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**EVALUATION OF PRE-PRIMARY CURRICULUM
IN SOME SELECTED BAPTIST NURSERY SCHOOLS
IN OYO STATE**

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out because of the interest and commitment of the researcher in early childhood education. The pre-primary curriculum was published by NERDC in 1987 and since its inception; the curriculum has not been evaluated, especially in church-based nursery schools. There is therefore a felt need to know how Baptist Church-based nursery schools in Oyo State are adhering to the laid down guidelines in implementing the curriculum. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the main components of the curriculum as they are being implemented in some selected Baptist nursery schools in Oyo State using modified CIPP evaluation model.

To achieve the purpose of the study, 25 Baptist church-based nursery schools in Oyo State were selected for the study. The subjects of the research were the proprietors, the head-teachers, the nursery teachers and the children, who are the end products of the curriculum. The following areas of the curriculum were evaluated: the objectives, the contents, the teaching methods and materials, the teachers' qualifications, the teacher-child ratio, the organization of the schedule of activities, the learning environment and assessments of children in two developmental areas.

The following instruments, based on the CIPP model were used to gather the data: three sets of questionnaires, observation schedule checklist and children's developmental tests.

A number of research questions were posed to which appropriate answers were provided based on the data collected. In addition, eight

hypotheses were tested using two-tail t-test. Six of the hypotheses were retained while the remaining two were rejected.

The findings of the study revealed that the objectives are being achieved. The children are helped to develop mentally, and socially at various levels of success. It also revealed that some church-based nursery schools do not have adequate space, facilities, equipment and materials and that the most used teaching method is memorization and drilling and the least used method is resting. As envisaged, it was found that most of the teachers have grade two certificates; only few received specialized training in teaching preschoolers. It also came out clearly that the schools do not provide opportunity for children to rest during the school hours.

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following recommendations were therefore made to help improve the teaching-learning, situations in church-based nursery schools, which will help the children to develop mentally and socially

1. The schools should promote spiritual development by providing trained and dedicated christian teachers who would model Christ-like attitudes, patterned along Galatians 5:22-23. Each school should adopt to reflect its being church-based; to promote character formation, evangelism and christian living.
2. Churches should elect children's committees that will coordinate the purchase, use and storage of teaching equipment and materials. Also the committees should harmonize all children's programmes in line

with the available space and facilities. The practice will avoid wastage and promote maximum use of the meager available resources.

3. Teachers should select and use involvement oriented teaching methods such as: small group activities, observation, experimentation, use of audio-visual materials, dramatization, creative activities, use of resource persons and field excursion so as to encourage self expression.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were reached:

1. Context: Objectives

It was concluded that lack of differences in the perceived objectives of pre-primary curriculum made the schools to have the desired focus and direction.

Therefore, all the Baptist church-based nursery not different from other private nursery schools.

2. Input: Learning environment, equipment and materials

The study concluded that because churches normally charge very low fees, as a result they could not provide enough needed funds to purchase adequate sports equipment, sport field, relevant instructional materials, and equipment. Since the needed material resources required to implement the curriculum as expected are not available in some church-based nursery schools, the curriculum could not be effectively implemented. This lack of materials affected the positive development of imaginative skills, innovative creativity and interpretation of symbols and signs, which every child in a progressive school is expected to cultivate in order to live in a modern world as the creator has destined him/her to be.

3. Process: Teachers Qualifications and their Methods of Teaching

a. Teachers Qualifications

It was therefore concluded that lack of qualified teachers has made it difficult for these Church-based nursery schools to have distinguishable characteristics which could have made them to be superior to all other non-church-based nursery schools, particularly in the area of spiritual development and healthy interaction with other people. Therefore, the education provided has forced some parents who are knowledgeable to withdraw their children from some of the schools, and this may be a reason for the very low enrolment that prevailed in some of the Baptist church -based nursery schools.

b. Teaching Methods

It may be concluded that some of the teachers are disseminators of facts rather than being facilitators of learning. A good number of the teachers are authoritarians in their teaching approaches; some are rigid, strict disciplinarians. Hence some of the children are deficient in freedom of expression, and they see adults as threats rather than their friends. It may further be concluded that those teachers that are using outdated methods for handling these children are out of step with the innovative age of computer.

4. **Product: children's performances on mental and social development tests.**

It was concluded that church-based nursery schools are in spite of their problems meeting basic mental and social needs of the children. They are however at par with other nursery schools in their provision for spiritual development. This is not as expected since the environment of church and christian personnel ought to have made significant input.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are therefore made based on the findings of the study:

1. **Context: Objectives**

All Church-based nursery schools should encourage spiritual development in their objectives, which will be reflected in all other aspects of the curriculum. It is hereby recommended that schools should provide trained and dedicated Christian teachers who would model Christlike attitudes

