

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR PROMOTING FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION, SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Jimoh Mukhtar

08065006346

mukhtarjimoh2018@gmail.com

&

Dr. Bada Steve Olusegun

bdolusegun@gmail.com

Department Of Educational Psychology and Counselling  
Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State

### Abstract

The development of skills, knowledge and competence through functional education are the main focus of early childhood education. This paper is aimed at providing strategies for early childhood education programme for promoting functional education, sustainable national security and development. Theoretical review of attachment theory was adopted for this paper. The paper discussed the concept of early childhood education, benefits of functional early childhood education, functional education, quality of early childhood education, national security, causes of insecurity and promotion of early childhood education for sustainable development, challenges hindering the development of early childhood education in Nigeria as well as intervention for confronting the problems. It was concluded that early childhood education is the foundation for a lifelong education for sustainable national development and national security of a country. It was suggested that funds should be provided for proper running of the programme, training and retraining of staff, innovation in the utilization of teaching aids and materials needed for staff should be provided.

**Key word:** Early Childhood Education, Functional Education, Sustainable National Security and Development

### Introduction

Functional education serve as a fundamental cornerstone that individual depend on, facilitating social, physical, economic, and emotional growth within a community. It serve as a means for which individual develops social, physical, economic and emotional development within a society. The provision of functional education at early childhood education is the responsibility of the government in a state or country (Yisa, Fasasi & Kwashabawa, 2017). Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) refers to early childhood care and education as the care, protection, stimulation and learning promoted in children from age aged 0-4 years in a crèche or nursery. Early childhood care and education is any formal educational programme that is designed to promote children's cognitive (intellectual) development, socio-emotional development, language development, physical development and learning from birth to age 6 years prior to full primary education system.

The aim of ECCDE according to (Olowe, Kutelu & Majebi, 2014: Sooter, 2013 & Mahuta, 2007) include fostering proper development of children, identifying and addressing their

problems, harnessing their potentials, molding their characters, enhancing their learning and equipping them for life so that their actions are channeled towards positive personal, communal and global development. It is pertinent to note that all ECE activities and programmes are geared towards giving positive early experiences to children.

Therefore, sub-sections 13 of the policy enumerate the purpose of early childhood education thus: to effect a smooth transition from the home to the school, prepare the child for the primary level of education, provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the market, offices etc); inculcate social norms; inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys, develop a sense of co-operation and team spirit; learn good habits, especially good health habits; and teaching the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes and forms through play.

### **Functional Education**

Functional early childhood education equipped children with the right skills and knowledge necessary to become economically productive, creativity in nature, creates sustainable livelihoods, and support democratic and peaceful society. The efficiency of early childhood education is to adopt the standard of teachers/pupils ratio in schools for developing suitable early childhood education curriculum for nationwide implementation, the quality of supervising and controlling quality of early childhood education schools is very paramount for national development (Somariah, 2020). The programme should ensure the production and effective utilization of learning and instructional materials in adequate numbers through the use of the mother- tongue or language of the immediate community is used as the medium of instruction in ECE schools (Yisa, et al., 2017; Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014).

Early childhood education, according to Somariah, Istaryatiningtias and Lelly (2021), is a good foundation for a lifelong education for sustainable national development. It is the basic building block for language learning, and literacy is formed during early childhood education period before children get to primary school. Early childhood education needs to develop the child's social, emotional and cognitive learning skills. It also enables the child to participate effectively in an educational environment, get along with others, develops a sense of self and an appreciation of group work, encourages aesthetic appreciation, develop personalities and values at early age and be useful at old age.

The nature of exposing children to when they are young will help them cultivate an appreciation for the environment and value of knowledge received. In this situation, such educated child will grow into environmentally-conscious adults where it will be free from any threats of insecure. Educating children in the early years will enable them cope with the sudden steps by steps of beginning school formally and the educational system up to the concepts that they would have to learn what will benefit them and how it will positively benefit the society.

These fundamental principles of functional education emphasize the right of all children to receive free and compulsory education in respect of gender, encourage enrolment and attendance; incorporate discipline humanely and fairly; develop the child's personality, talents and abilities of the child to their fullest potential; respect children's human rights and fundamental freedoms; respect and encourage the child's own cultural and religion identity, language, norms and values, as well as the national culture and values of the country where the child is living; and preparing the child to live as a free, responsible individual who is respectful of other persons and the natural environment. According to Somariah et al. (2021) early childhood education enables child reaps the benefits of greater productivity in the later years, an increase in educational attainment significantly reduces subsequent violent, property crime, insecurity, yielding sizable social benefits and makes them more astute learnt in school and later become more competent members of the workforce.

### **Benefit of Early Childhood Education to Sustainable National Development Security**

The benefit of early childhood education to sustainable national development security cannot be over emphasized. t equipped learners with practical skills, career advancement opportunities for pupils, developing critical thinking skills, encourage self-reliance among pupils, holistic development of cognitive, emotional and social skills development. Early childhood education can contribute to sustainable national security development in reducing the likelihood of children to engage in criminality in later life, fostering social skills development and understanding diverse socio-cultural background among children. It also promotes peace and stability in resolving conflict; contribute to economic stability and growth of populace. When investing in early childhood education, it contributes to a stronger nation's building of educational foundation for sustainable national development, stability and security. It can also enhance skilled and production of workforce for sustainable national security.

### **Quality of Early Childhood Education (ECE)**

Early childhood education is crucial for a nation's social, political and economic development. Early childhood education is identified with many benefits which, according to Taguma, Ineke and Kelly (2012) include achieving adequate child welfare, strong social and economic base for lifelong learning. Early childhood education therefore benefits not just the child for his greater potentials to be unveiled but also has a social, economic and parental benefit which will in turn have a positive impartation for the nation's transformation agenda on educational programme. It helps provides inclusive curriculum that aspires to equipped children with numeracy and literacy, as well as knowledge in science and technology, humanities, sport, arts and opportunities for play. It also helps ensures adequate and competent trained teachers through introducing child-friendly, school that is safe and healthy learning environments by: ensuring minimum health and safety standards; guaranteeing a minimum frequency of school inspections; and providing packages of health care, including nutrition, screening, health checks, malaria prevention, and attention to children affected by HIV and AIDS (Sani, Nma & John 2017; & Yisa, et al., 2017). In addition, prohibiting all

forms of violence against children; supporting and training teachers to end physical punishment and to introduce strategies for non-violent conflict resolution; and providing effective mechanisms for complaint by children (Somariah, et al., 2021; Olowe, et al., 2014). Hence, ensuring quality, relevant and sustainable early childhood education is essential for national development.

### **Theories on Early Childhood Education**

Attachment theory as propounded by John Bowlby (1982) states that attachment patterns are established and congealed in early infancy and continues through peoples' lifetime. The two patterns of the attachment theory are secured and unsecured. If an individual as a child grows up with reliability, constituency and safety, he or she will probably have a secure pattern of attachment which reflects in his or her lifestyle especially in intimate relationships whereby he or she is not afraid to take risks in relationships. On the other hand, individuals who grow up with inconsistency, unreliability and insecurity are the ones with the unsecure pattern of attachment. This Attachment theory emphasized the important of security of individual child within an environment where they live, grow and engage in education. The relevance of attachment theory to foundation education is that it provide a basic security for every child, as children have right to be safe and secured in respective of their challenges. a secured attachment for child provide support in fostering trust, emotional regulation, social skills, creating supportive and effective learning environment for pupil to learn.

### **National Security**

National security is a nation's protection and deepened its core values aimed at enabling people to live in free and secure environments by preserving their national interest, identity and sovereignty (Nasiru, 2020). National security is the ability of a nation to preserve its territory and physical integrity; to uphold its economic relationship with other countries on reasonable terms and conditions; to preserve and protect its nature, institution, control its borders and governance from inside or outside attack. National security can be said to be the ability of a country as a nation to guarantee its citizens with all characteristic of being secured for their wellbeing (Abubakar, Mohammed & Mathias, 2023). These include food, peace, employment, migration, living standard, socio-emotional safety, political and economic safety.

National security symbolized a nation without all forms of security threats and able to provide adequate needs for his citizens. These may include standard and quality education, adequate medical care, political stability, improved standard of living, food security, healthy economy, protection of life and properties, tied security, free corrupt society, sustainable housing, social behavioural society, religion and ethnicity tolerant populace (Abubakar, et al., 2023; Nasiru, 2020). Above all, when a nation is able to meet and address these issues that bothering citizens, the country is said to be nationally secured. The early childhood education can foster national security in the area of diverse cultural and religion tolerance among pupils, building common sense of togetherness and citizenship, enhancing equality, diversity and inclusion among

pupils, it also encourage the development of social cohesion, empathy and respect for diverse cultural heritage.

### **Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria**

Insecurity situations can lead to fear, anxiety, depression, and other negative emotions among students. They may experience a sense of helplessness, uncertainty, and vulnerability, which can hinder their ability to focus on their studies and engage in healthy social interactions (Matsayi, 2023). Nigeria has been ranked sixth in the 2025 global terrorism index with a score of 7.658, moving up from eighth place in 2023 and 2024 (Punch, 2025).

Some of the causes of insecurity according to Gabriel and Ibrahim (2023) and Nasiru (2020) are follows:

**Unemployment and Poverty** - extreme poverty leads to drop out of school and crime that gives rise to insecurity. An unemployed person can be frustrated, keep mind and body together to engage in violent and criminal acts such as lucrative kidnapping, militancy, and armed robbery. This has led many children to be out of school, roaming around the streets in Nigeria cities and rural areas.

**Ethnicity and Religious Differences** – In multi-ethnic country like Nigeria, many ethnic and religious leaders have exploit individuals’ minds to stir up mistrust and resentment among different ethnic groups.

**Corruption**- The state of insecurity in Nigeria is unquestionably a result of government failure. Poor budgetary allocation to education can be traceable to widespread corruption within the system of governance such as bribery, fraud, nepotism, embezzlement of the little budgetary allocation to educational sector, stealing of public property and so on.

**Political instability** – this involve unstable political structure of a nation as a result of poor governance which can lead to insecurity of life and property. This has resulted in to poor pupils’ enrollment into public school in the area where insecurity is dominated by insurgency.

**Weak security apparatus** - due to a number of factors including corruption, insufficient workforce, poor funding, poor remuneration, lack of modern equipment, poor safety personnel health, inadequate staff, lack of welfare package for deceased personnel, which have led many teacher not in their duty post, pupil have become out of school children.

**Porous border** - Nigerian borders have contributed the uncontrollable influx of migrants, predominantly young people from neighboring countries to Nigeria, for example lack of proper school fenced environment has led the criminal gaining free access to the school premises.

**Marginalization** – many children have experienced deprivation, oppression and marginalization. And this has resulted in dissatisfaction and loss of hope, particularly among the youth. This has created enemy among individual and led to poor pupils’ school enrollment.

**Bad governance and poor Leadership** – this have causes more challenges to the uncertainty in the security of the nation leading to killing of life and properties. These problems have hinder the progress of ECE which have resulted in poor funding, poor training of teachers, low budgetary allocation to education, lack of quality and quantitative education for children.

**Influx of fire arms** – the influx of arms by smugglers at the borders of the country due to the porous border, while criminal elements have access to arms and create insecurity problem

because kidnapers, armed robbers, bandits and terrorists use the arms to destroy life and property of people.

### **Promoting Early Childhood Education (ECE) for Sustainable Development**

To promote early childhood education, there is need for developing and disseminating curriculum materials to all schools. Sustainable development according to Tracey and Anne (2008) is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development is a multi-dimensional process that involves the entire life of individual in term of economic, social, political, environmental, and psychological for human growth. The sustainable development is a planning process by ensuring that the inclusions of social, economic, political, educational and environmental factors that are instituted for human needs development and protection are cared to and provided. Sustainable development is the capacity to maintain and raised the living standard of the citizens. It can be achieved by providing individuals with basic livelihood requirements and supplying them with basic human needs (Abubakar, et al., 2023; NDC, 2022).

### **Challenges Hindering the Development of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Nigeria**

The challenges that hindered the progress and development of early childhood education in Nigeria are enormous. In line with this, Yisa, et al. (2017); Ajayi & Ijaiya (2014) and Obiweluzor (2014) have described the following challenges on child development:

- 1. Lack of Qualified Caregivers/Teachers:** the early childhood educators' need a required professionals to provide, develop appropriate nurturing and responsive care and education experiences for young children.
- 2. Poor Resources:** at this school level, adequate recourses need to be provided, which helps the caregiver/teacher to nurture and support the development of young children, and to successfully implement curriculum. Lack or poor relevant resources for these children may alter the development of a child.
- 3. Early Childhood Curriculum:** the curriculum is what and how of any educational enterprise. It is the vehicle through which any educational programmes can be successfully implemented. This is an important written plan that includes goals for children's development and learning, experiences through which they will achieve the goals, when the curriculum is faulty, it discourages the child from achieving the desired goals.
- 4. Lack of Monitoring and Supervision:** lack of proper monitoring and supervision will make the any program unsuccessful. In an attempt to ensure effective implementation of early education enterprise, monitoring and supervision must be given adequate attention by stakeholder in early childhood education.

**5. Lack of Government Intervention:** Government is very critical in any meaningful educational development. Therefore, government programme and policy should gear towards the development of early childhood education as foundation for education.

**6. Staff-Child Ratio:** The number of children per staff needs to be in line with recommended guideline 1:25, which are usually found to enhance quality and facilitate better and total developmental outcomes for children.

**7. Poor Funding:** Adequate funds need to be made available for provision of resources and activities which include stimulating materials for teaching, training and re-training of staff (teachers and caregivers), enrichment and sensitization of programmes through regular workshops, monitoring, feeding, immunization, supervision and inspection, report writing, publications, school hygiene, school meals and training manuals among others (Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014).

**8. Lack of Motivation:** Early childhood education staff (teachers and caregivers) are poorly remunerated and this is affecting the morale of these staff. It also impedes and distracts teachers and caregivers' commitment and efficiency.

## Conclusion

Early childhood education is the foundation for a lifelong education for sustainable national development and national security of a country and thus; adequate attention should be provided by government at all levels. It develops children preparedness for formal education with positive social, mental and child-friendly environment that facilitates learning at early stage of human development.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Government and all stakeholders at all levels should be involved in the provision of security to early childhood education schools to protect the life of innocent pupils for sustainable development.
2. Government should find possible solution to put an end to the activities of insurgencies like kidnapping, banditry, and terrorism by equipping security personnel to protect schools.

## References

Abubakar, K., Mohammed, I. J. & Mathias, Y. (2023). Effects of in security on mental and emotional health: implications for national development. A paper presented at the coeasu 7<sup>th</sup> biennial national conference Niger state college of education, Minna.

- Alabi, A. T. & Ijaiya, N. Y. S. (2014). Funding strategies and sustenance of early childhood education in Nigeria: The way forward. *European scientific journal*, 8(1), 12-21. Retrieved from <http://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/download/4598/4394> on 3rd March, 2025.
- Bowlby, J. (1982). *Attachment and loss*: basic books publishing company ltd.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, (FRN, 2013). *National policy on education*.(4<sup>th</sup> Edition). Lagos: NERDC press.
- Gabriel, F. A. & Ibrahim, A. O. (2023). Physics education: bedrock for achieving security and sustainable national development. *Journal of science, technology and mathematics pedagogy*. 1(1), 52-58.
- Mahuta, M. G (2007). *Introduction to sociological foundation of education*. Sokoto: but-bass educational books.
- Matsayi, L. A. (2023). What is the influence of insecurity on the psychological wellbeing secondary school students? *psychotherapy research studies*. 7(1).PPRS. 000654. 2023. DOI: 10.31031/PPRS.2023.07.000654
- Nasiru, Z. (2020). Rising insecurity in Nigeria: causes and solution. *Journal of studies in social sciences*. 19(4) ISSN 2201-4624
- NDC, (2022). <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/national-development>.
- Obiweluzor, N. (2014). Early childhood education in Nigeria, policy implementation: critique and a way forward. *African journal of teacher education*. (AJOTE,) 4(4), 1-9.
- Olowe, P. K., Kutelu, B. O., & Majebi, O. I. (2014). Teaching social ethics in early childhood classrooms: a panacea for promoting peaceful Nigerian society. *International journal of humanities and social science*, 4(6.1), 263-268.
- PUNCH, (6th March 2025). Nigeria ranks sixth in global terrorism index, 565 killed in 2024. Available: [https://www.punch.org/nigeriaranks/terrismindex\\_565.html](https://www.punch.org/nigeriaranks/terrismindex_565.html). (Accessed March. 03, 2025).
- Sani, I. D., Nma, A. I. & John, S. (2017). Transformation of early childhood education in Nigeria for national development. *Sokoto educational review*, 17(1 & 2), 120-133. [www.sokedureview.org](http://www.sokedureview.org)
- Somariah, F, Istaryatiningtias, I. & Lelly, Q. (2021). A child-friendly school: how the school implements the model. *International journal of evaluation and research in education (IJERE)*. 10(1), 273~284 ISSN: 2252-8822, DOI: 10.11591/ijere.v10i1.20765
- Somariah, F. & Istaryatiningtias, I. (2020). Promoting child-friendly school model through school committee as parents' participation. *International journal of evaluation and research in education (IJERE)* 9(4), 1025~1034 ISSN: 2252-8822, DOI: 10.11591/ijere.v9i4.20615
- Sooter, T. (2013). Early childhood education in Nigeria: issues and problems. *Journal of educational and social research*, 3(5). doi:10.5901/jesr.2013.v3n5p173
- Taguma, M., Ineke, L., & Kelly, M. (2012). *Quality matters in early childhood education and care*. Slovak Republic: OECD.

Tracey, S. & Anne, B. (2008). Sustainable development: *linking economy, society, environment*. OECD publishing. [www.oecd.org/publishing/corrigenda](http://www.oecd.org/publishing/corrigenda)

Yisa, M. H., Fasasi, Y. A. & Kwashabawa, B. B. (2017). Appraising the level of participation in early childhood education by public and private schools in north-central Nigeria. *Sokoto educational review*, 17(1 & 2), 134- 144. [www.sokedureview.org](http://www.sokedureview.org)