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EXPLORING THE ISSUE OF RESOURCE AVAILABILITY FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S WRITING SKILLS, ekiti state, nigeria

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Abstract

The study explored the issue of resource availability for preschool children's writing skills. Observation and correlation design were used. The population for the study consisted of pre-primary schools in Ekiti State. The sample consisted of 50 pre-primary schools. Two instruments were used for the study. They are the Literacy-Rich Environment Rating Scale (LRERS) and the Prewriting Activities Material Availability Checklist (PAMAC). The reliability coefficient of the Literacy-Rich Environment Rating Scale (LRERS) is 0.71, and the Prewriting Activities Material Availability Checklist (PAMAC) is 0.80. The data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between prewriting activities' material availability and pre-school children's writing skills and a strong non-significant relationship between a literacy-rich environment and children's writing skill. The study recommended that caregivers and preschool teachers ensure that preschool children's activity materials are available in their classrooms and introduce children to these materials at an early stage to aid children's writing skills.

Keywords: Writing development, Literacy-Rich Environment and Prewriting Activities

Introduction

The preschool year is a crucial time for children since it is during this time that the basis for future success is established. It is the stage on which the foundations of life should be laid. Preschool, according to Maxwell (2012), is an early programme in which children integrate learning and play in a setting supervised by professionally educated adults. It is an educational programme that allows children ages three to five to enrol, though some institutions accept children as young as two. Pre-primary education is defined as an education given in educational settings for children aged 3 through 5 years in preparation for their entry into primary school.

Preschools differ from regular day-care in that they place a greater emphasis on learning and development than on allowing parents to work or pursue other

interests. The pre-school year is a crucial time in a child's development of mental functions. In support of this, Akinbote et al. (2017) pointed out that the pre-school years are formative, and the experiences that children have during this time determine a great deal about their eventual development. Therefore, it is essential to expose children to some prewriting activities and a literacy-rich environment that can aid their writing skills.

Early literacy skills such as writing skills are influenced by the child's environment and the extent to which adults around them expose them to literacy skills, activities, and habits (Olowe, 2013). It has been demonstrated that there are significant links between pre-school children's writing skills and their literacy environment, which includes access to materials such as books, alphabet materials, crayons, and paper; an introduction to the local library; caregiver or teacher literacy-related activities such as reading newspapers and street signs; and access to language-rich environments involving interesting conversations, stories, and explanations. This is why the classroom should be filled with activities that will help preschool children develop their writing skills.

Preschool children's writing skills are also aided by resource availability for the development of preschool children's writing skills, which includes pre-writing activities materials that are different items and apparatus that preschool children can use to engage in prewriting activities for the purpose of laying a good foundation and the development of writing skills. Some of these materials include play dough, building blocks, games, crafts, sounds, and buttons.

The quantity and quality of resources available for teaching writing skills will determine the capacity of educational systems to implement writing activities. Any educational program that aims to improve preschool children's writing skills must be accompanied by appropriate pre-writing activity resources. Beads, dough, building blocks, games, crafts, buttons, lace, scissors, blank paper, crayons, and pencils are among the materials. Prewriting activities and materials become a crucial and critical aspect of learning about writing skills in school settings when they are made available to youngsters.

As a result, pre-schoolers would have access to the prewriting activities and a literacy-rich environment in order to increase their writing skills and academic success. And this can only be done when children interact freely with materials and teachers who continue to reinforce the evolution of learning and writing as children study and develop, have interaction with literacy-rich surroundings, and connect with adults who model and respond to children's spoken and written language (Victorian State Government Department of Education and Training, 2016). A literacy-rich environment provides an opportunity for meaningful and authentic engagement in emergent literacy behaviours.

The environment is set up in such a way that educators can encourage the development of important oral language and emergent literacy abilities. In addition, a literacy-rich environment allows youngsters to use literacy skills in practical ways. Functionality and authenticity, according to the *Victorian State Government Department of Education and Training (2016)*, are crucial elements of a literacy-rich environment. As a result, educators must examine children's interests and daily routines while creating a functional and authentic setting and include elements of a literacy-rich environment into children's day-to-day activities.

According to Dennis and Votteler (2013), a literacy-rich setting is one in which teachers and parents are encouraged to make writing tools readily available to children and to allow them to write. A literacy-rich environment also encourages preschool children to utilize language in their daily lives. Therefore, it can be thought of as a form of classroom setting that is popular in whole language programmes and allows children to explore the surroundings. It can also be described as a setting that encourages significant hands-on inquiry, experimentation, and activities (The Access Center, 2007). Children can learn about the purpose of writing by playing with written language in a rich literacy setting. It also provides authentic literacy items to experiment with and utilize to learn more about writing, such as blank notebooks, puppets, chart paper, chalkboards, and chalk (The Access Center, 2007).

Observation revealed that when pre-schoolers are engaged in a meaningful literacy experience, they will write legibly. Active learning can also take place in a supportive and stimulating environment. Children not only learn that writing serves a variety of goals and functions, but they also learn that writing has significance (Wood, 2004). From the foregoing, it is obvious that a child's environment, as well as the extent to which teachers expose them to literacy

activities, is critical to the development of early writing skills.

As a result, it is critical to provide a rich environment for preschool children in terms of materials and accessibility to those items. However, little research has been undertaken on the association between a literacy-rich environment and pre-school children's writing skills, particularly in Ekiti State. The current study aims to add to the body of knowledge in this area.

Children's writing skills are stimulated by the environment, which gives a consistent opportunity to enhance children's comprehension of symbols and that these symbols convey a message (Neumann et al., 2013). The availability of resources for pre-primary school writing skills aids caregivers and teachers in nurturing and supporting the development of pre-school children's writing.

Chukwbikem (2013) argued that the quality and amount of resources available for every educational program would determine the capacity of the school system to carry out that particular educational program. This suggests that enough resources are essential for the development of children's writing skills. However, observation reveals that many teenagers find it difficult to write legibly after the age of six, which could be due to a lack of pre-writing activities and a literacy-rich environment. At this juncture, it is pertinent to mention that children's environment and the extent to which the teachers around them expose them to literacy activities are the keys to early writing skills acquisition. Therefore, to make the environment of preschool children rich in terms of materials and accessibility of the materials is paramount. But few studies have been conducted on the relationship that prewriting activities, materials, and a literacy-rich environment have with the writing skills of pre-school children, especially in Ekiti State, Nigeria. This is why researchers deem it necessary to explore the issue of prewriting activities' materials availability and literacy-rich environments for preschool children's writing skills.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 levels of significances:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between pre-writing activities materials availability and pre-school children's writing skills in Ekiti State;

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between literacy-rich environment and pre-school

children's writing skills in the study area;

Methodology

Observation and correlation design were used in this study. The target population for this study consisted of all the preschool children and their teachers in Ekiti State. The sample size for the study consisted of twenty (20) preschool teachers and one hundred (100) preschool children. This study adopted a multi-stage sampling procedure that is simple. A simple random sampling technique through the ballot system was used to select two senatorial districts. One local government area was selected from each of the two senatorial districts in Ekiti State. From selected local governments, 10 preschools were selected using a stratified technique.

This was stratified into private and public schools. Five pre-primary schools each were randomly selected from private and public schools. Two pre-primary school teachers were selected from the selected schools using purposive sampling based on

the availability of the teachers. In selecting the children, ten children in each school were selected based on the criteria that children fall within the age range of 3–5 years and that the children are in preschool.

Two self-designed instruments were used for the study. These were the Literacy Rich Environment Rating Scale (LRERS) and Prewriting Activities Materials Availability Checklist (PAMAC), and the reliability coefficient yielded was 0.71 and 0.80, respectively, using Cronbach Alpha.

These results showed that the instruments were reliable and were used for the study. Data was analysed using Pearson's Moment Correlation.

Results

Table 2

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between pre-writing activities materials availability and pre-school children's writing skills

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Table of pre writing materials availability and children writing skill.

	PREWRITING AVAILABILITY MATERIALS		CHILDREN WRITING SKILL
PREWRITING AVAILABILITY MATERIALS	Pearson Correlation	1	-.204*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.042
	N	100	100
CHILDREN WRITING SKILL	Pearson Correlation	-.204*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.042	
	N	100	100

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 shows that there was a significant relationship between the availability of prewriting materials and the prewriting skills of preschool children. This was statistically significant ($r = -.204^*$, $n = 100$, $p = .042$). As a result, Hypothesis 1 was rejected.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between a literacy-rich environment and pre-school children's writing skills.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Table of Children's Writing Skill and Literacy-Rich Environment

	LITERACY RICH ENVIRONMENT		CHILDREN WRITING SKILL
LITERACY RICH ENVIRONMENT	Pearson Correlation	1	.134
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.185
	N	100	100
CHILDREN WRITING SKILL	Pearson Correlation	.134	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.185	
	N	100	100

The result from table 2 indicates that a literacy-rich environment had no significant relationship with children's writing skills. Hypothesis 2 was hereby not rejected.

Discussion

According to the findings of this study, there was a significant relationship between prewriting materials availability and the writing skills of preschool children which was statistically significant ($r = -.204^*$, $n = 100$, $p = .042$). This implies that the prewriting materials availability of children contributes to preschool children's writing skills. The study agrees with the opinion of Chukwbikem (2013), who opined that the quality and quantity of resources available for any educational programme would determine the capacity of the school system for the execution of the type of educational programme.

This means that resources are critical to the successful development of children's writing skills. Also, there was a significant relationship between a literacy-rich environment and preschool children's writing skills.

The result negates the view of Dennis and Votteler (2013), who saw a literacy-rich environment as a kind of environment that arouses preschool children to partake in language in their daily lives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, it was established that a literacy-rich environment is not a determinant of the acquisition of preschool children's writing skills. This means that a literacy-rich environment does not have an effect on children's legibility in writing. The study establishes that the availability of preschool children's activities determines children's writing skills. Based on the findings of this study, it is therefore recommended that the stakeholders make prewriting activities and materials available for preschool children.

Also, the caregivers and preschool teachers should ensure that preschool children's activity materials are available in their classrooms and introduce children to the materials at an early stage to aid their writing skills.

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ASSESSMENT OF APPROPRIATENESS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRES IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study assessed the appropriateness of early childhood centres in southwestern Nigeria. This is with the ultimate view to determining the responsiveness of early childhood education programme to children developmental needs in southwestern Nigeria. The study employed survey research design. The population consisted of children between the ages 3 and 5, their parents as well as pre-school teachers in southwestern Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling procedure and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting 1,080 pupils, 1,080 parents and 108 pre-school teachers as the sample size for the study. One instrument was used for this study namely school Developmentally Appropriate Practices Environmental Rating Scale S-DAP-ER. Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and Pearson product moment correlation. Result showed that early childhood centres were not found to be developmentally appropriate based on staffing, as 99.9% of early childhood education teachers had no early childhood education training whatsoever. School environment and school facilities were only 47.8% and 40.0% developmentally appropriate respectively. The study concluded that assessment of Appropriateness of early childhood centres is vital to the life of the youngsters and all-round development in early childhood centres in Southwestern Nigeria.

Key Words: Appropriateness, Assessment, Early Childhood Proliferation, Early Life

Introduction

Early life is very crucial to the formation of intelligence, personality and social behavior. The early childhood education is a hallmark kind of education given to children from 0-8. This age range provides the opportunity for the scholars to reinforce the view of the development as a continuum. Gladys (2004) opined that old thinking linked brain development to genes. New research says that brain development hinges on interplay between genes and experiences. Old thinking reflected that experience before age three had limited impact on development in later life. While new research notes that nature and extent of adult capacities are decisively impacted by the earliest experiences. Old thinking linked positive experiences with primary caregivers as an aid to early development and learning. The new research

emphasizes that early interaction directly affects brain development. To give youngsters better early education and impressive developments, the children are to be introduced to different developmental domains skills early in life which enhance physical, social, intellectual, creative and emotional developments. Their environment must be ordered to improve all-round development early in life. There should be interaction between meaningful adults and children so as for the children to gain certain skills useful for their growth and development.

FRN (2004) states that pre-primary education is the education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. This period is very important to the youngsters, the family, homes and society at large. Any mal-treatment or wrong information on the children at this ages may mar their present and future development. In the light of this, early childhood managers should rise up in early childhood centres to dutifully and painstakingly, in all their selection (interview), programme and policy, carefully select trained caregivers. They must emphasize links with individual family, home, culture and home language; meaning, caregivers must carefully care for each child using developmentally appropriate practice.

Actualization of the needed nuggets for growth and development makes a child responsive, active and outgoing in life. This means every child could be easily helped to actualize their God-given talent, starting with them early in life with rightful and appropriate educative developmental materials and in a conducive environment that enhance them for proper growth and development.

The Purpose for The Establishment of Early Childhood Centres

In Nigeria, the purpose of establishment of the early childhood care centres hinges on the government's inability to provide early childhood education to children of ages 0-8 years. Before the current Nigeria revised National Policy on Education (2004), this level of education was declared open for the community and private owners who have interest in establishing the centres. Parents have different reasons for sending their children to the nursery schools. Akingbote (2006) revealed that some send