

Early Childhood Educators in Promoting Quality ECCE Students: A Case Study Jigawa State

Pendidik Anak Usia Dini dalam Mempromosikan Kualitas Siswa ECCE Studi Kasus Negara Bagian Jigawa

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji Dampak Pendidik Anak Usia Dini dalam Mempromosikan Kualitas Siswa ECCE di Perguruan Tinggi Pendidikan Negara Bagian Jigawa (Nigeria). Tujuan penelitian ini mengkaji pentingnya pendidikan berkualitas, di mana Nigeria sebagai sebuah negara membutuhkan sistem pendidikan fungsional yang dapat membekali pelajar dengan pengetahuan, sikap, dan keterampilan yang diperlukan untuk memungkinkan mereka berhubungan dan beradaptasi dengan cepat terhadap perubahan sosial, ekonomi, budaya, dan politik dalam masyarakat. Untuk mencapai pendidikan berkualitas, Pemerintah Nigeria harus mengakui peran pendidik anak usia dini dalam mempromosikan pendidikan berkualitas kepada mahasiswa di Perguruan Tinggi Pendidikan di Negara Bagian Jigawa (Nigeria). Makalah ini merekomendasikan bahwa perlu adanya penciptaan lingkungan pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang kondusif dengan penyediaan laboratorium, bengkel, ruang kelas, perpustakaan, kantor staf, serta akomodasi asrama dan ruang kelas yang baik dan memadai, serta teknik pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang tepat di Perguruan Tinggi Pendidikan di Nigeria.

Kata Kunci: Anak Usia Dini, Pendidik, Nigeria, Mempromosikan Siswa ECCE Berkualitas

Abstract

This paper examines the Impact of Early Childhood Educators in Promoting Quality ECCE Students in Colleges of Education Jigawa State (Nigeria). This paper examines the importance of quality education which Nigeria as a nation needs a functional educational system that can equip learners with requisite knowledge, attitudes and skills to enable them relate and adapt successfully to the rapid socio- economic, cultural and political changes in the society. To achieve quality education, Nigeria Government has to recognize the role of Early childhood educators in promoting Quality education to students of Colleges of Education in Jigawa State (Nigeria). The paper recommends that, there is need for creation of conducive teaching and learning environment with the provision of appropriate, well-equipped and adequate laboratories, workshops, classrooms, libraries, staff offices, as well as good and adequate hostel and classroom accommodation, teaching and learning techniques in Colleges of Education of Nigeria.

Keywords: Early Childhood, Educators, Nigeria, Promoting Quality ECCE Students



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INTRODUCTION

Education being an indispensable tool in nations building is a process of systematic training and instruction designed to transmit knowledge and acquisition of skill, potentials and abilities which will enable an individual to contribute efficiently to the growth and development of his society and nation. It involves all round development of an individual physically, socially, morally, intellectually, and mentally (A.A, 2022; Rabia et al., 2023; Sarkingobir et al., 2023; Waheed et al., 2022). Pre-primary education is the education meant for children between the ages of 3 to 6 years. Therefore, Early Childhood Education (ECE) has been described as many things: a form of applied child development, purposeful and targeted early intervention, or any of an array of services designed to support the learning and development of children in the first years of life (Akinrotimi, 2016). For most people, as acknowledged in the following passage from a forthcoming publication by one of the editors (A.A, 2022) early childhood education refers to services provided during the period from birth to the age of compulsory schooling: Moreover, Early Child Care and Education policies and programs involve the following provision: (a) Childcare to preschool-aged children, and care before and after school to school-aged children while their parents are employed or receiving further education; (b) Other child development focused and early educational experiences to preschool-aged children; and (c) Child development, childcare, and early education information made available to the parents of preschool-aged children (M. M. Musa et al., 2017).

This definition provides room for many of the more narrowly focused child care and early education programs and providers found across the country, including child-care centers, family and group family child-care programs and networks, preschools, nursery schools, Head Start programs, and prekindergarten programs. It also includes efforts to inform and educate parents about child development, child-care alternatives, and approaches to teaching preschool children appropriate social, cognitive, and language skills. For some in the field, however, this definition does not capture all of the meanings of early childhood education. The term "preschool children" in the definition refers to children during the period immediately prior to their entry into primary school. In the United States, this age group is typically three- and four-year-old children, and the endpoint of this definition wavers between the ages of four, five, and six. In the absence of national policies, kindergarten (for five-year-olds) remains nonobligatory in many states across the country but is a part of compulsory schooling in others (Gregoriadis et al., 2018).

The National Policy on Education (2004) sees pre- primary education as the education given in an educational institution to children aged 3-5 years plus prior to their entering the primary school. That is to say that early education is a special kind of education provided in an institution for children, prior to their entering the primary school. Early childhood education, in the context of formal education can be said to be "a formalized educational process to which children between the ages of 2 1/2 through five plus are subjected to in designated pre-school institutions" (T. M. Musa, 2014). This paper examines the Impact of Early Childhood Educators in Promoting Quality ECCE Students in Colleges of Education Jigawa State (Nigeria).

Early childhood education (ECE) refers to the educational experiences of children from birth to age 8, typically before they enter elementary school. The goal of ECE is to

support young children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development during this critical period of rapid growth and learning (Hu et al., 2020). Key Principles of Early Childhood Education are as follows: (1) Child-centered: ECE focuses on the child's needs, interests, and abilities; (2) Play-based: Play is a fundamental way children learn and develop; (3) Holistic: ECE addresses the whole child, including their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development (Gubuola, 2017); (4) Inclusive: ECE welcomes and supports children from diverse backgrounds and abilities; (5) Family-centered: ECE recognizes the importance of family involvement in children's learning and development (Rotshak et al., 2020).

Types of Early Childhood Education Programs: 1) Infant and Toddler Programs (0-3 years): Focus on nurturing and caring for young children; 2) Preschool Programs (3-5 years): Emphasize play-based learning and socialization; 3) Pre-Kindergarten Programs (4-5 years): Prepare children for kindergarten and formal education; 4) Kindergarten Programs (5-6 years): Provide a transition from preschool to formal education (Gregoriadis et al., 2018).

Benefits of Early Childhood Education: 1) Improved cognitive development: ECE enhances language, math, and problem-solving skills; 2) Better social and emotional development: ECE fosters social skills, emotional intelligence, and self-regulation; 3) Increased school readiness: ECE prepares children for formal education and reduces the risk of early school failure; 4) Long-term benefits: ECE has been linked to better academic achievement, higher graduation rates, and increased economic productivity (College, 2021).

Challenges and Opportunities in Early Childhood Education: 1) Access and equity: Many children lack access to quality ECE programs, particularly in disadvantaged communities; 2) Funding and resources: ECE programs often face funding constraints and limited resources; 3) Workforce development: ECE professionals require ongoing training and support to provide high-quality care and education; 4) Innovation and technology: ECE can leverage technology and innovative approaches to enhance teaching and learning (Rofiki et al., 2022).

By understanding the principles, types, benefits, and challenges of early childhood education, we can work together to provide high-quality educational experiences that support the development and well-being of young children ("Character Strengths Inventory for Early Childhood (CSI-EC)," 2019). The Nigerian Experience, Nigeria has made significant strides in early childhood education, with the inclusion of ECCE in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program and the inauguration of the early childhood education policy in 2007. However, there is still a need for quality ECCE programs that cater to the unique needs of young children (Akinrotimi, 2016).

Role of Early Childhood Educators. Early childhood educators play a critical role in promoting quality ECCE students. They are responsible for creating a nurturing environment that fosters cognitive, social, and emotional development in young children. To achieve this, educators must adopt an ontology of multiple realities, recognizing that each child brings their unique experiences and perspectives to the learning environment (Lemea-Adoma, 2024).

Challenges and Opportunities. Despite the progress made in ECCE in Nigeria, there are still challenges to be addressed. These include inadequate funding, lack of

infrastructure, and insufficient training for educators. However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation and growth, such as the development of context-specific ECCE programs that address the unique needs of Nigerian children College of Early Childhood Educators (Cahyati et al., 2022).

METHODS

The methodology utilized in this study consisted of literature review by analyzing various information sources that are related to objective of this study. This study employs a literature review methodology to explore the role of early childhood educators in promoting quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Jigawa State, Nigeria. The literature review approach involves a systematic examination of existing academic articles, books, reports, and policy documents related to ECCE, early childhood educators, and educational quality in Nigeria, with a specific focus on Jigawa State. Key databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ERIC were utilized to gather relevant sources. The review focuses on identifying themes such as educator qualifications, teaching strategies, challenges faced by educators, and the impact of their practices on student outcomes. By synthesizing existing knowledge, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how early childhood educators contribute to quality ECCE in the region.

The case study of Jigawa State is integrated into the literature review to contextualize the findings within a specific geographic and cultural setting. Data from local government reports, educational statistics, and interviews with stakeholders (where available) are analyzed alongside the reviewed literature to highlight unique challenges and opportunities in Jigawa State. This dual approach allows for a deeper exploration of the interplay between global ECCE best practices and local implementation. The findings from this literature review are expected to inform policymakers, educators, and stakeholders on strategies to enhance the quality of ECCE through improved educator training, resource allocation, and community engagement in Jigawa State and similar contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Conceptual Background

There are various definitions of education. Webster dictionary defines education as the process of educating or teaching. It further explained that, to educate means, to develop knowledge, skill, or character of the person. Thus, education was defined as the means to develop the knowledge, skill, or character of a student. It is also described as the formal process by society to deliberately transmit its accumulated knowledge, skills, habits, customs and values from one generation to the next (Rotshak et al., 2020).

The quality of education in Nigeria can be enhanced for national development if there can be a synergy of all stake holders in education. Our history of education informs us that, the colonial masters bequeathed quality education to Nigerians, but the civil war and incessant military incursion into governance, impeded/relegated the quality of education and consequently brought the sector to its present deteriorated level. Scholars have suggested the following as strategies to improve quality education in Nigeria: instructional supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the quality of delivery of the programme, adequate planning to cover the expected enrollment, required teachers,

infrastructure needs and equipment, funding, regular training of teachers among others (Ogunbela et al., 2021).

Early childhood education on the other hand can (also early childhood learning and early education) refers to the formal teaching of young children by people outside the family or in settings outside the home. "Early childhood" is usually defined as before the age of normal schooling – six years as in the case of Nigeria. Early childhood education focuses on children's learning through play, based on the research and philosophy of Jean Piaget (Piaget, 1983).

Brief History Of ECCE In Nigeria

In Nigeria, organized education of the child below primary age did not receive official recognition until very recently, receive the attention it deserved. The concept of infant schools was introduced in Nigeria by the missionaries in the early 20th century when such schools were set up in the Western and Eastern regions of Nigeria. Early Child Education in the form of nursery school or pre-primary education as we know it today in Nigeria is largely a post-colonial development. The semblances of it during the colonial era were the kindergarten and infant classes, which consisted of groups of children considered not yet ready for primary education. As grouping for instruction in school was not age-based during that period, some children aged six or even more, could be found in some of the infant classes (Omotuyole & Okudo, 2024). With phasing out of infant classes, some parents began to feel the need for nursery schools.

During that period, (pre-independence) all efforts for provision of early childhood education were confined with voluntary sector and receive little or no support from the government. It was for the first time in 1977 with introduction of National Policy on Education by the then military government of Nigeria that the importance and need for early childhood education was given official recognition and linked with the child's educational performance in primary school (Nasiru et al., 2019).

In the 1970s and 1980s nursery schools were very few and found in Nigeria's major urban centres. Childhood education in the 1970s was therefore, not guided by any government designed curriculum. As private entrepreneurs', Individuals and non-governmental organizations and religious bodies provided this level of education for profit, their curriculum varied and so did the qualification of teachers. Most of the teachers did not specialized in nursery education, even many of the proprietors. This situation implied that the Federal and State Ministries of Education did not effectively perform their supervisory, regulatory and control functions. By 1981 when the NPE was reviewed, NERDC also produced a curriculum 'to guide pre-primary education in Nigeria.

The contents reflected themes in creative arts, social studies, physical and health education, language and communication skills, mathematical skills and basic science. This same curriculum was used until 2001, twenty years without revision and for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years (Ogunsola et al., 2013). With the development of the ECCDE which covers children from birth to 5 years (0-5 years), UNICEF assisted the FGN represented by NERDC to develop a non-conventional curriculum with a multi-sectoral approach and linkage in 1994. It was reviewed in the year 2000 but was not produced and circulated to schools. The fourth edition of the NPE in 2004 and 2014 was clearly innovative in its provision for ECCDE. This time section 2 that hitherto was usually captioned pre-primary education was rather captioned "Early Childhood/Pre-primary Education". This implied that the scope of education at this level was broadened to accommodate children below the age of 3 years. Section 2 (11) specifically included the

crèche, nursery and kindergarten as centres for early childhood/pre-primary education (Vanbinst et al., 2020).

A remarkable innovation was the establishment of pre-primary sections in existing public schools by the Federal Government. This initiative would create more access for children at this level, particularly those in rural areas. Despite the challenges in ECCDE there is a preponderance of pre-primary schools in urban and semi-urban areas. Only few are established in the rural areas probably because establishing good schools is capital intensive and much profit would not be generated in the rural areas by the proprietors. In 1984 there were 414 government registered nursery schools in Nigeria. They increased to 900 in 1986 and over 12,000 by 1996 (Ellingson, 2016).

Nowadays, Early Childhood Educational institutions are located in various places and buildings, campuses of universities and Colleges, premises of some industries and business organizations; religious centres, residential buildings with unprecedented expansion owing to the high demand for early childhood care and education by parents. In 2012 National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) as part of its effort of transforming teacher education, it comes up with new NCE curriculum for the training of ECCE specialist (care-givers) (Yilmaz, 2016).

Objectives Of NCE Programme In ECCE

The Federal Government of Nigeria recognizes the importance of education in our economic development and social transformation process; hence she has given priority to early childhood education by inculcating its purpose in the National Policy of Education (2004) as follows:

- Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school,
- prepare the child for the primary level of education,
- provide adequate care and supervision of the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets, offices, etc),
- inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys, etc,
- inculcate social norms develop a sense of co-operation and team- spirit,
- learn good habits, especially health habits, and
- Teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc (Ogunbela et al., 2021).

Specifically, the care-givers/teacher should be able to:

- Assist the child to develop good eating habits.
- Assist the child to develop good social habits.
- Facilitate emotional stability in the child.
- Assist the child to develop communication, reasoning and expressive skills.
- Assist the child to develop fine and gross motor skills.
- Assist the child to develop good health habits with emphasis on sanitation and safety needs.
- Assist the child to develop inquisitiveness and explore his/her environment.
- Utilize resources and improvise materials to stimulate the child through play.
- Keep records of the child's developmental progress in terms of major mile stones.
- Identify children with special needs for referrals.
- Discuss needs, progress and development of the child with parents and caregivers.
- Assist the child to acquire desirable attributes e.g. good morals, norms and values.
- Participate actively in professional associations/organizations relevant to Early Childhood Care.

- Manifest desirable administrative competence in Early Childhood Education (Mahadi, 2018)

Factors Promoting Quality ECCE Education In Colleges Of Education In Nigeria

The following are some of the factors that will promote quality ECCE education in College of Education Jigawa State (Nigeria) and thereafter: -

- Massive campaign and public awareness as well as value re-orientation as regards what we want education to be and do for Nigerian.
- Government should pay adequate attention to the sector, so that there should be sustainability and improvement in the state of our education.
- Adequate funding of the sector and infrastructure rehabilitation of the entire education system in line with what obtains in the technological world. Funding of education must be based on the 26% of the national budget as recommended by UNESCO.
- Training and re-training of serving teachers in Colleges of Education of Jigawa State (Nigeria) as this will boost their knowledge base on contents as well as keep abreast with new knowledge and methods of curriculum delivery.
- Exposure to computer and ICT education because it is the in thing in modern education.
- Well remunerated to enhance commitment and job satisfaction for ECCE Teachers (Ogunbela et al., 2021)

Factors Militating Against Promoting Quality Students In Colleges Of Education Jigawa State Colleges Of Education (Nigeria)

Education is a vital instrument in development efforts. In order to make development agenda work, the human resources must be developed, not only is education a criterion in measuring development, it is also an instrument utilized in enhancing development. Indeed, the socio-political and economic development of a nation depends on the quality and educational attainment of the population (Nigeria, 2024). However, the state of quality ECCE education in Jigawa State Colleges of Education (Nigeria) have been compromised by many factors, which among are as follows:-

Overcrowdings in Classes:- The issue of overcrowding which has compromised quality of education remain one worrisome syndrome in Nigeria educational system which Jigawa State Colleges of Education are not exceptional. The National Policy on Education (2004) specifies and recommends the teacher student ratio of 1:35/40 for primary and secondary school levels respectively. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) recommends the teacher student ratio of 1:25 for Colleges of Education and in the Universities, the ratio differs according to the existing faculties such ratio range from 1:6 - 1:24, among its faculty such as Agriculture, Art & Islamic studies, Law, Social Science, Education, Science, College of Health Science, Veterinary Management Science (Etesike, 2021). This is against the background that with this, the teacher can effectively manage the class and carry out/his or her teaching process. Regrettably, however what we are experiencing today in Nigeria is far from been reality.

Issue of Dilapidated Buildings: Sarkingobir et al., (2023) Maintained that in our tertiary institutions of learning, ie. Colleges of Education, in some of the Colleges you will find out where students sit on the floor others stand by the window side and write on their laps when receiving lecture conducting test and even examinations. However, same can be testify here in Jigawa State College of Education and Legal Studies Ringim (Jigawa state) where students-teacher ratio especially combination like Hausa/Social studies, English/Social studies. Arabic double major, etc are more than 1:500 or 1:700 students. These without doubt affect quality education, it creates difficulties in academic

administration, even marking their script is tedious, as a result, teacher may give them out to unqualified or even students of similar level to assist for marking student unrest, religions crises, cultism are often witnessed in an overcrowded institutions of learning in the country.

Bad Leadership, Corruption and the Decay in Moral Values:- Even within the domain of the so-called intellectuals, we find high degree of corrupt activities. For instance, it is highly disturbing to see female students offering professors sexual favours in exchange for good marks or the professor demand for it. We have also seen where schools head divert money made for provision of infrastructural amenities which have resulted into a dilapidated building. Some schools are just a block of two classrooms. In some cases pupils are exposed to risk because they experience congestion in class, some sit on the bare floor, some attend class under tree and some have to withdraw because their class is totally dilapidated (Hannon & Nutbrown, 1997).

Poverty Situation of the Country: A Considering the level of poverty in the state (Jigawa State) according to Mahadi (2008) shows that there is correlation between high level of poverty and cascading education in Nigeria. Poverty is one of the most serious problems confronting Nigerians today and it is generally associated with conditions under which people live (Waheed et al., 2022). Also, it is a phenomenon characterized by deprivation, physiological, social and human rights. Freedom which exist at both individual and household level and at the community or national level. Studies have established this beyond reasonable doubt that children from less privilege homes are more brilliant, talented and acquired skills faster than most of those from wealthy families but as a result of poverty, these people find it difficult to send their children to schools even though they did, the children pay no serious attention because of starvation and hungry and these affect the education they receive.

Poor link between Education and Employment Opportunities:- Traditional educations in Nigeria as in any other African country emphasized on functionalism as people were trained in specific jobs (Massaro, 2017). However, there has been very little link between the formal type of the education inherited from the colonialist and procedure work. The type of education was elitist in orientation and ill-designed for preparing Nigerian youth with the appropriate attitudes, knowledge, skills and motivation needed for transforming their rural and urban slum areas into modern societies, instead it was esoteric and it emphasized the development of manpower interested in white collar jobs and not in manual work which is needed in the modern sector of the economy such as the civil services and modern industry. To buttress this, (Senawati et al., 2021) stated that modern education only emphasizes on instrumental goals that is only employment oriented. Therefore, when learners complete an educational programme without commensurate assurance for modern sector jobs, society sees a mismatch and lack of synergy. This of course discourages participation, given that no serious meaning is even attached to learning itself, after all schools do not teach and gain employment from their formal training.

Lacks of Qualified ECCE Teachers: This is another factor affecting Nigeria educational system in playing its role in the Nigeria transformation agenda. The teaching profession is not regarded as much in high esteems as other professions, this couple with low salary of teachers. According to a research findings conducted by the World Bank on teachers competency in Nigeria, indicated that only 75 out of 19,000 teachers tested were competent, teachers qualifications did not affect the scores because graduate teachers did not perform better than teacher with lesser qualifications (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson,

2014). It is not news to find third class and pass grade graduate teaching in many of our higher learning institutions especially in the state tertiary.

Examination Malpractices: Examination Malpractices is not only responsible for the decline of quality education in Nigeria, but also responsible for such malaise in the country today as medical malpractices by incompetent doctors, manufacture and sale of fake drugs by pharmacist, collapse of building by architects and engineers, massive fraud in the banks and such other ailments that threaten our society at large (Howard & Johnson, 2000).

Examination malpractices menace is one that has been discussed on uncountable occasions that is ought to have become uninteresting. It has seriously affected the quality of our education both home and abroad. It is one of the most serious ethical problems facing Nigerian today, more serious even than contract fraud, election rigging etc and it is the mother of all corruptions, (Thiagarajan et al., 1974). The incessant cancellation of student result does not only lead to direct economic loss to parents and students, but psychological and social trauma, He claimed that exam malpractice which is responsible for the cancellation of so many results by examinations bodies in Nigeria, is responsible for the loss of over 1 billion annually to the country. It is impossible to build an ethics friendly society on a foundation of labour force conceived and weaned on an educational diet of fraud, malpractices and irregularities. The battle of ethics in education must first be taught and won (Acosta-Tello, 2019).

Lack of Proper Public Investment in Education;- There has always been poor allocation to education which has always been less than 10%. The stark reality is that, the system is under resourced in Nigeria. The gross under funding manifest in various forms which include:-

- Inability to attract the best minds in the land to the teaching profession because of the poor welfare package
- Inadequate quality staff
- Low staff morale
- Lack of regulars training and retraining opportunities for teachers and school leaders,
- Inadequate and dilapidated infrastructure
- Lack of sufficient funds in the school for administrations to execute school programmes satisfactory (Dünya, 2020; Suryana et al., 2021). However, funding remains a prerequisite for any national developmental issues.

Lack of Democratization of Schools Administrative Process in Nigeria:- Democratization of any administration involves active involvement of the subordinates in the decision making process. It means that those in leadership positions will have to share their managerial authority with those over whom they superintend. Such involvement transcends involvement of the hand but more importantly the involvement of the mind, the heart and of the head (Zerga et al., 2022). It is a managerial practices by which the subordinate become ego-involved as he perceived him-self making his due contribution to the decision making process on important matters in the organization in a democratized process.

Way Forward

- First and foremost, we have to improve the quality of our education sectors, we should take note that only a viable education can produce the workforce that have the right skill and competences required for difference sectors that are critical to our economic transformation. The workers should be equipped with vocational

and technical skills that are relevance to our contemporary situation. This is what happens in China, North Korea, India, Brazil and even South Africa. These countries gave policy priority to technical and vocational education, expanded and upgraded technical training by improving their infrastructural amenities, these without doubt recorded enviable economic growth to these countries.

- As we all know, our problem in this country is not about like of resources, but inadequate utilization of these resources, therefore, our priority should be on how to manage and effectively utilize these resources. the little money given to the education sector should be properly utilize for its purposes, the board or body in charge of way and manner this money are spend should revoke their seriousness and be committed to their work, serious supervision on how this money were spend should be put in place.
- The schools' management need to restructure the policy guiding lecturer's immunity, the privilege and prerogative given to them is not bad, but it need to be guided, monitor, supervised, regulated and even punish the culprit. It's an insult not only on our education but on the entire country. Many innocent boys and girls in Jigawa state have been drove out of schools because they refused to correspond or reciprocate one or two illegitimate act of some teachers.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, if this paper will be given a proper consideration it will inevitably contributes towards promoting quality ECCE students not only in Jigawa State Colleges of Education but Nigeria in general.

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