervention in Early Childhood Education

The strong desire to make education in Nigeria to be relevant in meeting the economic, social, and cultural needs of the nation after independence was partly responsible for the Federal Government in the 1960s and 70s to wield a lot of influence in the educational sector. First, through the National Curriculum Conference held in Lagos in September 1969, the whole spectrum of the nation's educational system which was predominantly British influenced was reviewed for relevance to Nigeria's needs under the auspices of the Federal Government. As

Fafunwa (1989) remarked (from many educators, criticism of Nigeria's education system), "four years after Nigeria's independence, the educational system of the country was not only colonial but more of British than the British themselves. Nigerian children were being educated to meet the needs of a foreign culture and were, therefore better fit for export than for life in their own country".

The National Curriculum Conference reviewed old educational goals and identified new national goals for Nigerian education, bearing in mind the needs of youths and adults in the task of nation-building and national reconstruction for social and economic well-being of the individual and the society. Indeed, it was the first national attempt to change the colonial orientation of the Nigerian educational system and also promote national consciousness as well as self-reliance through the educational process. The outcome of this conference on the Philosophy for Nigerian Education suffered a major setback in its implementation due to the civil War in Nigeria from 1966 to 1970.

In June 1973, the Federal Commissioner for Education, Chief A.Y. Eke, organized a national seminar on "A National Policy on Education" chaired by Chief S.C. Adebayo. This was the second major intervention in educational affairs of the nation by the Federal Government in this post independence period. Again, a variety of' changed and developments since the end of the civil war in 1970 stimulated this seminar. For example, education became considered as the major vehicle for national rehabilitation, reconstruction and reconciliation which were the Federal Government's tenets for reunification of Nigerians after the civil war. Another force was the perception of education as an instrument for the survival of' the individual and society, the fostering of national unity, the transformation of the social and economic features of' society, the attainment of the nation's five national objectives and the need to actually indigenize the education system and for government to take primary responsibility in the control and development of education.

The Seminar had a wide representation of distinguished Nigerians broadly from non-governmental organizations, government agencies and individuals with varied interest and a UNESCO team. At this meeting the five national objectives were adopted, namely:

- a) a free and democratic society;
- b) a just and egalitarian society;
- c) a united, strong and self-reliant nation; d) a great and dynamic economy; and
- e) a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizen.

Similarly, the Recommendations of the 1969 National Curriculum Conference on these nine specific decision-areas were adopted:

- (a) National philosophy of education
- (b) Goals of primary education
- (c) Objectives of secondary education
- (d) Purposes of tertiary education
- (e) The role of teacher education

- (1) Functions of science and technical, education
- (g) The place of women's education
- (h) Education for living
- (i) Control of public education -

Each level of education was also discussed in detail by the participants at this seminar. In 1977 the military regime led by General Olusegun Obasanjo issued the first Nigerian policy on education, the "National Policy on Education" (NPE) which contained the recommendations of the 1973 national seminar. This indicated that the Federal Government had in principle accepted the seminar's recommendations. The Federal Government's White Paper on the NPE was not released on time partly because of the 1975 military coup led by General Murtala Muhammed that ousted General Yakubu Gowon from office. In February 1976, General Murtala Muhammed was assassinated in another coup which ushered in General O. Obasanjo's regime. Having stabilized in office an Implementation Committee for the National Policy on Education" chaired by Professor S. Onabamiro was appointed primarily to:

- (a) translate the Policy into a workable blue-print and to develop programmes for the implementations of the policy;
- (b) co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of those programmes developed under the Policy;
- (c) advice Government on and to assist in providing the infrastructural and other requirements for policy implementation, and
- (d) provide a continuous review and assessment of the aims, objectives and targets of' the Policy with a view to ensuring the adequacy and continued relevance of the policy (and those programmes developed under it) to our national needs and aspirations, and to propose modifications on any aspects as may be found necessary(Fafunwa, 1989).

Early Childhood Education: Federal Government Innovations. Section 2 of the National Policy on Education (NPE) by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) in (1977) provides for Early Childhood Education referred to as pre-primary education in the document. Clearly stated, the purpose of this education included:

- a) effecting a smooth transition from the home to the school;
- b) preparing the child for primary level
- c) providing adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets, offices, etc);
- d) inculcating social norms;
- e) inculcating in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through

The exploration of nature, and the local environment, playing with toys, artistic and musical activities, etc;

- f) teaching co-operation and team spirit;

- g) teaching the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours shapes forms, etc through play;
- h) teaching good habits, especially good health habits.

By this policy early childhood education was harmonized for uniformity in theory and practice nationwide. However, the usual problem is in the implementation of the policy. The significance of the status accorded this level of education is also reflected in the role education is also reflected in the role of the Federal Government towards the achievement of the objectives earlier enunciated. For example, Government in this period undertook to:

- 1) encourage private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education which meant that she would not establish any, even as a model for other stakeholders to emulate
- 2) make provision in Teacher Training Institutions for student teachers who want to specialize in pre-primary education;
- 3) ensure that the medium of instruction will be principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community;
- 4) develop the orthography for the many more Nigerian Languages, and
- 5) produce textbooks in Nigerian Languages;
- 6) ensure that the main method of teaching in the pre-primary institution will be through play, and that the curriculum of Teacher Training Colleges is appropriately oriented to achieve this;
- 7) regulate and control the operation of pre-primary education as well as ensure that the staff of pre-primary institutions are adequately trained and that essential equipment is provided.

The Federal Government established a language centre as part of the educational services complex under the Federal Ministry of the Education to facilitate the development of the orthography of Nigeria Languages as well as the production of the textbooks in Nigerian Languages. The Rivers State Government in this period too, 1979 precisely, also established the "Readers Project" for similar reasons. Again, the Institutes of Education of the Universities of Lagos and Ibadan, with support from UNESCO and the Federal Ministry of Education organized short-term training programmes for early childhood education teachers. These were significant innovations, a departure from past practices which did not stipulate age range for pupils, uniform curriculum, types of texts to be used and teacher qualification.

For emphasis on government's concern in this regard and because this level of education in this period was to be solely provided by non-governmental organizations and private individuals, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) also undertook to review and enforce the educational laws that relate to the establishment of Nursery Schools to make sure that pre-primary schools established are well administered with qualified teachers and other necessary academic infrastructure provided. Ministries of Education were to regularly inspect these schools to ensure the maintenance of high standards.

The 1981 and 1998 revised versions of the NPE did not have any different input on pre-primary education as such the Federal Government continued with a monitoring and supervisory role in early childhood education (ECF). State Governments were also involved in ECE through the

instrumentality of the Federal Government. For example, the Implementation Committee on the NPE set out the following guidelines for ECE (pre-primary education), (see Appendix 1)

Day Care Centres, Nursery and Kindergarten schools under the proprietorship of religious groups, women organizations such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), University Women Associations (UWA) and private individuals spread in many cities particularly State Capitals. As more women became employed in both formal and informal sectors of the economy the need for the preprimary schools increased. For those who could not afford the fees in these schools, their children were cared for by relations or paid house helps in their homes, or by their mothers whom they accompanied to their offices, markets and other commercial centres (shops etc) and farms. Most factories, Banks, Government Agencies, private enterprises, and so on did not also provide centres for early childhood education in this period and so the available ones were not evenly widespread and inadequate in number to meet the needs of the larger citizenry.

It would also be appreciated that the nation's economic downturn from the late 1970s, 1977 precisely to the 1980s, which culminated in the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP) in 1986 partly accounted for Government's (both Federal and State) inability to establish pre-primary schools or centres. For example, the 1976 free Universal Primary Education (UPE) that was conceived during the period of economic boom between 1974 and 1975 was adversely affected from 1977 economic recession and by 1979 the Federal Government withdrew financial assistance and the scheme collapsed.

As this harsh economic situation continued, it is not surprising that up till 1998 the revised NPE did not show any improvement on ECE. The Rivers State Government for example, established some model primary schools between 1974 and 1976 but they were phased out by September 1976 when UPE was launched. It is plausible that the State Government like others, Anambra etc could not have coped financially with the needs of both pre-primary and free primary education. In spite of this gloomy picture of the development of early childhood education, the FGN increased her regulatory and control functions by some innovations that positively affected this level of education.

From the Late 1980s there was an increased concern about the education and welfare of children in Nigeria, particularly those within the early childhood range. A number of events induced changes in the attitude and perception of early childhood education by a larger proportion of the adult populace, and EGN's intervention at this level of education.

The Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), an agency of the FGN had as early as 1987 commenced the expansion of ECE which had been restricted to children between the ages of three and five years to really accommodate these below, that is, from birth two years. The establishment of an Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) unit in NERDC, also in 1987 by the FGN was an innovation that projected and facilitated the development of ECCDE in Nigeria.

Maduewesi (2005a) argued that this expansion was necessitated by the changing phase of economic life, whereby women in their large numbers are engaged in a variety of roles and positive changes in the global idea and concern regarding child care. Consequently, building on the 1986 FGN, and the United International Children Fund (UNICEF) accord and in collaboration with Bernard Van Leer Foundation of the Netherlands, five Pilot Early Child Care (ECC) centres/facilities were established in five primary health care Local Government Areas (LGAs) namely: Oyo in Oyo State, Owo in Ondo State, Ogun in Osun State, Yamaltu/Deba in Bauchi State and Calabar

Municipality in Cross River State. (Maduewesi 2005a). This first phase was from 1987 to 1990, with the active involvement of the Ministry of health. From 1991 to 1995, there were 10 centres in 10 State of the second phase. 1,272 ECC facilities existed in 1995 with an enrolment of 145,469 children. By 1999 the facilities increased to 7,379 with an increased enrolment of 400,000 children (Maduewesi, 2005b)

These ECC facilities metamorphosed into Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) programme of the NERDC. It provided access for children in disadvantaged and low socioeconomic status, especially those based in the rural areas which hitherto did not have any form of pre-schools such as a Day Care, Play group, Nursery or Kindergarten schools. This programme was community based, low-cost and affordable. It stressed early stimulation of the child, improved mothers' child rearing skills in creating the awareness for the use of local resources for creating a stimulating environment for learning. Indeed, the inter-sectoral approach used as a strategy for implementing the ECCDE was helpful. UNICEF supervised the facilities and with Bernard Van Leer Foundation sponsored the development of relevant curriculum and other materials for the programme. NERDC therefore was able to produce the following:

- 1) Guidelines for establishing ECC centres/Resource Training Centres.
- 2) ECCDE curriculum that was approved by the National Council on Education (NCE) in 1994.
- 3) Pre-school readers for different age groups.
- 4) A Handbook for care givers titled: Caring for the African Child.
- 5) Training Manuals/Guides for lead trainers, Child educators and care givers.
- 6) Modules for Training Early Childhood Educators and Care-givers (in collaboration with the Regional Resource and Training Centre (RTRC), Kenya Institute of Education) such as Module on Child Development, Child health, Food and Nutrition Learn as you Play, etc.
- 7) A textbook on Child Development Health and Nutrition in Nigeria for education, health and social services professionals.
- 8) Survey reports on child rearing practices in 5 Pilot States and 10 UNICEF assisted States.
- 9) An Anthology of Nigerian songs, games, poems riddles and tongue-twisters for children.
- 10) Development of a Child Assessment Instrument

- 11) Posters on Child Stimulation and Educational Development (CSED) (Maduewesi, 2005a)

Other achievements include enlightenment programmes for social mobilization of the entire citizenry and awareness creation through radio and television jingles, discussions and other forms of advertisement. Organization of workshops and seminars for trainers and caregivers, as well as policy makers, women non-governmental organizations and community leaders for ECCDE among others. Between 1991 and 1999, 1,056 trainers desk officers and supervisors; 15,409 day care minders and 1,232 para-teachers /instructors were all trained. (Maduewesi 2005a).

Global concern for ECCDE particularly the World Conference on Education For All (EFA) which held in Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990 acted as a catalyst for more positive actions by States at this level of education. ,First, the conference theme, Education For All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs recalls that education is a fundamental right for every human being of all ages, throughout the world. Secondly, its expanded vision of basic education in Article v recognized that learning beings at birth and calls for early childhood care and initial education which can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities, or institutional programmes (UNESCO, 2001). This implied a broadening of the means and scope of basic education as it existed before this period, it was therefore not strange that Nigeria, being a signatory to this World declaration on Education For All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, included ECCE as part of her “Universal Basic Education” launched at Sokoto, Sokoto State on 30 September, 1999 by then President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. Article 15, Part iv of the Compulsory, Free, Universal Basic Education Act, 2004 and Other Related Matters states that-

“Universal Basic Education” means early childhood care and education, the nine years of formal school, adult literacy and non -formal education, skills acquisition programmes and the education of special groups such us nomads and migrants, girl-child and women, almajiri, street children and also disable groups. (Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) 2004).

Education for All, A framework for action in Sub-Saharan Africa: Education for African Renaissance in the Twenty-first Century was adopted by the Regional Conference on Education for All for Sub-Saharan. Africa which was held in Johannesburg South Africa in December 1999 noted that early childhood care and education programmes were limited to the few in the Urban areas and that the provision of early childhood education for all children of the appropriate age must be expanded. In fact, early childhood development (ECD) was to be ensured and expanded two-fold by the year 2006 as a strategy for early childhood education and development.

Consequently, EDC centres were to offer safe, secure and stimulating environments. Again, countries were encouraged to work towards providing access to ECD programmes to all children from ages 3 to 6 by the year 2015 (UNESCO, 2000).

Nigeria also participated in the World Education Forum at Dakar, Senegal in April 2000. At this meeting each country assessed its progress towards the attainment of the goals of EFA at Jomtien. The Dakar Framework for Action. Education For All: Meeting our Collective Commitment was adopted by participants and as usual, Nigeria was a signatory to this document.

Article 7 (i) of the document commits members to:

“expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantage children”

In Article 8 (1), the participants pledged to

“mobilize strong national and international political commitment for education for all, develop national action plans and enhance significantly, investment in basic education” (UNESCO 2000,).

The fourth edition of the NPE in 2004 was clearly innovative in its provision for ECCDE. This time Section 2 that hitherto was usually captioned pre-primary education was rather captioned “Early Childhood /Pre-primary Education” This implied that the scope of education at this level was broadened to accommodate children below the age of 3years. Section 2 (11) specifically included the crèche, nursery and kindergarten as centres for early childhood/pre-primary education.

A remarkable innovation was the establishment of pre-primary sections in existing public schools by the Federal Government. This initiative would create more access for children at this level, particularly those in the rural areas.

Money that would have been used for constructing new buildings for ECCDE could be used for equipment and improving the environment to be children and educationally friendly.

For the first time, the teacher-pupil ratio of 1:25 was stated., showing the FGN’s preparedness to provide quality education. Section 2, articles 14 e and f state that the FGN would set and monitor minimum standard for early childcare centres in the country, and ensure full participation of government, communities and teacher associations in the running and maintenance of ECE facilitates respectively. (FRN, 2004). Laudable as these innovations are their relevance and significance depend on their effective implementation.

It is plausible that the provisions of this revised 2004 Policy as well as global attention on a comprehensive care of children through a multi-sectoral approach contributed to the development of the National Policy For Integrated Early Children Development (IECD) in Nigeria. The policy adopted a holistic approach in which the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) collaborates with the Ministries of health, Environment and Housing, Women Affairs, Information and Communication, Finance, Agriculture and Water Resources, and National Planning Commission to provide intervention for the cognitive, physical, social, moral, and emotional development of the child. This policy enables the Nigerian child to appropriate the rights stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) which is indirectly a catalyst to ECCDE. UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Health Organization (WHO) provided technical and financial support for the development of the this IECD National Policy. The Early Years Development Consultative Committee (EYDCC) established by NERDC and which was inaugurated in 2002 produced this Policy document that is an innovation in education at this level. In order to harmonize practice and for uniformity, the National Minimum Standard For Early Child Care Centres in Nigeria was also produced by NERDC, supported by UNICEF.

The Policy goal is to expand, universalize and integrate interventions from various sectors in early childhood development for effective implementation and co-ordination of programmes that will optimize development for children from the age of 0-5years in Nigeria. The objectives are as follows:

- a) Provide care and support that will ensure the rights of the child to:
 - i) Good nutrition and health
 - ii) Healthy and safe environment
 - iii) Psycho-social stimulation
 - iv) Protection and participation
- b) Inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys etc.
- c) Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while parents! guardians are at work (on the farms, in the markers offices industry, etc)
- d) Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school.
- e) Prepare the child to adapt successfully when his or her current context changes.
- f) Develop a healthy, well nourished and adequately simulated child who is able to achieve its fullest potentials.
- g) Contribute to the reduction of high infant and U-5 morality rate.
- h) Raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and promote protective behaviour among children including Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC).
- i) Inculcate acceptable social and culturally appropriate norms, value and beliefs. (NERDC 2005) (See Appendix 2 for others).

These objectives are in consonance with those of the 2004 NPE except that the IECD Policy is more encompassing and adopts a multi sectoral approach to realizing its goal and objectives.

FGN Innovations and Early Childhood Care and Education.

FGN's intervention and innovations, rapid development of urban centres especially with the creation of more states and Local Government Areas (LGAs), increased participation of women in both formal and informal work force, increased awareness of the need for BCE (Early Childhood Education) among others have greatly influenced the widespread of pre-primary schools in Nigeria.

In the 1970s and 1980s nursery schools were very few and found in Nigeria's major urban centres Ejieh (2006), reported that Makinwa- Adebuseye's study of provision of nursery schools education in Lagos State/showed that only 7.7% out of the 948 parents in the study sent their children to either a nursery school or a group care centre. Again, a similar study by Orebanjo in 1981 too showed that half of the working mothers in Ile-Ife which then was a semi-urban settlement, preferred keeping their children with members of the extended family for child care to sending them to day care centres or nursery schools. By 1989, there were only 15 government approved pre-nursery schools in Rivers State. While in this period it was still feasible to get house, help, nannies and some members of the extended families to assist in providing early childhood care, the NPE of 1977 which gave pre-primary education an official status partly gave boost to the expansion of nursery schools in Nigeria.

Childhood education in the 1970s was not guided by any government designed curriculum. As private entrepreneurs! individuals and non-government organizations and religious bodies provided this level of education for profit, their curriculum varied and so did the qualification of teachers. Most of the teachers did not specialize in nursery education, even many of the proprietors. This situation implied her that the Federal and State Ministries of Education did not effectively perform their supervisory, regulatory and control functions. However, these schools taught English language, through recognition of alphabets, words, simple sentences; recognition of numbers, how to count and simple addition for Mathematics; shapes and colours of objects, drawing and painting, writing, reading, rhymes, stories etc.

By 1981 when the NPE was reviewed, NERDC also produced a curriculum 'to guide pre-primary education in Nigeria (NERDC, 1981). The contents reflected themes in creative arts, social studies, physical and health education, language and communication skills, mathematical skills and basic science. This same curriculum was used until 2001, twenty years without revision and for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years, (Maduewesi 2005c).

With the development of the ECCDE which covers children from birth to 5years (0-5years), UNICEF assisted the FGN represented by NERDC to develop a non-conventional curriculum with a multi-sectroal approach and linkage in 1994. It was reviewed in 2000 but was not produced and circulated to schools.

The 2000 review incorporated global issues such as HIV/AIDS, peace and child rights education based on gender sensitivity. As usual, other components of the curriculum were to engender physical, affective, cognitive and language development, food and nutrition, harmful practices, health and safety measures. Given the non-availability of a uniform curriculum, the dominance

of ECCDE schools by non-governmental organizations and private individuals and inadequate supervision and full implementation of the FGN's innovations pre-primary schools have continued to develop more of the children's cognitive skills. There is a preponderance of unapproved ECCDE schools both in the urban and rural areas. High fee-paying schools are patronized by the rich and they provide better quality education in terms of curriculum delivery, qualified staff, learning facilities and conducive learning environment which cannot be accessed by all. Uwakwe et al (2008), posited that public schools cannot provide all-round quality education that many private schools can, yet they are not sufficiently available for all. This assertion is true of the pre-primary schools established in existing public primary schools as provided by the NPE, 2004. Yet this remarkable innovation would have really catered for the OVC, most children in the rural areas and children from low socio-economic status. None of the 36 States of Nigeria has fully implemented this provision of the NPE. Lagos, Akwa-Ibom and Ogun States have only skeletally implemented it. Part of States Government excuse for non-implementation of the innovation is inadequacy of funds. Again, there is a dearth of qualified teachers in early childhood care and education in the country w service this programme if ECCDE schools are provided as expected. Most Federal and State owned Tertiary Education institutions do not offer pre-service training programmes for specialist teachers in early childhood education and most specialist teachers would not like to teach in many of the private schools because of the low salaries they pay and job insecurity. In most cases the teachers are not paid during the holidays in most private schools and this is very discouraging for career development.

Despite the challenges in ECCDE there is a preponderance of pre-primary schools in urban and semi-urban areas. Only few are established in the rural areas probably because establishing good schools is capital intensive and much profit would not be generated in the rural areas by the proprietors. In 1984 there were 414 government registered nursery schools in Nigeria. They increased to 900 in 1986 and to over 12,000 by 1996 (UNESCO, EFA 2000). In 1999 the distribution of children (below 6 years) by gender was 116,670,051(49.86 per cent)for males and 11 ,228,068 (50. 1 4per cent)for females, bringing it to a total of 22,395,119 for both sexes. By 2005, enrolment was tremendous (see appendices for details).

FGN's innovations have also stimulated some Form of corporate social responsibility by non-governmental organizations towards ECCDE. This was partly achieved through advocacy and government and NGOs linkages. For example, First Bank of Nigeria Plc donated the sum of N20 million(twenty million naira)to St Anne's Nursery and Primary School, Kakuri, kaduna State during the school's 50th anniversary celebrations on 8 May 2009 (First Bank, 2010). Similarly, Zain Nigeria donated Lap Desk tops to several nursery/primary schools in Lagos State.

These were special for teaching letters, numbers and objects. (Zain Nigeria, 2010). The FGN should also influence other organizations to assist in the development of ECCDE since stakeholders are to support government in this sector. -

Conclusion

The National Policy on Education, (1977, revised 1981, 1998 and 2004) attest to Nigeria's recognition of early childhood education as fundamental for good headstart of every human being. From performing mere regulatory and control functions between 1977 and 1998, the FGN by 2004 expanded the scope of education at this level to include children not only between 3 and 5 years plus, but also from birth to 2 years old, Nigeria's UBE of 1999 and the NPE of 2004 ushered in the remarkable innovation of including ECCDE as government's responsibility not only its recognition, regulation and control as was the situation in the earlier years, 1977 to 1998.

The 1990s were significant for laying the foundations for including ECC which was greatly influenced by the realization that education begins at birth and that other needs, health, nutrition, stimulating and safe environment are essential to education at this stage. Assisted by UNICEF and employing a multi-sectoral approach among others ECCDE received a boost into the 21st century Nigeria. The evidence of sustained increase in the number of schools and enrolment in these ECCDE schools in spite of varied challenges explains the appreciation of this level of education by a majority of the citizenry.

A successful implementation of the NPE, the curriculum on ECC and ECCDE, the National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development in Nigeria, the National Minimum Standard for Early Child Care Centres, and the UBE Act which are and bear innovations in ECCDE would facilitate the achievement of the objectives of ECCDE and ultimately, the philosophy of developing every Nigerian into a sound and effective citizen.

Nigerians are not bereft of ideas on how to organize ECCDE but there is the need for strong will to effectively implement innovations, particularly those in policies. Beyond policy is the Kernel of development which requires commitment and dedication to goal attainment without which there is emptiness. It would appear that ad-hoc measures are often employed in developing Nigeria's education programmes or that there is no genuine intention to actualize such planned programmes. The universal Primary Education (UPE) failed, the UBE is not without similar challenges that might make it fail, and now the ECCDE. Each time there are inadequate funding, infrastructure and facilities, late production of curriculum and books, dearth of teachers, and inadequate equipment for various activities that would engender all round development. Pilot projects, such as mid-day meal provision, and so on are hardly completed and sustained.

Nigeria should not always play to the gallery for global impression particularly when there are external pressures such as EFA, the Child Rights Act arising from the Convention, World Summit on Children, Millennium Development Goals and so on. Each time, there should rather be a gradual approach to programme development and implementation which can be in phase. The future of ECCDE in Nigeria is bright if ideas for this level of the educational sector are properly implemented.

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APPENDIX 1

- State Governments should legislate on and supervise pre-primary education. Individuals, private voluntary organizations, employers of labour and communities should establish pre-primary schools. Large employers of labour should see it as a social responsibility to establish pre-primary schools for the benefit of their workers' families (This should be an obligation enforceable by law).
- Each State Government should encourage pre-primary education by providing relevant legislation and adequate guidelines.
- Pre-primary schools should be made to keep schools records as required by all other schools.
- The proprietors should be required to recruit their teachers. There should be provision for mobility of the teachers from pre-primary schools into State Schools and vice versa.
- Pre-primary school teachers should be registered by the State Ministries of Education like all other teachers in the State school system.
- The Head Teacher of each pre-primary school should be a specialist in this field. Adequate provision should be made in Teacher Training Institutions for student teachers who may wish to specialize in pre-primary education. The preparation of teachers for this level should be such as to enable them to function as effectively as the lower level of the primary school if they wish.
- The medium of instruction in pre-primary schools should be the language of the immediate community. In a multi-national school English may be used as the medium of instruction but the language of the immediate community should be taught in the spoken form.
- It is recognized that, as of now, books with Nigeria background for pre-primary schools are not available in sufficient quantity and variety. The National Book Development Council and the Nigeria Educational Research Council (NERC.) should encourage the production of relevant books and materials for the very young.
- The curriculum of pre-primary schools should provide for instruction in Religion, and Social Norms through stories and other appropriate activities.

- The production of teaching aids and education toys should be encouraged through the involvement of students in craft schools, Vocational and Technical Colleges.
- Since a number of koranic schools are now within State educational systems it follows that the State Ministries of Education should provide for the maintenance of standards in these schools.
- Each State Government should re-examine its Education Laws and legislate as appropriate to cover pre-primary education.
- It should be the responsibility of each Ministry of Education to give guidance to pre-primary schools, through regular visits and inspections at least once a year, until they are well established.
- The State Ministry of Education should set out the guidelines governing the establishment, running and closure of pre-primary schools. Under normal circumstances boarding facilities should not be allowed in pre-primary institutions.
- The guidelines, among other things should stipulate the physical facilities to be provided, the fees to be charged, the books, curriculum, teaching aids, teacher's qualifications and other minimum requirements. For a one-teacher school the teacher must be professionally qualified.
- Pre-primary school children should be taught the National Pledge and the National Anthem and such schools should fly the National flag (Federal Ministry of Education (FME) 1988).

Appendix 2

- Raise awareness on IECD Policy in all communities by 2015.
- Build capacity of all stakeholders for IECD Policy implementation.
- Support existing legislations to reduce all forms of abuse and denial of children's rights.
- Establish and expand mechanisms for collaboration and co-ordination of IECD programmes.
- Provide guidelines and standards to ensure quality service delivery.
- Establish reliable Management Information System on IECD to facilitate research.
- Establish a valid and reliable monitoring and evaluation system for all aspects of the IECD policy.
- Build strategic partnerships with government at all levels, the private sectors, Civil Society Organization/NGOs, Development Partners and Communities to mobilize resources for IECD implementation; and Promote community participation, ownership and sustainability.
- Integration of Quranic system in IECCD (NERDC 2005).

Appendix 3

Table 1

Enrolment by Curriculum Focus for Pre-Primary Schools

Curriculum Focus	Enrolment (Private)	% Enrolment (Private)	Enrolment (Public)	% Enrolment (Public)
Unspecified	8,146	0.99	10,236	0.99
Islamiyya integrated	46,817	5.67	34,718	3.35
Nomadic	4,057	0.49	7,482	0.72
Regular	766,013	92.89	985,742	94.93
Total	825,093		1,035,178	

Source: F. M. E: Basic and senior secondary Education Statistics

Appendix 4

Table 2

The number of Challenged Pupils in Pre-Primary Schools, 2005year

TYPE	KG 1	KG 2	NS 1	NS 2	NS 3
Blind and Visually Impaired	104	51	80	110	82
Hearing and Speech Impaired	159	117	297	466	652
Mentally Challenged	259	179	528	606	461
Physically Challenged	285	240	633	737	676
Others	202	265	458	561	676
Total	1,009	852	1,996	2,480	2,547

Source:- F. M. E.: Basic and Senior Secondary Education Statistics in Nigeria 2004 and 2005

KEY- KG - Kindergarten
NS - Nursery

Appendix 5

Table 3

Enrolment by Age and Class

Pre-Primary School Enrolment by Age and by Class 2004 (National) Official Age 1-5

Age Category	Population	Population GP 1	KG 1	KG 2	NS 1	NS 2	NS 3	Total	Unenrolled Children
Below 3	18,869,136	0.97	77,866	84,622	289,330	38,305	29,353	519,476	18,3349,660
4	4,330,339	0.97	33,061	54,903	234,478	313,515	57,815	693,772	1,616,567
5	4,201,170	0.97	0	0	0	181,366	351,028	532,394	3,668,776
6	4,076,326	0.97	0	0	0	0	88,877	88,877	1,987,449
Total		0.97	110,927	139,525	523,808	533,186	527,073	1,834,519	

Source: F. M. E.: Basic and Senior Secondary Education Statistics in Nigeria 2004 and 2005

Appendix 6

Table 4

Enrolment by Age and Class

Pre-Primary School Enrolment by Age and by Class 2004 (National)

Age Category	Population	Population GP 1	KG 1	KG 2	NS 1	NS 2	NS 3	Total	Unenrolled Children
Basic 3	19,327,732	0.97	75,590	84,978	278,390	37,027	27,900	503,885	18,823,847
4	4,429,070	0.97	29,853	54,689	242,331	318,128	62,446	707,447	3,721,623
5	4,290,078	0.97	0	0	0	189,651	366,001	555,652	3,734,426
6	4,159,505	0.97	0	0	0	0	93,287	93,287	1,060,218
Total		0.97	105,443	139,667	520,721	544.806	549,634	1,860,271	

Source:- F. M. E.: Basic and Senior Secondary Education Statistics in Nigeria 2004 and 2005