

## Comparative Analysis of the Implementation of United Nations Rights-Based Approach to Early Childhood Education Programme in Two Anglophone Countries

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### Abstract

*The United Nations Rights-based approach to education programme, conceived in the year 2007, targets the holistic development of every child in every nation. However, since the adoption of the Education for All (EFA) protocol by signatory nations, the notion of rights based approach within the context of early childhood education appeared to remain a mere rhetoric. Using the UNESCO's EFA framework, this study carried out a comparative analysis of the implementation of the rights-based approach to early childhood education in two signatory West Africa nations: Nigeria and Ghana. Three research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The study involved four hundred and twenty (420) respondents comprising 200 teachers each from Lagos and Accra and 10 Education Officers selected from 10 Education Authorities in Lagos and Accra each. Adopting the descriptive survey design, the study collected data by means of questionnaires, interview schedule, and checklist guide. The quantitative data analysis involved percentages and ANOVA while the qualitative data were analysed using thematic approach. Findings of this study revealed that provision of adequate instructional materials remains a major challenge to the implementation of rights based approach to education in the two countries. The study concluded that the present status of implementation of ECE programmes curriculum in the two countries fall short of the EFA specified rights-based approach. Based on the findings, the study recommends, amongst others, that all duty-bearers should strive to address all the identified challenges limiting the implementation of rights-based approach to ECE.*

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Education, Education for All, Rights-based approach, Instructional materials

### Introduction

The introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999 as well as the Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) in 2006 which resulted has been acclaimed as a swift response to the yearning need to foster holistic development among the hitherto neglected category of children in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the gap between policy prescription and practice remained

wide. Related study by Ige et al (2010) indicated a wide gap between the number of schools, classrooms and school age population at the pre-primary level of education. The findings of the study also indicated that only about two thirds of the required number of primary schools was currently in place to support full enrolment of school age children. In some rural areas, the researchers noted serious problems of overpopulated classes, resulting in children receiving instruction under trees an inclemency condition which is a key factor in diminishing the motivation of children and parents for school attendance (Ige et al., 2010). It would be recalled in this connection that Nigeria still holds an unenviable record of accounting for 10.5 million out of school children, representing about 45 percent of the global total out-of- school children in the world (UNICEF/UNESCO, 2016).

For the Republic of Ghana, on the other hand, the situational analysis suggested that the country appeared to have shown more determined move in the direction of early childhood development (ECD). An evaluation conducted by UNICEF in 2011 confirms that as the first country to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Republic of Ghana has a record of attention to children's rights and development. For example, the Government of Ghana declared its commitment to addressing the developmental needs of children and achieving Millennium Development Goals through policies and plans including the National Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy, adopted in 2004. UNICEF key indicators for 2011 showed improvement in young children's education, health, and social welfare status in Ghana. Increases in pre-primary education attendance have been substantial and have exceeded national goals.

Education is considered a fundamental human right. Human rights education according to Fitriani (2022), is an educational and lifelong learning process focused on promoting and upholding human rights through knowledge, skills, attitudes, and actions. In relation to early childhood education, it includes the issue of access to education, provision of quality education to all pupils irrespective of their gender or families' background, and ensuring conducive learning environment for learners. This conforms to the rights based approach to Education for All which is a holistic strategy comprising access to education, quality (centered on human rights principles and values) and the school environment.

As part of efforts to give clarifications to the notion of rights within the context of development across all sectors, education inclusive, the United Nations' Development

Programmes (UNDP) in the year 2003 conceptualized the *Rights-based approach*- a conceptual, analytical and methodological framework for identifying, planning, implementing and monitoring development activities based on international human rights standards (Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation, UN, 2003). A rights-based approach tries to integrate the norms, standards and principles of the international human rights system into the plans, strategies, policies and the processes of development programming (UN, 2003). However, it should be noted that alongside policy prescriptions, the issue of implementation becomes germane (Igwe, 2011; Maduekwe, 2015). Despite the adoption of the United Nation's Rights-based approach to implementation of Early Childhood Education programme in Nigeria and Ghana, not much progress seems to have been made, especially in the effective implementation of the programme. Thereby, defeating the goals of the programme in the two countries. This study was therefore undertaken to assess the implementation of the rights-based approach to early childhood education programmes in Nigeria and Ghana.

Education remains an amorphous concept that cannot be straight jacketed. According to Osanyin (2012), education is the inculcation of intrapersonal values with intrapersonal skills. In support of this assertion, Maduekwe (2015) opined that education is the science and art in drawing out unlimited capacity at character molding, imparting and defending the knowledge of individuals. According to her, this impartation will definitely result in organizing the human minds for personal, national and global benefits. Other researchers such as Adegoke (2004) and Igwe (2011) are in consonance that education is a factor that induces change in one's total behaviour. From such change education becomes a bridge that allows the mind to cross from the unknown to the known, from chaos to order and from darkness to light.

The definition of early childhood education differs around the world. Some nations consider early childhood education as one that is given to children from birth to 6 years which is seen as a critical period that lays a foundation for later learning, while others view it as one which relates to the teaching of young children (formally and informally) from birth up until the age of eight. Accordingly, UNESCO (2012) defined early childhood education a range of processes and mechanism that sustains, supports and aids the holistic development of children from birth to age eight. ECE is a formal setting for children 0-8 years, synonymous with the crèches, nurseries, kindergarten and pre-primary. Worthy of note is the fact that the Nigerian National policy on

education, Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) views early childhood education as the education given in an educational institution to children prior to primary education. It is more than mere preparation for primary school, but aims at the total development of a child socially, emotionally, cognitively and physically to meet all their needs in these areas.

Globalization has affected every area of human endeavour. Wells (2009) asserted that the notion of childhood education has been reshaped radically through globalization. She contends that early childhood as seen in contemporary times is being considered as a necessary extension of compulsory education. Likewise, the global discourse on childhood shows that education is generally accepted as an important part of a child's foundation. Supporting this assertion, Obanyan (2004) affirmed that the concept of childhood continues to undergo tremendous transformation, especially in African countries like Ghana and Nigeria. In particular, he holds that the African philosophical ideology of childhood is considered as holding an egg in one's palm. Because these early years are a time of great change in a young life, and of such long lasting influence, ensuring the rights of the child must begin at the very start of life. Choices made and actions taken on behalf of children during this critical period affect not only how a child develops, but also how a country will progress.

According to the UNICEF report 2007, Rights Based Approach to Education is a programme developed for the realization of children's right to education and rights within education. From the convention on the right of the child, article 6 states that "every child has the inherent right to life". Thus, children are a bit like chickens-they need to be kept safe, guided, fed and loved. In line with this, education has also been formally recognized as a human right since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human rights in 1948. This has since been affirmed in numerous global human right treaties, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention against discrimination in Education (1960), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the Convention on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (1981).

In line with these treaties, UNICEF (2001) contends that right implies responsibilities to hold and respect the right of others. These responsibilities start from the individual within the family and community and extend through a hierarchy of social institutions up to the highest level of

government. Mujeri (2010) argued that right-based education is one that has well defined principles of participation, accountability, transparency, equality, non-discrimination and universality with significant value addition in any education sector. Rights of children include: protection from physical danger; adequate nutrition and health care; education; appropriate immunizations; things to look at, touch, hear, smell, and taste, appropriate language simulation encouragement of creativity and so on (UNICEF, 2001). Similarly, Forlin and West (2006) opined that EFA has a dual meaning as access to and equity in education which is further underpinned by the conviction that equitable education systems improve social cohesion which will create a society that is in consonance with the rights of children and a system that is rights-based. According to him, the right to education (access) and opportunities in education (equity) are part and parcel of the fundamental human rights of the child.

Although studies in right-based early childhood education has generated much research, a glance at the compendium of such investigations reveal a dearth of systematic and detailed studies in this area. In general, most of the studies reported in literature have too narrow scope or apply only to related curriculum bits, as will soon be demonstrated. According to UNESCO (2001), any successful right based education programme is expected to incorporate the principles of the Rights of the child, ensuring non-discrimination, the child's best interest, the right to survival and full development and participation of children in all matters affecting their lives. Lundy and McEvoy (2009) for instance argued in his study that the international children's right law provides not just legal imperative, but also a comprehensive frame work with which to assert for increased recognition of children as salient stakeholders in all aspects of service design.

In a similar vein, UNICEF (2001) undertook a quantitative and qualitative situation assessment and analysis on Children's and Women's Right in Nigeria. Findings revealed that the key right issues in early childhood in Nigeria are survival issues, developmental issues, protection issues and participation issues. More specifically, the study revealed the rising number of street children in highly precarious conditions, lack of books and toys for mental simulation, child abuse within the home, decline in immunization coverage rates in all parts of the country, and so on. They concluded by presenting the major strategic issues that should be taken into account in designing policies and programmes to improve the situation of children in Nigeria. This is the uniqueness of the study. It is worth noting that this view is not specifically a Nigerian phenomenon,

but to a greater of lesser extent, a global problem. In Ghana, the limited data available suggest that there is a wide gap between the number of schools and classrooms and the school age population at the lower primary level of education. It is estimated that only about two thirds of the required number of primary schools are currently in place to support full enrolment of primary school children (NPEC, E-2008).

Studies in relation to adoption of human rights-based approach to education exist. Broberg and Sano (2018) reported that adopting a human rights-based approach to education opens up new avenues for supporting the vulnerable groups. Similarly, Fitriani (2022) conducted a research on “A rights based approach to education: Promising approach for quality education” and argued that adopting a human rights-based approach to education does not present certain difficulties in terms of balancing the demands of many rights holders and addressing potential contradictions between the implementation of various rights or between rights and obligations. The researcher concluded that adoption of rights education programmes make a significant difference in people's lives, especially the children and young people.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this paper was to investigate the United Nations’ rights-based approach to early childhood education programme in two selected Anglophone West African countries. The specific objectives were to:

- i. examine the adequacy of the physical facilities and instructional materials in the schools for effective implementation of rights-based approach to ECE programme in Anglophone West African countries;
- ii. ascertain the opinions of teachers on the adequacy of the curriculum in selected Anglophone West African countries (Ghana and Nigeria) in relation to the intended goals of rights based approach to ECE; and
- iii. ascertain the level of classroom interactions in public primary schools in Nigeria and Ghana?

### **Research Questions**

- i. How adequate are the physical facilities and instructional materials in the schools for effective implementation of rights-based approach to ECE programme in Anglophone West African countries?

- ii. What are the opinions of teachers on the adequacy of the curriculum in selected Anglophone West African countries (Ghana and Nigeria) in relation to the intended goals of rights based approach to ECE?
- iii. What is the level of classroom interactions in public primary schools in Nigeria and Ghana?

### **Research Hypothesis**

This study tested the hypothesis below:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the level of implementation of rights-based approach to early childhood education programme in Nigeria and Ghana.

### **Methodology**

For the purpose of this study, the researcher adopted the descriptive survey method, while primary data were collected from a total of four hundred and twenty (420) respondents, using the Simple Random Sampling Technique. Teachers' Questionnaire on Rights-based Early Childhood Education Programme (TQRBECEP with 0.79 and 0.77 reliability values for Lagos and Accra respectively) was administered to 10 teachers each from twenty nursery/public primary schools in Lagos and same in Accra, given a total of 400 teachers from the two countries. Checklist Guide for Rights-based Early Childhood Education (CGRBECE) was used to assess the physical facilities of the schools using the adapted, National Minimum Standards for Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres and the Inclusive Education Programme (IEP) by selecting items based on the culture of both Ghana and Nigeria to determine the extent of compliance of classroom/school structures and facilities to rights-based approach to early childhood education across Anglophone West Africa. Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) model was adopted to observe the classroom interaction in Two (2) classes of Basic 3 levels randomly selected from each of 2 public primary schools in Lagos and same in Accra for the classroom interaction stage of the study. While Stakeholders' Interview Schedule on Rights-based Early Childhood Education Programme (SISRBECEP) was used as a guide to interview government education officers' awareness of the provision of the policy and strategic policy support for the implementation of Rights-based approach to ECE programme in each country. The quantitative data collected through the above instruments were analysed using percentages and ANOVA while the qualitative data were analysed using thematic approach.

**Results**

**Table 1 Percentage Distribution of the Sampled Respondents' Gender**

Respondents	Gender	NIGERIA		GHANA	
		N	%	N	%
Teachers	Male	78	39.0	80	43.2
	Female	122	61.0	105	56.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Education Officers	Male	6	60.0	5	50.0
	Female	4	40.0	5	50.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey

Table 1 shows the percentage distribution of the respondents' gender in Lagos and Accra. The table shows that in Lagos State, 78(39.0%) of the teachers were male and the majority (122: 61.0%) of them were female, while in Accra, 90(45.0%) of the teachers were male and the majority (110: 55.0%) of them were female. The table shows that in Lagos State, 6(60.0%) of the Education Officers were male and the remaining 4(40.0%) of them were female, while in Accra, 5(50.0%) of the education officers were male and the remaining 5(50.0%) of them were female.

**Research Question One:** How adequate are the physical and instructional materials in the schools for implementation of rights-based approach to ECE programme in Anglophone West African countries?

A checklist guide was deployed in assessing the adequacy of facilities in selected schools in Lagos and Accra.

**Table 2: Assessment of school physical facilities and instructional materials for Rights Based Early Childhood Education Implementation**

S/N	Item	Nigeria		Ghana	
		Adequate	Inadequate	Adequate	Inadequate
1	Purpose built school	18(90%)	2(10%)	17(85%)	3(15%)
2	Safe environment	16(77.5%)	4(22.5%)	15(75%)	5(25%)
3	Admission and Withdrawal register	18(90%)	2(10%)	17(85%)	3(15%)
4	Child Folder	16(80%)	4(20%)	15(75%)	5(25%)
5	Attendance register	18(90%)	2(10%)	19(95%)	1(5%)
6	Movement books	16(80%)	4(20%)	19(95%)	1(5%)
7	Continuous assessment/tests resort	18(90%)	2(10%)	19(95%)	1(5%)
8	School Diary	18(90%)	2(10%)	18(90%)	2(10%)
9	Curriculum	18(90%)	2(10%)	17(85%)	3(15%)
10	Chalk board	18(90%)	2(10%)	19(95%)	1(5%)
11	Charts	7(35%)	13(65%)	11(55%)	9(45%)
12	Posters	8(40%)	12(60%)	13(65%)	7(35%)



S/N	Item	Nigeria		Ghana	
		Adequate	Inadequate	Adequate	Inadequate
13	Flash cards	6(30%)	14(70%)	12(60%)	8(40%)
14	Counters	18(90%)	2(10%)	17(85%)	3(15%)
15	Story Books	2(10%)	18(90%)	11(55%)	9(45%)
16	Audio/Visual Aids	8(40%)	12(60%)	8(40%)	12(60%)
17	Computers	9(45%)	11(55%)	9(45%)	11(55%)
18	Printers	6(30%)	14(70%)	7(35%)	13(65%)
19	Play corner	6(30%)	14(70%)	8(40%)	12(60%)
20	Art work corner	5(25%)	15(75%)	9(45%)	11(55%)
21	Library	5(25%)	15(75%)	7(35%)	13(65%)
22	Sickbay	5(25%)	15(75%)	8(40%)	12(60%)
23	First Aid Box	9(45%)	11(55%)	7(35%)	13(65%)
24	Wheel Chairs	1(5%)	19(95%)	2(10%)	18(90%)
25	Braille	1(5%)	19(95%)	2(10%)	18(90%)
26	Crutches	1(5%)	19(95%)	2(10%)	18(90%)
27	Ramps	2(10%)	18(90%)	4(20%)	16(80%)
28	Hearing Aid	1(5%)	19(95%)	2(10%)	18(90%)

Evidence from Table 2 shows the results obtained per item in the assessment of school physical facilities and instructional materials for rights based early childhood education implementation in Lagos and Ghana. According to the table, early childhood selected public schools in Lagos had fairly adequate materials/facilities in such a way that the schools were purposely built and the environment was safe. The table also shows that the public schools in Lagos possessed adequate admission/withdrawal register, child folder, attendance register, movement books, continuous assessment/tests records, school diary, curriculum, chalk board, charts, posters, counters, story books and library. The table further establishes the fact that public schools in Lagos had inadequate flash cards, audio/visual aids, computers, printers, play corners, artwork corner, sick bay, first aid box. Table 2 clearly shows that wheel chairs, Braille, crutches, ramps and hearing aids were also inadequate in Lagos early childhood public schools.

On the other hand, for Accra selected schools observed, results in Table 2 show that the materials/facilities were fairly adequate which implies that the schools were purposely built and the environment was safe. Further assessment revealed that the public schools in Accra possessed at satisfactory level admission/withdrawal register, child folder, attendance register, movement books, continuous assessment/tests records, school diary, curriculum, chalk board, charts, flash cards, counters and first Aid Box. Items such as posters, story books, audio/visual aids, printers,

library, sick bay and ramps were not adequately found. Items such as computers, play corner, art-work corner, wheel chairs, Braille, crutches and hearing aids were also inadequate.

**Research Question Two:** What are the opinions of teachers on the adequacy of the specified curriculum in selected Anglophone West African countries (Ghana and Nigeria) in relation to the intended goals of rights based approach to ECE?

**Table 3: Opinions of Teachers on the Adequacy of Rights-Based Approach to Early Childhood Education Curriculum in Ghana and Nigeria Public Schools**

S/N	Item	Nigeria		Ghana	
		A	D	A	D
1	Curriculum supports inclusive system of education	145(72.5%)	55(27.5%)	145(72.5%)	55(27.5%)
2	Content of ECE programme is adequately spelt out	135(67.5%)	65(22.5%)	140(70%)	60(30%)
3	Curriculum designed to help children with diverse needs	125(62.5%)	75(37.5%)	140(70%)	60(30%)
4	Curriculum is periodically modified in line with global policies	150(75%)	50(25%)	145(72.5%)	55(27.5%)
5	Adequate time allotted for integrating child rights education	160(80%)	40(20%)	140(70%)	60(30%)
6	Overcrowded classrooms hamper implementation of rights- based curriculum	145(72.5%)	55(27.5%)	155(77.5%)	45(22.5%)
7	Curriculum does not embody key elements of an inclusive curriculum	135(67.5%)	65(22.5%)	145(72.5%)	55(27.5%)
8	Apt methods of instruction not clearly spelt out in curriculum	135(67.5%)	65(22.5%)	140(70%)	60(30%)
9	Implementation procedure for rights-based education not spelt out in the curriculum	135(67.5%)	65(22.5%)	140(70%)	60(30%)
10	Instructional materials for effective implementation not available	140(70%)	60(30%)	140(70%)	60(30%)

A= Agree, D= Disagree

Evidence from Table 3 shows the opinions of teachers on the adequacy of the specified curriculum in selected Anglophone West African Countries (Ghana and Nigeria) in relation to the intended goals of rights based approach to early childhood education. Teachers from Nigeria agreed strongly that curriculum was periodically modified in line with global policies and adequate time was allocated for integration of child rights education while their counterparts in Ghana agreed strongly that overcrowded classrooms hampered implementation of rights-based curriculum in public schools. Teachers from both countries agreed that the curriculum of rights based approach to early childhood education were not adequately spelt out and that implementation procedure was also not specified. They also agreed that early years' curriculum as far as rights-based approach to early childhood education was concerned, was also defective in terms of non-inclusion of appropriate instructional materials, instructional methods, discrimination, key elements of an inclusive curriculum and overcrowded classrooms.

**Research Question Three:** What is the level of classroom interactions in public primary schools in Nigeria and Ghana?

**Table 4: Analysis of classroom interactions in public primary schools in Nigeria and Ghana**

Variable	Item	Nigeria		Ghana	
		BA	AA	BA	AA
Teacher	Motivates	6(60%)	4(40%)	5(50%)	5(50%)
	Encourages	6(60%)	4(40%)	6(60%)	4(40%)
	Accepts initiation	6(60%)	4(40%)	6(60%)	4(40%)
	Lectures	5(50%)	5(50%)	7(70%)	3(30%)
	Encourages group projects	6(60%)	4(40%)	6(60%)	4(40%)
	Initiates musical activities	6(60%)	4(40%)	7(70%)	3(30%)
	Uses play-way	7(70%)	3(30%)	8(80%)	2(20%)
	Allows discussion	5(50%)	5(50%)	7(70%)	3(30%)
	Differentiated learning	6(60%)	4(40%)	6(60%)	4(40%)
	Guides	6(60%)	4(40%)	7(30%)	3(30%)
	Initiates drawing activities	6(60%)	4(40%)	8(80%)	2(20%)
	Uses observation	6(60%)	4(40%)	6(60)	4(40%)
	Allows exploration	6(60%)	4(40%)	6(60%)	4(40%)
	Takes field trips	6(60%)	4(40%)	6(60%)	4(40%)
	Uses dramatization	6(60%)	4(40%)	6(60%)	4(40%)
	Reinforces	5(50%)	5(50%)	7(70%)	3(30%)
Pupil	Team work	6(60%)	4(40%)	7(70%)	3(30%)
	Pupil talk response	5(50%)	5(50%)	3(30%)	7(70%)
	Pupil talk initiation	7(70%)	3(30%)	8(80%)	2(20%)
	Play	5(50%)	5(50%)	3(30%)	7(70%)
	Singing	6(60%)	4(40%)	4(40%)	6(60%)
Reaction	Silence	5(50%)	5(50%)	3(30%)	7(70%)
	Lack of concentration	4(40%)	6(60%)	4(40%)	6(60%)
	Distraction	3(30%)	7(70%)	4(40%)	6(60%)
	Confusion	5(50%)	5(50%)	5(50%)	5(50%)
	Sleeping	4(40%)	6(60%)	6(60%)	4(40%)
	Arguments/quarrels	5(50%)	5(50%)	3(30%)	7(70%)
	Hunger	5(50%)	5(50%)	7(70%)	3(30%)

**BA=Below Average AA=Above Average**

Evidence from Table 4 shows the rating of teachers during rights-based classroom interaction in public schools in Nigeria and Ghana. The results showed that teachers observed in Nigeria rated below average in 15 out of 16 items. It was discovered that pupils were lectured instead of being taught effectively which affected their activities during classroom interaction. It was also

discovered that pupils exhibited several negative reactions during the lessons which included distractions, sleeping and lack of concentration. Conclusively, the level of classroom interactions in the early years' classroom lessons in Nigeria public schools was very poor and no learning can be effective under such situations. It was discovered from the table that teachers of early childhood classrooms in Ghana lectured the pupils more while they fairly motivated, encouraged and initiated drawing activities. Pupils averagely engaged in plays, singing and talk responses during lessons while teamwork and initiation were done rarely. Like Nigeria, Ghana showed negative reactions by pupils in early childhood classrooms during lessons which could be concluded that the level of classroom interaction in rights-based early childhood public schools in Ghana is poor but better than what is obtainable in Nigeria.

### Testing of Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the level of implementation of rights-based approach to early childhood education programme in Nigeria and Ghana. This hypothesis is tested with One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 significant level and the result is displayed on Table 5.

**Table 5: Descriptive and ANOVA Summary Data of Implementation level of Rights-Based Approach to Early Childhood Education Programme in Nigeria and Ghana**

Country	N	Mean	SD		
Ghana	415	59.20	7.53		
Nigeria	430	62.70	10.34		
Total	845	60.92	9.19		
Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F-Cal	F-Crit
Between Groups	2599.23	1	2599.23	3.19	3.84
Within Groups	686083.98	843	813.86		
Total	688683.21	844			

### Not significant at 0.05

It is evident from Table 5 that a calculated F-value of 3.19 resulted as the difference in the level of implementation of right-based approach to early childhood education in Nigeria and Ghana. This F-value is statistically insignificant since it is less than the critical F-value of 3.84 given 1 and 843 degrees of freedom at 0.05 significant level. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was upheld while the alternative hypothesis was rejected which implies that implementation of rights based approach to early childhood education programme is inadequate in Anglophone West African Countries.

### Qualitative Analysis

To further validate the responses of the teachers to the questionnaires, educational officers from Ghana and Nigeria were interviewed and the summary of the interviewees' opinions is presented under the theme below:

**Theme:** Situation assessment and analysis (policy and practice regarding children enrolment, attendance, completion and attainment)

**Question:** *“How would you assess the situation in your country in terms of the policy and practice regarding children enrolment, attendance, completion and attainment of rights-based approach early childhood education?”*

**EXCERPTS:**

**Respondents A** *“It is the right of every child to go to school and government should make sure this happens by building schools where they can reach...”*

**Respondents B** *“Government wants to do the right things but sometimes they are restricted by not having enough money...”*

**Respondents C** *“It is true that if all these things are put in place more children will go to school...”*  
*“Many of us have no choice; we have to accept the poor condition”*

Respondents A, B & C in both countries agreed that making non-discriminatory education accessible to all children should be regarded as the rights of every child. They further affirmed that governments in both countries are committed to policy and practice of rights based early childhood education (ECE). They also opined that rights-based approach to education can encourage attrition and inclusion in schools apart from being a worthwhile innovation that increases children confidence and accord all children equal opportunity to education thereby reducing illiteracy significantly from the countries. They rated governments' efforts on children enrolment, attendance, completion and attainment in education as satisfactory and fairly adequate given their peculiar sociopolitical situation. They observed that government policies on children enrolment needed improvement as there is inconsistency in some areas which is detrimental to effective implementation of rights-based child education.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The analysis of research question one revealed that the physical and instructional materials in the schools for the implementation of rights-based approach to ECE programme in Anglophone

West African countries are not adequate. The individual analysis of the items related to question one revealed that early years' curriculum as far as rights-based approach to early childhood education was defective in terms of non-inclusion of appropriate instructional materials, instructional methods, discrimination, key elements of an inclusive curriculum and overcrowded classrooms. This implies that rights-based approach to Early Childhood Education programme is not implemented with the appropriate and adequate instructional materials in Nigeria and Ghana. Supporting the finding of this study, Gerdes et al. (2013) reported that children did not have access to a variety of materials which will provide them with the opportunities to engage in creative expression among others. Similarly, Amadioha (2017) found among others that the challenges of early childhood education in Nigeria include overcrowded classes and inadequate trained teachers and care givers.

The analysis of the research question two showed that the teachers were of the opinions that the specified curriculum in selected Anglophone West African countries (Ghana and Nigeria) in relation to the intended goals of rights based approach to ECE was not adequate. Specifically, the teachers in both countries pointed out that overcrowded classrooms hampered implementation of rights-based curriculum in public the schools. Despite the findings of Covell (2010) who discovered that the rights education programme was effective in engaging students, and reported that children in rights respecting schools were more engaged in the learning process. Teachers from Nigeria and Ghana were of the opinions that the curriculum of rights based approach to early childhood education were not adequately spelt out and that implementation procedure was also not specified. They were also of the opinion that early years' curriculum as far as rights-based approach to early childhood education was concerned, was also defective in terms of non-inclusion of appropriate instructional materials, instructional methods, discrimination, key elements of an inclusive curriculum and overcrowded classrooms.

The third research question revealed that the level of classroom interaction in rights-based early childhood public schools in the selected Anglophone West African countries (Ghana and Nigeria) was poor. For instance, it was discovered that teachers of early childhood classrooms in Ghana and Nigeria lectured the pupils which hardly motivated or encouraged the pupils to learn effectively in the classroom. Consequently, pupils in both countries showed negative reactions in early childhood classrooms during lessons. Thus, the level of classroom interaction in rights-based

early childhood public schools in Nigeria and Ghana is poor. This is contrary to the findings of Covell (2010) who discovered that the rights education programme was effective in engaging students, and reported that children in rights respecting schools were more engaged in the learning process. Similarly, Fitriani (2022) argued that adopting a human rights-based approach to education does present certain difficulties in terms of balancing the demands of many rights holders and addressing potential contradictions between the implementation of various rights or between rights and obligations. The researcher concluded that rights education programmes make a significant difference in people's lives, especially in the lives of the young people and the children. This implies that the level of classroom interaction in rights-based early childhood in the public schools in Ghana and Nigeria will make significance positive difference in the lives of their pupils if the programme is well implemented.

### **Conclusion**

The adoption and implementation of rights-based approach to ECE programme are fundamentals to all round development of every child. It enables the children to be equipped with right cognitive, physical, social and emotional skills which serve as foundation for further education. Since, the levels of classroom interactions in rights-based early childhood education programme of public schools in Nigeria and Ghana are poor, it can be concluded that the United Nations' rights-based approach to Early Childhood Education programme in the two selected Anglophone West African countries (Nigeria and Ghana) are not properly implemented. This could be an impediment to the children's ability to proceed to other levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary) in the two countries if not managed properly.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the study recommends:

- i. Government should provide adequate the physical and instructional materials in the schools for implementation of rights-based approach to ECE programme in Anglophone West African countries.
- ii. Curriculum developer/Ministry of Education should review the existing early years' curriculum to include specification of appropriate instructional materials, effective instructional methods, non-discriminatory activities, and major elements of an inclusive curriculum.

- iii. Teachers should improve the level of classroom interactions in rights-based early childhood public schools in Nigeria and Ghana for effective learning to take place among the pupils.

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