The Implication of Reggio Emilia Education Curriculum Approach to the Education of the Nigerian Child for Sustainable Development

[1]*Ndifon Friday Ogobi Ph.D., [2]Ani Hannah Sunday, [3]Odu Doris Emmanuel

[1,2]Department of Early Childhood Care and Education, Cross River State College of Education Akamkpa-Nigeria
[3]Department of Education Foundation (Curriculum and Instruction), Cross River State College of Education Akamkpa-Nigeria
*Corresponding Author's E-Mail: fridayogobi@gmail.com

Abstract - **The study investigated the extent to which Reggio Emilia Curriculum approach in the education of the Nigeria child is implemented in Cross River State Nigeria. The study seeks to ascertain the extent of the availability of supportive learning environment, parent and teachers collaboration in enhancing child development in Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE). The study adopted a descriptive survey design and two research questions were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study consists of 173 teachers from the 393 ECCE centers of the six Local Government Area of Cross River State Central Education Zone. A sample of 72 teachers randomly selected from the population was used. The instrument for data collection was a well-structured 23 items questionnaire titled Reggio Emilia Implementation Strategies Questionnaire (RELSQ). The data collected were analyzed with mean and standard deviation. The result reveals that there is a low extent of availability of supportive learning environment as ascertain from the available facilities, low teaching and parent collaboration in the learning process in ECCE. Based on the findings it was recommended among others that teachers and parents should encourage improvisation of school facilities, government and school owners should provide more facilities to ECCE centers.**

Keywords: Reggio Emilia, Curriculum model, supportive learning environment, Parental collaboration and sustainable development.

1. Introduction

Educational curriculum is any educational programme. It has often said that its fundamental nature is derived from the fact that it is the very foundation for any educational system. Curriculum is the entire range of experiences that children have at school: the content, objectives and learning outcomes. The knowledge of child development and careful observation of the needs and interest of an individual child, guides the development of a curriculum.

There are so many views on what the concept "curriculum" should mean. The reasons for the divergent views stems from; research result in developmental psychology and group dynamic newness of curriculum as a field of study, development and advance in science and technology, entry of many people both outside of the field of education [24]. These and others not mentioned here are responsible to the fluidity and nebulous nature of curriculum.

The many conceptions of the curriculum have either not completely removed it from the original Latin meaning of curriculum as a "runway", a course which one runs to reach a goal, a running course or race, running wager, a race ground or career [27]. According to [29], curriculum is the planned and unplanned experiences which the learner receives in the process of their formal education for the purpose of becoming useful citizens of a society who can make meaningful contributions to the sustainability of the society they duel. A sustainable national development according to Isa and Vambe [18], refers to an unending process of qualitative and quantitative transformation in the capacity to realize national entity in organizing the process of production and distribution of the material benefits of the society of sustained improvement in the wellbeing of the members of a nation. Sustainable development is a type of development that can meet the needs of the present without compromising the future. It seeks to maintain the process of productivity by replacing used resources with resources of equal or great values. [17] The sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognize the child as an agent of change as can be inferred in goal 4. It is specified in target 4:2 that "by 2030, Nations should ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality Early Childhood Development Education to enable them be ready for the primary level of education.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), according to National Education Policy of 2013, is the education given to children in an educational institution prior to their entering formal primary school. A wide range of early childhood curriculum models or approaches exists. These approaches,

most often are used in center-based setting providing half-day and full-day early childhood. The curriculum model or approaches are:

a) Reggio Emilia curriculum model
b) Montessori curriculum model
   ▪ Creative curriculum model
   ▪ The development interaction (Bank Street) model
   ▪ High scope curriculum model. Etc.

Variation among these curriculum models reflect differences in values concerning what is more or less important for young children to learn as well as in the process by which children are believed to learn and develop. These variations inform the role of teachers/caregivers, the curriculum focus, the classrooms structure and the ways in which children participate in learning.

Early childhood curriculum models also vary in terms of the freedom granted to the teachers/caregivers to interpret and implement the model's framework. Some models are highly structured and provide detailed scripts for teachers/caregivers behaviors, others provide guiding principles to determine how best to implement the principles. Regardless of their differences in goals and flexibility in their implementation, curriculum models are designed to promote uniformity across early childhood programmes. Early childhood curriculum models do affect child outcome. Differences in child outcome among curriculum models tend to reflect the intent of the curriculum models being adopted and evaluated.

The Reggio Emilia curriculum approach has been adopted in Nigeria for her Early Childhood Care and Education ECCE. This approach according to Ismail in Federal Ministry of Education (2015) is adopted to identify the needs to cover all the milestones in the development of the Nigerian child add new areas of security and protection issues which are germane at developing the child holistically. Raggio Emilia educational curriculum approach specifically used in ECCE was founded in Raggio Emilia, a small wealthy town in northern Italy shortly after the World War II at the time working parents were looking for a more appropriate type of child care and education for their children, that would promote critical thinking, group work and collaborative skills. It promotes low-cost no-cost approach to towards the development of learning materials. According to Carol Brunson in [18], Loris Malaguzzi, in collaboration with others opened Reggio Emilia first municipal Pre-school or ECCE center in 1963. The school was financed by selling a tank, nine horses and two military trucks abandoned after the World War II. The preschool was built with stones, sand and timber gathered by the villagers at a very low cost or almost no cost. Reggio Emilia curriculum approach is built on the principles

of: (a) Enriched supportive environment, (b) Parental and teacher's partnership or collaboration in child learning among others.

The school environment, which includes, the human and material resources are major variables that can influence child development in an ECCE center. The facilities like classrooms, libraries, play ground and play equipment among others constitute the school environment. A typical Reggio school should be child friendly. A school is said to be child friendly when it provide a safe, clean healthy and protective environment for the learners. Schools that are regarded as child friendly should respect and protect the rights of the child. A good school should provide a conducive learning environment for [15]. According to [35] the success of an educational institution is determined by a supportive environment. School environment means the extent to which school setting promotes learner's safety and health which are major determinants of academic performance. [37], specify that a Reggio class should be spacious and free without desks to enable learners interact freely with others. Mats on bear floor with assorted play materials are recommended to enhance creativity. [34] Assert that play materials enhance effective play way method of teaching which is recommended for early learners. [39], assert that a supportive school environment must have adequate facilities which includes but not limited to plants, buildings and equipment to support effective teaching and learning. The performance indicator of a school with a child friendly environment is the learner's academic achievement.

[11], In their study on environment, physical facilities and school size as predictive of sustainable academic performance in primary schools in Lagos state, Nigeria, adopted a correlational design with all the primary 6 learners in public schools. Their sample was 380 learners drawn from the population. The formulated 6 hypotheses which were tested with t-test at a significant level of 0.05 and degree of freedom of 11. The result showed x values greater than the critical value of 2.201 indicating that school environment, physical facilities and school size have significant influence on the academic performance of learners. They recommended a stimulating school environment to enhance learner's academic achievement.

[4], Conducted a similar study on the influence of school facilities on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Ikot Abasi Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom state. A survey research design was adopted for the study; the study population consisted of all the primary schools and all the primary school pupils numbering 34 and 61, 639 respectively. The sample size was made up of 25 primary schools which were picked through random sampling

technique (balloting). 1000 pupils through the simple method were also proportionally selected from the 25 primary schools. The study was guided by five (5) hypotheses and a questionnaire was used to gather data from the respondent. Independent t-test and PPMC were used in analyzing data. The findings among others showed that school facilities and other related factors, significantly influenced pupil's academic performance. The researcher made some recommendations based on his findings. He emphasized that government should continue to provide school facilities to school and that teachers and learners should maintain such facilities.

From the above analysis, it is established that school environment have a significant relationship with learners' academic achievement. This may have induced the Reggio Emilia proponent to include supportive environment as a principle. The most critical relationship regarding learner's achievement remains in the connection between teacher and parent. For schools to realize a profitable collaboration then the administration must look beyond the parents of the learners to the larger community. These are the partners that can be part of the solution to problems that affect education. School and family have a common duty to educate the child. Teachers and parents participate to advance children's education goals through shared planning strategies and responsibilities, in order to deliver the educational program to the child [6].Since parents are the child's first teachers, and perhaps the best, they make active efforts to help teachers achieve educational goals with their children [3].

In order to ensure such a goal, an intensive cooperation between parents and teachers, considering that the two stakeholders cannot work in isolation (Christenson, 2004). One of the ways of cooperation between teacher and parent is where the teacher leads all interaction by showing his/her dominance in the relationship, based on the fact that the teacher is a specialist and can provide professional information about the child's progress [30]. Teacher domination can work for a short time, but it cannot create the desired relationships that are needed in school today [7]. Family-focused practices ensure that the teacher and parent have same and equal status, which means sharing values, ideas and gratitude through their mutual participation in school activities [2].

Parents' participation in facilitating learning activities is a strong predictor of their children's achievement. Organizing and setting the daily routine and completing school assignments is a very important family support factor that has an impact on high academic achievement for students [2]. Research in the field of education has revealed that there are different aspects of parent's participation in education activities of children that have positive relationship with

pupils' academic achievements. Some of them are the teacher-parent relationship, the parent-child discussion about problems that are related with school, family environment that supports learning parents' beliefs and attitudes regarding the importance of special subjects, as well as self-assessment of their abilities to support learning of their children.

Interactions between children and parents help in their emotional, physical and intellectual development. Parents can engage in daily learning activities even with very young children to help them develop lifelong motivation, perseverance and love to teach [8]. The fact that children spend more time out of school strengthens the argument of parents' influence on their children education. [9] Indicated that the initial experiences that mold an individual values, aspiration, emotion and attitudes are those that are offered by parents and close members of the family. The kind of activities a parent encourages the child to take part in has direct influence on their future. The parents who know the importance of education and have positive attitudes towards school will always press their children to complete their homework and assist them in doing it.

Parental participation in their children's education either by helping or guiding them with home work performed at home after school programmes or by assisting them with class work during the school day has been noted to be a highly effective tool for improving academic performance [33]. Furthermore, [38] submitted that the relationship between parental participation and academic achievement was positive, regardless of a definition of parental participation or measure of achievement. [13] study confirmed that effort by the school to increase their interaction with their children by learning together has increased the time they spent at home with the children and made learning activities more interesting. It also created opportunities for social interaction between families since parents met often and discussed educational issues in a supportive and save environment with teachers. The experience also built confidence in the parents as adult learners.

Educated parents showed greater concern for the academic welfare of their children than their counterparts with less education. The parents with higher formal education, high economic status and positive attitudes towards education would have better educational achievements expectations for their children [32]. The author further noted that the higher the social economic group, the more parents attend open-days, concerts and parents' teachers' associations meetings and the more often they talked with head teachers and class teachers about how their children were doing at school. This implies that educated parents have greater concern for academic progress of their children.

[19] Investigated the effectiveness of school community partnership in educational development in secondary schools of Kenyenya District. The study adopted a descriptive study design, stratified random sampling techniques was used with questions on the questionnaires being structured and unstructured styles, which were considered suitable in explaining why it was important for schools to partner with the community to realize educational development. Ten schools were sampled out of 28 schools in the study area. Three sets of questionnaire were prepared and administered to ten head teachers (10), forty B.O.G/P.T.A executive (40), fifty teachers (50) and one interview for ten parents (10) who were selected randomly. The collected data was coded and analyzed using SPSSS and descriptive data presented in frequencies, charts, graphs and tables. The findings indicated that there was a positive relationship between the school and community participation in student performance in the study area. The finding further established that there existed active participation of parent in PTA meetings and other school activities.

1.1 Statement of problem

The Nigerian government adopted the Reggio Emilia approach of ECCE curriculum in her pre-schools. Effort is made to train and retrain stakeholders to enhance effective implementation of the Reggio principle in all ECCE Centre. It has been observed that not much has been done on the provision of needed facilities and environment for full implementation, of Reggio education, hence the need to ascertain the extent of availability and compliance of some of the requirement in implementing the Reggio Emilia approach of ECCE curriculum in the various ECCE centers for child sustainable development.

1.2 Purpose of the study

Generally, the study aimed at investigating the extent to which Reggio Emilia curriculum approach in the education of the Nigerian child is implemented in Cross River Central Education Zone. Specifically, the purported to:

(i)   Ascertain the extent of the availability of facilities in a supportive learning environment in a Reggio ECCE center to enhance could development.
(ii) To find out the extent of teaches and parent collaboration in the development of learners in a Reggio ECCE Centre.

1.3 Research question

To guide the study, the following two research questions were formulated:

(i)   What is the extent if availability of facilities in Reggio ECCE centers to enhance child development?
(ii) To what extent do teachers and parent collaborate in the Reggio ECCE centers to enhance child development?

2. Method

The researchers adopted a descriptive survey design for the study. According to [15], a descriptive research design is the type of design that aims to systemically obtain information to describe an existing situation.

The population of the study consisted of all the 173 teachers in the 393 public ECCE centers or pre-schools in the 6 local government areas of central education zone of Cross River State. The sample of the study was 72 teachers or caregivers from 72 schools randomly selected from the population. The instrument for data collection was a well-structured (23) items researchers questionnaire. The instrument was face validated by three experts, one form the Department of ECCE, Cross River State College of Education, Akampka and the other two from the Measurement and Evaluation Unit of the University of Calabar. These experts were requested to critically examine the instrument in terms of relevance of the content and clarity of the statements; they were also requested to advise the researchers on the suitability of the rating scale. Cronbach Apha Statistic was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument, a reliability coefficient of 0.68 was obtained.

The researchers used direct delivery method to administer the instrument to the respondents. The data collected were analyzed using means scores and standard deviation ($\bar{x}$ and SD).

2.1 Result

Table 1: Mean response of teachers on the extend of the available of facilities is a Raggio center to enhance child development

S/N	ITEMS	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	Extent of availability of chalk board	3.00	0.64	High
2	Extent of the availably of toys	2.22	0.74	Low
3	Extent of availability of computer games	1.00	0.46	Very low
4	Extent of availability of charts	2.00	0.57	Low
5	Extent of availability of playground	3.40	0.47	High
6	Extent of availability of playground equipment	2.20	0.59	Low
7	Extent of availability of offices	2.40	0.74	Low
8	Extent of availability of libraries	1.00	0.49	Very low
9	Extent of availability of desk	2.00	0.57	Low
10	Availability of classrooms	3.00	0.64	High
11	Availability of indoor playground	2.40	0.54	Low
	$\sum \bar{X}$ and SD	2.20	0.59	

Means $\bar{X}$ score ≥ 2.99 = High extent ≤ 2.00 and ≤ 3.00 = low extent and ≥ 100 and ≤ 2.00 very low

Research question one addressed the extent of availability of facilities in a supportive learning environment of Reggio ECCE Centre to enhance child development. The average of the mean response of the teachers was 2.20 and the standard deviation of 0.59.

Table 1 show that facilities like chalk board, playground and classrooms were adequately available while toys, computer games, charts, playground equipment, libraries, desk and indoor play materials were in short supply and not sufficient to enhance child development in a Reggio ECCE class.

Table 2: Mean response of teachers on the extent of teachers and parents collaboration in Reggio ECCE Centre to enhance child development

S/N	ITEMS	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	Parents are used as resource persons	1.00	0.46	Very low
2	Parents attend PTA meetings	3.00	0.64	High
3	Parents pay special levies	3.00	0.64	High
4	Parents supply play materials	2.40	0.67	Low
5	Parents access learner's notebook	2.00	0.57	Low
6	Parents provide children needs	2.20	0.59	Low
7	Teachers know the parents of learners	2.40	0.74	Low
8	Teachers attend PTA meeting	3.00	0.64	High
9	Teachers improvised learning materials	2.00	0.57	Low
9	Teachers give and mark home work	3.00	0.64	High
10	Availability of indoor playground	3.00	0.64	High
	$\sum \bar{X}$ and SD	2.40	0.62	

Also, research question two addressed the extent of teachers and parent's collaboration in Reggio ECCE centers to enhance child development. The average mean response in table 2 was 2.40 and stranded deviation of 0.62. The table reveals that parents attend PTA meeting pay special levies, teachers also attend PTA meeting and monitor learner's assignment. Both teachers and parents lack commitment or collaboration in the supply of play material, assessment of note books of learners and other records, provision of children's needs and improvisations of learning facilities. Their collaboration therefore is not sufficient enough to enhance child development.

2.2 Discussion

The analysis of data arising from research question one, revealed that there exists a high inadequate facility in Reggio ECCE centers in the sample schools. It was deducted that inadequate provision of facilities was one of the major problems in ECCE centers of Central Education Zone of Cross River State that claimed to have adopted Reggio Curriculum Principles to enhance a holistic child development. The analysis revealed that facilities easily found in ECCE centers are chalkboards, empty playgrounds and poor classrooms. The

result further showed very low mean scores of indicating that there exists an inadequate facility in ECCE centers.

This result agrees [1] who assert that some factors that militate against a holistic child development of a child include but not limited to lack of basic facilities and supportive environment. [35] In his study of school environment and children academic performance also found out that inadequate facilities hinder children academic performance in social studies.

The result from the analysis of research question return between parent, teachers and learners in ECCE centers. The mean score of $\bar{X}$=2.40 fell below the bench mark of $\bar{X}$=2.50 and above to be adjudged high. The analysis in table 2 shows that parents and teachers only attend Parent Teachers Associated (PTA) meetings, pay children fees and observe their note books but there is lack of development in ECCE Centre.

The result of research question two agrees with [20] who found out that parent, teachers and children collaboration in teaching learning process enhance effective and high academic performance while lack of collaboration hinders it. Similarly [38] submitted that a good relationship between parents and teachers create positive effects on relationship and hinders performance. Parents and Teachers collaboration in schools gives learners a sense of belonging and create a child friendly environment that is ultimately required for a Reggio school to thrive.

3. Conclusion

From the findings and discussion of the study, the following conclusions are made.

- There exist inadequate facilities in ECCE centers that claimed to have adopted Reggio Emilia Curriculum approach. This opposed the required supportive learning environment needed to enhance child development in a Reggio school.
- There exists insignificant collaboration between teachers and parents in the teaching of ECCE learners.
- Parents and teachers are not collaborating to improvise low-cost facilities needed in Reggio schools.

4. Recommendation

On the basis of the finding, the following recommendations are made:

- Teachers and parents should endeavor to collaborate in the area of improvisation of learning resource from local materials to enhance child development.

- Government and stakeholders should organize workshops for teachers and parents on the implementation of Reggio curriculum approach.
- Government and proprietors should provide materials like computers; playground material, toys, resources persons in their schools to ensure a holistic child development as advocated by Reggio Emilia.

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