

An Evaluation of the Adequacy of Language Related Courses in the NCCE ECCE Minimum Standard in Federal Colleges of Education in Nigeria

¹Nathanael Tanko Noah; ²Kangyang Ibrahim Dung; ³Zumji Danladi Semshak

¹Department of General Studies in Education
Federal College of Education, Pankshin
Plateau State, Nigeria
0816 080 3868

²Department of Early Childhood Care and Education
Federal College of Education, Pankshin
Plateau State, Nigeria

³Department of Primary Education
Federal College of Education, Pankshin
Plateau State, Nigeria

Publication Date: 2025/02/20

Abstract: This paper evaluated the adequacy of language related courses in the NCCE ECCE Minimum Standard in Federal Colleges of Education in Nigeria. Three research questions were set to guide the research. The descriptive survey design was utilised to collect data from a sample of 1200 drawn from five Federal Colleges of Education in Nigeria which offered ECCE. The Adequacy of Language Related Courses in the NCCE ECCE Minimum Standard questionnaire (ALRCNEMSQ) was designed by the researchers. It consisted of two sections: Section A elicited the bio data of the respondents while Section B elicited respondents' answers based on Likert rating scale. The data collected were analysed and the findings of the study are presented in charts. Based on the findings of this study it was recommended, among others, that the NCCE should consider reviewing the objectives of the ECCE Minimum Standard with a view to guarantee the personal improvement of English language skills of the teachers-in-training.

How to Cite: Nathanael Tanko Noah; Kangyang Ibrahim Dung; Zumji Danladi Semshak (2025) An Evaluation of the Adequacy of Language Related Courses in the NCCE ECCE Minimum Standard in Federal Colleges of Education in Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 10(2), 156-162. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14891767>

I. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) as a programme in Colleges of Education is relatively nascent in Nigeria. The education of children in the age bracket of zero and five is pivotal to the development and progress of Nigeria. The reason for this is hinged on the influence of this level of education on the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of the educational system. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) in its National Policy on Education (NPE, 2013) reiterated its resolution to promote a quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) by establishing "ECE sections in public schools and encourage both community and private efforts in its provision based on set standards." The policy

also includes the "provision for the production and effective utilization of learning and instructional resources in adequate numbers" as part of its mandate.

The benefits of establishing ECE Centres where relevant and adequate learning resources are provided are enormous. These benefits are captured in the objectives of early childhood education as cited in the NPE (2013) include:

- Effect a smooth transition from home to school
- Prepare the child for the primary level of education
- Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work
- Inculcate social and moral norms

- Inculcate in the child the spirit of inquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys,
- Develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit
- Stimulate in the child good habits, including good health habits and
- Teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc., through play.

Achieving the purposes and objectives of ECCE as stipulated in the NPE and the NCE Minimum Standard (respectively) depends heavily on the adequacy of the language related courses offered in the Colleges of Education and how proficient the teachers-in-training get to become.

The Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) is a qualification awarded by Colleges of Education in Nigeria, and the Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) is one of the programmes under this certification. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) sets the minimum standards for these programmes to ensure quality education with a view to train teachers who are well-equipped to handle early childhood education, to develop a curriculum that meets the needs of young learners, and to ensure that the teaching practices and learning outcomes meet national standards.

The ECCE programme typically spans three years. The curriculum includes courses on child development, teaching methods, educational psychology, and practical teaching experience. Students are taught by teachers who have at least a Bachelor's degree in Education or a related field. They also undergo teaching practice in schools to gain hands-on experience. Regular assessments and evaluations are carried out to monitor students' progress and programme effectiveness. These standards are designed to ensure that ECCE programmes produce competent and qualified teachers who can provide high-quality education to young children in Nigeria.

The English language is taught in tertiary institutions in Nigeria for several important reasons: strong communication skills are essential for success in any field. English language courses help students develop their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, which are crucial for professional and personal growth. In most Nigerian tertiary institutions, English is the primary medium of instruction. This ensures that students from diverse linguistic backgrounds can understand and participate in academic activities. Besides, proficiency in English opens up opportunities for Nigerian students to engage in international academia, business, and other fields. It enhances their competitiveness in the global job market. Much of the world's academic research and literature is published in English (Mishina & Iskandar, 2019).

Language is a complex and multifaceted tool that humans use to communicate, express thoughts, and share information. Mastering English language involves developing proficiency in four basic skills: listening,

speaking, reading, and writing. Each of these skills plays a crucial role in effective communication and language acquisition (Kurniasih, 2011). Listening is the ability to accurately receive and interpret messages in the communication process. It is the first language skill that humans develop, and it is essential for understanding spoken language. Effective listening requires concentration, attention to detail, and the ability to comprehend and retain information. It involves not only hearing the words but also understanding the context, tone, and emotions behind them. Good listening skills are vital for learning new languages, as they help individuals pick up pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

Speaking is the ability to produce sounds and words to convey meaning. It is an active skill that involves the articulation of thoughts, ideas, and emotions through spoken language. Speaking requires a good command of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. It also involves the ability to organize thoughts coherently and express them clearly. Effective speaking skills are essential for engaging in conversations, giving presentations, and participating in discussions. They enable individuals to communicate their ideas and opinions confidently and persuasively.

Reading is the ability to interpret and understand written language. It involves recognizing words, comprehending their meanings, and making sense of the text as a whole. Reading skills are crucial for acquiring knowledge, as they allow individuals to access information from books, articles, and other written materials. Good reading skills involve not only decoding words but also understanding the context, identifying main ideas, and making inferences. Reading also helps improve vocabulary, grammar, and writing skills, as it exposes individuals to different writing styles and structures.

Writing is the ability to produce written language to communicate ideas, thoughts, and information. It is a productive skill that involves organizing thoughts, choosing appropriate words, and constructing sentences and paragraphs. Writing requires a good understanding of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. It also involves the ability to express ideas clearly and coherently. Effective writing skills are essential for academic success, professional communication, and personal expression. They enable individuals to convey their messages accurately and persuasively in written form.

The four basic language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Developing proficiency in each of these skills is essential for effective communication and language acquisition. By honing these skills, teachers-in-training can enhance their ability to understand and express themselves in any English language, opening up new opportunities for personal and professional growth. Therefore, this paper sets out to evaluate the adequacy of language related courses in the NCCE ECCE Minimum Standard in Federal Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

➤ *Problem Statement/Justification*

Students are enrolled in the Department of ECCE in Colleges of Education around the country every year. From personal experiences of the researchers, most of the students fall short of effective communication in the English language. This affects their comprehension of texts and ability to express themselves fluently, in a manner that they would guarantee useful pedagogic interactions with preschool children at ECE Centres. While the ECCE teachers-in-training receive instruction on general English language along with students from other departments during General Studies Education (GSE), this is not effective in helping them master the language. For instance, they have GSE 111 (General English 1) lecture once a week for one hour only – which is too short a time for any meaningful language skill development to happen. It is the same case with GSE 121, 211, 221, and 323 spanning from NCE One to NCE Three.

Apart from the shortage of time allotted to the teaching of General English which is based on the premise that the teachers-in-training already are grounded in the rudiments of English language, it is apparent that they lack foundational knowledge of English to aid their comprehension of the ECE courses they offer. Although many of the students bear results that show they passed English language WASSCE, it turns out that the lecturers of the language oriented courses in ECCE are faced with the dilemma of either teaching the teachers-in-training the course contents or how to acquire the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in English language.

The Nigeria Certificate in Education Minimum Standards for General Education (2020) asserts (among other objectives) that by the end of the NCE programmes, the students should be able to discuss intelligently the main ideas that have affected and still affect the development and practice of education generally, and in Nigeria in particular. This entails the ECCE teachers-in-training must be proficient in the language so that they would be able to create a learning rich environment in the classroom and to communicate effectively inside and outside the classroom. The ability of a teacher in training to utilise proficient language skills is related to academic success and attainment, literacy outcomes, numeracy outcomes, positive social relationships, friendships, behaviour, emotional development, employability and later life chances. Hence, communication skills are of pivotal essence to learning in the formal education process for which ECCE at the College of Education level is the starting pedestal.

➤ *Aim and Objectives of the Research*

This research aims to evaluate the adequacy of language related courses in the NCCE, ECCE Minimum Standard in Federal Colleges of Education in Nigeria. Specifically, the research will evaluate adequacy of

- The objectives of language courses in relation to the ECCE teacher-in-training in Nigeria
- The content of language courses in relation to the ECCE teacher-in-training in Nigeria

- The suggested methods of teaching in relation to the ECCE teacher-in-training in Nigeria

➤ *Research Questions*

- To what extent do the objectives of language courses in the minimum standard accommodate the ECCE teacher-in-training in Nigeria?
- To what extent do the contents of language courses in the minimum standard facilitate the language development skills of the ECCE teacher-in-training in Nigeria?
- To what extent do the suggested methods of teaching language courses in the minimum standard enhance the personal language development skills of the ECCE teacher-in-training in Nigeria?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The National Language Policy (NLP) of 1977/1981 stipulates that on the importance of language in the educational process, the government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that a child should be encouraged to learn one of the three languages other than his own mother tongue. In this connection, the government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. To achieve the above objectives, government will ensure that the medium of instruction will be principally the Mother Tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate community; and to this end will develop language Centres and produce textbooks in Nigerian languages. At the Pre-Primary Education level, Government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and at a later stage, English (Ogunmodimu, 2015).

The foundation of formal schooling in Nigeria is the nursery school. Parents and guardians send their children and wards there as a prerequisite for further education at higher levels. It is the place where the fundamentals of listening, speaking, reading, writing, skill acquisition, and attitude formation for proper adjustment into the society are nurtured. It also serves as the platform for the preparation of the minds and training of children for higher and more challenging pursuits in education (Oloninisi, 2019). Due to the import of this level of education, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) saddled Nigerian Colleges of Education (COE) with the responsibility of training teachers in different courses including ECCE.

The Minimum Standards (MS) for ECC and PED published by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE, 2020) is implemented in the Colleges of Education in the country. The aim of the MS is for the teacher-in-training to be able to “...display and apply the knowledge and competencies acquired in appropriate situations” (p.1). The objectives by the end of the NCE programme include (among others) the ability of the teacher-in-training to;

- Assist the child to develop good social habits
- Assist the child to develop communication, reasoning, and expressive skills
- Assist the child to develop inquisitiveness and to explore his/her environment
- Manifest desirable administrative competence in ECCE

Both aim and objectives are plausible. However, the extent to which the graduates of ECCE attain the objectives of the curriculum every year is in doubt. Their academic performance is generally poor due, basically, to their incompetence in English (Oris, 2015). The flaws of the teachers-in-training were obvious to the researchers; they prefer to use their dialects instead of English because of their inadequacies in the language; they commit grammatical blunders while teaching children during teaching practice. Failure in education has been associated with linguistic failure (Obiakor & Malu, 2020). Proficiency in English is required for one to qualify as a professional teacher.

English is a language that has come to be the international language of communication and instruction. As the medium of instruction in higher institutions of education, it is a rapidly emerging phenomenon in most of the non-English speaking countries of the world. Given the rising number of English language learners, tertiary institution programmes embrace English language as educators and policy makers address the demand for international learning contexts. Scholars hold that high proficiency in English language is a primary qualification for graduates. It is required for the achievement of the objectives of the NCCE-ECCE policy (Kithini & Adam, 2022; Charles, Madu, & Adigun, 2016). Proficiency in English language refers to a high-level fluency and competency in all aspects of the language. It encompasses the ability to understand spoken and written English, as well as the capability to express oneself effectively in both oral and written form. It means ability to speak or express the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate smoothly and effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics (Chandra, 2017).

Achieving a high level of proficiency in English requires a combination of practice, exposure, and dedicated

effort. Regularly engaging in activities such as reading books, newspapers, and articles in English, watching English movies/films or TV shows, and engaging in conversations with proficient speakers could greatly enhance the language skills ECCE teachers-in-training. Proficiency in English has numerous advantages, both professionally and personally. In the professional realm, having a strong command of English assures the accurate and effective teaching of literacy skills to children. On a personal level, English proficiency allows for better interpersonal communication, broader access to information, and greater participation in global conversations. It facilitates educational exchanges among academics from different backgrounds (Jomel, 2022; Baclig, 2020).

III. METHODOLOGY

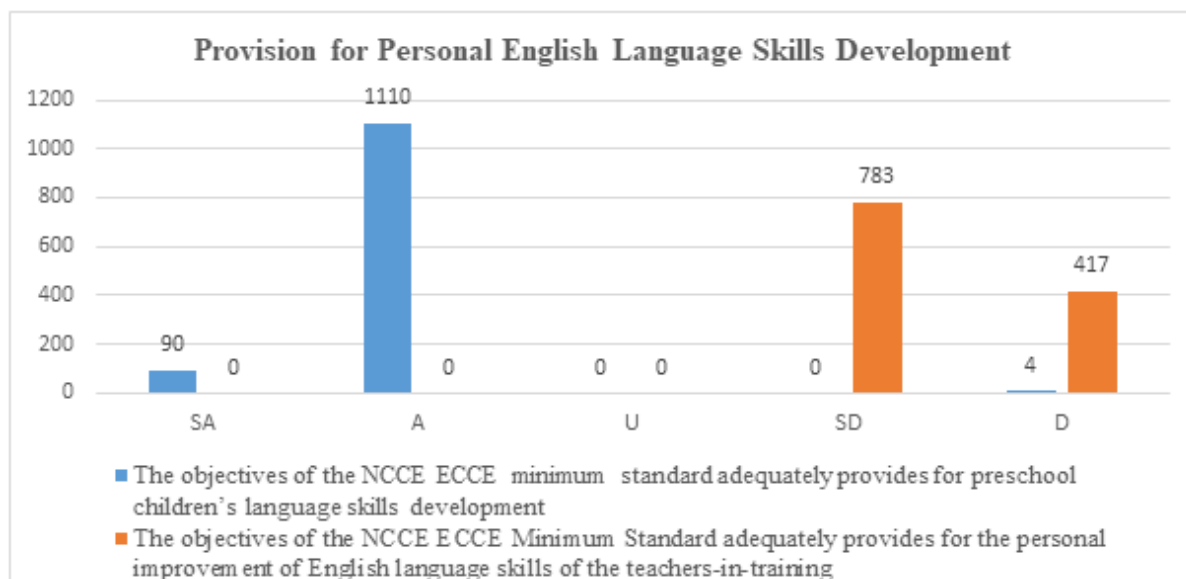
The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The design describes the characteristics, behaviours, or opinions of a group without manipulating any variables (Leavy, 2017). The population for this research was drawn from five Federal Colleges of Education in Nigeria. The target population consisted of NCE students specializing in ECCE. Using purposive sampling, a cohort of 1,200 respondents (200 from each institution) was selected. For data collection, the Adequacy of Language Related Courses in the NCCE ECCE Minimum Standard questionnaire (ALRCNEMSQ) was designed. It consisted of two sections: Section A elicited the bio data of the respondents while Section B elicited respondents' answers based on Likert rating scale. The data collected were analysed and the findings of the study are presented in charts.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The data collected using the ALRCNEMSQ were analysed using simple percentages and graphically presented in charts as can be seen below.

➤ Question 1:

To what extent do the objectives of language courses in the minimum standard accommodate the ECCE teacher-in-training in Nigeria?

**Chart 1**

The chart above indicates that 90 (7.5%) respondents strongly agreed that the objectives of the NCCE ECCE minimum standard adequately provides for preschool children's language skills development, 1110 (92.5%) agreed to the same item statement. However, for the objectives of the NCCE ECCE Minimum Standard adequately providing for the personal improvement of English language skills of the teachers-in-training 783 (65.25%) strongly disagreed and 417 (34.75%) disagreed. This result indicates that while the objectives of the Minimum Standard are adequate for preschool children's language skills development, there is no consideration for the personal improvement of English language skills of the teachers-in-training.

➤ **Question 2:**

To what extent do the contents of language courses in the minimum standard facilitate the language development skills of the ECCE teacher-in-training in Nigeria?

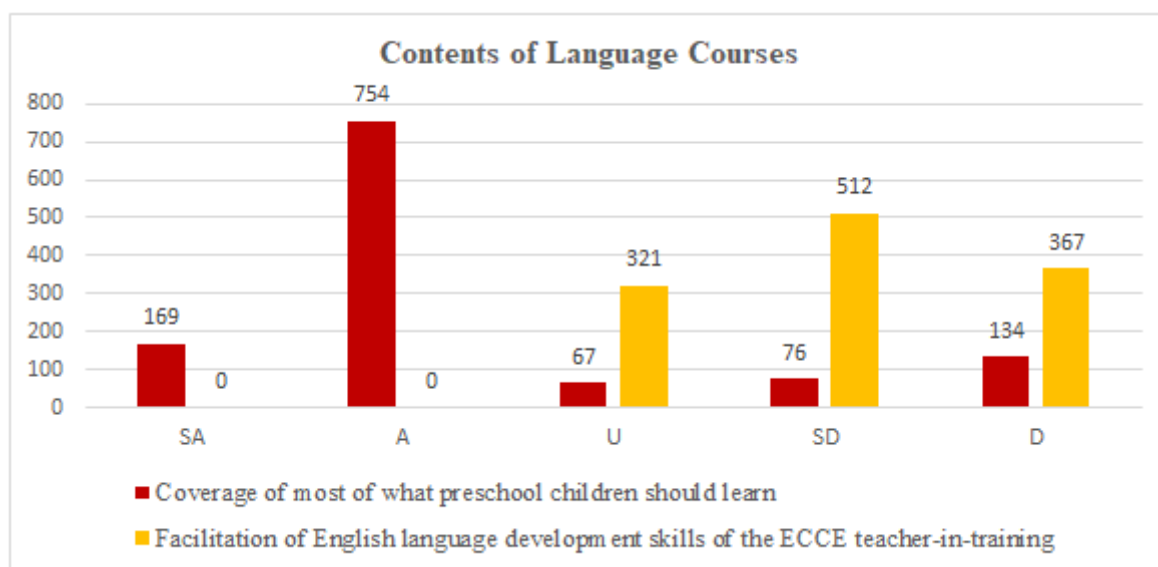
**Chart 2**

Chart 2 depicts that 169 (14.08%) strongly agreed that the contents of language courses in the NCCE ECCE Minimum Standard cover most of what preschool children should learn, 754 (62.8%), 67 (5.6%) were unsure, 76 (6.3%) strongly disagreed, and 134 (11.2%) disagreed. As for the contents of language courses in the NCCE ECCE Minimum Standard will facilitating the English language development skills of the ECCE teacher-in-training 321 (26.8%) were unsure, 512 (42.6%) strongly disagreed and 367 (30.6%) disagreed. It is obvious that most respondents (62.8%) agreed that the contents of language related courses in the Minimum Standard are cogent for the facilitation of preschool children's language development. Similarly, most respondents (approximately 73.2%) opined that the same contents cannot facilitate English language skills development of the ECCE teacher-in-training.

➤ *Question 3:*

To what extent do the suggested methods of teaching language courses in the minimum standard enhance the personal language development skills of the ECCE teacher-in-training in Nigeria?

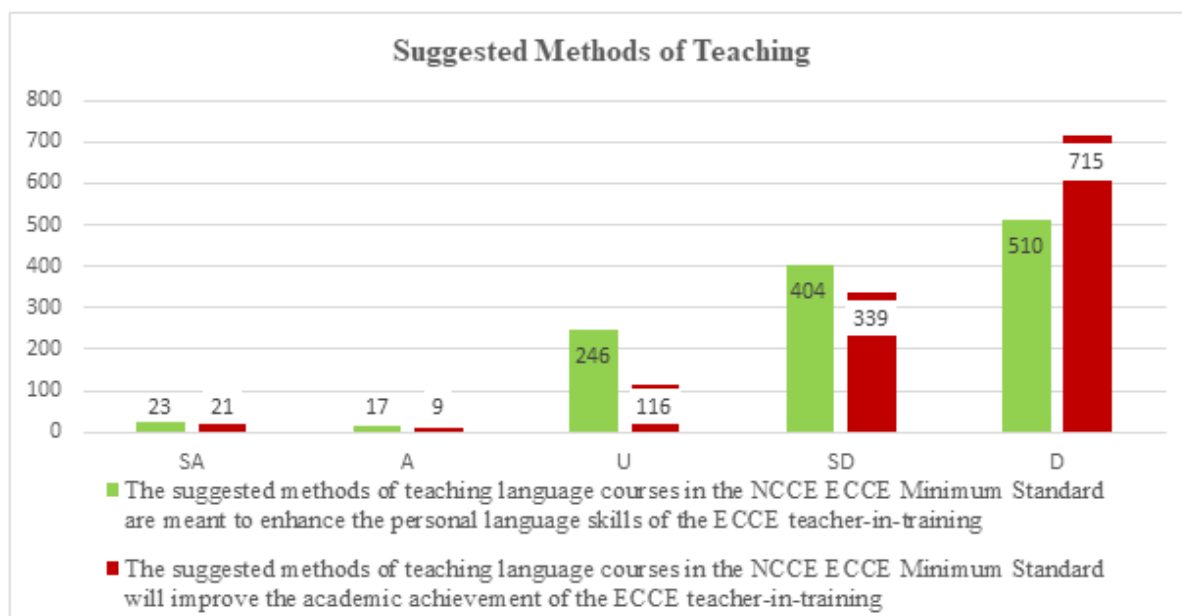


Chart 3

Chart 3 above represents 23 (1.9%) who strongly agreed that the suggested methods of teaching language courses in the NCCE ECCE Minimum Standard are meant to enhance the personal language skills of the ECCE teacher-in-training, 17 (1.41%) agreed, 246 (20.5%) were unsure, 404 (33.7%) strongly disagreed and 510 (42.5%) disagreed. Regarding the suggested methods of teaching language courses in the NCCE ECCE Minimum Standard improving the academic achievement of the ECCE teacher-in-training, 21 (1.75%) strongly agreed, 9 (0.75%) agreed, 116 (9.7%) were unsure, 339 (28.25%) strongly disagreed and 715 (59.58%) disagreed. From the results in Chart 3, 33.7% strongly disagreed and 59.58% disagreed that the methods of teaching language related courses could both enhance and improve the academic achievement of the ECCE teacher-in-training.

V. CONCLUSION

Early childhood care and education is crucial for a variety of reasons: it lays the groundwork for children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. It fosters children's love for learning and curiosity that can last a lifetime. Children learn to interact with peers and adults, developing essential social skills like sharing, cooperation, and empathy. ECCE helps in the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and language skills and stimulates intellectual growth and prepares children for formal schooling. As important as it is, the value of ECCE as a course can only be realised if the teachers-in-training have a good grasp of the English language by which they themselves learn and will communicate with preschool children when they work at ECD Centres. It is therefore, important that instead of assuming that the teachers-in-

training are competent users of English, deliberate efforts should be made to provide targeted English language teaching within the ECCE course contents in the minimum standard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study it is recommended that the NCCE should

- Consider reviewing the objectives of the ECCE Minimum Standard with a view to guarantee the personal improvement of English language skills of the teachers-in-training
- Curating the contents of the language related courses such as to facilitate English language skills development of the ECCE teacher-in-training
- Develop contents that will help the teachers-in-training to advance their personal English language skills for improved academic achievement

➤ *Suggestions for Further Studies*

Other researchers in the area of ECCE can further investigate the specific content of language-related courses to determine if they meet current educational needs and standards, assess the effectiveness of teacher training programmes in preparing educators to teach language skills, and compare the language-related courses in Nigerian Colleges of Education with those in other countries to identify best practices and areas for improvement.

➤ *Contribution to Knowledge*

It is hoped that this study has to identify gaps in the current NCCE ECCE Minimum standard which can be addressed to improve the quality of the ECCE teachers-in-training. By evaluating the effectiveness of language-related courses, the study has provided insights into how teacher training programmes can be enhanced to better prepare educators. Policymakers have been enlightened on the need for necessary changes or updates to the curriculum to meet needs of the contemporary early childhood educator.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Baclig, C. E. (2020). Philippine drops further in global English proficiency ranking. *Inquirer.Net*. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1362951/philippines-drops-further-in-global-english-proficiency-rankings>
- [2]. Chandra, S.R. (2017). A brief study of English language proficiency: Employability. *English for Specific Purposes World*, 49(17),
- [3]. Charles, G.E., Madu, S. & Adigun, F.A. (2016). Appraisal of the implementation of early childhood education in Owerri Education zone of Imo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Research & Method in Education*. 6(2):80-85.
- [4]. NCCE (2012). *Nigeria certificate in education minimum standards for general education*. NCCE.
- [5]. NCCE (2020). *Nigeria certificate in education minimum standards for early childhood care and primary education*. NCCE.
- [6]. FGN (2013). *National policy on education*. NERDC Press.
- [7]. Jomel, B.M. (2022). English language proficiency of senior high school students. *Multidisciplinary Journal for Education, Social, and Technological Sciences*, 9(1), 71-86. <https://doi.org/10.4995/muse.2022.16638>
- [8]. Kithinji, W.K. & Adam I. O. (2022). Relating English language proficiency to academic performance among non-English speaking undergraduate students in Kenyan universities. *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 5 (1), p. 66-76 <https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-3947>
- [9]. Kurniasih, E. (2011). Teaching the four language skills in primary EFL classroom: Some considerations. *Journal of English Teaching*, 1(1), 70-81.
- [10]. Leavy, P. (2017). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. The Guilford Press.
- [11]. Mishina, U.L., & Iskandar, I. (2019). The role of English language in Nigerian development. *An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis*, 2(2), 58-65. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3712642>
- [12]. Obiakor, M.I. & Malu, D. (2020). Problem of Teaching and Learning of English Language as a Second Language in Secondary Schools in Ankpa Local Government Area of Kogi State. *African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching, and Entrepreneurship Studies*. 1(1), 76, <https://ajemates.org>
- [13]. Ogunmodimu, M. (2015). Language policy in Nigeria: problems, prospects and perspectives. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 5(9), 154 – 160.
- [14]. Oloninisi, O. (2019). Communication challenges of teaching in English language in Nigerian primary education. *www.iosrjournals.org*, 9(6), 18-23. DOI: 10.9790/7388-0906021823.
- [15]. Oris, T.L. (2015). An evaluation of the English language curriculum of the Nigeria certificate in education: A case study of a college of education. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 2, 69-79. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/jss.2014.27011>