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# ESTABLISHMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF NURSERY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA-THE WAY FORWARD

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## ABSTRACT

The paper is on the establishment and management of Nursery Education in Nigeria. Nursery Education, according to Federal Government in the National Policy on Education is education given to children in the educational institutions to children ages 3 to 5 years plus prior to their entering primary school. It is a very crucial level of education because solid educational foundation is laid from this level. It gives all round development of the child-spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally. The objectives of Nursery education are stipulated in the national policy on education among others are: to effect smooth transition from home to school, and to prepare the child for primary level of education. The three tiers of government are charged with the responsibility of managing and financing of Nursery Education. It is faced with many constraints among, which are lack of funds, inadequate facilities, poor monitoring and supervision. The following have been suggested as Way-Forward: Adequate funds should be budgeted for Nursery Education, qualified teachers should be trained and teaching should be professionalized.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is the systematic development of the individual; mentally, physically, morally, emotionally, society in which he lives. Therefore education prepares an individual to live in a dynamic or constantly changing society and contribute to such changing or constantly promotes the survival, growth and development of the society. Thus, the Jomtien World Summit held from 5th-9th March 1990 the convention on the rights of the child and stated children's rights as "child's right to adequate living standards, health care, protection from abuse, education that is free and to freedom from discrimination.

Elui (2007) opines that the survival growth and development of young children are interdependent and can only be achieved if basic services are provided in health, nutrition, education, safe environment, and poverty eradication, empowerment of mothers, social mobilization and good drinking water. The provision of these services by different sectors working together will produce a well-rounded child all aspects of development.



The Nursery Education gives all round development of child. Hence, government in the National Policy on education(2004) recognized it as Federal

education. It is seen as the education given in the educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. It includes the creches, the nursery and kindergarten. Nursery education programmes, are designed to support the development of children during their early years. They help in the cognitive, psychomotor and social development of the child.

Maduewesi (2005) state that the period 0-8 years is critical to both physical growth and development of cognitive formation and are directly related to adequate care, health, nutrition and stimulations. Childhood is the formative period of the child, thus adequate arrangement must be made to inculcate into the child the right values and development to education fit in properly into the society. Moreover, children are generally believed to be the leaders of tomorrow and to have a better and brighter tomorrow, beholds on all concerned parents, communities, states and the federal government to have and create a good educational system for her children.

### **Purpose of Nursery Education**

As state in the National Policy on Education,(2004) the purpose of nursery education include:

- (i) To effect a smooth transition form the home to the school
- (ii) To prepare the child for the primary level of education
- (iii) To provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work, (on the farms, in the markets, offices, etc.)
- (iv) To inculcate social norms
- (v) To inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys etc.
- (vi) To develop a sense of co-operation and team spirit.
- (vii) To learn good habits, especially good health habit
- (viii) To teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc, through play.

For effective realization and actualization of the above mentioned purposes of Nursery Education, Federal Government mapped out the following strategies:

- (i) Establishment of nursery education section in existing public primary



- schools.
- (ii) Encouragement of both community and private efforts to provide nursery education
  - (iii) Make provision in teacher education programme for specialization in early childhood education
  - (iv) Ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community; and to this end:
    - (a) develop the orthography of many more Nigerian languages
    - (b) produce textbooks in Nigerian languages.
    - (c) Ensure that the main method of teaching at this level shall be through lay and that the curriculum of teacher education is oriented to achieve this; regulate and control the operation of nursery education. To this end, the teacher-pupil ratio shall be 1:25.
  - (v) Set and monitor minimum standard for early child-care centers in the country.
  - (vi) Ensure full participation of government, communities, and teachers associations in the running and maintenance of Early Childhood Education Facilities.

### **Administration of Nursery Education**

Federal Republic of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education (2004) stated that government is responsible for the establishment and setting up standard for nursery education

- (1) Government shall promote the training of qualified nursery school teachers in adequate number
- (2) Contribute to the development of suitable curriculum
- (3) Supervised and control the quality of such institutions.

### **The organization structure of Nursery Education, showing the following agencies**

- (a) The Federal Government: It establishes rules and regulations for:
  - (i) Providing acceptable standards of nursery education services.
  - (ii) The acquisition of appropriate types of teaching and learning resources.
- (iii) Making general goods of nursery education in Nigeria.
- (b) **State Ministry of Education**  
The State Ministry of Education has nursery education unit: which is charged with responsibility of inspection and supervision. It also

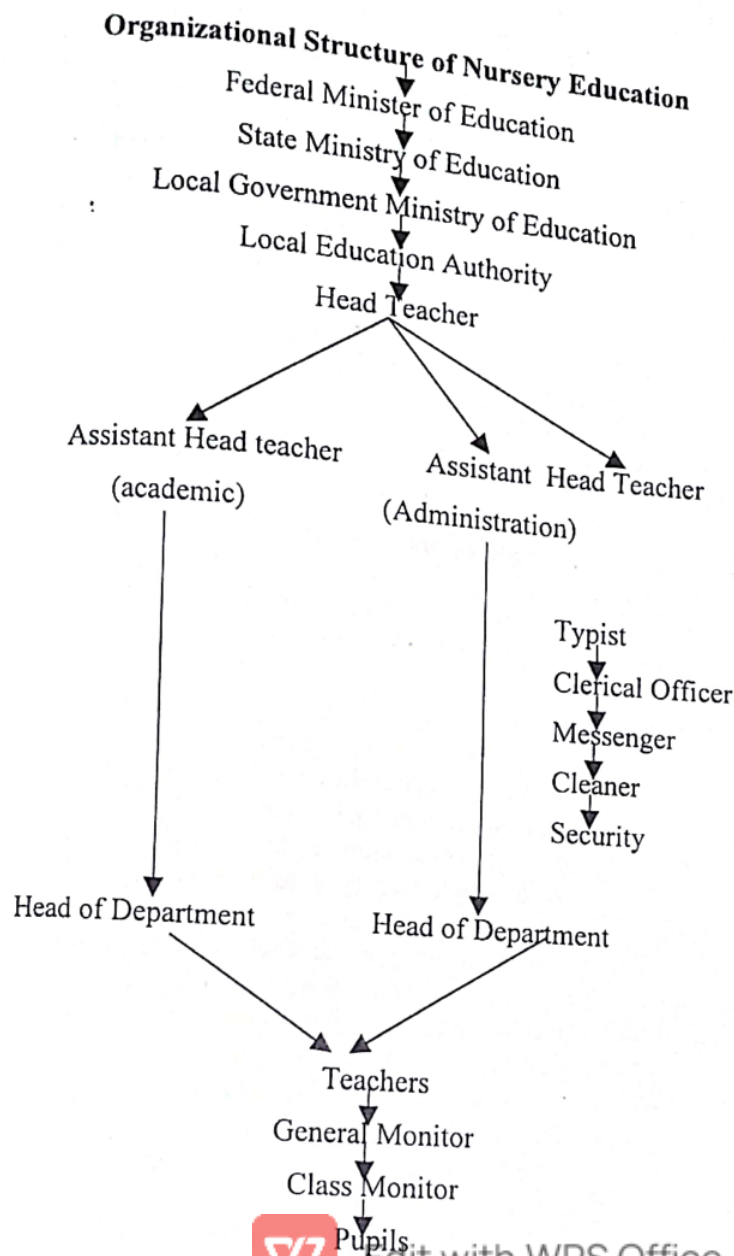


gives the approval of the establishment of nursery schools in addition, it makes copies of guidelines, rules and regulations available to intending proprietors.

(c) **Local Education Authority:**

The inspectors at local authority, inspect nursery schools and send report to the Federal Ministry of Education through the state Ministry of Education.

(d) **Parents:** through Parent Teacher Association, (PTA) parents are involved in the management of nursery school. They always involve in decision making and giving of financial support.



## **Teachers in the Nursery School**

This the Federal Government in the National Policy of Education (2004) states that no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers, therefore teacher education, shall continue to be given more emphasis in all educational planning and development. For the objectives to be actualized, the policy spelt out the teacher training institutions that will give the required professional training as: Colleges of Education, faculties of Education, Institute of Education, National Teacher's Institute, Schools of Education in the Polytechnics, National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN) and National Mathematical Centre (Maic). The Policy further directed that the University should modify their programmes, to make it possible for suitably qualified holders of the Nigeria certificate in education (NCE) to complete a degree programme in education at the University in two years. For competent and qualified teachers to be trained, government directed faculties of education in the universities to introduce Nursery and Primary Education (NPE) and Primary Education Studies (PES) in Colleges of Education and this has been implemented in some universities and Colleges of Education in the country. This innovation will lead to training of qualified and competent teachers in the Nursery school.

## **Nursery School Regulations**

Government is charged with the responsibility of maintaining uniform standards in the Nursery Education. To achieve this, the Federal Ministry of Education prepared Guidelines on Nursery Education (1987), which the supervisors in the Ministry of Education use in assessing the standards of work in Nursery schools.

These guidelines include:

- (i) Objectives of Nursery education (as stated in the NPE 2004)
- (ii) Government attitude towards Nursery school
- (iii) Requirements regarding types of establishment, teaching facilitates, equipment (for example prohibition of residential nursery school except for those serving the handicapped)
- (iv) Specification on playground, furniture, fees, teacher and side qualifications.
- (v) Teacher-pupil ratio (1:25)
- (vi) Language of instruction (mother tongue)
- (vii) Books (Locally appropriate)
- (viii) Record keeping (administration and academic)
- (ix) Inspection (by officer of the State Ministry of Education) (x)
- (x) Conformance to Federal Education Law



- (xi) Provision for the handicapped
- (xii) Criteria for school closure (non-compliance, inadequate facilities, and unqualified staff
- (xiii) Institutions of higher learning provide training in nursery education
- (xiv) Religion (conformance with the religion of parents
- (xv) Health (including hygiene and sanitation) (Maduewesi 2005)

### **Financing of Nursery Education**

The three tiers of government (Federal, State and Local Government) are charged with the responsibility of financing Public nursery education. Government directed that all public primary schools should establish nursery sections. The human and material resources in the various schools are being provided by the primary section so government finances nursery schools collaboration with projects with international agencies like United Nations International Children Education Fund. (UNICEF).

The funds for the administration of Nursery Schools can also be generated through the following:

- (i) Parents Teachers Association (PTA)
- (ii) Sales of school farm produce (ii)
- (iii) Proceeds from school activities; dramatic societies.
- (iv) Donations and endowments funds shell petroleum Development company Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).
- (v) Contributions by various companies, and industries, and proceeds from the local crafts e.g. broom, baskets etc.
- (vi) Money realized form food vendors

### **Constraints of Nursery Education**

Nursery education in Nigeria has a number of problems that need to be overcome so that the state objective may be achieved. Some of these constraints include:

- (1) Poor supervision of instruction. There is no adequate supervision of instruction in the nursery schools. Most of the supervisors have no means of visiting the schools so, they can only visit the schools occasionally to collect envelope form the School Head, thus there is ineffective control and monitoring.
- (2) Unqualified teachers: Most of the nursery schools especially private ones have unqualified teachers. They are made up of school dropouts, retired and weak teachers. In the public nursery schools, the teachers are deployed from primary sections, that may not have been involved in primary education studies and nursery and primary'

- education in teacher training institutions.
- (3) Inadequate facilities: Educational facilities are lacking for effective teaching and learning processes. There facilities that are in short supply in the nursery schools include tables, chairs; play ground for games and physical activities and audio-visual materials. Some nursery schools also operate in dilapidated rented and non-ventilated buildings, which are awkward and un-fascinating for a conducive teaching/learning environment.
  - (4) Inadequate funding: Money released into education sector during the national/state budgets are grossly inadequate to cater for the human and material resources needed. Nursery education is badly affected because government does not make separate/budget for it. In the light of this, the teachers are poorly rewarded poorly motivated to and these do not enhance high productivity.
  - (5) Non Utilization of Research Results: The results of the research conducted based on Nursery Education are not utilized, which is affecting the growth and development of nursery education in Nigeria.
  - (6) Over-Crowded Classrooms: The results recommended teacher/pupil ratio is 1:25. But a look at the various Nursery Schools-Public or Private shows that the classrooms are overcrowded, thereby depriving the children meaningful learning. Effects of overcrowded classrooms include out bread of epidemics, such as measles, chicken pox, cough and suffocation.
  - (7) Non-Direct involvement of government in the administration of nursery schools. The various Public Nursery Schools are accommodated by the primary schools.

This is a problem because the needs of the nursery schools cannot be articulated and attended to.

### **The Way-Forward**

Based on the problem facing Nursery Education, the following strategies have been suggested for the successful implementation of the objectives of nursery education:

- (1) Monitoring and Supervision are the only means of evaluating, implementing, compliance and the attainment or achievement of the desired objectives, therefore government should set up all machineries to achieve this. Trained supervisors should be recruited.
- (2) The funding of public nursery schools should be the responsibility of the government. The budget for Nursery Education should not be



toiled with because it is the bed rock and foundation of education. Apart from the fund from government, nursery schools can also generate money through the following sources: School fees, Parent Teachers Association, Farm Sales, Sports activities, philanthropic Organizations and individuals, which can be used for the development of schools.

- (3) Provision of Adequate Infrastructural Facilities: Adequate infrastructural facilities are needed to maintain a good conducive academic environment. These facilities should be adequate in the Nursery Schools - To curtail this problem, the authorities concerned with the approval and establishment of nursery schools must always carry out thorough inspection of the proposed school to ensure that all the necessary facilities are available.
- (4) Staff Improvement: Odor (1995) sees staff improvement as the process of training, retraining and development of staff members in organization for the purpose of acquiring more academic or professional qualifications, knowledge, skills and competences for increase of efficiency in their primary functions. Since majority of the teachers in the nursery schools are incompetent and unqualified, they should be given the opportunity to be involved in staff improvement/development by granting them in-service training.
- (5) Professionalization of Teaching: Teaching should be professionalized. No quacks should be employed into teaching profession. The introduced teacher Registration Council should uphold all the tenets of teacher's registration. Teaching should be (6) mage enviable profession of dignity and integrity.
- (6) To avoid the problem of overcrowdness, government should enforce and adhere to the stipulated the teacher-pupil ratio of 1:25. This could be solved by periodically monitoring and supervising the work being done in the various nursery schools.
- (7) Structured Curriculum: The curriculum of nursery school should be child ad society centred. It should be structured to address the emerging social changes, increasing rate of dropout and unemployment. It should be functional to meet the needs of the child in the society. (Igbiwu and Nwaham, 2008).
- (8) Use of Research Findings: Many researches have been carried out in nursery education, with findings and recommendations. Government should always make use of these recommendations to reduce the constraints in nursery education.



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