

## Towards The Holistic Development of Children in Oyo State: The Scope of the Behavioural Objectives in Preschool Teachers' Lesson Plans

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### Abstract

One of the benefits of Early Childhood Education, most importantly, the preschool education is its multi-foci target for holistic development of the children. A well-organized preschool centre which run developmentally appropriate programme is expected to ensure equal development of social, emotional, physical and intellectual skills in every child. To ensure this, the teachers are expected to plan every lesson with this laudable idea in mind by setting behavioural objectives (BOs) that can attain this goal. The skills acquired by preschool children in Nigeria, and in Oyo State in particular make one incertitude about the type of instructional activities and the BOs the preschool teachers have been setting; the extent to which the instructional activities, through the BOs, targeting holistic development of the children and the level of developmentally appropriateness and attainability of the BOs, hence this study. It was found out that the preschool teachers in the State concentrate their BOs on intellectual development in the expense of other developmental domains among others. Therefore, the BOs set by preschool teachers in Oyo State dictate, to large extent, the instructional activities exposed to the children with focus on intellectual development only and other developmental domains are neglected. It was proffer that there is the need for in-service training for the preschool teachers on how to set BOs that can ensure holistic development of the children among other recommendations

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**Keywords:** behavioural objective, holistic development, developmentally appropriate practices, developmental domains

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### INTRODUCTION

Education given to children at the formative years has been widely recognised as being crucial not just because of its ability to make the recipients literate but because of its ability to raise a whole-child. A whole-child is the child that develops holistically in terms of all the learning domains- social, emotional, physical, intellectual and even in creativity (Anderson and Shane, 2002). The goals of Early Child Care and Development Education (ECCDE) and that of 1-year Pre-primary Education in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) supported the whole-child concept by reflecting all the developmental domains skills to be developed in the children. In order to make this a reality, three other documents namely National Policy for Integrate Early Childhood Development in Nigeria (FRN, 2007), National Minimum standard for Early Child Care Centres in Nigeria (FRN, 2007) and National Early Childhood Curriculum for Age 0-5 years (NERDC, 2004) were produced. These educational programmes, if well implemented will face out the system of concentrating preschool education on intellectual development along (Myers, 2011).

The concept of whole-child development was advocated for all-over the world as a result of its impacts not only on the child but to the society at

large (Upitis, 2011). Almost all the socio-political and economic challenges faced by Nigerian society these days can be traced to the neglect or non-scientific way of handling some developmental domains at the cradle education given to the citizenry in the past. Social skills, according to Broadhead (2004) are better inculcated at the formative years, is expected to educate the child about friendship, care for others, selfless services, sense of belonging and patriotism. But its neglect produced Nigerians that are militants, 'boko haramists', kidnappers, ritualists, child traffickers, non-patriotic individuals and many of their kinds. Emotional skills, like the social skills, are better inculcated at the formative years and it enhances self-control, self-satisfaction, morality, emotional intelligence and eradicates greediness and self-centredness. Neglect of emotional skills in the primary education given in the past produced corrupt individuals, drug barons, armed robbers, power drunk leaders, money launderers and others like them. Physical skills deal with the extent to which individual makes use of body parts to perform various tasks. It is expected to enhance frequency, perfectness and fastness of individual to perform a task. Non-scientific way of handling this in the past produced lazy workers, mediocrist staff and officials that permeate public and private workplace in the country now. Total education that ensures whole-

child development is supported globally (Murugi, 2013).

The solution to these challenges is a total change in the orientation of entire Nigerians which can only be achieved through education that is total and integrated at the formative years (Ibiam and Ugwu, 2009). This, no doubt, was the intention of Federal Government of Nigeria in 2004 when the National Integrated Early Childhood Education was started and about six different policy documents were produced by the year 2007 to enhance its implementation.

It is now over ten years since the commencement of Integrated Early Childhood Education (IECE) in Nigeria. It is expected that the implementation of this programme should have been matured so that the practices as stipulated by the policies would have been fully in place in the centres. But research findings as well as observable preschool practices in Nigeria generally and Oyo State in particular make one sceptical about the teachers/caregivers understanding and implementing the integrated curriculum and other supporting preschool policies (UNICEF, 2010; Salami, 2010; 2011; Salami and Odebiyi, 2013). The preschool learning environment, the instructional methods/strategies commonly adopted by the teachers, the language of instruction in almost all the school and methods of and areas assessed and evaluated in the children are not according to the provisions and prescription of the policies.

Of all these unexpected practices, the alarming ones are the practices that negate the development of the whole-child in the preschool centres. Research findings as well as close observation have revealed that preschools in Oyo State in particular focus the development of intellectual domain only in the expense of other developmental domains- social, emotional and physical (UNICEF, 2010). Two of the preschool practices made these clear- the instructional methods/strategies and the progress report given to the parents at the end of the term or academic session. The common instructional strategy is teacher-centred characterized by children sitting still in columns, listening to the teachers and at best involve in say-after-me memorization method, assessment is through interview and test/examination. There is no way socio-emotional and physical development of the children can be scientifically taken care of using teacher-centred methods. Again, in the progress report given to the parents, almost all the preschools adopt the format which reflect that it is only intellectual development that were scientifically measured. Others developmental domains are not measured or reported at all in some cases while those that report them measured them in a biased and unsystematic way. If development is measure in an

unsystematic way, it is as useless as unmeasured at all because it will not only misrepresent the child but also misleading.

What is not clear at this juncture about the preschool education in the state and the nation as a whole is what the preschool teachers planned for in their lesson. The content of the lesson plan, most importantly the behavioural objectives and the evaluation items according to Aremu and Salami (2012) are capable of reflecting the developmental domains the teachers do plan for and how these domains are evaluated in the education of the preschool children. Behavioural objectives conceive instructional strategy in a form that requires a specification of what tasks the learners are expected to perform under what conditions and how such tasks will be evaluated (Abdullahi, 1981).

Ramsden (2003) stresses that the behavioural objectives must be specific, and clear, indicating what learners are expected to learn and able to demonstrate at the completion of a given lesson. Marsh (2007) explains that behavioural objectives in a lesson plan should describe the competencies that learners should possess upon completion of a lesson because the expressions direct attention more on the types of behaviour that learners should exhibit and that is why the term "behavioural" is used to describe the objectives. Behavioural objectives are specific statements describing the change in behaviour of the learner teacher will like to see upon successful delivery of the lesson. Thus, Ramsden (2003) asserted that a lesson without behavioural objective is like a journey without destination.

Setting behavioural objectives in a lesson plan is one thing but widen the scope of objectives to cover all the developmental/learning domains is another. The first step in ensuring that a lesson covers all aspects of developmental domain is to set behavioural objectives which reflect this. It is expected that the evaluation items have one-to-one direct relationship with the behavioural objectives. With this, a teacher will be able to see the strength and weakness of every child in relation to all the developmental domains. If any of the domains is neglected, this might eventually have negative effect on the total personality of the child. Therefore, it is imperative to have a study that will examine how preschool teachers have been planning for holistic development of preschool children through the examination of the behavioural objectives in the teachers' lesson plans, hence this study. The scope of the study is to examine the quality of behavioural objectives set by preschool teachers, in terms of coverage of developmental domains, in Oyo State, Nigeria. The developmental domains examined in the study are social, emotional, physical and intellectual.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to examine the adequacy and appropriateness of the behavioural objectives set by preschool teachers for whole-child development in Oyo State. The following are the specific objectives of the study:

- ✓ To examine the extent to which the behavioural objectives of preschool teachers in Oyo State cover all the developmental domains,
- ✓ To examine the appropriateness and level of attainability of the behavioural objectives in the lesson-plans of the preschool teachers.
- ✓ To provide empirical evidence for in-service training for the preschool teachers in the area of lesson planning for whole-child development the State.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were raised to guide this research study:

1. To what extent do the preschool teachers state behavioural objectives in their lesson plans?
2. What domain(s) of the child development do the behavioural objectives in teachers' lesson plan emphasized?
3. What proportion of the observed behavioural objectives are for:
  - a. Social development?
  - b. Emotional development?
  - c. Physical development?
  - d. Intellectual development?
4. What proportion of the behavioural objectives are:
  - a. Developmentally appropriate for preschool children?
  - b. Attainable for preschool children?

### METHODOLOGY

This study adopted descriptive survey research design since the intention was to examine the behavioural objectives set by the preschool teachers and report it accordingly. Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen (2010) submits that survey is a research that provides an accurate portrayal of characteristics of a particular individual, situation, or group.

The population of this study comprises all pre-school teachers in Oyo State, Nigeria. This set of teachers are the ones that see to the development of children during their formative years and they are the ones to observe and monitor the development of all the four domains namely; social emotional physical and intellectual before the children are admitted into primary level of education (FRN, 2013).

This study employs multi-stages sampling techniques in order to arrive at a sample that will adequately represent the entire population. Disproportionate

stratified random sampling technique was used to select 10 preschools (5 public and 5 private) from each of the 33 local government areas in the State. The list of the government-owned primary schools (Public schools) and the registered privately-owned (private schools) in each of the local government was collected from the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) office in Ibadan. This list was used for the random selection. This selection gave a total of 330 schools (165 public and 165 private) that were involved in this study. Purposive sampling was used to select teachers that involved in the study and the only criterion for being selected was that the teacher must be teaching preschool children. The number of preschool teachers in public school used to be very small, always between the ranges of 3 to 6. This is because public schools are made to run 1-year pre-primary programme in which they are to admit children age 4 to 5 years old only. Based on this, averagely 3 teachers were randomly selected from each of the public schools and this gave 422 preschool teachers in public schools that participated in the study. There are more preschool teachers in the private schools because most of them have programmes for children age 0 to 5years. But purposive random sampling was used to select 3 preschool teachers from each of the private schools. The criterion was that the preschool teachers must be teaching age 4years to 5years children. This is done in order to make the teachers selected from private school comparable to those selected from the public schools and this gave 447 preschool teachers. At the end 869 preschool teachers in Oyo state were involved in this study. Largest proportion, 83.7% of the teachers are female while 16.3% are male teachers. Majority, 49% of these teachers had National Certificate in Education (NCE); 33% of them had First Degree in education; only 8% had Master Degree in education while the remaining 10% had either OND/HND or School Certificate. Only 27.4% of the teachers were specialists in education of children (Those that studied Primary Education Studies or Early Childhood Education). Five (5) different lesson plans, most recently delivered, were captured using digital camera from each participated teacher. Therefore, the number of lesson plans analysed was 4345.

Two research instruments were used to collect data for this study. These are an Interview Schedule on Preschool Teacher Demographic Data (IS-PTDD) and Electronic Digital Cameras (EDC). IS-PTDD was used to collate the demographic information about the preschool teachers and it contains items such as gender, highest educational qualification, area of specialization, years of working experience, number of years already spent in the current school and age range of children taught. This instrument was validated by a professor in Early Childhood Unit of Department of Teacher Education, University of

Ibadan and experienced primary school teacher working in the Staff School, University of Ibadan. EDCs (Which could either be Digital camera, mobile phone or i-pad/tab) were also validated by the research. The electronic cameras were used to snap 3 different sizes documents- A4 size, quarto size and 20-leaves exercise sheet. These sizes are the common sizes of paper used by teachers to write lesson plan. The cameras were connected to a computer and the pictures were transferred to the computer and were printed out. The images printed were very clear and readable.

An approval as well as introductory letters to the schools was collected from Oyo State SUBEB office. Photocopies of these letters were made for 11 research assistants (Master Degree students in Early Childhood Unit, Dept. of Teacher Education, University of Ibadan) who collected the data across all the local government in the state. The data collected with the IS-PTDD and the images captured with the electronic cameras were coded into SPSS package in computer and were analysed using descriptive statistics. Charts were also used where necessary.

**RESULTS**

1. **Research Question 1:** To what extent do the preschool teachers state behavioural objectives in their lesson plans?

To answer this question, two things were examined in the lesson plans captured; the first is availability or otherwise of behavioural objectives in the plans and the second is number of behavioural objectives in the plan. Tables 1 and 2 and also figure 1 and 2 present the results to these questions

Table 1a: Availability of Behavioural Objectives in the Preschool Teachers Lesson Plans

Availability of Behavioural Objectives (BO)	Freq.	Percentage
Lesson Plans with BO	3911	90.01
Lesson Plans without BO	434	9.99
<b>Total</b>	<b>4345</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 1a reveals that out of 4345 preschool lesson plans analysed, 90% had behavioural objectives clearly stated while 10% did not. This is presented in a chart form as shown in figure I.

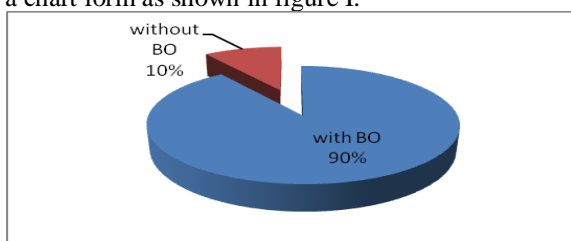


Fig. I: Extent of Behavioural Objectives (BO) in Preschool Teachers Lesson Plan

This finding should not be jettisoned because it could be as a result of the fact that some schools, most especially the privately owned ones do have some teachers that are not qualified to teach at all. For instance, the demographic data analysis done in this study revealed that one-tenth of the participated teachers were not qualified to be teachers because they either had School Certificate, Ordinary Diploma or Higher Diploma Certificate. It is not unexpected if this set of teachers plan lessons without behavioural objectives, and this is a clear indication that any lesson delivered by such teachers is of no focus. This is supported by the submission of Marsh (2007) that behavioural objectives are the planned expected outcomes of a well delivered lesson.

Table 1b: Number of Objectives in a preschool teachers' Lesson Plan

Number of BO	Freq.	Percentage	Total BO
No BO	434	10.0	0
1 BO	1999	46.0	1999
2 BOs	1130	26.0	2260
3 BOs	260	6.0	780
4 BOs	174	4.0	696
5 BOs	174	4.0	870
6 BOs	87	2.0	522
7 BOs	87	2.0	609
<b>Total</b>	<b>4345</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>7 736</b>

Table 1b shows that out of the total number of lesson plan observed, 10% had no behavioural objective; 46% had just one behavioural objective and 26% had two behavioural objectives. Other lesson plans had 3 objectives - 6%; 4% had four objectives; 4% had five objectives; 2% had six objectives and 2% had seven objectives. Altogether, 7, 736 behavioural objectives were found in 4, 345 lesson plans written by 869 preschool teachers. Figure 2 presents this in a chart form.

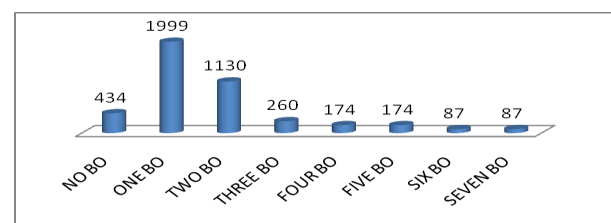


Fig. 2: Number of Behavioural Objectives in Preschool Teachers' Lesson Plans

Based on the information in table 1a and 1b it can be inferred that majority of the preschool teachers (Nine out of every ten) state one or more behavioural objectives in their lesson plan. This finding could be as a result of the fact that large proportion of the

teacher were qualified teacher and it is expected that a qualified teacher will definitely set behavioural objective(s) for every lesson planned. This is because behavioural objective(s) dictate what a teacher is trying to achieve. In the words of Ramsden (2003), a lesson without behavioural objective is like a journey without destination.

**Research Question 2:** What domain(s) of the child development do the behavioural objectives in teachers’ lesson plan emphasized?

To answer this question, each of the 7, 736 behavioural objectives was analysed and categorised into four major developmental domains – the social, emotional, physical and intellectual domains but some behavioural objectives that feature more than a developmental domain were also classified accordingly. Table 2 presents the results.

Table 2: Summary of Domains of Behavioural Objectives of Preschool Teachers

Developmental Domains	Freq.	%
Social domain	116	1.50
Emotional domain	47	0.61
Physical domain	189	2.44
Intellectual domain	6473	83.7
Social-emotional	46	0.58
Socio-physical	69	0.89
Socio-intellectual	282	3.65
Physical/intellectual	205	2.65
Multi-domains objectives	309	3.98

Table 2 reveals the developmental domains found in the lesson plan of preschool teachers. The common and most emphasised is intellectual domain which appeared in 84% of all the behavioural objectives examined. None of the other developmental domains appeared up to 5%. It can then be inferred that preschool teachers in Oyo State emphasised intellectual domain in their lesson plan in the expense of other developmental domains. Figure 3 presents this in a bar chart form.

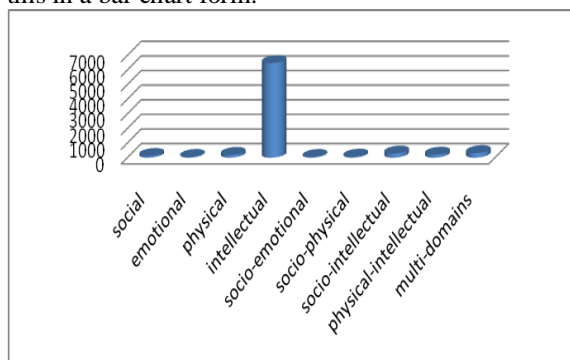


Fig. 3: Developmental domain emphasised in Preschool Teachers’ Lesson Plans

This finding should not be discarded because it could be as a result of the fact that it is easier to set objectives in intellectual/cognitive domain than any other domain. The measurable action verbs used for intellectual domains are so explicitly clear and ease to use than those of other domains. Therefore, most of the time, the teachers choose the easy part by setting objectives on intellectual domain which no supervisor will considered wrong than racking brain for words to use for setting objectives in social, emotional or physical development. By implication, the teachers are only interested in developing intellectual domain of the children and forget other developmental areas because, as put it by Aremu and Salami (2012) that behavioural objectives are capable of reflecting the developmental domains the teachers do plan for and how these domains are evaluated in the education of the preschool children. Marsh (2007) also explains that behavioural objectives in a lesson plan should reflect the skills and competencies the children should possess upon completion of a lesson. This implies that preschool teachers in Oyo State in particular and Nigeria in general have not been developing, or simply put, have been denying the children the social, emotional and physical development.

**Research Question 3:** What proportion of the observed behavioural objectives is for: (a) Social development, (B) Emotional development, (C) Physical development and (D) Intellectual development?

Based on the data in table 2, the proportions of observed behavioural objectives in the learning domains are as follows: social development is 1.5%, emotional development is 0.6%, physical development is 2.4% and intellectual development is 83.7%. Some of the behavioural objectives feature more than one domain, because of this, the following proportions were recorded: socio-emotional is 0.6%, socio-physical is 0.9%, socio-intellectual is 3.7%, physical-intellectual is 2.7% and those with more than three domains (Multi-domains) is 4%. This statistics reveals that intellectual domain had the highest proportion which is an indication that it is highly emphasised while other domains were hardly mentioned. This information was also presented in a chart form by figure 3. As discussed earlier, the result might be as a result of the fact that teachers found it easy to set behavioural objectives in intellectual domain than other developmental domains. The reason is that the common available measurable action verbs used are related to intellectual more than other domains. This is not to say that the action words for objectives in other domains are not available or many but many teachers are not familiar with them. Besides this, setting behavioural objectives in social, emotional and physical domains require in-depth thinking on the part of the teachers.

It is difficult to set this type of objectives because they are closely related or better put, easy to set when the lesson is child-centred. But the common method/strategy adopted by our teachers is teacher-centred.

**Research Question 4:** What proportion of the behavioural objectives is:

- a. Developmentally appropriate for preschool children?
- b. Attainable for preschool children?

To answer this question, the observed behavioural objectives were classified two times. The first classification involve two categories which are developmental appropriate and developmental inappropriate. The appropriateness of the objectives is measured using the action word in the objective. Those objectives that with action words such as draw, paint, demonstrate, recite, mention and so on were classified appropriate while those with action words such as define, explain, calculate and so on were classified as developmentally inappropriate. The second classification involve two categories namely; attainable and not attainable. The behaviour to be exhibited as presented by the behavioural objectives vis-a-vis the developmental milestone presented by the National Curriculum was used as basis for classification. Any behaviour that is not beyond the age level of the children as suggested by the milestone is considered attainable while those that were beyond the children age level were considered not attainable. Table 3 present the information.

Table 3: Classification of observed behavioural objectives based on Appropriateness and Attainability

Observed Behavioural Objective	Freq.	%
<b>DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATENESS</b>		
<b>Appropriate</b>	5369	69.4
<b>Not Appropriate</b>	2367	30.6
<b>Total</b>	7736	100.0
<b>ATTAINABILITY</b>		
<b>Attainable</b>	4085	52.8
<b>Not Attainable</b>	3651	47.2
<b>Total</b>	7736	100.0

Table 3 reveals that out of the 7, 736 behavioural objectives set by preschool teachers in Oyo State, 69.4% of them are developmentally appropriate while 30.6% are not. Again, only 52.8% of the objectives are attainable to the children while 47.2% are not. This shows that number of developmentally appropriate behavioural objectives set by the preschool teachers in Oyo State is high, though there is still large number of those that are not developmentally appropriate. It is only about 50% of the behavioural objectives set by these teachers that are attainable for the children. This is considered to

be alarming situation in the process of educating our young children. Figure 4 present this information in a bar chart.

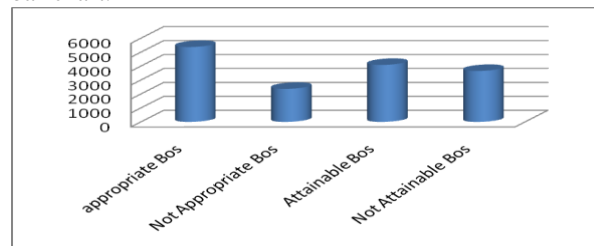


Fig. 4: Appropriateness and attainability of BOs

These findings might be as a result of the fact that the number of professional early childhood educators among the teachers is small (27.4%). Though, the number of qualified teachers is many but those that had their training in early childhood education are not many. It is those that are specially trained to handle children that can have information about developmentally appropriate milestones expected of children. It was also observed that the national curriculum, national milestone, national minimum standard for preschool centres are not available in the schools. Again, this might have effects on their knowledge of the preschool milestones which would have informed their skills of setting appropriate behavioural objectives. A lesson with inappropriate and unattainable behavioural objectives is as good as having no objective which makes such lesson aimless. In the words of Ramsden (2003), a lesson without behavioural objective is like a journey without destination.

**CONCLUSION**

Behavioural objectives (BO) take a significant position, not only in lesson plan but in the process of holistic development of preschool children. A good set of BOs are the ones that cover all developmental domains that are developmentally appropriate and attainable. This study has just revealed that the BOs set by preschool teachers in Oyo State are not covering the developmental domains expected at the preschool levels, large number of the BOs are not developmentally appropriate and not attainable. There is the need for all stakeholders to Early Childhood Education in the State, as well as in the country at large to put heads together and develop a plan on how to assist the preschool teachers in the State and the country as a whole on how to set BOs that ensure holistic development of the children, developmentally appropriate and attainable to preschool children.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are proffer based on the findings of the study:

- ❖ There is the need for in-service training for all preschool teachers in Oyo State on the following concept:

- Holistic development, which involves four learning domains namely social, emotional, physical and intellectual,
- Setting behavioural objectives that ensure holistic development
- Principle of developmental appropriate practices and multiple intelligences in preschool education
- ❖ Lecturers of methodology courses in the colleges of education and faculty of education where preschool and primary school teachers are prepared should endeavour to expose the pre-service teachers to significance of behavioural objectives and the best way to set them. This will equip the future preschool teachers on how to avoid this hidden-but-grievous problems.

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