

**EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION (ECCE) PRE-SERVICE
TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE OF AND ATTITUDE TO CORE SOCIETAL
VALUES (CSVs) IN THE SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Social and Moral Development was introduced as a course into the curriculum of Colleges of Education to expose ECCE pre-service teachers to the nation's core values. This is because they are expected to assist young children in acquiring desirable core societal attributes after their training. However, the ECCE pre-service teachers display undesirable societal attributes. There is need therefore to find out if they have sufficient knowledge of the core values or if they have the right attitude towards them. Explanatory sequential mixed methods design was adopted. Three hundred and fifteen ECCE pre-service teachers constituted the sample. Instruments used were "Test on Core Societal Values (TCSV)", "Core Societal Values Attitude Scale (CSVAS)", Field Note and Audio Recorder. The unstructured interview method was used for collection of qualitative data which were triangulated with the quantitative ones. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data were analysed through narrative technique. Quantitative results revealed the teachers had very low knowledge of the CSVs and neutral attitude towards them. The qualitative result, on the other hand, indicated negative attitude towards the CSVs. The pre-service teachers would find it very difficult to assist young children in acquiring desirable core societal attributes when they take up appointment as caregivers. Lecturers in colleges of education need to explore other active learning methods for the teaching and learning of CSVs. Experts in the field

should come up with research efforts to showcase practical ways by which the CSVs can be meaningfully taught to the ECCE pre-service teachers.

Keywords: Core societal values, Knowledge, Attitude, Desirable societal attributes

Introduction

The early childhood period is a period of remarkable growth and development for children. This informs the reason for capturing the issue of access to quality early childhood development and care for all children in one of the outcome targets of goal 4 of sustainable development goals (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, 2016). Today, the commonly accepted view is that no other period has as much influence on shaping the human mind, character and body as the early childhood period. It is the period when character is formed and when most learning becomes permanent. The early childhood period is therefore very crucial for setting up the foundation for good and socially acceptable characters.

The early childhood period is so important to the development of good and socially acceptable characters that every society of the world - be it literate or non-literate - usually devise means to educate or guide their children towards the development of good and desirable characters during this period. For instance in traditional African societies, the moral training of the child starts as early as possible in the family (Akinbote, 2006). Zulu (2006), Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang (2013) aver that the moral training with the development of good character is one of the major purposes of the education given to the child in African traditional societies. This, according to Akinbote (2006), is because everybody and in fact the society wants the child to be morally upright. Strong moral values are successfully enforced because the tasks of enforcing or inculcating these are not limited to the immediate parents but all other members of the family and community are involved (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013). This implies that every adult members of the society including immediate parents of the child performed the role of teachers and caregivers.

It is interesting to note that the present form of western education (Early Childhood Education) which modern societies give to young children equally has the focus of building good and desirable characters including moral values in young children. It is for this reason that the federal government stated one of the objectives of early childhood education as “to inculcate social, moral norms and values” (Federal Government of Nigeria, FGN, 2013). Meanwhile, just as parents and other community members performed the roles of guidance of social and moral values in traditional African societies, the western system of educating children also requires knowledgeable and well prepared professionals who can successfully guide children to develop desirable characters and to maximise their development. This is the reason for the step that was taken by the federal government of Nigeria to include a course known as Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in the curriculum of Colleges of Education. The federal

government stated one of the most important objectives of the course as “to assist the child to acquire desirable societal attributes such as good morals, norms and values” (FGN, 2012).

In order to further assist the pre-service teachers to achieve the important objective mentioned above, a course titled “ECE 122 - Social and Moral Development ” was made part of the ECCE curriculum in colleges of education to expose the pre-service teachers to cherished Core Societal Values (CSVs) of the nation. These CSVs, according to Sowe (2013) and Nebo (2015) are categorical moral standards and beliefs that guide people’s decision making, life goals and modes of behaviour. They are the natural ways of life among the African people and Nigeria in particular. When a person allows these CSVs to guide his/her behaviours, he/she is judged as a morally upright individual. It is such an individual that is referred to as “*Omólúàbí*” among the Yorubas, that is, a person of excellent and good character (Bamisaye, 2009). It is expected that exposing the pre-service teachers to this course would afford them the greater opportunity to gain appropriate knowledge and competencies in CSVs, which they can apply to assist children in acquiring desirable societal attributes. Besides, it is hoped that exposing the pre-service teachers to the CSVs would help them to exhibit desirable social behaviours that are required for their professional duty.

In spite of the important role expected to be played by the course, the behaviours and manners exhibited by the ECCE pre-service teachers do not indicate that they are exposed to the course at all. A painstaking observation has revealed that majority of the ECCE pre-service teachers, in both federal and state colleges of education in the South-West Nigeria, usually display behaviours that reflect negative values such as dishonesty, laziness, immorality, lack of ethics, disrespect for lecturers and constituted authorities, examination fraud, intolerance, indiscipline, disobedience and impatience among others. This is likely to be one of the contributing factors to the laments of some authors that there are several cases of negative values and moral decadence in our tertiary institutions (Ajayi and Adeniji, 2009; Fayokun, Adedeji, Oyebade, 2009; Omede, 2011; Asaju, 2013; Jekayinfa, 2013; Whawo, 2015).

With the fact that the pre-service teachers exhibit undesirable social behaviours, one is tempted to conclude that they have negative attitude to the CSVs. After all, Pickens (2005) had noted that a person’s attitude can be viewed from his or her resulting behavior. Karaduman (2011) sees attitude as a positive or negative evaluation regarding people, events, ideas, objects or any other thing within a person’s environment. There is a strong probability that the pre-service teachers hold a negative evaluation regarding the CSVs and this could be why it is reflecting in the kind of behaviours that they exhibit. Apart from the issue of attitude, one may also be tempted to say that the pre-service teachers do not have sufficient knowledge of the CSVs. Online Oxford Dictionary (2010) refers to knowledge as the facts, information and skills acquired by a person through experience or education. There is a very strong possibility that the ECCE pre-service teachers do not have the relevant experience, including the right kind of education, which should have equipped them with appropriate facts, information and skills on the CSVs.

This again could be one of the reasons for their display of behaviours that reflect negative core values.

Meanwhile, if the assumptions about the attitude and knowledge of the ECCE pre-service teachers are true, the consequence may be grievous especially after they might have taken up appointment as caregivers in early childhood centres. They may find it difficult to display appropriate knowledge and competencies needed for assisting children to acquire desirable societal attributes during the early childhood period, when most behaviours and learning become permanent. Such children may thus grow up exhibiting socially unacceptable behaviours. Likewise, the pre-service teachers could transfer the negative attitude to young children. Again, the pre-service teachers may equally expose young children inappropriately to the CSVs. In order to avert all these unpleasant consequences, it is imperative therefore to ascertain if the pre-service teachers truly have negative attitude and poor knowledge regarding the CSVs. This is particularly needed so that efforts could be made to address the situation. This study thus examined ECCE pre-service teachers' attitude to and knowledge of CSVs.

Research Questions

1. What is ECCE pre-service teachers' level of knowledge regarding core societal values?
2. What is the attitude of ECCE pre-service teachers towards core societal values?

Methodology

The researchers adopted the explanatory sequential design within the mixed method approach paradigm. The population of the study comprised all ECCE pre-service teachers in South-West Nigeria. The four federal colleges of education in the South-West Nigeria (Federal College of Education, Special Oyo, Federal College of Education, Osiele, Abeokuta, Federal College of Education, Akoka, Lagos and Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo) were sampled for the study. Of these four colleges, only three were purposively selected based on the criteria that they are offering NCE programme in ECCE. In each of the schools selected, students in year 2 and 3 were also purposively selected based on the fact that they had been exposed to the course titled "Social and Moral Development" in the second semester of their year 1, and based on their availability. In all, a total of 315 students were selected as sample for the study

The researchers used five major instruments for data collection. Four of the instruments were self-designed. They are "Test on Core Societal Values (TCSV)", "Core Societal Values Attitude Scale (CSVAS)", Field Note Template (FNT) and Unstructured Interview Questions Guide (UIQG). The fifth is an Audio Recorder. The CSVAS had two sections – A and B. The section A was based on gender and age of the respondents while the section B had 15 items which measured the pre-service teachers' attitude towards the CSVs. The response types adopted for the section B are that of Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The positively worded items were scored as 4, 3, 2 and 1 while the negatively worded ones were scored in reverse order. The

TCSV contained 25 questions which measured the pre-service teachers' knowledge of CSV. The questions were based on the meaning, characteristics, sources and relevance of core societal values. Sixteen of the questions were open-ended while the remaining nine were alternative choice items. Each of the questions was score 4 marks to give a total of 100 marks. The test items were generated around three levels of cognitive domain put forward by the Education Testing Services of United States of America, and used in Nigeria by Okpala (1985) and Oduwaiye (2009). These are Remembering, Understanding and Thinking. The researchers designed the FNT for the purpose of documenting oral responses that were received during the interview that the researchers conducted with some selected pre-service teachers. It was template with two sections. Section A had information on the date, purpose of recording and recorders' information. Section B is a blank space in which oral responses from the pre-service teachers were written. The responses were written either verbatim or paraphrased. The UIQG was designed to serve as prompts for eliciting responses from ECCE pre-service teachers during the interview that the researchers conducted. UIQG contained seven unstructured interview questions (three on knowledge and 4 on attitude) that were generated to elicit information on the ECE pre-service teachers' knowledge of the CSVs and their attitude towards them. The audio recorder was used for recording the oral responses of the pre-service teachers during the interview.

The researchers subjected four of the instruments (TCSV, CSVAS, FNT, UIQG) to scrutiny under the expertise of two (2) experienced researchers and three (3) experts in the field of Early Childhood Education. Twenty copies of TCSV and CSVAS were administered on twenty ECCE pre-service teachers in Oyo State College of Education, Eruwa Campus. The data collected for TCSV subjected to using Kuder-Richardson 20 reliability test and an index of 0.73 was obtained. Also, the data collected on CSVAS was subjected to reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha technique and a reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained

The researchers, together with five (5) trained research assistants, collected the data. After securing permission from the Head of the Department of ECCE in the three schools selected, the TCSV and CSVAS were administered on the ECCE pre-service teachers by the researchers and the research assistants. After administering both TCSV and CSVAS, at least 20 of the pre-service teachers were implored to participate in an unstructured interview section. The guide questions in UIQG were used to elicit relevant responses that address the pre-service teachers' knowledge of the CSVs and their attitude towards them were asked. The interview provided room for collection of qualitative data. The quantitative data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage, mean and standard deviation while qualitative data were analysed through narrative technique after being subjected to transcription and summarization.

Results

Research Question 1: What is ECCE pre-service teachers’ level of knowledge regarding core societal values?

Table 1: ECCE Pre-Service Teachers’ Level of Knowledge regarding Core Societal Values

Score	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
0 – 19	223	70.9		
20 – 39	92	29.1		
40 – 59	0	0.0	14.50	8.40
60 – 79	0	0.0		
80 – 100	0	0.0		
Total	315	100		

N = 315

Mark Obtainable = 100

Decision Value: **Low** (\bar{x} = 0.00-29.00), **Average** (\bar{x} = 30.00-59.00), **High** (\bar{x} 60.00-100.00)

Table 1 shows the ECCE pre-service teachers’ level of knowledge of core societal values. The result of the pre-service teachers’ performance in the knowledge test shows that 70.9% of the pre-service teachers scored 0 to 19 on the while remaining who constitute 29.1% scored 20 to 39. The table further shows that none of the pre-service teachers scored between 40 and 100. The overall mean score of the pre-service teachers’ knowledge test is 14.50 (a value within the range of decision value for low) with standard deviation value of 8.40. Based on this result and in line with the decision value, it can be inferred that the pre-service teachers’ have low knowledge of CSVs.

Qualitative Result on Research Question 1

The qualitative result that was generated based on research question 1 revealed that the ECCE pre-service teachers had very low level of knowledge regarding the CSVs. When asked to mention the CSVs known to them during the interview section that was conducted, many of the ECCE pre-service teachers failed to mention at least three CSVs successfully. Majority of them only mentioned respect, greetings and humility. They failed to mention most of the ones identified in the course titled “Social and Moral Development” which they had been exposed to. It is only about 3% of those interviewed that mention other CSVs like dignity of labour, perseverance, respect to constituted authority, hardwork and loyalty.

Research Question 2: What is the attitude of ECCE pre-service teachers towards core societal values?

Table 2: *Attitude of Early Childhood Care and Education Pre-Service Teachers towards Core Societal Values*

Item	Mean	Std.
I feel more comfortable and happier when learning about Core Societal Values CSV).	1.80	.77
I feel I should spend more time to learn about CSV.	1.78	.66
I am less likely to attend class whenever the course on CSV is to be taught.	2.25	.96
I think I should continue to learn about CSV even after my training here in the college.	2.64	1.00
I may not be able to assist children effectively to acquire desirable societal attributes like good morals, norms and values If I do not learn about CSV.	2.66	.93
I do not mind attending special training that will teach me more about CSV.	1.71	.72
I wish to be exposed to more contents on CSV during my training in ECCE.	1.68	.75
I do not feel happy and relaxed whenever it is time to discuss issues on CSV.	2.57	1.00
I feel that learning about and exhibiting CSV may make me behave in an old-fashioned way.	1.71	.69
I do not mind going to knowledgeable elders in my community to learn more about CSV.	1.92	.89
I look forward always to discussing issues that are centered on CSV.	1.78	.87
My exposure to CSV seems to be too poor so I wish to learn more about it.	3.00	1.03
I will be wasting my precious time if I make efforts to learn more about CSV after my training in this college.	1.68	.74
I think the course on CSV should not have been included in ECCE training programme in the college.	1.97	1.02
I think knowing more about CSV will help me to behave in more socially acceptable ways.	1.91	.71
Weighted Average		2.07

N = 315

Key: Positive Items: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree
Negative Items: 4 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Disagree, 2 = Agree, 1 = Strongly Agree
Decision Value: *Negative* = 0.00-1.44, *Neutral* = 1.45-2.44, *Positive* = 2.45-4.00

Table 2 shows the attitude of early childhood care and education pre-service teachers to core societal values (CSVs). The table shows that the pre-service teachers agreed with the following positively worded items that they think they should continue to learn about CSVs even after their training in the college ($\bar{x} = 2.64$), that they may not be able to assist children effectively to acquire desirable societal attributes like good morals, norms and values if they do not learn about CSVs ($\bar{x} = 2.66$), that they do not feel happy and relaxed whenever it is time to discuss issues on CSVs ($\bar{x} = 2.57$), that they feel more comfortable and happier when learning about CSVs ($\bar{x} = 2.50$) and their exposure to CSVs seems to be too poor so they wish to learn more about it ($\bar{x} = 3.00$). The table further shows that the pre-service teachers disagreed with the following positively worded items: I feel more comfortable and happier when learning about CSVs ($\bar{x} = 1.80$), I feel I should spend more time to learn about CSVs ($\bar{x} = 1.78$), I do not mind attending special training that will teach me more about CSVs ($\bar{x} = 1.71$), I wish to be exposed to more contents on CSVs during my training in ECCE ($\bar{x} = 1.68$), I do not mind going to knowledgeable elders in my community to learn more about CSVs ($\bar{x} = 1.92$), I look forward always to discussing issues that are centered on CSVs ($\bar{x} = 1.78$) and I think knowing more about CSVs will help me to behave in more socially acceptable ways ($\bar{x} = 1.91$).

Again, the pre-service teachers disagreed with the following negatively worded items: that they are less likely to attend class whenever the course on CSVs is to be taught ($\bar{x} = 2.25$), that they feel that learning about and exhibiting CSVs may make them behave in an old-fashioned way ($\bar{x} = 1.71$), that they will be wasting my precious time if they make efforts to learn more about CSVs after their training in college ($\bar{x} = 1.68$) and that the course on CSVs should not have been included in ECCE training programme in the college ($\bar{x} = 1.97$). Meanwhile, Based on the value of the weighted average (2.07 out of 4.00 maximum value that can be obtained), which falls within the decision value for neutral, it can be inferred that the attitude of ECCE pre-service teachers to CSVs is neutral.

Qualitative Result on Research Question 2

From the qualitative result that was generated based on research question 2, it was revealed that the ECCE pre-service teachers had negative attitude towards the CSVs. Many of them felt that exhibiting the behaviours that reflect the CSVs may make them to be seen as a person who is behaving in an old-fashioned manner. They were of the opinion that the CSVs would only make one to continue living in the past rather than moving with the computer age. For instance, one of the ECCE pre-service teachers remarked as follows:

As for me o, I like the CSVs but if one should say he wants to be doing all the CSVs, he will be referred to as somebody who is not civilized at all because he will behave like old people of the past and he will not know what is going on.

Again, another ECCE pre-service teacher noted that it would be difficult for him to put all the CSVs into practice. When asked the reason for this, he gave the following answer:

Although I know that the CSVs are good but to be sincere, it will not be easy to practice all the CSVs in our society like Nigeria. If one should be practicing all of them, he will not make it quickly in Nigeria because in this our country, you just have to survive through any means that you know.

Discussion of Findings

ECCE pre-service teachers in the South West Nigeria have low level of knowledge regarding CSVs and they have neutral attitude towards the CSV. Many reasons could be advanced for these findings. There is a strong probability that ECCE lecturers have been employing ineffective teaching methods like lecture method to teach the CSVs. Bonwell (1996) and Hodgson (1997) have noted that lecture method is not as effective as more active methods for the promotion of higher orders of thinking and should not normally be used when the objective is to change students' attitude or values. This submission of Bonwell (1996) and Hodgson (1997) is in line with the observation of Falade, Adeyemi and Olowo (2011) who observed that the conventional teaching method has been found ineffective for helping students to develop necessary values, attitudes and skills required for building the culture of peace. Perhaps if the lecturers had employed other active learning methods such as participatory and collaborative learning methods in teaching the course, students could have had better opportunities to improve their knowledge of the CSVs and they could have formed better attitude towards them (CSVs).

This finding may not also be unconnected to the fact that the ECCE pre-service teachers have not had the opportunity to learn about the CSVs from knowledgeable elders who are referred to as custodians and guardians of basic moral values, social norms and ethics in our society (Agulanna, 2007; Lewis, 2008). The knowledgeable elders who are also referred to as teachers, mentors, wisdom bearers and role models in the society (Lewis, 2008) could have helped to assist the ECCE pre-service teachers to learn more effectively about the CSVs, thereby improving their knowledge and attitude regarding them (CSVs). Another possible explanation for these findings could be that the lecturers who are teaching the course have not been employing the use folklores like stories, proverbs, legends and songs to teach the course. Akinsola (2011) and Faturoti (2017) have said that folklores are oral traditions which are used, from time immemorial, for the transmission of cultural values and traditions from one generation to another. Akinwumi (2016) had also said that folklore can teach the history of a people as well as their cultural values such as diligence, respect, dignity, hardwork, faithfulness and perseverance. Meanwhile, the findings justify the reasons why some authors like Omede (2011), Asaju

(2013), Jekayinfa (2013) and Whawo (2015) lamented that there are several cases of negative values and moral decadence in our tertiary institutions.

Conclusion

The findings from this study necessitate the conclusion that the unacceptable social behaviours that are exhibited by ECCE pre-service teachers are due to the fact that they have poor knowledge of CSVs and they have negative attitude towards them. The pre-service teachers therefore would not be able to effectively assist young children to acquire desirable societal attributes such as good morals, norms and values when they eventually take up appointment as caregivers or teachers in early childhood centers or pre-primary schools.

Recommendations

ECCE Lecturers in colleges of education need to explore other active learning methods for the teaching and learning of CSVs. Examples of such methods that could be used are collaborative learning method, participatory learning method and service learning among others. This is particularly important as the current method of teaching the course seem not effective because the pre-service teachers still have poor knowledge and attitude regarding the CSVs despite the fact that they had been taught in the second semester of their year 1. Besides, since CSVs are embedded in the culture of a society and they are usually communicated by elders of our society, efforts should be made by ECCE lecturers who are teaching the course to invite knowledgeable elders of the society to the classroom so that the ECCE pre-service teachers can have opportunity to experience the learning of the CSVs from custodians of moral values in our society. Without doubt, this would help them to have improved knowledge of the CSVs.

Experts in the field of ECCE should come up with research efforts to showcase practical ways by which the CSVs can be meaningfully taught to pre-service teachers. This could be through researches like action, experimental and qualitative research. An individual, professional or a group of professionals in the field could team up to conduct such research. In addition, the curriculum of ECCE in the college of education could be refurbished to feature more contents on how the CSVs can be practically taught to the pre-service teachers.

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