



Colleges of Education Pre-Service Teachers Perception on Career Prospects in the Field of Early Childhood Care, Development and Education

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Abstract:

This study aims to investigate the perception and motivation of prospective teachers about ECCE as a course to plan for career future. The study adopted qualitative research design. The population consist of all pre-service teachers in 200L in the Department of ECCE in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwest, Nigeria. The sample size targeted at was 50% of 42 pre-service teachers that was meant to be proportionally selected using proportional sampling technique that was to make a total number of Twenty-One (21) pre-service teachers in Federal College of Education, Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria. The total of nineteen pre-service teachers responded to the interview which made the sample size to reduce. Three research questions guided the study. Interview questions that were sectionalized into three was used to generate data for the study. The Section A, B, and C had 3 questions each that covered pre-service teachers' perceptions, motivations and future plan on ECCE as a profession. The data generated were analyzed using content analysis. The results shows that the respondents perceived that they have opportunities for professional growth in the field. In conclusion the pre-service teacher had positive perception on ECCE as career. The study recommends that Government and stakeholders should give more recognition to ECCE.

Keywords: Preservice Teachers, Career, Prospects, Perception, Early Childhood Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) plays a vital role in shaping the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of young children, this is why (Annisa et al., 2022) was of the opinion that providing children with appropriate and sufficient early childhood education is of great benefits to children brain development as it will reflect on their language, cognitive, and socio-emotional skills development. This could explain that when children are able to receive high-quality ECCE, they may likely exhibit emotionally stability as well as socially acceptable norms and values (Diale & Sewagegn, 2021). (Sarinastitin, 2018) were of the opinion that caregivers/teachers in the field of early childhood care and education should be individuals that can be entrusted with all the responsibilities of achieving effective and quality

learning experience for young children at early childhood stage and this does not exclude pre-service caregivers/teachers as they hold a significant position in promoting quality and standard education in the society.

It was confirmed that the societal perception of ECCE as a career in the society was viewed as low-status profession and this influences the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding their career prospects and societal recognition of ECCE as a profession (Herawati & Surahman, 2023). Despite the increasing awareness on importance of early childhood care and education, the societal attitudes towards the profession as a career remains a significant factor that is influencing the career choices of pre-service teachers (Abadi & Suparno, 2019). In a view of changing the perceptions of pre-service caregivers/teachers on societal view of the field as a career with low-status, various factors need to be put into consideration such as orientation on career prospects, professional development opportunities and personal motivations (Ananda et al., 2023).

As the value of Early Childhood Development is increasingly acknowledged, there are promising career opportunities in ECCE (Rahmat, 2019). It is also in agreement with that ECCE degrees allows people to pursue careers as preschool teachers and

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childcare workers with a grow in demand for qualified ECCE professionals in preschool and daycare centers (Saari et al., 2021).

Professional development opportunities would play a crucial role in shaping the perceptions of pre-service teachers on ECCE as a career (Sumartik & Ambarwati, 2023). (Sholeh, 2020) states the importance of access to ongoing training, mentorship programs, and opportunities for career advancement in attracting and retaining pre-service teachers in the field of early childhood education. Pre-service teachers are more likely to consider ECCE as a long-term career option when provided with support for professional development and opportunities for leadership roles within the field (Rasli et al., 2021). Investigating the perceptions of pre-service teachers in federal college of education Iwo regarding ECCE as a career is essential for informing policies, training programs, and recruitment strategies in the field of early childhood education. Hence, this study investigated the perceptions of pre-service teachers on ECCE as a career path (Ismail S.A & Adeeb J.M, 2019). This study aims to investigate the perception and motivation of prospective teachers about ECCE as a course to plan for career future.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study adopted qualitative research design. Research that aims to describe or describe a phenomenon or situation is known as descriptive research. This study only talks about what happens when the research is conducted, not explains the causes. The data that is usually collected comes from primary sources such as observations, interviews, or questionnaires. The data analysis that is usually used is descriptive statistics. Descriptive research is essential for providing a preliminary overview of a phenomenon and can be the basis for further research, but it cannot explain cause and effect. The population consist of all pre-service teachers in 200L in the Department of ECCE in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwest, Nigeria. Federal College of Education, Iwo was purposively selected for the study. The sample size targeted at was 50% of 42 pre-service teachers in the Department of ECCE that were proportionally selected using proportional sampling technique to make a total number of Twenty-One (21) pre-service teachers in Federal College of Education, Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria. The total of nineteen pre-service teachers responded to the interview which made the sample size to reduce. Three research questions guided the study. Interview

questions that were sectionalized into three was used to generate data for the study. The Section A, B, and C had 3 questions each that covered pre-service teachers' perceptions, motivations and future plan on ECCE as a profession. The data generated were analyzed using content analysis. This research was carried out for one month, namely from late August to mid-September.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Question 1: Business Profile Research question 1: How do the pre-service teachers perceive the prospects in ECCE as a career?

To answer research question one, pre-service teacher responses were analyzed using content analysis to give the report. 19 respondents gave their perceptions on ECCE as a career.

The report revealed through In-depth interview (II) shows that 13 pre- service teacher perceive ECCE as a career that is well recognized in shaping life of children compared to other field of education , two (2) pre-service teachers perceive ECCE as a career that shows empathy than other field of study ,two pre-service teachers are indifferent that ECCE is not well recognized as a profession compared to other field ,one of the pre-service teacher perceive ECCE as a career that build children life compared to other field , why a pre-service teacher does not perceive ECCE as a career compared to other field. The results also show all the pre-service teacher perceived that there are opportunities for professional growth in the field

Research question 2: what motivated pre-service teachers to choose ECCE as a course of study

To answer research question two, content analysis was used to analyze the interview responses.

The report shows that 9 pre- service teachers has self-interest and were motivated to pursue their career in ECCE so as to make positive impact in the development of Nigerian children and to understand the relationship and influence of the family and community in promoting child's social and emotional skill , 5 pre service teacher were of the opinion that they want to gain insight on child's development, 3 pre service teachers stated that they want to Build strong foundation for children , two of

the pre-service teachers were motivated to study ECCE through role models in the field .

Research question 3: What are the likely future plans of pre-service teachers on ECCE as a career.

To answer research question content analysis was also used to make report.

The report shows that 16 pre service teachers had the mind set of long-term goals in studying ECCE as a career as they planned to become high skilled and knowledgeable experts in the field, in other to make a positive impact on the lives of young children, to contribute to children development and learning, to advocate for the importance of early childhood education and promote its recognition in society. 16 pre-service teachers also stated that engaging in professional developmental programs, with the latest research, teaching methods, and best practices which will help them stay updated and succeed as an early childhood expert. A pre-service teacher plan to be an expert in developing children with special needs while another pre-service teacher looks forward to be an expert in building stronger relationship with the community and parents

Discussions

The findings of how pre-service teachers perceived ECCE as a career revealed that majority of the pre-service teachers interviewed had positive perception of chosen ECCE as a career and also perceive that there is opportunity in the field of study, this result is in agreement with (Khan et al., 2024) who found out that ECCE is seen by pre-service teachers as a field that fosters innovation, creativity, and personal development. It also corroborates (Rakhmawati, 2019) who discovered that the chance to positively influence children's lives during their formative years is the main reason why pre-service teachers consider early childhood education and care (ECCE) to be a fulfilling career path. Pre-service teachers' opinions of ECCE as a career will be influenced by their motivations, which include a love of working with young children, empathy, and a sense of fulfillment from fostering and supporting their development (Shen & Luen, 2022). These intrinsic factors play a significant role in attracting individuals to pursue a career in early childhood education and sustaining their commitment to the profession over time.

A rewarding opportunity to positively influence young children's lives and support their holistic development is presented by a career in early childhood education (ECE). The foundation for

children's future academic success and socioemotional wellbeing is laid by professionals in this field.

4. CONCLUSION

The study assessed the perceptions of pre-service teachers on career prospects in the field of early childhood care, development and education in Colleges of Education. In this study the researcher discovered that some pre- service teacher perceives ecce as a career that is well recognized In shaping life of children compared to other field of education. Also, it shows that ECCE is seen by pre-service teachers as a field that fosters innovation, creativity, and personal development. This research revealed that government, stakeholders, expert in ECCE, associate bodies should invest more on ECCE by providing pre service teachers opportunities in engaging in professional development workshops and seminars.

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