Determinants of Children's Enrolment in Public Pre-Primary Schools in Ondo State, Nigeria

***Ayomiposi Rebecca Akinrimisi and ** Prof. Babatunde Adeniyi Adeyemi**
Institute of Education, Faculty of Education, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria
**akinrimisitolani@yahoo.com and **adeyemibabs2003@yahoo.com*

Abstract
The study examined the enrolment of children in public pre-primary schools from 2010 to 2014 and investigated parents' attitudes towards enrolment of children in Ondo state public pre-primary schools. These were with the view to providing information on enrolment of children in pre-primary schools in Ondo State. The research design that was adopted was the descriptive survey research design. The population for the study consisted parents and teachers of public primary school pupils as well as ministry of education officials. The sample comprised 360 teachers of pre-primary school children and 360 parents as well as 60 Ministry of Education officials. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select the sample for the study. Two instruments were used for the study. The result showed that there was 13.44% enrolment in year 2010, 13.21% in year 2011, 16.76 in year 2012, 20.73 in 2013 and 35.86% in 2014. The study also showed that 16.1% of the parents had negative attitudes towards the enrolment of children in Ondo State public pre-primary schools while the vast majority (83.9%) of the parents had positive attitudes towards the enrolment of children in public pre-primary schools in Ondo State. The study concluded that there has been increase in enrolment of children in public pre-primary schools in Ondo state. Parents' attitudes towards enrolment of children in Ondo state public pre-primary schools is positive. It is recommended that relevant authorities should concentrate on developing and improving school administration, as this will further improve enrolment in schools.

Keywords: Children's Enrolment, Determinants of Enrolment, School Enrolment

Introduction

Early years in life are the most important to the formation of intelligence, personality and social behaviour of a child. The years before a child reaches primary school are among the most critical in his or her life to influence learning, that is why modern societies show serious concern for the education of their young ones by providing needed support to prepare them to succeed later in school (Ejieh, 2006). It is common practice in most societies to make provision for early childhood education programmes of various sorts for children below the official school-going age (usually 6years) mainly to prepare them for education in primary schools (Obidike, 2012).

The Federal Government of Nigeria recognises the importance of early childhood education in Nigeria and as a result, it was given prominence in the National Policy of Education as one of the programmes in the Nigerian educational system. Bagudo (2008) posited that reports across the globe revealed that an estimated figure of one hundred million children, struggle daily for survival in villages and cities, and are exposed to the risks of hunger, poverty, disease, illiteracy and abuses. In support of this view, Mahuta (2007) stressed that the need to address the problems and salvage these children and the next generation of children from this menace, has necessitated the programme of Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE).

Mahuta (2007) also stated that the aim of ECCDE is to foster the proper development of the children, identify and address their problems, harness their potentials, mould their character, enhance their learning, equip them for life, so that their actions are channeled towards positive personal, communal and global development in all ramifications of life. Schooling is widely acknowledged as a major investment in human capital that enhances later career opportunities and wages. It serves as an avenue for escaping poverty and reducing income inequality in an economy. The importance of schooling to a child's social and economic status later in life cannot be overemphasised. Education is a major development-enhancing tool and is seen as essential to people's chances in life (Self and Grabowski, 2004). Those who have gone to school are healthier and less likely to live in poverty (UNESCO, 2008; Hannum and Buchmann, 2005). Education empowers people and improves their ability to communicate, argue, and choose in informed ways.

Unfortunately, in many developing countries, children either do not have access to education or are enrolled in schools of questionable quality. Despite the undisputable role of education as a prerequisite for development, the Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2010) pointed out that 72 million children were not enrolled in schools. In cases where they get enrolled, there is yet a challenge of low pupil retention in schools. Enrolment and low retention of children in schools has remained a global challenge, this is an unfavourable situation.

The objective of any reasonable government is to improve access to pre- primary and primary schools by investing in educational infrastructure and optimising the resources allocated to the educational sector. This can only be done effectively by having an insight into the factors that impede children's enrolment in pre-primary schools. This study is interested in these factors and their effects on enrolment outcomes. For individuals, education is a sound economic investment which raises not only the quality of life, but also increases the productivity in market and non-market work and therefore future earnings. For both individuals and their families, their perceptions of the benefits that would accrue from such investment is a major determinant of the decision to attend school.

Nigeria embarked on a short-lived Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme in 1976. The programme was supposed to make education free and compulsory for primary school children. Although enrolment rates increased shortly after the introduction of the programme, the economic crisis of the 1980s had negative effects on the education sector of the economy, as successive governments embarked on fiscal restraints. As a result, higher enrolments and education quality could not be maintained, especially at primary school level which had experienced a dramatic expansion following the adoption of the UPE programme. Fees were

reintroduced in many schools, further reducing enrolment. The growth in poverty levels in the country also raised the opportunity cost of keeping children in schools when they could be involved in child labour and helping increase household income. This high opportunity cost coupled with increasing direct costs adversely affected the decision of parents to keep their children in school. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was introduced in 2000 as an improved and more comprehensive programme than the UPE programme.

The determinants of child schooling can differ with location of residence. Usually, urban areas are favoured because of higher access to government activities. Rural-urban disparities in schooling are well documented in the literature (Al-Samarai & Reilly, 2000). This can be traced to the disparity in school quality in these areas. If the quality of schooling is an important factor in determining the decision to attend, quality differentials are likely to widen the disparities in attendance rates between urban and rural areas. The persistence of rural urban disparities in access to schooling can prevent a large number of rural children from exploiting educational opportunities and their capacity to render a significant social contribution. Interestingly, there is evidence of disparities in rural urban education provision and uptake in Nigeria. Even households below the poverty line increasingly prefer to send their children to private fee-paying schools rather than to free public schools (Pradhan and Subramanian, 2003). This indicates that parents of all socio-economic levels want quality education and good facilities for their children. Both in developed and developing countries, children from families with more socio-economic resources are more often enrolled in school (Huisman and Smits, 2009; Mingat, 2007). For wealthier families, the direct costs associated with education, such as fees, books and uniforms are less likely to be an obstacle. Opportunity costs of children not being able to help at home, at the family farm or by earning additional income through child labour, are also less important to them (Evangelista de Carvalho Filho, 2008).

Besides household wealth, the educational level and labour market position of the parents is expected to play a role. There is ample evidence that children from better educated parents more often go to school and tend to drop out less (UNESCO, 2010; Huisman and Smits, 2009; Ersado, 2005; Buchmann & Brakewood, 2000; Colclough, Rose & Tembon, 2000). Parents who have reached a certain educational level might want their children to achieve at least that level. It is in the light of these possible and probable determinants of pre-primary school enrolment in public schools that this study attempts to ascertain the immediate household determinants affecting pre-primary school enrolment with specific allusion to public pre-primary schools in Ondo state.

Statement of the Problem

Studies such as Noor, Mariana and Syahirah (2014) have provided information on parents' choice of schools for their children in private schools. Information on the choice of schools for children in the public schools have not been provided in the literature. Previous researches that have made findings on children's enrolment in schools, such as Philip (2001) have failed to look at the attitudes of parents towards children's enrolment in schools, however, this study fills the gap by providing information on parents' attitudes towards children's enrolment in Ondo State. Education generates substantial private and social benefits to an economy. It is because of the benefits accruing to investment in education that it becomes important to identify the factors underlying enrolment regarding pre- primary school enrolment. Ondo State Universal Basic Education Board SUBEB has committed a lot of funds into building new structures and provision of infrastructural materials towards improving enrolment in public pre-primary schools in Ondo state since the beginning its strategic plan in 2004. There are claims that enrolment in such schools remains low which are due to some factors yet to be investigated; hence this study.

Research Questions

Answers were provided to the following research questions

a. what is enrolment of children in pre-primary schools in Ondo State between 2010-2014?

b. What are parents' attitudes towards enrolment of children in Ondo state public pre-primary?

Methodology

This chapter gives a vivid description of how the research work was carried out. This states how the research was conducted and how the chosen research methods are connected with the research strategy linked to the work being undertaken. It focuses on bringing out the methodology used to collect data, analysis to bring logical conclusion and empirical investigation of the element of study, the research design that was adopted, the population of study, sample plan, sources of data, method of data collection, validity and reliability and method of data analysis.

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey research design; this design was deemed suitable because the objectives are to explore, describe or explain the characteristics of a group (Babbie 2013 and Wimmer and Dominick 2013). The method was through the administration of questionnaire to the sample size drawn from the population of this study.

The population of this study consisted of teachers, parents of pre-primary school pupils in Ondo state as well as Ministry of Education officials in Ondo state. The sample comprised of 360 teachers and 360 parents of public pre-primary School children as well as 60 officials of Ministry of Education in the state selected using multi-stage sampling procedure. Four Local Government Areas (LGAs were selected from each of the senatorial district using simple random technique, from each of the LGAs, six public pre- primary schools were selected and in each school five public pre-primary school teachers were selected using simple random sampling technique while five parents were selected using purposive sampling technique based on the parents having children in public-pre-primary schools in Ondo state. Accidental sampling technique was used in selecting 15 officials of the Ministry of Education from four LGAs.

Two instruments were used for the study namely; Structural Questionnaire on Children's Enrolment (SQCE), to elicit information from parents and teachers of public pre-primary school pupils on the determinants of enrolment of children in public pre-primary schools in Ondo state and Checklist on Children's Enrolment (CCE) to elicit information from Ministry of Education Officials on the determinants of the enrolment of children in public pre-primary schools in Ondo state.

In ensuring validity for this study, experts in relevant field assessed the instruments for wording, adequacy, and coverage of items on determinants of child enrolment in public pre-primary schools. Concerning the reliability of the instruments, internal consistency approaches was adopted. The Cronbach alpha reliability estimates were obtained from the SPSS 17 software. Initial 17 items on the scale yielded a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) of .600. In order to increase this coefficient, item 12 was deleted and the new Cronbach's Alpha becomes .659. Finally, when item 17 was deleted, the reliability coefficient increased to 0.700 which was considered high enough for use. The data generated through the questionnaires were analysed through the application SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) using appropriate Descriptive and Inferential Statistics.

Methodology should be discussed as a whole without subheadings under it

Results

Research Question 1: What is the enrolment of children in Ondo State pre-primary schools from 2010 to 2014?

In order to answer this research question, pre-primary enrolment figures collected through Checklist on Children's Enrolment (CCE) were analysed. The result is shown in Tables 1 and 2 below:

Table 1: Pre-primary Children Enrolment Distribution According to Classes from Year 2010-2014

Pre-Primary Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Day Care	1651	25.69
KG1	1499	23.32
KG2	1386	21.57
Nursery 1	1354	21.07
Nursery 2	537	8.36
Total	6427	100.00

Table 1 shows the distribution of pre-primary children enrolment according to their various constituting classes from year 2010 to 2014. It can be observed that out of 6,427 pre-primary children enrolled during the period of study, 25.69% of them were in day care category. Also, 23.32% of them were in KG 1, 21.57% were in KG 2, 21.07% were in Nursery one while 8.36% of them were in Nursery two classes. There is an indication from this result that Day care had the highest figure of children enrolment while Nursery two class recorded the least figure of enrolment. This result is further expressed graphically in figure 1 below:

Fig 1: Pre-primary Children Enrolment Distribution According to Classes from Year 2010-2014

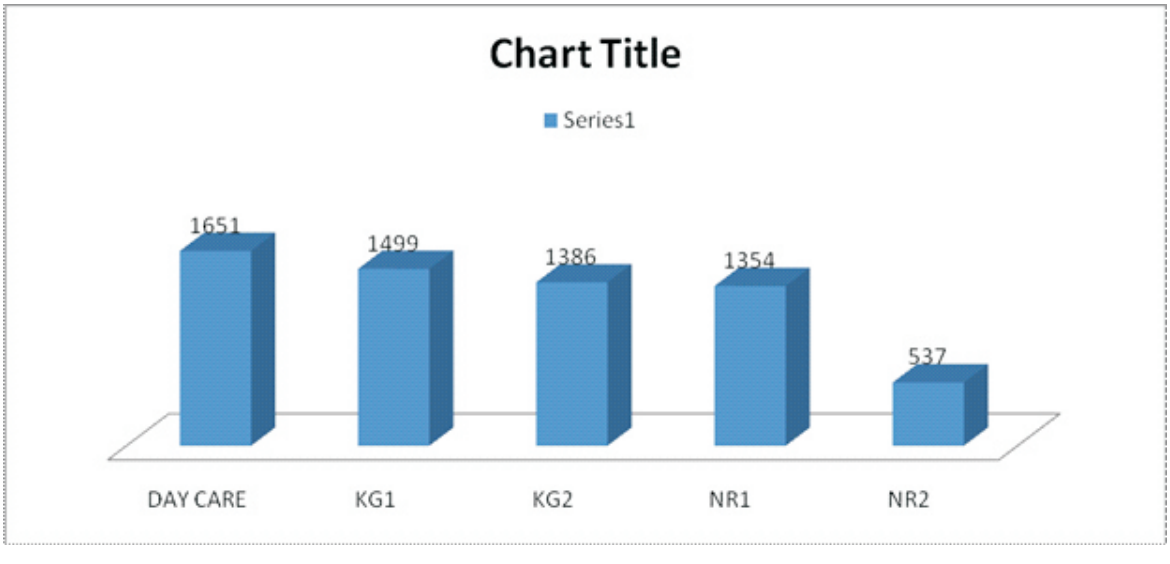
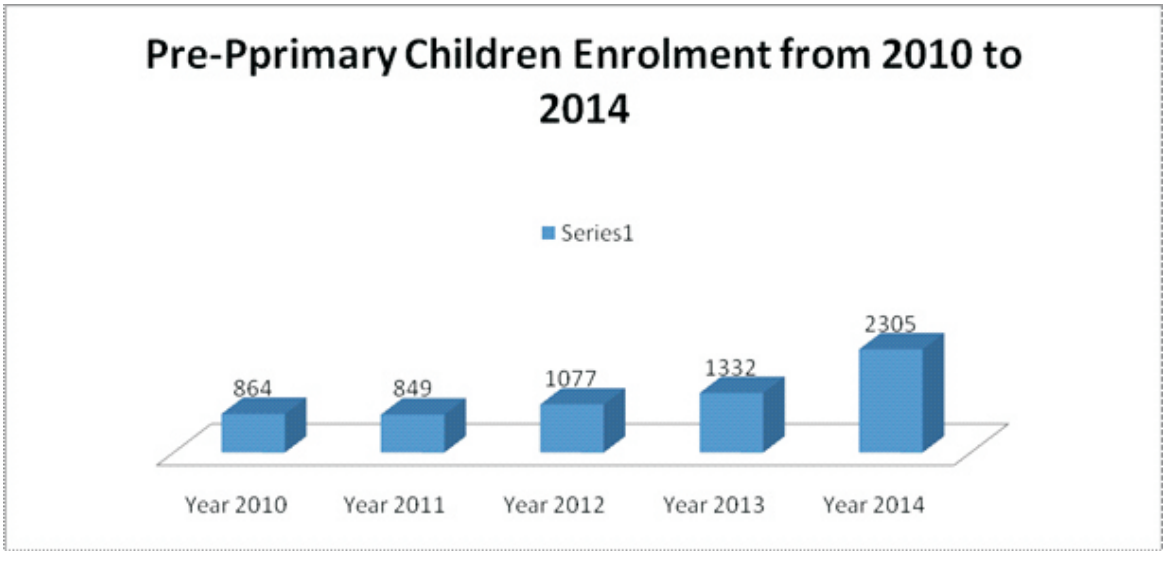


Table 2: Yearly Distribution of Pre-primary Children Enrolment from Year 2010-2014

Year	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
2010	864	13.44
2011	849	13.21
2012	1077	16.76
2013	1332	20.73
2014	2305	35.86
Total	6427	100.00

Table 2 shows the yearly distribution of pre-primary children enrolment from 2010 to 2014. It can be observed that out of the total of 6,427, public pre-primary schools enrolled 864 children constituting 13.44% in year 2010 alone. In the subsequent year, the schools enrolled 849 children constituting 13.21%. Between year 2010 and 2011, a decline of 0.23% was experienced in children enrolment. In year 2012, the enrolment figures rose to 1077 as against the previous year of 849. This figure accounted for 16.76% of the total enrolment figure during the period of study. Likewise, in year 2013 public pre-primary schools enrolled 1332 children constituting 20.73% which indicate a rise in enrolment figure when compared to the previous years. Finally in year 2014, public pre-primary schools enrolled 2305 children constituting 35.86% of the total enrolment figure. The analysis of this result showed that with exception to year 2011, there has been increase in enrolment of children in public pre-primary schools in Ondo state. This is an indication of increased in patronage of public pre-primary schools by the parents. This result is further expressed graphically in figure 2 below:

Fig 2: Yearly Pre-primary Children Enrolment Distribution from Year 2010-2014



Research Question 2: What is the parents' attitude towards enrolment of children in Ondo State public pre-primary schools?

In order to answer this research question, items on Structural Questionnaire on Children Enrolment (SQCE) were scored such that "Strongly Agree" response was allotted 4, "Agree" response, 3, "Disagree" response 2 and "Strongly Disagree" response was allotted 1. However, items 3,4,7,8, 9, 13, 14, and 15 were reversed in scoring. The responses were first subjected to a descriptive analysis and the result is shown in Table 3

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of Parents' Responses to Structural Questionnaire on Children Enrolment (SQCE)

		SA		A		D		SD	
	Items	**F**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**
1	I am comfortable with my child(ren) attending public pre-primary school.	196	56.5	53	15.3	69	19.9	29	8.4
2	I will encourage other parents to enroll their children in public pre-primary school.	56	16.1	175	50.4	87	25.1	29	8.4
3	Public pre-primary schools are mainly for pupils whose parents cannot afford private school.	100	28.8	102	29.4	109	31.4	36	10.4
4	Teachers in public pre-primary schools are not as qualified as their counterparts in private schools.	56	16.1	143	41.2	112	32.3	36	10.4
5	Public pre-primary schools are meant for every child irrespective of their parents' socio-economic status.	59	17.0	118	34.0	107	30.8	63	18.2
6	Children's academic potentials can be developed and nurtured in public pre-primary schools across the state.	58	16.7	109	31.4	113	32.6	67	19.3
7	If the opportunity is given, I would have enrolled my child in pre-primary schools operated by private individuals.	62	17.9	119	34.3	110	31.7	56	16.1
8	Children learn better in private pre-primary schools than public pre-primary schools.	73	21.0	106	30.5	112	32.3	56	16.1
9	Public pre-primary schools lack the necessary learning facilities that can aid child's intellectual growth and development.	67	19.3	103	29.7	123	35.4	54	15.6
10	There exists conducive learning environment for children in public pre-primary schools	59	17.0	92	26.5	129	37.2	67	19.3
11	Teachers in public pre-primary schools are always up to task.	48	13.8	91	26.2	121	34.9	87	25.1
12	Children in public pre-primary schools are adequately catered for.	63	18.2	105	30.3	114	32.9	65	18.7
13	Even, if it is free, I would never encourage other parents to patronize any of the public pre-primary schools	60	17.3	107	30.8	112	32.3	68	19.6
14	I am just waiting for any opportunity to withdraw my child from public pre-primary schools.	63	18.2	112	32.3	102	29.4	70	20.2
15	Public pre-primary schools are just a waste of child's time.	43	12.4	70	20.2	119	34.3	115	33.1

In addition, in order to determine the parents' attitudes, their individual response to each item were computed and the mean and standard deviation values were 37.98 and 4.5 respectively. On this measure, the higher the scores, the positive the attitude and vice versa. Parents whose scores were 1 standard deviation below the mean score (i.e. 14-33) were adjudged as having negative attitudes while those with whose scores were 34 and above were adjudged as having positive attitudes towards the enrolment of children in Ondo State public pre-primary schools. The result is shown in Table 4

Table 4: Parents' Attitudes towards enrolment of children in public pre-primary schools

Attitude	**Frequency (f)**	**Percent (%)**
Negative	56	16.1
Positive	291	83.9
Total	347	100.0

Source: (Field Survey, 2016)

Table 4 shows the parents attitudes towards the enrolment of children in Ondo State public pre-primary schools. It can be observed that 16.1% of the parents had negative attitudes towards the enrolment of children in Ondo State

public pre-primary schools while the vast majority (83.9%) of the parents had positive attitude towards the enrolment of children in public pre-primary schools in Ondo State. There is a clear indication from this result that the majority of the parents had positive attitude towards the enrolment of children in Ondo State public pre-primary schools.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study showed the various determinants of enrolment of children in public pre-primary schools. Some of the various determinants which include socio-economic status of parents, proximity, school facilities and religion, improved school administration and commitment are considered the foremost determinant of enrolment of children. The finding provide evidence to the results of Auer (2018) and Paget (2019)) that improved school administration and commitment are considered the foremost determinant of enrolment of children. Improved school administration helps in managing the school's daily activities. It also ensures the availability of instructional leadership. School administration is very important to promote enrolment in schools as it involves managing all activities that take place in the school which includes creating a safe environment for learners. When there is a safe learning environment, parents are rest assured that their children are in safe hands which spurs them to enroll their children in such schools.

It was found out that majority of parents have positive attitudes towards children's enrolment. Only few have negative attitudes towards children's enrolment. This result is in support of Dinesh and Chandrashekar (2015), Abu-saheed, Abu-saheed and Parakoyi (2012) and Nada (2009). The attitudes of parents towards enrolment is very important. Parents' involvement in school is also the higher predictor of learners' academics performances. The attitudes of parents towards children's education also help to determine children's school enrolment and attendance.

It was revealed that there has been increase in enrolment in public pre-primary school. There has been constant patronage of parents in pre-primary schools. This result is in support of Abu-saheed, Abu-saheed and Parakoyi (2012). Except for year 2011, there has been increase in enrolment of children in public pre-primary school.

Conclusion

The study concluded that there has been increase in enrolment of children in public pre-primary schools in Ondo State. This is an indication of increased in patronage of public pre-primary schools by the parents. Parents 'attitudes towards enrolment of children in Ondo state public preprimary schools is positive.

Recommendations

Relevant authorities and policy makers should concentrate on developing and improving school administration, as this will further increase enrolment rate in pre-primary schools in the state. It is also recommended that parent-teacher relationship should be promoted more so as to reinforce parents' believe in public pre-primary schools, as parents will feel more at peace if they have a personal rapport with the teachers in charge of the pupils.

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