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Foreword from the Desk of Editor-In-Chief

Dear Readers,

Welcome to Volume Five (5) of the Journal of Early Childhood and Primary Education (JECPE). The theme for this edition is entitled: "Strengthening Childhood Education Programmes: Implication for sustainability." The Journal is published by the Department of Early Childhood/Primary Education, College of Education, Kwara State University, Malete, Kwara State, Nigeria.

In a time of high technological advancement, progressing globalization, and numerous changes in the field of early childhood and primary education, it is imperative to communicate research results to a broad practitioner audience, to strengthening the dynamic and ever growing the field of early childhood/primary education, and for its national and international sustainability. The articles presented in this edition, will surely enhance that!

In our fifth edition, we include voices from the field out of our fundamental conviction that scholarship in education is furthered by collaboration among researchers and practitioners. It is our fundamental belief that research continually supports effective pedagogy as an important and successful scientific way of learning in the field of early childhood and primary education, and that our journal can help to further applied research and scholarship in this growing field. We also believe that all stakeholders in early childhood/primary education can make important contributions to the expanding knowledge-base in the field. To this end, all articles are blind-reviewed. Also, the JECPE features scholarly research papers evaluated for publication under standards suitable for traditional research journals.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the contributing authors and the referees. I would also like to invite all interested researchers in the areas of early childhood and primary education, as well as teacher education to send their contributions. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy and learn from this issue of the Journal of Early Childhood and Primary Education! I wish you all the best, and I look forward to another challenging year in 2017. 'Onward Early Childhood Educators/Practitioners.'

Professor Olaiya E. Aina

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IDENTIFICATION OF HEARING-IMPAIRMENT IN CHILDREN: IMPLICATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE, DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

Ogungbade Oyelakin Kunmi, Isarinade Julius Oladolu, Kolawole Alaba Paulina

Abstract

This paper examined the identification of hearing-impairment in children: implication for early childhood care, development and education (ECCDE) in Nigeria. The purpose of ECCDE and the measures Government need to take in order to achieve them as stated in the recent national policy on education were highlighted. The paper also emphasized early childhood care, development, education and the needs of hearing-impairment education. Various ways of identifying hearing-impairment in early childhood were discussed. The paper proffered different ways of meeting the needs of children with hearing-impairment in early childhood and recommendations were made such that Government should take ECCD seriously by providing fund; the professionals in the field of ECCD should consider children with hearing-impairment when deciding matters that affect these children; teachers and caregivers should handle these children properly so as not to contribute more to their educational deprivation.

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Key words: Identification, meeting the needs, early childhood Care, development and education

Introduction:

The Period of pregnancy serves as the bedrock for intellectual, psychosocial, physical, health, visual and hearing growth and development of an unborn child (Ogundipe, 2006). The period of early childhood symbolizes the foundation for a life-long process. From conception to six years old, children undergo rapid mental and physical development and must be encouraged to learn. According to Shonibare (2006), early childhood period is generally referred to as the period from birth till about the age of five or six. According to the National Policy on Education (2013), early childhood care development education is described as the care, protection, stimulation and learning promoted in the children from age 0-4 years in a crèche or nursery. Also, Agusiobo (2004) established that fact that early childhood education of a child starts from home with the mother as the child's first educator and care giver. In other words, it is the period before the official primary school age in Nigeria. It means that early childhood does not go beyond the pre-primary or what is popularly called nursery school year in Nigeria. Therefore, Obiweluzor (2015) believed that pre-primary level of education is the key to national development which must be maintained for sustainability of early childhood education in Nigeria because it is upon this level that all other educational levels are built.

Early Childhood Care, Development and Education in Nigeria

Early childhood care development education is regarded as Nursery school or pre- basic education as it is known today in Nigeria which is largely a post-colonial development. The resemblance of it during the colonial era were the kindergarten and infant classes, which consisted of groups of children considered not yet ready for basic education. As the grouping for instructions in schools was not age-based during the period, some children aged six or even nine, could be found in some of the infant classes. The demand for nursery education was, however, very low at that time (Maduewesi, 1999). Efforts to develop appropriate curriculum for early child care in Nigeria started about two decades ago. The first draft which was ready in the late 1990s emphasized the holistic development of the child, catered for the physical development and stimulation of the child, but was directed eventually at a classroom audience, and still left the care of children in the 0-3 year's bracket up to the traditions and cultures into which these children were born. The increasing global advocacy for an integrated approach to early childhood development is beginning to change that situation, as there is the need to address emerging concerns such as the HIV/AIDS education, peace and conflict resolution and Safety/Security (UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2006). Finally, Federal Government produced the curriculum for early childhood care, development and education in 2007 targeting children aged 0-4 years. This curriculum has been approved for use by the government and a training manual to facilitate the use of the curriculum was developed. The training manual is expected to promote the integrated approach and converge of all sectoral interventions- health, nutrition, water and environmental sanitation, psycho-social care, early learning, child protection with the aim to survive, live, learn and reach their full potentials (Micheal, 2006).

The National Policy on Education: Early Childhood Care, Development and Education (ECDE)

In the Current National Policy on Education (2013), childhood education is regarded as pre-primary education which is otherwise known as crèche or nursery education. It is defined as the education given in an educational institution to children aged- Zero (0) to four (4) prior to their entering the primary school which is now known as basic school. As stated in the policy document, the purpose of early childhood care, development and education includes, among others:

- Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school;
- Preparing the child for the primary level of education;
- Providing adequate care, supervision and security for the children while their parents are at work;
- Inculcate social, moral norms and values;
- Inculcating in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and the use of toys e.t.c;
- Develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit;
- Stimulate in the child good habits; especially good health habits; and
- Teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc through play.

The document lists a number of measures to be taken by government to ensure the achievement of those purposes of early childhood care, development and education. They include:

- Set and monitor minimum standard for ECCDE centres;
- Develop and disseminate curriculum materials such as the Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) Policy, National Minimum Standard for the establishment of ECCDE centres, IECD Curriculum, IECD Implementation Guidelines and all other materials that will enhance the implementation of ECCDE;
- Encourage both community and private efforts in the establishment of ECCDE section based on set standards;
- Make provision in teacher training education programmes for specialization in early childhood care and education, and for retraining of teachers;
- Ensure that the curriculum of teacher education is oriented towards play-way method;
- Ensure that ECCDE Centres adopt both caregiver infant ratios: (a) Crèche shall be 1:10 and (b.) Nursery 1: 25;
- Develop suitable ECCDE curriculum for nationwide implementation;
- Supervise and control quality of ECCDE institutions;
- Make provision for the production and effective utilization of learning and instructional materials in adequate numbers; and
- Ensure that the medium of instruction will be principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community; and to this end will develop the orthograph of more Nigerian Languages, and produce textbooks, supplementary readers and other instructional materials in Nigerian Languages.

In addition to these measures, appropriate levels of Government (Federal, State & Local) are required to establish and enforce educational laws that will ensure that established crèche and nursery schools are well run, crèche

and nursery teachers are well qualified, and other appropriate academic infrastructure are provided. Federal and State Ministries of Education are expected to ensure maintenance of high standards.

Early Childhood Care, Development in Relation to Children with Special Needs

Since early childhood years are regarded as the fundamental period for far-reaching human developments, a limitation caused by any of the causative factors (intrinsic or extrinsic) would definitely result in limited development. With the knowledge of the importance of early childhood, it has posed a great challenge also to teachers of children with special needs in early childhood. Regardless of the external surroundings, the environment of children with disability is by definition depriving. If there is sensory deprivation, individual child cannot take in the best and if it is the case of hearing or language, which is the core to greater cognitive exploration, such children are equally impaired.

The essence of the early education is to make up for the deprivations: cognitively, psycho-motor, socially, material wise, personnel wise and try to build the best out of them (Agusiobo, 2004).

Hearing Challenges in the Early Childhood Care Development and Education

A child's inability to hear may develop from the mother's womb. Although a child develops effective speech and language in the first 3 years of life, the ability to acquire spoken language is highest in the first six months after birth (Olusanya, 2000). Hearing loss in early childhood may cause speech and language defects which in turn restrict verbal communication with others. Olusanya (2006) further explained that hearing loss can affect one ear (unilateral) or both ears (bilateral). The difficulty encountered with hearing can be classified as mild, moderate, severe or profound. A child that has slight to moderate hearing loss is usually described as hard-of-hearing while the one with severe-to-profound hearing loss is referred to as deaf. A child with severe-to-profound hearing loss will have difficulty in relating with people, becomes isolated and may end up in schools using total communication, which often makes it hard for them to relate freely with hearing members of their families and the society at large. The inability to communicate orally, therefore, restricts educational and vocational attainment (Olusanya, 2006). Also, other researchers (Pimperton & Kennedy, 2012; Frank-Briggs, 2012) pointed out that, hearing-impaired children had delay in different domains of development, among them are language and communication, cognitive skills and poor academic progress and other forms of social development. Frank-Briggs (2012) highlighted the attitude that the parents have when they have hearing-impaired children it includes feelings of sadness, self-blame, anger and other behavioural attitudes, thus early identification of hearing-loss in children might prevent such feelings.

According to Shonibare (2006), hearing predisposes one to large volume of information in the environment. It sometimes reveals to one how much love is available in the environment or the amount of danger that can be perceived. It transfers an age long secret in the mind of others in a very short moment. The ear can translate the events on the street where the eyes cannot see as joyous or as a warning. Through hearing, the voice of the mother can be determined as a comforting shield when there is heat. It can build confidence on someone's being around even when one is alone. However, it is a different thing when a baby has to develop without hearing from the womb or from a very early childhood. The level of security, trust, language acquisition would have to change from the natural sequence. Actions will be seen without being able to quantify the rationale behind it. Shonibare (2006) further explains that speech, which is basically an auditory acquired skill, would have to become artificial. Looking into people's mouth to make meaning and interpretation of people's gesture becomes one's major means of communication. Sometimes, when there is a measure of residual hearing, the lack of clarity in the information flow would have been better shut out. The whole case is worst when the need is not appropriately perceived, identified by parents or guardians who only feel that the expression of the child is mere expression of stubbornness. Loss of hearing imposes a great deal of limitation on a child who experiences it from birth. A teacher or caregiver must appreciate this.

Identification of Hearing Needs in Early Childhood

Identifying the hearing needs in the early childhood is very important. The following are the methods that may be employed to identify the hearing needs of the children:

General Observation: It has been observed that from general observation virtually every level of hearing loss can escape identification before nine months because the activities that could lead to it are common to all such as crying, babbling, cooing, and some form of lolling. Only very close observation elicit appropriate suspicion (Shonibare, 2006).

According to Olusanya (2006), the only alternative option is to detect hearing loss as early as possible through screening and prompt intervention. This process is referred to as secondary prevention. It entails the early detection of hearing loss in children to minimize its adverse consequences in early childhood. For instance there is ample scientific evidence that a baby born with moderate to severe hearing loss can still develop spoken language as one with normal hearing. If the hearing loss is detected within three months and appropriate intervention is provided before six months of age. This is why the screening of new born for hearing loss before being discharged from the hospital or within three months of birth has become a standard public health care practice in many developed countries for instance in most parts of U.S.A, the practice is mandated by legislation.

Specific methods of identifying hearing loss include:

Neonatal screening: A critical examination using the Apgar's score which is a systematic evaluation of physical examination at birth, respiratory, muscular response and sensitivity. Oto-Acoustic Emissions (OAE) and automated auditory brainstem response (AABR) are widely used in infant screening programmes throughout the world (Olusanya, 2006).

Audiometric Assessment: This equipment is also helpful in identifying children with hearing loss. Graphical representations are produced to show the level of hearing loss of the patient.

Deducing from Behavior: This type of children may be described in early growth stage as unusually quiet or "stubborn". Other signs are:

- Lacks of affection
- Turning of the head towards the speaker
- Difficulty in following instruction or direction
- Withdrawn, reluctance to participate in oral activities- dependence on classmates/playmates for instruction-excessive focus of eyes on speakers mouth.
- Withdrawn- speech defect-disparity between expected and achievement.

Needs for Early Identification of the Hearing Impairment

Hearing plays a key part in learning to talk. Without speech and hearing, it is difficult for person to develop interpersonal relationships which lead to academic failure and in turn severely limits career options. The needs of persons with hearing difficulties cannot be over-emphasized especially during the infant stages in life which has direct impact on speech and language acquisition, academic achievement and social/emotional developments. The first three years of life are the most important period for speech and language acquisition. Consequently, if a child is hard of hearing or deaf at birth or experiences hearing loss in infancy or early childhood, it is likely that the child will not receive adequate auditory, linguistic and social stimulation as the prerequisite to speech and language learning, social and emotional development thus that child may not function properly. The goal of early identification and intervention is to minimize or prevent these adverse effects. This fact was buttressed by Frank-Briggs (2012) that early identification of hearing-loss and effective treatment of such newborn child would prevent adverse effect of hearing-loss in children. Robson (2006) further highlighted that it is important to identify the hearing-loss early enough because nearly all children develop transient hearing-loss related to middle ear infections during the period from birth to 11 years of age. Smith, Bale and White (2005) stated that hearing-loss occurred in one to two per 1000 newborns and in 2 per 1000 young children.

Meeting the barriers of Hearing Impairment in Early Childhood

Hearing loss discovered during pre-primary period could pose a devastating barrier to the child's development and learning. Unless the teacher or care giver knows how to modify the instruction to meet the needs of the children with hearing impairment, the child may not develop to his or her full potential (Shonibare, 2006).

Meeting the needs posed by the challenges in early childhood is not a mere exercise. Recently, a new dimension has been introduced as a result of electronic implant, with the intension of eliminating the effect of hearing loss. For a school or non-surgical option, a broad overview will be provided in the presentation. These are in relation to early childhood and some spilling over years beyond formative years.

Pre-primary Intervention: According to Shonibare (2006) due to early childhood deprivation of the hearing challenged children, pre-primary intervention should be encouraged.

Goals of Pre-primary Intervention: To give the child opportunity to experience how other children are sharing, playing and taking turn during socialization;

To allow a child without hearing appreciates some guiding rules in interacting with others and how that may be lacking. Hence, there must be early socialization opportunity, through day-care or kindergarten etc;

To develop language, speech and speech reading in order to effectively interact.

Skills needed at the Pre-primary:

- The use of hearing aids will be of help, the child can be made to develop receptive and expressive language skills, through auditory training and speech-focused attention by the care giver.
- Other skills include localizing and identifying sound, discriminating it and classifying it appropriately e.g. goat, dog, door banging etc. Allow for extensive verbalization, talk to the child appropriately; dialogue; the child should listen to stories; share nursery rhymes and greetings.
- An auditory environment in general involves readiness to listen, use voice to get attention, Repeat speech frequently, discuss using object as focus, Encourage parents to do same at home or immediately the need arises.

Association Method: This is the major means of introducing reading to the child. Reading in this sense is not necessarily the print. The child must be taught how to read situations, indications in the environment, but often they must be labeled, cup, spoon, cat (large number of picture cards will be required at this stage). After this, sentences can then be progressively introduced like the boy is running, the girl is sleeping on the bed, he is drinking water etc (Shonibare, 2006).

Total Communication: The concept of total communication seems to be compromised ground on which the controversy between the pure orals and the manual sign language proponents stood. Shonibare (2006) carried out a study in this area highlighting the key components: - speech, hearing aid and auditory training, lip reading. Sign language, finger spelling, gesture, the pad and pencil method.

If this composition is used from the early childhood, it is believed that the impact of hearing loss would have been reduced as much as possible, this will give the child adequate opportunity to develop intellectually.

Conclusion

Early childhood is an important stage in life. It is the most crucial stage for all children irrespective of hearing impairment or not. Early detection of the problem and prompt intervention is highly recommended for them. Parents should also be vigilant to observe any strange behavior in children's action during the early childhood.

Proper placement of the child with hearing impairment in the appropriate pre-primary where teachers or care givers will take adequate care will be of advantage to the children. The use of hearing aids and auditory training will improve the hearing system, strong speech training and the use of total communication will enable the children develop speech and language. Showing love and affection can also take care of their psychological needs during the early childhood.

Finally both government and private organizations should be ready to provide good and conducive academic environment with facilities that will meet the children's hearing needs in the early childhood to bridge the gap created by the challenges of hearing loss and the hearing children.

Recommendations

It is important to note the following recommendations in order to meet the needs of children with hearing difficulties in the early childhood:

- Government should take ECCD serious by establishing the crèche or nursery schools for Nigerian;
- The professionals in the field of ECCD should consider challenged children when deciding matters that affect them;
- Teachers and caregivers should place these children properly so as not to contribute more to their educational deprivation.

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