

## *Full Length Research Paper*

# **The effect of parent-school partnership on the availability and utilisation of learning resources in early childhood centres in Ibadan South-West, Oyo state**

**Ishola Akindele Salami\* and Antoinette Ufuoma Edo-Olotu**

Early Childhood Education Unit, Department of Teacher Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

### **Abstract**

**Availability and effective utilization of learning resources are required to improve the internal efficiency of Early Childhood Education (ECE). A good ECE practice supports collaboration with communities and parents. It is against this backdrop that this study examined the effect of parent-school partnership on the availability and utilization of learning resources in early childhood centres. The descriptive survey type of research design was adopted. A total of 567 respondents participated in the study. “Parents Questionnaire on Parent-school partnership (0.94)” and “Schools Questionnaires on Parent-School partnership (0.77)” are two instruments used to collect data. Data collected was analyzed using percentages, mean, standard deviation and t-test. The findings from the study indicated that the extent of parent-school partnership in early childhood centres in Ibadan South-West is low. Parent-school workshop should be organized to enlighten parents on their roles in their children’s schools and also equip teachers with the technical know-how on how to involve parents in activities.**

**Keywords:** Parent-school partnership, learning resources, early childhood centre, resources utilization.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Early childhood education is the organized practice of educating those who are in early childhood, one of the most vulnerable stages in life. According to the NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children), early childhood education spans the human life from birth to age eight. Early childhood education often focuses on children learning through play. The learning resources and instructional methods at this level of education must be carefully handled so as to ensure good foundation for further education.

The early years of life lay the foundation for a child’s development today and during the course of her life. From the time of conception to the first day of kindergarten, development proceeds at a pace exceeding that of any subsequent stage of life. It is during this time that the brain undergoes its most dramatic growth, and children acquire the ability to think, speak, learn and

reason. Early experiences can and do influence the physical architecture of the brain, literally shaping the neural connections in an infant’s developing brain. In the physical domain, brain development is especially important. Brain development is often the most influenced physical domain, so quality early childhood education is important. According to Zero to Three (2011), children undergo dramatic brain development from birth to 3 years old. When a baby is born, its brain is 25 percent the size of an adult brain. By the time a child is 3 years old, billions of cells and connections have been formed between his brain cells. An early childhood education program rich in stimulating activities and environment, including interactions with caregivers, ensures that children’s brains make the connections necessary. Ojameruaye (2010) views that many parents in Nigeria do not value pre-primary school education due to distrust, poor quality, high cost and the notion that the child must be close to the warmth of the mother before primary school age.

Children’s interactions with peers and caregivers prove critically important for the development of appropriate social behaviours and expression of emotion.

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\*Corresponding Author E-mail: [ia.salami@mail.ui.edu.ng](mailto:ia.salami@mail.ui.edu.ng);  
[snappy600@yahoo.com](mailto:snappy600@yahoo.com)

According to Zero to Three (2011), social interactions are what motivate a child to learn. To be accepted by peers, children have to learn impulse control which includes learning how to control emotions which can lead to antisocial behaviours. Programs that promote collaboration, sharing and communication between not only the children but also adult caregivers will model for children the appropriate ways to socialize and express emotions. One important goal of early childhood education is to prepare children for starting school. Conenzio and French (2002) says children usually enter school with a lot of curiosity about the world. They are inexperienced due to age but are naturally inquisitive about the world. They explore with water, mud, insects and everything they can touch, taste, smell, see or hear. They talk about things ask questions and find out why things are the way they are and some are not. In other words, children are created to be scientists. They are biologically prepared to learn about the world.

In a study conducted by High Scope Perry 1967, children were followed from the age of 3 or 4 to age 40. The children were divided into two separate groups: One group attended a high-quality preschool program, and the second group did not attend a preschool program. Researchers found that at age 40, the subjects who had attended the program had higher paying jobs, more education and lower crime rates. According to Sacks and Ruzzi, (2006), the results from this study strongly support the need for enriching, stimulating and engaging early childhood education programs.

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
- teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms.

Increasing attention has been paid to the early childhood years as the foundation of children's academic success. Ojameruaye (2010) views that many parents in Nigeria do not value pre-primary school education due to distrust, poor quality, high cost and the notion that the child must be close to the warmth of the mother before primary school age. The importance of high quality learning environments, qualified teachers, and family

engagement with early care and education programs have all been identified as critical factors in enhancing young children's early learning experiences and their subsequent educational outcomes (Cost, Quality and Outcome Study Team, 1995; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 1999; NICHD, 2000). The cost, quality and outcome report focuses on one critical aspect in supporting high quality learning experiences for young children – that of parent-school partnership in early childhood education. Family is the primary influence of young children and sets the stage for how they grow and develop (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The more parents are involved with their children, the more positive learning and general life outcomes occur (Baker, Goesling and Letendre, 2002). In recent years, the language has changed, from parental involvement and participation to parent-school partnerships, which implies the shared and equally valued roles in education described by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Gordon (1977). Internationally, the term partnership increasingly emphasizes a broad range of meaningful and cooperative relationships between parents and schools that improve students' learning, motivation, development and availability of learning resources (Davies and Johnson, 1996). Family-school partnerships of the 21st century must go beyond equipping parents with skills and knowledge. It must involve them in the process of learning. Influenced by Vygotsky's theory of learning and development, Wells (2004) emphasized the importance of the "co-construction of knowledge by more mature and less mature participants engaging in activity together". This type of collaborative learning plays an important role in communities of practice.

Parent and School Partner through a regular exchange about the child's development and its facilities and possibilities (social competence, learning behaviour, achievements, possibilities of advance, transfers...) In case of problems, solutions are worked out together. Teachers impart information about school and lessons, listen to parents' concerns and clears up parents' questions Invitation to class events: Children and teachers invite parents to an event, in which also opinions and information can be exchanged. Parents are invited as experts of one subject into class, attempt class at expeditions, journeys, in camps, help with special activities and at festivities. To the children, family-school partnership in making learning resources available and also in their utilization would afford children more positive attitudes toward school, higher achievement, better attendance in school and in school activities, higher graduation rates at the primary and secondary school levels, higher enrolment rates in the post secondary education and better school to attend. According to Christenson and Sheridan (2001), when families and the school partner in children's academic lives by making available learning resources and also participate in the utilization of learning resources, grades improve, test

scores rise, and even students' attitudes toward schoolwork improve. Students complete more homework, are placed in special education less often, and enroll in postsecondary education more frequently when families and schools work together. However some Head teachers and school owners have had enough discouraging experiences with parent-school partnership that they feel weary of trying to include or involve parents as partners. The most universal problem is poor attendance at school events that deal with educational topics, convey important information, or require work to be done (Kirschenbaum, 2000). Moreover, it has been reported that asking busy parents to increase their participation in the school rarely produces significant results (Greenleaf, 2000).

On the part of the teacher, effective parent-school Partnership collaboration would lead to greater teaching effectiveness, higher expectation of the children, increased ability to understand family views and culture which would make utilization of learning resources easier, greater appreciation by parents, and improved morale. Through effective Parent-school collaboration, the parents would also have greater Knowledge of education programmes and school work, greater knowledge of how to be more supportive of children, greater confidence about ways to help children, more positive views of teachers. Partnerships between schools and families, between teachers and parents, must be a top priority for both schools and families if they are to result in the best possible educational outcomes for children. If either party views partnerships as not essential, they are not likely to work as well to serve the educational needs of children. In this age of greater accountability on all levels, putting partnerships as a top priority is more important than ever. Dodd and Konzal, (2003) opined that oftentimes, schools seem to be "islands" separated from the families they serve, and the society in which their students live, but this should not be so. Teachers alone cannot help children in the all round development i.e. intellectually, personally, socially and morally. However, they can provide best practices that encourage and guide parent partnership in school activities to assist them in their work of teaching the children to achieve the desired results. These best practices can be achieved by allowing open, welcoming and respectful communication between them and the families of the students they teach. The school alone also cannot help in making all the needed learning resources available to children to develop all the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to be productive citizens and caring people as adults. Abimbade (1997) opines that learning resources in teaching and learning make children to learn more and retain better what they have been taught and that it also promotes and sustains children's interest. It also allows the children to discover themselves and their abilities. Reporting the view of Schramm, (1977) said that learning resources enrich children's knowledge and reinforce verbal instruction.

Young children see the world differently than older students and adults, and they learn best through direct, sensory experience. They need to manipulate, explore and experiment with real objects. They learn by doing, moving and talking.

Bolick (2003) pointed to a good relationship between effective teachings and using of learning materials. He argued that "... while some educators have been fascinated by the potential of learning materials to enhance teaching and learning, teachers lagged behind in using learning materials during teaching and learning. Learning resources are integral components of teaching-learning situations; it is not just to supplement learning but to complement its process. It is then shows that, if there must be an effective teaching-learning activity, utilization of learning resources will be necessary.

Ema and Ajayi (2004) assert that, "learning resources have changed over the years, not only to facilitate teaching learning situation but also to address the instructional needs of individuals and groups". Adekeye (2000) says instructional materials are made up of objects such as printed, audio, visual that aid in the successful delivery of lesson To this end, learning materials are said to be objects or things the teacher can use in the while teaching in order to ease off his teaching activities. However, learning materials cannot address all the teaching-learning problems but it can go a long way in solving them, simply because, they are additional apparatus that can influence the reality of teaching and learning activities.

Abimbade (1997) explained that, "the concept of teaching aids has gone through several evolutionary stages from the simple aids, instructional technology, media to communication and educational technology". This however, tells us that learning materials are not just objects or equipment used during teaching-learning process but they are those objects improvised by the teacher to make conceptual abstraction more concrete and practical to the learners. Orakwe (2000) "Instructional media today are very gradually finding their ways into the system where modern and versatile teachers are exploring new ways of transferring learning to the younger generation the use of prints, visuals and audios or various combination of these trios make up all we have in instructional media. Instructional media therefore are the information dissemination devices made up of prints radio picture including films, movies, photographs, etc, used in the for an easy transfer of learning".

Ema and Ajayi (2006) opined that, "without the teacher who is knowledgeable, learning materials cannot create change and progress. The only time it begins to make impact is when the teacher begins to make use of it and allows it to take over its values". This portrays the professional attributes of the teacher and general knowledge. Effective utilization is usually the result of a careful selection of the appropriate medium or

combination of media available by an effective teacher. It has been identified that, using learning resources to facilitate learning or instructions is not always the issue but how to use it and its availability for use. . Schools also can create positive climate by reaching out to the families and providing structures for them to become involved in school activities. The result will be effective school-family partnership that helps children to succeed in school and their future.

Killen (2006) has made the same observation on the shortage of learning resources in schools by indicating that; "the issue of resources may not be easy to resolve, but the important thing is that teachers should not use lack of resources as an excuse for not teaching well." The implication here is that alternatives are out there and teachers should refrain from being solely dependent on the school for ready-made materials, they should reach out to parents for local or improvised materials. Learning resources and materials are of immense importance to the total development of children and there is no alternative to it at early-year education.

Ibadan South-west Local Government Area is one of the 11 local government areas that constitute Ibadan land, the Largest black city in Africa. The area covers both urban and semi-urban areas. A close observation of the practices of the preschools and the lower primary schools in this area reveals a very poor availability and utilization of instructional materials in the teaching/learning activities. The submissions of the teachers working in these schools are that the materials are not available; because of safety, children are not taking out for site seen; teachers are not well remunerated to facilitate improvisation of materials and so on. Then, one keep wonder if the parents are aware of all these and if they know they can come to the aid of these school for the development of their children.

### Research Questions

Three major research questions that guided this study are:

- 1) To what extent does parent-school partnership exist in Early Childhood Centres in Ibadan south-west Local Government of Oyo State?
- 2) To what extent has parent-school partnership contributed to the availability of learning resources in Early Childhood Centres in the local government area?
- 3) To what extent has parent-school partnership contributed to the utilization of learning resources in Early Childhood Centres in the local government area?

The result of this study is expected to provide information on the extent to which parent-school partnership exist in ECE centres. The study is also expected to provide information as regards contribution of parents- school

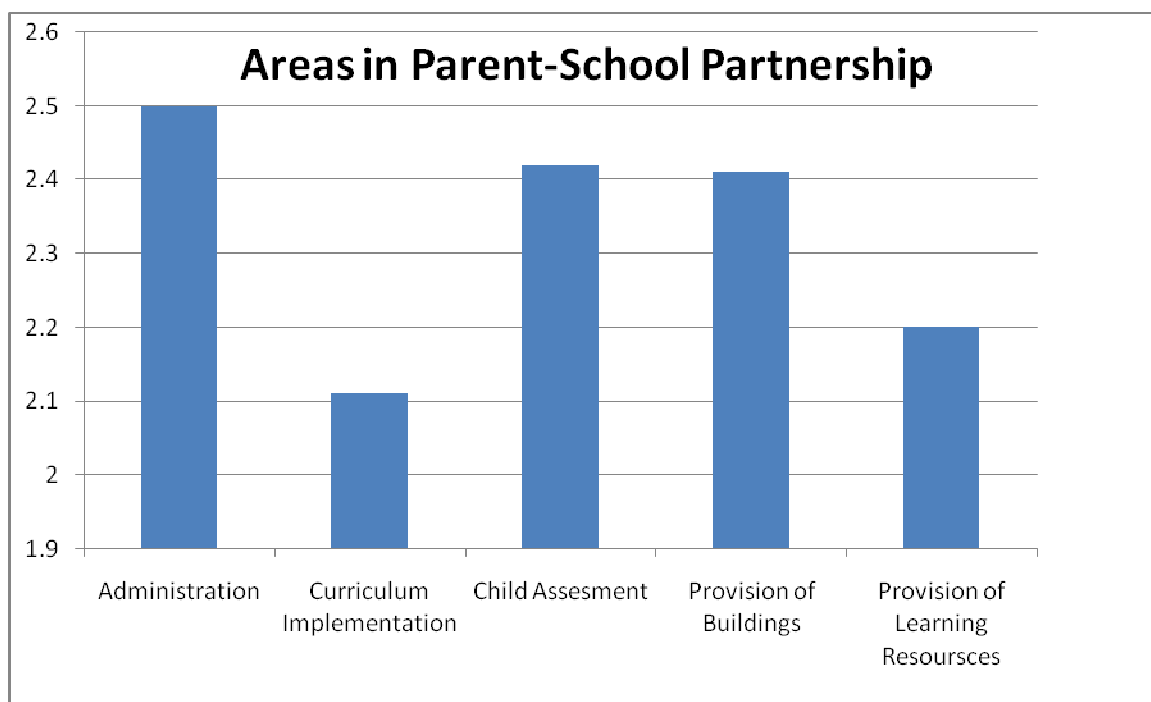
partnership to the availability and utilization of learning resources. This result of this study is also expected to create awareness that when schools and parents work together, both are strengthened in synergetic ways and make gains that outpace what either entity could accomplish on its own. In addition, the study would prove the fact that Children from families that are regularly and constructively involved in their education attain higher levels of academic and social competence.

This study covers parents, teachers, school administrators in early childhood centers in proportionate stratified randomly selected private and public schools in Ibadan South-West L.G.A. These schools were selected because of the existent and functional parent-teacher relationship through the Parent-Teacher Association. The study investigates the extent to which Parents and school collaborate to make resources available and also their utilization.

### METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research design, according to Adeyemo (2006), is a design that critically examines events, opinions, objects, attitudes, subjects or ideas with the aim of providing accurate information about the phenomenon being studied. The choice of this design enabled the researcher to critically, accurately and objectively describe the extent to which parents and school partner to make learning resources available and effectively utilized.

The population comprised all early childhood teachers, parents, school administrators and proprietors in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area of Oyo State. The local government was purposively selected because of the preschool practices observed in the area. That is, the almost non-availability and utilization of instructional resources that permeate the schools. The second criteria for selecting the local government area is that it features communities that can be classified as Urban, semi-urban and rural areas which represent all the types of communities found in the state. In the local government, the schools involved were selected using the disproportionate stratified sampling technique. Forty (40) public and private schools each were randomly selected .This was based on the criteria that the school (in the case of private school) has been registered with the government. The criterion for that of the public school was based on the fact that the schools have preschool sections. In the schools selected, four hundred parents were selected based on the recommendations of the teachers, all the available early childhood teachers including school administrators and proprietors were selected using purposive sampling technique because of their experience as early childhood educators. Although 400 parents were sampled, only 353 were retrieved and



**Figure 1.** A simple Bar chart showing the weighted average of parent-school partnership in the areas of Administration, Curriculum Implementation, Child Assessment, Provision of Buildings and Provision of Learning Resources.

214 teachers constituted the sample for this study.

Four self-designed instruments namely: (i) Parents Questionnaire on Parent school Partnership(PQPSP), (ii) Schools Questionnaires on parent school Partnership (SQPSP), (iii) Rating Scale for the Availability of learning resources(RSALR) and (iv) Rating Scale for the Utilization of learning resources (RSULR), were used for data collection.

PQPSP has two sections: section A has 5 items which measure the demographic data of the parents. The second section, section B has 29 items which sought information on the level of parents' involvement in parent-school partnership in the areas of Administration, Curriculum Implementation, Child Assessment, Provision of Buildings and Learning Resources. This section is on 4-point likert scale of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree and Strongly Agree.

SQPSP has two sections also: Section A measures the demographic data of the teachers (classroom teachers, school administrators and school owners). Section B was used to gather information on how well the school involves parents to partner with the school. This section is also on 4-point likert scale just as used in PQPSP.

RSALR was used to measure the available learning resources in the schools selected for the study. The rating scale is on a scale of 1-4 where 1 stands for 'No Extent' and 4 stands for 'High Extent'. But RSULR was used to collect data on the Utilization of learning

resources in the selected schools. The rating scale sought how parent-school partnership contributed to the utilization of learning resources on a scale of 1-4 also and 1 stands for 'Not utilized' while 4 stands for 'Adequately Utilized'.

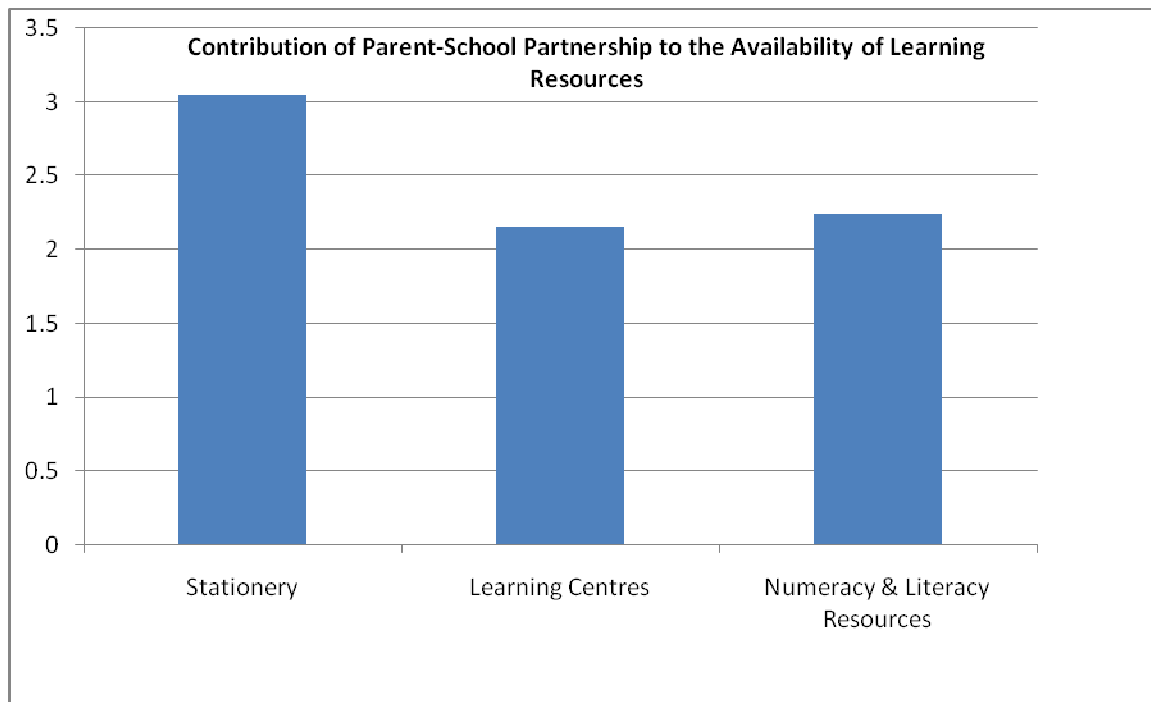
These instruments were administered with the assistance of four research assistants and this lasted for three weeks. The collected data were vetted and those found analysable were given to computer data analyst with instruction that Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) is used to analyse.

## RESULTS

### Research Question 1

To what extent does parent-school partnership exist in Early Childhood Centres in Ibadan south-west Local Government of Oyo State?

Figure 1 reveals the weighted average of parent-school partnership in the areas of curriculum implementation 2.11, child assessment 2.42, provision of buildings 2.41, provision of learning resources 2.20 and administration 2.50. On a 4-point likert scale, it is only the partnership on administration (2.5) that shows that the respondents agreed to its existence, others are not. This could be as a result of the fact that they parents and teacher on come together to discuss how and when



**Figure 2.** A Simple Bar Chart Showing The Weighted Average of the Contribution of Parent-School Partnership to the Availability of Stationery, Learning Centres and Numeracy and Literacy Resources.

school fees should be paid; when the school want to ask the parents to provide the basic needs of their child and when parents are invited for end-of-year party. Therefore, the extent of Parent-school partnership is generally low except the area of Administration which is just fair. This finding could be as a result of the fact that majority of the schools worry less about acquisition of instructional resources and rely solely on teaching given by the teachers to make the children learn. Not only this, this schools fail to partner with the parents in order to provide these instructional materials. This substantiates the submission of Decker et.al (2000) that most schools do not have comprehensive parent-school partnership scheme. The finding further corroborates the finding of White-Clark and Decker (1996) that there is a very low parents-school partnership on the school activities for the development of eighth-graders.

### Research Question 2

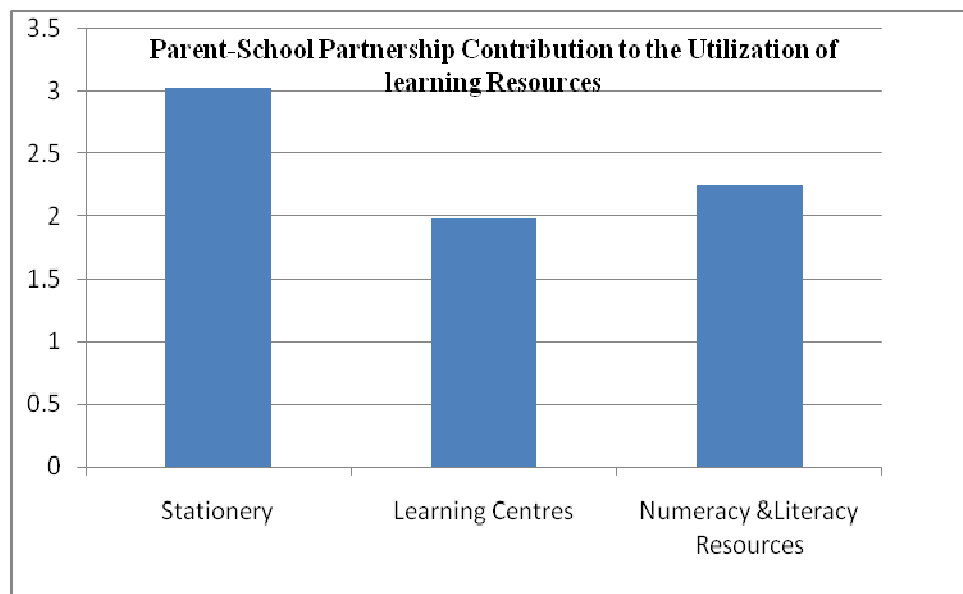
To what extent has parent-school partnership contributed to the availability of learning resources in Early Childhood Centres in the local government area?

Figure 2 reveals that the weighted average of parent-school partnership contribution to the availability of the following learning resources; availability of stationery (3.05), the availability of learning centres (2.15) and the availability of numeracy and literacy resources (2.24). On

a 4-point likert scale where 2 stands for low extent and 3 for fair extent; it is only the stationeries that are fairly available while availability of other resources are low. This may be because of the affordability of the basic stationery required of children in early childhood education centres which are most times solely provided by the parents. This finding revealed that the extent of parent-school partnership contribution to the availability of learning centres and numeracy and literacy resources in early childhood education centres is low. This may be as a result of the low partnership between the parents and the school: the school hardly solicit for resources and ideas from the parents and the parents also hardly bother to share such with the school. Parents may just be contented with whatever learning resources the school can afford. This might not be unconnected with the socio-economic standards of most of the parents in the local government area as this is confirmed in the research findings of Halfon and McLearn (2002) that says majority of young children are being reared in families where both parents work, where income and earning potential are less than what is needed.

### Research Question 3

To what extent has parent-school partnership contributed to the utilization of learning resources in Early Childhood Centres in the local government area?



**Figure 3.** A Simple Bar Chart Showing the Weighted Average of the Contribution of Parent-School Partnership to the Utilization of Stationery, Learning Centres and Numeracy and Literacy Resources.

Figure 3 reveals that the weighted average of parent-school partnership contribution to the utilization of the following learning resources; utilisation of stationery (3.02), the utilisation of learning centres (1.98) and the utilisation of numeracy and literacy resources (2.25). On a 4-point likert scale where 2 stands for 'low utilise' and 3 for 'fairly utilise'; it is only the stationery that were fairly utilised while others were low. The fairly utilization of the basic stationery could be as a result of the fact that they are the basic needs for teaching/learning is a formal school setting without which no schooling is taken place. The graph shows that parents-school partnership contribution to the utilization of learning centres and numeracy and literacy resources is low. This shows that parents' ideas on how to use these resources either not sought by the school or that the parents do not attempt to give such ideas (those that have them) to the schools of their children. Another reason could be that majority of the parents do not have the ideas of how to use the resources to make children learn. This is in line with the finding of Welsh et al. (2004) that, concerns about their own abilities prevent parents from helping children with their activities. It is corroborated by Williams et al. (2002), that asserted that parents are also concerned that they might be 'doing things wrong' because teaching methods have changed since they were at school.

### Summary of Findings

Based on the analysis, interpretation and discussion presented; the following are the summary of findings:

- Parent-school partnership in early childhood education centres only exist in the area of school administration but not in other areas like curriculum implementation, child assessment, provision of building and provision of learning resources.
- Parent-school partnership only contributed to the availability of stationeries but not to others like classroom learning centres and resources
- Parent-school partnership only contributed to the utilization of stationeries while the utilization of other resources is low.

### CONCLUSION

Though parent-school partnership exists in the early childhood centres, it has been found out to be low in the areas of curriculum implementation, child assessment, provision of buildings, and provision of learning resources while fair existence was recorded in the area of administration. The contribution of Parent-School Partnership to the availability and Utilization of stationery has been found out to be fair because of the affordability of the basic stationery that are most times solely provided by parents even by low income earners and its utilization is a must. The low availability and utilization of learning centres and numeracy and literacy learning resources could be attributed to the poor economy and lack of know-how of how best to utilize these resources.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended to all the stakeholders of pre-school education in Nigeria.

- 1) Parents should make their children's school activities top most on their priority list and be ready to share ideas and some discarded materials (that are useful for instruction) at home with the school. Parents should also be reminded that the total development of the children is joint effort of the teachers and the parents but teacher cannot do it alone.
- 2) For the parents to be aware of their responsibilities in their children schools, the schools administrators should invite the parents and educate them about it. During the PTA meetings, the discussion should not be only payment of school fees, donations during parties but should cover better partnership between the school and the parents in all areas of school activities. Literate parents should assist fellow illiterate parents by informing them of the latest developments in their children's schools to bridge the gap that language barrier might place on them.
- 3) The school should organize parent-school workshops to create an open channel of communication between parents and the school. These workshops would create a forum for parents to partake in the decision making of the school and render valuable services to the school.

If these are considered worthwhile and tried in the early childhood education centres in Ibadan south-east local government in particular and in Nigeria as a whole; there will be increase in the availability and utilisation of learning resources for effective development of the children.

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