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Appraisal Of The Regio Emilia Approach Utilization To Early Childhood Education In Katsina State

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ABSTRACT
The study examined the utilization of Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education in Katsina State, Nigeria. The study adopted the use of questionnaire. The targeted population for the study was 1534 pre-primary schools and 1774 Teachers of pre-primary schools in Katsina state. The sample of the study consisted of 65 Teachers of pre-primary schools in Katsina state. The study was guided by two objectives, research questions and hypothesis respectively. This study utilized validated research instrument with reliability coefficient of 0.8 and 0.9. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics inform of mean, standard deviation, mean rank and Sum of Ranks. Hypothesis was tested using ANOVA at 0.5% level of significance. Specifically, findings indicated significant differences among all the parameters tested. The use of Regio-Emilia approach was influenced by the Teachers in the early childhood education in Katsina state. It was concluded that the use of Regio-Emilia approach to the early childhood education proved to be effective and more relevant to children in pre-primary schools in Katsina state. The researcher also recommended among others that the Federal Government of Nigeria through NGO's and its agencies, the state ministry of education in collaboration with Teacher Training Institutions, UBEC and SUBEB should maintain the tempo on continuous training and re-training workshop for the ECD teachers on the utilization of Reggio-Emilia approach to early childhood education. The research seeks to assess the utilization of Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education in Katsina State, Nigeria. This study used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research paradigm (Mixed-Method) in order to minimize the weaknesses of both approaches
Keywords: Regio-Emila, Approach, Pre-primary, learning environment, early childhood centers

INTRODUCTION

Early years in life are widely accepted as the most important period during which children experience cognitive, language, perceptual, socio-emotional and motor development which they will need for future achievements and social functioning. This informs the reason why the periods of the early years need to be handled with all special and detailed attention. Estes (2004) has described the early years as a remarkable period of growth and development in the lives of children. In their submission, Oduolowu and Olowe (2011) noted that the early years of children are years of extreme vulnerability and tremendous potentials, during which adequate protection, care and stimulation are essential to provide the foundation for well-being and development. There is no doubt research conducted by neuro-scientist on brain development gave early childhood education a boost. Early childhood education is recognized worldwide

as as one of the education outcomes of individuals as well as nations. (Magruder,2018). Early Childhood Education is a foundation upon which the children future development is laid and the inability to meet children's nutritional requirements, basic health care, protection from violence and abuse, stimulation, positive relationships, safe and decent shelter may affect child's development during critical stage of brain development (Darragh, 2010).

The most important scientific break rough is that the first few years of life of the child which is regarded as critical stages of brain development. It is generally believed that the quality of care, nutrition and stimulation child received in the early years provide solid foundation for subsequent cognitive, social, physical and emotional development which will have an impact on child's performance and achievement in school and in life (Nakpodia, 2011).

Reggio Emilia approach is an emerging educational approach that started in Northern part of Italy immediately after World War II. It's a cosmopolitan city with a population of about 1300000 people. Over the past 50 years they developed a school system that spawned an innovative method of early childhood Education that has become famously and globally known as Reggio Emilia.

(Umegboro, 2022) It emphasizes on socio-constructivist where the child is seen as unique and active learner with different interest, needs, desires, allergies and interactions with friends, adults and environment. Even the identical twins differ in these areas of development (Birinci, 2018; Cline and Vau, 2019). It's therefore against this backdrop the researcher wishes to carry out an appraisal on the Utilization of Reggio Emilia (RE) approach in Katsina State. Reggio Emilia is one of the early childhood philosophies that were getting global attention. Initially, it was utilized in Europe, precisely in poorest Northern part of Italy. It later own spread to America, Quebec in Canada, China and Saudi Arabia. Providing this foundation during the early years, Early Childhood Education (ECE) becomes a key actor. For Reggio Emilia approach to be successful it has to utilize its principles and challenge the traditional and dominant view of the child as passive recipient of knowledge to RE view of the child with rights and abilities to co-construct his learning with teachers (Hans, 2019) More so, for RE to be successful teachers/caregivers the learners' environment has to be considered as third teacher in line with approach: This can be buttressed by Abdulmalik (2020) view from the teacher's perspective that, it is possible to implement RE with the consideration for culture and learners 'environment. The learner's environment should be beautifully appealing with open design settings, promote participation, involvement and communication between all learners. It is therefore a challenge before the ECD teachers to understand that Reggio Emilia unstructured and lack written curriculum there by making it open ended approach as against the written and structured traditional curriculum designed by policy makers. Lastly for RE to be successful teacher's/care givers has to create an opportunity for children to be creative, think outside the box and figure out how to do things without constantly telling them when and how contrary to the traditional method learning through rote memorization (Vecchi, 2010). From the proceeding we can deduce that for Reggio Emilia approach to be successfully implemented and see to its expansion in other states of the northern part of Nigeria, the approach has to be localized to suit local context and the professional development should focus on changing the dominant view about child, curriculum and practice (Miller & Pound, 2014). It's therefore against this backdrop the researcher wishes to carry out an appraisal of on the Utilization of Reggio Emilia (RE) approach in Katsina State. Most importantly Reggio Emilia is one of the early childhood philosophies that were getting global attention. Initially, it was utilized in Europe, precisely in poorest Northern part of Italy and It later spread to America, Quebec in Canada, China and Saudi Arabia(Abdulmalik,2020) Finally, there was the need to state here that the researcher embarked on this study and use the findings to promote general understanding of the Reggio Emilia utilization to early childhood approach; its success and challenges in Katsina State and also consequently contribute to the consolidation and expansion of the approach. It will also be employed to serve as scheme that informs the policy makers and ECD teachers on proper utilization of the approach. It was also help ECD teachers to become well prepared Reggio teachers that was see to the successful utilization of Reggio Emilia in future and overcome its challenges during and after the pilot program. Although the Reggio Emilia approach was conducive to the development of creativity, it cannot be

viewed without skepticism. Children in Reggio Emilia are not required by law to have formal education until the age of six or first grade (Delrio, 2012). Therefore, early childhood centers are free to exercise great flexibility in teaching and learning, as they are not required or pressured to maintain school readiness for children moving up to first grade, as is the case in the United States. Additionally, the municipality and the Italian government do not impose federal or state mandates at the early childhood level; nor do they require schools to follow certain academic standards. There are only minimal guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice, developed by the municipality, to ensure the safety of children (Infant-toddler centers and preschools, 2010).

Objective(s) of the Study

The study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine whether the implementation utilized the Reggio Emilia approach
2. To examine the impact of learning environment in the utilization of Reggio Emilia approach
3. To examine the impact of activity based learning in the utilization of Reggio Emilia approach
4. To examine the role of communities, government and NGO'S in the utilization of Reggio Emilia approach.

Research Questions

1. How R.E utilization influence the implementation of Early Childhood Education in Katsina State?
2. To what extent does local language promote the utilization of R.E approach?
3. To what extent does learning environment influence the utilization of RE approach?
4. How does activity base promote the utilization R.E approach to early childhood Education?
5. What is the role of communities, government and NGOs in the Utilization of R.E approach?

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research paradigm was employed for this study (Mixed-Method) in order to minimize the weaknesses of both approaches. Likert questionnaire was employed using four (4) rating scales. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was applied to analyze data since it's easier and accurate. Questionnaire was served as the instrument for data collection from ECD teachers in some selected Early Childhood Centers in Katsina state. Focus group interview was u. The study adopted the use of questionnaire. The targeted population for the study was 1534 pre-primary schools and 1774 Teachers of pre-primary schools in Katsina state. The sample of the study consisted of 65 Teachers of pre-primary schools in Katsina state. The study was guided by tow objectives, research questions and hypothesis respectively. This study utilized validated research instrument with reliability coefficient of 0.8 and 0.9. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics inform of mean, standard deviation, mean rank and Sum of Ranks. Hypothesis was tested using ANOVA at 0.5% level of significance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result and analysis of the data obtained under the following research questions:

Research Question 1: *How Reggio-Emilia utilization influenced the implementation of Early childhood education in Katsina state?*

Table 1: Mean, Standard and S.D on utilization and implementation of Reggio-Emilia

Source	N	Sum	Mean	Std Error	S.D
Methodology	65	205	3.15	0.045	0.364
Collaboration	65	202	3.11	0.039	0.312
Activity Based	65	260	4.00	0.000	0.000
Critical thinking	65	188	2.89	0.039	0.312
Project	65	195	3.00	0.000	0.000

Table 1: Presented the mean performance of teacher on the utilization and implementation of Reggio-Emilia approach to the early childhood education. From the result obtained mean Rank of Activity based is 4.00, methodology and collaboration recorded a mean Rank of 3.15 and 3.11. While critical thinking

Research Question 2: *To what extent does Local Language promote utilization of Reggio-Emilia Approach?*

Table 2: Mean Standard error and Standard deviation on Local language that promote utilization of Reggio-Emilia approach.

Source	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Error	S.D
Language	65	195	3.00	0.000	0.000
Local songs	65	228	3.51	0.073	0.590
Indigenous play	65	222	3.42	0.062	0.497
Local dancing	65	228	3.51	0.062	0.504
Fairly tales	65	193	2.97	0.079	0.637

recorded a mean Rank of 2.89. The mean difference was observed among all the above items mentioned. This mean indicated that there was high influence (HI) on the use of Reggio-Emilia approach by the teacher to the early childhood education in Katsina state.

Table 2: Above shows mean performance of Teachers on the promotion of local language and utilization of Reggio-Emilia. Language of the immediate environment having mean rank of (3.00) which indicated by the teaching to promote local language to early childhood education in Katsina state. While local

Research Question 3: *To what extent does learning environment influence the utilization of Reggio-Emilia?*

Table 3: Mean Standard Error and Standard deviation on the use of learning environment to influence utilization of Reggio-Emilia Approach.

Source	N	Sum	Mean	Std Error	S.D
Use of local materials	65	227	3.49	0.062	0.504
Culture	65	208	3.20	0.080	0.642
Kitchen utensils	65	219	3.37	0.060	0.486
Local skills and trade	65	214	3.29	0.115	0.931
Nature	65	222	3.42	0.062	0.497

songs, indigenous play, local dancing and fairy tales with mean of 3.42, 3.51 and 2.97. The mean rank of 3.51 indicated a very high extent. While 3.42 mean rank shows high extent but fairy tales having mean of 2.97 indicated low extents on the use of Reggio-Emilia approach to promote local language.

Above shows mean performance of Teachers on the influence of learning environment for the utilization of Reggio-Emilia approach. Use of local materials and nature with a mean of 3.49 and 3.42 which indicated a very high influence on the use of Reggio-Emilia by the teachers to influence learning environment to early childhood education in Katsina state. While Kitchen utensil with a mean of 3.37 which indicated high influence on the use of Reggio-Emilia on the utilization of Reggio-Emilia on learning environment to early childhood education in Katsina state. Culture and local skills and trade with a mean of 3.29 and 3.20 indicated low influence on the utilization of Reggio-Emilia using learning environment to early childhood education.

Research Question 4: *How does activity based promote the utilization of Reggio-Emilia approach to early childhood education?*

Table 4: Mean, Standard error and Standard deviation (SD), to promote activity based using Reggio-Emilia approach

Source	N	Sum	Mean	Std Error	S.D
Creativity	65	251	3.86	0.632	5.099
Critical Thinking	65	230	3.54	0.062	0.502
Curiosity	65	180	2.77	0.053	0.425
Practiced	65	195	3.00	0.000	0.000
Imagination	65	130	2.00	0.000	0.000
Use of Object	65	260	4.00	0.000	0.000

Table 4: Above shows mean performance of Teachers on the promoting of activity based using Reggio-Emilia approach. Use of objects with a mean of 4.00 which indicated very high extent on the utilization of Reggio-Emilia by the teachers to promote activity based to early childhood education in Katsina state. While creativity, critical thinking and practiced with the mean rank of 3.86, 3.54 and 3.00 indicated high extent on the utilization of Reggio-Emilia approach by the teachers to promote activity based to early childhood education in Katsina state. The curiosity and imagination recorded the lowest mean rank of 2.77 and 2.00 which have shown low extent on the utilization of R.E approach by the teachers to promote activity based to early childhood education in Katsina state.

Research Question 5: *To what extent do communities, Government and non-Governmental organizations played role on the utilization of R-E approach*?

Table 5: Mean Standard error and Standard deviation on communities, government and non-governmental organizations on the utilization of R.E approach.

Source	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Error	S.D
Control of local Materials	65	130	2.00	0.000	0.000
Access to Important place	65	260	4.00	0.000	0.000
Provision of Teaching	65	195	3.00	0.000	0.000
Employment of ECS	65	195	3.00	0.000	0.000
Training and Re-training	65	260	4.00	0.000	0.000
Funding	65	260	4.00	0.000	0.000
Provision of play materials	65	195	3.00	0.000	0.000

Table above shows mean performance of teachers on the role of communities, non-governmental organizations for the utilization of R.E approach. Access to important places, training and re-training of early childhood teachers, funding having mean rank of 4.00 which indicated a very high extent on the use of R.E approach to communities, government, non-governmental organization for early childhood

education in Katsina sate. While provision of teaching facilities, employment of early childhood teachers and provision of play materials having recorded the mean rank of 3.00 which indicated high extent on the utilization of Reggio-Emilia approach to communities, government and non-governmental organization for early childhood education in Katsina state. Contribution of local materials with mean rank of 2.00 has shown low extent on the use of R.E approach to communities, government and non-governmental organization for early childhood education in Katsina state.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings it was indicated that there was significant difference among all the tested parameters. The use of Reggio-Emilia approach was influenced by the Teachers in the Early childhood education in Katsina state. Yusuf Arumugam (2014) found that the use of play based approach or activities helped to arose the children's interest in learning language, this is agreed with Cho (2001) who stated that interest has a significant effect on child's learning as it is identified as an important motivational that influence pupils engagement and achievement in learning language. The study carried out by Nair, Yusuf and Arumugam (2014) showed that the use of play based approach helped to arouse the interest of children's in learning language compared with the conventional approach because play based or activities enable children to enjoy. Bredekamp (2000) the first theme concerns the learning environment, is showed a learning environment that supports all children to develop and learn. This requires a physical, emotional climate and conducive environment which is experienced as safe and promotes exploration. The second theme concerns teaching methods to enhance development and learning. This will influence the utilization of Reggio-Emilia approach to early childhood education. Copple and Bredekamp, 2009 indicated that implementing an intervention and collaboration were interaction and collaboration is needed will probably not succeed because there is insufficient attention for social interaction at pre-schools right now. A focus on interaction and collaboration in the intervention could contribute to the stimulation of social emotional development of the children. The intervention should find a way to make social interaction a more important theme in the schools and provide the teachers with the resources needed to promote good interaction and collaboration.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study it was concluded that the use of Reggio-Emilia approach to early childhood education proved to be effective and more relevant to children. In pre-primary schools in Katsina state. The study indicated that the projects or approach inspired by the Reggio-Emilia approach have an effect on children creative thinking skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommended that:

1. The Federal Government of Nigeria through NGO's and its agencies as the state Ministry of Education in collaboration with Teacher training institutions, UBEC and SUBEB should maintain the tempo on continuous training re-training workshop for the ECD teachers on the utilization of Reggio-Emilia approach to early childhood education.
2. The use of Reggio-Emilia approach to early childhood education should be encouraged as a paradigm shift from traditional method of rote learning and memorization to activity base learning and critical thinking pedagogy.
3. The National Policy on Education should make a policy statement that will approve and implement Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education since it proved to be effective and more relevant proved to be effective and more relevant and can easily be localize to suit local context

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