

SCHOOL FACILITIES MAINTENANCE TOWARDS ENHANCING LEARNING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE CENTRES (ECD) IN SOKOTO METROPOLIS

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Abstract

School facilities encompass the entire educational environment including the school site, the building, the playground, the equipment and instructional materials provided for effective teaching and learning. School plant which is the same with school facility is similarly referred to as the space interpretation of the curriculum, noting that the programme of the school are expressed through the site, the building, play grounds, the arrangement and design of the school buildings. The paper examines school facilities as critical components of early childhood education (ECD). The paper offers detailed explanations about school buildings, instructional materials as well as their valuable support to the ECD teaching. The paper also highlighted concept framework guiding ECD teaching with schematic illustration describing various maintenance which include individual centre custodian maintenance approach, committee maintenance approach and situational maintenance approach among other approaches ought to have been adopted by the early childhood care (ECD) centres managers/coordinator and head of caregivers. It highlighted on the advantages and disadvantages of proper maintenance of the school facilities that strengthens and promotes good learning environments and but when the school facilities are poorly or carelessly handled, these would deteriorate mentorship periods, spoil supporting staff spirit of dedications and educational system of the (ECD) centres in the state. This paper focused on the school facilities maintenance towards enhancing learning of toddlers at the early childhood (ECD) centres in Sokoto metropolis with particular reference to school buildings and instructional materials. In the same vein, the paper recommends that centre managers, coordinators and care givers in collaboration with government and non government organizations should adopt effective strategies that would generate improved learning outcomes in ECD. They should include robust school facilities managed by well-trained school managers.

Keywords: *School facilities, School Buildings, Instructional Materials, Early Childhood Care (ECD) centres and Toddlers*

1. Introduction

School facilities encompass the entire educational environment including the school site, the building, the playground, the equipment and instructional materials provided for effective teaching and learning (Semako, 2019). He stressed further that school plant is the space interpretation of the curriculum, noting that the programme of the school are expressed through the site, the building, play grounds, the arrangement and design of the school buildings.

Akomolafe and Adesua (2020) described school facilities systems range from the blocks of classrooms, libraries, workshops, laboratories, equipment, electricity, water, desks, chairs, audio-visual and visual aids, toilets and storage space that would likely motivate toddlers towards learning. Furthermore, the purpose of providing a decent facility at early childhood care (ECD) centres is to enhance the learning activity, and it is a booster to increase toddlers' enrolment and retention. A good adequate provision of school buildings and facilities bring about conducive mentorship

and learning environment for caregivers, toddlers and other staff members to perform their duties effectively as stated by (Asiabaka, 2018, MbonabucyaAloys, 2023). This entails the needs to understand significant roles the school facilities played in the enrolment as well as retention of both toddlers and parental interests at the ECD centres.

A good school environment facilitates desirable behaviour; it is the desire that allow creativity in the minds of toddlers and subsequently promotes harmonious relationship and problem-solving skills among kindergartens. Ezza, *et.al.*, (2019), buttressed that school facilities provision should be undertaken after diagnosing and estimating school requirements and identifying the ideal communities and sites where new schools and facilities are to be located (Kwashabawa, 2017, Odigwe, & Owan, 2019).

This will prevent careless used of school facilities, beside school facility is used not only to provide conducive environment for both mentoring and learning but also to ensure a safe, secure hygienic and comfortable shelter for toddlers, caregivers, head of caregivers and other supporting staff as mentorship, learning and other activities of the (ECD) centres take place and where additional resources are to be provided to meet current and future needs of education in society.

The whole school facility and not just the school building can thus, be conceived as an instrument in education, (Manga, 2021). The prime reason for its existence is for the implementation of the school programme. The type instructional programme that determines the types and sizes of learning spaces provided in the school facility. The availability of equipment and instructional materials significantly impacts on how toddlers are organized for instruction and the mentorship methods adopted by caregivers at the (ECD) centres. The numbers and sizes of spaces for instructional and non-instructional activities depend, of course, on the size of the (ECD) centres' enrolment. Toddlers' Enrolment refers to a total number of learners that are currently schooling at a centre. There are some factors that promote enrolment at (ECD)centres as highlighted by Garba, (2015).

Bearing in mind that, availability of facilities such as classrooms, libraries, laboratories, workshops, ICT Centres, comfortable hostels, convenience rooms, etc. are necessary for a productive learning. These facilities make it easier for caregivers and toddlers to carry out their basic responsibilities at various (ECD) centres, since, kindergartens need learning materials to learn well while the caregivers also require instructional materials to be effective. However, in a situation where these facilities are not available for self-development, the performance level of both caregivers and toddlers will be very low (Omotor, 2017, Chika et.al 2020). Hence the need to provide the school facilities since the caregivers and kindergartens will have more idle time than productive time. The implication is that mentorship periods will reduce learning outcome. Well-managed school facilities through space management and planning, maintenance, and access to amenities and resources are proven to have higher enrolment rates among toddlers, this subsequently lead to enhanced learning. The best small schools offer an environment where caregivers, toddlers, and parents see themselves as part of a community and deal with issues of learning, diversity, governance, and building in a home-like learning place Ekaette et.al, (2019).

All these aforementioned will augur well at provision of available school facilities for effective mentorship and learning. Governments and societies around the world should strive to improve their education systems and ensure that all children and youths have the opportunity to go to school and acquire the knowledge and skills they need to leave healthy and productive lives. Key inputs to the education system, such as curricula, caregivers, head of caregivers, toddlers and education infrastructure, help to improve the quality of education, the quality of education infrastructure, specifically its appropriate educational management, and design with a focus on child development.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 1, which are defined by the United Nations that has scope the development agenda for all countries in the world require countries to "build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive, and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive, and

effective learning environments for all. These education infrastructures constitute a large component of the World Bank's education investment projects. The Bank's World Development Report 2018 titled "Learning to Realize Education's Promise" stresses the making of schools work for all learners and focuses on the need to ensure the high quality of education (World Bank's Development Report, 2018).

The report emphasizes the need to guarantee the efficient use of public resources in delivering the maximum benefits of education to all children. To ensure that investments in school infrastructure achieve the maximum positive impact on learning, which will cater for all children and should actually have access to a place at school, the school buildings should have a safe and healthy environment, existing learning spaces should be optimally designed for learning, the design of the school should foster current pedagogy and community engagement and above all the school infrastructures should be designed to evolve sustainably over the longer term (World Bank's Development Report, 2018).

Interestingly, school facilities in which caregivers and toddlers can work comfortably, furnishings that create an aesthetically pleasing ambiance, and furniture that stands up to the rugged treatment it receives from daily kindergartens use and facility appraisal should be one of the many roles assumed by educational managers.

More profoundly, studies are increasing their focus on the impact that the school facilities will have on toddlers outcomes. When the learning process is at the core of school facilities priorities, there is a significant likelihood that the facility will positively

influence performance. Because, failure to adequately take care of school facilities by the (ECD)centres' managers or coordinators may postpones needed improvements and it may also accelerates deterioration of the (ECD) centres to a large extent. It has been observed by Ugwuanyi (2020) in his study the impact of facilities management on students 'academic performance that, there is correlation which is positive between school facilities and learning. They have reported that, poor learning facilities can derides negative attitudes similar to what is obtain on the exceptional or quality school facilities may booster achievement.

Therefore, the nature and look of a school facility, especially the buildings and instructional materials seem to be one of the important factors that influence toddlers' attitude towards attending school and, perhaps towards learning at the centres. When caregivers work in well-equipped and well-furnished school facilities with good air quality, rich natural lighting and under suitable thermal and acoustic conditions, their levels of motivation and stability on the job increase as it has been prescribed by Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN, 2009) which aims to improve the education sectors in Nigeria.

The physical plant is so important in education that if it does not meet certain standards or if its quality or condition deteriorates, it may have some negative consequences on the mentorship and learning process, as well as on the personal life of caregivers and toddlers. Some studies have established that the physical conditions under which caregivers work have direct positive and negative effects on their morale, sense of personal safety, feelings of effectiveness at the (ECD) centres and the general learning environment.

2. Conceptual Framework illustrations

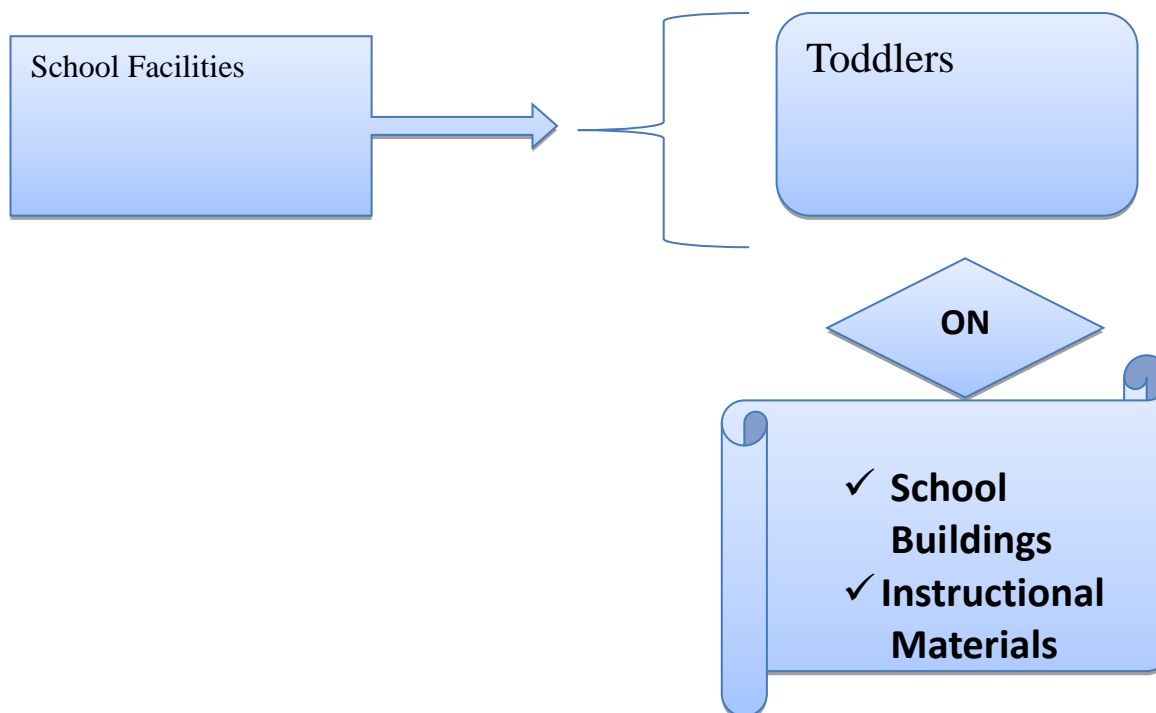


Figure 1: Schematic diagram of school facilities on Toddlers.

2.1 Concept of School Facilities

School facilities: according to Manga, (2021), school facilities can be defined as those things that enable caregivers to stimulates the teaching, mentorships and learning.

According to Akomolafe & Adesua (2020), school facilities systems range from the blocks of classrooms, libraries, workshops, laboratories, equipment, electricity, water, desks, chairs, audio-visual and visual aids, toilets and storage space that would likely enhance toddlers participation towards learning.

3. Importance of School Facilities Maintenance in early childhood care centers (ECD) in Sokoto metropolis

Several scholars such as; Sani, (2007& 2018), Anyoku, (2005), and Oke, (2005) have reported that, the nature of the school plant and the manner of its utilization suppress or promote inherited characteristics and has direct effects of school facilities on a toddler may likely vary in continuous graduation from bad, fair, good, excellent and vice-versa. It was observed that, proper utilization of school facilities enhances promotion and graduation rates as well as reduce repetition and dropout rates in schools at all levels. They have also

observed that, there was school-community service and better relationship improvement due to proper utilization of the school facilities. This increases the relevance and sensibility of schools to the societies they serve coupled with sharing responsibility for toddler behaviour and learning, improved interaction of the school with parents, friends and well-wishers of the school(Onuma,2016), Oseni (2012)).

4.Approaches to School Facilities Maintenance at the early childhood care canters (ECD) in Sokoto metropolis

Manga (2019),Ogunu (2000),Taiwo (2000) and Sani (2007), recommended that, early childhood care centres managers at various points in timeshould have utilized one type of maintenance approach of the other so as to ensure that facilities handed over to their care are appropriately maintained identified types of maintenance approaches as follows:

- ❖ Individual centre Custodian Maintenance Approach: This approach of maintenance is mainly centralized and the centre custodian ensures that maintenance tools are not only provided but that supporting staff on daily basis should carries out maintenance duties. (Taiwo, 2000,

Manga, 2019). This approach could be better up where the custodian is committed to his/her duties. However, it could fail badly; if observed negligence of duty by the (ECD) centres managers or coordinators and he/she is not carefully guided and refused to be asked to sit up by the centre manager.

- ❖ **Committee Maintenance Approach:** It is a situation where by some members are selected and then charge with maintenance responsibility. The committee could comprise; head of caregivers, toddlers, caregivers and supporting staff. . The committee could be in charge of fund raising; receiving complaints on damaged facilities, organizing direct labour where necessary, collecting data and data on condition of school facilities (Ogun, 2000, Manga, 2019). ECD Centre managers need to assign some duties and ensure vital support to enable the committee to carry out their assigned responsibilities diligently. The approach is gear towards ensuring collective responsibility is achieved.
- ❖ **Situational Maintenance Approach:** This depends on availability of funds that are usually generated by charging the public for their use of school facilities. The money is then used for the maintenance of facilities. (ECD) centres could charge some money for the use of their halls, playgrounds, chairs, play tools and: other facilities by the community. Caution deposit is using charged to repair damaged facilities. (Manga, 2019, Ogun, 2000).

It is important to stress that, each approach as its strengths and limitations and their effectiveness depends on proper implementation and management. Availability of the school facilities depicts mechanisms through which school funding is governed, distributed and monitored: plays a key role in ensuring that resources are directed to where they can make the most positive impact. While the overall level of funding matters requires effective use of allocate and match resources to meet learner needs are at least as important.

Since school funding comes from public budgets, developing effective mechanisms to allocate this funding among competing

priorities is an important school-based management committee (SBMC) policy that must be emphasized by governments. It should be remembered that. School systems have limited resources with which to pursue their objectives and using these resources efficiently is a key aim for their activities.

Efficiency alone is not the main concern of school systems but needs to be achieved alongside the quality and equity objectives that are at the heart of (ECD) centres. All these aforementioned will augur well at maintenance of available school facilities in the early childhood (ECD) centres.

5. Advantages of proper Maintenance of School Facilities

Availability of facilities such as school buildings and instructional materials is critical for a productive learning. These facilities make it easier for caregivers and toddlers to carry out their basic responsibilities in the school. Toddlers need learning materials to be mentored well while the caregivers also require instructional materials to be effective. However, in a situation where these facilities are not available and not properly maintained for self-development, the performance level of both caregivers and kindergartens will be very low. This is because caregivers and toddlers will have more idle time than productive time. The implication is that instruction periods will reduce and learning outcome will be low as stated by (Omotor, 2017).

Well-managed school facilities through space management and planning, maintenance, and access to amenities and resources are proven to have higher attendance rates among toddlers, fewer stressful scenarios for supporting staff, caregivers and toddlers' learning is enhanced as ascribed by toRich. (2012). The management of a school's facility e.g., the condition of buildings, the availability of playing tools and the overall safety of the toddlers and caregivers' environment has a direct impact on the outcome of mentorship provided by caregivers to toddlers. A well-maintained facility is directly associated with higher toddlers' learning abilities that is a school building free from disruption increases mentorship time and increase caregivers' turnover rate by 25%. (Offemet.al., 2017).

6. Disadvantages of Poor Maintenance of School Facilities

Sullivan and Sheffrin (2003) stress that, infrastructure is a term used to refer to products, services and facilities that are needed for the (ECD) centres to function. It therefore means that the ability of the school system to achieve her objectives depends on the availability of these products. Infrastructures are very important for learning to take place in any early childhood care (ECD) centres. Eseyin, Okafor&Uchendu (2014) emphasized “Infrastructures play a significant role in the provision of quality education in any nation”. They aid in the dissemination, assimilation and transmission of knowledge. However, when facilities are not properly maintained, it could result into a dilapidation of existing structures as a result of wear and tear and lack of maintenance could lead to infrastructural decay: Poorly maintained school facilities negatively impact on the availability of classrooms, equipment, and learning resources, caregivers and supporting staff workload and the health and safety of kindergartens. It is always good that school facilities should be properly handled and utilized, because when the facilities are poorly taken care of or underutilized if not over utilized, the likelihood returns from investment on the various facilities is to be inadequate, this will render the mentorships ineffective (Sani, 2018). According to him, the way and manner the school plant is utilized could determine the extent of the benefit to be derived from the school facilities in terms of the attainment of (ECD) centres outcomes.

8. Some Recommendations: The paper proposed some recommendations to enhance effective ECD operation. These include;

- ❖ Government should be committed to the adequate funding of education sector through appropriate budgetary allocation

for the sustenance of educational programs in the country. The budgetary allocation should be reviewed upward to meet up with the 26% allocation recommended by UNESCO and above for smooth teaching and learning to take place,

- ❖ Lack of the certain school facilities should not impede the educational system progress instead methods such as mobile shades canopies can be used to facilitate effective teaching and learning,
- ❖ Caregivers, toddlers and other staff that handle the school facilities should be trained on proper school facilities techniques and take responsibility for the upkeep of these facilities
- ❖ The private sectors to collaborate with the government while other educational stakeholders to support the education system through financial and materials contributions. This partnership should be part of their cooperate social responsibility, recognizing that education sectors role in developing skilled manpower for the economy is a statutory responsibility state that must be accomplished,
- ❖ Government to establish a committee to oversee the allocation and use of funds in the education sector. This committee would help minimize misappropriation and improve prudence management as well as ensures effective school maintenance practices.

8. Conclusion

This Paper concludes that effective teaching in ECD centres can only be achieved if the required school infrastructural facilities are in place and well trained staff are hired to manage them. This can only be possible if government holds all stakeholders accountable to their duties.

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