

TITLE PAGE

**AN APPRAISAL OF CHILD-FRIENDLY STATUS (CFS) OF EARLY
CHILDHOOD CARE EDUCATION (ECCE) SCHOOLS IN NIGER STATE**

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FEBRUARY, 2014

APPROVAL PAGE

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DEDICATION

This research work is dearly dedicated for the cause of Allah, and then to my loving and caring parents Alhaji Yunusa Aliyu and Hajiya Rabi'ah Y. Aliyu.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher's gratitude goes to the Most high, Allah, the Almighty, Cherisher and the Giver of all things including knowledge. Who also gave her supervisor the strength to oversee this work and the researcher, Who He gave the strength, patience, courage, and good health to pursue this programme.

The researcher is highly indebted to her supervisor Prof. Julie U. Ibiam for her humility, tolerance, valuable suggestions, proficient decisions and cooperation: she took time despite the tight schedule to go through this work within the shortest time possible. Thanks to her for the full support, courage and motherly care accorded to the researcher. She was always ready and willing to help students in her own ways.

The researcher very much appreciates her validates: Dr. G. C. Ugwu, Dr. E.N. Nwosu and Dr. V. N. Nwachukwu. Their contributions immensely added to the development of this study. To her readers, Dr. L. N. Onuigbo, and Dr. N. O. Obiyo for shaping and adding more value to the work, she is ever grateful to them.

Pharm. Abdul Mu'amin Isah was a wonderful editor who provided valuable suggestions in many aspects of this study and Mal. Hassan Abdullahi Yabagi contributed immensely during the researcher's proposal defense. The researcher deeply appreciates their profound efforts. The researcher also appreciates Janet Joseph for her support.

With great joy and gratitude, the researcher is deeply indebted to her loving and caring parents, Alhaji Yunusa Aliyu and Hajiya Rabi'ah Y. Aliyu for their, moral and financial support with their love and care and, above all, their courage and prayers in seeing this programme a success. May Allah spare us all, for them to see the fruits of their labour

in a special way through their children. The researcher also appreciates her aunt, Hajiya L. Dankano, for her prayers.

To the Yunusa's, the researcher enormously appreciates them all: from her big sister Aisha Yunusa, whose vigorous efforts was exhibited during the course of this programme to Bilyamin Yunusa her brother, Zainab and Yasmeen Yunusa her younger sisters. Thank you all for your prayers, care and taking charge of the researcher's home responsibilities while she was away for this study. She also appreciates the contribution of Ailyu Adamu.

The researcher's appreciation goes to her brother in-laws: Alhaji Ahmed B. Ahmed and Mohammed Aliyu for their support, care and prayers during the course of her study. The researcher expresses her deep feelings to her Nephews: Mubarak Ahmad, and the triplets (Fahad, Faizullah & Fawaz Mohammed) as well as her Nieces, Fatimah Mohammed and Little Zainab Ahmed, for their endurance in her absence during this programme.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to appraise the Child-friendly status of ECCE schools in Niger state. The study was guided by five research questions and five hypotheses. The population of the study consisted of all the 272 teachers in the 34 UNICEF-designated child friendly schools in Niger State. The sample for this study consisted of 272 teachers and 68 parents of ECCE pupils. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data to answer the research questions and hypothesis formulated to guide the study. This instrument was validated by three experts. Data were arranged and analyzed according to the research questions using means scores and standard deviation while the t-test was tested at 0.05significance level. The major findings of the study were that: To a great extent ECCE Schools in Niger State show diversity to ensure equal opportunities for all children; With respect to quality learning outcomes, ECCE Schools in Niger State to a great extent are child friendly; To a great extent, ECCE Schools in Niger State are accessible; Niger state do less to enhance ECCE teachersöcapacity; Niger State ECCE schools to a less extent are community-based and :There was no significant difference in the mean Child-friendly status of urban and rural ECCE schools in Niger state. Based on these findings, the conclusion is that much need to be done to improve basic ECCE in Niger State through child friendly school model. Hence, the major educational implication of the findings of the study is that there should be greater effort by stakeholders to create such stimulating milieu to motivate children to discover new skills and knowledge through child friendly school model. The researcher therefore recommended that quality assurance should be demonstrated through teacher and community capacity building. The major limitation of this study is inherent in the design of the study. Thus, the researcher suggested that other research designs and checklist be used to verify the variables of interest in this study.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

A child could mean different thing to different people. A child is a young human being whose development has employed the attention of the government, community, as well as the parents. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 2007) defines a child as every human being below the age of 18 years. In another definition, Obinaju (2004) viewed a child as a young person, especially between infancy and youth. United Nation International Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2007) also defines the child as a human being below the age of eighteen years. For the purpose of this study, a child is seen as a person from the age of zero to five years.

It is the right of every child to be educated, since education is one of the natural phenomena associated with human growth. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (1989) declaration óthat education is a fundamental human rightô (UNICEF, 2013). For instance; Nigeria has domesticated this right of children to education by implementing the universal and compulsory basic education through Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). Early Childhood Care and Education is all the experiences children between the ages of 0-5yrs have in an educational setting which include the childcare centres, nurseries and kindergarten in public or private centres before the age of formal schooling. According to Essa (2011), early childhood education encompasses developmentally appropriate programs that serve children from birth through age eight. However, the National Policy on Education (NPE) delineated Early Childhood/Pre-Primary Education as the education given in an educational

institution to children of ages 0-5years, prior to their entering primary school. It includes the crèche, the nursery and the kindergarten (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2004).

Government commitments in child right to quality basic education necessitate that every Nigerian child shall have the right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any perceived or real disability. Upon this notion, the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) through the Universal Basic Education Board (UBEB) has taken the mantle of setting, monitoring and granting approval in both private and public sectors such as UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO) among others, to establish ECCE in public primary schools across the nation (FRN, 2004:6). ECCE is seen to be vital to the development of the child. The need to enhance the quality of young children's lives and their cognitive development has made ECCE a topic of national importance. Thus the objectives of ECCE according to FRN (2004:6) are;

- To effect a smooth transition from home to the 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 in the children the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, environment, art music and playing with toys etc.
- Develop a sense of co-operation and team spirit;
- Learn good habits, especially good health habits and
- Teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, and forms through play.

To achieve the above objectives, Nigeria has since over years introduced some basic education programme and pledged to provide basic infrastructure, make provision in teacher education programme for specialization in early childhood education, contribute to the

development of suitable curriculum, supervise and control the quality of such institutions (FRN, 2004). Establishment of Early Childhood Care and Education section in the existing public primary schools was a recommendation by UNICEF and WHO in collaboration with FME. Also, UNICEF (2000) further recommended that ECCE should be given a Child Friendly Status (CFS). Thus, Nigeria took steps to launch Child ñ Friendly Schools Initiatives (CFSI) in 2000. So many schools across the country adopted it. Dada (2001) as described in Ismailia (2013) observed that 71,040, pupils and 1776 class teachers in 26 states, Niger State inclusive, were recruited in 2001 for the CFSI. He further noted that by the year 2001 there were 163 schools designated as child ñ friendly schools in Nigeria. Also the Federal Government of Nigeria noted that 286 primary schools nationwide had been accorded child-friendly status (UNICEF, 2004).

A School with Child Friendly Status (CFS), is a school that óserves the whole childô through embracing a multidimensional concept of quality. It addresses the total needs of the child as a learner through promoting a right-based concept of quality that goes beyond good teaching methods and learning outcomes to include health, safety and adequacy of schools facilities and supplies (Commonwealth of Learning, 2011). UNICEF (2004) describes a child-friendly status school as the one where the learning environment is encouraging, the staff is responsive to children and the health and safety needs of the children are adequately met. Consequently the school is community-based and considers the rights of all children, irrespective of gender, religious and ethnic differences.

Child-friendly status schools, as described by Orkadashvili (2010), aimed to develop a learning environment in which children are motivated and able to learn. Staff members are friendly and welcoming to children and attend to all their health and safety needs. UNESCO (2004) posited that child-friendly status schools are where children have the right to learn to their

fullest potential within a safe and welcoming environment. A child-friendly status school provides children with quality education in an environment that is safe, where they express their views, actively participate in the learning process and are protected from harm. It encourages children to enroll in school, stay in school and complete their education with improved performance among others. Importance of CFS schools led the FRN in her NPE (2004:5), to stipulate that, Government shall:

- Establish early childhood/ pre-primary sections in existing public schools and encourage both community/ private efforts in the provision of pre-primary ECCE.
- Make provision in teacher education programmes for specialization in early childhood education;
- Ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother-tongue or language of immediate community; and to this end will:
- Develop the orthography of many more Nigerian languages, and produce text books in Nigerian languages;
- Ensure that the main method of teaching at this level shall be through play and that curriculum of teacher education is oriented to achieve this; regulate and control the operation of ECCE. To this end the teacher-pupil ratio shall be 1:25;
- Set and monitor minimum standard for early childcare centers in the country; and
- Ensure full participation of government, communities and teachers associations in the running and maintenance of ECCE facilities.

Despite the importance and government stipulations of ECCE, researchers made it known that there are some hindering factors that contribute to poor accomplishment of the programme. Chukwu (2011) noted that the stipulation in the National Policy on Education that the method of

teaching at this level of education shall be through play and the medium of instruction, principally the language of the immediate community, are implemented to a little extent, leading to poor quality of education. UNICEF (2009a) asserted that, in addition to poor quality of education, such persistent challenges to school attendance as child labour, HIV/AIDS, civil conflict, natural disasters, deepening poverty continue to threaten gains in school enrolment and completion rates in many countries.

The researcher's personal experience presently showed that Niger State public primary schools of which ECCE is embedded, are running most of the classes in dilapidated buildings, schools are unfriendly; teacher capacity and commitment is low because teachers are seen under the tree selling while classes are on. Teacher to student ratio is more than the 1:25 as stipulated in the NPE. Most children leave school before time and stay under the trees sleeping, hawking and begging for food. Inadequate physical environment to include the facilities such as the playground and play facilities, class composition and size are very poor. There is limited or absence of community participation and this gives rise to schools being unfriendly to pupils, thereby causing poor pupils achievement and high dropout rate.

Child-Friendly Status Schools are situated both in rural and urban areas of Niger State. The schools situated in these areas are meant to prepare and enhance both social and intellectual development of the children for lifelong learning. They are also meant to have suitable school environment; adequate classroom space, adequate furniture, equipment and teaching/learning materials; good motivated teachers who use effective teaching methodologies; adequate water, health and sanitation facilities; and very high involvement of community in education. All these are conditions stipulated by UNICEF (2000). But the reverse may be the case in Niger State. With the researcher's observations, teaching and learning takes place in dilapidated structures.

This poses question on, whether Niger State really provides child-friendly environment. Therefore, this caused the need to appraise, child-friendly status schools in Niger state.

Appraisal as defined by Kidwai (2010) is a clear, concise, regular and unbiased process of rating a system's performance in its current position. This entails a planned, logical process that determines a structure or organizational decision learning process. With respect to this study, appraisal is the impartial examination of the status of child-friendly school initiative in early childhood care and education.

From the foregoing and for the full achievement of the ECCE objectives, appraisal of ECCE schools based on CFS in Niger State is necessary. CFS is a UNICEF initiative that serves the 'whole child'. UNICEF Nigerian office worked with other key promoter of child-friendly schools (UNESCO, Commonwealth of Nations, etc.) to develop a blueprint for the child-friendly schools initiative. In the blue print for CFS (2009a) are the characteristics of child-friendly schools as been adapted and defined specifically for the Nigerian social-cultural context, stated in UNICEF as follows:

- Reflects and realizes the rights of every child
- Sees and understands the whole child, in abroad context
- Is child centered
- Is gender sensitive and girl friendly
- Promotes quality learning outcomes
- Provides education based on the reality of children's lives
- Is flexible and responds to diversity
- Acts to ensure inclusion, respect and equality of opportunity for all children

- Promotes mental and physical health
- Provides education that is affordable and accessible
- Enhances teacher capacity, morale, commitment and status
- Is family focused
- Is community-based
- Promotes community cohesion (p 11)

Based on previous research, An appraisal of Child-Friendly Status of Early-Childhood and Education schools in Gombe State out of the fourteen identified characteristics five have been examined: rights of individual child, health and safety status of a child, gender equity, child centered and facilities that ensure inclusive education. Therefore other characteristics of CFS were recommended to be examined by the subsequent researchers. In the present study, five out of the remaining will be examined as it represents a segment of the immediate need of a child friendly school in Niger state. Ismaila (2013) opined that no single study can adequately and conveniently address all the issues involved in CFS.

The characteristic of CFS to be considered include: school flexibility and responds to diversity; promoting quality learning outcomes, affordable and accessible education; enhancing teacher capacity moral, and community-based school governance. Furthermore, these five selected characteristics appear to correspond to the pressing needs of CFS in Niger State. An environment that responds diversity to meet the differing needs of all children is central to features of CFS effort. UNICEF (2009a) describes an environment that responds to diversity as one that meets differing circumstances and need of children such as gender, culture, social class, ability level among others. This is an environment that is conducive for all tribes, ages, sexes, religions, and everybody is given equal rights. This explains that teachers must welcome all

manner of human beings. Gonzalez(2009) underscored teachers approach to diversity in the classroom could be by looking at commonalities in everyday world such as cultural foods and feeding, ethnic holidays, skin colour and many more. In Niger State, catering for children with disability in public primary schools appears unconvinced. This is as a result of the researchers observation that shows many children with disability are used by their parents as an agent of street begging.

Another characteristic of CFS is that the school must provide quality learning outcomes. UNICEF (2009a) believed that school climate, improved pedagogy and better school facilities will lead to better learning outcomes. Learning outcome is the particular knowledge, skill or behaviour that student is expected to exhibit after a period of study (World Bank Group, 2013). Quality Learning Australia (2013) sees quality learning outcome as the provision of simple tools, methods and concepts to make classrooms and schools more efficient and effective. They also believed that improved learning outcomes results to greater engagement; increased responsibility for their learning; better relationship with teachers and peers; higher level of cooperation and trust; and more fun learning at school. UNICEF did not focus on children outcomes in a particular subject area, but focused on school environment as a determinant to improved outcomes. The CFS blue print describes environment that promotes quality learning outcomes as the one that:

Encourages children to think critically, ask questions, express their opinions- and learn how to learn; helps children to master the essentials enabling skills of writing, reading, speaking, listening, mathematics, and the general knowledge and skills required for living in the new century-including useful traditional knowledge and values of peace, democracy and acceptance of diversity.(UNICEF,2009a:28).

In Niger State, it seems that there is no improvement in learning materials, hence, children's skills and abilities are not encouraged.

Provision of affordable and accessible education, especially to families and children most at risk is another CFS characteristic. Affordability of education as described in the CFS blueprint (2009) stressed that the family's ability to pay school fees and accessibility in terms of children needing to miss school in order to work or assist at home. In Niger State, parents seem to exclude their children from school due to inability to pay school fees and children do have to miss school to assist at home or follow their parents to occasions or performances.

In addition to the CFS characteristics is the teacher capacity morale, commitment and status. There is considerable evidence that the provision of a supportive environment for teachers is associated with positive student outcome (Klem and Connell, 2004). Nigeria's CFS blueprint describes an environment that enhances teacher capacity, morale commitment and status as one that ensures that its teachers have sufficient pre-service training, in-service support and professional development, status and income. (UNICEF, 2009a:41). UNICEF further explains the stand of teachers as central to school reform. Thus, the success of implementing child-friendly models in context or reform will depend on the caliber of teachers within the system. In many developing countries, a high percentage of teachers lack the requisite level of education and training needed to rise to the challenge of school reform (UNICEF, 2009a). Salaries and conditions of service are major factors in teacher motivation and commitment, and these need to be carefully addressed because they will result into unfriendly attitude to pupils which will result to poor achievement on the part of the children. Based on the researcher's observation, Niger

State teachers are poorly motivated and have an obsolete method of instruction. In addition, they hawk during classes in a proposition to uplift their status, depriving the pupils their rights and causing poor achievement on the part of the pupils. These attitudes lead to mistrust among pupils and teachers.

The last to be assessed in this study, is the community based initiative. Over the past few years, schools across Nigeria have introduced School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) to improve conditions in schools through greater community ownership and involvement. For example, SBMCs inform the local educational authorities with regards to the needs of the school (for example, a building of classrooms needs the roof repaired), and act in an accountability monitoring capacity to ensure that once approved by educational authorities, planned work will be completed satisfactorily or allocated supplies will, indeed, be received. SBMCs co-exist with school parent-teacher associations (PTAs), and incorporate local leaders and community members (UNICEF, 2009a). The Nigeria CFS blueprint describes a community-based school as one that

óstrengthens school governance through a decentralized, community-based approach; organizes parents, local government, community organizations and other institutions of civil society to participate in the management as well as the financing of education; promotes community partnerships and networks focused on the rights and well-being of the childrenô(UNICEF,2009a:44).

How do parents and communities participate in the decision making through enriching the environment and provision of physical structures in Niger State ECCE schools?

The first goal of the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) is expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Disadvantaged children could come from urban or

rural settings, but mostly from the rural setting. ECCE/CFS is not just for one location or area. But does location really affect the success of child-friendly schools in early child care education? It was observed that less empirical studies were done in that aspect. Also, children from the rural areas are the disadvantaged group because of poor access to basic amenities; hence, the researcher's interest to examine how location affects child-friendly status of schools. Enyi (2010) have it that there were variations in the existence of resources between urban and rural schools in favor of the urban locations. Ighuzor (2006) also stressed that children in some ECCE/CFS schools are faced with the challenge of not being safe due to the remote location of schools, as well as nearness of schools to busy roads, markets, amongst others which pose danger to the lives of the children. These motivated and led the researcher to embark on the study to appraise the CFS of ECCE schools in Niger State.

Statement of the Problem

Niger State is one of the pioneer beneficiaries of the CFSI established jointly by UNICEF, FME, UBE and WHO, which was aimed at ensuring that children learn in an inclusive, protective, and conducive environment. It has a total of 34 CFS evenly spread across the urban and rural areas of the State. In spite of the establishment of these schools, studies have shown that the enrolment of children is quite low and there has been a high dropout rate of school children. Many children of school age roam the streets and motor parks hawking and begging for alms. The question is what could be the problem? Could it be that the schools are not learner friendly?

CFSI developed the guidelines for the operation of CFS across the country, Niger State inclusive. However, since the establishment of these schools about 13 years ago in the

State, efforts have not been made to ascertain the extent to which these schools follow the guidelines. If the objectives of ECCE/CFS are to be met, there is the need to also appraise the status of the ECCE schools in the State based on UNICEF characteristics for CFSI. The problem of this study therefore, is to examine the status of ECCE/CFS in Niger State based on the UNICEF recommendations for CFS.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to appraise the Child-friendly status of ECCE schools in Niger state. Specifically, this study sought to:

1. Examine the extent to which ECCE Schools in Niger State respond to diversity to ensure equal opportunities for all children.
2. Ascertain the extent Niger State ECCE Schools create environment that promotes quality learning outcomes
3. Determine the extent ECCE Schools in Niger State provide education that is affordable and accessible.
4. Determine the extent Niger State ECCE Schools enhance teacher capacity.
5. Examine the extent to which ECCE Schools in Niger State are community-based.

Significance of the study

Theoretically, Socio-cultural Cognitive Theory of Vygotsky (1962) portrayed the child's development as inseparable from social and cultural activities. He believed that children's cognitive development is enhanced by their psycho-social interaction with the environment. The environment includes the family, school (to include teachers) and community, among others. By this, a justification could be made that CFS is a typical form of this theory because children's relationship with their environment (parents, teachers,

physical facilities, peers and community) is highly encouraged. Therefore, this study will add to the existing knowledge of Vygotsky's theory.

Practically, the result of the study will be beneficial to operational bodies in children services such as UNICEF, WHO, and United Nations Education and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO), Government, Educational Administrators, Teachers, Community, Researchers, as well as Parents.

For the operational bodies, the findings of the study will provide steadfast basis for quality control and management of the programme, if made available. It will assist these bodies to deliver services on children's welfare, and to draw up policies that will take care of children in different backgrounds who need the same care. Thus, reliable information can also be used to improve, enhance and strengthen the framework for better performance.

The result of this study will help the government by providing empirical evidence on framework of interventions that can boast achievement at the ECCE. The findings will provide a framework to government's ministry of education, UBE, and other bodies with the aim of improving education that promotes child's development in an inclusive participation and responsive approach. It is also expected that the findings will map out facilities that will be used in schools through formulation of minimum standard, policies and objectives that will sustain CFS initiatives in the country, thus, protecting children's rights.

The findings of the study when published and presented in seminars, conferences and workshops will provide a benchmark to stakeholders in early childhood education, namely, educational administrators and ECCE proprietors in guiding their teachers and also

setting standards to both parents and teachers. This present study will also be beneficial to teachers as it will give them more awareness on their roles through pre-service and in-service trainings.

The findings of this study will create more awareness on the status of ECCE to the community, parents and guardians. The findings of this study will create more awareness on the CFS, thereby contributing to its development through ideas and finances. Parents can also demand for school status change (in policy, administration and implementation) through advocacy to the government and in the parents-teachers association (PTA).

It is believed that the children will enjoy stimulating child-friendly learning environment when teachers practise child-friendly approach to teaching, thereby contributing to their total growth and development. Children will also learn how to relate more with their peers and explore their environment more, through play.

Finally, the findings of this study will act as a source of literature to researchers on framework on educational intervention that most reflect the realization of basic education goals in Nigeria. These could be through conferences, seminars, workshops and, when published, as a book.

Scope of the study

The geographical scope of the study covered Niger State. There are 34 ECCE/CFS schools. All of these schools were involved in this study. The content scope focused on the appraisal of the status of child-friendliness in ECCE schools in Niger State with respect to school flexibility and respond to diversity; promotion of quality learning outcome,

affordability and accessibility of education, teacher capacity moral; and community-based school governance.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent does ECCE Schools in Niger State show diversity to ensure equal opportunities for all children?
2. To what extent do Niger State ECCE Schools create environment that promotes quality learning outcomes?
3. To what extent are Niger State ECCE Schools affordable and accessible?
4. To what extent does Niger State enhance teachersö capacity in ECCE Schools?
5. To what extent are ECCE Schools in Niger State community-based?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study, and then tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- Ho₁. There is no significant difference between the mean rating of teachers and parents in urban and rural areas on the extent to which ECCE schools responds in ensuring equality of opportunities for all children.
- Ho₂. There is no significant difference between the mean rating of teachers and parents in urban and rural areas on the extent to which ECCE schools promotes quality learning outcome.

- Ho₃. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of teachers and parents in urban rural areas of ECCE schools with respect to affordability and accessibility.
- Ho₄. There is no significant difference between the mean rating of teachers and parents in urban and rural areas of ECCE schools on the extent to which they enhance teacher capacity morale, commitment and status.
- Ho₅. There is no significant difference between the mean rating of teachers and parents in urban and rural areas of ECCE schools on the extent they develop community-based schools.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURES

This chapter deals with the review of literature on the appraisal of child-friendly status of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). Literatures were reviewed under the following sub-headings: Conceptual Framework; Theoretical Framework; Related Empirical studies and summary of literature review.

Conceptual Framework

- Concept of a child and childhood
- Concept of environment
- Concept of early childhood care and education (ECCE).
- Concept of child-friendly status (CFS)
- Concept of appraisal

Theoretical Framework

- Socio-cultural cognitive theory of Vygotsky (1869-1934)
- Social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura (1925-1977)

Review of Empirical Studies

- Studies on ECCE
- Studies on CFS
- Studies on school environmental influence

Summary of Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

Concept of a Child/Childhood

A Child is viewed differently by different people and in different categories of life. To George (1990) a child is viewed in five different categories, namely: miniature adult; what separates a child from adult is just the age, 'blanket tablet'; a child was born with no tendency except that of human attribute, growing plant; what a child becomes in life depends on nature and quality of experience, a child as a property and investment in future entails the training and care given to the child. Gonzalez (2008) viewed a child as a person that come from a family with a past and a future - a family that is part of a race, ethnic, culture, language, and socioeconomic group. In another view, Obianju (2000) described a child as generally a young person especially between infancy and youth. This goes in line with the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child that sees a child as a human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child (CRC, 2007).

The legal definition of a child generally refers to a minor, otherwise known as a person younger than the age of maturity that goes through certain stages of development as described by researchers (Sasse, 1994; Stephen, 1996 and Santrock, 2001). Basically, the four main stages that children go through as they develop are infancy (birth to one year), toddlerhood (one to three years), pre-school age (three to five years) and school age (five to ten years). The first three stages are termed early childhood (Situ, Utim, and Aliyu, 2009).

To the developmental psychologists (Santrock, 2010), children go through five stages of development in childhood life. These stages are prenatal period, infancy period, early childhood, middle and late childhood, and adolescence. The prenatal period is the time from conception to birth. Infancy period is the developmental period that starts from

birth to about 18-24 months. It is characterized by basic reflexes, sitting anywhere, standing, stooping, climbing and usually walking. Early Childhood period is the developmental period that starts from the end of infancy to about 5 to 6 years of age. Sometimes this period is called the preschool years. During this time, young children learn to become more self-sufficient and to care for themselves; they develop school readiness skills (following instruction, identifying letters), and they spend many hours in play and with peers. Middle and late childhood involves the period that extend from about 6 to 11 years of age, sometime called the elementary school years. Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to early adulthood.

Childhood is the age span ranging from birth to adolescence. Childhood is often retrospectively viewed as a time of innocence, a mixture of happiness, wonders, angst (fear) and resilience. It is generally a time of playing, learning, socializing and exploring, in a world without much adult interference, aside from parents (Hannam and Stephenson 2013). Developmentally and biologically, it refers to the period between infancy and adulthood. Childhood is considered to start from birth. For the purpose of this study, the period of childhood shall represent children of age zero to five years. This stage is characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development.

The level of care and attention received by the child greatly influences the child's cognitive and social lifelong development, since this period is characterized by a period of exploration, broadening the social world and change in the social environment as noted by Nnadozie 2006. This calls for a comprehensive early childhood care and education.

Concept of Environment

Everything which surrounds us may collectively be termed as environment. The air which we breathe, the soil on which we walk, water, living and non-living things around are all components of the environment. The environment has influenced and shaped our lives since time immemorial (Asthana and Asthana, 2006). The environment refers to all external variables that have positive or negative influences on the development of an individual or his behaviour from conception till the end of his life (Abolarin, 2010). Environment is that which stimulates the inherited characteristics like intelligence, emotions or temperament, physical development, among others, and the basic mechanisms for a particular behaviour. It has the potentials to activate the characteristics to attain the maximum growth or to curb the growth of any characteristics, in that way inhibiting their manifestation (Polmin, 1996).

For ages, it has been observed that any change in one component of the environment affects the growth and development of a child. When the environment is favorable, there will be positive development. But when the environment is impoverished, negative development will emerge. Agada (1996) has it that the environment which might influence a child's learning includes the home, the school and the community. Ibiam (2013) underscored school environment as a broad range of educational concept, which include physical setting and psychological surroundings formed through instructional component linked to teacher's behaviour. Mbipom (2000) commented that the school's physical environment is the entire school plan including location, building, classroom conditions,

laboratory, library, playgrounds, desks, chairs, tables, lightening conditions, among other things. The quality of education given by any institution is attributed to the school's physical facilities. This also indicates that the physical environment of the school has some impacts on how instruction is carried out by the teachers and assimilated by the students. It is to this end that Olaniyan and Timothy (2005) discovered that the school's physical environment significantly influences teachers' effectiveness.

In the context of early childhood development, environment is defined broadly, including children's learning, training, education and other experiences (Berndt, 1997). The class size, class space and composition entail the physical classroom environment. Eventually, all children leave the protection of their homes and family for the new world of the school. Teachers help children to adjust to the school as they oversee classroom activities and encourage more isolated children to take part in the group. They are role models that have influence on children's behaviour. The school is a major influence on a child's sense of competence and achievement. As the child socializes, he imitates the adults in the society; any negative influence will affect the child socially (Fayombo, 2004). The concept of classroom environment in this study shall connote the changes in physical environment, which involves the influence of family and the community, the teacher or care giver and the total structures of the school as they enhance and stimulate learning. All these constitute a child-friendly school environment.

The Concept of Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE)

The importance placed on education for children has since been acknowledged over the years. Early Child Care, as it was then known, evolved in Nigeria over two decades as a

special field of focus for development intervention (FRN, 2004). Ordinarily, the term “Early Childhood Care and Education” could be described as the care and training given to children of early age. The meaning could refer to different things to different people based on the socio-cultural setting of a group. For sociologists and historians, the term Early Childhood Care and Education is more of social intervention. To the psychologists, it could mean guiding or shaping children’s behaviour through observation and play. It therefore depends on the social beliefs. ECCE is care and education of children from birth to primary school age (i.e. to age 6 or 8). It covers children’s survival, growth, development and learning (including health, nutrition and hygiene, and cognitive, social, physical and emotional developments) from birth to entry into primary school in formal, informal and non-formal settings (Ojameruaye, 2010). Several scholars and organizations have attempted to define Early Childhood Care Education. The consensus opinion is that “Early Childhood Care Education is distinct from other forms of child education as it is limited to the young child of 3 to 5 years of age, prior to their entry into primary school” (Ajeyalemi, 2003). However, as it was earlier noted, the usage of this term means it is applied differently to diverse people or society.

Early Childhood Care Education is an active social setting created to cater for efficient growth and development of the children where they find a “richer and fuller life than elsewhere”. In other words, it is a stage of performance of sacred rites, where children’s talents, values, and problems are identified, watched and tendered; it is a stage, for training in regular habits where the supervision for healthy living in adulthood is provided (Ajeyalemi, 2003:28).

Early Childhood Care and Education, according to Bowman, Donovan and Burn (2011) is the education that children obtain during the early stage of their childhood. Early Childhood Education is a crucial period for the development of the mental function of

children. This development including the emergence of the abilities and skills in areas such as language, motor skills, psychosocial, cognitive and learning is greatly influenced by many factors like the educational environment to which the child is exposed. Early Childhood Care and Education consists of activities and/or experiences that are intended to affect developmental changes in children prior to their entry into elementary schools. This includes any type of educational programme that serves in the preschool years and is designed to improve later school performance. It could refer to the formal teaching of the young children by people outside the home (Gale, 2006). According to Maduewesi (1999), early childhood education is a semi-formal education arrangement usually outside the home; whereby young children from age of three years are exposed through play-like activities in group setting mental, social and physical learning suited to their developmental stage, until the mandatory age of government approved formal schooling. Early childhood can be regarded as a foundation ground for the child's physical, social, emotional and health care. The FRN through the National Policy on Education (2004:5) described early childhood education as 'the education given in educational institution to children, prior to their entering the primary school'. The policy also stated the purpose and objectives of early childhood to include:

To effect a smooth transition from home to the school; prepare the child for the primary level of education; provide adequate care for the children while their parents are at work; inculcate in the children the spirit of enquiry and creativity, co-operation; Learn good habits, team spirit, and teaching the children rudiments of numbers shapes, all through play. These objectives have a tremendous effect to the general development of the child which includes health, cognitive-ability, social, physical and moral development.

Maduewesi (2005) affirmed that early childhood education has a positive influence on the educational development of intelligence, personality and social behaviour of children in later life. Therefore, it is a well-known fact that the care and support received by a child in terms of good health, nutrition and psychological care and protection are crucial in the formation and development of intelligence, personality and social behaviour. These objectives have implication for mental, physical, social and moral development and these can be achieved through a conducive and peaceful, learning environment, also it must be organized and strongly pursued through well-articulated programme (Ibiam, 2011). It is in line with this, and to effectively actualize these objectives, that Ibiam, posited that there should be provision for qualified pre-primary school teachers in adequate number, a suitable curriculum supervision and quality control of such institutions and to establish pre-primary sections in existing public primary schools.

A highly established pre-primary school will go a long way to help the child. A child at this stage is characterized by substantial gain in cognitive and language development; the interplay between socialization and individuation shapes personality and influences adjustment. In this study, ECCE will be termed the education given in an educational institution to children between ages zero to five years prior to their entry into primary school. This includes the crèche, daycare, nursery and kindergarten education.

The need for Early Childhood Care Education among working families makes early childhood education and care a topic of national prominence. With the increase in the number of childbirth and high increase in low-income families and insecurity in the health sector, UNICEF deemed it necessary to embrace ECCE. This is in line with the study of Essa(2003) that ECCE intervention can help to combat poverty, improve the opportunities

for children who may be at risk and also improve family life since there are an increasing number of women in their child bearing years that are in the work force. In another view, Maduewesi (1999) maintained that good early education programme helps to enhance the child's knowledge and experience in language, numbers, science, music, arts and social learning. Early Childhood Care and Education enriches children's life to enable them enjoy their early years. Childhood plays a crucial role and helps in appropriate development of children.

Learning is known to be greatly influenced by exogenous factors, including nature of educational environment to which the child is exposed during the first years of life. Ojameruaye (2010) described some importance of early childhood education as: ECCE is a right, since it is part of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; is a time of remarkable brain development that lays the foundation for later learning; children that have access to ECCE generally perform better in primary and secondary schools, and perhaps at the tertiary level and later in life; ECCE also helps significantly, to improve the well-being of children, it is more cost-effective to institute preventive measures and support children early in life than to compensate for disadvantage as they grow older. Furthermore, affordable and reliable childcare provides essential support for working parents, especially mothers, and enhances women empowerment and it also counterbalances disadvantage and inequality, especially for children from poor families in Nigeria.

It is the contention of Opara, Nwosu and Nwebo (2012) that Early Childhood Education can be an appropriate intervention strategy to address the issue of many problems that Nigeria is confronted with. Nigeria is saddled with a bewildering array of social, political, economic and technological problems that are significantly exerting

adverse effects on child development and the subsequent quality of the future adults who will definitely be products of the new day care centers. Early Childhood Care and Education is a foundation that helps to shape and improve the children's lives, their potentialities and personalities towards self-actualization, through training and modeling. It could also ruin the development of children when not adequately handled.

Though appreciable progress has been made in early childhood care and education in the past four years due to government policy requiring every public school to have a pre-primary school linkage, the proportion of children enrolled in pre-primary Early Childhood Care Centres still remains low at approximately 2.3 million children. This represents about 21 per cent of the population of children in this age group (UNICEF, 2004). UNICEF went further to explain another major issue in Nigeria's early childhood care and development, which is the poor state of the infrastructure, equipment, facilities and learning resources. Essential learning resources are lacking in most schools while the national curriculum is not yet widely operational. The caregivers of these centers are generally unqualified: about 85 per cent do not possess basic qualifications and more than half have no formal education (UNICEF, 2009a). Eijieh (2006) and Ajayi (2008) have identified some of the challenges to ECCE in Nigeria to include the following:

- The teacher factor: lack of trained teachers in ECCE, few universities offering training in ECCE, among others.
- The high pupil/teacher syndrome: The national policy on ECE stipulates 25:1 which is considered too high. In most countries, it is less than 15: 1

- Issue of minimum standard and lack of standard curriculum: The minimum standard is not being in use, while the curriculum keeps on changing therefore leading to each ECCE school with different curriculum.
- The use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in ECCE: Teachers ignore mother tongue as first language to be spoken to child, teachers favor the use of English as first language. This will become more difficult of a task to understand because they need to translate it before understanding it.
- Funding of ECCE programmes: Government easily designs a programme, but always found it difficult to put that programme in to practice because of lack of release of fund to manage such programme.
- Supervision of ECCE programmes in Nigeria: Since there is lack of funding, Supervisors will not be able to run cost of transportation to schools from their own pockets.

These challenges were further expressed and argued by Ofoma, Ibiam, Uzoegwu, and Igbokwe, (2009). Facilities are not tailored to children's need, especially in the semi-urban and rural areas. The private schools are better off with good quality materials and basic facilities. Programme content or curricula; the medium of instruction and learning in most ECCE schools is in English language. There is the constraint in dealing with the children from different socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds, ethnic groups and language. In addition, the teachers and care givers are mostly not qualified Early Childhood Care and Education specialists. Most are women and only one fourth of these women on the average undergo one year skill training at least. Another challenge to ECCE schools in Nigeria as described is the problem of accessibility of the school to the children. By the Minimum

Standard for ECCE operation in Nigeria, a walking distance of about 2km is recommended for ECCE schools which are not obtainable in most cases. Finally, Most ECCE schools do not organize periodic inspection of the children and facilities for treatment of common diseases are not available. Most children are poorly nourished or are malnourished. These are some of the challenges of ECCE schools in Nigeria. For effective implementation of ECCE/CFS programme, appraisal is hence necessary (Ofoma, *et al*, 2009).

Concept of Child-Friendly Status Schools

Child- friendly status was encouraged by UNICEF. The Technical Committee on the Child Friendly Schools Initiative (composed of stakeholders from institutions such as the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, and Islamic Education Trust) defined the child-friendly schools they were seeking to create as:

A place where the learning environment is conducive, the staffs are friendly to children, and the health and safety needs of the children are adequately met. Thus, the school, which is community based, takes cognizance of the rights of ALL children, irrespective of gender, religious and ethnic affiliation, physical and mental abilities/disabilities and other cultural dissimilarities.(UNICEF 2009a:9)

CFS is UNICEF's approach to promoting quality education in schools for all children – especially among the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations – both in everyday circumstances and in emergencies. Child-friendly educators focus on the needs of the whole child (which include his or her health, nutrition and overall well-being) and care about what happens to children in their families and communities before they enter school and after they leave (Orkadashvili, 2010). CFSs imply designing world class schools that inspire a love of learning and create a sense of harmony between the school, the surrounding community and the environment. CFSs also promote healthy, safe and protective environment for children's emotional, psychological and physical well-being,

both in primary and secondary schools, especially for girls. UNICEF envisions and promotes CFS models not as abstract concepts or a rigid blueprint but rather as “pathways towards quality” in education that reflect three key, and inter-related, principles derived from the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2009a) which are:

Child-centeredness: Central to all decision-making in education is safeguarding the interest of the child. Child-centered refers to pedagogy in which children are active participants, provided by reflective practitioners, healthy, safe and protective learning environment.

Democratic participation: As rights holders, children and those who facilitate their rights should have a say in the form and substance of their education. In addition, Children, families and communities are active participants in school decision-making. There is a strong links among home, school and community

Inclusiveness: All children have a right to an education. Access to education is not a privilege that society grants to children; it is a duty that society fulfills to all children.

UNICEF has developed a framework for rights-based, child-friendly educational systems and schools that are characterized as inclusive, healthy and protective for all children, effective with children, and involved with families and communities - and children. Child-friendly schools aim to develop a learning environment in which children are motivated and able to learn. Staff members are friendly and welcoming to children and attend to all their health and safety needs.

A child-friendly school is not just a child-welcoming school but also a child-seeking school. It works to attract and retain children from different backgrounds, respects diversity and ensures nondiscrimination (UNICEF, 2009b). Characteristics of child friendly schools as described by UNICEF (2009a) also adapted and defined specifically for the Nigerian socio-cultural context as follows:

- Reflects and realizes the rights of every child: ñ cooperates with other partners to promote and monitor the well ñ being and rights of all children; defend and protect all children from abuse and harm, both inside and outside the institution.
- Sees and understands the whole child, in a broad context: ñ is concerned with what happens to children before they enter the system (e.g. their readiness for school in terms of health and nutritional status, social and linguistic skills), and once they have left the classroom-back in their homes, the community, and the workplace.
- Is child centered:- encourage participation, creativity, self-esteem, self-confidence and psychosocial well-being; promotes a structured child-centered curriculum and teaching-learning methods that are appropriate for the child's developmental level, abilities and learning style; and considers the needs of children over the needs to the other actors in the system.
- Is gender sensitive and girl friendly:- promotes parity in the enrolment and achievement of girls and boys; reduces constraints to gender equity and eliminates gender stereotypes; provides facilities; curricular and learning processes are welcoming to girls.
- Promotes quality learning outcomes:- children to think critically, ask questions, express their opinions-and learn how to learn; helps children master the essential

enabling skills of writing, reading, speaking, listening, mathematics and general knowledge and skills required for living in the new century including useful traditional knowledge and the values of peace and democracy and the acceptance of diversity.

- Provides education based on the reality children's lives:- ensures that curriculum content responds to the learning needs of individual children as well as to the general objective of the education system and the local context and traditional knowledge of families and the community.
- Is flexible and responds to diversity:- meets differing circumstances and needs of children (e.g. Gender culture, social class or ability level).
- Acts to ensure inclusion, respect and equality of opportunity for all children:- does not stereotype, exclude or discriminate on the basis of difference.
- Promotes mental and physical health:- encourages healthy behaviour and practices and guarantees hygienic, safe, secure and joyful environment.
- Provides education that is affordable and accessible:- especially to children and families most at-risk.
- Enhances teacher capacity, morale, commitment and status:- ensures that its teachers have sufficient pre-service training, in-service support and professional development, status and income.
- Is family focused:-attempts to work with and strengthen the family and helps children, parents and teachers establish harmonious collaborative partnerships
- Is community-based:- strengthens school government, through a decentralized, community based approach; encourages parents, local government, community

organization and other institutions of civil society to participate in the management as well as the financing of education; promotes community partnerships and networks focused on the rights and well-being of the children.

- Promotes community cohesion (p 11)

In the previous study conducted five (5) out of fourteen (14) were used as pointed out earlier. In this present study five (5) out of the leftovers will be examined. They include:

- Responds to diversity and ensuring equal opportunity for all children
- Promotion of quality learning outcomes
- Provision of education that is affordable and accessible
- Enhancing teacher capacity
- Encouragement of community-based approach.

The above are parts of the characteristics of a right- based Child-Friendly Schools. It tends to promote a rights-based concept of quality that goes beyond good teaching methods and learning outcomes to include health, safety and adequacy of schools facilities and supplies, seeks to create schools that reflect and realize the rights of every child; implements student-centered pedagogy; were gender sensitive; promotes students' mental and physical health; promotes quality learning outcomes for all children; enhances teacher capacity, morale and commitment; and provides education that includes families and promotes community cohesion.

Concept of Appraisal

Appraisal is a clear, brief, regular and unbiased process of rating a system's performance in its current position. This entails a planned, logical process that determines structures or organizational decision learning process (Kidwai2010). Performance appraisal is a method of evaluating the behaviour of employees in the work spot, normally including both quantitative and qualitative aspects of job performance. It is a systematic and objective way of evaluating both work related behaviour and potentials of employees. To appraise means the act or process of developing an opinion of value (Babcock, 2011). It may be said that value is the present worth of all rights to future benefits, arising out of property ownership, to typical users or investors. An appraisal report is usually a written statement of the appraiser's opinion of the value of an adequately described property for a specified period. It is a conclusion which results from the process of research and analysis of factual and relevant data (Muchinsky, 2012).

In this study, Early Childhood and Care Education/Child-Friendly Schools will be appraised. This will involve developing an opinion of value. It also involves the method of evaluating the behaviour of children and teachers in the work spot, normally including both quantitative and qualitative aspects of school performance based on the UNICEF's child friendly status characteristics.

Theoretical Framework

The theories under review will be appropriate for application if the objectives of CFS are to be achieved in children of ECCE/CFS schools of Niger state.

- Socio-cultural cognitive theory by Vygotsky (1869-1934)
- Social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura (1925-1977)

Socio-cultural Theory by Lev Semonovich Vygotsky (1896-1934)

The socio-cultural theory emphasizes how culture and social interaction guides cognitive development. Vygotsky depicted the child's development as inseparable from social and cultural activities. He believed that attention, memory and reasoning involve learning to use the invention of the society, such as language, mathematical system and memory strategies. In one culture, this might consist of learning to count with the help of a computer, while it might consist of counting with one's fingers or using beads, in another. Vygotsky's theory has inspired substantial awareness in the view that knowledge is *collaborative*. In this view knowledge is rather constructed through interaction with other people and objects in the culture but not generated within the individual.

Vygotsky articulated a unique and influential idea about cognitive development, which he termed zone of proximal development (ZPD): This is the level at which the child finds task too difficult to complete alone, but which with the assistance and support of an adult or an older peer, the child can accomplish. The ZPD captures the child's cognitive skills that are in the process of maturing and can be proficient only with the assistance of a more-skilled person. Vygotsky (1962) called these the *óbudsô* or *óflowersô* of development which is different from the *ófruitô* of development which the child already can accomplish independently. Clearly linked to the idea of ZPD is the concept of Scaffolding. This means changing the level of support. Over the course of a teaching session, a more-skilled person adjusts to the amount of guidance to fit the child's present performance level.

For Vygotsky, children construct knowledge through social interaction with others. Vygotsky implies that children need many opportunities to learn with the teacher and more skilled peer. Vygotsky's ideas have acquired new relevance in Early Childhood Education. The focus of finding the ZPD for each child has validated the long-held concern with

individualization of Early Childhood programmes. Vygostky's theory also suggests that, in addition to providing a stimulating environment in which young children are active explorers and participants, early childhood educators need to promote innovation by modeling, explaining and providing suggestions to suit each child's ZPD.

In this study, the community, parents, school environment, including the teachers; experienced teachers that are well trained, peers and physical structures including classroom settings and facilities, determine the child's ability to learn and comprehend. CFS is a socio-cultural environment that contributes to shaping the whole child's development. This study will be distinctive to the theory because CFS is focused on shaping children's knowledge through social interaction with others and also imply that children need many opportunities to learn with the teacher and more skilled peer. This calls for the need to appraise ECCE/CFS schools in Niger state to ascertain the extent to which socio-cultural environment is embedded also, as part of characteristics of CFS.

Social Cognitive theory by Albert Bandura (1925-1977)

Albert Bandura, one of the chief architects of social learning theory, stressed the potent influence of modeling on personality development. He called this observational learning, and proposed that modeling process involves several steps: *Attention*: for individual learning to take place, attention must be given to the features of a represented behaviour. *Retention*: the skill used in remembering information of behaviour for learning and replicate the behaviour. *Motivation*: this is a dynamic strength in the individual's imitation of behaviour.

In a famous statement on social (cognitive) learning theory, Bandura cited evidence to show that observational learning is the information gotten from observing other people, things, and events which manipulates the way we act. Bandura's (2002) most recent representation emphasized on behaviour, environment and cognition are the key factors in development. A child's assurance that he/she can manage success is an example of person factor, while thinking is a cognitive factor. Behaviour, person, cognitive and environmental factors operate interactively. Behaviour can influence person factor and otherwise. The person's cognitive activities can influence environment, the environment can also change the person's cognition and so on. In a society, children are bounded by many influential models like parents, siblings, teachers, and peers among others. These models provide them with different examples of behaviour that will be observed and imitated by the children. For example, a young boy might observe his father's hostile explosion and burst in a hostile interchanges with people; when observed with his peers, the child's style of interaction is highly aggressive, showing the same characteristics with his father. Social cognitive theorist believed that children acquire a wide range of behaviours, thoughts, and feelings through observing others' behaviour and that these observations form an important part of their development.

This theory is an aspect of CFS and hence important for the study because, it tends to prepare the teachers on regulating and modeling good behaviour to the children. Children learn through observation and imitation, thus this shape their thoughts, and feelings hence preparing the child for future education and contributing to the child's development. As the child retains what has been observed around his immediate environment.

These theories are classical to this study because they all relate the development of a child through the environment (family, school including teachers) and the socio-cultural setting of the community. Thus, this study is hinged upon the above theories.

Related Empirical Studies

This section attempts a review of conducted empirical studies that are related to this study.

Studies on Early Childhood Care and Education

In a study conducted by Ibiam (2011) on the ignored areas militating against the effective actualization of the goals of early childhood in Abia and Ebonyi States of Nigeria, a descriptive survey research was used. A structured questionnaire was developed based on the purpose of the study. This sought a representative view of permanent secretaries, directors of education, UNICEF desk officers and teachers in the ECCE schools in the two states that gave rise to a total of 278 respondents in the study. The instrument was validated by specialist in Early Childhood Education and a specialist in curriculum studies. For data analysis, mean and standard deviation were used. The result showed that lack of child friendly environmental factors like secured premises and physical facility were part of the many ignored areas militating against the actualization of objectives in ECCE. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the government must ensure a minimum standard in pre-primary schools among others. This study focused on ECCE as a whole, parents were not part of the respondents and the study was keen in highlighting this tailback. The present study therefore concentrated on only ECCE schools that are accorded CFS; parents will also be used as part of the respondents.

In another study conducted by Osakwe (2009) on the effects of early childhood education experience on the academic performance of primary school children in Delta state. A total of 1250 pupils form the population. Simple random sampling was used to select primary 4 and 6 with the total number of 325 respondents. The research instrument used was the school continuous assessment records. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested using z-test statistics, at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that there is a significant difference between pupils who had pre-primary education and those without it in their academic performances ñ cognitive ability, social skills and motor skills. Based on the findings, the study recommends that early childhood education should be encouraged by the government by providing pre-primary educational facilities (classrooms, instructional materials etc.) needed for the success of the programme and proper enlightenment campaign among others. The study is related to this present study, because it deals with ECCE pupils' development. It is therefore necessary to carry out this present study in order to find out how the Niger State ECCE/CFS provide educational facilities (classrooms, instructional materials, etc.) for pre-primary schools needed for the success of the programme as pointed out by Osakwe that children with early childhood education experience do better in cognitive, social and motor ability, during Primary education.

Obiweluzo (2012) carried out a descriptive study on teachers' understanding of the characteristics of young children for a sustainable development at Nsukka town in Enugu State, Nigeria. A total number of seventy-one (71) teachers were randomly sampled. Thirty three item questionnaires titled Assessment Needs of Pre-Primary School Children Questionnaire (ANOPSCQ) were used. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed that it is important to study the

characteristics of young children. Constraints to understanding the characteristics of young children and problems emanating from lack of understanding these characteristics, among others were found to be the major problems in ECCE. Based on the result, it was recommended that teachers, including parents should embark on a meticulous study of children in order to understand the characteristics of young children for sustainable development. This present study thus brought to light how these components influence ECCE/CFS in Niger State.

Ekanem, Essien and Ekanem (2011), explored play facilities as child centered instructional aid and socio-motor skill development of pre-primary and primary school pupils in Akwa-Ibom State. The research design was survey design while the population consisted of teachers of nursery two and primary one in 324 public and 185 private schools of which 660 teachers were selected for the study. The researchers prepared a 30 item questionnaire in a 4-point Likert scale response format. The reliability of the instrument was 0.82. Pearson Product Moment correlation was used in analyzing the data on relationship between play facilities and pupils' development of socio-motor skills. The study recommended that schools should employ play facilities and provides space for effective teaching and learning. The study concluded that play is important in pupils' development but no public school employs the use of play facilities in teaching and learning while the private schools that utilize play facilities lack space. The study is related to this study because pre- primary schools were used. It will differ to the present study because only public pre-primary schools will be used without the private pre-primary schools. It also provided insight to the present study as the same process of how to collect data from the respondents used. It also verified consequently how far ECCE/CFS in Niger

State put into action measures in providing these play facilities that harmonize child centered approach of teaching and learning.

Foluso, (2012) carried out another study on the effect of early impact programme on the child competencies in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study, an experimental one, aimed at augmenting the effect of challenging behaviour on children and families using the Early Impact (EI) programme; an intervention framework that can be utilized by early childhood professionals. 40 pre-school children aged 4-6 years were drawn from 5 pre-schools in Ado-Ekiti town, Nigeria. Parental consent to participate in the programme was sought. Children considered being at great risk for the development of behaviour difficulty was sought. The school components of the EI programme consist of a classroom curriculum which was administered by teachersö aid. The EI curriculum consists of 10 session of 15 to 30 minutes duration. Teachers involved in the evaluation completed the teachersö version of the strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) at base line post intervention and at six months follow up. At post intervention the findings drawn from the teachers response derived from the SDQ questionnaire revealed a significant reduction in the challenging behaviour in children in the experimental group in comparison to children assigned to control condition. The school components of the early impact highlight how intervention can assist children who are more susceptible to development of challenging behaviour. Future research in the design and implementation of early intervention and prevention were recommended as a means of future practices in the science of prevention of serious challenging behaviour among children. All these studies prop up the need for this present study on the appraisal of ECCE/CFS in Niger State.

Studies on Child Friendly Schools

Ismaila (2013) conducted a study on ECCE Child Friendly schools. The study was conducted to make certain the extent to which the status of ECCE is Child Friendly in Gombe State since its inception in 2000, being one of the states in the Federal Republic of Nigeria where Child-Friendly Schools Initiative (CFSI) was introduced. The study was based on five research questions and five null hypotheses while the study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of 132 ECE/CFS teachers in all the eleven (11) Local Governments of the State. Child Friendly Schools Appraisal Questionnaire (CFSAQ) was designed by the researcher and was validated by three experts while a trial test was conducted outside the study area using Cronbach's Alpha method of reliability to establish internal consistency of the instrument. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and t-test. The findings of this study showed that child-centered learning is to a low extent encouraged by teachers in urban and rural schools, protects the rights of the child, ensure availability of physical facilities, encourage gender equity and adopt inclusive practices in ECCE/CFS in Gombe State. The study therefore recommended among others that the government should venture to provide teachers with training, guidance and professional support to enable them adopt those child friendly practices as recommended by UNICEF. CFS is a constituent of ECCE schools in Niger State; this study will therefore determine what extent they are implemented through appraisal. Therefore, the study is related to the present study because it is concerned with the whole child. It differs from this present study because it only concentrated on specific characteristics while this study handled the untouched characteristic.

Okoye (2012) evaluated the United Nations Children's Education Fund Child Friendly School initiative programme in Enugu State. The study was guided by five research questions and two hypotheses. The hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. Some literatures related to the study were reviewed. Evaluative design was used in carrying out this study. The six UNICEF designated child friendly primary schools across the state formed the population of the study. Quota sampling was used to choose 10 teachers and 10 parents from each of the six primary schools. Purposive sampling was also used to sample 10 SUBEB staff that are directly involved in primary education (N=130). Two questionnaires, a checklist and a Common Entrance *pro forma* were used to collect data to answer the research questions formulated to guide the study. These were: CFS Programme Objectives Extent of Achievement Questionnaire (CFSPOEQAQ); CFS Input Facility Checklist (CFSIFC); Utilization of Student Centered-Pedagogies Questionnaire (USCPQ) and the National Common Entrance Examination Achievement Scores Pro forma (NCEEASP). For the two questionnaires, the Cronbach's Alpha method was used to establish their internal consistency. Using SPSS version 16.0, a coefficient value of .897 was obtained. Data were arranged and analyzed according to the research questions and the formulated hypotheses. Data collected with CFSPOEQAQ and USCPQ were analyzed using means and standard deviation scores. CFSIFC was interpreted with reference to the minimum standard in primary education. In this study however, inputs facility's child friendly status was a major concern. Thus, to accommodate the ideals of CFS environment in primary education on input facilities, the study probed further into their adequacy and optimality. Hence, for these input facilities, their availability in schools is necessary but not a sufficient condition to justify their child friendliness. This then formed the basis for

judging its appropriateness to children's needs, use and extent of implementation. Means and percentage of pass was used to interpret NCEEASP. ANOVA was used to test the two formulated hypotheses. The findings of the study showed that the UNICEF designated child friendly schools in Enugu state have made substantial effort to realize the CFS objectives; most basic facilities in the UNICEF designated child friendly school are inadequate with respect to their child friendly status; there is no evidence of UNICEF presence in the schools; schools very often utilize child friendly pedagogies and the learning achievement of pupils in the UNICEF designated child friendly schools are on average while the percentage of pass is high. The educational implications of the findings of the study were discussed. Recommendations were made and suggestions for further research were highlighted.

Deizigha (2013) compared the quality of basic education parameters in UBE public primary schools and UNICEF Child Friendly Schools in Bayelsa State. The study was guided by four research questions and four hypotheses. Some literature related to the study was reviewed. Casual-comparative research design was adopted to collect data in order to compare and describe in a systematic manner the UBE and UNICEF schools in the areas of child-centeredness, democratic participation, inclusiveness and achievement in the study area. The population of the study consists of all the 3251 serving teachers and 2028 pupils in the 657 public primary schools in Bayelsa State who took the National Common Entrance Examination between 2011 and 2013. The sample of the study consisted of 144 teachers and 216 pupils in 12 primary schools across the state. Structured questionnaire and pro forma were used to collect data to answer the research questions and hypothesis formulated to guide the study. These instruments were validated by three experts. Data

were arranged and analyzed according to the research questions using means scores, standard deviation and percentage of pass while the t-test was tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The major findings of the study were that: UNICEF schools are often child-centeredness than UBE schools; UNICEF schools accommodate community participation in resources and management than UBE schools; With respect to inclusiveness, both schools are very often gender sensitive; Pupils in UNICEF schools relatively have higher achievement ratio than those in UBE schools and; There was no significant difference in the mean child-centeredness, democratic participation, inclusiveness and achievement of UBE and UNICEF schools. Based on these findings, the conclusion is that the UNICEF model of intervention has relatively improved basic education than the UBE programme. Hence, the major educational implication of the findings of the study is that there should be greater effort by stakeholders to create such stimulating milieu to motivate children to discover new skills and knowledge. The researcher therefore recommended that quality assurance be demonstrated through capacity building and monitoring by the Government and UNICEF. The major limitation of this study is inherent in the design of the study. Thus, the researcher suggested that other research designs and checklist be used to verify the variables of interest in this study.

A study was also conducted by UNICEF (2010) on programme evaluation of the Getting Ready for School: A Child-to-Child Approach. This programme is consistent with the ECCE objective of effecting a smooth transition of the child from the home to school. This programme is implemented in pilot schools in Bangladesh, China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Tajikistan and Yemen. However, the programme model is unique in its child-to-child approach whereby older children (Young Facilitators) worked

with younger peers to increase their academic and non-academic school readiness skills. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the programme increased children's successful transitions into primary schools, and achieved secondary goals the sixth. The evaluation included direct assessments of children's acquisition of academic and non-academic school readiness skills, interviews with caregivers, surveys conducted with Young Facilitators and with teachers, and interviews with school heads and community leaders. Teachers implementing the programme also kept session notes regarding children's attendance and how well the programme materials worked, such as increased family support for children's education. The evaluation methodology consisted of randomized controlled trials in five of the countries, and a matched-subjects design in the sixth. The evaluation included direct assessments of children's acquisition of academic and non-academic school readiness skills, interviews with caregivers, survey conducted with young facilitators and teachers, and interviews with school heads and community leaders. Teachers implementing the programmes also kept session notes regarding children's attendance and how well the programme materials worked.

Across all six countries, the evaluation exercise reported that there is a high degree of interest in and enthusiasm for the Getting Ready for School programme within communities where it was introduced, and programme attendance was very high. This programme evaluation thus concluded that there were at least some significant programme impacts on children's school readiness in all six countries. Based on the findings, it was recommended that countries should follow through on current plans to make early childhood programme interesting and child centered so as to effect a smooth transmission from home to school. It could be observed that these recommendations to actualize the objectives of the Getting Ready for School: a Child-to-

Child Approach as acceptable by the findings is reliable with the NPE objectives on ECCE. Thus, this present study is relevant to empirically find out the extent these measures are being implemented to actualizing the goals of ECCE/CFS Schools in Niger State. It is distinctive in the sense that the study was carried out in countries other than Nigeria, this present study was carried out in Nigeria.

In another dimension, UNICEF conducted a global evaluation of her Child Friendly School (CFS) programme in 2009 (UNICEF, 2009b). The evaluation was expected to serve as a baseline assessment, examining the effectiveness of UNICEF's CFS programming efforts in the areas of inclusiveness, pedagogy, architecture and services, participation and governance, and systemic management. Nigeria was selected as one of six countries for this global evaluation. A specific purpose of this report is to present an evaluation of the effectiveness of UNICEF CFS intervention efforts in Nigeria. As part of the data collection effort for the CFS global evaluation, the evaluators visited a total of 23 schools in the Federal Capital Territory, Ebonyi and Niger States that had received support under the CFS initiative. Hence the evaluation administered survey items to teachers, students and school heads, observed the school grounds and buildings, and conducted interviews with focus groups, school heads, teachers, families and other key stakeholders. The study found out that most schools have made an effort to reach out to register all students, including students with disabilities, and there seemed to be a positive attitude towards the provision of education for all. And most teachers and students reported that the school leadership made decisions in the best interest of students. Although few classrooms provided an attractive and well-furnished environment for students, most were able to provide students with adequate seating, work space, lighting, ventilation and protection from the elements. This study thus concluded that Nigeria has made substantial progress towards the

provision of schools that are child friendly, although, there are still some significant areas of concern that have long-term impact on children's outcomes. UNICEF carried out this study as a body not as an individual and it was carried out for their own interest. It is necessary to carry out a similar study independently to find out how the state's ECCE move toward being child friendly.

Enueme and Oju (2005) carried out a study to determine the impact of CFSI on pupils' performance. The area of study was Delta State. It was a causal comparative research design. 18 head teachers, 96 primary school teachers and 108 pupils were selected using a multistage stratified sampling technique. A checklist adapted from Basic Education Programme in Nigeria, structured questions was used by UNICEF and the Federal Ministry of Education and a structured questionnaire on the Impact of Child-friendly Schools designed by the researcher were used for data collection. Seven research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The results of the study showed that CFS are better than non-CFS in school facilities, teachers' qualifications, children's performance, family/community involvement, curriculum delivery, and pupils' enrolment. Significance difference was observed in pupils' performance in support of the CFS. In the present study, questionnaire was used to collect data as in the reported study.

Studies on the Influence of School Location

In a study conducted by Akiri and Ugburugbo (2009) determined the influence of location on teachers' classroom effectiveness in comparison with students' academic performance in pre-primary schools in Delta State. It was a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was pre-primary school teachers. Academic performance records of 50 students per teacher were analyzed. Also a questionnaire and a rating scale were used in data

collection. Cronbach alpha value of 0.98 and 0.79 respectively were obtained from the two questionnaires. Four hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that effective teachers produced better performing students. The differences in student's performance were statistically not significant. This study is relevant to the present study because of the influence of location on teacher's adoption of plan on CFS.

Temple (2009) conducted a study on Rural Gaps in participation in Early Childhood Education in U.S.A. Even as state governments' spending on early education has grown in recent years, accessibility of pre-school programmes for rural children remains a problem. The findings further revealed that rural children are less likely to participate in pre-school. The study concludes by discussing the appropriate role of local State or Federal Government in funding rural pre-school programme. In the present study, the influence of school location on the achievement of the CFS plan was examined.

Another study conducted in Colorado by Coon, Carey, Fulker, and Defries (1993) on the influences of school environment on the academic achievement scores of adopted and non-adopted children shows that the association between academic achievement and characteristics of the school environment can result from direct environmental influences of the school, or from placement of children into particular school environments based on prior ability. To disentangle these potential influences underlying school effects on children, data was analyzed from parents and first-grade adopted and non-adopted children in the Colorado Adoption Project. Estimate of internal Consistency of the factors were computed using Cronbach's (1951) alpha coefficients on the set of items which loaded on each factor. Items were standardized for unit weighting. Alpha coefficients were as follows: .90 for Private versus Public; .62 for Traditional; .68 for Discipline; and .26 for Order included attending a private versus a public school, a variable aggregated at the

school level, and several variables aggregated at the classroom level. If such aggregated measures are associated with many inter correlated individual aspects of school environment, each having a small effect on achievement, the process of aggregation may offer additional power to detect these small individual environment effects. Several of these aggregate variables, in addition to measures of children's attitudes about school, showed direct environmental associations with reading and math achievement independent of effects of parental IQ. This is similar to this study, because parent and environment, are part of the characteristics that were examined.

In another study conducted by Mtakabwa and Rao (2009) conducted a study which examined the relationship between pre-primary educational policy and actual practice in Tanzania. Policies relevant to pre-primary education was analyzed and 15-pre-primary lessons from two urban and two rural schools were videotaped. Although the national educational policy specified the same standard for pre-primary education regardless of location, there were considerable differences across schools. Compared to urban classes, rural ones had considerable less space, large group sizes, less favorable teacher-pupil ratio, fewer instructional resources and less qualified teachers. Teacher professional qualifications appeared to influence the quality of classroom interactions more than the physical setting and resources.

Summary of Review of Literature

The review of literature was basically on documentary source like published and unpublished thesis and dissertations, journal and articles, internet sources and interviews, published books, and UNICEF documents. Conceptual framework, theoretical framework and related empirical studies made up the literature review. In the conceptual review, the concept of a

child, childhood period, early childhood care and education, environment, child- friendly schools and appraisal were highlighted. A child is regarded as a person from the age of zero to five. Early Childhood refers to the period of pre-school years which occurs between three to five years. In addition, Early Childhood care and Education refers to the education given in an educational institution to children aged zero to five years prior to their entry into formal primary school. It includes the crèche, nursery and the kindergarten. Furthermore, conceptually reviewed are child friendly schools where children have the right to learn to their fullest potential within a safe and welcoming environment. It was observed that the initiative to make ECCE school environment child-friendly has been adopted by Nigeria since the year 2000. Some of the challenges facing ECCE achieving its goals were also identified to comprise inadequate funding, unqualified teachers, poor provision and maintenance of facilities among others.

The theoretical framework adopted two theories to support the study. They include socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky, who portrayed the child's development as inseparable from social and cultural activities. Hence, these socio-cultural activities such as the school environment consisting of object and physical stimulating facilities will enhance their development. Social learning of Albert Bandura's theory was also discussed stressing the potent influence of modeling on personality development, he emphasized on behaviours are modeled through imitation. In other words, children develop their cognition through modeling their parents, teachers, among others.

Related empirical review outlined the findings of some studies on childhood education both nationally and internationally. Many empirical studies centered on early childhood education focused principally on the limitation of the programme to the physical settings which include school facilities, environment, family and teachers influence as it relates to total

development of a child. The influence of location and teachers on classroom effectiveness in line with the achievement in pre-primary schools, were also discussed among other studies. However, no existing formal study was found to have been carried out to determine the extent of implementation of CFS programme in ECCE schools in Niger State. The study therefore attempts to remedy information relating to the extent to which CFS is implemented in ECCE schools in Niger State. Most studies reviewed concentrated on certain aspect in ECCE based on the minimum standard and national policy. Therefore, gap in knowledge exist which makes this present study relevant and appropriate in Niger state, emphasizing, on CFS in ECCE schools.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter describes the procedures that were adopted in carrying out this study. It specifically outlines the research method under the following headings: design of the study, area of the study, population of the study, sample and sampling techniques, instrument for data collection, validation of instrument, reliability of instrument, method of data collection and method of data analysis.

Design of the Study

Descriptive survey design was used for this study. Descriptive survey design is concerned with describing certain variables of interest in relation to the population. Ali (2006) noted that descriptive survey research design uses sample data in an appraisal to document, describe and explain what is in existence or present the status of existence of the phenomenon under investigation. This research design was chosen for this study because according to Nworgu (2006), it aims at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. The descriptive survey research design is therefore appropriate for this study since it permitted the description of the conditions of variables of interest as they exist in their natural setting. Hence, the researcher collected data from the responses of teachers and parents to appraise and describe in a systematic manner the status of ECCE in Niger State based on the UNICEF characteristics for CFS.

Area of the Study

The study was carried out in Niger State. Niger State is one of the seven states in North-central geopolitical zone of Nigeria with 25 Local Government Areas (LGAs). The state is bordered to the North by Zamfara State, West by Kebbi State, South by Kogi State, South-west by Kwara State, North-east by Kaduna State and South-East by FCT. The state also has an international boundary with the Republic of Benin along Agwara and Borgu LGAs to the North-west. The majority of the indigenes in the state (85%) are farmers, while others, constituting (15%), are involved in vocations such as white-collar jobs, business, craft and arts. The people of Niger State are predominantly Muslims and Christians with very few Traditional Religionists. Although there are three major ethnic groups (i.e. Nupe, Gbagyi, and Hausa), the state is multi-ethnic with the ethnic groups having diverse customs, beliefs and culture (Bureau of Statistics, Niger State Planning Commission, 2013).

Niger State was chosen for this study because the State has the highest number of CFS but there was no existing independent research study in the area of appraisal of their child friendly status at the ECCE level. Furthermore, Niger State has long been considered as one of the educationally disadvantaged States in the Federation. Findings from an appraisal of the child friendly status of her ECCE will give insight on thus far effort has been made to develop the basic education sector.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all the 272 teachers in the 34 UNICEF-designated child friendly schools in Niger State. Records from the Office of Planning, Research and Statistics of Niger State Universal Basic Education Board (NISUBEB), indicated that these 34ECCE/CFSs are located across 9 Local Government Areas (12 urban

and 22 rural). The population also included all the 5440 parents of pupils in these UNICEF designated Child Friendly school. These UNICEF designated Child Friendly schools were suitable for this study because they have incorporated early childhood education programme as stipulated in the UBE Act 2004 (FRN, 2004). (See Appendix: A)

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for this study was 340 respondents. This consisted of 272 teachers and 68 parents of ECCE pupils. All the 272 teachers in the 34 UNICEF-designated child friendly schools in Niger State were used without sampling because the population was manageable. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 2 parents from each of the selected 34 UNICEF-designated child friendly schools. In using simple random sampling, all parents in the UNICEF/CFSs stood equal chance to be sampled for the study without bias. (See Appendix: A)

Instrument for Data Collection

To answer the research questions formulated to guide this study, structured questionnaire was used for data collection. This instrument was titled CFS Appraisal Questionnaire (CFSAQ). It was a rating scale adapted from the UNICEF proposed objectives on Early Childhood/Pre-primary education as contained in the CFS manual. This provided a primary baseline data on the status of the UNICEF designated schools. Reviewed literature and personal interactions with the UNICEF desk Officer gave the researcher insight on the nature of the UNICEF proposed objectives for ECCE programme. Consequent on this insight, these instruments were clustered in line with the five variables of interest of this study. These were in the areas of diversity, quality learning outcomes,

educational affordability and accessibility, teacher capacity and community-based participation.

The instrument has two sections (A and B). Section A was demographic while section B contained 45 items distributed into five clusters (A-E); one for each research question. Cluster A, consisted of items which sought to elicit data on the extent to which ECCE in Niger State responds to diversity to ensure equal opportunities for all children. Cluster B, was used to appraise the status of ECCE in creating environment that promotes quality learning outcomes. While Cluster C, was to ascertain the accessibility of the ECCE schools in the implementation of CFS objectives. On the other hand, items in Cluster D, appraised the various efforts employed to enhance teacher capacity at the ECCE level and Cluster E was used to ascertain the extent to which ECCE in the state is community-based. The options of the scale ranges from Very Great Extent (VGE) = 4 point, Great Extent (GE) = 3 point, Very Low Extent (VLE) = 2 point, Low Extent (LE) = 1 point (See Appendix: B).

Validation of the Instrument

To ascertain the validity of the CFSAQ, it was given to three experts: two in Early Childhood Education unit and one in Sociology unit, all in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The Validates were requested to examine the instrument to ensure that their items relate to the purpose of the study, research questions and the formulated hypotheses. They also made observations for modifications of the items where necessary. When the instrument was collected back by the researcher, their assessment and input immensely contributed in making it more adaptive to the purpose of the study. Their input also helped in making the instrument unambiguous and unbiased. Thus, after a critical scrutiny of the

validated instrument, their comments and corrections helped in the modification and final development of the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure the reliability of the CFSAQ, a trial test was conducted outside the study area. Twenty respondents including teachers and some parents in some primary schools from Nsukka Local Government Area were used. The Cronbach Alpha method of reliability was used to establish the internal consistency of the instrument. Using the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient method, the following internal reliability estimates were obtained: cluster A= 0.906, Cluster B= 0.957, Cluster C= 0.899, Cluster D= 0.805 and Cluster E = 0.862. The overall internal reliability estimate obtained was 0.886. These coefficient values were considered satisfactory to attest to the reliability of the instrument. This method was used because it measures the internal consistency of the items and allowed the instrument to be administered once on the respondents. (See Appendix C).

Method of Data Collection

Data was collected using the validated CFSAQ. The researcher undertook personal visits to the selected UNICEF CFS schools for data collection. This data collection was however done with the help of 2 research assistants who administer the instrument to the sampled respondents, through direct delivery and retrieval. These research assistants were trained on how to handle the instruments carefully. Meanwhile, permission from the SUBEB and Head-Teachers of the selected schools were sought before administering the questionnaires.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected for this study was arranged and analyzed according to the research questions and the formulated hypotheses. Mean ($\bar{x}$) scores and Standard Deviation (SD) was used in answering the research questions while t-test was used to test the formulated null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Mean scores of respondents on adoption of the CFS characteristics in the schools was interpreted using decision criterion of 2.50 and above; any score from 2.50 or above was considered positive response while scores below 2.05 was regarded as negative response. Also, real limits of numbers were also used to interpret the responses of both teacher and parents as follows: 0 ñ 1.49 (Very low extent) 1.50 - 2.49 (Low extent) 2.50 - 3.49 (Great extent) and 3.50 ñ 4.00 (Very great extent)

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in this chapter. The results are presented in line with the research questions and hypotheses which guided the study.

Research Question 1: To what extent does ECCE Schools in Niger State show diversity to ensure equal opportunities for all children?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviations of parents and teachers on the extent ECCE Schools in Niger State show diversity to ensure equal opportunities for all children

S/N	The school	Mean	SD	Decision
1	meets differing circumstances of children	2.84	0.71	GE
2	meets differing needs of children	2.31	0.86	LE
3	do not stereotype with respect to gender	3.72	0.68	VGE
4	do not stereotype with respect to culture	2.65	0.88	GE
5	do not stereotype with respect to social status	3.44	0.82	GE
6	do not stereotype with respect to ability	3.27	0.96	GE
7	do not discriminate in terms of disability	2.91	0.80	GE
8	do not discriminate in terms of religion	3.01	0.88	GE
9	do not discriminate in terms of ethnicity	2.67	0.83	GE
10	do not label	3.28	0.91	GE
11	protect minority	2.84	0.88	GE
12	runs a flexible curriculum	2.37	0.86	LE
Cluster Mean		33.15	18.11	

Key: VGE = Very Great Extent; GE = Great Extent; LE = Low Extent; VLE = Very Low Extent

Table 1 explains the opinion of parents and teachers on the extent the schools ensure equal opportunities for all children. All the items with the exception of items 2 and 12 were rated low extent with the mean of 2.31 and 2.37 respectively. This means that both parents and teachers maintained that to a low extent, Niger State ECCE/CFS schools show diversity to ensure equal opportunities for all children. On the other hand, item 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 were rated great extent with the mean of 2.84, 2.65, 3.44, 3.27, 2.91, 3.01, 2.67, 3.28 and 2.84 correspondingly. This indicates that the respondents to a great extent upheld that Niger State ECCE/CFS schools show diversity to ensure equal opportunities for all children. The overall mean for the respondents show a cluster mean of 33.15. This indicates a decision level of great extent which has been rated above the agreed criterion mean of 2.50. Therefore the table shows that to a great extent, parents and teachers in Niger State ECCE/CFS schools ensures equal opportunities for all children.

Research Question 2: To what extent do Niger State ECCE Schools create environment that promotes quality learning outcomes?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviations of parents and teachers on the extent ECCE Schools in Niger State create environment that promotes quality learning outcomes

S/N	The school	Mean	SD	Decision
13	encourages children to think critically	3.02	0.80	GE
14	encourages children to ask questions	2.85	0.88	GE
15	encourages children to express their opinions	2.63	0.97	GE
16	encourages children to participate in class work	2.88	0.02	GE
17	help children learn how to learn	2.53	0.99	GE
18	helps children master the essential enabling	2.75	0.85	GE

	skills of writing			
19	helps children master the essential enabling skills of reading	3.28	0.94	GE
20	helps children master the essential enabling skills of speaking	3.63	0.86	VGE
21	helps children master the essential enabling skills of mathematics	2.82	0.83	GE
22	helps children master the essential enabling skills of general knowledge	2.72	0.87	GE
23	helps children master the essential enabling skills required for living in the new century including useful traditional knowledge and the values of peace and democracy	3.05	0.83	GE
Cluster Mean		33.15	18.11	

Key: VGE = Very Great Extent; GE = Great Extent; LE = Low Extent; VLE = Very Low Extent

Table 2 indicates the response of parents and teachers on the extent the ECCE schools create environment that promote quality learning outcomes for pupils. All the items excluding item 20 was rated very great with the mean of 3.63. This deduced that both parents and teachers in Niger State ECCE schools to a great extent create environment that promote quality learning outcomes for pupils. On the other hand item 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22 and 23 were ranked great extent with the mean of 3.02, 2.85, 2.63, 2.88, 2.53, 2.75, 3.28, 2.82, 2.72 and 3.05 respectively. This denotes that the respondents maintained that Niger State ECCE Schools create environment that promotes quality learning outcomes to a great extent. The overall mean for all the respondents show a cluster mean of 2.92. This indicates a decision level of great extent. Therefore the tables confirms that both parent and teachers in Niger State ECCE Schools create environment that promotes quality learning outcomes

Research Question 3: To what extent are Niger State ECCE Schools accessible?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviations of parents and teachers on the extent ECCE Schools in Niger State are accessible

S/N	The school:	Mean	SD	Decision
24	welcomes children with special needs	3.03	0.83	GE
25	ensures that cost of uniform is affordable	2.91	0.94	GE
26	supplies do not keep children from the poorest families from gaining an education	2.74	0.74	GE
27	official enrolment fee is affordable	3.66	0.81	VGE
28	school fees are affordable	2.83	0.80	GE
29	do not encourage pupils to miss school to work or to assist at home	3.13	0.77	GE
30	promote easy transmission from one class to another	3.03	0.82	GE
	Cluster mean	3.05	0.81	

Key: VGE = Very Great Extent; GE = Great Extent; LE = Low Extent; VLE = Very Low Extent

Table 3 shows the responses of parents and teachers on the extent the schools are accessible to all children. All items excluding item 27 were rated very great with the mean of 3.66. This shows that to a very great extent both parents and teachers agreed that the schools are accessible and affordable to all children. On the other hand item 24, 25, 26, 28, 29 and 30 were rated great extent with the mean of 3.03, 2.91, 2.74, 2.83, 3.13 and 3.03 respectively. This implies that the respondents maintained that Niger State ECCE Schools are accessible. The overall mean for all the respondents show a cluster mean of 3.05. This shows a decision level of great extent which has been rated above the agreed criterion mean of 2.50. Therefore, the table indicates that Niger State ECCE Schools are accessible.

Research Question 4: To what extent does Niger State enhance teachers' capacity in ECCE?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviations of parents and teachers on the extent Niger State enhance teachers' capacity

S/N	Our school	Mean	SD	Decision
31	enhances teachers' morale	2.81	0.80	GE
32	enhances teachers' commitment through remuneration	2.05	0.81	LE
33	enhances teachers' commitment through improved working environment	2.42	0.76	LE
34	enhances teachers' commitment through improved status	2.03	0.86	LE
35	enhances teachers' quality through pre-service training	2.87	0.93	GE
36	enhances teachers' quality through in-service training	3.14	0.84	GE
37	enhances teachers' quality through professional development	3.03	0.93	GE
38	involves teachers in school management	2.56	0.92	GE
39	involves the teachers in major decision making of the school	2.96	0.93	GE
	Cluster Mean	2.72	0.82	

Key: VGE = Very Great Extent; GE = Great Extent; LE = Low Extent; VLE = Very Low Extent

Table 4 indicates the opinion of parents and teachers on the extent the schools' status enhances teachers' capacity. All the items with the exception of item 32, 33 and 34 were rated low extent with the mean of 2.05, 2.42 and 2.03 respectively. This means that both parent and teachers maintained that to a low extent Niger State ECCE Schools enhance teacher capacity. However, items 31, 35, 36, 37, 38 and 39 were rated great extent with the mean of 2.81, 2.87,

3.14, 3.03, 2.56 and 2.96. The overall mean for both respondents shows a cluster of 2.27. This indicates a decision level of low extent. Therefore, the table shows that Niger State ECCE Schools enhance teacher capacity to a low extent.

Research Question 5: To what extent are ECCE Schools in Niger State community-based?

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviations of parents and teachers on the extent ECCE Schools in Niger State are community-based

S/N	The School:	Mean	SD	Decision
40	strengthens school government through decentralized management	2.34	0.91	LE
41	encourages parents to participate in school management through the Parents Teachers Association (PTA)	3.51	0.86	VGE
42	encourages community-based organizations to participate in school management through provision of resources	2.24	0.51	LE
43	encourages local civil society to participate in school management through advocacy	2.16	0.70	LE
44	encourages community networks focused on the well-being of the children	2.23	0.89	LE
45	promotes community partnerships focused on the rights of the children	3.17	0.94	GE
46	adopts community based approach to school management	2.33	0.65	GE
47	Encourages community cohesion	2.04	0.77	LE

Key: VGE = Very Great Extent; GE = Great Extent; LE = Low Extent; VLE = Very Low Extent

Table 5 shows the opinion of parents and teachers on the extent the ECCE schools are community-based. Items 40, 42, 43, 44, and 47 were rated low extent with the mean of 2.34,

2.24, 2.16, 2.23 and 2.04 accordingly. This reveals teachers and parents' responses to which Niger State ECCE Schools to a low extent are community based. Meanwhile, item 41 with the mean of 3.51 disclosed the opinion of teachers and parents to which Niger State ECCE Schools are community based to a very great extent. While items 45 and 46, having the mean of 3, 17 and 2.33 respectively, were assessed great extent. The overall mean cluster for the table shows the mean of 2.50. This indicates decision level of great extent. Therefore the table indicates that Niger State ECCE Schools are to a great extent community based.

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of teachers and parents in urban and rural areas on the extent to which ECCE schools ensure equality of opportunities for all children.

Table 6: t-test analyses of urban and rural ECCE schools with respect to equality of opportunities for all children

Schools	No	$\bar{X}$	SD	Std. Er. $\bar{X}$	t- Cal.	df	Prob. Level	Sig. (2- tailed)	Decision
Urban	212	2.91	0.84	0.18	0.30	338	0.05	0.82	Accepted
Rural	128	3.04							

The t-test result in Table 5 shows that t ñ calculated value is 0.30 and the Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.82 at the probability level of 0.05. Since Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.82 is greater than Probability level of 0.05, it is not significant. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the mean rating of teachers and parents in urban and rural areas on the extent to which ECCE schools ensure equality of opportunities for all children. This suggests that the null hypothesis one was not rejected.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of teachers and parents in urban and rural areas on extent ECCE schools promote quality learning outcome.

Table 7: t-test analysis of urban and rural ECCE schools with respect to promotion of quality learning outcome

Schools	No	$\bar{X}$	SD	Std. Er. $\bar{X}$	t-Cal.	df	Prob. Level	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Urban	212	2.82	0.88	0.22	0.23	338	0.05	0.43	Accepted
Rural	128	2.71	0.94	0.17					

Data presented in table 7 show the opinions of sampled parents and teachers in urban and rural areas on the extent ECCE schools promote quality learning outcome. The calculated t value of 0.23 was significant at 0.43. This indicated that at 0.05 level of significant, the calculated t was not significant. The null hypothesis two of no significant difference in the mean scores of teachers and parents on the extent urban and rural ECCE schools promote quality learning outcome therefore was not rejected.

Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of teachers and parents in urban rural areas of ECCE schools with respect to accessibility.

Table 8: t-test analyses of urban and rural ECCE schools with respect to accessibility

Schools	No	$\bar{X}$	SD	Std. Er. $\bar{X}$	t- Cal.	df	Prob. Level	Sig. (2- tailed)	Decision
Urban	212	3.04	0.81	0.41	0.26	338	0.05	0.52	Accepted
Rural	128	2.82	0.78	0.11					

The t-test result in table 8 shows the opinion of sampled parents and teachers on accessibility of urban and rural ECCE Schools in Niger state. It indicates that t-calculated value is 0.26 and the Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.52 while the probability level is 0.05. Since Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.52 was greater than Probability level of 0.05, it is not significant. Therefore, there was no significant difference in the mean rating of teachers and parents in urban rural areas with respect to accessibility of ECCE Schools in Niger State. With regard to decision rule, research hypothesis three was not rejected.

Hypothesis Four

Ho₄: There is no significant difference between the mean rating of teachers and parents in urban and rural areas of ECCE schools on the extent to which they enhance teacher capacity.

Table 9: t-test analyses of urban and rural ECCE schools with respect to teacher capacity

Schools	No	$\bar{X}$	SD	t- Cal.	df	Prob. Level	Sig. (2- tailed)	Decision
Urban	212	2.62	0.84	0.28	338	0.05	0.44	Accepted
Rural	128	2.84	0.80					

Data presented in Table 9 show the opinions of sampled parents and teachers on teacher capacity of urban and rural ECCE Schools in Niger state. The calculated t- value of 0.28 was Significant at 0.44. This indicated that at 0.05 level of significance, the calculated t was not significant. The null hypothesis four of no significant difference in the mean scores of teachers and parents on teacher capacity of urban and rural ECCE schools was, therefore, not rejected.

Hypothesis Five

H₀₄: There is no significant difference between the mean rating of teachers and parents in urban and rural areas of ECCE schools on the extent they develop community-based schools.

Table 10: t-test analyses of urban and rural ECCE schools with respect to community participation

Schools	No	$\bar{X}$	SD	t- Cal.	df	Prob. Level	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Urban	212	2.43	0.77	0.41	338	0.05	0.13	Accepted
Rural	128	2.25	0.83					

The t-test result in table 10 indicated the opinions of sampled parents and teachers on community participation of urban and rural ECCE Schools in Niger State. It shows that the t calculated value is 0.41 and the Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.13 while the probability level is 0.05. Since Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.13 is greater than the Probability level of 0.05, it was not significant. Therefore, there was no significant difference in the mean rating of teachers and parents on the community participation of urban and rural ECCE Schools in Niger State. With regard to decision rule, the research hypothesis five was not rejected.

Summary of Major Findings of the Study

Based on the research questions and formulated hypotheses that guided the study, a number of findings were made, which include:

1. To a great extent ECCE Schools in Niger State show diversity to ensure equal opportunities for all children
2. With respect to quality learning outcomes, ECCE Schools in Niger State to a great extent are child friendly
3. To a great extent, ECCE Schools in Niger State are accessible
4. Niger State performs less to enhance ECCE teachers' capacity
5. Niger State ECCE schools to a low extent are community-based especially in the area of administration, management sponsorship and provision of resources.
6. There was no significant difference in the mean Child-friendly status of urban and rural ECCE schools in Niger State, especially in the areas of accessibility, affordability and teacher capacity morale.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS

This chapter focuses on the discussion of major findings of the study, implications of the findings and recommendations. And discussed in this chapter are conclusion, limitations of the study, suggestions for further study and summary.

Discussion of Results

The findings of this study are discussed in line with the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study. Specifically, the study was discussed according to the following sub-headings

- Diversity of Niger State ECCE Schools to ensure equal opportunities for all children.
- Promotion of quality learning outcomes in Niger State ECCE Schools
- Accessibility of Niger State ECCE Schools
- enhancement of teacher capacity at Niger State ECCE Schools
- Community participation at Niger State ECCE Schools

Diversity of Niger State ECCE Schools to ensure equal Opportunities for all Children

Research question one was formulated to appraise the child friendly status of Niger State ECCE schools with respect to diversity in ensuring equal opportunities for all children. The findings indicated that the ECCE schools in Niger State to a very great extent do not stereotype with respect to gender. This is consistent with the findings of UNICEF (2009) in a study to evaluate the child-friendly status of UBE schools across the country. The UNICEF study, which

Niger State was among the sampled state, among other things found out that Niger State schools are gender sensitive.

The findings of this present study also show that to a great extent, the Niger State ECCE Schools meet differing circumstances of children; do not stereotype with respect to culture, social status; do not discriminate in terms of disability, religion, ethnicity, ability or label. These findings are similar to the findings of Deizigha (2013) and UNICEF (2009) in their separate studies on schools' child friendly status. For instance, Deizigha (2013)'s findings show that UBE schools (ECCE inclusive) have made substantial effort to be inclusive in order to ensure equal opportunities for all children. Hence, these schools serve the 'whole child' as suggested by UNICEF (2009).

Furthermore, hypothesis one was meant to test for any significant difference in the mean scores of sampled parents and teachers on diversity of urban and rural ECCE Schools in Niger State on the extent they respond in ensuring equal opportunities for all children. The t-test analysis showed that there was no significant difference in the diversity of urban and rural Niger State ECCE Schools on the extent they respond in ensuring equal opportunities for all children. The researcher therefore accepted the null hypothesis

Promotion of Quality Learning Outcomes in Niger State ECCE Schools

Research question two was formulated to appraise the child friendly status of Niger State ECCE schools with respect to quality learning outcome. The findings indicated that the ECCE Schools in Niger State to a very great extent help children master the essential enabling skills of speaking. The findings agree with that of Osakwe (2009) which showed that the ECCE Schools boost the pupils' performance.

Similarly, the findings of this present study indicated that to a great extent, the Niger State ECCE Schools encourage children to think critically, ask questions, express their opinions, participate in class work and learn how to learn. The schools were also found to help children master the essential enabling skills of writing, reading, mathematics, general knowledge and enabling skills required for living in the new century including useful traditional knowledge and the values of peace and democracy. These are consistent with the findings of Enueme and Oju (2005) which showed that child-friendly schools impact positively on pupils' performance. These findings supported the findings of Ekenem, Essien and Ekenem (2011) that child-friendly environment boosts cognitive development and psycho-social motor skill of pupils.

A corresponding hypothesis two was formulated to test for any significant difference in the mean opinions of sampled parents and teachers on the extent urban and rural ECCE schools in Niger State promote quality learning outcome. The t-test analysis showed that the Significant 2-tailed test of 0.43 is greater than Probability level of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The researcher therefore accepted the null hypothesis and concludes that there is no significant difference in the extent urban and rural schools in Niger State ECCE Schools promote quality learning outcome.

Accessibility of Niger State ECCE Schools

Research question three was formulated to appraise the child-friendly status of Niger State ECCE Schools with respect to accessibility. This indicated that the official enrolment fee at the Niger State ECCE schools is to a very great extent affordable. The findings of this present study also indicated that to a great extent, the Niger State ECCE Schools welcome children with special needs, and do not keep children from the poorest families from gaining education and the costs of school fees and uniform are affordable. Other findings indicated that the schools do not

encourage pupils to miss school through working or assisting at home. The school also promotes easy transmission from one class to another. These findings are similar to that of Ismaila (2013) that ECCE schools are increasingly becoming inclusive for all children.

Likewise, hypothesis three was meant to test for any significant difference in the mean opinions of sampled parents and teachers on the extent urban and rural ECCE Schools in Niger State are accessible. The t-test analysis indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean rating of teachers and parents in urban rural areas with respect to accessibility of ECCE schools in Niger State. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted.

Enhancement of Teacher Capacity at Niger State ECCE Schools

Research question four was formulated to appraise the child-friendly status of Niger State ECCE Schools with respect to teacher capacity. This indicated that Niger State ECCE Schools to a great extent enhances teachers' morale and quality through pre-service training, in-service training and professional development. The schools were also found to involve teachers in school management and major decision making of the school. This is similar to the findings of Obiweluzo (2012).

On the other hand, the findings of this study also indicated that the state enhance teachers' commitment through remuneration, improved working environment and commitment through improved status. These findings are dissimilar with the findings of Okoye (2012) that enough is not being done to enhance teachers' capacity. Supporting this findings are the findings of Klem and Connell (2004) which show that there is considerable evidence that the provision of a supportive environment for teachers is associated with positive student outcome. Thus, the objectives of ECCE would have been undermined if the teachers are not committed.

A corresponding hypothesis four was formulated to test for any significant difference in the mean scores of sampled parents and teachers on teacher capacity of urban and rural ECCE Schools in Niger State. The t-test analysis showed that the Significant 2-tailed test of 0.44 is greater than Probability level of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The researcher therefore accepted the null hypothesis and concludes that there is no significant difference in the capacity of urban rural ECCE teachers in Niger State.

Community Participation at Niger State ECCE Schools

Research question five was formulated to appraise the child-friendly status of Niger State ECCE Schools with respect to community participation in the running of ECCE Schools in Niger State. This indicated that to a very great extent parents are encouraged to participate in school management through the Parents Teachers Association (PTA). This is consistent to the findings of Okoye (2012) which revealed that PTA is a major stakeholder in the school management.

The result of the study also show that the schools to a great extent promote community partnerships focused on the rights of the children and adopt community based approach to school management. These are consistent with the findings of UNICEF (2009) that schools are increasingly adopting community-based approach in management. On the other hand, the findings of this study also show that Niger State to a less extent strengthens school government through decentralized management, encourage community based organizations to participate in school management through provision of resources, encourage local civil society to participate in school management through advocacy, encourage community networks focused on the well-being of the children and community cohesion. These findings are in contrast to the findings of UNICEF (2009) that to a very great extent, Niger State strengthens school government through community based organizations.

Furthermore, hypothesis five was formulated to test for any significant difference in the mean opinions of sampled parents and teachers on community participation of urban and rural ECCE schools in Niger state. The t-test analysis indicated that there was no significant difference in community participation of urban and rural Niger State ECCE schools.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. To a great extent ECCE Schools in Niger State show diversity to ensure equal opportunities for all children
2. With respect to quality learning outcomes, ECCE Schools in Niger State are child-friendly
3. To a great extent, ECCE Schools in Niger State are accessible
4. Niger State do less to enhance ECCE teachers' capacity
5. Niger State ECCE schools to a less extent are community-based
6. There is no significant difference in the mean child-friendly status of urban and rural ECCE Schools in Niger state.

Educational Implications of the Findings of the Study

The findings of this study have some important educational implications. The implications of each finding as they relate to early childhood education in particular are hereby highlighted

- From the perception of parents and teachers in Niger State. It can be gathered that they do not run a flexible curriculum. This implies that the schools do not respond to diversity to ensure equal opportunities for all children. Hence differing needs of all children are not met

in such environment. This explains that the schools must localize its curriculum to accommodate all.

- With respect to quality learning outcomes, the schools were found to have done enough to boost achievement. Quality learning outcomes also entail the provision of simple tools, methods and concepts to make classrooms and schools more efficient and effective. This implies that the schools in Niger State capitalize on all available human and material resources to broaden perspectives and enrich the learning experience.
- The findings of the study indicated that accessibility is high. This implies that provision of accessible and affordable education, especially to families and children most at risk is another characteristic of Niger State. Affordability of education as described in the CFS blueprint (2009) is in terms of family's ability to pay school fees while accessibility is in terms of children needing to miss school in order to work or to assist at home.
- It is revealed that not much is done to enhance teachers' capacity in the ECCE schools. This implies that the teachers may not be highly motivated to give in their best. Since teacher role have been observed as central to proper implementation of school curriculum and reform, teacher factor becomes necessary. The NPE recognizes this important role of the teacher when it declared that no nation can rise above the quality of its teachers (FRN, 2004).
- With respect to community participation at the ECCE schools, it was revealed that the level of community involvement in the school management is poor. This necessitates the need for ECCE school movement towards greater decision-making power for local communities, parents, students and teachers in the running of their own schools. This is because schools play important roles within the life of local communities as significant institutions and can

serve as key elements within students' educational experiences. According to Koliba (2000), these external and internal organizational realities help to shape the core values inherent in pupils' educational experiences.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. ECCE school environment should so be organized to be more *flexible* so as to respond to diversity in order to meet differing circumstances and needs of all children.
2. Improved learning outcomes should be geared towards greater engagement; increased responsibility for pupils' learning; better relationship with teachers and peers; higher level of cooperation and trust; and more fun learning at school.
3. Accessibility should be extended to inclusive practices.
4. Government should endeavour to provide teachers with training, guidance and professional support to enable them implement more positive behaviour management techniques in the classroom and to create a respectful environment for the children in the school.
5. Government should strengthen school governance through community participation. Where there is an existing one, effort should be made to improve the quality of services provided.

Limitations of the Study

The generalization and conclusions of the result of this study is subject to some limitations. This research work adopted descriptive design, and as such, the research could not manipulate variables to study their effect. Questionnaire was the major instrument for data

collection. The CFS School teachers were not too comfortable in answering and responding to the Questionnaires while some rejected the questionnaires. Hence, the validity of the findings of this study rested much on the honesty of the respondents who provided the much-needed information. This constitutes the major limitation of the findings of this study. Niger State is diverse and ECCE/CFS schools are spread throughout the state. Since all the schools were chosen, it was difficult to administer the instrument on the subjects. This study cannot claim it has investigated all variables regarding Niger State schools' child-friendly status. It is therefore recommended that further studies are conducted to identify other factors of Niger State ECCE status.

Suggestions for Further Research

The limitations of this study suggest the need for further studies in the following areas:

1. Other research designs other than descriptive research design should be used to evaluate the Niger State ECCE schools.
2. Other instruments like checklist should also be used to verify other variables of interest in this study.
3. The present study was carried out in ECCE/CFS in Niger State; further study can be carried out in another state in the country.
4. The study only used ECCE/CFS in Niger State. Further studies can improve on this by using primary schools in the state.
5. Private schools can be used for this study since the present study was carried out in public schools.

Summary of the Study

An enabling school environment for children is a child-friendly environment. It is a vital means for the development of children. The main purpose of this study was to appraise the child-friendly status of ECCE Schools in Niger State. The study was guided by five research questions and five hypotheses. Some literatures related to the study were reviewed. The review of literatures was basically on documentary sources like unpublished thesis and dissertations, published books, journal articles and internet sources. Descriptive research design was adopted to collect data in order to appraise and describe in a systematic manner the child-friendly status of ECCE Schools in the study area. The population of the study consists of all the 272 teachers in the 34 UNICEF-designated child-friendly schools in Niger State. The sample for this study consists of 272 teachers and 68 parents of ECCE pupils.

Structured questionnaire was used to collect data to answer the research questions and hypothesis formulated to guide the study. This instrument was validated by three experts. Data were arranged and analyzed according to the research questions using means scores and standard deviation while the t-test was tested at 0.05significance level. An overview of the major findings of the study was that:

1. To a great extent ECCE Schools in Niger State show diversity to ensure equal opportunities for all children
2. With respect to quality learning outcomes, ECCE Schools in Niger State to a great extent are child-friendly
3. To a great extent, ECCE Schools in Niger State are accessible

4. Niger State does less to enhance ECCE teachers' capacity
5. Niger State ECCE Schools to a low extent are community-based
6. There was no significant difference in the mean child-friendly status of urban and rural ECCE Schools in Niger State.

Based on these findings, the conclusion is that much needs to be done to improve basic ECCE in Niger State through child-friendly school model. Hence, the major educational implication of the findings of the study is that there should be greater effort by stakeholders to create such stimulating milieu to motivate children to discover new skills and knowledge through child-friendly school model. The researcher therefore recommended that quality assurance should be demonstrated through teacher and community capacity building. The major limitation of this study is inherent in the design of the study. Thus, the researcher suggested that other research designs and checklist be used to verify the variables of interest in this study.

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Appendix A: Population and Sample for the Study

Niger State's ECCE/CFS According to Location

S/N	School	Town	Lga	Location	No of Teachers	No. of Parents Sampled
1	Beri Primary School	Beri	Mariga	Rural	8	2
2	Bobi Primary School	Bobi	Mariga	Rural	8	2
3	Gulbin - Boka Primary School	Gulbin - Boka	Mariga	Rural	8	2
4	Tudun Fulani Primary School	Bangi	Mariga	Rural	8	2
5	UngwarWangwa Primary School Dabban	Dabban Community	Lavun	Rural	8	2
6	Nasarawa Primary School	Nasarawa	Lapai		8	2
7	Edokota Primary School	Edokota Village	Gbako	Rural	8	2
8	Emiwoshi Primary School	Emiwoshi Village	Gbako	Rural	8	2
9	Gbangba Primary School	Gbangba Village	Gbako	Rural	8	2
10	Toroko Primary School	Toroko Village	Gbako	Rural	8	2
11	GidanKwano Primary School	GidanKwano	Bosso	Urban	8	2
12	Jikuchi UBE Primary School	RafinYashi	Bosso	Urban	8	2
13	Baro Nursery And Primary School	Baro	Agai	Rural	8	2
14	Etsu Mohammed Bello Pilot Primary School	Agai	Agai	Urban	8	2
15	Etsu Mohammed Kudu Nursery and Primary School	Zago	Agai	Rural	8	2
16	EtsuNuhu Primary School	Agai	Agai	Urban	8	2
17	Etsugaie Primary School	Etsugaie	Agai	Rural	8	2
18	Fogbe Nursery And Primary School	Fogbe	Agai	Rural	8	2
19	Isyaku Primary School	Agai Town	Agai	Urban	8	2
20	Kasimu Primary School	EkokunaAgai	Agai	Rural	8	2
21	Ndako Primary School	Ndako	Agai	Rural	8	2
22	Nursery And Primary School Agai	Hospital Street	Agai	Urban	8	2
23	Suleimanu Primary School	Agai Town	Agai	Urban	8	2

24	TagagiNusery And Primary School	Tagagi	Agaie	Rural	8	2
25	Ube Kapagi Primary School	Kapagi	Agaie	Rural	8	2
26	Central Primary School Kaboji	Kaboji	Mashegu	Rural	8	2
27	Kwatachi Primary School	SabonPegi	Mashegu	Rural	8	2
28	BodoIslamiyyaModelprimary School	Kuta Community	Shiroro	Urban	8	2
29	Central Primary School Wushishi	Wushishi	Wushishi	Urban	8	2
30	DrNnamdiAzikiwe Primary School	Zunguru	Wushishi	Rural	8	2
31	Gwarjiko Primary School	Gwarjiko Road	Wushishi	Rural	8	2
32	Kwata Primary School	Wushishi Town	Wushishi	Urban	8	2
33	Madaki Primary School	AnguwanMadakiZunguru	Wushishi	Rural	8	2
34	Model Nursery and Primary School	Wushishi	Wushishi	Urban	8	2
Total					272	68

Appendix B: Instrument

School of Post-Graduate Studies,
Faculty of Education,
Dept. of Educational Foundations
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
11th November, 2013.

Dear Respondent,

Child–Friendly Status (SFC) Appraisal Questionnaire (CFSAQ)

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of M.Ed (Childhood Education) of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, I am currently carrying out a research work on **An Appraisal of Child-friendly Status of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Schools in Niger State.**

I humbly request you to fill this questionnaire to enable me do this work effectively. The information received from you shall strictly be treated confidentially for academic purposes. I solicit your understanding by sincerely responding to the items of the **CFSAQ**.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Yunusa, Shaima’u Aliyu

PG/M.ED/12/62101

Child-Friendly School Appraisal Questionnaire (CFSAQ)

Section A: Demographic Information.

Please, tick (å) as appropriate.

School location: **Urban** []; **Rural** []

I am a **Parent** []; **Teacher** []

Section B: Child-Friendly status of ECCE schools

Please, kindly rate the extent to which your school observes the following by ticking (å) in the appropriate column.

Key: **VGE** = Very Great Extent; **GE** = Great Extent; **LE** = Low Extent; **VLE**=Very Low Extent.

Cluster A: Diversity for equal educational opportunities

S/N	The School :	VGE	GE	LE	VLE
1	meets different circumstances of children				
2	meets different educational needs of children				
3	does not stereotype with respect to gender				
4	does not stereotype with respect to culture				
5	does not stereotype with respect to social status				
6	does not label with respect to ability				
7	does not discriminate in terms of disability				
8	does not discriminate in terms of religion				
9	does not discriminate in				

	terms of ethnicity				
10	Protects minority				
11	runs a flexible curriculum				

Cluster B: Quality learning outcome

S/N	The School:	VGE	GE	LE	VLE
1	encourages children to think critically				
2	encourages children to ask questions				
3	encourages children to express their opinions				
4	encourages children to participate in class work				
5	helps children learn how to discover skills and ideas				
6	helps children master the essential enabling skills for pre- writing				
7	helps children master the essential enabling skills for pre- reading				
8	helps children master the essential enabling skills for speaking				
9	helps children master the essential enabling skills for pre- mathematics				
10	helps children master the essential enabling skills for general knowledge				
11	helps children master the essential skills required for living in the new century including useful traditional knowledge and the values of peace and democracy				

Cluster C: Accessibility of ECCE/CFS

S/N	The School:	VGE	GE	LE	VLE
1	accepts all children including those with special needs				

2	ensures cost of school uniform is affordable				
3	Supplies (school request) do not keep children of the less privileged families from gaining an education				
4	official enrolment fee is affordable				
5	fees are affordable				
6	does not encourage pupils to miss school to work or to assist at home				
7	promotes easy transition from one class to another				

Cluster D: Teachers capacity

S/N	The school:	VGE	GE	LE	VLE
1	fosters mutual support and respect among staff				
2	enhances teachers' commitment through salary				
3	enhances teachers' commitment through improved working environment such as adequate equipment and laboratory				
4	enhances teachers' commitment through improved status				
5	enhances teachers' quality through in-service training				
6	enhances teachers' quality through professional development				
7	involves teachers in school management				
8	involves the teachers in major decision making of the school				

Cluster E: Community participation

S/N	Our school :	VGE	GE	LE	VLE
1	strengthens school government through assigning members to oversee the school administration and management.				
2	encourage parents to participate in school management through the school based management committee (SBMC)				
3	encourage community based organizations to participate in school management through provision of resources				
4	encourage local civil society to participate in school management through sponsorship				
5	encourage community networks focused on the well-being of the children				
6	promotes community partnerships focused on the rights of the children				
7	adopts community based approach to school management				
8	encourage community cohesion (participation)				

Appendix C: Reliability of the Instrument report

Scale Cluster A: Diversity

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.906	.907	11

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	2.395	2.200	2.700	.500	1.227	.023	11

Scale Cluster B:Quality Learning Outcome

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Case	Valid	20	100.
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.957	.959	11

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	2.400	2.200	2.550	.350	1.159	.011	11

Scale Cluster C: Accessibility

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.899	.902	7

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	2.314	1.900	2.600	.700	1.368	.056	7

Scale Cluster D: Teachers Capacity

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

- a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.805	.918	8

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	2.050	1.900	2.450	.550	1.289	.029	8

Scale Cluster E: Community Participation

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.862	.871	8

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	2.338	1.900	2.600	.700	1.368	.062	8

Appendix D: UNICEF Characteristics for Child- Friendly Schools

1. **Reflects and realizes the rights of every child:** – cooperates with other partners to promote and monitor the well ñ being and rights of all children; defend and protect all children from abuse and harm, both inside and outside the institution.
2. **Sees and understands the whole child, in a broad context:** – is concerned with what happens to children before they enter the system (e.g. their readiness for school in terms of health and nutritional status, social and linguistic skills), and once they have left the classroom-back in their homes, the community, and the workplace.
3. **Is child centered:** - encourage participation, creativity, self-esteem, self-confidence and psychosocial well-being; promotes a structured child-centered curriculum and teaching-learning methods that are appropriate for the child's developmental level, abilities and learning style; and considers the needs of children over the needs to the other actors in the system.
4. **Is gender sensitive and girl friendly:** - promotes parity in the enrolment and achievement of girls and boys; reduces constraints to gender equity and eliminates gender stereotypes; provides facilities; curricular and learning processes are welcoming to girls.
5. **Promotes quality learning outcomes :-**children to think critically, ask questions, express their opinions-and learn how to learn; helps children master the essential enabling skills of writing, reading, speaking, listening, mathematics and general knowledge and skills required for living in the new century including useful traditional knowledge and the values of peace and democracy and the acceptance of diversity.
6. **Provides education based on the reality children's lives:** -ensures that curriculum content responds to the learning needs of individual children as well as to the general objective of the

education system and the local context and traditional knowledge of families and the community.

7. **Is flexible and responds to diversity:** -meets differing circumstances and needs of children (e.g. Gender culture, social class or ability level).
8. **Acts to ensure inclusion, respect and equality of opportunity for all children:** - does not stereotype, exclude or discriminate on the basis of difference.
9. **Promotes mental and physical health:** -encourages healthy behaviour and practices and guarantees hygienic, safe, secure and joyful environment.
10. **Provides education that is affordable and accessible:** - especially to children and families most at-risk.
11. **Enhances teacher capacity, morale, commitment and status:** - ensures that its teachers have sufficient pre-service training, in-service support and professional development, status and income.
12. **Is family focused:**-attempts to work with and strengthen the family and helps children, parents and teachers establish harmonious collaborative partnerships
13. **Is community-based:** - strengthens school government, through a decentralized, community based approach; encourages parents, local government, community organization and other institutions of civil society to participate in the management as well as the financing of education; promotes community partnerships and networks focused on the rights and well-being of the children.
14. **Promotes community cohesion** (p 11)

Source: UNICEF, 2009 Country Report for Nigeria