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INTEGRATION AND INNOVATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR QUALITY TEACHER PRODUCTION

Onu, V. C., Ph.D
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Obiozor, W.E, Ed.D.
Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, USA

Agbo, O. E.
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Ezeanwu Chiamaka
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

This survey research studied integration and innovation in early childhood education and implications for quality teacher preparation. The study was a descriptive survey research, with one hundred and twelve (112) sampled preschool teacher. Eight research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. Early Childhood Programme Instrument on Integration and Innovation (ECPAI) was constructed, validated and used in eliciting responses from the respondents. The data collected were analyzed using percentage, mean, and Paired Sample tests. The study revealed a significant difference in the opinions of public and private preschool teachers toward integration and innovative practices in early childhood education in Nigeria. It was equally revealed that are Early Childhood Education (ECE) programme in Nigeria is influenced by traditional, uncreative approaches. Thus, training and retraining of focus teachers and stakeholders in ECE was highly recommended.

Integration and Innovation in Early Childhood Education in Nigeria: Implications for Quality Teacher Production

INTRODUCTION

The years before a child reaches kindergarten are among the most critical in his or her life to influence learning (ED.gov, 2010); and this becomes a challenge and commitments to the parents, teachers, community and government, to ensure that these young children receive appropriate training in their early stages of life. Early childhood education programmes are highly recognized and promoted in developed societies to give children the opportunity to learn phenomenal amount of experiences at home and surrounding environments. Heward (2009) explained in this scenario that children grow and develop in orderly ways, learning to move about their world, communicate, and play. As their ability to manipulate their environment increases, so does their level of independence.

Nigeria is currently facing a challenging time in providing g her young citizens' quality education. Some important issues facing Nigeria's policy makers include ineffective planning and implementation of programmes, accountability, and management of scarce resources, shortage of highly qualified early childhood teachers, undefined curriculum and inclusion. In agreement with the above, Mindes (2007) added that early childhood educators' challenges are enormous and they include parent partnership, respect for cultural diversity, appropriate early intervention assessment, and linking curriculum and assessment practices appropriately. In the World Summit in 2001, the Secretary General of the United Nations reaffirmed the world's commitment to ensuring that every child has a right to the best possible start in life. He identified good quality education, opportunities to develop his or her full potential, and an enabling environment to make positive contribution to the society in meaningful ways as the thematic areas.

On the contrary, the recently released results of the Senior Secondary School Examinations in Nigeria would continue if stakeholders do not tackle the challenges facing the sector. Ademilola in TELL (2010) reported that the performance of students in West African Examination Council (WAEC) and NECO examinations has not been impressive in recent times. In the last 2009 NECO/GCE, only 1.8 percent of the 236, 613 that sat for the examinations across 1,708 centers in the country had five credit passes, Mathematics and English inclusive. Whilst out of the 1,373,009 candidates that took the Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations, 25.99 percent of them had five credit passes in five subjects, Mathematics, and English inclusive. This dismal performance was also observed in May/June 2009 NECO results.

Ademilola stated emphatically that at the fore of these challenges facing the educational sector in Nigeria is the poor quality of teachers. In his own right, Peter Okebukola, former executive secretary of National Universities Commission (NUC), in a report by the Daily Sun newspaper said many teachers are exceedingly weak in the subjects they teach. Besides, he further argued that very little is done to train and retrain teachers in the country and this takes its toll on the performances of teachers. This training gap creates vicious cycles that negate the necessary early childhood educational foundations, and inevitably later education.

The importance of teachers and the roles they play in any educational system cannot be over-emphasized. Teachers are usually linked to issues related to teaching-learning goals, learning achievement, organization of programmes, and the performance of the educational system which involves an analysis of the role of teachers their behaviours, performance, remuneration, incentives, skills and how they are used by the system (Federal Ministry of Education and Youth Development, 1994). The National Policy on Education (1981), in recognition of the importance of teacher quality, states, "No education system can rise above the quality of its teacher". It is a shared view that the quality of any education system depends largely on the competence, commitment and motivation of the teachers (Mbanefoh, 2002). In the same vein, the 1993 summit of the Nine High Population Developing Countries held in New Delhi, India was emphatic about the relevance of qualitative teacher production in the success of Universal Basic Education. In line with the aforementioned, Ede (2003) opined that the success of any system of education depends to a large extent on the number of teachers and their quality, their devotion to duty and their effectiveness on the job. In sum, talking also on the role of teachers in the development of Africa, Fafunwa (in Ede, 2003) noted that of all the educational problems that beset the African countries today, none is as persistent or as compelling as the one relating to the training of the competent teacher… indeed the overall problem of preparing the future citizens of Africa cannot be effectively accomplished without aid of competent teachers.

In this regard, the responsibility of government on pre-primary education according to the National Policy on Education (2004) shall be to promote the training of qualified pre-primary schoolteachers in adequate number, contribute to the development of suitable curriculum, among others. However, Maduewesi (2003) observed that teacher preparation which was promised in the National Policy on Education is not being implemented thus nursery school curriculum is not actually being planned by qualified teachers that are adequately trained for that level (early childhood/pre-primary education).

Early childhood/preprimary education according to the National Policy on Education document is the education provided in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. It includes the crèche, the nursery, and the kindergarten (NPE, 2004). Ibiam and Ugwu (2009) defined it as the education designed to develop the habits, altitudes and skills needed for primary education. Maduewesi (2005) believes it encompasses the care, development, and education of children below the age of six years. The earliest years of a child's life are very critical. They influence how the rest of childhood and adolescence unfold. Yet, in most developing countries, including Nigeria, the policies, programmes and budget of the nations have not reflected the seriousness with which the matter ought to be addressed.

Research reports have confirmed that children from conception to six years of age undergo radical mental and physical development. In addition, those children, if given good care during early childhood, are more likely to benefit from later education and other social services, and become more productive, healthy, and law abiding citizens (UNICEF in Ibiam & Ugwu, 2009). Research has also shown that the last three months of prenatal life and the first two years after birth are the most critical periods of brain growth because more than half of the adult brain weight is added at this time (FGN/UNICEF, 2001). As such, children need more stimulation and learning opportunities beyond the scope of their parents and ordinary teachers. To achieve these ideals, training in integrative and innovative thinking strategies needs to be introduced in early childhood teaching practices to enhance quality teaching and teacher production.

Quality in education embraces all function and activities of teaching and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staff, students, facilities, equipment services to the

community and academic environment (UNESCO, 1998). The National Research Council's 2001 synthesis of research on preschool education (in Sacks and Ruzzi, 2005) concludes that teachers with strong intellects, education, and training are effective preschool teachers. Specifically, teachers with at least a bachelor's degree are correlated with programmes leading to higher quality programmes. The Cost Quality and Child Outcomes study (in Sacks and Ruzzi, 2005) showed a clear impact of the quality of the preschool on children's performance through second grade. Children attending higher quality preschools had better language, Math and social skills than those attending a lower quality one. Those at risk of school failure benefited the most from attending a higher quality preschool and were most negatively affected by attending a lower quality one. The study also showed the closeness of the relationships between children and preschool teachers to have a significant and lasting impact on academic and social abilities.

There is now a strong consensus on the many benefits of preschool. Sacks and Ruzzi stated that studies have shown that attending a high quality preschool programme not only increases children's readiness for kindergarten, but also causes positive long-term improvements in participants' school performance and social outcomes. Among the documented results of preschool education are lower rates of grade retention, increased rates of high school graduation and less likelihood of being convicted of a crime for both juveniles and adults. Preschools have the greatest impact on children living in poverty and those who do not speak English at home. (Perry Preschool Study, in Sacks and Ruzzi, 2005). It therefore remains a puzzle as to why preschool programmes in Nigeria are not receiving adequate attention.

Sacks and Ruzzi reported on two popular innovative model approaches applicable to preschool education. The first is the *Montessori philosophy* built on the belief that children are highly capable learners who need minimal teacher input to learn from their environments. Key elements of the Montessori Method are mixed age classrooms (integrated), student autonomy in choosing learning tasks and experiential learning. The second innovation is strong parent involvement to further the goals of promoting critical thinking and collaboration among young children. This one is popularly known as *Reggio Emilia approach*. It is focused on strong home-school relationships, long-term projects, the recognition that children possess multiple symbolic languages, and the role of the child's environment as teacher (Sacks and Ruzzi, 2005).

Teachers are expected to be continually engaged in the process of learning about young children, both through ongoing professional development and through careful observation of the children in their classes. The teachers then reflect together on what they have learned and use such experience as a basis for future activities intended to expand on initiatives of the child. In this way, the Reggio Emilia approach bases its success not on formal curricula, but on an approach to educating children that give the children themselves a significant role in determining classroom activities. Marcon (2002) research further shows that children who attend preschool programmes that emphasize child-directed activities do significantly better academically in later schooling than children whose preschool experience is more academic and teacher- directed. Integration is another concept that applies to the general planning of the pre-primary educational programme in order to create harmony between goals and objectives; as well as programmes and outputs there from (Adaralegbe, 1992). It is used with a view to synchronizing the needs of the individual citizens and learners, as well as the society at large in relation to the environment and the harsh reality of the socio-economic realities of the modern worlds within the limit of available resources to the education sector. The question is: can Nigeria be said to have achieved this?

A good number of nursery schools in Nigeria are still run by private individuals despite the government lip service of getting involved. The programmes are still faced with the challenges of providing quality training and recruitment for teachers on a continual basis, provision of learning materials that are age appropriate and a nationally accepted curriculum for teaching the children. In a survey of nursery schools in Nigeria, Ejeh (2006) noted that nursery schools in Nigeria currently operated on university campuses, schools premises, premises of industrial and business organizations, church premises, town halls, and residential buildings must be assessed for quality assurance in all sectors of the curricula, including aesthetics. The facilities and equipment are considered generally poor and ineffective; yet, only wealthy individuals can afford to send their young ones to the institutions. In another survey on nursery school and caregivers, Ezirim (2004) noted that of the 1,429 teachers in nursery schools surveyed in the South Eastern part of Nigeria, below 20% of the observed centers have teachers who with Nigeria Certificates of Education (NCE), much less university degrees. Many were high school graduates who were waiting to complete the requirement for university education. These high school graduates were using the nursery school as a temporal workplace (stopover); as a result, the school proprietors and proprietresses pay them low wages. Furthermore, these often inexperienced, under- motivated teachers have too much workload, therefore, resulting in the children receiving ineffective education and inadequate care, which is bound to affect their eventual growth and intellectual development. The issues, therefore, lies on whether there are integrative and innovative practices in Nigerian early childhood education system; as well as the views of preschool teachers concerning such practices.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent will there be percentage and mean difference in the opinion of Early Childhood teachers with respect to use of instructional materials in Early Childhood Education (ECE)?
2. To what extent will there be percentage and mean difference in the opinion of Early Childhood teachers in respect of need for formal academic instructions in Early Childhood Education (ECE)?
3. To what extent will there be percentage and mean difference in the opinion of Early Childhood teachers with respect to assessment of preschool children based on their interest, needs, and abilities?
4. To what extent will there be percentage and mean difference in the opinion of Early Childhood teachers with respect to availability of hands-on materials?
5. To what extent will there be percentage and mean difference in the opinion of Early Childhood teachers with respect to training needs of preschool teachers?
6. To what extent will there be percentage and mean difference in the opinion of Early Childhood teachers with respect to use of whole group instruction and rote learning strategies?
7. To what extent will there be percentage and mean difference in the opinion of Early Childhood teachers with respect to availability of appropriate curriculum?
8. To what extent will there be percentage and mean difference in the opinion of Early Childhood teachers with respect to integration of families and the communities in pre-primary education?

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study at .05 probability level.

Ho1 There is no significant difference in the mean scores of public and private preschool teachers with respect to teaching qualifications.

Ho2 There is no significant difference in the mean scores of public and private preschool teachers with respect of years to teaching experiences.

Ho3 There is no significant difference in the mean scores of public and private preschool teachers' overall responses measured by Early Childhood Programme Instrument on Integration and Innovation (ECPAI).

METHOD

This study is a descriptive survey research, designed to elicit information on the quality of early childhood programmes and practices in public and private owned preschool establishments in Nsukka urban area. The administration of Early Childhood Programme Assessment Instrument on Integration and Innovation (ECPAI) was conducted by the researchers and other research assistants in Nsukka urban, area of the study. The sample for the study was drawn from pre-primary schools in Nsukka urban. Early childhood centers in twelve (12) primary schools in Nsukka town were selected using purposive random sampling procedure. The researchers due to fewer numbers of preschools and preschool teachers in Nsukka administered 112 copies of ECPAI to all available target respondents in the sampled schools.

The ECPAI, a nine-item, four points Likert-type scale was used in scoring responses to the research instrument. It was constructed and validated to elicit responses from preschool teachers on the quality of instructional materials, need for formal academic instructions, teaching and learning strategies, availability of hands-on material, training need of teachers, appropriate curriculum, and integration practices. To ensure the face and content validity of ECPAI, copies of the instrument were evaluated by experts in Early Childhood Education, and Educational Psychology. Clear guidelines, the purpose of the study, and research questions were provided and informed participants of the evaluation procedure. The experts' comments were used in modifying the items and improving the overall adequacy of the instrument; thereby making for clarity, appropriateness of language, expressions, and instructions to the respondents.

A trial testing was equally conducted on ten preschool teachers in a pre-primary school other than the sample for the study, who responded to the initial draft of ECPAI. The overall responses of the respondents helped the researchers determine further item clarity and conciseness, inter-item correlation and reliability coefficient of the instrument. In order to estimate the internal consistency of the ECPAI instrument, data obtained from the trial testing was subjected to Cronbach procedure for reliability analysis, which is apt for non-dichotomously scored Likert-type scale measurement. The normal Cronbach alpha of 0.81 obtained, indicated high internal consistency of ECPAI items. ECPAI items were analyzed; thus, items with corrected item-total correlation of less than .3 that boosted the reliability index were deleted. After the administration of ESAQ by the researchers, responses to the measuring instrument were collated and analyzed statistically. The Research questions for the study were answered using percentage and mean statistics, while the hypotheses were tested using Paired Samples tests. The four-point scale of strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and strongly Disagree (SD) was used in measuring individual responses. The reversed phrased items were given proportionate interpretation in negative order of 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively. The mean rating of

2.50 determined based on the measuring scale informed decisions to either Agree or Disagree with the research questions since each item mean could either fall below or above 2.50.

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented as follows:

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Table 1: The Percentage and Mean rating of Early Childhood Teachers

		SA	A	D	SD		
No	Item Description	P (%)	P (%)	P (%)	P (%)	MEAN	DECISION
1	Any instructional material will do for children in early childhood	20.7	15.3	37.8	26.1	2.31	Disagree
2	Children in nursery school do not need formal academic instructions	9.9	15.3	39.6	35.1	2	Disagree
3	Whole group instruction and learning by cramming are not appropriate for nursery children	14.5	22.7	40	22.7	2.30	Disagree
4	Assess nursery children based on their interest, needs and ability is not necessary	7.3	15.5	31.8	45.5	1.85	Disagree
5	Our school does not have materials that will assist nursery children to develop their talent	20	21.8	20	38.2	2.24	Disagree
6	Our teachers have not been trained on how to work with children	5.5	7.3	28.2	59.1	1.59	Disagree
7	We do not have a curriculum to use in teaching nursery children	12.7	12.7	29.1	45.5	1.93	Disagree
8	No need to teach children in our culture by involving the parents and community in our nursery schools	9.2	12.8	30.3	47.7	1.83	Disagree
9	I have not received training in how to work with nursery children	8	13.4	38.4	40.2	1.89	Disagree

F= frequency P= Percentage

Data presented on Table 1 above shows that the mean responses of respondents to all the items are well below the mean rating 2.50. These findings seem to suggest that all the respondents conversely agreed that appropriate instructional materials, formal academic instructions, use of teaching and learning strategies, use of hands-on materials, training of teachers, appropriate curriculum, and integration of families and communities are essential to early childhood education in Nigeria. The 63.9, 74.7, 62.7, 77.3, 58.2, 87.3, 74.6, 78, and 78.6 percentage ratings on *Disagree* and *Strongly Disagree* responses further underscore the importance of innovative and integrative teaching practices in Early Childhood Education.

HYPOTHESES

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on Teachers Responses to ECPAI

		Mean	N	SD	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Teacher Qualification Public	4.33	51	.476	.067
	Teacher Qualification Private	3.39	51	1.218	.171
Pair 2	Teaching Experience Public	20.11	36	6.265	1.044
	Teaching Experience Private	5.42	36	4.305	.718
Pair 3	Public Overall responses	18.98	50	4.488	.635
	Private Overall responses	16.68	50	4.901	.693

Data displayed on Table 2 above show a mean rating of 4.33, and SD score of .476 for public preschool teachers, and a mean rating of 3.39 and SD score of 1.218 for private preschool school teachers with respect to teacher qualification. Table 2 also shows a mean rating of 20.11 and SD of 6.265 for public preschool teachers, and a mean rating of 5.42 and SD of 4.305 for private preschool teachers with respect to years of teaching experiences. A mean rating of 18.98 and SD of 4.488 for private preschool teachers, and a mean rating of 16, 68 and SD of 4.901 for private preschool teachers with respect to overall responses to ECPAI were equally obtained. Thus, these results seem to suggest that public preschool teachers were better qualified, more experienced and different in their overall responses to ECPAI.

Table 3: Paired Samples Test Scores on Preschool Teachers Responses to ECPAI

		Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Teacher Qualification Public - Teacher Qualification Private	.941	1.302	5.160	50	.000	.011	.936
Pair 2	Teaching Experience Public - Teaching Experience Private	14.694	6.187	14.251	35	.000	.362	.030
Pair 3	Public Overall responses - Private Overall responses	2.300	6.296	2.583	49	.013	.103	.478

Ho1 There is no significant difference in the mean scores of public and private preschool teachers with respect to teaching qualifications.

Data depicted on Table 3 above clearly indicates that public preschool teachers are more qualified than the private preschool teachers. This assertion is predicated on t-computed value of 5.160, which is obviously greater at .000 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected for an alternative hypothesis of significant difference in the mean qualification scores of public and private school teachers.

Ho2 There is no significant difference in the mean scores of public and private preschool teachers with respect to years of teaching experiences.

Likewise, the public preschool teachers are markedly more experienced than their counterparts in the private sector. This is because the t-calculated value of 14.251 is highly significant at .000 probability level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected for an alternative hypothesis of significant difference in the years of teaching experience of public and private preschool teachers.

Ho3 There is no significant difference in the mean scores of public and private preschool teachers' overall responses measured by Early Childhood Programme Instrument (ECPAI).

Statistical results shown on Table 3 above once more clearly indicate that in all parameters measured using ECPAI that Public preschool teachers were different in their opinion of early childhood integrative and innovative programmes. This is due to the t-computed value of 2.583, which is greater at .013 level of significance. Public preschool teachers are not significantly related with Private preschool teachers in all ramification of assessment using ECPAI (as shown by .011, .362, and .103 coefficient scores in Table 3 above). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected for an alternative hypothesis of significant difference in public and private preschool teachers' overall responses measured by Early Childhood Programme Instrument (ECPAI).

DISUSSION

The findings of the study have shown that there is a difference in the teaching qualifications of public and private preschool teachers. Data on Table 2 and 3 indicate that public preschool teachers were significantly more qualified than the private preschool teachers. While all the 51 public preschool teachers were qualified with NCE and B.Ed certificates, six had SSC, five had TCII, three had an ordinary Diploma, the rest had NCE, B.Ed and above certificates. In addition, the Paired Samples Correlation score with respect to teaching qualification clearly confirmed that there is no relationship between public and private preschool teachers studied. These findings lend credence to some survey studies conducted by Ezirim (2004); the National Research Council's 2001 synthesis of research on preschool education (in Sacks and Ruzzi, 2005; Mbanefoh, 2002; & Maduewesi, 2003). Their findings suggest that teachers with strong intellects, education and training are more effective preschool teachers. Specifically, those teachers with at least a bachelor's degree are correlated with activities leading to higher quality programmes. Thus, while public schools have more qualified preschool teachers and less involvement and establishments in early childhood education, the private preschool teachers should be put to quality trainings in order to upgrade their qualifications.

Results in Table 2 and 3 also show that public preschool teachers were significantly more experienced than the private preschool teachers. This finding is supported by the National Policy on Education (1981); Mbanefoh (2002); Ede (2003); and Fafunwa (in Ede, 2003). Their findings summarily suggest that a successful system depends to a large extent on the competence of her teachers, their devotion to duty, and their effectiveness on the job. Competence is a product of skillfulness, experience and motivation to duty. Thus, there is an urgent need to constantly train and retrain preschool teachers, particularly private preschool teachers, on a termly basis in order to foster an increasing teaching experience that long years of practice endows those in the public sector.

Results on Table 3 show that public preschool teachers responded significantly different in their opinion of use of integrative and innovative approaches for early childhood education. The integrative and innovative skills measured by the ECPAI instrument are as follows : use of appropriate instructional materials; need for formal academic instructional; appropriateness of whole group instruction and rote learning; availability of hands-on materials; assessment based

on interest, needs and ability; availability of ECD curriculum; family and community involvement in ECE and training/re-training needs of preschool teachers. The higher mean score obtained by public preschool teachers in overall responses indicated their perception of integration and innovation as very needful in ECE. This finding is seriously supported by the findings of Ejeh (2006); Mindes (2007); Marcon (2002); UNESCO (1998); and Sacks and Ruzzi (2005). Their findings suggest that children do significantly better in an ECD programme that is child-directed, is less academic, has strong parental involvement to further the goals of promoting critical thinking and collaboration among young children, respects cultural diversity, uses appropriate early intervention assessment, and links curriculum with assessment practices appropriately.

Nevertheless, the researchers observed that preschool teachers studied acknowledged the use of a whole group instrument and rote learning strategies; which invariably contradicts the findings of Marcon (2002) and Sacks and Ruzzi (2005) studies. The need to innovate teaching practices in Nigerian preprimary institutions by modifying or doing away with the traditional teacher directed academic approach for a more result-oriented, child directed approach is imperative. The latter will make for an enabling environment where the need, abilities, interests and talents of the child are identified through individual instruction and assessment, and then maximized through teacher facilitated but unlimited learning activities that uses hands-on materials.

CONCLUSION

A good number of nursery schools in Nigeria are administered by private individuals despite the policies requiring governmental intervention and involvement in the early childhood education administration. The Early Childhood Development programme in Nigeria is confronted with challenges of training, recruitment and certification of early childhood caregivers. Provision of continuous capacity building trainings, learning materials that are age appropriate and a nationally accepted child-friendly curriculum for teaching preschool children are indispensably needed. On the other hand, strong home-school partnership, long-term projects, the recognition of multiple symbolic languages possessed by children, and the role of child's environment as teacher must be prioritized. It is understood that Early Childhood Education should not be solely based on formal curricular, but on child-directed education. Nigeria should reflect on early childhood policies and practices in developed nations like the United States to improve on current system. The United States government under President Obama has shown commitment to providing the support that young children need to prepare to succeed later in school. The President supports a seamless and comprehensive set of services and support for children, from birth through age 5 via empowerment and urging American state governments to impose high standards across all publicly funded early learning settings, develop new programs to improve opportunities and outcomes, engage parents in their child's early learning and development, and improve the early education workforce (ED.gov, 2010). Such strides are evident in the public education laws and policies in America, like the No Child Left Behind, Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, Title V, Part D, Subpart 14, Sec. 5542; U.S.C. 7269a, among others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In consonance with the National Research Council's and Eager to Learn: Educating our Preschoolers' recommendations (in Sacks & Ruzzi, 2005), the following recommendations are apt for producing high quality teacher for Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Nigeria.

a. Capacity building workshops should be organized to train or retrain preschool teachers so as to address the observed gaps in and discrepancies between teacher qualification and experiences.
b. ECE teachers should have a minimum of NCE qualification with specialized ECE courses.
c. Teacher preparation programmes should give them better knowledge of children's development and of appropriate pedagogy for young children.
d. ECE teachers should go through supervised student teaching or internships
e. ECE programmes should have qualified supervisors
f. There should be more research into effective preparation practices for an ECE teacher.
g. Federal and state agencies should fund curriculum development, field-testing, and assessments for ECE.
h. Minimum standards for ECE programme should be developed nationwide.
i. States should monitor evaluate/update periodically the implementation of developed programmes/content standards. This should be a task for all state Ministries of Education.
j. The federal government should fund high-quality preschools for all children.
k. States should develop a single career ladder for ECE teachers with adequate work incentives.
l. ECE programmes should be integrative, through formation of strong alliance with families and the community.
m. ECE programmes should be innovative, through child directed teaching and learning process.

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