

**MODALITIES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRE-PRIMARY AND PRIMARY  
SCHOOLS: NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE**

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**Abstract**

*This paper discusses the importance of pre-primary and primary education. The general requirement for the establishment of a pre-primary and primary school is in line with the Federal Ministry of Education. It also highlighted other human and material resources needed for the initial take-off of pre-primary and primary schools. It looked at how the schools could be financed and the procedures to be used in the registration of this category of schools.*

*Keywords: pre-primary and primary education, Federal Ministry of Education, category of schools*

**Introduction**

Pre-primary education in Nigeria is education given to children aged 0-5+. It is given in nursery daycare centres. It has the following objectives: Effects a smooth transition from home to school; prepares the child for primary school; provides adequate care and supervision when the parents are at work; Inculcates social norms and values; teaches in the child spirit of inquiry and creativity. While Primary Education is education given in institutions for children aged 6

to 11 plus (FGN, 2014). It has the following objectives; Lay sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking; Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution of the life of the society; Molds the character and develops sound attitudes and morals in the child; Develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment; Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limit of the child's capacity; Provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality. The success and failure of other levels of education lies on these foundation levels of education. This makes it crucial that attention should be given to their establishments.

In Nigeria, the establishment and management of pre-primary schools is mainly done by private individuals, groups, organizations and partly by the government. There are some rules and regulations guiding the official establishment of pre-primary schools in Nigeria. As early childhood educators, you may be interested in opening one. In this section we are going to examine the regulations guiding the establishment of pre-primary schools in Nigeria. This should be looked at based on the following; premises/ location, physical facilities, learning/play materials, personnel administration, teaching and non-teaching staff, finance/administration, registration and conclusion.

### **General Requirements**

As discussed earlier, we are at home presently with the problems of the country in relation to the type, quality and nature of early childhood education given to the children. This means we still need to do something meaningful at that level of education so as to save this nation of ours. Part of it is to have well organized and equipped pre-primary schools in the country. As early childhood educators, we need to be familiar with certain things necessary to start a pre-primary school. The first step is to make a feasibility study- The possibility of pre-primary school being needed in the area. Thus you find out the following;

#### **The Population Density of the Area**

Find out how many families are with children at pre-primary stage. Also what is their occupation? Are they predominantly farmers and illiterates? If the answer is yes, it is going to have some implications on the number of children to be allowed to attend the school.

The next thing is to find out the existing pre-primary school in the area. If the existing one is deficient in some areas, it will give the opportunity to open another one.

### **Premises/ Location**

The location should be suitable and safe for children. For instance it will be accessible for the children and the parents, not close to the highways and bushes. This is to avoid kidnappers and dangerous animals having access to the children. The premises must be airy and free from pollution. It should be clean and not too close to the market or factory to avoid noise pollution which could be injurious to the ear.

The premises/location of the school is very important as it will affect subsequent decisions about the school and help in getting enough space for play ground which is very vital for childhood education. After ensuring that the proposed location is good, then you have to take decision on whether to make use of the existing building or to build a new one. All these depend on the existing resources in your hand.

### **Physical Facilities**

One can start a pre-primary school with existing structure, such as big halls, or any big buildings or newly constructed classroom blocks. Whichever one, there are certain guidelines to follow as given by the Federal Ministry of Education; they include the following

Building must follow the following standard;

- a. The classroom size should be 12m by 6.5m to accommodate about 25 children (30sq.ft)
- b. Each classroom should be cross- ventilated and well lighted
- c. Each classroom must have storage facilities and build- in cupboards for items or equipment.
- d. The classroom should have two access doorways to serve as alternative exists and a veranda on either side of the classroom.
- e. There must be a cloakroom, toilet and wash hand basins of appropriate height.
- f. There must be a separate staff room, office for the Head teachers, and First Aids Unit with the provisions of two to four beds per class.
- g. A good source of water supply should be available. (Maduewesi 2005).

You may think that all the things mentioned above are for permanent site, No. A big hall may be partitioned to meet all these requirements. All the buildings to be used must be well ventilated to reduce contamination of communicable diseases.

As regards to furniture and chairs to be used in pre-primary classrooms, the chairs and tables should be round plastics with many colours and toys of different types on their top. The toys must be of the size of their hands, light and no sharp materials.

In addition to these, there should be large tables with drawers for teachers use, book racks and toy storage in every classroom. It should be noted that all these should be done with different colours because children are easily attracted by colours.

The last thing you will consider as regards to physical facilities is the play ground. Most pre-primary and primary schools were established in residential building which lack this. This is not good since children need much space to run and play. Most of the teachings in the words of Froebel should be done through play. This is why FGN (2014) highlighted the following in relation to establishment of pre-primary and primary schools;

- a. A well-fenced playground varying in size according to the enrolment of school should be made for further growth. In other words, there should be room for expansion of the playground as the population of the school increases. This is necessary since most pre-primary schools later develop to include the primary sections.
- b. The playground should have white sand and installed with facilities for climbing, jumping, puffing, swinging, balancing etc.
- C. A track of hard surface for pushing along wheeled toys should be provided.

### **Learning/ Play and other Materials**

We have identified some of the physical facilities that are expected in a standard pre-primary school. Just like we said earlier, for a start, you may not have all. To start, some of them must be provided.

As much as physical facilities are needed, playground, play and other learning materials are equally important. For instance, it is enough to have all the materials without the real material to stimulate children. As said earlier, play is one of the most natural needs of children. Play

during early childhood is necessary for human beings to reach their full potentials. Thus a psychologist Stuart Brown noted that play is the basis of all art, games and books. For a play theorist, Sutton-Smith opposite of play is not work but depression. For this reason and others more, Froebel and other child educators emphasized the need to provide the children with a wide variety of materials through which they can be actively engaged in play activities that will bring about the development of their skills. In line with these, formal learning or instruction has little place in the pre-primary school. Play is important for whatever learning that will take place with varieties of such materials. Such materials will include those that are necessary for the development of gross physical skills such as; running, jumping, climbing and walking. In the same way, there are those that are needed for the development of fine motor skills that is fingers and wrist. Some are needed for development of intellectual, social and emotional aspects of the child. This means that it is not just one or two materials but a wide varieties of them that are needed to help children have a balanced personality development.

Some essential materials for learning/play.

Gross motor skills; Materials to be provided here are those that will give the children opportunity for climbing, swinging, hopping, jumping and running. For instance, climbing frames, slidingboards, swings, rocking horse, seesaw, hoops and ropes.

Fine motor skill-materials are those that will encourage throwing, catching, cutting, threading, painting and drawing. Schools should provide things like, small balls, bean bags, beads and strings for threading, counting flannel, crayon, pencil and papers weighing scales.

Intellectual skills; Here you need to get a lot of diversified materials to provide the rich experience the child needs. In this way, the following should be provided; toys of different shapes, columns and sizes for counting, modelling, construction; water and dry sand trays, children's literature, blocks, colour sorting and matching materials.

## **Personnel and Administration**

### **Teaching and Non-teaching Staff**

Having identified all the general requirements needed for the establishment of a pre-primary school, it is one thing to have all these and it is another thing to manage them well. This should be done by the teaching and non-teaching staff. The requirement for teaching staff are;

According to the guide line of Federal Ministry of Education, whoever that will be the head teacher of any nursery and primary education must have received specialized training in nursery and primary education. He or She must have the following qualifications;

{i} A trained qualified teacher with at least five years of teaching experience in lower primary classes, or the Montessori, Diploma certificate of any recognized university or college of education.

{ii} Grade II Teacher certificate with Associateship Certificate in Education {ACE} in any of the recognized Nigerian University with specialization in pre-primary education

{iii} A grade II certificate with Montessori Diploma.

{iv} A grade II Teacher with any of the following certificates or diplomas of any recognized university or college of education

{a} National Froebel foundation course.

{b} NCE pre-primary/ education of any Nigerian or other University.

{v} Any other qualification in Early Childhood education approved by the Federal Ministry of Education. (FRN 2014)

As regards to the class teacher of pre-primary and primary education, all the qualification for that of the head teacher is applicable . In addition to that the class teacher must have a minimum standard of NCE in pre-primary and primary education. Teacher pupil ratio of 1:10 /15 with two teachers in a class. The teaching method to be used should be exploration as recommended by Froebel and child- centered not teacher centered.

The non-teaching staff which we refer to as nursery helpers could have any of the following; 1976 standard six certificates, and primary six certificate holders, we can include J.S. III certificate holders or those who fail their SSC. Examinations. Apart from a professionally qualified teacher, there is need for a helper. Why? Children generally are very difficult to teach than adults. They require a lot of supervision and individualized instruction. This may be too much for one person. That is why in any good pre-primary and primary school , each teacher must have a helper.

### **Finance and Administration**

In many cases, government is not directly involved in the establishment of pre-primary and primary schools. The proprietress/ proprietor generate the fund.The funds are normally generated through the following means;

- (i) Personal savings/ loans
- (ii) School fees and other levies.
- (iii) Donations/ gift from individuals, relatives and groups.

To start a school, a big sum of money is needed. This depends on whether you are starting with a new building or an existing one. It is difficult to say how much is needed. However some reasonable amount of money is needed for a start.

For proper management, it is better for each school to open a bank account where all incomes and expenditures should be made. Some schools employ an accountant who may be a clerk or a qualified one depending on the strength of the school.

In the day to day administration of the school, much depends on the proprietor/the head teacher. In many cases, the head -teacher is in charge of the academic programmes while the proprietor/ proprietress is in charge of financial transactions.. There must be a Board of Governors responsible for taking major decisions on the affairs of the school. There should also be Parents Teachers Association(PTA). This body is an advisory body. Membership is open to all parents and guardians of the children in the school as well as the teachers. The Board of Governors membership is based on the nomination by the proprietor of the school. They are usually men and women of integrity, great experience with observable interest in education.

In the day to day running of the school, the head teacher needs certain records that must be available in the school. These are referred to as statutory records. They include the following;

- Admission Register
- Attendance Register
- Log Book
- Visitor's Book
- Pupils' Progress( Continuous Assessment) Cards
- Diary of Work. And a host of other things. (FRN 2014)

### **Registration**

As noted earlier, the registration of pre-primary and primary schools is the responsibility of state government. State Ministry of Education is responsible for giving approval to open a school. The procedure may vary from state to state. Generally the following procedures may be followed;

First, obtain the form. The registration form will be given by the ministry of education at a specified amount. The amount vary from state to state and is subject to review from time to time.

When the forms are filled and returned, the ministry will now inspect the site and the existing facilities to ensure that they are adequate. In this regard, two other ministries should be involved in the inspections. These are the Ministry of Works and Housing. The Ministry is to ensure that the buildings are put in conformity with the specifications approved for that level of education. Also safety standards are complied.

The Ministry of Health on the other hand will see to the health aspect of the school. That is, the toilets and other health facilities provided. Are the classrooms well ventilated? Are there no health hazards in the school environment generally? They will also look at the food vendors and their location in the school.

It is only when the Ministries are satisfied with the facilities in addition to the Ministry of Education recommendation on the staff, the academic programme that the approval will be given. The registration however is not a onetime affair. Some states have a 5year renewal. In this way, there is need for a regular inspection of the school. The school can be closed down at any time by the Commissioner for Education if the school fails to meet the required standard.

### **Conclusion**

There is need for more well equipped pre-primary and primary schools in Nigeria. Experience supported by research and common wisdom show that majority of the pre-primary and primary school age in Nigeria have no access to formal education. Those who have the access to school are doing that in a very poor environment. This means that, children who are not having the necessary stimulations and encouragement even at home as a result of poor home background will not have the opportunity of receiving this necessary education in schools. It becomes necessary for more well equipped pre-primary and primary schools to be established. Experts in Early Childhood and Primary Education should take up the challenge to open more of these, especially in areas where they are very few or not even available.

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