
**EFFECT OF LEARNING RESOURCES ON PRELITERACY SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN JOS NORTH LGA, PLATEAU
STATE**

Jeno-Mary Enighe, Ph.D.
English Unit
Department of Arts Education
Faculty of Education
University of Jos
jenomary@yahoo.com

&

Nathanael Tanko Noah
Department of Early Childhood Care and Education
School of Early Childhood Care and Primary Education
Federal College of Education
Pankshin
Plateau State

Abstract

Using the correlational research design and a sample of nineteen (19) out of the twenty four (24) ECE centres that have Nursery Three classes, the study investigated the effect of learning resources on pre-literacy skills development of preschool children in Jos North LGA of Plateau State. Two different researchers-developed check-lists – Indoor Pre-literacy Skills Development Resources Check-list (IPSDRC) and Outdoor Pre-literacy Skills Development Resources Check-list (OPSDRC) were used to collect data for the study from care-givers in the centres. Also, a 24-item tool known as Researchers' Observation Schedule (ROS) and a Preliteracy Skills Proficiency Test Tool (PSPTT) were also used to gather information from Nursery Three pupils in the ECE centres. IPSDRC, OPSDRC and ROS were personally administered by the researchers while two research assistants helped to administer the PSPTT. Simple percentages were used to analyse the data. Findings revealed that resources available in the ECE centres sampled were grossly inadequate, and even among the available resources, a large percentage were not functional. As a result of unavailability of learning resources, preschool children's performance rating in pre-literacy skills was very poor. The researchers recommended among others that given the significance of learning resources in the development of pre-literacy skills in preschool children, the Plateau State UBEB should endeavour to equip all government owned ECE centres with sufficient and functional pre-literacy skills development resources.

Introduction

The instruction of young children between the ages of 0 and 5 years is critical to their educational development. The reason for this is hinged on the influence of this level of education on the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of the educational system. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) in its National Policy on Education (NPE,

2013) also reiterated its resolution to promote quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) by establishing “ECE sections in public schools and encourage both community and private efforts in its provision based on set standards”. The policy also includes the “provision for the production and effective utilization of learning and instructional resources in adequate numbers”.

The benefits of establishing ECE centres and providing adequate learning resources are enormous. These benefits are captured in the objectives of early childhood education in the National Policy on Education (2013) which include to:

- Effect a smooth transition from home to school
- Prepare the child for the primary level of education\
- Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work
- Inculcate social norms
- Inculcate the spirit of inquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys,
- Develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit
- Stimulate in the child good habits, including good health habits and
- Teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc., through play.

All of these advantages have direct bearings on the impact of the early childhood learning environment on preliteracy skills development among preschool children. The impact of learning environments in relation to learning outcomes has constantly been explored by researchers of education from earlier times. For example, Ramsden and Entwistle in **Adebowale and Adekanye (2013)** empirically identified a relationship between approaches to learning and the perceived characteristics of the academic environment. Similarly, Haertela, Walberg and Haertela in **Adelodun and Asiru (2015)** found correlations between students' perceptions of social psychological environments of their classes and learning

outcomes.

An important component of the indoor and outdoor learning environments is the social and communicative interactions between preschool children and their caregivers (teachers), and among preschool children themselves. A caregiver is a child's language and communication partner. When children are born, they are naturally predisposed to interact and communicate with the people around them. Even before they have the abilities and skills to interpret and speak words, they are attentive to sounds, facial expressions, and the world around them. Children grow from turning their heads and responding to familiar faces and voices to being able to express their thoughts, feelings and experiences in certain words. This language development occurs through the interactions and experiences created by caregivers who use communication and language with children in responsive and meaningful ways throughout the day.

Statement of the problem

For several years now in Nigeria, Early Childhood Education (ECE) has been regarded as a remedy that prepares preschool children for school and life, equalizes opportunity, and prevents welfare dependence, incarceration, teenage pregnancy, and school dropout. While a veritable aura of success encases contemporary early childhood education, few problems have scorched these accolades as examined in the current realities. For instance, the public Early Childhood Education (ECE) Centres in Jos North Local Government Area lack or do not have adequate indoor and outdoor preliteracy skills development resources. Preliteracy activities in Early Childhood Education Centres in Jos North Local Government Area are hampered by the non-availability of most of the instructional resources required in the centres. There are cases, too, where the caregivers do not know how to utilize/operate the available and functional resources. This situation, apart from strengthening the “perceived decline in children's language and communication

skills” (National Literacy Trust, 2005), goes against the notion that high quality preschool education settings make provisions for both care and learning to take place in conducive environments.

Preschool age is a very vital period in the life of a growing child for it is at this stage that the foundation for intellectual and cognitive development is laid. At this stage too, preschoolers require a lot of resources that are appropriate to their age in order for them to develop in every area. However, in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State, these resources are either completely unavailable or are grossly inadequate. Since preliteracy skills cannot be effectively acquired by preschoolers without learning resources, it falls to reason therefore that pre-literacy skills development would be negatively skewed as a result of this absence and or inadequacy. The crux of the matter in this work is the examination of the effect of learning resources on pre-literacy skills development of preschool children. Can preschoolers acquire pre-literacy skills without learning resources? This is the heart of this study.

Research Questions

In order for the study to be properly guided, the following questions were asked by the researchers:

1. To what extent are pre-literacy skills development resources available in Early Childhood Education Centres in Jos North LGA
2. To what extent are the pre-literacy skills development resources that are available functional
3. How adequate are available pre-literacy skills development resources in the Early Childhood Education Centres in Jos North LGA
4. To what extent are the available and functional pre-literacy skills development resources properly utilised by caregivers in the Early Childhood Education Centres in Jos North LGA
5. To what extent do learning resources influence the development of pre-literacy skills among preschool children in Early Childhood Education Centres in Jos North LGA

Design

The correlational research design was adopted. It was used to ascertain the relationship between the availability, functionality, adequacy, and utilization of pre-literacy skills development resources and preschool children's pre-literacy skills development. The goal is to describe the strength of the relationship between the two variables.

Population

The research population for this study was all the forty four (44) government owned ECE Centres in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. These have a total number of nine hundred and eighteen (918) children.

Sample

Out of the twenty four (24) ECE Centres that have Nursery 3 classes in Jos North LGA, nineteen (19) Centres were sampled using the convenience sampling method of the non-probability sampling design.

Instruments for Data Collection

The researchers used two checklists to cover for the Indoor Pre-literacy Skills Development Resources Checklist (IPSDRC) and Outdoor Pre-literacy Skills Development Resources Checklist (OPSDRC). The IPSDRC contained 35 items in three categories of the learning resources required namely: **audio** (for listening and speaking skills) 6-items; **visual** (for listening, speaking, reading and writing skills) 24-items; and **audio-visual** (for listening, speaking, and reading skills) 5-items. The filters were tagged: Availability, Functionality, Age appropriateness, and

Utilisation. The OPSDRC which was meant to assess communication relationships among preschoolers contained 12 items with the filters also labelled: Availability, Functionality, Adequacy, and Utilisation.

The Researchers' Observation Schedule (ROS) was a 24-item tool used to check the activities observed indoors (12-items) and outdoors (12-items) in the ECE Centres. The filters for ROS were two -- Yes/No. A Pre-literacy Skills Proficiency Test Tool (PSPTT) for Nursery 3 children was also prepared. The pre-literacy skills domain test items covered included: 1) alphabet knowledge, 2) print awareness, 3) phonemic awareness, 4) mental models, 5) communication relationship, 6) reading orientation, and 7) writing orientation. Generally, the PSPTT required children to read out letters of the alphabet, match pictures to corresponding words, enunciate and discriminate between speech sounds, answer questions about a given picture, provide information about themselves and their friends in class, demonstrate their knowledge of reading and writing orientation.

Procedure

The researchers went round the 19 ECE Centres sampled to personally administer the IPSDRC, OPSDRC, and ROS. Afterwards, the researchers recruited two research assistants who helped to administer the PSPTT only. In order not to unduly disrupt the activities of the caregivers and children in the ECE Centres, the researchers first requested permission from the Head Teachers. To administer the Indoor Preliteracy Skills Development Resources Checklist (IPSDRC) and Outdoor Preliteracy Skills Development Resources Checklist (IPSDRC), the researchers asked the caregivers (at their free moments) about the resources available and checked out the appropriate box on the research tool. As for the Researchers' Observation Schedule (ROS), the researchers either sat at the back of the

classroom or stood by the playground to observe the interactions between caregivers and the preschool children.

For the administration of the Preliteracy Skill Proficiency Test Tool (PSPTT), the researchers recruited and trained two research assistants. Each child was called to the caregiver's table where he/she was presented with the PSPTT and was gently guided to provide responses to the test items. Any child who was reluctant to participate in the exercise was not coerced. All the administered test tools were retrieved immediately by the researchers after the exercise in each school so as to avoid any loss of data/material.

Method of Data Analysis

The data that was generated in the course of this research was analysed using simple percentages. The data used to determine the influence of preliteracy skills development resources on preschool children literacy skills was also analysed using percentages and the results are presented in a table and chart.

RESULTS

The results obtained from the study are presented in the following tables:

Research Question 1

The first question was on the availability of pre-literacy skills development learning resources. The data were collected using the ILRC (Indoor Learning Resources Checklist) and OLCRC (Outdoor Learning Resources Checklist).

Indoor Learning Resources and

Outdoor Learning Resources Frequency Percentage

| | | |
|--------------------------|----|--------|
| Number of Items required | 47 | 100% |
| Number Available | 17 | 36.17% |
| Number not available | 30 | 63.82% |

Table 1 presents the frequency of Indoor and Outdoor Learning Resources required. The statistical analysis of data for question one reveals that 36.17% of the resources required at an ECE Centre to help children develop pre-literacy skills were available while 63.82% of the required resources were not available.

Research Question 2

The second question sought to find out whether the Indoor and Outdoor language learning resources available in the Early Childhood Education Centres in Jos North LGA were functional.

Table 2: Functionality of Indoor and Outdoor Learning Resources in ECE Centres

Indoor Learning Resources and

Outdoor Learning Resources Frequency Percentage

| | | |
|----------------------------|----|--------|
| Number of Items required | 47 | 100% |
| Number of Items Available | 17 | 36.17% |
| Number of Items Functional | 9 | 19.14% |

From the table, it is evident that out of the 17 (36.17%) pre-literacy skills development items that were available at the ECE Centres visited, only 9 (19.14%) were functional.

Research Question 3

Question three was meant to elicit responses on the adequacy of available pre-literacy skills development resources.

Table 3: Adequacy of Pre-literacy skills development resources

Indoor Learning Resources and

Outdoor Learning Resources Frequency Percentage

| | | |
|--|----|--------|
| Number of Items required | 47 | 100% |
| Number of Items Available and Functional | 9 | 19.14% |

Table 3 shows that only 19.14% out of 100% required preliteracy skills development resources were available and functional. Given the disparity of 80.86% between what is required and what is available, it is obvious that the pre-literacy skills development resources are grossly inadequate.

Research Question 4

This question sought to ascertain the utility of the available and functional pre-literacy skills development resources by caregivers.

Table 4: Utilization of Indoor and Outdoor Learning Resources in ECE Centres

| Indoor and Outdoor Learning Resources | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Number of Items required | 47 | 100% |
| Number of Items Available | 17 | 36.17% |
| Number of Items Functional | 9 | 19.14% |
| Number of Items Utilized | 9 | 19.14% |

It is clear from table 4 that caregivers in the ECE Centres under study made use of the nine (9) available indoor and outdoor

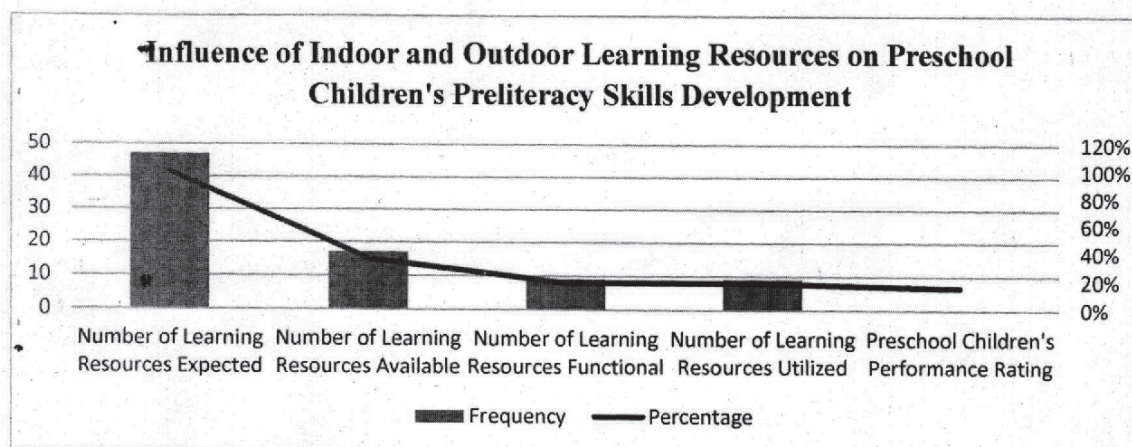
learning resources. This is indicated by their usage of the 19.14% of the functional resources.

Research Question 5

Question 5 aimed at finding out the extent to which learning resources influence the development of pre-literacy skills among preschool children the Early Childhood Education Centres in Jos North LGA. The

result is presented in the table and chart below.

| Indoor and Outdoor Learning Resources | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Number of Learning Resources Expected | 47 | 100% |
| Number of Learning Resources Available | 17 | 36.17% |
| Number of Learning Resources Functional | 9 | 19.14% |
| Number of Learning Resources Utilized | 9 | 19.14% |
| Preschool Children's Performance Rating | | 16% |



The table and chart presented here indicate that out of the total number of learning resources expected, only 36.17% were available. Of this percentage, only 19.14% were functional and utilized. As a result, therefore, the preschool children's performance was at a mere 16%. This shows the negative effects of lack of resources on preschoolers' skills development.

Conclusion

The impact of children's surroundings on their literacy skills development cannot be overestimated. Prepared environments make language learning resources and experiences available to children in an organised setup. The physical environment

of an ECE Centre is much more than a simple container for learning and teaching. Instead, the indoor and outdoor environments occupy a central place in the teaching and learning process among preschool children.

From the results presented however, it is evident that the preliteracy skills of preschool children in the ECE Centres sampled were under developed. This is consequent upon the dearth of adequate and functional preliteracy skills development resources. When the required resources are not available and functional, the caregivers have nothing to use in the teaching of children in the centres. The lack of preliteracy skills development resources especially in the government (public) owned Early Childhood Education Centres therefore, hampers the objective of the federal government to eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings of this research, the researchers make the following recommendations:

1. The Plateau State Universal Basic Education Board (PSUBEB) should equip all government owned Early Childhood Education (ECE) Centres with sufficient and functional pre-literacy skills development resources to cater for the preliteracy needs of the children. The learning resources should be varied to include audio, visual, and audio-visual materials.
2. Head teachers of the various ECE Centres should liaise with parent-teacher associations, non-governmental agencies, and well-wishers from the immediate communities where the ECE Centres are situated to provide both indoor and outdoor language development facilities in order to stimulate communicative interactions among children in the centres.
3. Caregivers/teachers should endeavour to improvise different pre-literacy skills development resources from time to time to make up for some of the resources which may be lacking at the centres.

References

- Adebowale, A.J. & Adekanye, E. A. (2013). Audio-visual resources availability and use for library services among colleges of education in Lagos State Nigeria. *International Journal of Library and Information Science*, 5(10), 417-425. Retrieved July 27, 2016 from <http://www.academicjournals.org/IJLIS>
- Adelodun, G. A. & Asiru, A. B. (2015). *Instructional resources as determinants of English language performance of secondary school high-achieving students in Ibadan, Oyo State*. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(21), 1-7. Retrieved July 29, 2016 from www.iiste.org
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). National policy on education. Abuja: NERDC Press.
- National Literacy Trust (2005). *Why do many young children lack basic language skills?* London: NLT
- Nunan, D. (2012). *Language teaching methodology*. Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall International.
- Oyetunde, T.O. (2015). *Olu, Musa and Eze cannot read: Arresting the drift towards basic and higher illiteracy*. Inaugural lecture series of the University of Jos.
- UBEC (2010). *Field guide to research methods for teachers and administrators*. Abuja: Universal Basic Education Commission