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Implementation of Universal Basic Education Program in the North-Central Region of Nigeria

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Oladimeji Kazeem Adebayo

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Review Committee

Dr. Victoria Landu-Adams, Committee Chairperson,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Mark Starik, Committee Member,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Lori Demeter, University Reviewer,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
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Abstract

Implementation of Universal Basic Education Program in the North-Central Region of
Nigeria

by

Oladimeji Kazeem Adebayo

Masters, Fulda University of Applied Sciences, 2006

BS, Fulda University of Applied Sciences, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Government reports document that the North-Central region of Nigeria has experienced increased negative ineffectiveness of preschool education policy implementation. At the same time, other data suggest that key stakeholders' contribution is missing in the preschool education policy formulation and implementation processes. However, much less is known regarding specific key stakeholders' perceptions that could help reverse this trend. Grounded in the advocacy coalition framework and appreciative inquiry, narrowing this knowledge gap was the purpose of this study. The research question focused on key stakeholders' perceptions that could increase full participation and facilitate the establishment of more quality preschools in the region. A case study was employed with a purposeful sample of 16 semistructured interviews drawn from parents or guardians, preschool heads, primary school principals, and officials from the region. Themes were extracted through descriptive coding regarding the preschool education policy's perceived strengths and opportunities for improvement from collected data transcripts. The emergent themes from the study included early educational and psychomotor development, child supervision, educational sector development, equality and social justice, education for all, school readiness for next level, private and public sensitization, and lack of government financial intervention. The results point to evident positive social change in that the established preschools require being well equipped. The collaboration and active participation of all key stakeholders is needed towards effective preschool education policy implementation and the establishment of more quality preschools across the region.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The Federal Republic of Nigeria consists of six geopolitical regions: The North-Central, North-East, North-West, South-East, South-South, and South-West regions. These geopolitical regions comprise 36 states with the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (Vande, 2012). The Nigerian education data survey (NEDS, 2015) revealed that the North-Central area of the country has yet to realize its full potential regarding the accessibility to early childhood education, while the unschooled population rate remains high. Thus, this issue impedes the psychological development and the smooth transition of children from the preschools into the primary school system (Alase, 2017; Babalola, 2012; NEDS, 2015). Consequently, the high unschooled population rate indicated that early childhood education in Nigeria is unacceptable (Alase, 2017; Awofala & Sopekan, 2013; NEDS, 2015).

The implementation of early childhood education (ECE) in Nigeria has experienced severe problems despite the federal government's commitment to education for all (EFA) and universal basic education (UBE) that was revitalized in 1999 by the former President Obasanjo (Alase, 2017; Awofala & Sopekan, 2013; Odekunle & Okuwa, 2012). The legislators in 2004 later passed into law an undertaking to address the issues of the ineffectiveness of implementation of the set agenda of the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria (Odekunle & Okuwa, 2012; Opoh et al., 2015).

Universal free education was first introduced by the Nigerian federal government in 1977 to enhance the accessibility to basic education and opportunities equally among its citizenry (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013). Nonetheless,

these educational programs were later abandoned due to ineffectiveness in their implementation and sustainability (Okujagu, 2013; Uyanga, 2012). In the General Assembly resolution 217 A (1948), United Nations (UN) declared in Article 26 children education is a universal human right, which implies that every child has the right to education. Children should not be deprived of this right because it is an integral part of a child's development psychology.

Universal Basic Education is a national agenda whose aim is to provide quality and accessible basic education to Nigerian society to promote social justice and equality (FRN, 2013). Uyanga (2012) posited that the UN declaration of human rights considered children education as the right of an individual that should adequately be implemented and observed at the national or local level in a democratic society. However, Odekunle and Okuwa (2012) argued that the provision of free compulsory primary education in the country was rather a misadventure of the federal government.

The federal government of Nigeria is committed to promoting social justice and equality among its citizenry (FRN, 2013). Notwithstanding its commitment, this goal is flawed by the ineffectiveness of UBE (Amuchie et al., 2013; Nsoedo, 2014; Nudzor, 2015; Porter, 2015; Umuroko, 2013). The emergence of a paradox existed between national education policies and human rights. The ineffectiveness of UBE policy implementation prevented social justice and the individual rights of a child.

The conceptual frameworks of this research were elaborated among three thematic backgrounds, which were (a) UBE, (b) EFA, and (c) ECE. The goal of this thematic underpinning was to consider both the global and national perceptions of the education system approaches. Additionally, this study required diverse views of

national education policies of different countries worldwide to understand the supporting issues in basic educational programs.

Chapter 1 of this study focused on the background with an overview of the current literature. The creation of the six geopolitical regions in Nigeria and the policy background was introduced in this chapter. This section also highlighted the study's problem statement with the current trend and the importance of this research to public policy administrators and society. The chapter proceeded with the study's purpose as it attempts to shed more light on the perceived impact of the preprimary education policy implementation on the children who have obtained primary school entrance in the North-Central region of Nigeria.

In the research questions section, I introduced a central research question, and three subresearch questions later explained in Chapter 2. The advocacy coalition and appreciative inquiry conceptual frameworks helped answer the research question. Chapter 1 also addressed the nature of the study with the rationale, which led to the operational definitions of terminology used to develop themes during the search process. The subsequent sections explained the assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of this study. Lastly, in Chapter 1, I also provided significance of the research by offering the potential outcome of the study towards promoting positive social change that is needed to reverse the current trend within the scope of this study.

Background of the Problem

Education is seen as a global phenomenon that promotes socio-economic development and serves as a measurement of prosperity. Apple (2013) explored the problems of education in society. The race-gender-class dynamics division is not clear in a social system and provides the conditions for achieving education in the

community (Apple, 2013). The national policy on education (NPE, 2013) of the federal republic of Nigeria supported this stance that education is the backbone and energy source for a nation that is advancing towards poverty eradication, illiteracy reduction, socioeconomic development, and prosperity of a nation.

The NPE was enacted in 1977 and has undergone several revisions during each of the years 1981, 1989, 1998, 2004, and 2013 partly to impact the embraced UBE for all children. Section 2 of the NPE includes the guidelines for the establishment of preprimary education in Nigeria. Parts of the Nigerian government's proactive efforts are the new inclusions of early childhood care, development and education (ECCDE), and kindergarten education in the NPE. These new measures indicated ECE improvement in Section 2 of the national policy on education (NPE, 2013). However, several challenges, such as funding, qualified staff, curriculum, and others still face ECE's adequate provision in Nigeria (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016).

The education sector crisis began in 1977, when the Nigerian government introduced the free universal primary education system (UPE) (Alase, 2017; Awofala & Sopekan, 2013; Odekunle & Okuwa, 2012). This system was designed to enhance the growth, development, effectiveness, and efficiency of the sector, but due to a lack of adequate planning and accurate statistics, the program failed. Alase (2017) also argued that planning was inadequate for a successful implementation of the planned universal primary education take-off in Nigeria. Despite this failure, the federal government took over all the missionary schools with their full financial obligations. Invariably, this move had an immense negative impact on the federal budget allocation to the states and local governments (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016; Awofala & Sopekan, 2013).

There is a need to fill the gap that will promote the achievement of both the universal basic education and education for all in the North-Central region of Nigeria. UBE was one of the objectives of the post-2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Nation's 2030 objectives are the accessibility of quality education, school readiness of children, and societal equality among Nigerians (Alase, 2017). This study can assist with the achievement of the set goals of the Nation's 2030. However, the UBE has been replaced by sustainable development goals (SDGs) since 2016 (UNDP, 2016). The 17 SDGs are now the new agendas of international communities to achieve prosperity and sustainable development for all nations by 2030 (UNDP, 2016).

According to Alase (2017) Nigeria witnessed a boom in the education sector from 1975 to 1983 due to oil discovery and exportation. The economic boom did not last long as the federal government abandoned the investment and development in other economic sectors (Alase, 2017). The discovery of crude oil quickly harmed other economic sectors of the nation. However, improvements were made in the education sector through the Nigerian constitutional amendments of 1999 (NPE, 2013). Chapter II, Article 18 mandates free education for all citizens, beginning with the free compulsory primary education and continuing up to the university level. The article also mentioned the efforts of the federal government to eradicate illiteracy in the society. As a result of these efforts made by the federal government in 2013 (NPE, 2013), education is again recognized as a fundamental human right and not a privilege in Nigerian society. One of the early scholarly works in the area of UBE in Nigeria was by Uyanga in 2012.

Uyanga (2012) stressed that education is a fundamental right of all citizens in a country. This goal could be achieved by providing an affordable and quality education to all Nigerians. The provision of adequate quality primary education could eradicate illiteracy in society and reduce poverty by empowering the population with essential knowledge for their daily earnings. It could also promote unity among the diverse ethnic groups and religious groups that would yield sustainable coexistence. Nonetheless, the Nigerian government has been unsuccessful in fully implementing the NPE since its establishment in 1997 (Alase, 2017). The subsequent section explores some of the unimplemented or partially implemented portions of the NPE.

1. Section 1, subsection 5. This section of NPE states that Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on each citizen's development into a sound and productive citizen. The policy further states the full integration of everyone into the community, and there would also be equal access to education for all citizens. In reality, Nigerian education data survey (NEDS) (2015) revealed that the effect of the prekindergarten (Pre-K) participation on the literacy rate of children in the North-Central region is among the lowest in the country, at 25.9%. The net attendance rate is only 39.6% of children between the ages of 4 and 5 years. Another issue is related to the number of schools and infrastructures at all educational levels to handle the 8.73 million youths that are expected to be admitted into the school system yearly (Awofala & Sopekan, 2013)
2. Section 1, subsection 10. This section addressed national policy on language. It mentioned the important role language plays in society. The syllabus should have the three main Nigerian languages that are Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. The

policy further states full integration of everyone into the community, and there should also be equal access to education for all citizens, and the three Nigerian languages should be taught in schools. This measure could also promote unity among citizens. The policy further states the importance of smooth interaction with the neighboring countries in the West Africa region, such as Cameroon, Mali, Ivory Coast, Guinea, and others. It stated that French should become the second official language in Nigeria. The national policy on language is only partially implemented in a few schools due to the lack of qualified workforce, while other schools do not have any French teachers.

3. Section 2 of the NPE. This section mandated the provision of pre-primary education with adequate skilled professionals. As such, it is the responsibility of the federal government to provide appropriate preschool in the country. This policy had not been implemented at all, especially at the federal level, due to lack of funding at the Ministry. The Lagos State college of primary education is the only institution that offers preprimary teachers' training sessions.
4. Section 9, subsection 79. This section established the teachers' registration council. This section had not been implemented since its inception in 1977 until 1999, when the registrar and the council's chief executive were appointed. Despite this, only a few teachers have been able to register, while many are still unaware of its existence. Students of science and technology at the tertiary level received 70% of the admission quota according to the commission's proposal. However, NPE (2013) showed that less than 50% of the graduates come from the humanities and social sciences. This measure was

intended to produce graduates that can be self-employed. These graduates can also be creative and self-motivated to tackle the problems of increasing unemployment of graduates in the country.

5. Policy on private universities. The commission recommended establishing private universities across the country to solve the problem of an increasing number of students who seek admission into tertiary level of education. There is inadequate support for the private sector to venture into the establishment of private universities. This is premised on the many bottlenecks and bureaucracy of the government agencies charged with the establishment of private universities in the country.

Invariably, an ongoing argument among interest groups is about improving public schools' educational standards in the country. These interest groups advocate the inclusion of parents, student associations, professional organizations, and NGOs to formulate new educational reforms so that there can be some closure of the gap between the educational standards for private schools and those for public schools across Nigeria (Uyanga, 2012). This education reform and policy improvement can also promote affordable education to lower-income earners. As a result of this education reform, all the key stakeholders are pushing for various agendas to improve an accessible educational system in Nigeria (Alase, 2017). The core aim was to address problems concerning the standard of living, poverty eradication, self-reliance, and empowerment of the citizens, especially the youth in the job market.

Additionally, since 1977, this vital economic sector has not witnessed the desired development, regardless of the several reforms of the NPE. The NPE explicitly specified the guideline for establishing preprimary education at the federal,

state, and local educational jurisdictions in Nigeria (FRN, 2013). A review of the NPE Act (FRN, 2013) revealed no provision made for the inclusion of children from under one-year-old to three years old. Furthermore, the NPE shared the Nigerian government's duties at the state and local levels to provide qualified teachers with adequate numbers, develop curricula, supervision; and control the preschools' standards. However, the recent publication of the Nigerian education research and development council in conjunction with the United Nations children's educational fund and the universal basic education commission showed the recent improvement in early childhood education has just established a national curriculum for the ages one year to five years.

Little is known about the role the key stakeholders played in the negatively perceived experience and perception of the policy implementation of the universal basic education in the North-Central region of Nigeria (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016; Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014; Amuchie et al., 2013; Nsoedo, 2014; Nudzor, 2015). Therefore, this study filled the gap that may well inform decision-makers and key stakeholders on finding a viable solution that could reverse the negative impact of the current early childhood education programs.

The UBE program consists of the preprimary level, nine years of continuous primary education that is divided into one to three years of primary school (lower level), four to six years (middle basic), and one to three years of junior secondary school (upper basic). UBE's primary focus is the provision of equal opportunities for all preprimary school-age children between three and five years old. Odekunle and Okuwa (2012) argued on restructuring the current UBE programs, despite the introduction of several reforms since its enactment in 1977.

The national education programs' ineffectiveness denied Nigerian children adequate access to the country's free compulsory basic education. It has also hampered the socio-economic development of the nation (Uyanga, 2012). Existing literature also showed that the pre-primary education policy implementation lacks the federal government's commitment. Lack of responsibility by the federal government and political will constitute societal problems that prevent a child's school readiness and psychological development.

Recent research highlighted numerous challenges in implementing the UBE and EFA (Porter, 2015; Potokri, 2014). The recent historical perspective of the impact of education on the economic growth in sub-Saharan African countries was suggested by Glewwe et al. (2014). Glewwe et al. concluded that most SSA's low economic development could be traced to the substandard schools compared to the developing countries. The authors further stated that the increase in economic growth trends was due to government commitment and investment in those developed countries' education sectors.

A recent study on government expenditure and economic development in Nigeria showed that spending on education had an immense impact on its economic growth (Alase, 2017; Omodero & Azubike, 2016). The world summit in 1990 on the expansion of a child's right to education per the Jomtien Declaration shed light on EFA in Thailand as a global agenda contributing to the world's economic development (Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014).

The multifaceted programs of EFA are essential components of the MDGs. The EFA aimed at the provision of quality and comprehensive early childhood education to all children between the ages of three and five years. However, the

private sector has provided the needed infrastructure to promote this aspect of the NPE, supporting this undertaking by the Nigerian government. The current EFA implementation is experiencing several issues: accessibility, funding, political support, and lack of qualified staff (Potokri, 2014; Porter, 2015).

The 1990 EFA and the 2000 MDGs agreements gained support from the international communities and donors. In sub-Saharan African countries, the EFA's commitment and the MDGs promoted the accessibility of education throughout the continent. This measure was expected to tackle poverty alleviation and facilitate the region's socio-economic development that includes the most poverty-stricken countries in the world (Lewin & Sabates, 2012; Lyytinen & Richardso, 2014; Umukoro, 2013; Unterhalter, 2014). Lewin and Sabates (2012) argued in support of the success recorded from implementing the EFA in the sub-Saharan African countries. The authors concluded that the documented success had exceeded the set goals towards the inclusion of a full complete basic education until grade nine and beyond. However, basic education's growth rate has been unsustainable due to inadequate infrastructure and a lack of qualified teachers. Additionally, the problem with insufficient preschools, combined with more over-age children, indicated a degeneration of the educational programs.

The developing countries have also failed to address the gender inequality of education in women's and girls' schools. The gender inequality in education further shifted the realization of EFA and MDG 2 in the post-2015 target (Aikman & Rao, 2012; Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2012; Porter, 2016). The epidemic of HIV/AIDS is essential to all school children as part of health education. Sub-Saharan African countries are located in one of the regions in the world most affected by sexually

transmitted diseases. This is due to inadequate healthcare, education, and social sensitization (Okwori et al., 2012).

The role of women in society is vital, as they contribute to the world's socio-economic development. Women also contribute to a country's political and cultural development and, of course, to human rights. Furthermore, women contribute to the socio-economic development of the world. Nonetheless, Nigeria is among the E-9 countries, with over 40 million nonreaders, of which 60% are women. Lack of adequate education can lead to an impediment in the country's economic growth (Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2012). Therefore, women's empowerment in society is requisite for illiteracy eradication, reduced health-related issues, and shrinking of the maternal mortality rate (Olaoye, 2013; Ozuhu-Suleiman, 2012; Wushishi, 2014).

Although the developed countries commit huge capital to the education sector, sub-Saharan countries still lack the political will to end current trends of low development in the education sector due to inadequate funding of this critical economic sector. This has contributed to insecurity in some parts of Africa due to the absence of promising young generation perspectives on the African continent (Adebisi, 2016; Ekwueme et al., 2016; Nwaka, 2016).

That the sustainability and development of human beings depend on education cannot be overemphasized. Education contributes mainly to a person's cognitive, emotional, and philosophical awareness during that person's lifetime. Knowledge assists human beings in realizing the potential of their surroundings. Therefore, education is considered a human right, regardless of country, gender, ethnicity, or color, as described in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2016; Uyanga, 2012). Human rights are the rights of a person that should not be diminished

but protected. Education is a critical socioeconomic need of the people. The state government's responsibility is to make the provision for accessible and quality education, as stipulated in the Nigerian constitution (NPE, 2013).

It is assumed that ECE improves the cognitive development and academic performance of children in the short-term, as children between the ages of three and five years explore fundamental ways of life (Mofrad, 2012; Odgers, 2015). Other scholars emphasized the connection between the long-term effects of ECE programs. Their conclusion showed the relationship between children's positive development in preschools and their academic performance (Bakken et al., 2017; Barnett et al., 2017). The authors also argued that preschoolers that attended high-quality care centers are better-mannered, more mature, and more socially connected than their counterparts in public-funded preschools in the United States. Government intervention could also bridge the gap for children living in poverty throughout their lives (Currie & Rossin-Slater, 2015).

In contrast, Keys et al. (2013) argued that government needs to provide quality prekindergarten (Pre-K) as an essential aspect of early childhood education intended to prepare children for school readiness before entering primary school. Furthermore, Keys et al. concluded that the quality of the Pre-Ks has a positive effect on their oral communication and mathematics facility. However, they found no effect on the social behavior and skills of the preschoolers. The quality of the Pre-Ks is also important in the adequate preparation of children for the educational experience that would be acquired by the children later in life (Mofrad, 2012; Odgers, 2015). Mofrad (2012) and Odgers (2015) also concluded that quality preschools are necessary to promote social justice and equality in society.

The delivery of and continuous adequate government support for the establishment of Pre-K students has gained more attention in recent years as the global recession, and financial crisis has impacted government spending in this crucial economic sector. Thus, governments worldwide have re-evaluated education expenditure and educational programs on the priority agenda towards the regeneration of the economy (Carneiro & Ginja, 2014).

According to Hedefalk et al. (2015), the education sustainable development of early childhood education has received insufficient attention as a new strategic approach towards achieving long-term early childhood education in the world.

Nudzor (2015) shed light on the evolution and current challenges facing the policy implementation of preprimary education in sub-Saharan African countries. Nudzor concluded that lack of compliance by the concerned key stakeholders and the unwillingness of local governments of each African country contributed to the problems. Additionally, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics Report (2016) showed that the set objectives of the UBE and EFA, which are part of the new 2030 agenda for sustainable development (associated with the U.H. SDGs), are unlikely to be met as a result of political and government instability in some areas in Africa.

In Nigeria, the preschool program is the early childhood care, development, and education (ECCDE), which is an integral component of the UBE. It was launched in 1999 to improve the accessibility of children's education in the country. Among the critical issues that affected an effective policy implementation of ECCDE in Nigeria could be the government's lack of commitment (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016). Other problems facing the ECCDE are insufficient funding, lack of qualified staff, lack of a unified curriculum, and inadequate planning (Adebisi et al., 2014; Alabi & Ijaiya,

2014; Olubor & Inua, 2015; Sooter, 2013). The government could not wholly sustain the adequate provision of ECCDE in Nigeria. The federal government encouraged the private sector's full participation with close government monitoring to enforce a quality standard in the preschools (Matthew, 2015; Newman & Obed, 2015).

The federal government attempted in 2000 to bring to light the constitutionalized convention on the rights of the child (CRC). The new CRC locally fused into the Child Rights Act and the UBE Act (2004) towards improving early childhood education in Nigeria. The Nigerian educational research and development council, in partnership with UNICEF, in 2000, developed a national curriculum that took a holistic approach to the issue (FRN, 2018). They presented the three age cohorts that could facilitate the adequate development as zero to two, two to three, and three to six. This arrangement focused on the content of seven topics: physical development, affective development; mental and language development; foods and nutrition; harmful traditional practices; health and diseases, and safety measures.

This national curriculum was revised in 2018 due to the local intervention practices of early childcare, feedback from the early childhood development centres in the country, and the impact of globalization, in conjunction with technology advancement (FRN, 2018). Thus, the new, improved curriculum for the ECE's structural and developmental approach thematically now has the zero to three and three to five ages as the benchmark for preschool education in Nigeria. The new approach focus was abridged from the previous preschool arrangement before the revision in 2018. These changes are described as follows: physical development; affective/psychosocial development; cognitive development; food and nutrition; health; water and environmental sanitation; safety measures; and protection issues.

The premise of the research questions for data collection is described in Chapter 3 under the lenses of combined conceptual frameworks of the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) and appreciative inquiry (AI). Also, an extensive review of the current literature status on the UBE, EFA, and early childhood education failed to address the impact of key stakeholders' contributions. Furthermore, the literature did not address the key stakeholders' inputs on ECCDE in Nigeria (Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014; Amuchie et al., 2013; Nsoedo, 2014; Nudzor, 2015; Porter, 2015; Umuroko, 2013). The exclusion of key stakeholders may hinder the government's realization of the country's commitment to enhancing education accessibility. The inadequate provision of primary education may deprive children of their right to school, which may also lead to the infringement of children's human rights in Nigeria.

This study filled this knowledge gap under the ACF and AI lenses that informed the data collection. The study results may help the educators, key stakeholders, and policymakers at all levels of government gain insights on the needed improvement in early childhood education implementation policies. The frameworks mentioned above may also provide children with a smooth transition into the primary school system accessible as stipulated in the Nigerian constitution. Hence, a study from the selected key respondent's perspective may advance the understanding of the impact of the preschool education policy implementation whose inputs are not addressed in the literature identified by the researcher.

Creation of the Six Geopolitical Regions

Nigeria is comprised of over 250 ethnic groups, speaking more than 354 dialects with considerable political interests and diverse cultural groups (Alase, 2017; Vande, 2012). The Gowon regime in 1967 adopted a political and administrative

model towards the harmonization of all the ethnic groups to end the conflicting interests of the Republic of Biafra, led by their then main leader Ojukwu, in the eastern part of the country. In 1967, Nigeria was composed of 12 states: North-Western, North-Central, North-Eastern, Kano, Kwara, Northern zone, East-Central, Southeastern, Eastern zone, Mid-West, Lagos state, and Western zone (Vande, 2012). The 12 states were later merged into the current composition of six geopolitical regions, including the North-Central, North-East, North-West, South-East, South-South, and South-West. These geopolitical regions consist of the 36 states and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

The agenda of the military in 1967 led to the imposition of a centralized government system in a move to stop the agitations from the eastern part of the country that called for a referendum and a break away from Nigeria. This step was intended to attain the urgent needed political stability in the country. However, the constitutionalizing of a federal system in Nigeria was obtruded without considering the diversity in ethnicity and the citizens' political perspectives. This omission led to ongoing unrest in the eastern parts of the country and some ethnic minorities' marginalization in distinct geopolitical regions. According to Vande (2012), citizens in the eastern zone are less privileged to hold political office positions in Nigeria. The author also concluded that all the recent national conference initiatives were politically motivated by diminishing interest in Nigerians' unity and coexistence (Vande, 2012).

Policy Background

This study analyzed preschool education policy implementation in the North-Central region of Nigeria. It is informed by the impacted citizens' views and selected

critical stakeholders in this geopolitical zone. From this perspective, looking at the societal problem helped the researcher better understand the impact that the preschool education policy implementation had on those citizens whose contributions to the policy formulation and implementation were not mentioned in the literature identified by the researcher.

The present research filled this gap in the body of knowledge from the perception of parents or guardians, educators, and administrators from the North-Central geopolitical region by exploring their shared, in-depth information. This approach intends to advance the understanding of the impact of the preschool education policy. The researcher also sought the input of UBE officials, who were in charge of policy formulation, to examine their perception of the preschool education policy's effect on establishing accessible and quality early childhood education in Nigeria. The study also contributes to positive social change by promoting quality early childhood education in Nigeria to advance the citizens' values of social justice and equality.

Problem Statement

The negatively perceived impact of ineffective policy implementation is increasing in the country's early childhood education. It is one of the issues facing preprimary education in Nigeria (Amuche & Kukwi, 2013). Consequently, the problem mentioned above has led to ECE's inadequate provision in the North-Central region (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016; Awofala & Sopekan, 2013; NEDS, 2015).

The National Policy on Education (NPE, 2013) states the guidelines for establishing pre-primary education. It addresses the problem of accessibility of preschools in all the geopolitical zones of Nigeria with the overall goals of illiteracy

eradication in the country (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016; Babalola, 2015). Effective policy implementation of early childhood education in Nigeria would provide children with a smooth transition from preschools into the primary school system, which would also aid children's psychological development (Amuche & Kukwi, 2013).

Despite the numerous studies conducted on early childhood education in the past and several reforms by the Nigerian government, Nigerian children's literacy rate remains at 48.5% in the country. Also, the number of children out of school has increased, which was linked to the monetary cost and the schools' distance from home (NEDS, 2015). Ineffectiveness of the Pre-K implementation policy has negative consequences for the children in the North-Central region of Nigeria (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016; Babalola, 2015; NEDS, 2015).

The literature on early childhood programs neglects to address the key stakeholders' buy-in in the policy process (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016; Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014; Amuchie et al., 2013; Nsoedo, 2014; Nudzor, 2015; Porter, 2015; Umuroko, 2013). This presents a gap in the policy arrangements of preschool programs in the North-Central region of Nigeria. Understanding the fundamental role, the stakeholders' perception played in the ineffectiveness of policy implementation of early childhood education in this region of Nigeria is essential to answering the research question which is how do the early childhood education policy affect children's entry into the primary school system in North-Central region of Nigeria.

In response to the ineffective preschool education implementation policy, this study investigated several options to address the misalignment of preprimary educational policies in the North-Central region of Nigeria. Thus, without improvement in the policy implementation of early childhood education, the

achievement of UBE would be difficult to accomplish in this geopolitical region (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016; Amuche & Kukwi, 2013; Babalola, 2015; Ekong, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative case study aimed to advance the understanding of the negatively perceived impact on early childhood education policy implementation. Children who have gained primary school admission in the North-Central geopolitical zone were considered in this present study. Hence, the parents' or guardians' perceptions shed light regarding a child's school readiness in the first year of primary school. The states in the North-Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria include Benue, Abuja (Federal Capital Territory), Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and the Plateau. I used several sources, including policy papers, legislative reports, preschool reports, historical documents, and other valuable resources for the study. The experiences of the purposefully selected 16 key respondents, such as UBE officials, parents or guardians, and educators residing in the North-Central zone were collected through individual in-depth interviews at a selected Nigerian private university.

This present study aimed to examine the issue of ineffectiveness in the policy implementation of universal basic education in North-Central Nigeria. The study sought to facilitate a better understanding of the decision-makers and key stakeholders' perspective towards the achievement of the government's set national agenda, which is the provision of accessible education to its citizenry. It may also facilitate reaching the objectives of Education for All (EFA) and SDGs in the country and simultaneously promote the children's right to education in Nigeria. The selected key respondents provided the perception of their inputs. They also explained how they had been affected regarding the implementation of the preschool education policy.

Effective policy implementation of early childhood education in Nigeria could facilitate school readiness and aid children's psychological development (Amuche & Kukwi, 2013).

Without understanding the key stakeholders' contribution and inputs in the implementation of preprimary school education, the achievement of universal basic education may remain elusive. This study aimed to examine the negative perceived impact and lived experiences of affected stakeholders who informed the policymakers and other key stakeholders towards effective policy implementation of the early childhood education programs and the establishment of more preschools.

By exploring the perceived roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes of the key informants, this study sought to gain a better understanding that was intended to make useful contributions towards the establishment of more preschools in the North-Central area of Nigeria and improved the effectiveness of policy implementation of early childhood education in the region. Seeking the key stakeholders' buy-in may also positively contribute to an effective preschool education policy formulation and implementation that is needed towards Nigeria's socio-economic recovery.

Research Question

The research questions for this case study and the purpose of the proposed study are as follows: The central research question was: How does the early childhood education policy affect children's entry into the primary school system in North-Central region of Nigeria? The subresearch questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-Central region on the early childhood education system in Nigeria?

2. What are the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-Central region of Nigeria on the overall impact of the preprimary education policy of the Nigerian primary school system?
3. How does the collaboration of local stakeholders affect early childhood education towards the achievement of school readiness of children in the North-Central region of Nigeria?

Conceptual Frameworks

The conceptual frameworks that were used in the present study to analyze the ineffectiveness of preprimary policy implementation were the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) and appreciative inquiry (AI). I used the ACF by Jenkins-Smith (1993) as the main framework in this study. I applied the ACF components to analyze the effectiveness of the current state of the preschool's policies. The study results also forecast the outcome of the new policy recommendations of relevant key stakeholders, such as policymakers, educators, government agencies, and the private sector. ACF's components are deep core beliefs, an advocacy coalition, policy learning, subsystems, policy broker and sovereign, policy change over a decade or more, and enlightenment (Sabatier & Weible, 2014).

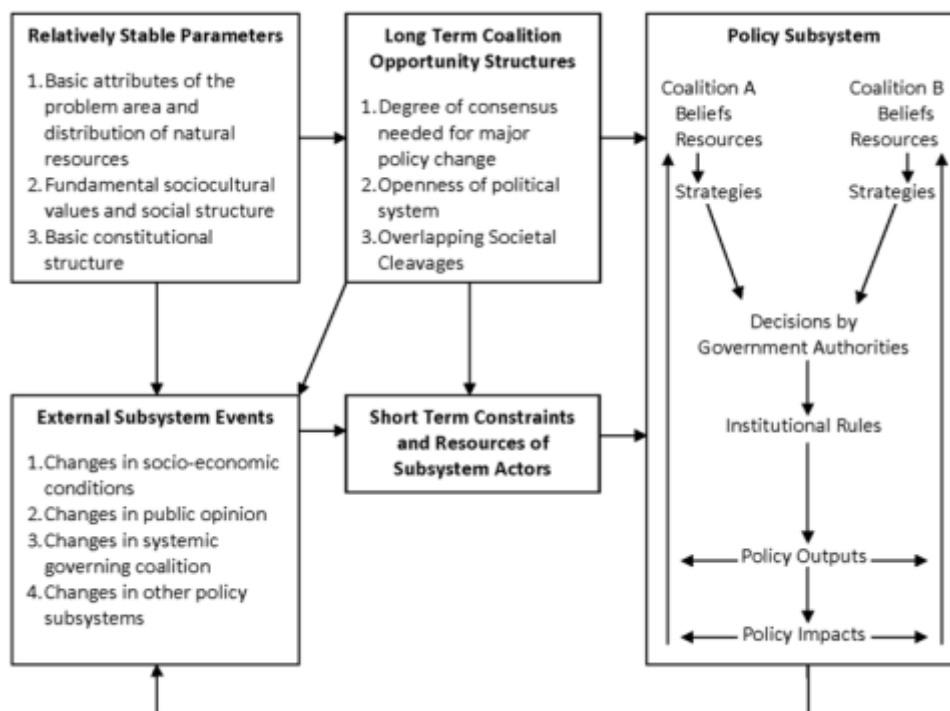
ACF application could add rigor to the study's findings regarding policy implementation effectiveness (Elgin & Weible, 2013; Fidelman et al., 2014; Shahriar & Khan, 2016). The Sabatier and Weible (2007) propositions indicated that a shared belief system unites the policy actors into an advocacy coalition in a policy subsystem. Figure 1 shows the application of ACF in a public policy process with the influence of coalition actors at different subsystem levels in an organization. The ACF is a theoretical framework developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith in 1993. The

ACF was applied to examine public policy processes and the impacts of coalition partners' influence in policy formulation and implementation.

The ACF was developed to explain and describe the complexity of the established structures' policy-making structure and decision environments. These policy structures consist of several government levels, such as the federal, state, and local government levels. Also, ACF has both practical and theoretical significance. ACF's primary aim is to shed light on the key stakeholders' behavior, which are the coalition actors that attempt to impact the policy-making process, either directly or indirectly.

Figure 1

Flow Diagram of the Advocacy Coalition Framework – (Sabatier & Weible, 2007)



This indication influenced the selection of the ACF and appropriateness as a theoretical lens in this study. Appreciative inquiry (AI) was used to complement the

shortcomings of ACF. ACF only concentrates on policy changes resulting from the learning process within and between the coalition actors. ACF focuses on coalition system consistency and the development of the belief system (Elgin & Weible, 2013; Shahriar & Khan, 2016). The authors concluded that ACF does not provide information on how to gain or discover resources needed at the individual, organizational, and subsystem levels. The authors further stressed that the resources are essential for developing a progressive relationship with the key stakeholders by focusing on how to effect positive change in a government agency by employing the AI envisioning method.

Appreciative inquiry is a theoretical framework developed towards envisioning a change in organizational culture and setting (Shafritz et al., 2016). Cooperrider and Whitney (2016) proposed four principles, which are also known collectively as the 4D framework of AI. The process of AI involves two main components: first, identifying positive forces, and secondly, envisioning the new possibilities for the organization's future through inspiration and creative ideas.

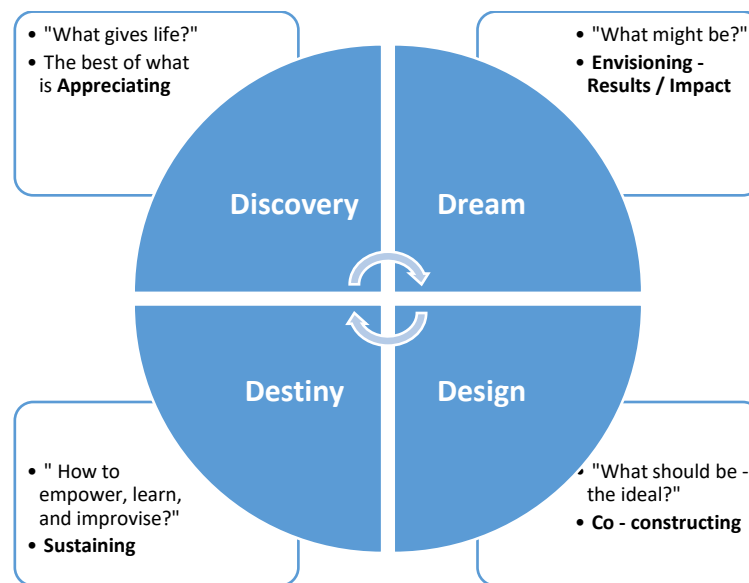
Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) posited that various coalition partners seek to determine and dominate policy direction at the policy subsystem level, including the state and local levels. In their study, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) applied the ACF to public policy issues to show how advocacy coalitions and events can have on public policy. One problem facing preprimary education in Nigeria is the negatively perceived impact of policy implementation in early childhood education.

Cooperrider's (2005) AI theory was developed for organization development and change management, as organizations are established to realize set objectives. The federal government set up public institutions to create public value by employing

the change agents' use of transition strengths. AI links the core energy with the knowledge to community change agenda or organizational goals. It implies that AI seeks the root (cause) of success (Shafritz et al., 2016).

Figure 2

4D Model of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2016)



This study analyzed the issues mentioned above from the key stakeholders' perspectives; it is important to reverse the current trend of ineffective implementation of the preschool policy. Figure 2 shows the graphical description of AI concepts that may help an organization achieve the set objectives by focusing on the present positive success of such an organization. The two selected conceptual frameworks were used in advancing the understanding of the policy processes with robust theoretical support of the key stakeholders. This practical support ranges from the policy planning stage through the execution and post-implementation initiatives that enhance the realization of the UBE and EFA set objectives in Nigeria.

Nature of Study

The research method for the study was a qualitative case study approach. Ravitch and Carl (2016) posited that qualitative research inquiry is a better approach than other research methods such as the quantitative method to study human behavior and culture in their complexity. The qualitative research approach aimed to explore various opinions or views and collect in-depth information about a particular observation or group of individuals.

The study evaluated the stakeholders' perception and attitude through the analytical lens of the advocacy coalition framework and appreciative inquiry. The two conceptual frameworks guided the researcher to understand the meaning of the collected interview data for interpretation and analysis. To gain insights into the selected key stakeholders' perceptions of the policy processes' impact, semi-structured interviews of 16 selected key informants that are UBE officials, parents or guardians, preschool heads, and primary school principals were carried out. Also, the triangulation of observational fields and documents was conducted, while the coded data were divided into themes for analysis and interpretation. The results served as the basis for new policy implementation recommendations for early childhood education and, in Nigeria, the early childhood care, development, and education.

The qualitative case study can allow research with more in-depth opportunities for solving underlying issues by using multiple data sources (triangulation) and individual face-to-face interviews (Creswell, 2013). The inquiry method focuses on the experiences of the small group of participants through extensive interaction that could lead to codes and patterns (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative research approach was chosen over a quantitative approach because a qualitative case study can enable

integrating the phenomenon of interest and context within the study (Creswell, 2013).

In a quantitative study, the researcher may decide to separate the phenomenon from the context of the study, which are not separable in real-life scenarios (Creswell, 2013).

The research article by Yob and Brewer (2015) noted that the qualitative research approach is not about the generalizability of a study. Rather, it deals with choosing an appropriate sampling strategy by applying a purposeful sampling method that will enrich comprehensive, in-depth, and rich information about a particular phenomenon or group of individuals within a progressive and complex worldview. The alignment of research design with the research question is vital to a study's outcome (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Yin (2014) pointed out that the case study design is particularly suitable to answer the “how” or “why” questions within a research study and about the events that the researcher cannot manipulate (p. 14). A research design is a blueprint that helps a researcher choose a method with the steps that need to be taken; that is, research design dictates a study's roadmap. Careful consideration is necessary for the choice of research design and method to provide the findings accurate and aid in a satisfactory outcome. The study design also specifies how the chosen method will be applied to answer the research questions. In this study, the research design included selecting key stakeholders who provided perspectives on their inputs and decision-making processes regarding preschool education's implementation policy.

Researchers who are mindful of the methodology steps mentioned above may be more convincing than otherwise. These three components of a research design are consistency, logic, and transparency. They aid the clarity of data selection, data

collection, coding process, analysis, and interpretation process to answer the research question adequately.

The research problem determines the type of design that should be used in a study. Newman and Covrig (2013) noted that the improvement of the title, problem statement, purpose, and research question could be achieved through consistency. Thus, the alignment of these research components promotes the rigor of study design. If the steps mentioned above are considered and followed in a study, it is easier for the readers and the audience to monitor such a study's logical flow.

Operational Definitions of Terminology

National Policy on Education: An educational program that was first established and implemented in 1977 by the federal government of Nigeria to facilitate access to education to all its citizenry to foster social justice and equality (FRN, 2013). The National Policy on Education (NPE) shares the Nigerian government's duties at the state and local level to provide qualified teachers in adequate numbers, develop curricula, provide a supervision role, and control the standard of the preschools.

Universal Basic Education: The national agenda aims to provide quality and accessible basic education to Nigerian society to promote equality among the citizens (FRN, 2013). The primary focus of universal basic education is providing equal opportunities for all preprimary school-age children between 3 and 5 years of age (FRN, 2013; Odekunle & Okuwa, 2012).

Education for All: The global aspiration of the international community with the objectives of supporting and promoting early childhood education for all, as advanced by the United Nations World Summit for children in 1990 on the expansion

of a child's right to education as a means to advancing global development (Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014).

Early Childhood Education: The preschool or Pre-K initiative geared towards the improvement of the cognitive development and academic performance of children in the range of 3 to 5 years of age, as they explore the fundamental ways of life (Mofrad, 2012; Odgers, 2015).

Early Childhood Care, Development, and Education: The Nigerian government agenda on the Pre-K establishment. The ECCDE is an important aspect of the UBE which was launched in 1999 to improve the accessibility of children's education in the country (FRN, 2013).

Advocacy coalition framework: Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith developed the theoretical framework in 1993. The ACF was applied to examine public policy processes and the impacts of coalition partners' influence on policy formulation and implementation. ACF is a tool used for policymaking when dealing with intense public policy systems (Sabatier, 1993). ACF helps to understand policies and priorities involved in dispute management that may arise from coalition actors' interaction at different levels of subsystems (Sabatier, 1993).

Appreciative inquiry: The theoretical framework developed towards envisioning a change in the organizational culture and setting (Shafritz et al., 2016). AI application is used as a change strategy in an organization that focuses on the life-center of a phenomenon of interest. Individuals (key stakeholders) and organizations (government agencies) are recognized as entities seeking a practical solution than looking for problems to be solved (Shafritz et al., 2016).

Assumptions

This study contains several assumptions. The first assumption was that ECE improves children's cognitive development and academic performance and advances school preparation (Keys et al., 2013; Mofrad, 2012; Odgers, 2015). The second assumption was that, through the establishment of ECCDE in Nigeria, early childhood education would be promoted, thereby increasing the accessibility to Pre-K education in the country. Thirdly, it was assumed that the key informants, such as the UBE officials, parents or guardians, and educators in the study, have a good understanding of the ECCDE programs' experience. A related assumption was that all the interview questions were presumed to have been answered correctly and honestly. The fourth assumption was the use of the qualitative case study to collect rich and in-depth information from the perceptions of the key informants that helped answer the research question. These four assumptions were needed to help me answer the subresearch questions adequately in this study.

Scope and Delimitations

The sampling strategy considered the setting, culture, events, and participants to interview or observe in a study (Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014). Patton (2015) posited that the appropriate sample size in a qualitative study depends on the study's purpose. Thus, the sample size is determined by the aim of the inquiry, the timeframe, and resources available for the study. Ravitch and Carl (2016) encouraged the use of saturation or redundancy sampling to determine the appropriate sample size in a qualitative study. Also, Mason (2010) stressed that selecting a suitable sample depends on collecting in-depth and rich data that is meaningful until nothing new is being learned from the collected data. Stake (2006) recommended between 15 and 30

cases for a qualitative case study approach so that researchers could collect enough in-depth data to reach saturation.

This qualitative case study used a purposive sampling approach and a semistructured interview with purposely selected 16 key respondents who were the UBE officials and parents or guardians, preschools heads, and primary school principals residing in the North-Central region of Nigeria. The selected participants living in the North-Central part of Nigeria could shed their lived experiences regarding their perceptions of the preschool education policy implementation to answer the research question. In this study, after 16 interview sessions with the participants about their preschool experiences, program saturation was reached. Therefore, no more cases were recorded. O'Reilly and Parker (2012) defined data saturation as a point at which there are few surprises in the data, and no new patterns or themes are emerging from the data.

The qualitative research approach aims to explore various opinions or views and collect in-depth information about those opinions or beliefs. Therefore, the number of participants required depends on the nature of the research and how many are needed to answer the research questions adequately. Ravitch and Carl (2016) underpinned the definition of data saturation as the adequacy of the sampling method. Conceptual frameworks widely used in post-primary school education, such as secondary, higher institution, and adult education, were not investigated. The outcome of this study might be reproduced and applied to other states in the same region where issues exist with preschool education implementation policy.

Limitations

Ravitch and Carl (2016) recommended considering participants of a study to precede the selection of the data collection method. The selected research approach was a case study to investigate the phenomenon of interest in the study. The selected participants were located in the North-Central region of Nigeria. This present study was a case study and will not be generalized to other geopolitical areas within the country.

My role as a researcher in this present study is that of a research instrument. I applied positionality and reflexivity to enhance rigor in the study. I anticipated and addressed the reliability and validity of the instrument used in the study by carefully applying an audit data trail that involved transparency throughout the entire investigation.

The issue of validity occurred throughout every step of the qualitative research design. I exercised flexibility in the entire process of checking the data accuracy in this present study. Ravitch and Carl (2016) suggested that researchers who use a qualitative approach should take great care to ensure accuracy during data collection, values assignment, and data entering. These are vital to the outcome of the study. Furthermore, the use of multiple data sources by applying triangulation enhances the richness of the results of the study of the present study. This study's data included the interview protocols, observation field notes, and documents that were organized and then transcribed immediately into the Excel spreadsheet after the collection to prevent leaving out any valuable information during the data collection process.

Significance of the Study

Giving voice to the less privileged in society is an essential aspect of understanding and realizing the meaning of positive social change. The successful implementation of preschool programs could lead to the achievement of set objectives of UBE and EFA. The findings will also help educators of UBE programs by improving on their methodology and engaging in meaningful educational initiatives that will facilitate the successful implementation of UBE programs in Nigeria.

This present study could contribute to social change with a public policy application for the Nigerian Ministry of Education by providing information that might help legislators, school administrators, education planners, and other key stakeholders who play a vital role in education policy formulation implementation. UBE 's primary focus is providing equal opportunities for all preprimary school-age children from 3 to 5 years of age. The present study could facilitate a better understanding of the impact of the ineffectiveness of the preprimary education policy implementation in the North-Central region of Nigeria.

The present study filled this gap in the body of knowledge of public policy and administration by concentrating mainly on implementation of the preprimary education policy in the North-Central zone of Nigeria. In understanding the key stakeholders' contribution and decision-making processes regarding the preschool program implementation policy, this study made useful contributions that can help the key stakeholders and policymakers gain insights on the needed improvement of early childhood education towards establishing more preschools in the North-Central region of Nigeria.

The findings of this study provide relevant data that could help the federal government, educators, parents or guardians, and policymakers, and government agencies, such as the Ministry of Education and State Universal Education Board, to plan adequately and gain insight into the consequences of ineffective implementation of the programs that might impede the school readiness of children.

Additionally, this present study's findings could facilitate a better understanding of the psychological development of a child that the nation urgently needs towards socioeconomic development. Moreover, this study's results may also help the educators and learners work towards achieving the set objectives of full realization of preprimary education programs, as spelled out in the NPE.

O'Sullivan et al. (2016) stressed the essential need for administrators to use scholarly works to facilitate and strengthen their decision-making processes regarding the justification of public problems. Administrators use data to evaluate, monitor, and analyze government programs' effectiveness for the public towards good decisions. The result of these findings could also be useful to school administrators to implement policies and programs geared towards learners' efficient development. This study's anticipated results could facilitate the collaboration of the key stakeholders in the preschool program policy formation by providing the key actors with the necessary policy recommendations that could be viable and practical.

Implications for Social Change

The successful implementation of preschool programs can lead to the achievement of set objectives of UBE and EFA. The findings will also help educators of UBE programs by improving their methodology and engaging in meaningful

educational initiatives that will facilitate the successful implementation of UBE programs in Nigeria.

De Siqueira (2012) concluded that social change to be unworthy of the difference in the society that will be progressive. Also, Aloni (2013) also agreed with De Siqueira and described social change as value-laden and progressive. Yob and Brewer (2012) noted most of the previous studies perceived social change activity as “end product” rather than considering the processes of social change activities themselves (p. 6). I described the meaning of social change as an active community engagement that will bring about a progressive society with long term values for the community. The understanding of social change by the key stakeholders is critical to the positive transformation of society.

Furthermore, a study of this nature could also guide the parents and guardians against the dangers and consequences of the failure of their children’s enrollment in preschools, impeding the school readiness, academic achievement, and psychological development of the Nigerian children.

Summary

The research problem that this study addressed was the ineffectiveness of UBE policy implementation in the North-Central region of Nigeria that impeded the psychological development and smooth transition for children from preschool into the primary school system. The lack of proper Pre-K policy implementation also presents the issue of infringement of a child’s right to education against EFA and MDGs' set global agendas. The SDGs are the post-MDGs set agendas by the international community to develop all nations (UNDP, 2016). These challenges could result in the impediment of achieving basic education to all, especially children, worldwide.

At the national level in Nigeria, the ECCDE are constitutionalized to provide a good environment for the preschools and implement the ECCDE programs.

Nonetheless, several factors, such as insufficient funding, lack of political will, absence of qualified staff, parents' or guardian belief, and insecurity in some regions of the country, have prevented the realization of the important objectives of the federal government.

Chapter 1 dealt with the multifaceted issues of realizing early childhood education across the globe with a concentration on the Nigerian ECCDE preschool program and, it was noted that the involvements, as well as the contribution of some key stakeholders, are absent in the policy formulation and implementation of the Pre-K programs. There is an urgent need for the Nigerian government to overhaul the ECCDE program to improve the provision of early childhood education in the country, especially in the North-Central region. Chapter 2 includes the literature search strategy, a review of the literature on key stakeholders' lived experiences in Nigeria's North-Central region. Chapter 2 also includes a detailed discussion of Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's (1993) advocacy coalition framework combined with Cooperrider and Whitney's (2016) appreciative inquiry.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The literature on early childhood education with global and national perspectives geared towards social justice and equality in society are reviewed in this chapter. The review indicated an inadequate provision of preschools in the North-Central region of Nigeria, which could be linked to the policy implementation's ineffectiveness. These challenges prevented the psychological development and the school readiness of children (Amuchie et al., 2013; Nsoedo, 2014; Nudzor, 2015; Porter, 2015; Umuroko, 2013). Also, national education policies' ineffectiveness led to the impediment of a child's right to free compulsory education (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016; Babalola, 2015; NEDS, 2015).

The historical, epistemological, ontological, and theoretical perspectives were applied to guide the literature search process using transdisciplinary and thematic strategies. The use of triangulation from various national preschool programs, disciplines, and social constructs was sought to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of the sources used (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Data Collection Strategy

This section of Chapter 2 summarizes the literature search strategies concerning the terms and combinations of words related to the early childhood education policy by applying the transdisciplinary and thematic approaches. The section also uncovers the theoretical frameworks, application, and rationale to the present study, while the chapter ends with a summary of the scale of the proposed research.

The databases for the literature reviewed include Academic Source Complete, Business Source Complete, Education Resource Information Center (ERIC), Education source, PsychINFO, SocIndex, SAGE Journals, ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Full-Texts bases, JSTOR, Science Direct, and Google Scholar. The search terms were universal basic education, advocacy coalition, appreciative inquiry, preschool access, primary school entrance, preschool policies, millennium development goals, child development psychology, education for all, and early childhood education.

In addition, relevant and synonymous keyword searches were interchangeably used in this review, resulting in some of the previously identified sources. In contrast, others were not related to the themes of this study. They were considered irrelevant for the literature review process. The objective of this search approach was to enhance the comprehensiveness of the literature search within the past five years, thereby exhausting the sources that were related to the themes (Tong & Thomson, 2015).

A search strategy, called citation chaining, was used when there were few or few current literature sources on a particular topic. Citation chaining can be either backward chaining or forward chaining and involves using a good source to find other relevant sources to a particular topic of interest. The backward chaining is by mining or scanning through the reference list for other useful sources. The forward citation chaining is by identifying those who have already cited a particular article, which can be carried out using Google Scholar.

Organization of the Literature Review

The transdisciplinary and thematic strategies were applied to examine multiple sources of literature to better understand the themes in Pre-K education concepts. The

concepts are Universal Basic Education (UBE), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Education for All (EFA), Early Childhood Education (ECE), Early Childhood Care, Development and Education (ECCDE), child development psychology, preschool access, preschool policies, and primary school entrance. This literature review approach could guide the current and relevant policy application for a practical policy recommendation and future research on early childhood education. There is currently an ineffectiveness of the preprimary education of policy implementation in the North-Central region of Nigeria that impedes the psychological development and the school readiness of children advancing from preschools into primary schools (Amuche & Kukwi, 2013).

In literature reviews, scholars and researchers concluded that existing literature relevant to the research problem should be reviewed to facilitate a better understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Amuchie et al., 2013; Nsoedo, 2014; Nudzor, 2015; Porter, 2015; Umuroko, 2013). The selection of a suitable theory should depend on its appropriateness, application, and ease of explanation.

Methods

Tong and Thomson (2015) argued for a trans-disciplinary and thematic approach. Quantitative and qualitative research studies may apply this holistic approach to the literature review. This method enabled the researcher to sort the sources into different themes, critical examination of education's historical perception. The current trends of the global agendas on the attempt to provide quality and accessible education resulted in multiple challenges that could guide the future implication for policymakers and the stakeholders.

Assumptions

Reid et al. (2017) posited that the researcher's knowledge influences the selection of methodology, theory, data collection, and interpretation as critical aspects of social science. The selected search terms were the results of critical thinking and reflectivity of literature regarding early childhood education concepts with global and national policy perspectives, as the lenses that guided the literature search process. Creswell (2013) described some philosophical assumptions that are relevant to the qualitative approach as follows:

1. **Ontological Assumptions:** describes the nature of reality and its characteristics. Researchers that embrace this school of thought explore the nature of reality using the different evidence from the various individual's perspectives and life experiences.
2. **Epistemological Assumptions:** describes how the researchers know what they know. Researchers try to get as close as possible to the participants being studied.
3. **Axiological Assumptions:** describes the role of values in research while the researchers report their biases and values during the fieldwork.

Conceptual Frameworks of Literature Review

The role that a theoretical lens plays in qualitative research is multi-faceted and diverse, which is critical to the objectives and the significance of a study. Researchers using a qualitative approach apply the theoretical lens to design and guide the formation of the research methods. Also, the theoretical lens and the worldview of a researcher guide the research questions, data collection technique, interpretation methods, and analyzing method used in a particular study. Theories

such as critical theory and phenomenology are examples of the theoretical lens that are employed in qualitative research design. The theoretical lens shapes the questions the researchers ask, how data would be collected, interpreted and analyzed (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The differences between the theoretical framework and conceptual framework rely on their definitions. The theoretical framework consists of concepts with their definitions and references to relevant scholarly accepted literature and existing theories that are used for a particular study. Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined a theoretical framework in the qualitative approach as how researchers build on theories in a study that then orients the study to be conducted in a particular direction.

Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)

ACF is a tool used for policymaking when dealing with intense public policy systems (Sabatier, 1993). ACF helps to understand policies and priorities involved in dispute management that may arise from the interaction of coalition actors at different levels of subsystems (Sabatier, 1993). The complexity of the policy environments in early childhood education could be more appropriate to examine using a robust theoretical framework known as the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) created by Paul Sabatier in the 1980s. ACF was applied to analyze public policy processes and the impacts of coalition partners' intense interests in the policy formulation and implementation (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1988, 1993, 1999). The advocacy coalition framework is an adequate lens to understand and examine the policy change and belief change when dealing with objective disputes among diverse interest groups or advocacy coalitions.

The ACF application could advance the understanding of how to facilitate the full participation of all the key stakeholders towards effective policy implementation of the UBE that could aid the psychological development and the school readiness success of a Nigerian child. However, some scholars concluded that the ACF is a robust theoretical framework that could be applied towards an effective policy implementation despite its limitations.

ACF does not provide adequate information regarding how to gain or discover resources needed at the individual, organizational, and subsystem levels that are important for the development of a progressive relationship with the key stakeholders (Elgin & Weible, 2013; Fidelman et al., 2014; Shahriar & Khan, 2016). Nonetheless, Shahriar and Khan (2016) argued that the ACF is in its infancy stage, requiring the combination of other frameworks or theories to expand its application areas. The goal is to promote satisfactory results in the policy formulation and implementation activities by understanding policy priorities and dispute management in the public policy arena.

As such, there is justification for the choice of the ACF for this study, as the literature revealed that there is still an impediment to the adequate establishment of universal basic education in the North-Central region of Nigeria. (Babalola, 2012; NEDS, 2015). ACF may also facilitate the inclusion of key stakeholders such as the parents or guardians and educators. Educators and parents or guardians are two crucial stakeholders who are mostly excluded in the literature concerning effective policy implementation of the UBE programs in the North-Central region of Nigeria (Adebisi et al., 2014; Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014; Olubor & Inua, 2015; Sooter, 2013). A need exists for a robust theoretical study to support the key stakeholders to effect

positive social change towards establishing ECE in Nigeria (Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014; Amuchie et al., 2013; Nsoedo, 2014; Nudzor, 2015; Porter, 2015; Umuroko, 2013).

The conceptual frameworks that guided the literature review are the ACF (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993) and Cooperrider and Whitney's (2016) appreciative inquiry (AI). I applied the AI to support the ACF limitation as appreciative inquiry seeks the root cause of success and support needed in building key stakeholders' buy-in towards effective preschool education policy implementation. The combination of the two conceptual frameworks assisted in the thorough examination of the concepts of ECE. The ECE concepts are: UBE, MDGs, EFA, ECE, ECCDE, child development psychology, preschool access, preschool policies, and primary school entrance. In general, the policy process occurs in the subsystem that is regionally confined with the policy coalitions or actors, including all the levels of government, diverse interest groups, and other key stakeholders.

However, within the policy subsystem, there are coalition allies with the same beliefs that directly or indirectly advocate for the policy direction due to a societal problem. In Nigeria's context, the inadequate provision of accessible preschools informed the issues of ineffective policy implementation of the UBE in the North-Central of the country. Thus, the justification for the review is based on the ACF's Sabatier and Weible (2007, p. 220) propositions, which state as follows:

1. Coalition proposition 1: On major controversies within a policy subsystem when policy core beliefs are in dispute, the lineup of allies and opponents tends to be rather stable over periods of a decade or so.

2. Coalition proposition 2: Actors within an advocacy coalition will show substantial consensus on the policy core issues, although less so on secondary aspects.
3. Coalition proposition 3: An actor (or coalition) will give up secondary aspects of her (its) belief system before acknowledging weakness in the policy core.
4. Coalition proposition 4: Within a coalition, administrative agencies will usually advocate a more moderate position than their interest group allies.
5. Coalition proposition 5: Actors within purposive groups are more constrained in their expression of beliefs and policy positions than the actors from material groups.

Effective policy implementation of early childhood education in Nigeria could provide a child with a smooth transition from preschool into the primary school system which could also aid in the psychological development of a child (Amuche & Kukwi, 2013). By exploring the perceived roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes of the key stakeholders, this study could facilitate a better understanding of educational policy implementation. This strategy could lead to the establishment of more preschools in the North-Central region of Nigeria and improving the effectiveness of policy implementation of early childhood education in the area. Also, seeking the buy-in of critical stakeholders could positively contribute to an effective preschool policy formation and implementation.

Limitations of the Advocacy Coalition Framework

Scholars have argued that the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) is flawed by its sole concentration on policy changes resulting from the learning process within and between the coalition actors. The ACF focuses on coalition system consistency

and the belief system's development (Elgin & Weible, 2013; Shahriar & Khan, 2016). Additionally, the importance of discovering the resources needed for gaining and using the information at the individual, organizational, and sub-system levels are vital to developing a progressive relationship with the key stakeholders (Elgin & Weible, 2013).

Appreciative inquiry involves identifying the positive elements and factors that have helped an organization succeed in the past and then building on those conditions to transform the organization in the right direction. I applied the AI to support the ACF limitation as appreciative inquiry seeks the root cause of success and support needed in building key stakeholders' buy-in towards effective preschool education policy implementation in the North-Central region of Nigeria. The two selected conceptual frameworks in the study could lead to a better understanding of the complexity of the political coalition that includes belief systems, policy networks, resources, and coalition actions. Combining ACF and AI is necessary to understand how effective policy may be better formulated and implemented.

The ACF objectives could be better realized in combination with other theories and frameworks to examine the policy process while expanding ACF's application to other regions (Elgin & Weible, 2013; Gen & Wright, 2013; Shahriar & Khan, 2016). The use of "Policy Analytical Capacity (PAC) is suggested to 'complement the limitation of the ACF'" (Elgin & Weible, 2013, p. 131). However, Elgin and Weible (2013) concluded that the PAC lacked direction at the policy sub-levels in its application. ACF and AI application in this present study was intended such that the combination could facilitate an effective policy implementation of the ECE in the North-Central region of Nigeria.

Appreciative Inquiry Theory

As Grant and Osanloo (2014) stressed, the crucial role theoretical and conceptual frameworks have in a study is to facilitate richness and the thoroughness of the research. Appreciative inquiry is an interpretive research-based approach that links core energy with the knowledge to community change agenda or organizational change goals. Appreciative inquiry involves identifying the positive elements and factors that have helped an organization succeed in the past and then building on those conditions to transform the organization in the right direction. These steps enable the achievement of the long-term goal, as well as the vision of the organization. The partnership of David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastava at the Case Western University in 1987 led to Appreciative Inquiry formation.

AI was further developed by the partnership between Cooperrider and Whitney in 2016. In 2016, they proposed four principles, the set of which is also known as the 4D framework of appreciative inquiry (AI). The process of appreciative inquiry involves two main components: first, identifying those present positive experiences, and, secondly, envisioning the new possibilities for the organization's future through inspiration and creative ideas. The application of AI is described in the following section. The four AI principles of organizational life are:

1. **Appreciative:** Appreciative inquiry looks for the positive core elements and factors that would constitute the foundation for future growth.
2. **Applicable:** Appreciative inquiry is based on past positive experiences. It is seeking the present positive experiences of “what is” to build the best of “what might be.”

3. Provocative: Appreciative inquiry guides the organization into taking calculated risks in redesigning the organization's future. It involves making provocative propositions about the future of the organization.
4. Collaborative: Appreciative inquiry is a form of collaborative inquiry whereby the key stakeholders across the organization contribute to forming the new vision of the organization's future.

The most used appreciative inquiry model is the set of four processes or 4D interpretative inquiry framework that focus on distinctive phases during the inquiry process:

1. Discover: What gives life? The best of what is appreciative.
2. Dream: What might be? Envisioning results.
3. Design: What should be the ideal? Co-constructing.
4. Destiny: How to empower, learn and adjust, improve, and sustain the positive elements.

The primary objective when applying AI is to identify the “life-giving forces” across the entire organization. Each team member refined his or her important topic from the initial interviews’ data by identifying their own organization’s life-giving forces. AI was developed for organization development and change management, as most organizations' establishment is for profit maximization. The government sets public institutions to create public value by employing the change agents' use of transition strengths. As a change agent, the researcher in this present study looked for similarities and differences between them to bring about positive organizational change.

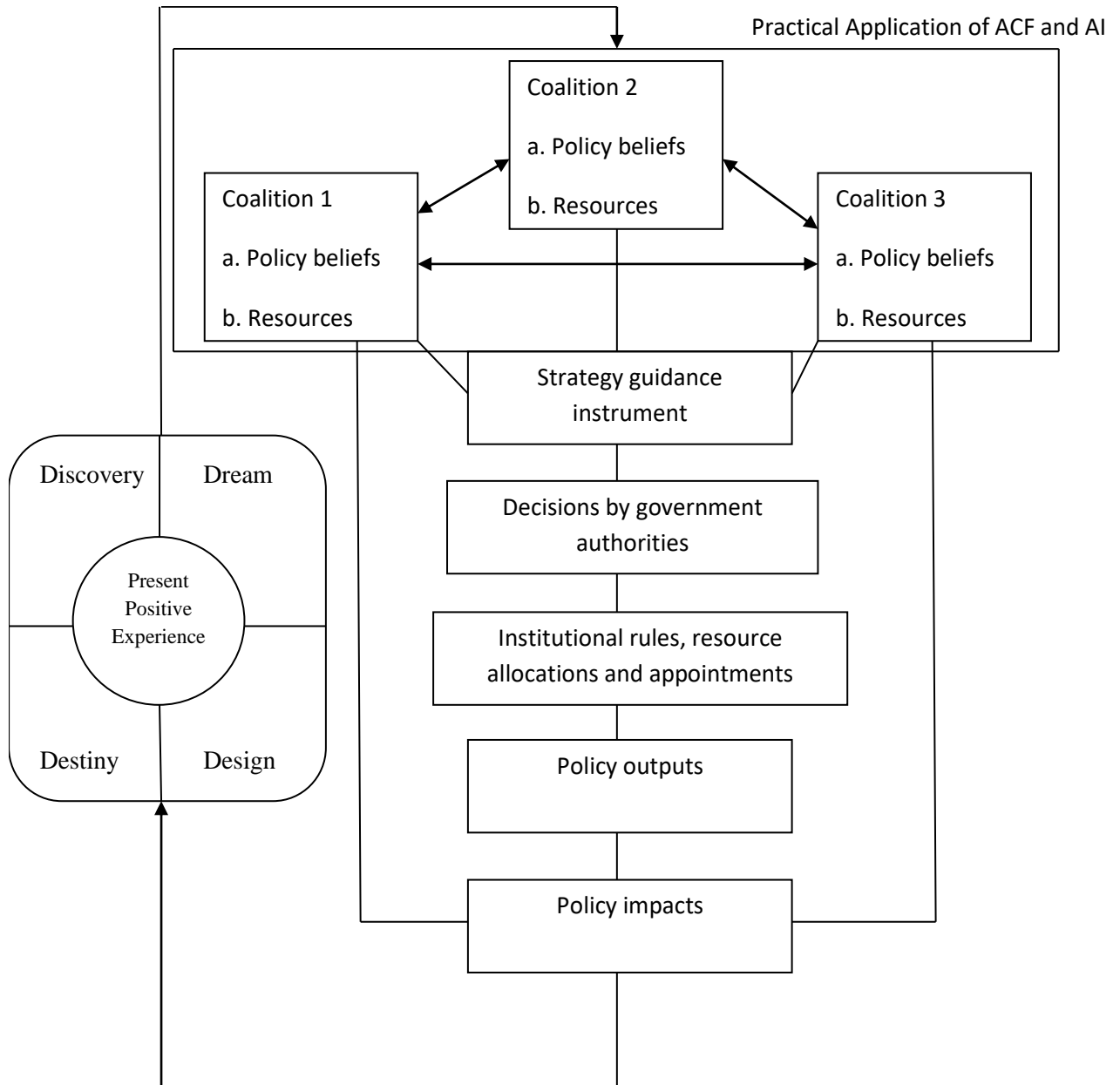
AI seeks the root (cause) of success (Shafritz et al., 2016). By understanding the cause of ineffective preschool education policy implementation from the perception of the key stakeholders, it is important to reverse the current trend of ineffective implementation of preschool education policy towards Nigeria's socio-economic development. The AI would complement ACF in drawing on how to effect positive change in government agencies by employing the appreciative inquiry envisioning method.

Figure 3 shows how ACF and AI were combined to provide a practical solution to improve preschool policy implementation in the North-Central region of Nigeria. The researcher applied AI to support ACF limitation as appreciative inquiry seeks the root cause of success and support needed in building key stakeholders' buy-in towards effective preschool education policy implementation. It implies that the AI framework could also facilitate the organizational change and organizational learning of the Nigerian early childhood education providers urgently needed to promote the psychological development and school readiness of Nigerian children. The AI interpretative framework could enhance the self-reflective model that is required to facilitate a learning society across all ages.

The formation of the research questions in the present study used both theoretical frameworks as a guide. Central research question and subresearch question 1 to 3 addressed ACF related issues, while subresearch question 4 addressed AI-related matters. The two selected theoretical frameworks were used in advancing the understanding of policy formulation, planning, execution, and post-policy implementation stages with the set collaborative initiatives towards the adequate provision of early childhood education in Nigeria.

Figure 3

Practical Application of Advocacy Coalition Framework and Appreciative Inquiry



Rationale for the Choice of Theories to Present Study

According to Cooper (2012), objective responsibility involves imposed expectations (accountability and obligations) from outside the organization. The

subjective responsibility is the administrator's worldview. Cooper's concept of ethics and responsibility addressed issues related to dilemmas. However, ethical dilemmas in society require a choice in support of equality and social justice. Applying professional values may facilitate the effectiveness of responsible administrators (Cooper, 2012).

These multiple actors rely on scholarly works to mitigate the risk of these uncertainties by applying and using strategic initiatives to implement public policies. One of the issues is the potential existence of different conflicts of interest of key actors in the policymaking environment. Sabatier and Weible (2007) asserted that key stakeholders (state officials, parents or guardians, and teachers), especially in the policy subsystem, will continue to dominate and determine the direction of policy formulation and implementation over an extended period towards the achievement of an effective set policy objectives (p. 98).

For example, in a study on the implementation of the regional quota system in Nigeria's centralized university admissions policy, Nsoedo (2014) found that only 13% of students come from the southern region. The current admission policy presents an inequality among the students in the country. The author called for a new approach that could address the negatively perceived impact of the imbalanced access to the university admission policy implementation from the students' view in the southern region of Nigeria (Nsoedo, 2014).

Application of the Advocacy Coalition Theory

The ACF has been used extensively in studies ranging from education, environment, health, social, finance, and many other application areas (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2016). The ACF could inform this study on how to effect a positive change

of the current state of preschool policies by analyzing and evaluating the influence of the policy direction's coalition partners. The various coalitions seek to determine and dominate the direction of policy at the policy subsystem level, which, in this case, are the state and local levels (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999). In their study, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) applied the ACF in public policy issues to show the effect that advocacy coalitions and events can have on a given particular policy. One problem facing pre-primary education in Nigeria is the negatively perceived impact of policy implementation in early childhood education. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) posited, “ACF focuses on a policy subsystem... as the principal unit of understanding policy change” (p. 35).

The problems mentioned above are related to the policy implementation of pre-primary education regarding the versatile actors that attempt to influence policymaking in the policy environment of both the state and local levels (subsystems). The Advocacy coalition framework (ACF) served as a theoretical lens to investigate these issues. The importance of discovering the resources needed to gain and use the information at the individual, organizational, and sub-system levels are vital to developing a progressive relationship with the key stakeholders (Elgin & Weible, 2013).

AI may help overcome issues of buy-in and dispute management during ACF application in public policy. I applied the AI to support the limitation of the ACF, as Appreciative inquiry seeks the root cause of success and support needed in building key stakeholders' buy-in towards effective preschool education policy implementation in the North-Central region of Nigeria. It implies that AI framework could also facilitate the organizational change and organizational learning of the Nigerian early

childhood providers that is urgently needed that could promote the psychological development and school readiness of Nigerian children. The AI interpretative framework could enhance the self-reflective model that is required to facilitate a learning society across all ages. Thus, the ACF is an appropriate framework to apply in this present study. The ACF could also help to understand and answer the research questions of the underlined issues as illustrated in figure 1 in Chapter 1 of this present study.

The ACF concepts are appropriately aligned with the research questions towards a better understanding of the complexity of the problem statement. One of the theoretical frameworks for this study is the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) by Jenkins-Smith (1993). Fidelman et al. (2014) conducted a study on a stakeholder analysis that aimed to solve urgent issues in the coastal and marine environments that have affected the ecosystem and the natural setting of the Southeast Asia-Pacific Coral Triangle area by applying the ACF. The authors stated the problem statement related to marine and coastal problems. However, the answer to this issue is aligned with the data collection method. Simultaneously, the questionnaire and individual interviews with the key stakeholders are carried out to facilitate collaborative efforts among management and governance. Rudestam and Newton (2015) recommended that a problem statement be formulated based on one or two research questions and hypotheses to facilitate the study's exploratory factor. Thus, the research questions should be aligned with the method of data collection, which could enhance the feasibility and validity of the research.

Also, Nsoedo (2014) applied the ACF to studying the university admission quota system in the southern part of Nigeria. Nsoedo concisely stated the problem,

and the author used the ACF as a theoretical lens, which was developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993). The application of ACF was presented in Nigeria's southern region and justified by Nsoedo (2014). The choice of the conceptual framework was essential to capture and explore the perception and the lived experience of the students, faculty, and state officials.

The ACF is appropriate in cases where there is a dynamic change in policy formulation with different policy actors, which is the case in the study conducted Nsoedo (2014). The literature review consists primarily of sources that were older than five years. However, Nsoedo did not include some of the more recent past studies in the literature review for the key stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the roots of the problem, which facilitated the recommendation of appropriate solutions to some of the challenges in the tertiary education system in Nigeria.

In addition, the number of citations that the Nsoedo used was adequate to enable the reader to gain new insight into the problem and the factors that were impeding the development of the higher education system in Nigeria. The literature review also showed an unbiased approach to the topic because Nsoedo (2014) used evidence that supported or contradicted the views university admission quota system in the southern part of Nigeria.

The central research question of the study conducted by Nsoedo (2014) was: How do the quota system and centralized higher education policy affect the prospective students' access to Nigerian universities? Nsoedo applied the ACF theory to determine if ACF prepositions could hold for the case study. He also investigated the dynamics involved in the policy processes in the admission system in Nigeria. The ACF was the central framework in the study that analyzed the centralized university

admission policy's current state. I used ACF as a framework in this present study due to the similarities between the Nsoedo study and this current study in Nigeria's complex policy background.

The problems mentioned above are related to policy implementation of pre-primary education. The actors attempted to influence policymaking at the state and local levels (subsystems). The ACF served as a theoretical lens to investigate the preschool policy implementation process's challenges by looking for possible areas of improvement in subsystems of government. The ACF might help to understand and answer the research questions of the underlined issues. The alignment helped to better understand the complexity of the problem statement, which was the ineffectiveness of preschool education policy implementation.

O'Sullivan et al. (2016) noted that the clarity of the significance of a study could facilitate identifying variables of interest and their relationship to each other, which could be used in the construction of a model for the study. ACF informs public administrators on how to use research data to evaluate, monitor, and analyze the effectiveness of government programs for the public. The gained insights might facilitate adequate decision making by the federal government of Nigeria.

The Appreciative Inquiry Research-Based Approach

Cooperrider and Whitney developed AI in 2005 to promote organizational change and cultural change in a business environment. AI is an alternative research methodology called a practical planning approach within the social constructionist philosophy (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2016). AI application is used as a change strategy in an organization that focuses on the life-center of a phenomenon of interest. Individuals (key stakeholders) and organizations (government agencies) are

recognized as entities seeking a practical solution than looking for problems to be solved. AI seeks the causes of life-center moments that are also known as the energy-giving moments as the basis for the emergence of themes and inspirational statements towards planning an organization (Shafritz et al., 2016).

The principles are appreciative, applicable, provocative, and collaborative. AI application could provide practical solutions from the initial planning phase through the execution phase and post-initiative activities of the UBE programs' policy implementation cycle in Nigeria's North-Central region. Additionally, AI could support the missing components of ACF by seeking the full support and collaboration of all the key stakeholders in this policy arena towards the adequate provision of early childhood education in Nigeria.

Appreciative inquiry has a broad range of applications since its development in the 1980s. Kung et al. (2013) applied AI on the action plan to support the future teaching staff in the education sector. Kung et al. concluded that AI applications rekindled future educators' energy-giving source towards a better understanding of inner selves through careful reflection. Likewise, the progressive development of a fruitful and sustainable academic course needs an energy-giving source.

Also, Klatt et al. (2013) conducted a study using AI on teacher assessment to reduce stress factors while simultaneously improving students' behavior at risk in an elementary school. The authors concluded that AI is a practical, interpretative framework that could be used with children at an early age in support of the Mindfulness-Based Intervention (MBI) tool. MBI provides interventions such as Yoga movement and mindfulness meditation for children living in poverty as they face daily stress. Hence, MBI caters to this need that could alleviate the impact of the

stress and chronic environment in which poor children grow up. MBI could facilitate social justice and children's academic achievement (Klatt et al., 2013).

Lundgren and Janssen (2016) also applied appreciative inquiry to the international business (IB), intending to extend AI application by seeking business partners' collaborative efforts in the dynamic and uncertain current business environment. Lundgren and Janssen found that the application of AI could facilitate the realization of the organization's set objectives by providing a roadmap from the initial planning stage through the execution of the post-goal initiatives, underscoring the usefulness of AI in this study.

The research questions focused on the key stakeholders' role in the North-Central region towards their attitudes in preschool education policy processes. The Advocacy coalition framework by Jenkins-Smith (1993) is the main framework that consists of components used in the evaluation, assessment, and analysis of the effectiveness of the current state of the preschool's policies. It also gave a forecast of the new policy recommendation of relevant key stakeholders such as policymakers, educators, government agencies, and the private sector.

The appreciative inquiry was used to complement the shortcomings (buy-in and dispute management) of the ACF by focusing on how to effect positive change in a government agency by employing the appreciative inquiry envisioning method. Cooperrider and Whitney (2016) proposed four principles known as the 4D framework of AI. Appreciative inquiry links the core energy with the knowledge to community change agenda or organizational goals. It implies that the AI seeks the root (cause) of success (Shafritz et al., 2016). The two selected conceptual frameworks were used in advancing the understanding of the policy processes with

robust theoretical support for the key stakeholders. This theoretical support ranges from the policy planning stage through the execution and post-implementation initiatives that enhance the realization of the UBE and EFA set objectives in Nigeria.

Trajkovski et al. (2016) used AI's practical planning approach in the healthcare sector to promote collaborative efforts between parents and health care workers. Trajkovski et al. found that AI facilitated the chances for information exchange, networking, and partnership between parents and healthcare professionals by creating innovative ideas to strengthen the relationship between the two parties towards improving healthcare service delivery. It implies that the AI framework could also facilitate the organizational change and organizational learning of the Nigerian early childhood providers that is urgently needed that could promote the psychological development and school readiness of Nigerian children.

Godwin and Schiller (2017) applied AI to achieve a learning leadership role in today's business environment and community engagements. The authors discovered that learning opportunities and the cultivation of learning leadership characteristics could promote intergeneration learning leaders. The AI interpretative framework could enhance the self-reflective model that is required to facilitate a learning society across all ages. As learning is a lifetime commitment, which was indicated by Godwin and Schiller, "intergeneration learning happens when the younger and older are part of the inquiry together, co-creating both the conversation and the decision-making" (p. 44).

Strategies for Searching the Literature

The appropriateness of the literature search strategy was based on the transdisciplinary and thematic approach that was asserted by Tong and Thomson

(2015). The method enabled using various literature search strategies across different disciplines, ranging from the relevant seminal works to the current sources on early childhood education in the review.

Review of the Literature

This section of the study provides a summary of the preschool concepts. The preprimary education concepts are comprised of UBE, MDGs, EFA, ECE, ECCDE, child development psychology, preschool access, preschool policies, and primary school entrance. Keeping a focus on the research questions prevented the researcher from being overwhelmed by the number of sources. In this literature review, I identified a gap in the body of knowledge of public policy and administration due to the absence of key stakeholders' contribution in the effectiveness of the preschool policy processes. All the sources reviewed were on the causes and outcomes of the ineffectiveness of the implementation of the ECE programs.

Also, I could not identify in the relevant literature cases in which the use of ACF was the primary approach to solving the problem with the ineffectiveness of the policy implementation of early childhood education. Evidence of this reality was acknowledged by Shahriar and Khan (2016) that the application of ACF in “policy implementation” was still at the early stage of its development (p. 539). ACF provides a solid theoretical foundation for examining coalition actors' influences on policies in this present study.

The research problem was used as a lens to analyze the data in the present study. This holistic approach is critical to understanding the impact of the effectiveness of policy implementation of the preschool programs. The goal is to aid psychological development and the smooth transition of children from preschool into

the primary school systems (Keys et al., 2013; Mofrad, 2012; Odgers, 2015). The process might foster children's school readiness, while aiding their academic achievement if the Pre-K policies are effectively implemented.

Rationale for Data Collection

The critical literature analysis included the following points:

1. The impact of accessible universal basic education on the education and the psychological development of a child.
2. The role of millennium development goals in promoting multiple aspects of education.
3. Effect of the education for all agenda in fostering equality.
4. Assessment of early childhood education and the early childhood care, development, and education as catalysts to facilitate school readiness.
5. The aim of child development psychology for the cognitive development of a child.
6. Evaluation of how preschool access is essential for the enhancement of academic achievement.
7. Exploration of challenges related to preschool policies.
8. Determination of how primary school entrance impacts the academic success rate of a child.

Universal Basic Education

The perception of experts on the provision of adequate UBE policies has several applications that are projected to promote quality and accessibility of basic education if the UBE programs are properly formulated and implemented (Alase, 2017; Awofala & Sopekan, 2013; Odekunle & Okuwa, 2012). Odekunle and Okuwa

(2012) examined the several challenges in promoting UBE in Nigeria that would further help realize the set objectives of the MDGs. However, the viable solution to the UBE policy implementation challenges in their study was the missing inputs of the key stakeholders. In this study, it is the essence of the ACF application to explore how multiple coalition actors influence directly or indirectly the policy process in this study (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993).

The government's focus was only on access and not the provision of a quality education system in Nigeria (Glewwe et al., 2014). However, Uyanga (2012) took a different view of the UBE and asserted that education is the right of every Nigerian child as declared by the United Nations Organization on Human Rights. The citizens' contribution was missing from the policy processes that negatively impacted the realization of the UBE programs. It implies that there was also no participation by some key stakeholders in the policy processes.

The federal government of Nigeria has committed herself to the realization of the UBE and EFA in the country (FRN, 2013). It is thus imperative for Nigeria's federal government to commit resources continuously towards the achievement of human development in the country that could promote social justice and equality in all the geopolitical regions (Alase, 2017; Alhassan, 2017; Anaduaka, 2014; Omodero & Azubike, 2016). On the contrary, Okujagu (2013) observed that the UBE programs lack funding in Nigeria and funding is lower than the average, resulting in low human development despite the government's commitment to facilitate free access to education. Thus, inadequate provision of UBE negatively impacts the socioeconomic development of the nation.

Opo et al. (2015) agreed that adequate UBE provision in Nigeria is impeded by insufficient funding, the dearth of qualified staff, and a weak policy environment. The authors extended their view on UBE towards the world's commitment to education for all and MDGs as global agendas to provide accessible education to the world. Nonetheless, the achievement of these goals is dimmed, as the effective implementation of the educational programs lacks total continuous commitment of the political will of the Nigerian government (Todowedede, 2016).

Studies revealed mixed statistical evidence on the effectiveness of policy implementation of the UBE policies. Other researchers, such as Fosu (2015), believed that some African countries had recorded positive figures in establishing UBE in their countries. For example, Fosu observed the accessibility of education in sub-Saharan Africa while using the World Bank data as a lens to view the changes in income and inequality as critical indicators for the fight against poverty in the sub-Saharan countries. Contrary to the general views, there has been a positive achievement of establishing the UBE programs since the early 1980s and 1990s on the poverty reduction of some of the sub-Saharan Africa countries compared to India (Fosu, 2015).

Mixed outcomes can be found in the literature regarding the African continent's progress on its commitment to the realization of free accessible and quality education to all citizens. Glewwe et al. (2014) argued that the provision of accessible education in sub-Saharan Africa is of significance. Still, the schools' quality is critical to the economic development of sub-Saharan Africa that has a tremendous impact on their economic growth.

The current trend of low economic development of some sub-Saharan Africa and the African continent, in general, could be traced to the political unwillingness and corruption that hindered the achievement of the set global agendas, such as the MDGs and EFA. These challenges deeply affect the promotion of the positive social change that the world is hoping to realize. Despite the diverse strategies to explore and enhance the full potential of UBE in the African continent, an urgent need exists to evaluate the UBE programs from the perception of the key stakeholders through the lens of robust conceptual frameworks, such as the ACF and AI. This approach could facilitate the achievement of the UBE policies' set objectives as a sustainable strategic approach. This strategy might pilot the way forward in the right direction as other early childhood education components are explored in the next sections of this study.

The Role of Millennium Development Goals

Among the international community's global agendas in the struggle to eradicate extreme poverty in the world was the establishment of the MDGs, organized and coordinated in 2000 by the United Nations. The primary goal of the MDGs Panel 1 was tackling multiple aspects of extreme poverty, such as finance, food security, health, housing, social justice, inequality of gender, and renewable energy that was projected to be achieved by the year 2015 (Carr et al., 2014). Scholars have emphasized from statistical evidence that there was no positive effect of good governance on the poverty reduction in SSA (Kwon & Kim, 2014; Ogujiuba & Jumare, 2012). The enormous financial pledge from the international community also requires sound management, as official public corruption is deeply rooted in the cultures of the public officials of some of the poverty-stricken countries (Kwon & Kim, 2014; Okon & Ukwai, 2012).

Contrary to these views, Gabay (2012) argued that the performance measurement of implementing the MDGs and the SDGs in the African continent was not accurate. There were also doubts about the progress realized by some of the countries (Gabay, 2012). Additionally, Gabay suggested that in the goal setting of the MDGs towards mass reforms and advancement, some of the countries in this region, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, have merited" (Gabay, 2012, p. 1249). The goal setting of the MDGs requires a societal and cultural reorganization to strengthen set objectives (Briant, 2017; Cha, 2017; D'Alessandro & Zulu, 2017; Fukuda-Parr et al., 2014; Gabay, 2012; Ogujiuba & Jumare, 2012).

Creating a friendly business environment could help attract international investors while the local businesses are growing simultaneously if the government could make provision for the basic amenities such as electricity, water, good roads, hospitals, and strengthening of good governance that would aid self-sustainability of the citizens. In the Nigerian case, the federal government also established the National Poverty Eradication Programs (NAPEP) and National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) to stamp out poverty in the country (Odior, 2014; Okeshola, 2012; Okon & Ukwaiyi, 2012; Oyewale & Musiliu, 2015). Nonetheless, researchers concluded that Nigeria's poverty line is still on the high side, as the implementation of the NAPEP and NEEDS remains ineffective for citizens in poverty (Odior, 2014; Okeshola, 2012).

The MDG-5 targeted health education, especially the alarmingly high maternal mortality rate (MMR) globally and aimed to reduce the MMR to 75% by 2030 and post-2030 (Liu et al., 2015). The MMR refers to women's death during pregnancy, childbirth, or in the 42 days after delivery (Liu et al., 2015). Izugbare (2014) reported

that Nigeria is ranked as the second-highest contributor to under-5 mortality. The implication is that over 2000 children under the age of 5 years die every day, which is estimated at 4 million annually, from vaccine-preventable death causes, in spite of the availability of different health service delivery measures in the country (Izugbare, 2014). Izugbare linked these challenges with the lack of poor implementation of health policies. Another view of the MDG-5 in Nigeria was associated with the reading skills of mothers. Child mortality rate was linked to the level of education of mothers. (Smith-Greenaway, 2013).

Also, Abu et al. (2015) and Izugbara (2014) assessed the MDG-5 from the qualified midwives' lens. The authors observed that the numbers of well-trained midwives were meager in Nigeria, as MMR was steadily increasing. Pronyk et al. (2012) presented a contradicting view, that ascertained the effect of the millennium villages project in sub-Saharan Africa as a diverse systematic approach to tackling multiple problems, such as health education and food insecurity, and poverty was targeted in this project. Although the village project was applied to societal issues in the short-term, this villages project's long-term effect is yet to be researched. Cha (2017) reported on the vast improvement in MMR reduction in sub-Saharan Africa with the commencement of the 2016 SDGs.

Black et al. (2017) also alluded that failure in the MDGs' achievement was due to inadequate national development that resulted in perceived inequality of children. However, D'Alessand and Zulu (2017) argued that the positive projection of the realization of the SDGs for the African continent should be enjoyed with skepticism as most countries in this region of the world face challenges with good governance and political instability.

Education for All

Scholars of social sciences have echoed the need for the extension of the theoretical framework and application of ACF towards a more extensive examination of policy processes that could produce meaningful results and effectiveness of policy implementation (Elgin & Weible, 2013; Gen & Wright, 2013; Shahriar & Khan, 2016). For example, Alabi and Ijaiya (2014) agreed with the World Summit Declaration that education is the right of every child, which guided Nigeria's federal government to the inclusion of education for all in the universal basic education programs in 2007. However, EFA program implementation in Nigeria faced various challenges, such as lack of funding, management and monitoring, infrastructure, and government support (Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014; Ekwueme et al., 2016; Nwaka, 2016; Wunshishi, 2014).

Besides, Egharevba et al. (2016) also added that the improvement of accessible basic education to balance the inequality in society demands full adoption of education policies and political will. In spite of the enormous success in sub-Saharan Africa that showed a 75% increase in the enrollment figure in the last 20 years, which is about 144 million children between 1999 and 2012, over 30 million primary school-age children are still unschooled (UNESCO, 2013). The case is also not different in Nigeria, as the number of children who are out of school is estimated to be 8.7 million in 2012. This indicated an increase of 1.6 million from the initial 7.1 million children in 1999 (UNESCO, 2013). This increment could be linked to the ongoing insecurity in some parts of the country, especially in the Northeastern region, as the fight against the Boko Haram insurgency intensifies.

Experts observed the inequality in the provision of EFA and MDGs in developing countries, particularly for girls, as there were inadequate theoretical frameworks used to investigate the challenges facing the establishment of basic education (Aikman & Rao, 2012; Porter, 2016). In addition, Okwori et al. (2012) emphasized the need to extend the curriculum to health education, given the dreaded consequences of HIV/AIDS that have affected many developing countries, as a result of inadequate healthcare and education.

Porter (2016) conducted a review of the historical perspectives on globalization regarding the consideration of education as a human right that protects the vulnerable and less fortunate in society, especially young girls and women. Porter identified the quality of teaching methods used in some of the developing countries as ineffective. According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/2014, there has been an improvement in the accessibility of fee-free universal education in African countries. Nonetheless, the report also stressed that the standard quality of teaching remains ineffective. The children who attended a minimum of 4 years of education still lack the basic skills in learning.

Oyitso and Olomukoro (2012) reported that 40 Million Nigerian women are analphabetic due to the marginalization of women in Nigerian society. Experts equate a nation's development with the level of education of women in that society, which underscores the significance of women's empowerment. Ozuhu-Suleiman (2012) and Olaoye (2013) likened the failure of the targeted 2015 EFA goals assessment to poor policies and strategic implementation in Nigeria. The illiteracy rate is still on the increase in the country. The provision of quality education is essential for the socioeconomic development of a nation. The use of language and education to

promote equality and social justice is equally vital to Nigeria's development (Olaoye, 2013; Umukoro, 2013).

The achievement of EFA is a global agenda to which every country should be committed towards its success. Lyytinen and Richardso (2014) noted that a high rate of children in sub-Saharan Africa requires assistance in basic education, such as reading and writing, which affects their human development at a later stage in life. Adebisi (2016) added that the set objectives towards reducing illiteracy in the world had been severely impacted by global unrest and terrorism that keep millions of children out of school. In spite of the global agreements on the strengthening accessibility of education that would enhance gender equality and social justice in the world, national policies on education still play a critical role in the execution of education policies.

Early Childhood Education

The importance of educational components has been explored in the previous sections in the literature review, highlighting several challenges in the adequate establishment of these programs, as many lack proper practical implementation (Elgin & Weible, 2013). Researchers assumed that early childhood education (ECE) has a positive effect on the cognitive development and academic achievement of a child. The practical implementation of the ECE programs requires a good understanding of Nigeria's complexity of political environments.

Mofrad (2012) believed that the quality of the Preschoolers' education was significant to the structures and facilities provided in the preschools. Mofrad also added that the class of current preschoolers was low, which also affects children's school readiness. The application of ACF and AI could be suitable for structural

readjustment of the Pre-K children towards improving quality of Preschoolers' education. In addition, the ECCDE was established in 1999 in Nigeria for the establishment of the Pre-K programs in the country, but these programs are facing several challenges.

The ineffectiveness of the Pre-K policy in Nigeria was due to lack of funding, qualified staff, infrastructure, and government commitment (Adebisi et al., 2014; Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014; Kana et al., 2015; Olubor & Inua, 2015; Sooter, 2013). Matthew (2015) alluded to the burden of effective implementation of the ECCDE policies in Nigeria could not be carried only by the government. The federal government encouraged the private sector's full participation due to the financial constraints and current recession in the country. Multiple approaches, such as an ACF and AI combination, as a robust framework to evaluate Pre-K children could aid the development of policies which could aid in their academic performance and school readiness.

An empirical study by Carneiro and Ginja (2014) showed that there are medium- and long-term positive effects of ECE on the health and conduct of children, despite the government proposal of spending cuts in the United States and England. It also reported that more families are endangered by poverty due to the global financial crisis, which necessitates more funding of preschoolers as a means of facilitating socioeconomic development in the society (Carneiro & Ginja, 2014; Odgers, 2015).

Hedefalk et al. (2015) advanced the concept of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The scholars concluded that the educators taught children to think and engage themselves in social change activities that could assist in self-transformation. Newman and Obed (2015) presented a new research perspective on

the establishment of adequate ECE in Nigeria. The authors found that the prerequisite for the success of ECE programs relies on the involvement of stakeholders. The ACF and AI perspectives could also enhance the participation of coalition partners in the evaluation of policies.

Child Development Psychology

To better understand the concepts of education, the examination of the impact of psychology on academic achievement and the development of children is vital to their school readiness. Scholars and researchers have associated children's academic success with the quality of the childcare they received (Barnett et al., 2017). Another scholarly perspective on the matter was that the academic achievement of a poverty-prone child is low and could be linked to the family's socioeconomic status and the quality of teachers (Herberie & Carter, 2014; Porumbu & Necşoi, 2013).

Scholars concluded that the Nigerian government must achieve effective intervention of problems that could promote equality and social justice (Adebisi et al., 2014; Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014; Kana et al., 2015; Olubor & Inua, 2015; Sooter, 2013). This measure could be realized with the full participation of relevant key stakeholders, such as the parents or guardians and educators with the robust conceptual frameworks such as the ACF and AI (Elgin & Weible, 2013; Shahriar & Khan, 2016). Porumbu and Necşoi (2013) agreed that parental involvement contributes to the academic achievement of a child, as parents and teacher collaboration is required for the occurrence of the effect.

Considering the multiple components of child development psychology (CPD), Undiyaundeye (2013) reported that play activities enhance the learning ability of children, while “playtime” should be considered as an academic construct for

learning (p. 514). In contradiction to the general views on the vital roles that parents, and Nigerian federal government play in promoting CPD, Anero (2014) argued that the parents and the government are also potential factors that hinder children's development. Anero linked his position to child labor and the lack of government commitment to its citizenry's human development. Heberie and Carter (2014) showed that a child from a poor home has the cognitive ability to perceive the inequality they experience. Such inequality calls for Nigerian federal government intervention, which could promote equality and social justice in society. In the Nigerian context, the researchers agreed on using the mother tongue to facilitate a child's learning ability (Awopetu, 2016).

Preschool Access

Scholars and researchers have extensively studied the impact of education on children's psychological development and academic achievement. However, little is known about how the environment in which a child grows impacts school readiness. For example, Garbacz et al. (2017) claimed that the significance of the environmental cause of stress for a child impacts that child's development. Fuller et al. (2017) also concurred that successful implementation of the universal ECE program would positively affect the school readiness of children from different backgrounds.

While agreeing with the above authors on the child development and socio-economic benefits of Pre-K attendance, Benner (2017) addressed the issue of long-term sustenance of ECE's learning effects. Benner found that there was a positive effect on the academic achievement of children regarding reading ability. The author also discovered that children's academic performance was not associated with math skills and better behavior in the transition period of the preschoolers into

kindergarten. The government must make provision for adequate universal Pre-K programs that would promote equality in the school readiness of Nigerian children.

Raudenbush and Eschmann (2015) acknowledged the importance of providing equal opportunities, especially for children from low-income families. The developed countries have embraced large-scale subsidized preschools and daycares to facilitate their citizens' school readiness and human development. Havnes and Mogstad (2011) argued that, in 2002, the European Union agreement on the provision of daycares to more than 90% of children between the ages of three years and older should be realized by 2010. In the U.S., the Obama administration established the “Zero to Five Plan” to boost the accessibility to large-scale preschools to enhance early childhood education (Havnes & Mogstad, 2011).

The global preschool enrollment was estimated at 184 million in 2012, with about 11 million children enrolled in sub-Saharan Africa in 2008 (UNESCO, 2013). However, only seven countries were able to achieve the set target of the gross enrollment ratio of 80% or more children in SSA, which indicated that there is still much to be done by the respective governments in this region towards the adequate provision of the ECE in the African continent (UNESCO, 2013). Despite the progress that was made in the enrollment of the pre-primary education in the African continent, only 20% of the 3-5 years old children were enrolled in the Pre-Ks in 2012 (UNESCO, 2013).

The hotly debated examination area of preschool access is the Pre-K entrance age. Many scholars, educators, and parents argued that a child needs time for cognitive development and school readiness. On the contrary, opponents of this view concluded that delaying a child from attending preschool would cause the deprivation

of a child's education that promotes an informal environment into a formal learning opportunity. While studies on this argument's opposing views are scarce, Kucuker (2016) called for more research in this area. Kucuker advocated for more research primarily on children's academic achievement that began primary school at the very young age of years.

Huang and Invernizzi (2012) explored the preschool access from the Pre-K entrance age. They concluded that older children scored higher than their younger counterparts and that this achievement gap persists until Grade 2. Preschool access and Pre-K entrance age need adequate educational intervention to promote equal opportunity for children and school readiness (Bassok & Latham, 2017; Bruwer, 2014). Besides, the Karoly (2016) study on ECE's economic benefit agreed that the preschool education is of significance as the countries that invested in ECE tend to gain more than the developing countries regarding human development, socioeconomic development, and social equality.

Hirokazu and Weiland (2016) examined the effect of preschool teachers on the development of children and found that the trainers' quality also boosted the academic success of the preschoolers. The developed countries are more committed to the beneficial effects of preschool attendance. The situation is different in the African continent to the developed countries. Woldehanna (2016) studied and discovered that the impact of the Pre-K attendance rate on children's academic achievement between five and eight years of age in Ethiopia was positive. Furthermore, the author noted that many children were missing this learning opportunity in that country as preschools' attendance remains a privilege in Ethiopian society.

Preschool Policies

This section served to facilitate the understanding of preschool access and the political environment that could foster an adequate establishment of preschools. The developed countries have embraced this critical early childhood education because of the statistical evidence which links it to socioeconomic development. Sub-Saharan Africa charted a different course, as a result of inadequate political will in the provision of preschools for its citizens. The situation is similar in Nigeria as the ECCDE programs were constitutionalized to establish preschools in the country that lacks effectiveness.

Neuman and Devercelli (2012) found that the national policy of offering Pre-K on the African continent still needs a solid framework that could assist in policy formulation and effective implementation. Scholars and researchers agreed on the importance of ECE towards the achievement of gender equality and social justice. For example, Amadi (2013) and Gabriel (2013) emphasized the neglect of the child's right to education, especially female children in Nigeria, which could facilitate a practical solution to many societal issues, such as maternal mortality, health-related issues, poverty, and socioeconomic problems.

Haque et al. (2013) also called the need for a continuing commitment of governments to provide adequate ECE policies and effective implementation to promote economic and human development. Haque et al. observed that ECE could also help prevent the drop-out rate of children, while supporting them to experience a smooth transition from preschool into primary school. The case study conducted by Margetts and Phatudi (2013) highlighted the importance of key stakeholders and government support in the realization of quality ECE in South Africa. Nonetheless,

the inputs of the stakeholders in the preschool policy processes are still absent in the country. The quality case study conducted by Correia (2016) suggested that parental and teacher participation had positive support for the transition of children from preschool into primary school in Portugal.

Primary School Entrance

This section examined the role that primary school entrance also plays in advancing the knowledge on the significance of accessibility and quality of education in a society with adequate established educational policies. Contemporary scholars and researchers argued that the effect of primary school entrance on the academic achievement of children could be linked to the quality of teachers and the schools that children attend, which is predominately the case in the low-income countries or developing countries (Fuller et al., 2017; Raudenbush & Eschmann, 2015). Fuller et al. (2017) contradict the general belief that the impact of the family background has more of an effect on the school performance of children than the quality of schools and teachers. Furthermore, this impact positively affects the student's academic performance before primary school entrance, which is noted to be true for most developed countries. Fuller et al. concluded that these notable differences in the results to the government's commitment and investment in the education of the developed nations.

The financial aid for most developing countries is sparse because of political and economic instability in some regions. D'Aigiepier and Wagner (2013) showed that financial support has an enormous positive impact on primary school attendance that facilitates gender equality while reducing the students' repetition rate. In a study on primary school entrance and the challenging factors that impede primary school

attendance, Woldehanna (2016) demonstrated that the cost of education was a critical determining factor, especially in developing countries. Woldehanna found that low-cost education and family background positively affect primary school attendance with a greater negative consequence for female children in developing countries. This is also the case in Nigeria, as the country has yet to make primary school education completely cost-free and compulsory, as compared to the universal primary education in the developed countries. In contrast, developed countries make huge yearly investments in education (Woldehanna, 2016).

The enrollment figure of preschoolers has increased in Africa to 62 million from 14.9 million children, with an increased population between 1990 and 2012, which indicated a proactive commitment of some of the African countries in the right direction (UNESCO, 2013). Since 2000, 15 countries have embraced free primary education (UNESCO, 2013). Nonetheless, statistics show that no African country has yet achieved Universal Primary Education (UPE) (UNESCO, 2013). The study conducted by UNESCO indicated that not all enrolled children complete a full course in primary school. The fact that 38 million primary school age in Africa with a total number of 58 million children in the world are not in school is alarming. The vast number of African children will not enjoy this critical educational experience as adequate provision of accessible and quality education remains a privileged status in some African societies (UNESCO, 2013).

Eweniyi's (2012) quantitative study on the impact of formal preschool attendance found that there was a positive effect on children's academic achievement. The positive impact is related to those children with formal Pre-K knowledge, irrespective of gender in Nigerian society. Researchers have asserted the challenges in

establishing accessible and quality education in Nigeria (Awofala & Sopekan, 2013; Famade, 2012). These authors concluded their studies with contrary views of quality preschool education. They showed that the lack of resources in this essential socioeconomic factor has a significant impact on Nigeria's future.

Scholars have argued that the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) is flawed by its sole concentration on policy changes resulting from a learning process within and between the coalition actors. The ACF focuses on the coalition system consistency and the belief system's development (Elgin & Weible, 2013; Shahriar & Khan, 2016). An area of research dispute among scholars, researchers, educators, parents, and policymakers is the appropriate age of primary school entrance. More studies are needed in this area to provide a suitable framework for establishing the most suitable education intervention as this debate remains unsettled. However, Kucuker (2016) argued that children with the primary school entrance age of 6 years and above were more successful in their academic achievement than children 5.5 years of age and younger children.

Summary and Conclusion

Scholars and researchers have advocated for a robust theoretical framework towards a comprehensive policy formulation and effective implementation of UBE, which could positively affect the psychological development and academic achievement of children with the participation of concerned stakeholders (Elgin & Weible, 2013). The literature review in this study on the implementation of UBE in Nigeria identified several challenges in establishing accessible and quality education in the country.

As a result of the urgency to provide a practical solution to free and compulsory basic education, multi-facet education concepts were established to tackle these challenges. These are Universal Basic Education, Millennium Development Goals, Education for All, Early Childhood Education, and Early Childhood Care, Development, and Education. In promoting the implementation of the ECE in all the geopolitical regions, the Nigerian government also embraced UBE as a grass-roots strategy in addressing the deficiencies of the education gap in the country, especially the ECE as an approach towards both human and socio-economic recovery.

The literature review indicated the objectives of most of the educational policies had not been achieved, especially UBE in the North-Central region of the country, a result that was linked to the ineffectiveness in the policy implementation lack of key stakeholder involvement. Thus, a comprehensive and robust theoretical framework, such as the advocacy coalition framework and appreciative inquiry theory, is needed to tackle the huge education gap in the country that could better understand the influence of the policy actors and key stakeholders.

The literature review, a trans-disciplinary and thematic approach, sheds light on multiple educational concepts. The concepts are Universal Basic Education, Millennium Development Goals, Education for All, Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Care, Development and Education, child development psychology, preschool access, preschool policies, and primary school entrance. These preschool concepts are related to the phenomena under study. As policymakers' participation and involvement could play a critical role in the implementation of ECE programs in Nigeria, as Scholars have asserted, then the parents or guardians and educators should

be an essential part of the policy-setting that could facilitate the formulation and implementation of the UBE programs.

This study focused on the insights, views, and perceptions of the key informants, often forgotten components of research studies on the ECE programs to advance the understanding of the key stakeholders' perceived experience about UBE programs in the North-Central region of Nigeria. Chapter 3 discusses the design of the research. The chapter also provides a rationale for the chosen research design, explains why other designs were rejected, and a review of the qualitative research questions. Finally, in my role as the researcher, a detailed description of the methodology and trustworthiness issues are addressed.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The main purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the impact of the ineffectiveness of the policy implementation of the UBE program on the key stakeholders in the North-Central region of Nigeria. In Chapter 3, I present the research design and the rationale for this study, which is a qualitative case study being the most appropriate research method for studying this problem. The justification of the methodology was informed by the problem statement, as well as the research question. The combination of an ACF and AI served as the lenses used to examine the perception of the key stakeholders' lived experiences and perceptions, as it is necessary to determine their contribution to the current formulation and implementation of preschool policies.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Question

The research questions utilized for this case study and the purpose of the study are as follows: The central research question was: How does early childhood education policy affect the prospective children's entry into the primary school system in the North-Central region of Nigeria? The subresearch questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-Central region on the early childhood education system in Nigeria?
2. What are the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-Central region of Nigeria on the overall impact of the preprimary education policy of the Nigerian primary school system?

3. How does the collaboration of local stakeholders affect early childhood education towards the achievement of school readiness of children in the North-Central region of Nigeria?

Research Method

Research method is a blueprint that helps a researcher choose a method with the steps that need to be taken. Thus, it dictates the roadmap of a study. Careful consideration is necessary for the choice of research design and method so that the findings are accurate and aid satisfactory outcomes. The study design also specifies how the chosen method will be applied to answer a particular research question.

A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because I sought to know how people attach meanings to their experiences and their immediate surroundings. Qualitative case study was an appropriate research design used in this study as it enabled me to collect rich and in-depth information about the phenomenon of interest. The process in a qualitative study involves an interest in a matter, identifying a societal problem or question. The starting point of investigating the phenomenon of interest was reading various sources and contacting people who knew the topic or setting. As such, this process was characterized as inductive in nature. The researcher developed a conceptual framework as a foundation for the study which entailed a continuous interactive approach throughout all the stages of the study (Creswell, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The rationale for choosing the qualitative tradition is aligned with the problem statement's inductive nature and the research question as they serve as fundamentals and roadmaps for the entire study.

Maxwell (2013) defined the qualitative approach as an “interactive” or “systemic” approach to the structure of the study, not rigidly fixed, but flexible and

interrelated (p. 3). The theoretical lens shapes the questions the researchers ask, how data will be collected, interpreted and analyzed (Creswell, 2013). Hence, the theoretical lens adds thoroughness and richness to the whole study. The approach in this study was emerging and descriptive in pattern with no intervention during data collection. Creswell noted that selecting a suitable theory should depend on its appropriateness, application, and explanatory nature.

Maxwell (2013) also stressed the importance for a researcher to state the problem statement and purpose of the study. Rudestam and Newton (2015) suggested that the problem statement should also summarize the conceptual frameworks of the proposed research. Maxwell further noted that stating the purpose of a study is to limit the focus into a more manageable and researchable study. Thus, the outcome of this study will promote a better understanding of the phenomenon of interest, which is intended to facilitate the adequate establishment of preschools in the North-Central region of Nigeria.

Selection of Case Study

The qualitative research design's five primary approaches are the narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study. The examination of these research methods is essential to understanding the appropriateness of the choice of the case study for this study. The case study was the most suitable research approach to this study to explore better the impact of the preschool education policy implementation on the affected citizens in the North-Central zone by collecting in-depth information about the phenomenon of interest. Yin (2014) argued that a case study is appropriate to explore a current societal problem or setting. It implies that a case study is most applicable to researching the real-life situation.

In addition, Creswell (2013) agreed that the case study examines contemporary issues that are limited to a particular individual, group of individuals, settings, or location, while the in-depth data collection uses various sources to be analyzed in generating the themes of the study. In this study I inclined to the definition of the case study approach. I also separated the phenomenon of interest from the context, thereby retaining the characteristics of this case study's flexibility.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role in a qualitative research approach is that of a primary instrument that necessitates the central significance of the research. Maxwell (2013) argued that the researcher's relationship or identity to a study is central in the case of qualitative research design. Ravitch and Carl (2016) also noted that positionality is the researcher's role concerning the identity and a social location. Furthermore, the researcher should engage in reflexivity throughout the entire study. Ravitch and Carl asserted that to facilitate a study's quality, the researcher should also adequately address internal validity, reliability, construct validity, and external validity. The selection of site, data collection method, and selection of participants depends on the goals of a study and the researcher's aim (Creswell, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The role I played in this research effort is the interviewer. I attempted to apply an objective view to addressing the participants' bias and ethical considerations. A researcher's position concerning the research setting and participants is an important aspect of qualitative inquiry. The researcher's positionality regarding race, gender, class, and culture should be considered vital aspects of a study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, pp. 6-11). It is also important that a researcher identify and acknowledge their value and overcome their biases during the whole research stage. A researcher's objective

view of their research determines how the audience perceives the outcome of a study. Applying an objective view in the coding process will enhance the credibility of the results from the coded data. Throughout this study's entire process, I maintained an objective view by not providing leading questions or clarification to the participants.

Researchers should also be aware of their own bias when posing research questions and not asking leading questions that agree with the researchers' pre-existing beliefs. Manipulation of the collected data can happen (Maxwell, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A study that accommodates both supporting and opposing views is considered ethically balanced (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

I have attempted to anticipate and adequately address the reliability and validity of the instrument used in the study, by carefully applying an audit data trail that involved transparency throughout this study. The issue of validity will appear throughout every step of qualitative research design, as the researcher exercises flexibility in every process in checking data accuracy (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Maxwell (2013) posited that the researcher using a qualitative approach should have sound knowledge to ensure accuracy during data collection, assigning values, and entering data. Cautiousness during the data phase in a study is vital to the investigation's outcome as the researcher applies objectivity in the entire stages of the research (Maxwell, 2013).

I solely conducted the semi-structured interview with the selected participants, using open-ended questions. This approach was aided by the observation of non-verbal communication and body language of the participants. The participants could stop at any stage of the study. This step helped with the protection of the privacy of the participants. I used informed consent forms to ascertain the agreement of the

participants. I also explained that the study will be transparent and not interfere with the participants' privacy (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Another crucial step to gain access to participants was explaining the benefits of the research to the region and the entire nation.

The participants' involvement throughout the data collection and analysis stages was a critical step in promoting the study's credibility. I intended to prevent transmitting any wrong information or contributing to any misinterpretation (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A strategy to improve the reliability of the collected data in a study is member checking. The researcher and participants should reflect on the collected data. I used a member checks to ensure that correct information was obtained from the participants and there would be no misinterpretation of data.

In this vein, I had no prior knowledge of the UBE policy and, have no personal or professional relationship with the key informants. This research method was informed with the lenses of the theoretical frameworks of the ACF and AI that provided a better understanding of the complexity of this policy environment (O'Sullivan et al., 2016). Nonetheless, my application of objectivity in carrying out this study was paramount to me, as it added credibility to the study's outcome (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Also, I used triangulation of various sources of information to add rigor to the outcome of the study (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014).

I considered ethical issues throughout the whole research processes by following the IRB guidelines. A qualitative research approach involves person-centered relationships among all the people that participated in a study. Thus,

applying ethical considerations in exercising these processes is vital to the validity of the study.

Research Methodology

Sampling Strategy

The sampling strategy considered the setting, culture, events, and the participants interviewed or observed in a study (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014). Patton (2015) posited that an appropriate sample size in a qualitative study depends on the study's purpose. The sample size is determined by the aim of the inquiry, the timeframe, and the resources available for the study. This study used a purposive sampling method. This involved the deliberate choosing of the participants and the site for the study that contributed to answering the research question (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). The use of the purposive sampling strategy is characterized by the qualitative research approach in this study. This study also employed the criterion-based case selection strategy (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Patton (2015) argued that a purposive sampling method enables a researcher to collect in-depth information from a small number of participants. A qualitative inquiry's objective is not the generalization of the findings to other settings or populations (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Qualitative inquiry is anchored on the purposive selection method and not the randomized sampling strategy (Maxwell, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The nature of the qualitative approach is emergent. The qualitative approach entails flexibility as the process is an interactive one, leaving the opportunity for changes as well as an evolution towards the enhancement of the credibility of the study.

Criterion for Participants Selection

The qualitative research approach is comprised of many sampling methods, and the selection of an appropriate method depends on the goal of the research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this study, the criterion-based case selection strategy was used. Ravitch and Carl (2016) argued that the purpose of the criterion-based case selection sampling strategy enabled a researcher to deliberately select the participants, activities, and the study setting. Data collected can only be obtained from a particular environment and not otherwise. Furthermore, in selecting this sampling strategy, I selected participants that have been experienced in the phenomenon of interest and that had been impacted by the ineffectiveness of the policy implementation of the UBE programs.

The deliberately selected participants comprised of the UBE officials, parents or guardians, preschool heads, and primary school principals from the North-Central zone of Nigeria. This research site and the participants were located in the North-Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Thus, the shared information and the participants' lived experiences in the region helped in answering the research question.

Sample Size

Stake (2006) recommended between 15 and 30 respondents for a qualitative case study approach so that researchers could collect enough in-depth data to reach saturation. The sample size for this study consisted of 16 participants, comprised of four UBE officials, four parents or guardians, four preschool heads, and four primary school principals. The purpose of this case study was to advance the understanding of the perceived impact of the UBE policy implementation on the prospective children

who gained primary school admission in the North-Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

The qualitative research approach is characterized by the rich and in-depth data collection from a small number of participants while retaining the flexibility to changes in the research processes (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yin, 2014). The first step was to get the approval of the IRB to conduct the study. The recruitment of potential participants included a letter of introduction of the study's intent to access the site and to secure the agreement of the participants by signing the informed consent form. Gaining access to the potential participants was also achieved through emails or via telephone calls.

The official must have had additional work experience to facilitate the contribution and answering the interview questions meaningfully. The principals and preschool heads must have had work experience of a minimum of two years, which is standard for this region, to answer the interview questions adequately. The parents' or guardians' inclusion criteria were a minimum of primary school certificate holders to ensure that the participants could sufficiently understand the interview questions. However, I clarified without providing any leading answers when the occasion arose. Also, the potential parents or guardians in the study were those whose children have attended a preschool in the past and were impacted by the Universal Basic Education policies.

Relationship between Sample Size and Saturation

The sample size in the qualitative research approach depends on the research's objective and the goal of the study that is guided by the research question (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Sixteen key informants, which comprised four UBE officials, four

parents or guardians, four preschool heads, and four primary school principals, were considered by the researcher to be sufficient to adequately answer the research question (that is, saturation was achieved). O'Reilly and Parker (2012) defined data saturation as a point in which few surprises in the data are present and no new patterns or themes are emerging from the data. On the other hand, Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined data saturation as adequacy for the sampling method. Researchers use it as an indication of quality in the studies.

The type of data used in this study was responses to a semi-structured questionnaire with open-ended questions. This was done using an interview protocol. Ravitch and Carl (2016) showed that the qualitative case study method offers practical solutions to policy issues (p. 20). Furthermore, the authors stressed the usefulness of a case study on the preschool policy's ineffectiveness from the perspective of the key stakeholders. In this situation, the respondents can shed light on the understanding of the policy formulation and implementation that helped in answering the research question.

Instrumentation

In this study, the data instrument consisted of interviews, documents, field notes, audiotapes, and archival materials.

Interview

For this study, I applied the proposed guide for conducting quality interviews by Ravitch and Carl (2016) to facilitate the achievement of a good interview model that may reveal in-depth information about the research questions. This study also employed responsive interview techniques. This method enabled the interviewer and the interviewee to share a trusting relationship. The conversations were based on give-

and-take frames, which Rubin and Rubin (2012) called the responsive interview technique (p. 36). Kaufmann and Wagner (2017) posited that emotion dictates and influences our life decisions and what information we want people to know about us.

Adequately dealing with and recognizing the participants' emotions in data collection through their voice tone and body language is an essential aspect of the interview process (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The individual interviews in this study were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. The recorded interviews were transcribed immediately for interpretation and analysis at a later stage to generate codes and the themes for this research.

The conversations between me and the participants were conducted in a friendly tone that allowed both parties to express their views on the research questions. Kaufmann and Wagner (2017) noted that when people have the attention of others, the blocks or walls of defense that they build around themselves slowly crack open and fall apart. This approach could facilitate an interactive and informative conversation process that can enhance the collection of in-depth information about the participants' lived experiences. A semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was used as the data collection method, which was flexible in nature and facilitated an in-depth conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee.

The participants answered seven interview questions in this present study. The interview questions were structured and guided with the help of ACF and AI propositions. Interview questions 1 to 4 answered ACF related issues, while 5 to 7 were AI-related.

Documents and Researcher Field Notes

I examined public archival documents associated with ECE's historical development and especially the UBE programs in Nigeria. This process is vital to advance the understanding of the complexity of this policy environment. There was also cross-referencing of primary and secondary sources related to the phenomenon of interest. This type of data collection is necessary as gathering this information is not possible through the use of the interview method (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014).

In addition to the documents, to prevent loss of valuable information, I maintained field notes daily to record my research progress and any significant occurrence to prevent loss of valuable information (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I implemented the use of audit data trail that was also paramount, as it promoted the entire study's transparency. In addition, I applied the triangulation of multiple data sources to aid in the rigor of the study's outcome.

Recruitment Procedures for Site and Participants

After obtaining the approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) # 09-18-18-0359092, I wrote a formal letter to the private university's authority requesting permission to carry out the study. The letter informed the school authority of the proposed study's details, the study's expected duration, and potential benefits to the university and the community.

I visited the selected community partner organizations to recruit likely participants by letter of invitation. My first visit was a State Universal Basic Education Board office in North-Central region, Nigeria. I gave out letters of invitation to the UBE officials in the morning before they started the day's work. This first step was only specific to the recruitment of UBE officials. I also went to the

selected primary schools and kindergartens to recruit participants. Invitation letters were also provided to the parents or guardians at the schools in the morning before lessons started. This action provided the opportunity to invite the primary school principals and the preschool heads by handing out their letters of invitation at the schools. This process took place after gaining letters of cooperation from these community partner organizations.

The letters indicated the purpose of the study, the significance, potential positive social change aspect, and the confirmation in protecting the confidentiality, as well as the privacy of the participants. The informed consent process was explained to the participants as parts of the requirements of the IRB. The respondents were assumed to know about the phenomenon of interest that could help answer the research question until the saturation stage was reached. This procedure facilitated content validity and answers to the research question adequately.

As the primary research instrument, I conducted the semi-structured interviews with the aid of a digital voice recorder, while observation notes were written simultaneously for the non-verbal communication of the participants. The interviewer conducted a 60-minute face-to-face interview with each participant one-at-a-time and performed two interviews daily. The duration of the data collection events was four weeks, while an additional week extension plan was in place to address the no-show issue. I applied a person-centered approach in conducting the interviews, as it is critical to building a trustworthy relationship between me and the participants. This step was followed up by a member checks of the participants to facilitate the study's rigor.

Data Analysis Plan

Data management is an essential aspect of a research process which helps the researcher organize and manage the collected data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 238). A data management plan was put in place so that vital information from the participants was well-stored and-secured. Nonetheless, suitable strategies for data management plans also contributed to that success. I adhered to the ethical guidelines and ensured full compliance with the IRB regulation in using the human subjects in this study. All the potential participants were treated equally and with respect. Similarly, this step will promote equal participation of all groups while their rights and welfare are ensured. Also, the collected personal information during the screening phase of ineligible individuals will be securely destroyed. Hence, the safety and privacy risks will be adequately addressed. The following steps will be taken to address the safety and privacy risks adequately:

The collected data will be securely stored in a fireproof safe.

The collected data will be password protected during the entire study.

Only the researcher will have access to the collected data at all time to prevent any manipulation of data.

All the interview transcripts and collected data of the participants will be securely deleted after the minimum of five years.

The data-gathering phase is the next step in this present study to prepare the analysis and interpretation data. The data in this study included the interview protocols, observation field notes, and documents that were organized, and then transcribed immediately into the Excel spreadsheet after the collection to prevent leaving out any valuable information during the data collection process (Patton, 2015:

Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The follow-up activity was the manual sorting and grouping of the transcripts into themes and patterns while focusing on the study's phenomenon of interest. In this study, I applied the eclectic coding method. Saldaña (2016) defined eclectic coding as a “first impression” group of words or phrases that are deduced from the open-ended process (p. 5).

Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software offers research assistance with transcription, analysis, coding and text, interpretation, content analysis, discourse analysis, and grounded theory methodology. NVivo is a top-rated qualitative software that is extensively used, and it has a robust capability for video, photo, audio documents, and code parts of an image. It also has a wide range of querying and reporting capacity and flexibility. The NVivo software also allows sharing of work among researchers working on the same project, organizing the theme and coding, and developing cross tab matrix tables to discover the bits of documents that the researcher has coded in quite specific ways. The software is also used for visualization, codes, categorization, and themes generation. I used NVivo as the most appropriate software package for this study. It helped me to organize, manage, store, analyze, and interpret the collected data. Also, the objectivity approach was applied to address discrepant cases.

Issues of Trustworthiness

A critical issue in investigating is ensuring trustworthiness. The shared information of research participants in a study should be an opportunity that deserved to be respected, protected, and not misused nor lead to any form of harm to the participant-volunteers. Privacy and minimizing harm to participants in the study must

be the paramount issue that a researcher should consider in all phases of a study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Ravitch and Carl (2016) proposed the person-centred approach to conducting a qualitative study as it is critical to building a trustworthy relationship between the researcher and the participants (p. 345). It is also important to consider both the researcher and the participants' feelings or thoughts during the entire process of a study, ranging through the data collection stage, interpretation, and analysis phases as the phenomena emerge from the participants' lived experiences. Applying ethics such as confidentiality, informed consent, and IRB guidelines throughout the study's phases is vital to the study's validity.

I applied the triangulation strategy in this study to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Triangulation is the use of more than one source or method to form a comprehensive focal whole. It is also used to generate validity that confirms or challenges the study's interpretation (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Ravitch and Carl further outlined the different aspects of this strategy: theory triangulation, methodological triangulation, observer triangulation, and data triangulation.

Data triangulation's primary objective is that it tells the researcher if enough and appropriate data were collected that may help answer the sub research questions. The strategies to ensure quality, trustworthiness, and credibility in qualitative research rely not only on transparency in the different stages of a study to be ethical. Data triangulation is also essential for the achievement of the validity of a study. A key aspect of this study is taking into consideration participants' interests with the use of the informed consent form, which facilitates the quality of a study.

The credibility of a study is essential to its outcome and its acceptance as a scholarly work. The various stages of data collection to the end phase of publication should be transparent, including abiding by ethical guidelines proposed by Ravitch and Carl (2016). Among the critical strategies to ensure credibility is an approach that will leave traces of the decision-making processes in all stages of a study. A researcher should be open and possess an objective view throughout the entire research process, especially during the study's data collection and analysis phase. Thus, ethical issues and biases should be anticipated and adequately addressed towards conducting of ethically accepted study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I anticipated and addressed the study's ethical issues by applying confidentiality, informed consent, and IRB guidelines throughout the study's phases.

This research study's findings will not be generalized to the broader society as a qualitative case research design was applied. The triangulation strategy was applied in this study to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The data analysis processes were well-documented to enhance the transparency and credibility of the findings. Credibility is established if the findings in this present study represent the views of the participants. Member checks were carried out with the participants to ensure the collected interview data represent the participants' actual statements.

Transferability is the degree to which this research's findings can be used in other settings and other respondents' contexts. Transferability was established in this present study through a thorough description of the steps used in this present study. Dependability refers to the stability of the results over time. The findings in this current study involved evaluating the participants' responses, interpretation, and

recommendations that were supported by the data received from the participants of this study. Confirmability is the degree to which other researchers could confirm the results. The confirmability was established in this study that the data used for analysis and interpretation in this present study was directly from the respondents.

Ethical Procedures

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensures that researchers do not violate the participants' human rights. The IRB also evaluates a proposed study to assess the potential risks for the research participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Hence, researchers should ensure the participants' protection, especially vulnerable ones such as children, prisoners, pregnant women, and the mentally challenged. Researchers must include the method of data collection procedures for the proposed study in their application so that IRB can evaluate the extent to which the research participants may be at risk (Creswell, 2012). The researchers' use of an informed consent form is also an important aspect to consider in the planning of a study to facilitate approval of the IRB application.

It is also paramount for any Walden University student first to seek the IRB's approval when there is an intention to conduct a study. Hence, abiding by ethical procedures for this study, the researcher completed training from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research on "Protecting Human Research Participants" under Certificate Number 1060765 in 2012. In compliance with ethical procedures, the researcher requested approval from the Walden University IRB and was granted on the 17th of September 2018.

Summary

This section of the study reported the research design, the methods, and methodology of this study towards finding an adequate solution for the policy implementation of the ineffectiveness of the Universal Basic Education in the North-Central geopolitical region of Nigeria. The rationale for applying the qualitative research approach was explored. Simultaneously, the rationale for the selection of the case study was also justified towards collecting in-depth, meaningful data about the phenomenon of interest from the deliberately selected respondents. They were impacted by the UBE policy.

The recruitment procedures, possible sources of data, and instrumentation for the data collection strategy with positionality of the researcher were explained, and the steps that the researcher took in ensuring an ethically balanced study were also explored. This chapter also examined the data analysis plan with the analytical method that facilitated a successful IRB application. The participants answered seven interview questions in this present study. The interview questions were structured and guided with the help of ACF and AI propositions. Interview questions 1 to 4 answered ACF related issues, while 5 to 7 were AI-related. Chapter 4 explained the results of the findings that were guided by the researcher's question and the statement problem from the data collection strategy.

Chapter 4: Findings and Results

Introduction

The effective implementation of preprimary education policy in Nigeria is facing multiple challenges since its inception in 1999. The continuous increase of the negatively perceived impact of policy implementation in the country's early childhood education is one of the preprimary education problems in Nigeria. This qualitative case study aimed to advance the understanding of key stakeholders regarding the perceived impact on early childhood education policy implementation. Akinrotimi and Olowe (2016) concluded that research should explore key stakeholders' contributions to Nigeria's policy activities.

The study focused on children that have gained primary school admission in the North-Central geopolitical zone. The perceptions of the key stakeholders such as the state officials, principals, preschool heads, and especially the parents or guardians, who are often forgotten in policy formulation, play a significant role in implementing the pre-primary policy implementation processes in the North-Central region of Nigeria. This study applied the advocacy coalition framework's theory and the appreciative inquiry to understand the preschool education policy's issues. The interview questions were structured and guided with the help of ACF and AI propositions. Interview questions 1 to 4 answered ACF related issues, while 5 to 7 were AI-related.

A summary of the findings is presented in this chapter. The interview sections were audio-recorded and transcribed into Excel sheets immediately after each interview to prevent any loss of details. The transcripts and field notes with the observation notes were later processed and analyzed using the NVivo software

program to reduce or condense the collected data into meaningful categories with relevant themes, which will help answer the research question (Miles & Saldaña, 2014). The chapter also covered the study setting, participants, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and results. The overarching research question guiding this study was as follows: How does the early childhood education policy affect the prospective children's entry into the primary school system in the North-Central region of Nigeria? The chapter also covered the study setting, participants, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and results.

Setting

Some data collection took place in a private university in the North-Central region of Nigeria while other data collection took place in assigned locations, due to a then on-going industrial action and to ensure confidentiality of the selected participants in the study. There were two main categories of settings for this study.

The location of the private University is within in the North-Central region of Nigeria. I also wrote a formal letter to a private university's authority requesting permission to use a room to perform the interviews with the potential participants, which will enhance confidentiality and privacy (see Appendix C). All other community partner organizations were also located in the North-Central zone (see Appendix E). I gave the partner organizations letters of invitation. I visited the State Universal Basic Education Board's local office, where the officials were invited and interviewed. I also went to four private preschools and four public primary schools in the North-central region, where data collection from parents or guardians, preschool heads, and principals took place.

Demographics

There were 16 total participants, consisting of four parents who had been impacted by the preschool education policy, four preschool heads from private preschools, four primary principals from the public schools, and four UBE officials from the North-Central zone of Nigeria. This study used a purposeful sampling method. This involved the deliberate choosing of the participants and the site for the study that contributed to answering the research question (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). In this study, the criterion-based case selection strategy was used. Ravitch and Carl (2016) argued that the purpose of the criterion-based case selection sampling strategy enabled a researcher to deliberately select the participants, activities, and the study setting.

Four criteria had to be met to participate in this study: A UBE official's inclusion criteria were that the official must oversee preschool policy implementation with additional work experience to facilitate the contribution and answer the interview questions meaningfully. The principals and preschool heads must have work experience of a minimum of two years, which is standard for this region to answer the interview questions adequately. The parent or guardian inclusion criteria were a minimum of a Primary School Certificate to ensure that they would sufficiently understand the interview questions. However, I clarified any questions further when the occasion arose without any leading answers. The study's potential parents or guardians would have been impacted by the universal basic education policies whose children have attended a preschool in the past. The following sections described each participant group. Table 1 presented the demographic information of the 16 selected participants for the study.

There were two males and two females with two Bachelor and two National certificate holders that took part in the interview. A male and three female preschool head participants participated in this study with two having National certificates, one teacher with a Bachelor and one with a master's degree. All the primary school principals were male, with two having a bachelor's degree, a National Certificate, and a doctorate. Among the UBE officials were two males and two females with two having master's degree, a Postgraduate, a doctorate.

Table 1 indicates the 16 selected participants' demographic information for the study located in the North-Central region of Nigeria.

Table 1

Participants' Characteristics – Case Classifications Sheet

Participants/ Category	School Type/ Position of UBE	Gender	Qualification
Parent1	Public	Male	B.ED
Parent2	Public	Female	HND
Parant3	Public	Female	NCE
Parent4	Public	Male	B.SC
PSH1	Private	Male	NCE
PSH2	Private	Female	M.SC
PSH3	Private	Female	NCE
PSH4	Private	Female	B.SC
Principal1	Public	Male	B.ED
Principal2	Public	Male	B.ED
Principal3	Public	Male	HND
Principal4	Public	Male	Doctorate
UBE1	Deputy Director	Female	PGD
UBE2	Deputy Director	Male	M.ED
UBE3	Education officer	Male	M.ED
UBE4	Deputy Director	Female	Doctorate

To ensure confidentiality and privacy of the selected 16 participants in the study, the researcher identifies them in the above table as Parents, Preschool heads (PSH), Principals, and UBE officials. Knowing the background of the participants who took part in the interviews is essential to understanding the participants' responses.

The first sets of participants were two males and two female parents. Two of the parents are degree holders of the National Certificate Examination while one male parent holds a bachelor's degree, and one female parent is a Master of Science degree holder. All their children attend public schools. The three Preschool heads were females with National Certificate Examination holders, Bachelor and Master of Science degrees. The only male Preschool head is a holder of the National Certificate Examination. The four Preschool heads represented Private schools. All four male Primary School Principals are overseeing public schools. Two of the latter have a bachelor's degree in Education, one has a Higher National degree, and the fourth is a doctorate holder. The last sets of participants were the UBE officials. Two male UBE officials have a Master of Education, one male has a Post Graduate degree, and the only female official among them has a doctorate. It is necessary to know those who took part in this study. All the interviews were conducted with knowledgeable participants that helped inadequately answering the interview questions.

This study addressed the ineffectiveness in the pre-primary education policy implementation from the perception of impacted participants. The importance of this data analysis process was to facilitate the transparency and credibility of findings in this study. All the participants were asked seven interview questions. The central research question was related to the preschool education policy's impact on a child's

primary school entrance. The key stakeholders' views on the effect of early childhood education policy were addressed with the first subresearch question. The second subresearch question was concerned with the overall evaluation of the ECE program on a child's performance in school. The way forward and strategies that could enhance the preschool program were included in the third subresearch question. The participants' responses to the subresearch questions were coded into categories and themes with the help of the NVivo software program.

Data Collection

This study addressed the ineffectiveness in the preprimary education policy implementation from the perception of impacted participants. The importance of this data analysis process was to facilitate the transparency and credibility of findings in this study. The data collection took place in the North-Central region of Nigeria, with both public and private community organizations as partners in this present study. Every 60 minutes of interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's consent and later transcribed. All 16 participants were asked seven interview questions. I interviewed two participants separately every day.

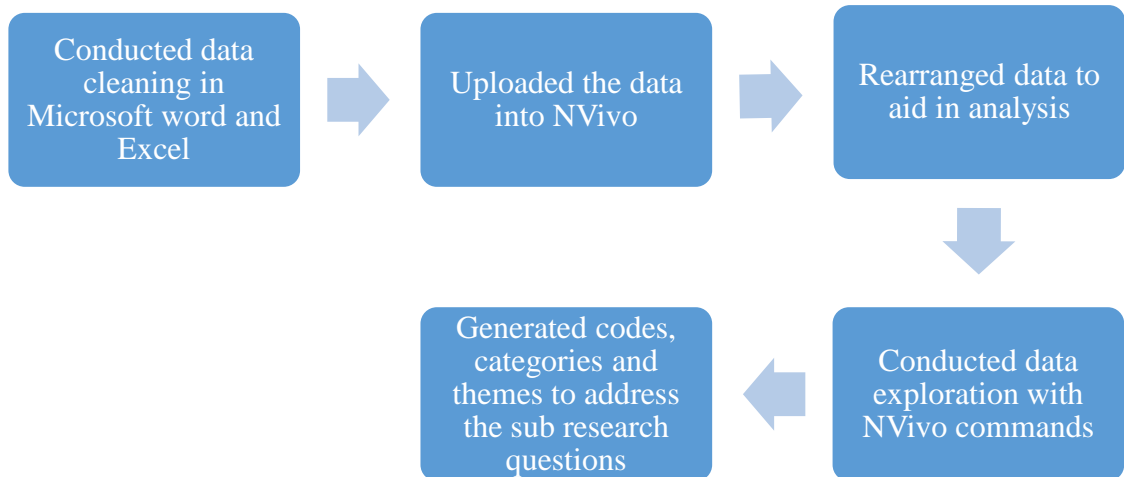
The central research question was how early childhood education policy affects the prospective children's entry into the primary school system in the North-Central region of Nigeria. The perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-Central region on the early childhood education system in Nigeria were addressed with the first subresearch question. The second subresearch question was the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-central region of Nigeria of the overall impact of the pre-primary education policy of the Nigerian primary school system. The third subresearch question was how collaboration of local stakeholders

affects early childhood education towards the achievement of the school readiness of children in the North-Central region of Nigeria. The participants' responses to the subresearch questions were coded into categories and themes with the NVivo software program's help. Each participant was asked to answer seven interview questions. The real names of the selected participants were changed with pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality in this study. The first and second interview questions enhanced the participants' responses to help the researcher answer the first subresearch question. The interview questions three and four supported the answering of the second subresearch question. The interview questions five, six, and seven were composed to enable the participants to answer the third subresearch question in this present study adequately.

Data Analysis

Figure 4

Data Analysis Process



Coding with NVivo

I transcribed all the 800 minutes audio files for the 16 participants. Transcripts were firstly organized in the Microsoft word documents before the importation into the NVivo software. The collected interview data's organizing involved the labelling of the interview transcripts into the appropriate NVivo headings. I organized the participants' responses to the interview questions by appropriate sub research questions for each participant in Microsoft word. I also formatted the transcripts according to the paragraph style in Microsoft work.

All the subresearch questions were in heading 1. The participants' responses were in heading 2. The interview questions were formatted as normal heading in Microsoft word. The participants' demographic information such as the gender,

category, school type, and qualification were created using the case classification that contained the participants' closed-ended questions presented in table 1 above.

Theming Process

Saldaña (2016) described this method as process that occurred during the initial coding phase of the collected data. Saldaña noted that the second cycle coding is the continuation of the first cycle coding activities. This study phase required more analytic knowledge to further divide the coded data into categories, themes, and the emergence of theory. The aim of this coding method is data analysis and interpretation. A way to carry out the second cycle coding is to look at the responses of a subresearch question across the participants' responses or the relevant resources to a study. The described steps and processes were used in the study to enhance the transparency and credibility of the findings.

I used both manual coding and the NVivo software program to generate the categories by examining all the participants' responses to the subresearch questions. For the pattern coding (second cycle coding) I looked for similarities in words or phrases across participants' responses regarding the subresearch questions. Words or phrases that indicated a shared meaning also was used for pattern coding (Saldaña, 2016). The pattern codes were used to condense the first cycle codes into more meaningful and explanatory codes. The generated patterns or themes were later used for the interpretation and visual presentation of the themes.

I copied the new formatted transcripts into NVivo. I used an auto code command in NVivo to group the formatted transcripts according to the subresearch questions. Auto-coding command in NVivo automatically arranges all relevant information to assigned nodes. NVivo assigned all interview questions as nodes. The

nodes contained all the participants' responses. This present study had seven parent nodes that represented the interview questions.

I rearranged the transcripts to further analyze the data. I used word frequency to determine the key phrases or words to generate codes that led to categories. This step is the first cycle of coding. Two hundred and fifty codes were generated from the first cycle coding activities. I created nodes in NVivo Software to organize the generated codes and hold relevant information that addressed the sub research questions. This step was the first cycle coding method.

The second cycle of coding was the next step that involved sorting and categorizing of the generated codes. The sorting process was possible by grouping codes that have the same or similar meaning together, frequency of the codes, and underlying significance among the codes to the sub research questions. Two hundred and fifty codes were regrouped under 35 parent nodes. The parent nodes were created to narrow the 250 codes to 35 categories (parent nodes). The new generated categories were named based on their contents.

Anchor codes were assigned to each research question in NVivo. The assigned anchor codes represented the sub research questions with their description in NVivo. From the 35 categories (parent nodes), eight themes were generated through pattern identification and a reflection and examination of the categories. The eight themes of this present study presented the participants' key views that answered the subresearch questions. The following themes emerged (pattern codes):

1. Early Educational and Psychomotor Development
2. Child Supervision
3. Educational Sector Development

4. Equality and Social Justice
5. Education for All
6. School Readiness for Next Level
7. Lack of Government Financial Intervention
8. Private and Public sensitization.

The mentioned themes with their corresponding subresearch questions are presented in the generated theme summary of this chapter (see Table 2).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

This research study's findings will not be generalized to the broader society as a qualitative case research design was applied. The triangulation strategy was applied in this study to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The data analysis processes were well-documented to enhance the transparency and credibility of the findings. Credibility is established if the findings in this present study represent the views of the participants. Member checks were carried out with the participants to ensure the collected interview data represent the participants' actual statements.

Transferability is the degree to which this research's findings can be used in other settings and other respondents' contexts. Transferability was established in this present study through a thorough description of the steps used in this present study. Dependability refers to the stability of the results over time. The findings in this current study involved evaluating the participants' responses, interpretation, and recommendations that were supported by the data received from the participants of this study. Confirmability is the degree to which other researchers could confirm the

results. The confirmability was established in this study that the data used for analysis and interpretation in this present study was directly from the respondents.

I used triangulation of sources such as interview transcripts, observation notes, field notes, and archival materials. I also used NVivo software program, ACF, and AI to analyze the findings. Finally, the findings in this study were explained in these subsequent sections with the lenses of the ACF theoretical framework and the AI. The interview questions were structured and guided with the help of ACF and AI propositions. I presented the results of this present study according to each subresearch questions. Relevant themes were used to address each subresearch questions of the study.

Generated Theme Summary

This section covers how the generated themes were used to address the subresearch questions. The themes generated for the first subresearch question were “Early Educational and Psychomotor Development, “Child Supervision” and “Educational Sector Development.” The data reviewed showed that the ECCDE policy implementation promoted pre-primary education and supported the parents to enrol their wards into school at an appropriate early age in the North-Central region of Nigeria. I present briefly in Table 2 the subresearch questions with their corresponding themes.

Table 2*Sub Research Questions with Corresponding Themes*

Sub Research Questions	Themes
1. What are the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-Central region on the early childhood education system in Nigeria?	“Early Educational and Psychomotor Development”, “Child Supervision”, and “Educational Sector Development”
2. What are the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-central region of Nigeria of the overall impact of the pre-primary education policy of the Nigerian primary school system?	“Equality and Social Justice”, “Education for All”, and “School Readiness for Next Level”
3. How does the collaboration of local stakeholders affect early childhood education towards the achievement of the school readiness of children in the North-Central region of Nigeria?	“Lack of Government Financial Intervention” and “Private and Public Sensitization”

Theme 1: Early Educational and Psychomotor Development

Regarding the preschool education policy implementation in the North-Central part of Nigeria, most of the participants indicated that the education policy supported the development and the school readiness of a child. Twelve out of the 16 participants gave their recommendations of the ECE program. All four of the Preschool heads reported that the ECCDE policy has both positive and negative impacts on a child’s development. However, a majority gave positive comments about the ECCDE. Early

childhood education is in the limelight for the most critical stakeholders, and they strive to ensure its sustainability.

Three parents reacted to the ECE implementation while advising against implementing the ECE program at a too early age of children. Some of the parents responded positively to ECE implementation. For instance, Parent 1 indicated that “the preschool assists our children to know what they are doing in the primary classes”, while Parent 3 also explained, “a child has been exposed to the challenges of education straight from the start. So, it will be effortless for them when the child gets to primary school.”

The participants further narrated that the preschool education program was an enthusiastic way to introduce children to early age education. Their opinion is that this method helps children grow in a learning environment that positively impacts their educational and psychomotor development. As Parent 4 enthused " I can see the improvement in education in the North-Central region with an acceptable standard." However, the preschool heads reactions to the policy implementation were divided between positivity and negativity opinion, as all the preschool heads concluded that the preschool education policy implementation has both positive and negative impact on children's educational and psychomotor development.

On the positive side, Preschool Head 4 said, “if a child started school at an early age, it also enhanced quick completion of that child’s education.” Most preschool heads indicated that the preschools also facilitated a child's performance, which most parents endorsed since a short childhood education relieves parents' financial burden. For instance, Preschool Head 1 indicated “preschool will enhance the parents to introduce their children to the school at an early stage.” While

Preschool Head 3 was of a different opinion, stating “parents misuse the ECE opportunities because some enrolled children are too young.”

The primary school principals also expressed their opinion about the ECE policy implementation; because they noticed the excellent foundation most children had in the preschools before the children started primary school education. For instance, Principal 3 said, “preschool also aids them and brings about educational development in which pupils are ready to learn, and parent is also willing to send their children to school because the parents are now seeing that primary school education is the bedrock of the learning in the society.” Principal 1 also discussed similar incidences saying, “ECE policy implementation sparked enthusiastic behavior in children at an early stage in life.” Principal 4 supported this assertion stating, “preschool program is a method to bring facilitation to the children and develop their interest in education at a young age.”

The UBE official’s response to the implementation policy is that it helps children reach their full potential because it enhanced the accessibility to education in the region and across the country. Additionally, the opinion of UBE Official 1 was that “preschool provides a haven for the children, thereby enhancing the parent’s ability to be productive and contribute to the socioeconomic development of the nation.” As the UBE Official 4 replied, “children play with various teaching aids, and the preschool prepares children cognitively and promotes the Psychomotor.” Supporting this assertion, UBE Official 3 also indicated, “if we can arrest them young because the early years of children matter a lot and preschool is critical to the development of a child.”

Parts of the Nigerian government's proactive efforts are the new inclusions of early childhood care, development, and education (ECCDE), and kindergarten education in the NPE. As indicated in the NPE, the pre-primary education policy was initiated to enhance the establishment of more preschools. Evidence from the participants' interview reflected this policy is met.

Theme 2: Child Supervision

Most participants in the study emphasized policy implementation of the preschool, supported the parents regarding safe supervision of their children, enabling parents to balance work and family responsibilities. This opinion was buttressed by Parent 1 as he indicated “preschool allowed our children to be exposed to education at early childhood in a safe environment.” Additionally, Preschool Head 4 explained:

Instead of the children just playing around. With the help of the preschool, at least the children are currently playing in an educational environment.

Children are opportune to grow in the educational environment, which will help them be successful.

All the four UBE officials interviewed narrated the program's genesis to support and balance the responsibility at home and workplace for working mothers. Also, all the UBE officials responded affirmatively on the role the policy implementation played. UBE Official 4 explained how the preschool program contributes to the parent support by saying, “a civil servant who will go to work, such parent should have a safe and secure place for her child. So, this was the genesis of early childhood education in the North-central region of Nigeria.” The policy implementation document on ECCDE did indicate the goal for this policy

implementation in this region. The opinions provided buttressed what the policy stated.

Theme 3: Educational Sector Development

Six participants in this study responded to the question regarding the development that they have experienced in the educational sector of the region. For example, Parent 4 indicated that “the way I perceive the policy of the preschool in the North-central region of Nigeria is that the policy is very much okay now unlike before the introduction of the preschool.” Similarly, Principal 2 also explained that “the implementation of ECE policy in the preschools in the North-central region of Nigeria is something to write home about, especially at the beginning.” Primary school Principal 3’s assertion was that “firstly, the childhood education in Nigeria is something that is recognized and in which government policy has backed up because of the creation and establishment of the preschools.” However, Parent 2 argued differently that, “ECE implementation in the preschools in the North-Central region of Nigeria is very poor, especially in the rural areas because the children under age five do not start early.”

Three out of four of the UBE officials replied concerning the establishment of preschools. For instant, UBE Official 2 said that “now the parent does not see the ECCDE classes as just a time-wasting endeavor instead of a welcoming change that facilitates the development of their children.” In the same view, UBE Official 3 stated that “well, so far so good. According to the UN right of the child, the implementation of the policy has been in place. It should be emulated and applied or advocated for worldwide that ECE should be included in all the existing basic schools.” Supporting

this assertion, UBE Official 4 said that “my perception about ECE in the North-central region of Nigeria is that the policy measure is good.”

Theme 4: Equality and Social Justice

The participants' responses that led to the “Equality and Social Justice” theme were primarily because majority of the participants indicated preprimary education policy provided quality basic education that is affordable and accessible for all citizens. Nine out of 16 participants responded to the second subresearch question regarding their lived experiences on equality and social justice in preschools. For example, Parent 1 ascertained:

To me, the way I can evaluate the policy is through interrogating our pupils by asking the pupils what they have done in their classes before they reach the primary level. I can see that the children have equal opportunities in their class. I cannot tell that there is something a male is getting more than a female. To the best of my knowledge, there is an equal opportunity in their classes. Whenever I come to this school, I am always seeing that pupils are doing everything equal within the school. This implies that there is no discrimination.”

Parent 2 also supported the preschool policy and confirmed that “usually, some pupils come from low-income families. The preschools promote equal opportunities in the society.” Similar experience was given by Parent 4 stating “the preschool program creates equal opportunities among children because some children come from low-income families while some other children come from the middle class, but the teachers still teach them together in the class.”

Some of the educators affirms the equality in preschools where, Preschool Head 2 stated, “it is not about the gender or that type of a thing. The pupils have equal rights; we teach them the same way.” Some of the primary school principals also agreed that preschool program has an effective impact on children in the North-Central zone of Nigeria. For instance, Primary school Principal 1 said, “both the male and female are being taught and treated equally. There is no segregation between males and females. This ECE brings progress to the child.” Principal 3 also responded similarly to this second subresearch question:

My evaluation is based in this school and the area where I served in the past; I can see that the evaluation is positive. There is creation of equal opportunities for all the children, either male or female and the physically challenged ones among them. The educators also cater for the physically challenged children to learn. Also, there is provision of teachers for the deaf and dumb so that every Nigerian have a quality education.

The four UBE officials all asserted the impact of the preschool program on the children in the North-Central region of Nigeria. UBE Official 3 explained that “when we are talking about equal opportunities, there are no discrepancies in the education of male or female children nowadays. This implies that pupils have equal rights regardless of gender, background, religion, affiliation, or economic status.”

Theme 5: Education for All

Four participants also emphasized the importance of quality and affordable education towards the eradication of illiteracy in the region. For instant, Parent 1 narrated:

There is slogan called Every Child Counts in the school. In the neighboring school, there are some physically challenged children in that school, and the educators still teach all the pupils equally. There is nothing like discrimination between a male and a female child. The educators are treating all the pupils equally.

Principal 3 similarly stated:

So, in a nutshell, this preschool formulation in Nigeria has helped a lot of people, especially the less privileged people in society by giving the pupils food early in the morning, encourages the pupils to come to school. And at the same time, the parents are willing to surrender their children to learn. All these things are given to the pupils as a way of motivating them towards the educational policy that the government has been able to establish for the benefit, development, and total eradication of illiteracy in Nigeria.

UBE Official 1 similarly discussed, “ECE program has helped a lot to reduce the number of OSC... ECCDE programs, and policies that help young children reach their full potential by supporting families and the communities through increasing access to quality early childhood care. For now, in this state, there is equality in gender. Even in the mentioned school, some physically challenged children are also present in the school.” In addition, UBE Official 4 during the interviewed answered:

Yes, the children are given equal opportunities. That was the major Act, which the UBE basic emphasizes that all children in Nigeria, irrespective of race, religion, color, and challenges, must be given an education. And like our slogan in this ministry is that every child counts.

Theme 6: School Readiness for Next Level

The “School Readiness for Next Level” theme focused majorly on the impact of preschool classes that children have undergone. Nine out of 16 participants expressed their experiences. For example, Parent 1 said, “I discovered that childhood education in primary school reduced the way our children were playing and are more productive in the class.” Similarly, Parent 2 reported, “preschool is preparing our children for the primary class. I discovered that it assists our children to know what they are doing in the primary classes.” Parent 3 expressed a similar reaction about school readiness for next level stating, “children are exposed to a learning environment, learning things and they understand more when they get to primary school.”

Affirmation of the school readiness for next level also came from Preschool Head 1 with an answered that “when children get to the primary section teachers has less effort to teach them.” Similarly, Preschool Head 2 argued, “it's on a positive side. The performance is outstanding because those preschool classes build the foundation of the children before they get to primary school.” While Principal 1 replied:

It will be easier for the teachers in the primary school. You know the pupils would have finished the preprimary. It will be easier for those teachers and easy learning because of some lesson the children had in the preschools. It will be easier for teachers to cope with them. There will be easy learning for the pupils. Going to school with all the activities will not be new anymore.

Principal 2 also pointed out that “preschool program train children for primary school. when the children get to the primary school proper, it will not be difficult for them to understand and follow the footsteps of the right education. The preschool

classes improve children readiness for primary school.” Similar response came from UBE Official 2 stating, “ECE educate children for the real primary school education. I think the ECCDE is preparing them for the stage of schooling in their life.”

Theme 7: Lack of Government Financial Intervention

Participants' responses to the “Lack of Government Financial Intervention” theme mainly focused on the increase in government spending and political will at all various levels of governments towards the establishment of more quality preschools across the region. 10 out of 16 participants stressed the urgent need for the federal government’s intervention to sustain the existing preschools and extend the ECE education policy's implementation to the rural areas. For example, Parent 1 stated “the best organizational ways to facilitate the adequate provision of early childhood education in the North-central region of Nigeria is government empowerment of the preschools.” Similarly, Parent 3 said, “by providing a conducive environment. The government schools should have a preschool environment where children under the age of 5 can be enrolled.”

Similarly, Preschool Head 1 pointed out, “government should provide the needed instructional materials, whereby it will make the learning very easy in the class for both the teachers and the learners.” Affirming to the view, Principal 3 also said, “all materials and amenities that these pupils require, good infrastructure and ventilated classes that is conducive for learning should be provided by the government.” Principal 4 similar reaction was that “the federal government should increase its spending on the educational sector, especially in the area of preschool.” During the interview UBE Official 1 emphasized:

The government is trying by providing many things; they provide buildings, uniforms, playing materials, and employment of caregivers. The government should support the teachers and caregivers for effective delivery in our ECCDE centers. Furthermore, the procurement and distribution of the ECE materials across the ECCDE centers will assist children's learning and establishment of more ECCDE centers across the region. If more centers were established, it would still boost the success of the program."

Likewise, UBE Official 2 said, "government at federal, state, and local should invest in the establishment of more EC-Centers." Supporting confirmation also came from UBE Official 3 explaining "the government should fund the public schools adequately."

Theme 8: Private and Public Sensitization

The "Private and Public Sensitization" theme emphasized the need for collaboration among all stakeholders to promote preschools education in the region. Participants were asked to give suggestions about ways in which ECE policy could be implemented effectively and sustained. A total number of 12 out of the 16 participants answers were captured in the subsequent sections regarding the ways to promote preschool education in the region. For instance, Parent 1 explained:

The government should go by way of advertising to our communities, talk to parents or guardians to bring their children to school. Their future and current levels will be more effective, and they will be useful to our community. The government must go rural communities, mosques, and churches, talk to the religious leaders to canvass for the community to allow the children to be

enrolled in school on time is better option to enhance future opportunities of pupils.

Parent 2 expressed similar opinion stating, "government should provide more facilities for the children to encourage the educators to teach the children better." Additionally, Parent 3 narrated that "the government should organize seminars, enlightening the parents on the importance of preschool education." Parent 4 also indicated that "government should make sure that the preschool policy is circulated. Not only in the North-central geopolitical zone, but also throughout the federation."

Preschool Head 1 similarly said, "government, private sectors, or individuals, should support the preschool programs." While Preschool Head 2 stressed that "the government should provide a training opportunity for the educators." In addition, Principal 1 indicated:

Although we are still trying through SBMC – school base management committee -- to continue the preschool in our school, PTA (Parents Teachers Association) and NGOs need to provide the learning materials for the children. Additionally, private and public sensitization such as NGOs and individual groups should that take education as priorities."

Affirming the need for continuous commitment, Principal 2 explained that "parents, teachers and the government should sit down together and formulate a good policy that can make things work. Undoubtedly, you will see a very good result."

Principal 3's assertion was:

The government has done a lot, despite it the first and the most thing is the sensitization activities throughout the communities. Government must continue to sensitize and make public enlightenment either on the radio or

television. To encourage the parents and the students to know the importance of education.

Similar view was from Principal 4 stating that “well, apart from the efforts of the government, proprietors, teachers, policymakers, I think, we should be able to have NGOs.” He continued and said that “government should be able to advertise or promote the ECE to the people. There should be a lot of advertisement on the radio, TV that will serve as a way of passing information to the society.”

All four UBE officials also gave recommendations to promote the preschool education policy implementation. For example, UBE Official 1 explained:

Government is trying by providing a lot of things; they provide buildings, uniforms, playing materials, employment of caregivers. The government should support the teachers and caregivers for effective delivery in our ECCDE centers. The procurement and distribution of the ECE materials across the ECCDE centers will also help the educators. The establishment of more ECCDE centers across the region is essential to promote ECE. If more centers were established, it would still boost the success of the program.

UBE Official 2 explained the involvement of the private sector to promote the establishment of more preschools in the region. For instance, UBE Official 2 narrated that “only achievement now is due to the personal interest of the stakeholders involved to keep the program on-going.”

Similarly, UBE Official 4 emphasized:

Government should play a major role in the ECE structure to enhance better performance. Also, the stakeholders must constantly participate in the ECE.

Society should indicate what type of education is needed to promote development and education remains the mother of all professions.

Emerging Themes from Interviews

Figure 5 shows the emergence of critical themes in the findings of this study after second round of coding and triangulation process. The discovered themes served as the foundation of the participants' responses to the sub research questions posed to them. The researcher's questions were related to the perceived impact of early childhood education in Nigeria's North-Central region.

Figure 5

Key Themes after Triangulation of Data



Summary

This present study was conducted to explore the perceptions of key stakeholders on the overall research question: How does the early childhood education policy affect the prospective children's entry into the primary school system in the North-Central region of Nigeria? Three subresearch questions were raised to the overarching research question: What are the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-Central region on the early childhood education system in Nigeria: What are the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-central region of Nigeria of the overall impact of the pre-primary education policy of the Nigerian primary school system: How does the collaboration of local stakeholders affect early childhood education towards the achievement of the school readiness of children in the North-Central region of Nigeria.

Chapter 4 started with an introduction that restated this study's aim and what I hoped to discover. Interview transcripts were cleaned in Microsoft Word before the data was used for analysis with the NVivo software program. The remaining section of Chapter 4 presented the background, data analysis process, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and summary.

The sub research questions in the study aimed to understand how early childhood education policy affects the prospective children's entry into the primary school system in the North-Central region of Nigeria. Subresearch question 1 was asked to determine the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-Central region in the early childhood education system in Nigeria. All 16 participants, who are all key stakeholders in the study, agreed that the ECE implementation has brought

about educational development across all the country regions, especially to the working mothers for adequate child supervision.

Subresearch question 2 sought to discover stakeholders' perceptions from the North-Central region of Nigeria on the overall impact of the preprimary education policy on the Nigerian primary school system. Majority of the participants ascertained that early childhood education policy implementation was a welcome educational program to strengthen the educator teaching practices, reduce Out-of-School-Children, increase gender equality, advance social justice, and promote socio-economic prosperity in the country.

The final subresearch question 3 inquired: how does the collaboration of stakeholders affect early childhood education towards the achievement of children's school readiness in the North-Central region of Nigeria? All the participants agreed with the positive impact of preschools in the community. Nonetheless, they all reported that there should be continued support for the Federal government. Public and private collaboration should also be encouraged with other key stakeholders to bring about more outreach of early childhood education across all the geopolitical zones.

Chapter 5 discussed the results and interpretation of the findings in this present study. This chapter also discussed emerging problems, which were addressed in Chapter 5. Recommendations and way forward with this current study's impact as a positive social change in the community were also be discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendation

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to understand the perceived impact of the preschool education policy implementation on children who had gained entrance into the primary school system in the North-Central geopolitical region of Nigeria. I applied a qualitative case approach. The results of the interviews presented in Chapter 4 are explained, recommendations for future studies and the social change implications are also discussed in this chapter. The literature reviewed showed that there is a gap in policy arrangements of preschool education programs in the North-Central region of Nigeria. Thus, there is a need in understanding the fundamental role the stakeholders' perception played in the ineffectiveness of policy implementation of early childhood education in this region of Nigeria (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016; Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014; Amuchie et al., 2013; Nsoedo, 2014; Nudzor, 2015). The findings of this study support the Early Educational and Psychomotor Development, Child Supervision, Educational Sector Development, Equality and Social Justice, Education for All, School Readiness for Next Level, Lack of Government Financial Intervention, and Private and Public Sensitization about the perceived experience of key stakeholders in the research literature.

The research question guiding this study was: How does the early childhood education policy affect the prospective children's entry into the primary school system in the North-Central region of Nigeria? The findings in this study indicated that the ECE policy implementation in the North-Central region of Nigeria is still not fully implemented due to a significant lack of government financial intervention and collaboration of key stakeholders. All the study participants reported that lack of

government financial intervention with private and public sensitization, especially in the rural areas are some of the pressing issues that mainly prevent the effectiveness of preschool education policy implementation. The perceived experiences narrated in this study had made some participants self-help by privately raising needed funds in keeping some of the preschools open.

Through preschools' attendance, many participants pointed out that children were more amenable to being taught because they have better learning capacity. It is a different case with other children who lack previous knowledge from early education, which impacted their education later in life. I discovered that the number of enrolled children has increased since the inception of preschools in 2004, while the rate of out-of-school children (OSC) has been reduced because of the introduction of the ECE policy implementation in the North-Central region of Nigeria. These educational initiatives have enhanced gender equality and social justice in the area. The final finding in this study was that participants argued that there should be adequate government financial intervention towards the effective implementation of ECE policy implementation with the collaboration of key stakeholders. The following sections of this chapter present the interpretation of findings, recommendations for future study, implications for social change, and conclusion.

Interpretation of Findings

Many participants associated mostly the ineffectiveness implementation of preschool education policy in the North-Central region of Nigeria to lack of government political will (Potokri, 2014; Porter, 2015); this issue has also prevented the contribution and buy-in of key stakeholders in the policy formulation and implementation (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016). The literature reviewed narrates the

non-involvement of key stakeholders such as parents or guardians, preschool heads, primary school principals, and the importance of understanding their views regarding the preschool education policy implementation in the North-Central region of Nigeria (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016; Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014).

Early Educational and Psychomotor Development

When the participants were asked what the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-Central region were on the early childhood education system in Nigeria, 12 out of the 16 participants said they could see improvement of children's early development thinking capacity. Mofrad (2012) concluded that the Preschoolers' quality was significant to the psychomotor development of children. For instance, Principal 3 indicated that "preschool also aids pupils and brings about educational development" Also, Parent 4 asserted, "I can see the improvement in education in the North-Central region with an acceptable standard". Similarly, Barnett et al. (2017) noted that preschool educational policy implementation enhances children's learning capacity and psychomotor from an early age. Principal 4 supported this assertion stating, "preschool program is a method to bring facilitation to the children and develop their interest in education at a young age." A similar experience was also described by Parent 3; she stated, "children have early exposure to the challenges of education straight from the start of their education."

As Adebisi (2016) discovered similar results in which ECE has proven to facilitate cognitive development and academic achievement of children. Supporting the assertion was Parent 1, who said, "the preschool helps our children know what they are doing in the primary classes." UBE Official 3 also indicated, "if we can arrest them young because the early years of children matter a lot and preschool are critical

to the development of a child." However, according to Lyytinen and Richardso (2014), researchers noted that children in sub-Saharan Africa require basic education, such as reading and writing, which affects their human development later in life.

One of the educators, Preschool Head 3, reserved her support for ECE because of children's enrolment in preschool at a too early age. She explained that "some parents misuse the ECE opportunities because some enrolled children are too young. She further said; I do not think the children are enjoying it." Kucuker (2016) suggested that preschool enrollment age should begin at five years to enhance children's full cognitive development and academic achievement.

Child Supervision

When participants were asked what are the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-Central region on the early childhood education system in Nigeria? The response of Parent 1 was, "our children have exposure to education at early childhood in a safe environment," as well as Preschool Head 4, who explained that "children are opportune to grow in the educational environment." Furthermore, Undiyaundeye (2013) stressed that children growing in an educative environment promotes children's learning ability. Similarly, Garbacz et al. (2017) asserted that it is vital for children to grow in an educative environment to encourage children's development. At the same time, the ECCDE program supported a working mother. Parents must abide preschool enrolment age of children. Correia (2016) cited that parental and trained teacher's involvement is essential to children's successful academic achievement. As explained by Hirokazu and Weiland (2016) that experienced educators boost the success of preschoolers.

Additionally, UBE Official 4 asserted that preschool establishment supported working mothers. She explained that "parent should have a safe and secure place for her child." However, some participants, Preschool Head 3, emphasized that parents and educators should abide by the stipulated preschool enrolment age of 5 years. She explained, "some parents misuse the ECE opportunities because some enrolled children are too young."

The government initiative with this intervention is to provide every child with accessible education that will promote quality in the Nigerian society regardless of the parents' socioeconomic status (Herberie & Carter, 2014; Porumbu & Necşoi, 2013). The parents are the first teachers of a child. A child's adequate educational support is paramount to every nation's development, emphasizing the government commitment at all the government levels (Necşoi, 2013).

Educational Sector Development

The participants in the study were also asked, "when the participants were asked in the interviews, what are the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-Central region on the early childhood education system in Nigeria? Parent 4 answered by saying, "the way I perceive the policy of the preschool in the North-central region of Nigeria is that the policy is very much okay now, unlike before the introduction of the preschool." Likewise, Fosu (2015) concluded that the establishment of preschools has contributed to the development of Sub-Saharan countries such as Nigeria. A similar assertion came from Principal 2, who cited an instance that "preschools establishment... is something to write home about, especially at the beginning." However, Principal 2's statement signified that the current trend of preschool education policy implementation is still ineffective across all regions, especially in the

rural areas. Similarly, Parent 2 indicated by saying, "children in the rural areas under age five do not start early." Among researchers was Cha (2017), who called for a societal and cultural reorganization of the educational sector, mainly in the Sub-Saharan countries like Nigeria.

Similarly, Karoly (2016) noted that investment in ECE promotes socioeconomic development of a nation. While UBE Official 3 stressed that "preschool programs should be advocated for worldwide." UBE Official 2 asserted by stating, "now the parent does not see the ECCDE classes as just a time-wasting endeavor instead of a welcoming change that facilitates the development of their children." Supporting this assertion, UBE Official 4 said that "my perception about ECE in the North-central region of Nigeria is that the policy measure is good." It is worth mentioning that the Nigeria's federal government should commit resources continuously towards the achievement of human development in the country that could promote educational sector development in all the geopolitical regions (Alase, 2017; Alhassan, 2017; Anaduaka, 2014; Omodero & Azubike, 2016).

Equality and Social Justice

The participants in this study were the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-central region of Nigeria of the overall impact of the Nigerian primary school system? Parent 1 explained that "there is equal opportunity in their classes. I am always seeing that pupils are doing everything equally within the school." As noted by Alase (2017), the federal government should increase its spending on education to enhance social justice and equality in geopolitical regions of the nation. Another participant pointed out the preschool program policy implementation fosters equality among pupils in school. Parent 4 responded by stating, "some children come

from low-income families while some other children come from the middle class, but the teachers still teach them together in the class." Egharevba et al. (2016) concluded that an improvement in accessible ECE would promote social justice in society.

Similarly, the answer was also given by Preschool Head 2, explaining, "it is not about the gender or that type of a thing. The pupils have equal rights; we teach them the same way." Likewise, Principal #3 stated, "both the male and female are being taught and treated equally. There is no segregation between males and females." Herberie & Carter (2014) noted that it is essential for the government to enhance equality and social justice in society to have equally accessible education in the country. Also, UBE Official 3 explained that "there are no discrepancies in the education of male or female children. All the pupils have equal rights regardless of gender, background or religion, affiliation, or economic status." Scholars concluded that the government must achieve effective intervention of problems that could promote equality and social justice (Adebisi et al., 2014; Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014; Kana et al., 2015; Olubor & Inua, 2015; Sooter, 2013). According to some UBE officials, the introduction of the ECE policy implementation has helped reduce Out-School-Children (OSC) in the North-Central region of Nigeria. Also, key stakeholders have intensified citizens' enlightenment regarding the importance of education in society (Raudenbush & Eschmann, 2015).

Education for All

When I asked the participants in the interview, what are the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-central region of Nigeria of the overall impact of the Nigerian primary school system's pre-primary education policy? Parent 1 stated that "there is slogan called Every Child Counts in the school. There are some

physically challenged children in that school, and the educators still teach all the pupils equally." As noted by Uyanga (2012) that education is the right of all children. Similarly, Principal #3 stressed that "preschool formulation in Nigeria has helped many people, especially the less privileged people in society." The affirmation also came from UBE Official 1, stating, "ECE program has helped a lot reduce the number of OSC."

Additionally, UBE Official 4 explained that "all children in Nigeria, irrespective of race, religion, color, and challenges, must be given an education." Accordingly, Nigeria's federal government has committed itself to realize the Education for All (EFA) in the country (FRN, 2013). However, the literature review shows a lack of political will and government commitment in achieving the set goals. As Porter (2016) described, the quality of teaching methods used in some of the developing countries is ineffective. The achievement of EFA is a global plan to which every government should be committed towards its success. Lyytinen and Richardso (2014) noted that a high rate of children in sub-Saharan Africa requires basic education assistance.

School Readiness for Next Level

The participants in the study were also asked, When I asked the participants in the interview what are the perceptions of local stakeholders from the North-central region of Nigeria of the overall impact of the preprimary education policy of the Nigerian primary school system? Parent 2 responded by saying "...preschool is preparing our children for the primary class.". Expressing a similar opinion, Parent 3 said, "children are exposed to learning things, and they understand more when they get to primary school." Scholars have emphasized that the quality of preschools is

essential to the school readiness of children (Fuller et al. (2017). Preschool Head 1 response to the interview question was, “when children get to the primary section, teachers have less effort to teach them.” Similar affirmation was from Preschool Head 2 by stating, “the performance is outstanding because those preschool classes build the foundation of children before they get to primary school.” Benner (2017) noted that government should promote accessible Pre-K programs that will enhance the school readiness of Nigerian children.

Similarly, Fuller et al. (2017) argued that the federal government commits more resources towards the establishment of quality preschools that positively influence the school readiness of children. As noted by Principal 1 by stating, “going to school with all the activities will not be new anymore.” Likewise, Principal 2 indicated that “preschool programs train children for primary school.” However, Woldehanna (2016) advocated that there should continuous government support to access basic education. Woldehanna further explained that low-cost education and family.

Lack of Government Financial Intervention

When I asked the participants the interview question, how does the collaboration of local stakeholders affect early childhood education towards the achievement of children's school readiness in the North-Central region of Nigeria? Ten out of the 16 participants argued that the government should be the driven force behind the preschool education policy implementation by providing adequate support for the existing preschools and extending the ECE policy to the rural areas. Parent 1 stated, "to me, the best organizational ways to facilitate the adequate provision of early childhood education in the North-central region of Nigeria is government

empowerment of the preschools." Most participants emphasized the urgency for establishing more preschools and expressed reservations that the current ones should be adequately equipped with instructional materials and well-trained teachers, especially in public schools. Principal 4 concluded that "the federal government should increase its spending on the educational sector, especially in the area of preschool." Likewise, Alase (2017) stressed the importance of increasing government spending on education and political will facilitates more preschools while eradicating illiteracy in society.

Preschool Head 1 pointed out, "at least majorly, the government, if they can provide the instructional materials, whereby it will make the learning very easy in the class for both the teachers and the learners." Also, Parent 3 emphasized, "by providing a conducive environment. The government schools should have a preschool environment where children under the age of 5 can be enrolled." These suggestions were raised too by Mofrad (2012), who believed that the Preschoolers' quality was significant to the structures and facilities provided in the preschools. Mofrad also added that the class of current preschoolers was low, affecting children's school readiness.

Researchers have asserted the challenges in establishing accessible and quality education in Nigeria (Awofala & Sopekan, 2013; Famade, 2012). These authors concluded their studies with contrary views of quality preschool education. They showed that the lack of resources in this essential socioeconomic factor has a significant impact on Nigeria's future. UBE Official 1, UBE Official 2, and UBE Official 3 agreed that the federal government should increase its financial intervention and empower the preschools. UBE Official 3 argued, "the government should fund

the public schools adequately." Haque et al. (2013) also called for the need for governments' continuing commitment to provide adequate ECE policies and effective implementation to promote economic and human development.

Private and Public Sensitization

The participants were asked how the collaboration of local stakeholders affects early childhood education towards the achievement of children's school readiness in Nigeria's North-Central region of Nigeria? Parent 1 reacted, "the government has to go by way of advertising to our communities, talk to them so that it can bring other people to school." Margetts and Phatudi (2013) highlighted the importance of key stakeholders and government support in realizing quality ECE. Twelve out of 16 participants indicated the necessity of public and private sensitization to improve the preschool programs. Newman and Obed (2015) presented a research perspective of establishing adequate ECE in Nigeria. The authors emphasized that the prerequisite for the success of ECE programs relies on the involvement of stakeholders. Parent 3 narrated that "the government should organize seminars, enlightening the parents on the importance of preschool education."

Matthew (2015) alluded that the burden of effective implementation of the ECCDE policies in Nigeria could not be carried only by the government. The federal government encouraged the private sector's full participation due to its financial constraints and the current recession. Besides, the involvement of various key stakeholders in the policy activities will enhance preschool education policy implementation in Nigeria's North-Central region. UBE Official 4 emphasized that "the government plays a major role in the structure to function adequately.

Additionally, all the stakeholders must constantly participate in the ECE. Society should indicate what type of education is needed to promote development. Education remains the mother of all professions." The participation of key stakeholders is essential towards improving the preschool education policy implementation in the North-Central region of Nigeria (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016; Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014). After careful interpretation and analysis of the study's findings with the literature reviewed on perceptions of key stakeholders on the effect of preschool education policy implementation, understanding the contribution and participation of key stakeholders is essential towards a reverse of the current trend of the ineffectiveness of Pre-K education policy implementation.

Theoretical Framework Application

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) recommended using ACF theory to analyze and evaluate public policy in a region such as Nigeria. The ACF theory focuses on a policy subsystem where multiple actors try to influence the outcome of a needed policy (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith recommended using ACF theory to analyze and evaluate public policy in a region such as Nigeria. The ACF theory focuses on a policy subsystem where multiple actors try to influence the outcome of a needed policy (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993).

The Sabatier and Weible (2007) propositions indicated that shared belief systems united the policy actors into an advocacy coalition in the policy subsystem. The first ACF proposition states that on major controversies within a policy subsystem when policy core beliefs are in dispute, the lineup of allies and opponents tends to be relatively stable over periods of a decade or so. The second proposition adds that actors within an advocacy coalition will show substantial consensus on the policy core

issues, but less so consensus secondary aspects. The third is in line stating that an actor (or coalition) will give up secondary aspects of her (its) belief system before acknowledging weakness in the policy core. The fourth and fifth propositions are that administrative agencies will usually advocate a more moderate position within a coalition than their interest group allies. More so, actors within purposive groups are more constrained in their expression of beliefs and policy positions than the actors from material groups. Material groups are groups that are motivated for economic self-interest (local key stakeholders). On the other hand, the purposive groups are driven by an ideological position (government establishments).

In the case of Nigeria's North-Central geopolitical region, the deep core belief system was supported as described by Sabatier and Weible's ACF propositions. UBE Official 1 indicated that despite the positive impact of the preschool education policy implementation in the North-Central region of Nigeria, the federal government is still behind regarding adequate funding. UBE Official 1 also stated, "the government should support the teachers and caregivers for effective delivery in our ECCDE centers. In addition, the procurement and distribution of the ECE materials across the ECCDE centers will also help them establish more ECCDE centers across the region."

The participants' responses in this study indicated that adequate instructional materials and well-equipped preschool class provisions remained a challenge, especially in public schools. All the participants appreciated introducing early childhood education policy implementation across the region, as this policy implementation promoted the children's early educational and psychomotor

development. This is a negotiated agreement aspect of the ACF, as described by Sabatier and Weible (2007).

The secondary belief system in the ACF propositions is now for the coalition actors to discover, support, and strengthen a new policy direction. Regarding the effective ECE policy implementation in the North-Central zone of Nigeria, all the participants recognized the socioeconomic influence on early childhood education in the country. The participants unilaterally supported the course towards the nation's economic prosperity, despite the challenges of establishing more preschools across the country, especially in the rural areas that are majorly unaware of the ECE program. Another conformance to one of the ACF propositions was the ability of the multiple coalition actors to team up in the fight for the preschool's sustainability. The key stakeholders established organized self-help strategies such as the parent teacher association and the school-based management committee as drivers for the preschool program's sustainability.

Some of the participants raised the issue of corruption, which reinforced ACF's stand on the compromise. Despite the differences among the coalition actors with differing views on the early childhood education policy implementation, interest groups and NGOs, such as UNICEF, have taken it upon themselves to ensure the continuity of this vital educational program, which is an essential recipe for the socioeconomic development of Nigeria as a country.

Cooperrider and Whitney (2016) proposed four principles known collectively as the 4D framework of Appreciative inquiry (AI). Appreciative inquiry involves identifying the positive elements and factors that have helped an organization to succeed in the past. The principles are appreciative, applicable, provocative, and

collaborative. AI application could provide practical solutions from the initial planning phase through the execution phase and post-initiative activities of the UBE programs' policy implementation cycle in Nigeria's North-Central region.

Additionally, AI could support the missing components of ACF by seeking the full support and collaboration of all the key stakeholders in this policy arena towards the adequate provision of early childhood education in Nigeria.

I further extended the interview to the four UBE officials in charge of the mobilization, monitoring, and supervision of the preschool policy in Nigeria's North-Central zone. The main objective was to identify the “life-giving forces” across the entire regional Universal Basic Education Board and State Ministry of Education. Each team member refined his or her essential topic from the initial interviews' data by identifying their own preschool education's life-giving forces. Participant UBE Official 1 argued, “if more centers were established, it would boost the program's success.” UBE Official 2 explained the involvement of the private sector to promote the establishment of more preschools in the region. UBE Official 2 narrated that “only achievement now is due to the personal interest of the stakeholders involved to keep the program on-going.” This view was also supported by Newman and Obed (2015) in their study on establishing adequate ECE in Nigeria. The authors found that the prerequisite for the success of ECE programs relies on the involvement of stakeholders. UBE Official 4 emphasized that “the government plays a major role in the structure to function adequately. Furthermore, all the stakeholders must continuously participate in the ECE.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) links the core energy with the knowledge to community change agenda or organizational goals. It implies that AI seeks the root

(cause) of success (Shafritz et al., 2016). Analyzing and evaluating public policy in a region such as Nigeria described by Sabatier and Weible (2007) about the influence of government financial intervention alongside with private and public sensitization of key stakeholders are also stress by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's (1993) Advocacy Coalition framework; that emphasized on coalition actors to discover, support, and strengthen a new policy direction. Additionally, the participants unilaterally supported the course towards the nation's economic prosperity, despite the challenges of establishing more preschools across the country, especially in the rural areas that are majorly unaware of the ECE program.

Limitations of Study

A limitation of this study was the inability to generalize the study's findings beyond the North-Central region of Nigeria since the qualitative case research approach was used. Ravitch and Carl (2016) posited that the researchers using qualitative methods should have more experience to ensure accuracy during data collection, assigning values, and data entering. These are vital to the outcome of the study. The second limitation is applying a purposive sampling method of the participant that was limited to the North-Central region of Nigeria due to the timeframe and available funding for the study. This study's findings will potentially be useful to key stakeholders such as the parents or guardians, educators, and especially policymakers.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study focused on the challenges facing the effectiveness of preschool education policy implementation and its perceived impact on the key stakeholders from the North-Central region of Nigeria. This study's findings will potentially be

useful to key stakeholders, such as the parents or guardians, educators, and especially the policymakers. The research findings' scope was limited to the North-Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria; I recommend that future study be extended to other regions of the country for a comprehensive collection of national data. This study might help to strengthen a holistic approach towards the adequate provision of preschool education programs. This approach may facilitate the establishment of more preschools across all geopolitical zones in the country and the development of the educational sector, which is essential for a nation's socioeconomic wealth. Furthermore, the application of appreciative inquiry is to discover the life-giving energy in the government establishments such as the Ministry of Education and State Universal Basic Education Board that will enhance the effectiveness of the preschool education policy implementation in the country is recommended.

Implications for Positive Social Change

This present study focused on preschool education policy implementation and its impact on the key stakeholders from the North-Central region of Nigeria. The study's findings have implications for the parents or guardians, educators, policymakers, and other interest groups. The outcome of this research may help parents or guardians comply with the stipulated entrance age of children into school since non-compliance may hurt both the psychomotor skills and academic performance of children. Some educators raised this vital point during the interview that parents and guardians should abide by the appropriate enrollment age of children into school. This present study shows that there is a negative impact on children's school readiness in the North-Central zone of Nigeria.

A highlight in the findings was that the preschool education policy implementation has facilitated more child enrollment in the region and reduced the number of out-of-school children. In addition, the policy has helped to enroll more children in schools, which was a positive and welcome government initiative in the community. The issue of gender inequality was also addressed in this study since more female children now have access to basic education. More citizens in the North-Central region of Nigeria are more enlightened and aware of the importance of education for male and female children through increased public enlightenment while promoting equality. Most of the participants in this study collectively made comments regarding the positive impact of early childhood education in the communities. This study's findings indicated that the ECE policy implementation has helped promote equality and social justice in society.

Analysis of the ACF indicated that the evaluation of the ECE policy implementation had not been significantly under scrutiny or thorough assessment to determine the program's effectiveness. The ACF with the AI findings may also help policymakers adequately discover the missing elements in restructuring the government agencies and establish a more robust policy that will be beneficial for the children in the North-Central region of Nigeria. Lastly, this study adds to the body of literature for research on early childhood education implementation policy, since the findings in this study create measurable opportunities to provide adequate, accessible education for all with effective programs.

Conclusion

This study's focus was to understand how early childhood education policy affects the prospective children's entry into the primary school system in the North-

Central region of Nigeria. The conceptual frameworks that guided this study were the advocacy coalition framework by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) and Cooperrider and Whitney's (2016) appreciative inquiry theory. I found that the perception of most of the participants in this study was that the preschool education policy implementation positively impacted the school readiness and academic achievement of children, which agreed with the literature reviewed.

As a fallout of this study, I also re-affirmed that issues with appropriate school entrance age persist in the North-Central zone of Nigeria. The participants in this study agreed that the implementation of early childhood education policy supports parents or guardians, educators' teaching practices, gender equality, social justice, and accessible education in the North-Central zone of Nigeria.

The application of ACF and AI in an ethnic and politically diverse nation like Nigeria was relevant to this study. The results of the study aligned with components of ACF propositions in the policy subsystem. The primary ACF constructs were considered applicable in a policy system with a minimum of 10 years, which was the case in the early childhood education policy implementation that is older than 40 years since it has been in session from 1977. Furthermore, the study's findings also confirmed that the formation of advocacy coalitions was driven by the coalition actors' deep core belief system, policy core belief system, and secondary policy beliefs.

The application of AI as a change model was highlighted in this study. This step is essential for reorganizing government agencies to facilitate effective policy implementation in Nigeria's North-Central zone. Some of the life-giving energies that emerged during the interview sections were education for all; equality and social

justice, private and public sensitization; lack of government financial intervention.

The collaboration and active participation of all key stakeholders such as parents or guardians, educators, policymakers, and other interest groups can help facilitate the establishment of more quality preschools across the region that will contribute to positive social change within the communities.

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Appendix A: List of acronyms used in the study

ACF	Advocacy Coalition Framework
AI	Appreciative Inquiry theory
CDP	Child Development Psychology
ECCDE	Early Childhood Care, Development and Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Education for All
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
FRN	Federal Republic of Nigeria
LASCOPED	Lagos State College of Primary Education
MBI	Mindfulness-Based Intervention
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
NAPEP	National Poverty Eradication Programs
NEDS	Nigeria Education Data Survey
NEEDS	National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPE	National Policy on Education
PAC	Policy Analytical Capacity
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSA	Sub-Saharan African country
UBE	Universal Basic Education

UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistic
UPE	Universal Primary Education

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol Project: Implementation of the Universal Basic Education in
North-Central Region of Nigeria

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

This interview is intended to discover what experiences the participant can share regarding how the universal basic education policy implementation affects him or her.

Questions:

1. How do you perceive the early childhood education policy implementation in the preschools in the North-Central region of Nigeria?
2. In what way do you think the use of preschool education policy affect the school readiness of a child from preschool into the primary school in the North-Central area?
3. Considering the preschool policy implementation up to now, how do you evaluate the policy about the creation of equal opportunities among children?
4. In what way do you think the early childhood education policy implementation affected the performance of primary school students?
5. What are current or future opportunities that can support effective implementation of the preschool policy in the North-Central geopolitical region of Nigeria?
6. What are the organizational best practices that can facilitate the adequate provision of early childhood education in the North-Central region of Nigeria?
7. What ways can the participation of parent or guardians and educators enhance the policy implementation of the early childhood education?

Thank you for volunteering your time to take part in this interview. I want to assure you that confidentiality is paramount to this study. Please may I solicit

for your continued support in advance, should there be any reason to do a follow-up interview to help project your perspective accurately?

Appendix C: Request to use the University as Study Site

Implementation of the Universal Basic Education in the North-Central Region of Nigeria

The Vice-Chancellor
University in North-Central Nigeria
North-Central Geopolitical Region, Nigeria

Re: Request to use your university for my dissertation field study

Topic: Implementation of the Universal Basic Education in the North-Central Region of Nigeria

Dear Sir,

My name is XXX. I am a student at Walden University, in the School of Public Policy and Administration (SPPA). The purpose of writing this letter is to humbly request your permission to use your institute as a study site for my dissertation project.

The study will explore universal basic education policy implementation in the North-Central geo-political region of Nigeria and the challenges facing the policy effectiveness vis-à-vis the children, administrators, parents or guardians, and educators. The data collection process will include documents concerning UBE policy, preschool policies, archival material, and interviews with 16 respondents comprising of four UBE officials, four parents or guardians, four preschool heads, and four primary school principals. The research will be conducted with a qualitative case study approach and will not exceed four weeks.

If my request is granted, I assure you to observe all the rules and regulations that are stipulated regarding the use of the school's facility. Furthermore, I promise to abide by the ethical processes concerning privacy and confidentiality of all the participants in the study. I want to reiterate that at any point during the study, any of the participants can withdraw from the study without any explanation as the participation is fully voluntary.

For further inquiries or questions, you may have regarding this project, please feel free to call me at XXX-XXXXXXXX. Alternatively, you may reach me at XXXX@XXX.

Thank you in advance, and I look forward to your reply.

Respectfully,

XXX

SPPA, Walden University

Appendix D: Request to Interview Four UBE officials

Implementation of the Universal Basic Education in the North-Central Region of Nigeria

XXX

Date: XX, XXXX

XXX

Dear Sir:

Re: Request to interview four members of the UBE officials, and access to documents on the universal basic education policy.

My name is XXX. I am a doctoral student at the Walden University, in the School of Public Policy and Administration (SPPA). The purpose of writing this letter is to humbly request your kind permission to facilitate access for me to interview four UBE officials who are in charge of policy implementation. The interview will help answer the questions necessary to complete my dissertation.

I also wish to request to have access to documents on UBE policy, including resolutions, bills, and laws passed by the Federal government.

I want to pledge that I will observe all the rules and regulations that you may stipulate concerning the use of the facility. Furthermore, I am bound by the ethical mandate to respect the privacy and confidentiality of all participants that will participate in the interview. The participants do reserve the right to opt out of the interview without necessarily having to justify the reasons for their action.

For further inquiries or questions, you may have regarding this project, please feel free to call me at 1-XXX-XXX-XXXX. Alternatively, you may reach me at XXX@XXX.

Thank you in advance, and I look forward to your reply.
Respectfully,

XXX

SPPA, Walden University

Appendix E. Request of your Organization as a Research Partner

Implementation of the Universal Basic Education in the North-Central Region of Nigeria

XXX

Dear Sir/ Ma:

Re: Request of your organization as a research partner.

My name is XXX. I am a doctoral student at the Walden University, in the School of Public Policy and Administration (SPPA). The study will explore universal basic education policy implementation in the North-Central geo-political region of Nigeria and the challenges facing the policy effectiveness vis-à-vis the children, administrators, parents or guardians, and educators.

The purpose of writing this letter is to humbly request your kind permission to facilitate access for me to recruit and interview four parents or guardians who had experienced the universal basic education policies and whose child have attended a preschool in the past. The interview will help answer the questions necessary to complete my dissertation.

I want to pledge that I will observe all the rules and regulations that you may stipulate concerning the use of the facility. Furthermore, I am bound by the ethical mandate to respect the privacy and confidentiality of all participants that will participate in the interview. The participants do reserve the right to opt out of the interview without necessarily having to justify the reasons for their action. For further inquiries or questions, you may have regarding this project, please feel free to call me at XXXX-XXXXXXX. Alternatively, you may reach me at XXXX@XXX.

Thank you in advance, and I look forward to your reply.

Respectfully,

XXX

SPPA, Walden University

Appendix F: Recruitment Letter to the Participant

Name of the participant:

Telephone no:

Email address:

Job Description:

Education:

My name is XXX, a doctoral candidate in the School of Public Policy and Administration (SPPA) at Walden University. I wish to invite you to participate in a study on the implementation of the universal basic education in the North-Central region of Nigeria. I will be conducting interviews to explore your experience regarding how this preschool policy has impacted you. The interview will last a maximum of one hour. Your participation will help the policy makers, parents or guardians, and educators have a better understanding of how the policy impacts the children and society in general. The findings of the study will be applied in responding to the issue of ineffectiveness of the preschool policy to the school readiness of children. This study, when completed, will form part of a doctoral dissertation project as required by Walden University.

Let me reiterate that your willingness to participate is highly appreciated. I want you to understand that at any time you wish to withdraw from participating, you can do so without any obligation to my school or me. I also want to assure you that there is absolute confidentiality of your person and participation in this study. I wish to convey to you that I will be flexible, and ready to adjust to your schedule, to complete the project. I am also available to respond to any of your questions or concern. Please feel free to reach me at 1-XXX-XXX-XXXX. Alternatively, you may reach me at XXX@XXX.

Sincerely,

XXX

SPPA, Walden University

Appendix G: Informed Content Form

Implementation of Universal Basic Education in the North-Central Region of Nigeria

You are invited to participate in the research titled ‘Implementation of Universal Basic Education in the North-Central Region of Nigeria.’ This invitation to participate has been extended to Universal Basic Education officials, parents or guardians, preschool heads, and primary school principals who have been impacted by this policy. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before acting on this invitation to take part in the study.

This study is conducted by XXX, a doctoral candidate at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to advance the understanding of the impact of universal basic education policy implementation concerning prospective children that have gained entrance into the primary school system.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to answer questions in a face-to-face interview session for a maximum of one hour. The interview will take place on a university campus and will be audio taped to help the researcher reflect your account as accurate as possible. After the development of the transcript by the investigator, you will be given the opportunity to review it to ascertain that it reflected your perception. The review of the transcript could take approximately 45 minutes.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect you in any adverse manner. If you initially decide to participate, you can still withdraw at any time later without affecting those relationships.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. If however, your participation makes you feel uncomfortable at any time during the study; you do reserve the right to terminate your involvement. There is no personal benefit to the participants. The potential benefit of participating in this study is that your shared experience may help to facilitate the effectiveness of the preschool policy implementation in the country. Additionally, those in the position of formulating early

childhood education policy may incorporate the study's outcome as part of the overall policy review to address the identified issues.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation for your participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The audio recordings of this study will be kept private and secured. In any report of this study that might be published, the researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and only the researcher will have access to the data.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is XXX and can be reached at XXXX-XXXXXXXX or by email at XXXXX@XXX. The researcher's faculty advisor at Walden University is XXX, and her email address is XXX. You may contact her at Walden if you have questions about your involvement in this study.

You will receive a copy of this form from the researcher.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Name of Participant:

Participant Signature: _____ Date:

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date:

Appendix H: NIH Certificate of Completion

