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TRANSFORMATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR EXCELLENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION (ECCDE) THROUGH EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

Ngozi Okonkwo (Mrs.)
Department of Primary Education, School of Early Childhood and Primary Education
Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba, Pmb 1044, Asaba Delta State
Email: Mivictriumph@Gmail.Com; Mobile Line Number: 08038843052
&
Carol Ifesiokwu (Mrs.)
Department of Educational Foundations, School of Education
Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba, Pmb 1044, Asaba Delta State
Email: Icarolnneka@Gmail.Com; Mobile Line Number: 08037255933

ABSTRACT
The inefficiency and ineffectiveness observed in administrative processes of Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) programme in Nigeria which equally has continued to crop and cripple this education level is very much alarming. Many administrators and care givers in the ECCDE programme in the country lack the capabilities to promote quality instructional practices that will lead to attainment of excellence in the teaching and learning situations. The inabilities and poor capabilities of the above mentioned personnel who are supposed to promote quality education in ECCDE has deemed it necessary for this paper, calling for transformation in the entire ECCDE programme. The authors in this paper therefore, concentrated efforts in discussing issues pertaining the transformation of teaching and learning for excellence in Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) through effective instructional leadership practices. Few concepts such as transformation, teaching and learning for excellence, ECCDE together with the importance and objectives, effective instructional leadership practices, were defined and discussed in the paper. Furthermore, the problems facing ECCDE programmes warranting the transformation of ECCDE through effective instructional leadership practices were pointed out in the paper. Various effective instructional leadership practices for transformation of teaching and learning for excellence in the ECCDE programme were extensively discussed. Finally, the challenges affecting transformation of teaching and learning for excellence in ECCDE by leadership were highlighted and the possible strategies aiding effective instructional leadership practices in the ECCDE programmes for transformation and improvement in teaching and learning for excellence were identified as well.

Keywords: Transformation, Teaching and Learning, Excellence, (ECCDE), Effective, Instructional, Leadership, Practices

Introduction

Early childhood education, such as Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) programme is vital for children's development. It is an important first step in formal education for many young children. Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) is any formal education or care that takes place before primary schooling. This usually covers the ages from birth through approximately six years. This kind of education, although, it is optional, realistically, it is required for the development of children before they encounter primary education. There are many different types of early childhood education programmes in all countries including Nigeria. Some focus on child care while others focus on education. Either way, the goal of ECCDE is to provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for socialization and learning in a structured and supervised teaching and learning environment. Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) enable children to develop certain social skills like communication skills, manipulation skills, literacy skills, arithmetic skills, among others, which will help them to socialize in their environment. Children at the early stages of their life-time are like 'tabula rasa', that is, empty vessels which needs to be filled with information and knowledge through appropriate instructions. Given the early exposures to quality education and instructions through ECCDE, this will enable children acquire great potentials, competencies and functional skills necessary for their physical, social, emotional and psychological development. Early Childhood Care and Development Education has the potentials of fostering the spirit of enquiry and creativity into children which will enable them to explore their environment. It inculcates into children at early stages of life, rightful societal values, norms and habits that will enable them gain abilities to take rational decisions in life. The important benefits of ECCDE towards supporting all-round development of children between the ages of 0-6 years, cannot be overemphasized. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019) highlighted that quality early childhood care and development education (ECCDE) has the power to transform children's lives. It can contribute to greater efficiency in education and health systems and a better skilled workforce. Attention to early childhood education can also help build more equal and inclusive societies by providing excluded and disadvantaged children with a strong foundation in lifelong learning, and throughout their lives. Early childhood is the time when promoting gender equality and a culture of peace makes a true difference, as the pace of brain development is at its peak. When children are exposed to values and attitudes that support gender equality and peace at an early age, they are likely to hold them in later stages in life (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO, 2019).

Knowing the roles and important benefits of ECCDE, it is essential that effective instructional leadership practices be employed in order to ensure that quality is highly promoted in teaching and leaching experiences for excellence. On the other hand, the goals and objectives of ECCDE cannot be achieved without effective leadership. Leaders or administrators of the ECCDE programmes are responsible for coordinating the day to day activities in the programmes. All instructional objectives of the teaching and learning activities in the ECCDE programmes are accomplished through effective instructional leadership practices. Akpakwu (2012) opined that the leadership is charged with the responsibility of taking care of all curricular and extracurricular activities in the school. To this effective, the leader must adopt excellent strategies and practices that will lead to successful realization of goals. The ECCDE leader is responsible essentially for the management of the school and instructional programmes, with the implementation of learning and overall success of

the school programmes. So, the success or the failure of a school is explained by the success or failure of the leadership. The legal power and authority of the leader, as the most authoritative person in school, is not enough in itself to both manage and make the school successful. So, the school administrator should be an excellent leader as well as "instructional leader" (Sisman, 2004). Besides, instructional leadership practices, are leadership roles that are directly related to the teaching process, involving the interaction between teachers, students and the curriculum. This will equally entail time management and supervising teachers in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes and enhance the attainment of the educational goals and objectives (Quah, 2011). Pacchiano, Klein and Hawley (2016) opined that ECCDE programme leaders shape teaching through day-to-day practices of instructional leadership, drive continuous improvement by facilitating routine teacher collaboration and practice improvement. Although, most scholars reported that instructional leaders are not providing effective instructional leadership that generates practice excellence and improvement overtime. Cultivating those effective leadership competencies by early childhood programme leaders requires embarking on excellent practices that transforms not only their knowledge and skills but also their conceptualization of their role and understanding of leadership. While the need for increasing ECCDE programme quality is well documented, few, if any improvement efforts have focused so deeply or systematically on leaders and the instructional leadership practices. Stagnation in children-learning outcomes resulting from low-quality teaching and inadequate improved teachers' instructional skills, are often attributed to instructional or bad leadership practices (Pacchiano, Klein & Hawley, 2016). Improving young children's learning outcomes likewise increasing the quality of teaching and learning for excellence in the ECCDE programme demands an evolved transformation of instructional delivery for improvement, evidently-based on the deployment of effective instructional leadership practices. Pacchiano, Klein and Hawley (2016) attested further that the key premise for effective instructional leadership practices flows from providing strong organizational conditions and instructional improvements which support teachers work of teaching and learning. The health and strength of these organizational conditions is purely the responsibility of the programme leader. Therefore, all efforts targeted on effective instructional leadership practices must be tailored towards the use of effective supervisory practices, promoting healthy climate through adequate collaborations, adequate provision of teaching and learning materials, among others.

Despite the significance of ECCDE on children's development, to expand access and improve quality of teaching and learning for excellence in the early education field remains underwhelmed by children's poor learning outcomes and disappointed by the pace and impact of quality improvement efforts. To this end, transformation of teaching and learning for excellence in the ECCDE programme which focus on how to strengthen the ECCDE school to better generate continuous children learning and improvements through effective instructional leadership practices becomes of utmost importance. Although, concerted efforts have been made to promote excellence in teaching and learning in the ECCDE classrooms for children's learning through policy and legislation, the results have been lackluster and proven abortive. Yet, the stakeholders of ECCDE seem not to have systematically explored how to help early childhood education settings become organizations designed for powerful children learning and sustained improvement for excellence. There is a growing understanding that a sole focus on only teachers and classrooms without looking at effectiveness of instructional leadership practices is insufficient. Recognizing that leaders are the driver of organizational change, there is need to

identify those effective instructional leadership practices that needs to be instilled in order to yield positive results and make successful impact on the transformation of both teaching and children's learning. Transformation as described within the context of this paper simply means making absolutely positive or fundamental change from old practices to new practices. For transformation of teaching and learning in the ECCDE for excellence, it should encompass all levels and corners of change which includes employing effective leadership practices. The thrust of this paper therefore, is on transformation of teaching and learning for excellence in Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) through effective instructional leadership practices. The paper focus is on ECCDE programme leaders and care givers who should deploy sound and effective instructional leadership practices for attainment of excellence in teaching and learning in ECCDE programmes. The paper showcases why ECCDE programme leaders must become effective instructional leaders by application of critical practices that would make significant impact on both teachers' daily professional improvement and children' s learning. Discussions have been done in several sections in the paper. Clarifications on a few concepts have been done and the problems facing ECCDE programme warranting the transformation of ECCDE through effective instructional leadership practices discussed in the paper in different sections. Other sections in the paper were an outlook of various effective instructional leadership practices for transformation of teaching and learning for excellence in the ECCDE programme, challenges affecting the transformation of teaching and learning for excellence in ECCDE by leadership and the possible strategies aiding effective instructional leadership practices in the ECCDE programme for transformation and improvement in teaching and learning for excellence.

Extensive Definition of Concepts
Transformation

The word transformation according to Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Edeh (2015) actually means a complete change from one situation to another, a total departure from the old order to a new one. Transformation does not come accidentally, but requires deliberate effort. To change from failure to been successful calls for performance of some activities that will facilitate the actualization of such dreams, and transformation calls for practical action which goes beyond mere expression or verbal pronouncement, but requires a number of tasks to be performed. Transformation as further observed by Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Edeh is a concept that has been diversely defined by scholars of different backgrounds and orientations. It is a fundamental shift in the deep orientation of a person, an organization, or a nation, such that the world is seen in new ways and new actions and results become possible that were impossible prior to the transformation. In an organizational context, transformation according to the Business Dictionary online (2020) is a process of profound and radical change that orients an organization in a new direction and takes it to an entirely different level of effectiveness. It is a change into someone or something completely different, or the process by which this happens. Few, Morchain, Spear, Mensah and Bendapudi (2017) says that transformation is all about change—but it is not synonymous with change. For most authors, it implies change that is more than routine, a fundamental alteration of a particular state. For the above mentioned authors, Few et al (2017) transformation could be seen as a mechanism for managing situations of environmental or ecosystem change that exceed the ability of human actors and/or natural systems' to manage through incremental adjustments. Transformation in the teaching and learning in ECCDE therefore implies fundamental change in the building block of the programme and applying several approaches; a

change affecting all corners which serves as a veritable platform for children to realize their intellectual potential, develop their abilities and follow their aspirations (Ajisafe, Bolarinwa & Edeh, 2015). Transformation will bring about new directions in the teaching and learning process in ECCDE.

Teaching and Learning for Excellence

Attaining excellence in teaching and learning in ECCDE has been one of the matter of discourse by many education stakeholders. Teaching according to the IGI Global (2020), is an activity aimed at bringing about meaningful learning through a method that is morally and pedagogically acceptable. It involves a teacher, a learner, content in form of knowledge facts information and skill to be imparted a deliberate intention on the part of the learners to learn, and finally a method that respects the learners' cognitive integrity and freedom of choice. Teaching is equally act or process of helping a learner to acquire information (knowledge and skills). It is the process of guiding learning. Teaching is the art and science whereby a teacher conveys knowledge to students in a formal setting, employing a variety of methods (IGI Global, 2020). Teaching is a profession that carries with it a high degree of responsibility and the qualifications and skills of those who take on this responsibility constitute a major factor that affects, be it positively or negatively, any education system. This has serious implications for the preparation of teachers at all stages of education, including at the Early Childhood stage which requires creation of a learning environment for children which is joyful, play based and developmentally appropriate (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). The main essence of teaching is to promote learning and to achieve this purpose, there must be excellent teaching provided by an excellent teacher. Baker, Franz, Glenn, Herron, Pauley, Pierce, Snavely, and Von-Dorpowski (2005) defined teaching excellence as an academic process by which students are motivated to learn in ways that make a sustained, substantial, and positive influence on how they think, act, and feel. It is a process that elevates students to a level where they learn deeply and remarkably. An excellent teacher or leader has been further viewed by Baker, Franz, Glenn, Herron, Pauley, Pierce, Snavely, and Von-Dorpowski (2005) as one who contributes positively to the learning environment by providing exceptional energy, keen interest in students, and extraordinary strengths.

Having described teaching, Robert Gagne (1982: 2) (as cited by the Smith, 2020) defined learning as 'a change in human disposition or capacity that persists over a period of time and is not simply ascribable to processes of growth. In the 1990s learning was often described as the relatively permanent change in a person's knowledge or behaviour due to experience. This change may be deliberate or unintentional, for better or for worse. To qualify as learning, this change must be brought about by experience – by the interaction of a person with his or her environment.…the changes resulting from learning are in the individual's knowledge or behaviour' (Woolsfolk, 1998, p. 204-205 cited in Smith, 2020). In these examples, learning is approached as an outcome – the product of some process. It can be recognized or seen. Learning could also be seen as a function that maps experience onto behaviour. In other words, learning is defined as an effect of experience on behaviour (Smith, 2020). The focus for them, is gaining knowledge or ability using experience. There have been attempts on functional definitions of learning by scholars as cited in Smith (2020). Domjan (2010) gave a definition of learning (as cited in Smith, 2020) as an enduring change in the mechanisms of behaviour. Learning was further looked at from the angle of adaptation of individual organisms to their environment during the lifetime of the individuals (after Skinner 1938) (Smith, 2020). Quality learning cannot take place without the presence of a teacher or student. Both must be present and undertaken in a conducive

environment. The importance of teaching and learning towards the development of children in the ECCDE programme cannot be overemphasized. Teaching and learning creates opportunities where children can maximize creative potentials and skills for their individual development and those of the society. Educational goals and objectives can be realized through effective teaching and learning (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2013). It is also through excellent teaching and learning that the development of a whole child – intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual and in some degree, physical development can be made possible (Kochhar, 2012). From all the foregoing, thus, the need for ensuring that excellence in teaching and learning in ECCDE is highly sustainable. Excellence according to Lierse (2018) is the state or quality of excelling or being exceptionally good or extreme merit and superior in an action, characteristic, etc., in which a person excels. The Vocabulary.com Dictionary (2020) described excellence as greatness — the very best. It entails possessing good qualities in high degree and the quality of being excellent. The Coaching & Leadership Development Group (2017) opined that in order to encourage excellence in teaching and learning, schools must first build a culture of excellence, created alongside with strategy and pedagogical advances, schools have systems in place that support an understanding of human process issues, that encourage people to develop a deep understanding of themselves and others. Additionally, Mintrom (2014, p.4) identified the following things that should be done by the leadership as a way of building the culture of excellence in teaching and learning and they include: continuous improvement in teaching strategies, providing opportunities for motivation, guiding work habits, promoting deliberate practices, giving effective feedback, creating transparency, scaffolding teamwork, naming the culture of excellence as a group goal, comparing students' outcomes, among others. All the above explanations showcase the importance of transforming the teaching and learning activities for excellence in the ECCDE programme.

Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE)

ECCDE is an acronym meaning Early Childhood Care and Development Education. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019) defined ECCDE as the period from birth to eight years old, and is a time of remarkable growth with brain development at its peak. During this stage, children are highly influenced by the environment and the people that surround them. According to the FRN (2013), ECCDE is a care, protection, stimulation and learning promoted in child from age 0-4 or 5 years in a crèche or nursery. Winner (2009) opined that early childhood care and development education often focuses on learning through play, based on the research and philosophy of Jean Piaget, which posits that play meets the physical, intellectual, language, emotional, and social needs (PILES) of children. Children's curiosity and imagination naturally evoke learning when unfettered. Learning through play will allow a child to develop cognitively. This is the earliest form of collaboration among children. In this, children learn through their interactions with others. Thus, children learn more efficiently and gain more knowledge through activities such as dramatic play, art and social games. Neaum (2013) asserted that ECCDE is more than preparation for primary school. It aims at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. ECCDE has the possibility to nurture caring, capable and responsible future citizens. In this way ECCDE is one of the best investments a country can make to promote human resource development, gender equality and social cohesion, and to reduce the costs for later remedial programmes. For disadvantaged children, ECCDE plays an important role in compensating for the

disadvantages in the family and combating educational inequalities. History has it that early childhood care education could be traced to the efforts of prominent European education experts like: John Amos Comenius (1590-1690), J. J. Rousseau (1782 – 1788), Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1748-1827) and Friedrich Froebel (1782-1751); but the first pre-primary education was founded in 1816 by Robert Owen. The early experts in childhood education were anxious to see the children of the rich and the poor have the opportunity and privilege to be educated. With the phasing out of infant classes, some parents began to feel the need for nursery schools; the demand for nursery education was however very low in Nigeria until recently (Obiweluozor, 2015). Although, the concept of early childhood or infant schooling was introduced by the Missionaries in the early 20th century in Nigeria when such schools were set up in the Western and Eastern regions of Nigeria. Early childhood care and development education in the form of nursery school or pre-primary education as we know it today in Nigeria is largely a post-colonial development. The semblances of it during the colonial era were the Kindergarten and infant classes, which consisted of groups of children considered not yet ready for primary education. As groping for instruction in schools was not age-based during that period, some children aged six or even more, could be found in some of the infant classes. During the pre-independence period ECCDE did not receive much government support not until after Nigerian independence in 1977 with the introduction of National Policy on Education by the then military government of Nigeria was the first time that the importance and need for early childhood education was given official recognition and linked with the child's educational performance in primary school (Sooter, 2013). Today, ECCDE which has been introduced by the federal government with certain objectives incorporates crèche, day care, kindergarten, nursery and preprimary education. These schools are located everywhere throughout the country in various places and buildings, campuses of universities and Colleges, premises of some industries and business organizations, church premises, residential buildings with unprecedented expansion owing to the high demand for early childhood care and education by parents (Ejieh, 2006 as cited in Sooter, 2013). Ever since the introduction of ECCDE programme in Nigeria, there have been lots of improvement in children learning and development, showcasing the importance of ECCDE programmes in the society. The importance of ECCDE are been highlighted below by most authorities.

Importance of ECCDE in the Development of the Child

The National University (2020) stressed that is an important time in children's lives because it is when they first learn how to interact with others, including peers, teachers and parents, and also begin to develop interests that will stay with them throughout their lives. It is a time when children learn critical social and emotional skills and a partnership is formed between the child, their parents and the teacher. When this is done successfully, it lays the groundwork for it to continue throughout the child's education. Quoting UNESCO, National University (2020) noted that early childhood care and development education (ECCDE) is more than preparation for primary school. It aims at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. ECCE has the possibility to nurture caring, capable and responsible future citizens. Early childhood care and development education provides opportunities where all-round physical, emotional, psychological and social development of children are possible. The emotional, social and physical development of young children has a direct effect on their overall development and on the adult they will become. That is why understanding the need to invest in very young children is so important, so as to

maximize their future well-being (Tremblay, Boivin & Peters, 2011). The Walden University (2020) attested that in terms of human development, the importance of early childhood education cannot be overstated. A child's early years are the foundation for his or her future development, providing a strong base for lifelong learning and learning abilities, including cognitive and social development. Well-established research continues to emphasize the importance of early childhood education as an essential building block of a child's future success. Fraser (2010) highlighting the importance of early childhood care and development education says that it contributes a lot in healthy brain formation of children. The early years of human development establish the basic architecture and function of the brain. This early period of development, (conception to ages 6-8), affects the next stage of human development, as well as the later stages. There is now a better understand, through developmental neurobiology, how experience in early life affects these different stages of development. Poor early development affects health, behaviour and learning in later life. Results from developmental neurobiology studies and animal and human studies provide strong evidence that early neurobiological development affects health (physical and mental), behaviour and learning in the later stages of life. Countries that provide quality universal early development programmes for families with young children tend to out-perform countries in which the early development programmes are chaotic (Fraser, 2010). Barnett (1995) posited that children in ECCDE at young age are exposed to positive, stimulating experiences that helps them to develop enhanced learning capabilities, which improve their odds for excelling in school. Children who attend preschool or other early education programmes have enhanced cognitive, verbal, and social development, which is maintained into the first few years of school. They have significantly higher intelligent quotients (IQs) and tend to demonstrate higher levels of school achievement and better social adjustment. They are less likely to exhibit later delinquency and antisocial behaviour. Exposure to ECCDE helps children enter school better prepared to learn and are more likely to graduate from high school. Such children are less likely to have to repeat a grade or be placed in special education classes (Barnett, 1995).

Part of the early childhood care and development curriculum as documented by Shaughnessy and Kleyn (2012) is to prepare children to play, interact with and engage in age appropriate developmental activities that would assist with their later socialization process. Piaget extensively documented the importance of play, the stages of play and how play contributes to the child's understanding of the world. The pre-school environment provides a rich, robust domain for the child to engage in play of various sorts, with materials that may not be present in the home, with toys that parents may not possess and with children that may encourage them in terms of future growth. The active aspects of play are more important than the passive receiving of stimulation from various cartoons on the television. The importance of ECCDE in Nigeria have been indicated also in its objectives by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) in the national policy on education document, where the federal government stated that ECCDE education provides education for children to develop certain attributes and social skills, among others. Apart from the development of a child, ECCDE also has some economic benefits as this can be understood from the angle of the monetary benefits including financial returns associated with investing in education. ECCDE promotes social cohesion (especially in contexts of increasing diversity) and integration (i.e. in contexts of the increased mobility of families and the integration of newcomers and refugees), enabling children from different areas to interact together (Vandenbroeck, Lenaerts & Beblavý, 2018). Children who attend ECCDE are found to have higher educational attainment than those who did not, because of their early exposure to

education. Children who participate in early childhood education and care generally perform better in school (in terms of test scores for numeracy and literacy and grade retention rates) and have higher rates of school completion (and higher rates of college attendance) (Vandenbroeck, Lenaerts & Beblavý, 2018). In a report prepared for the World Bank, Fasih (2008) confirms that early investment in education generates high returns and lowers the costs of educational investment at a later stage by making learning at later ages more efficient (Vandenbroeck, Lenaerts & Beblavý, 2018). Given the above importance, hence, the objectives of ECCDE programme for development of young children and the society in Nigeria.

Objectives of ECCDE

The objectives of ECCDE as indicated in Section 2, p.7 of the National Policy on Education by the Federal Republic of Education (FRN, 2013) are to: a. effect a smooth transition from the home to the school; b. prepare the child the primary level of education; c. provide adequate care, supervision and security for the children while their parents are at work; d. inculcate social, moral norms and values; inculcate in the child the spirit enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and the use of toys; e. develop a sense of co-operation and team spirit; stimulate in the child good habits, including good health habits; and f. teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc, through play. These objectives cannot be achieved without effective instructional leadership practices.

Effective Instructional Leadership Practices

The concept of instructional is derived from the word instructions which involves teaching and learning. According to Reigeluth (1999), the concept of instructional offers explicit guidance on how to better help people learn and develop. It provides insights about what is likely to happen and why, with respect to different kinds of teaching and learning activities while helping indicate approaches for their evaluation. It is a concept that determines what instruction or teaching should be like. And equally outlines models, methods and strategies that an educator may adopt to achieve the learning objectives. Leadership, is simply the ability of a leader or head to influence subordinates to perform task in order to achieve educational goals and objectives. According to Nwaham (2011) leadership is an essential component in school organization which refers to the function of the relationship among the leader, the followers and the task-situational characteristics. Besides, in the ECCDE, the leadership is known as the school administrators, head teacher or school head. Leadership is therefore an individual in the group given the tasks of directing and coordinating task relevant to group activities. Leadership to Nwaham (2011) also means influence, the art of process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly towards the achievement of group goals. Given the importance of leadership, their effectiveness is needed through their practices for attainment of instructional and educational goals. Without effective leadership practices, no organization can achieve its goals. Being effective entails the leader's ability to perform well and achieve or produce intended results in the school. Such leaders possess extraordinary qualities and capabilities requisite to achieve school goals (Nwaham, 2011). Instructional leaders play a pivotal role in affecting the climate, attitude and reputation of their schools. They are the cornerstone on which learning communities function and grow. With successful instructional leadership practices, their school becomes effective incubator of learning, a place where students are not only educated but challenged, nurtured and encouraged. On the other hand, poor or absent school leadership can undermine the goals of an educational system. When schools lack a strong foundation and direction, learning is compromised, and students suffer. According to a Wallace Foundation study (as cited in Lathan,

2020), "leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning".

Effective instructional leadership practices therefore, as defined by Quah (2011) are leadership roles that are directly related to the teaching process, involving the interaction between teachers, students and the curriculum. Onyali and Akinfolarin (2017) says that effective instructional leadership practices are directly linked to creating the conditions for optimal teaching and learning. For Onyali and Akinfolarin, effective instructional leadership practices could be referred to as administrative activities and roles that are geared towards providing support for teachers and students to ensure quality instructional delivery for school effectiveness. As regards to this statement, effective instructional leaders provide effective instructional leadership practices critical to providing high-quality services and such leaders are tasked with creating excellent teaching and learning environments that are safe and nurturing, rich in resources, supportive of both cognitive and socio-emotional development, and sensitive to children's diversity of culture and language. They ensure that their leadership practices will definitely assist to bring about transformation while solving educational problems and difficulties (Sakai, Copeman & Austin, 2017). Certain problems or difficulties facing ECCDE programmes has warranted the transformation of teaching and learning for excellence in the ECCDE through effective instructional leadership practices, as they include; the partner of instructional delivery in the ECCDE programme, teaching methodologies, teacher poor performances, teacher inefficiency affecting teaching and learning, the concern for constant staff development in teaching and learning, issues relating to the general administration of ECCDE which affects teaching and learning for excellence coupled with issues concerning monitoring and implementation of minimum standard and curriculum for ECCDE, supervision and quality control of teaching and learning activities in the ECCDE schools, facilities provision, utilization and maintenance, among others, as highlighted by the FRN (2013). Pont, Nusche and Moorman (2008) opined that the overburdened roles and heavy workloads, insufficient preparation and training, limited career prospects and inadequate support and rewards calls for the need for adoption of effective instructional leadership practices by leadership for attainment of excellence in teaching and learning, which has been further discussed.

Effective Instructional Leadership Practices for Transformation of Teaching and Learning for Excellence in the ECCDE Programme

Ahmed (2016) generally highlighted instructional leadership practices to include: framing school goals, communicating school goals, supervision and evaluation of instruction, coordination of the curriculum, monitoring of students' progress, protection of instructional time, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, promotion of professional development and providing incentives for students. Akpakwu (2012), Nwaham (2011), Onyali and Akinfolarin (2017), Yavuz and Bas (2010) and other scholars have identified series of school administrators, head teachers or school heads instructional leadership practices that would be effective in order to promote excellence in teaching and learning in the ECCDE programme; and they can be achieved through effective instructional supervision, adequate time management, resources management, supporting teachers work using good communication and collaborations, among others. To the aforementioned scholars, a good instructional leader in the ECCDE school should apply effective instructional supervisory practices by checking teachers' record of work done to monitor their progress and monitoring of staff participation in school extra-curricular activities, checking of teachers lesson notes to provide assistance for improvement and checking of staff school attendance to ensure regular instructional delivery among others are their instructional

supervision practices for school effectiveness. Akpakwu (2012) opined that in supervising and evaluating instructions the leader should ensure that the school goals are translated into practice at the classroom level and monitor classroom instruction through numerous classroom observations using techniques/methods like classroom visitation, guided practices, demonstration, among others (Nwaham, 2011). The dimension of the leadership's evaluation of the instruction process and the students is consistent with certain behaviour, such as supervision of the instruction, evaluation of school curriculum, monitoring the development and evaluation of students (Şişman, 2004). In a study conducted by Yavuz and Bas (2011), teachers had some views on the evaluation of the instructional process, that the head teacher should be active in the education-instruction mechanism. He or she should also have a driving force for the development of the education-instruction and school-family collaboration processes, as well as of the students, by being in close contact with the students. On the other hand, the head teacher should, firstly, be informed about the evaluation process of the students. The head should perform an introductory and encouraging attitude to the teachers in order to evaluate students objectively at school. Successful students should be rewarded in order to be motivated for success. School equipment should be in good condition in order to make an objective evaluation at school. In the process of student evaluation, students should not only be evaluated academically, but their different performance (that is, social, athletic and artistic) should be reinforced and taken into consideration in the evaluation process.

A good instructional leader ensures effective management of instruction by creating opportunities for the successful implementation and practice of the school curriculum, which is one of the main inputs of the school, and to lead the teachers effectively in the application of the curriculum process. Most of the teachers stated remarkable views on this issue by identifying that a school administrator or head teacher should know the education-instruction techniques well. Such a person should know how to communicate with the students, while working in close collaboration with the teachers, whose views he should always consider. He or she should also give all kinds of support for every positive event in the education process and provide support for every negative aspect at school to the teachers in need. If necessary, the school administrator, by participating in teaching activities, should play an active role and be a model in the process of effective instruction at school (Yavuz & Bas, 2011). Akpakwu (2012) opined stated that the administrator promotes quality instructions by ensuring consistency and coordination of instructional programmes and defining recommended methods of instruction. He or she determines the curriculum content and ensures that teachers translate the curriculum knowledge into meaningful objectives with the curriculum materials and standard tests. He or she should also provide materials, resources and equipment for implementation of instructional programmes in the school. Yavuz and Bas (2010) observed that it is very important that a school administrator, as an effective instructional leader, should follow the innovative activities in education, renew and develop himself, and share these innovations with his teacher colleagues at school. It will enhance the success at school in the process of the management of instruction if head teacher provides course equipment and works to improve the physical conditions of the school. In the process of managing instruction at head teachers should be as close to the teachers as a friend and they should develop the instruction process together. They should have high expectations of both ECCDE teachers and students at school.

Onyali and Akinfolarin (2017) identified the need for head teachers to ensure that they practice effective time management in the school as part of their instructional leadership practices.

Time management is the ability to produce and follow a schedule, meet deadlines, prioritize and minimize distractions and unimportant tasks. It is the efforts to efficiently utilize available time for tasks accomplishment. Graig and Steven (2014) stated that time management practices include: short-term and long-term goals, determining priority and scheduling of activities and minimizing time wasters. The function of the school administrator in instructional time management is to ensure that instructional time is not interrupted by other school activities which are not related to the instructional process (Mohammad & Muhammad, 2011). Setting of deadline, prioritizing school activities and ensuring appropriate delegation of instructional tasks to teachers are instructional time management practices that enhance timely coverage of scheme of work and maintaining of focus on instructional tasks as indicated by Onyali and Akinfolarin (2017). The administrators should give support to teachers as part of effective leadership practices. It is not sufficient for school principals as an instructional leader to only develop the instructional process at school and provide some of the resources to teachers and students. In addition, school administrators should pay attention to the professional development of teachers and should also understand that the professional development of teachers means the development of students in this regard. The vast majority of teachers who adopt these views in Yavuz and Bas (2010) study stated that school administrators should contribute to the professional development of teachers at school. Some of the views expressed were as follows: that the school administrators should pay attention to the in-service training courses and seminars for the professional development of teachers and should also make the teachers come together to reinforce teacher cooperation and make them share their views and practices with each other. Another teacher stated the following in this regard: that the school administrator by listening to teachers' views and problems using some questionnaires or interviews, should take notice of these views and support the teachers participating in activities such as seminars, etc. Besides, he or she should also support teachers through different activities such as social, artistic and sports activities for psychological relaxation. Most of the teachers, by stating similar views as the teachers above, believe that administrator should improve their professional development. Opportunities should be created both for the development of innovative ideas at school and teachers' professional understanding (Yavuz & Bas, 2011). On the other hand, the administrators should pay attention to ways of rewarding and motivating teachers. School administrators should behave equally with the teachers and should not also make discrimination towards teachers.

Teachers must be appreciated for their positive behaviour at school and also should proclaim successful teachers to society by different means of communication. They should prepare activities for resolving teachers' inadequacies at school by establishing healthy and effective communication channels with teachers and they should value them, because the more the school administrator value the teachers at school, the more motivated the teachers will be to perform excellent work and discharge their duties in appropriate manner. These were some of the views that the teachers in the study stated regarding the "support of teachers and their development" role of school administrators as an instructional leader (Yavuz & Bas, 2011). Akpakwu (2012) opined that it is part of the instructional role of the school head to provide in-service education for teachers through staff meetings, workshops, conferences, seminars, symposiums, group discussions, among others. Another effective instructional leadership practices for promoting excellence in teaching and learning as pointed out by Yavuz and Bas (2010) is creation of a regular learning-teaching environment. A school's atmosphere is very important and has a valuable impact on students' effective learning. A school creating a positive school climate should be

relatively orderly, safe, clean, convenient and supportive (Gökyer, 2004, cited in Yavuz & Bas, 2011). On the other hand, it is understood that the school environment primarily means the working conditions and the impact of these conditions on people at the school. The positive environment at a school has a multi-faceted impact on the school's integration, motivation, morale and performance of the people at school. The school administrator should therefore develop a school environment before anything else where friendship and mutual trust occur and everyone is happy at work (Şişman, 2004, p. 101). In this regard, a vast majority of the teachers participating in the study of Yavuz and Bas (2010) expressed their views on the head teachers' creation of a regular learning-teaching environment. Some of these views are as follows that: in order to be an instructional leader and establish an interpersonal dialogue at school, it is crucial to creating a regular learning-teaching environment. Problems can be solved and a positive climate can be established within this dialogue and the process continues in a good way. As a result of this, there is nothing which cannot be achieved if a school's physical structure is organized and the necessary materials and infrastructure are provided. Another teacher said the following on this issue that: environmental regulations can be made by taking into account student characteristics and obtaining the necessary course materials to be used in class. The head teacher can provide the necessary technological tools and supplies to benefit the teachers at school; especially in the ECCDE school which needs adequate toys, ICT tools like tablets and computers in order to aid children learning. A teacher added the following that: the head teacher should help teachers in matters such as finding supplies, materials and equipment. Mistakes should be corrected and met with tolerance in a positive learning environment and students should be educated so that they develop social relationships with their friends and have self-confidence. Moreover, the head teacher should approach teachers with tolerance and support and motivate them in a positive learning-teaching environment at school. On the other hand, the head teacher should work to build team spirit and a positive and safe climate at school. In this regard, another teacher added the following views by saying that: the head teacher should support teachers at every opportunity. He or she should also develop cooperation in school, approach both teachers and students with tolerance and try to understand them. The head teacher must believe in team spirit and support this. Moreover, the head teacher should be proactive in providing the necessary equipment for a positive learning-teaching process (Yavuz & Bas, 2011).

Other views the teachers expressed in the interviews for the head teacher creating a positive school environment in the study of Yavuz and Bas (2010) are given as: head teacher should not exaggerate and should think beyond bureaucracy, thus being more flexible and more tolerant in order to develop a more positive school climate. Besides, he should also help teachers and students get together by holding different events (artistic, athletic, academic, etc.) at school. Another teacher stated that: "the head teacher should be objective towards everyone at school. He or she should also adopt understanding towards teachers and students by communicating effectively with them. He or she should never use an authoritarian manner at school and should work to develop a more tolerant and trusting school climate. The head teacher should therefore: (1) adopt supportive and encouraging roles for both teachers and students; (2) communicate effectively with students; (3) contribute directly to the development of the students by participating actively in the instruction process; and (4) reward successful students in different ways. The head teacher as an effective instructional leader should also sustain the examinations carried out at school which are based on objective criteria and lead the teachers in evaluating of students, not only in an academic sense, but also in social, sporting and artistic

aspects. They should reflect all aspects of the teaching process in addition to the creating the school vision together with all members of the school, as well as developing of the school curriculum. In addition, the head teacher should pay attention to the evaluation of students in order to determine the impact of this on students at school. The school vision should be prepared and shared with all members of the school, since the curriculum and the teaching process are all for the development of children at the ECCDE school. Consequently, head teachers that have effective instructional leadership should evaluate students in such a way that the effects of all the above can be observed. School head or administrator or head teacher should not only monitor, evaluate and improve student development according to the results of standardized tests, but should also interview teachers on the evaluation and development of children at the ECCDE school. So, an effective school head as an instructional leader should not only protect the present results/status, but should also try hard to develop these current results or school status to a greater extent. Effective instructional leaders are never satisfied with current success, they always have higher expectations of students at the school (Andrews & Soder, 1987 as cited in Yavuz & Bas, 2011). But, it is not enough that school leadership work to improve only the teaching process and have high expectations for students and teachers. They need to implement powerful supervision and evaluation at school in order to create an effective educational environment. In studies carried out by Daresh. and Ching-Jen (1985) and Krug (1992), cited in Yavuz and Bas (2011) it was revealed that school head as effective instructional leaders pay great attention to supervision and evaluation at school. Of course, they rewarding of outstanding students at the school will motivate them even more. It will increase the success of school so that students who are in need of extra education/instruction are recognized and the education process is developed for them. In this regard, it is not sufficient for school heads as instructional leaders to set a vision and objectives for the school and to develop the school curriculum. It is important to move this process to the education process and then to develop the teaching process in line with some feedback by taking some precautions (Glickman, 2002 cited in Yavuz & Bas, 2011), with regard to the evaluation of the instruction process and the students. Therefore, it is crucial that school heads know multiple practices and evaluation methods well in the student evaluation process and can share them with teachers to implement these at the school. More so, they should also attempt to create vocational discussion environments relating to the organization of some seminars and/or in-service training activities at school. The school heads of the present information age will need to create a positive open learning environment in order to assure integration amongst students and staff, to ensure transformation of the teaching and learning for excellence in the ECCDE schools (Yavuz & Bas, 2010). Notwithstanding all these effective instructional leadership practices, there are some challenges which might affect the adoption of these practices in school.

Challenges Affecting Transformation of Teaching and Learning for Excellence in ECCDE by Leaders

These challenges as listed include as indicated by the Walden University (2020) and Yavuz and Bas (2010):

a. Lack of experience and exposure on the part of leadership.

b. Poor/lack of cooperation and communication between leadership and teachers.

c. Inadequate funding of ECCDE schools hindering the provision and maintenance of school facilities.

d. Poor policy implementation on ECCDE programme.

e. Lack of stakeholders' involvement and public support in the administrations of ECCDE schools.

Possible Strategies Aiding Effective Instructional Leadership Practices in ECCDE Programme for Transformation and Improvement in Teaching and Learning for Excellence

To address the above challenges, certain strategies needs to be adopted in order to encourage effective leadership practices that will lead to transformation and improvement of teaching and learning in the ECCDE for excellence. The first and foremost is giving adequate priority interest towards the provision of continuous leadership training and retraining programmes for head teachers or administrators in the ECCDE programme. The Walden University (2020) asserted that training and guidance education programmes should be regulated by the school leaders in the education-instruction process. Online or on campus, the right degree programme will empower leadership with a deepened understanding of child development and learning, equipping them with the knowledge and professional competencies to prepare them for their leadership roles—in and out of the classroom. A good master's degree in early childhood education programme will also help to link the importance of early childhood education to issues of equity and inclusion, helping students learn and grow in a variety of environments. This will enable leadership examine trends, apply cutting-edge research to the field's most pressing issues, and become a skillful collaborator with families, colleagues, and agencies (Walden University, 2020). Administrators in the ECCDE schools should also be motivated so as to apply effective leadership practices in monitoring teaching and learning activities. Motivation as highlighted by Nwaham (2011) is the driving force which impels or propels one to act willingly for the progress of the organization. Motivation can come in form of reward, incentives, regular payment, promotion, empowerment, among others (Nwaham, 2011). Pont, Nusche and Moorman (2008) posited that to improve the performance of school leaders, there is need to make their position attractive through adequate remuneration, support for their career development and recruitment of effective leader. Pont, Nusche and Moorman noted further that the relative attractiveness of salaries for school leaders can influence the supply of high quality candidates for the job. Again, providing career development prospects for school leaders can help avoid principal burnout and make school leadership a more attractive career option. There are many ways to make the profession more flexible and mobile, allowing school leaders to move between schools as well as between leadership and teaching and other professions. School leaders should be recruited based on certain established eligibility criteria of merit, transparency and competence (Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008).

Leadership should also encourage participatory decision making, collaborations and team work among teachers which will give room where they can discuss and tackle all the challenges affecting their teaching responsibilities. Creating room for staff collaboration will make teachers have the feeling that their voices are been heard and are carried along in the school which will in returns make them to put in keen interest and focus on their task (Keshen, 2019). However, the collaborations should also go beyond the teachers to the families and other external stakeholders of the school who would make positive transformation, changes and impacts in the school, tailored towards attainment of excellence in teaching and learning. Above all these discussions, ECCDE programme in the country should be highly supported with sufficient funding. Funding will aid the effectiveness of leadership in the ECCDE because through this means, adequate facilities will be provided in the school, leadership can encourage and support teachers career development likewise, be able to adequately maintain or manage the school facilities. According to Afolayan (2014) the management of available resources and the curriculum coupled with the provisions of necessary instructional materials, quality and

quantity of teachers that could be trained, recruited and retained and the require teaching and learning facilities and environment would be achieved if education is given its priority with adequate funding. This simultaneously will mean that the realistic attainment of quality output for excellence in teaching and learning in the ECCDE, can be realizable through adequate funding. All the above possible strategies if effectively applied including the personal efforts from the administrators or head teachers of ECCDE school will bring about positive transformation and outcomes resulting into the attainment of excellence in teaching and learning.

Conclusion

Effective instructional leadership always makes a difference in improving teaching and students' learning. All the same, there is no doubt that effective instructional leadership practices will definitely lead to the transformation of teaching and learning for excellence in the ECCDE programme in the country. This is so because, effective leaders including those in ECCDE programmes will always make significant impact in the teaching and learning situations. Achievement of the goals and objectives of ECCDE programme might not be effectively actualized without the efforts and contributions of an excellent leader whose effective instructional leadership practices matters a lot. Given all the odds and challenges against childcare providers, being a strong leader becomes all the more important. The leadership must never lose sight of achieving the goal to improve teaching and learning outcomes for children. This also demands that the leader applies effective instructional leadership practices through effective instructional supervision, adequate collaboration with stakeholders and teachers, creating opportunities for teacher support, among others. All these leadership practices discussed in the paper when fully applied will surely lead to transformation of teaching and learning for excellence in the ECCDE. Nevertheless, there seem to be some challenges affecting the transformation of teaching and learning in the ECCDE programme by leadership, which needs to be properly handled and curbed. This calls for the adoption of certain strategies which have been discussed in the paper in order to encourage effective leadership practices that will lead to transformation and improvement of teaching and learning in the ECCDE for excellence.

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