

Assessment of Community Based Early Childhood Care Centers in Improving Enrolment and Quality Learning in Nigeria

Sunday Jacob and Falade J. Olakunle

ABSTRACT

The study x-rayed the implementation of 20 Community Based Early Childhood Care centers purposively selected in Bauchi and Gombe states. The aim of the study was to ascertain the situation in the centers regarding enrolment, quality and quantity of learning facilities, equipment, and teachers. A descriptive research design with three research questions guided the study using quantitative and qualitative approaches. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data collected through the use of enrolment proforma, questionnaire and observation checklist. The data was analyzed using frequency counts and charts. The major findings show high level of enrolment of male and female children in all the centers with no significant difference between the male and female children. There was collaboration between SUBEBs, communities and UNICEF in the establishment of the centers. Indoor and outdoor learning materials were grossly inadequate across the 20 CBECC centers in the 2 states. Learning centers provided by the communities were inadequate and not conducive for effective learning while basic facilities like toilets and sources of portable water were lacking in most of the centers. Most of the teachers have NCE as their highest qualifications but not related to Early Childhood Education and their number is inadequate. In order to improve on the quality, relevant workshops were organized for some of them by UNICEF. Recommendations made among which is the need for more collaboration between the communities and other relevant stakeholders to raise more funds to ensure a more child friendly environment in the CBECC centers.

Keywords: Community Based Early Childhood Care, Early Childhood Care, Enrolment, Quality Learning

Published Online: April 15, 2022

ISSN: 2736-4534

DOI :10.24018/ejedu.2022.3.2.298

S. Jacob*

Social Studies Department, Federal College of Education, Pankshin, Plateau State, Nigeria.

(e-mail: sundayajacob@yahoo.co.uk)

F. J. Olakunle

Department of Psychology, Federal College of Education, Pankshin, Plateau State, Nigeria.

(e-mail: falade.olakunle@yahoo.com)

**Corresponding Author*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is regarded as the key to the development of any society while Early Childhood Education is seen here as the master key because of its undisputed roles in the wholistic development of human capability. For this to be achieved, all children no matter their background and status are expected to be given the opportunity to attend formal education. Unfortunately, this is not the case as many children are out of school thereby denying them the opportunities of realizing their full potentials. In Nigeria for example, out of the total number of out of school children, 52.5% were found in Northeast, 50.9% in Northwest, 23.5% in Northcentral, 9.2% in South, 8.6% in Southeast and 8.2% in Southwest (UNICEF, 2012, Umar, 2020). This unfortunate situation calls for actions based on its negative consequences not only on the children but to the larger society. Also, Pre-school children in particular and other children in general not going to school contradict various policies like Section 18 of the Nigerian Constitution, the

Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act 2004, the Child Rights Act 2003, and Article 17 of the African Charter. All these guarantee the right of every Nigerian child to education. The UBE Act and the Child Rights Act further made provision for free and compulsory basic education for all children up to junior secondary level.

In 2012, Federal Ministry of Education (FME), Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) in collaboration with UNICEF reflecting on the neglect children in rural communities are facing regarding to access to early education resolved to explore the potentials of using the strategy of Community Based Early Childhood Care (CBECC) to increase enrolment of pre-school children especially in rural communities in Nigeria (Akhaine, 2015). Four states were initially used for pilot study and by 2014, the project was expanded to 14 states which has Bauchi and Gombe the focus states for this study.

The Community Based Early Childhood Care Education (CBECC) is established to assist children living in hard-to-reach areas to benefit from Early Childhood Care

Development Education (ECCDE). It is also an inclusive strategy aimed at boosting enrolment at the community level. Researches shows that poverty has detrimental impact on children's physical growth, cognitive capacity and psychosocial development while enrolment of children in ECD fosters their proper development, identify and solve their problems, harness their potentials, mould their character, enhance their learning capability and equip them for life, so that their actions are channeled towards positive and global development in all ramifications (Mahuta, 2007; Wordu, nd; Tande, 2016, Falade *et al.*, 2020). Based on these therefore, there is the need to put in place targeted interventions that would assist children but most especially in rural communities to develop to their full potential. The overall goal of CBECC towards this direction is to accelerate children's access to quality early learning through advocacy and community participation. CBECC focused on promoting community participation in the provision of functional community based early learning centres through the establishment and support for Mother's Associations and engagement with key community gate keepers. Establishment of CBECC has resulted in community ownership of schools and support for early learning programmes. The criteria used to select the communities were hard to reach, educationally disadvantaged, economically deprived and lack of educational facilities among others. The aim was primarily to help in addressing the various gaps (enrolment, access, quality, completion rate, government, and community support etc.) in basic education.

From the foregoing therefore, there is the need to assess how far has the objectives for the establishment of CBECC have been attained. To do this, the researchers decided to focus on two states of Bauchi and Gombe in the northeast of the Nigeria as they account for more children in the country not in school. The objectives of the study focused on three major issues of enrolment, availability of learning materials/facilities and the quality and quantity of the teachers. The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the pupils' enrolment rate at the selected CBECC centres before and during the period of the visit?
2. What is the quality and quantity of available learning material/facilities in the selected CBECC centres during the visit?
3. To what extent is the quality and quantity of the teachers in the selected CBECC centres meet the required standard?

II. METHODOLOGY

As earlier stated, CBECC were established in 14 states of the Federation. For this study, only two states within the UNICEF Bauchi Field Office were used. The states of Bauchi and Gombe were chosen. Within these states, 30 CBECC centers (15 per state) were established. However, 10 centers per state were purposively sampled for this research. Five days per state were spent in data collection by the researchers and their assistants. Descriptive research was adopted as the study explored and described the situation as being found in the selected hard-to-reach CBECC centres.

The researchers did not manipulate any of the variables but examined and measure the variables involved in the study. The instruments for data collection are proforma and facilities checklist prepared by the researchers tagged 'Follow-up Survey on Community Based Early Childhood Care and Education'. The proforma was used to collect the enrolment of the pupils from the CBECC centers' School Registers over a period of 3 years as well as the number of children that were present on the day of visit. Also, the facility checklist was used to document the available instructional materials, indoor/outdoor facilities and structures sighted at the various centres. On the teachers at the centers, data on their number, qualifications, workshops/training attended were also collected. The various quantitative and qualitative data collected were then analyzed using descriptive statistics that is frequency, percentage, and charts.

III. RESULTS

Research question 1: What are the pupils' enrolment rate at CBECC centres in the selected hard-to-reach environments over the period under review and on the day of the visit?

TABLE I: PUPILS' ENROLMENT IN THE VISITED CBECC IN BAUCHI STATE AND GOMBE STATE

Enrollment	2015/2016			2016/2017			2017/2018		
States / Gender	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Bauchi	256	257	513	399	461	860	291	314	605
Gombe	533	527	1060	468	411	879	485	406	891
Total	789	784	1573	867	872	1739	776	720	1496

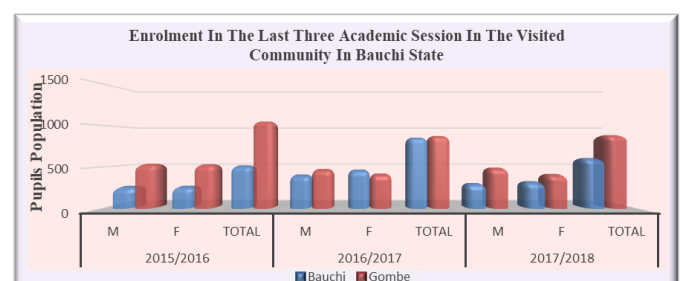


Fig. 1. Pupils' enrolment at the visited CBECC in Bauchi state and Gombe state.

The Table I and the Fig. 1 present the pupils' enrolment at the visited hard to reach CBECC centers in the two states of Northeast Nigeria. The result revealed that, there was steady increase in the enrolment rate between 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 session while there was slight decrease in 2017/2018. Interestingly, children enrolled shows a range between 50 to 80 for Bauchi per center while for Gombe, it shows between 80 to 100. The enrolment over the period of 3 years depicts more female enrolment in Bauchi State while in Gombe State, reverse is the case as the number of the male children are slightly higher. Over the period of 3 years, 4,808 children were enrolled in the 20 CBECC centers in the two states. From this number, 2376 (49.4%) were females while 2432 (50.6%) were males. The males had a higher difference of 56 (1.2%) which is very insignificant. From this discussion, parents in rural communities did not discriminate against their female children in enrolling them

in CBECC. This shows that if more CBECCs are established in more rural communities across all the states in Nigeria, it will definitely increase both male and female enrollment thereby helping in reducing the menace of out of school children. Also, catching the female children early in schooling may likely reduce the menace of given them out by their parents in early marriage.

TABLE II: PUPILS' ATTENDANCE ON THE DAY OF VISIT TO THE CBECCS

State	Male	Female	Total
Bauchi	390	428	818
Gombe	391	416	807

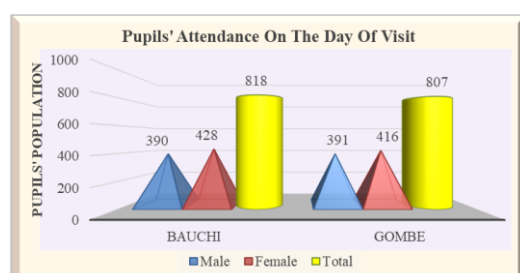


Fig. 2. Enrolment on the day of visit.

The Table II and the Fig. 2 present the attendance on the day of visit to the CBECC centers in Bauchi and Gombe states. In Bauchi state the attendance was 390 and 428 for male and female children respectively with a total of 818 children on the day of visit. Similarly, in Gombe state, the

attendance was 391 and 416 for male and female children respectively with a total attendance of 867 on the day of visit. This revealed an average of 80 children per CBECC center. In comparing this average with the 3 years registered children shows that they are not only enrolled but the children were actually attending school on regular basis. Therefore, the strategy of using CBECC is a very positive development towards reducing out of school children in the two states and by extension, Nigeria.

Research question 2: What are the available learning materials/facilities in the selected hard-to-reach environments CBECC?

From the qualitative data presented in Table III shows that learning materials and facilities which are very critical for effective learning were grossly inadequate across the 20 CBECC centers in the 2 states. On availability of classrooms/learning spaces, there seems to be collaboration between government and communities in this regard in the two states. However, most of the learning centers provided by the communities in term of space were inadequate and not conducive enough bearing in mind the number of the children enrolled at the CBECC centers. It was also observed that basic facilities like toilets and sources of portable water were lacking in most CBECCs used for this research. These findings have great negative consequences on quality of teaching and learning as well as on the health of the children.

TABLE III: AVAILABLE LEARNING MATERIALS INCLUDES AT THE CBECC CENTER VISITED

State	Indoor	Outdoor	Instructional materials available	Facilities/structures
Bauchi	Very few readymade toys were seen in some centers	No outdoor facilities in most of the centers	Few children picture books, story books Plasticine, Lego, drawing materials were available in some centers	3 Open space, 4 Personal house, 2 Government structures, 1 Community structure
Gombe	Few creative art works, readymade and locally made toys were seen in some centers.	Few locally made outdoor facilities seen in some centers.	More children picture books, story books Plasticine, Lego, drawing materials were available in many centers	4 Government structures, 2 Community Buildings, 3 Open space, 1 mud classroom

Research question 3: What is the quality and quantity of teachers available to facilitate learning in the CBECC centres?

TABLE IV: NUMBER OF TEACHERS/CAREGIVER AND QUALIFICATIONS

State	No. of male teachers/caregivers	No. of female teachers/caregivers	Total
Bauchi	18	6	24
Gombe	16	20	36
Total	34	26	60
State	Above NCE	NCE	Below NCE
Bauchi		12	12
Gombe		12	24
Total	Nil	24	36

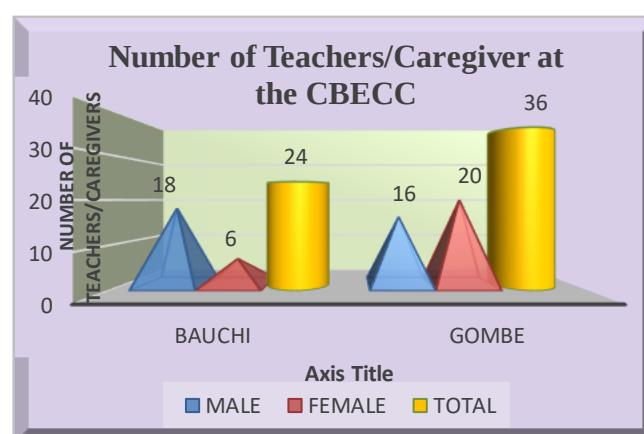


Fig. 3. Number of teachers at the CBECCs.

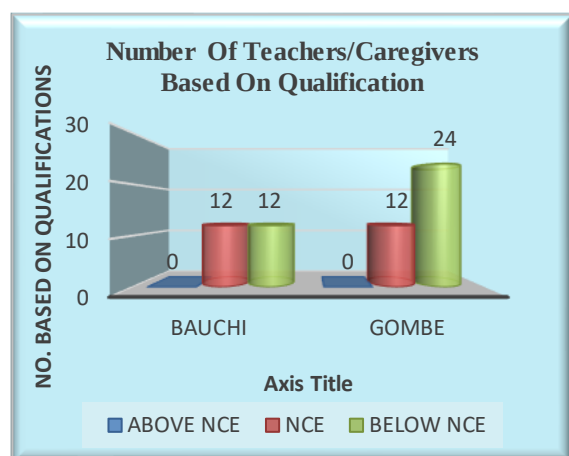


Fig. 4. Number of teachers based on qualifications.

The Table IV and Fig. 3 and 4 present the number of teachers and their qualifications across the CBECC centers in Bauchi and Gombe states. On the average, there are two and three teachers per center in Bauchi and Gombe respectively. This can be improved when compared to the number of children per center. Furthermore, the data in Bauchi state shows 50% of the teachers have NCE while the remaining have less than NCE. However, for Gombe state, 33% have NCE as their highest qualification while a high percentage of 67% has below NCE. On perusing the background of the teachers, none had qualification related to Early Childhood Education which is very important for handling children at this level. Based on these findings, teachers who are key to the effective running of the centers are not adequate in terms of number and poor in term of quality.

TABLE V: NUMBER OF TEACHERS/CAREGIVERS TRAINED IN THE LAST TWO YEARS

S/NO	Type of Training Received	Bauchi State		Gombe state	
		M	F	M	F
1	Child stimulation and care	1	1	1	2
2	Early learning (child-centered pedagogy)	2	1	5	4
3	Local toy making	1	1	3	9
4	Early grade reading	1	1	1	4
Total Trained		5	4	10	19

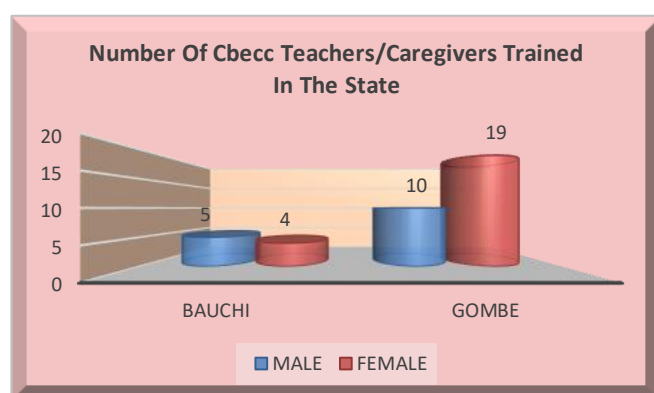


Fig. 5. Number of trained teachers in workshops.

From the data presented in Table V and Fig. 5, out of the 24 teachers in Bauchi state in the 10 CBECC centers, only 9 (38%) of them had opportunity to attend one form of ECD workshop or the other. This is greatly inadequate. For

Gombe state, 29 out of 36 had training workshops related to ECD. This number which represents 80.5% is highly commendable. From this data, though efforts were made to improve on the quality of the teachers through workshops, it was observed that this was not regular and not all teachers had the opportunity to be trained. Also, the training provided was as a result of UNICEF intervention but unfortunately, the states involved did not sustained and complement these efforts.

IV. SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS

- Over the period of 3 years, 4,808 children were enrolled in the 20 CBECC centers in the two states which is an indication that this strategy can improve enrolment of children in rural areas.
- Out of 4,808 children, 2,376 (49.4%) were females while 2,432 (50.6%) were males with an insignificant difference of 56 (1.2%). This is an indication of positive attitude by the parents in rural areas to enroll both male and female children in CBECCs.
- On the day of visits to the 20 CBECC centers, 1,625 children were in attendance indicating an average of 80 children per CBECC center. This further demonstrated that these children were not only registered but that they were actually attending school on regular basis.
- Indoor and outdoor learning materials were grossly inadequate across the 20 CBECC centers in the 2 states.
- There is collaboration between government and communities in the provision of classrooms/learning spaces.
- Most of the learning centers provided by the communities were inadequate and not conducive for effective learning.
- Basic facilities like toilets and sources of portable water were lacking in most of the CBECCs used for this research.
- Number of teachers per center were not adequate bearing in mind 1:25 teacher-student ratio. There were only two and three teachers per center in Bauchi and Gombe respectively.
- 50% and 33% of the teachers have NCE as their highest qualifications in Bauchi and Gombe respectively.
- All the 36 teachers in the 20 CBECCs have no qualifications related to Early Childhood Education which indicated lack of relevant skills, knowledge and other competencies in handling children at this level.
- UNICEF Bauchi Field Office funded the relevant workshops for some of the CBECC teachers as a measure to improve on their knowledge, skills and practices in handling children.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on this study, the researchers can confidently conclude that CBECC has a great potential in achieving its set objectives with the high enrolment rate recorded in the 20 centers. Therefore, there is the need to encourage the establishment of more CBECC centers in rural and hard to reach communities bearing in mind the benefits children

will derive from them. This action will equally help in reducing the number of children not attending formal education generally and reduced early marriages among the girls in particular. However, for children to benefit optimally, efforts should be made by all relevant stakeholders to provide child friendly environment for effective teaching and learning.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More CBECC centers should be opened in more rural areas not only in Bauchi and Gombe states but in all the states including FCT.
2. In order to have adequate and quality learning materials and facilities in CBECC centers, corporate organizations should be encouraged to partner with communities in the provision of such valuable facilities.
3. Government should give technical support to communities when building classrooms for CBECCs in order to maintain standard.
4. Community leaders should be encouraged by relevant government agencies to collaborate with community members, NGOs, FBOs and philanthropists in the provision of toilet and water facilities in the CBECC centers.
5. SUBEBs when recruiting teachers should make it as a deliberate policy to at least give 30% of the employment to graduate of ECD and most of them should be posted to CBECC centers.
6. Capacity building on improvisation of indoor and outdoor learning resources, knowledge and skills on ECD for all CBECC teachers should be given a topmost priority by SUBEBs and other relevant stakeholders.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Appreciation to UNICEF Bauchi Field Office, Nigeria, as the researchers leverage on one of their activities to collect data for this study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Akhaine, S. (2015, December 1). UNICEF, UBEC raise awareness on pupils' enrolment in schools. *The Guardian*.
- Falade, J. O., Obadijah, M. D., Bitrus, D. G. (2020). Assessment of Numeracy Knowledge Acquired and Learning Facilities of Pupils in Early Childhood Education in Public Primary Schools in Plateau State. *International Journal of research and Sustainable Development*, 7(2).
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) Universal Basic Education Act, 2004 and Other Related Matters, Abuja
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). *National Policy on Education* (6th Edition). NERDC Press, Yaba, Lagos
- Mahuta, M. G. (2007). *Introduction to Sociological Foundation of Education*. Sokoto: But Bass Educational Books
- National Human Rights Commission (2003). *Child Right Act*. <http://www.nigeriarights.gov.ng/resources>
- Tande, K. (2016) Early Childhood Education and its Influence on Academic Performance of Level one Pupils in Selected Primary

Schools. *Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research*, 3(7).

Umar, Y. (2020, March 5). North-East is home to 60% of Nigeria's 13m out-of-school children. *Vanguard*. [https:// www.vanguardngr.com/](https://www.vanguardngr.com/)

UNICEF (2012). *Global initiative on out-of-school children: Nigeria country study*. <https://www.unicef.org/>

Wordu (nd). Effect of Early Childhood Education on the Academic Performance of Primary School Children in River State. *Academic Discuss: An International Journal*, 165-171.