

CLASSROOM SOCIALIZATION AND LEADERSHIP PRACTICES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING AMONG EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

**Chukwu, Cynthia Chisom;¹Aneke, Anthonia Olunwa¹
& Nweke, Prince Onyemaechi²**

¹Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

²Department of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Corresponding Author: Dr. Aneke, Anthonia Olunwa

Abstract

This study investigated classroom socialization and leadership practices for capacity building among early childhood educators. Five research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and was carried out at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The population of the study comprised 189 early childhood educators in selected primary schools in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. Due to the manageable size of the population, no sampling technique was employed; the entire population was studied. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled: Classroom Socialization and Leadership Practices Questionnaire (CSLPQ). The instrument was face validated by three experts, two in the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one from the Department of Science Education, all in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.79, indicating high internal consistency. Data were collected through direct administration of the questionnaire to the respondents. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, with 2.50 set as the decision rule for acceptance or rejection of items. The findings revealed that classroom socialization guided leadership practices among early childhood educators, fostering teamwork, mentoring, and professional growth. Structured leadership strategies also enhanced communication and skill development necessary for sustainable educational improvement. It was recommended among others that Collaborative decision-making should be promoted in school administration because it encourages educator participation, responsibility sharing, and improved capacity building. The study contributed to knowledge by providing an empirical framework linking classroom socialization to leadership for professional development in early childhood education.

Keywords: Classroom socialization, leadership practices, capacity building, childhood educators, professional development

Introduction

The increasing decline in professional collaboration, mentoring practices, effective communication, and leadership engagement among early childhood educators has become a serious concern in the educational sector. Many early childhood educators experience limited opportunities for classroom interaction, professional socialization, and leadership development necessary for improving their teaching competence and professional capacity. This challenge has continued to affect teamwork, instructional effectiveness, and sustainable educational improvement in many schools. The concern is that when classroom socialization and leadership practices are weak, educators may struggle to build the professional skills, confidence, and collaborative relationships required for quality early childhood education. This situation therefore creates the need to investigate

classroom socialization and leadership practices for capacity building among early childhood educators.

Education is widely recognized as an important instrument for social, economic, and national development because it promotes the acquisition of knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills necessary for societal progress. Early childhood education forms the foundation of the educational system because it supports the physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development of children during their formative years. Phillips, Johnson, & Iruka (2022) explained that early childhood educational environments play a significant role in promoting children's social and emotional development through supportive classroom interaction and socialization processes. The effectiveness of early childhood education therefore depends greatly on the professional competence and social interaction of educators responsible for nurturing young learners.

Classroom socialization refers to the process through which educators and learners interact, communicate, share experiences, and develop positive relationships within the learning environment. Effective classroom socialization encourages teamwork, mentoring, cooperation, communication, and professional growth among educators. Fabry (2024) noted that relational interaction and collaborative engagement among educators strengthen pedagogical leadership and support continuous professional improvement in early childhood education settings. Through classroom socialization, educators are able to exchange ideas, improve interpersonal relationships, and develop professional competencies needed for effective teaching and learning.

Leadership practices are essential in promoting professional effectiveness and organizational improvement in educational institutions. Leadership practices involve the ability of educators and school administrators to guide, motivate, support, and influence professional development within the school environment. Sisson, Lash, Shin, and Whittington, (2021) explained that collaborative leadership approaches in early childhood education encourage professional participation, teamwork, and collective responsibility among educators. Effective leadership practices such as mentoring, participatory decision-making, communication, supervision, and professional support help educators to improve their competence and instructional delivery.

Capacity building is the continuous process of developing the knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies required for effective professional performance. In early childhood education, capacity building enables educators to improve classroom management, instructional strategies, communication skills, and professional confidence. Movahedazarhouli, Banerjee and Luckner (2022) observed that leadership development and professional support systems are necessary for strengthening educational quality and sustaining effective early childhood education practices. In recent years, there has been growing concern about the need to strengthen leadership practices and classroom socialization among early childhood educators due to changing educational demands and the increasing importance of quality early childhood education. Heikkinen, Ahtiainen, and Fonsén (2022) emphasized that leadership practices built around community participation and collaborative professional relationships contribute positively to professional learning and educational improvement in early childhood education settings.

The growing emphasis on improving professional competence among early childhood educators has drawn attention to the need for effective classroom socialization and leadership practices that support capacity building in educational settings. Classroom socialization has been recognized as a critical process through which educators interact, share experiences, and develop professional competencies necessary for quality teaching

and learning (Phillips, Johnson & Iruka, 2022). In addition, leadership practices within school environments such as teamwork, mentoring, communication, and collaborative decision-making have been identified as essential strategies for strengthening educators' capacity and promoting professional growth. Sisson, Lash, Shin, and Whittington (2021) emphasized that collaborative leadership practices in early childhood education foster shared responsibility, professional engagement, and continuous development among educators, while Movahedazarhouli, Banerjee, and Luckner (2022) noted that structured leadership support enhances educators' competencies and instructional effectiveness.

Aina and Bipath (2020) conducted a study to examine factors influencing professional development among early childhood educators in Nigeria. The study was carried out in selected early childhood education centres in Lagos State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The researchers adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised 420 early childhood educators, from which a sample of 210 respondents was selected using simple random sampling. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire. The instrument was validated by three experts in Early Childhood Education and Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.82. The researchers personally administered the instrument and retrieved the completed copies. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that collaborative classroom interactions enhanced educators' professional competence and that continuous professional development programmes improved educators' instructional effectiveness. This study is similar to the present study because both focused on factors that enhance capacity building among early childhood educators. However, it differed from the present study because it focused on professional development generally, whereas the present study investigates classroom socialization and leadership practices as predictors of capacity building among early childhood educators.

Ogunyemi and Ragpot (2015) conducted a study to investigate the influence of leadership support on teacher effectiveness in early childhood education centres. The study was carried out in selected early childhood education centres in South Africa. Three research questions guided the study, while two hypotheses were tested. The study adopted a survey research design. The population consisted of 360 early childhood educators, and a sample of 180 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument was face-validated by specialists in Educational Management and Early Childhood Education. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.79. Data were collected through direct administration of the questionnaire. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The findings showed that supportive leadership practices improved teachers' classroom performance and that mentoring and supervision enhanced educators' professional growth. This study is similar to the present study because both examined leadership-related variables as factors influencing educators' development. However, it differed from the present study because it focused primarily on leadership support, whereas the present study considers both classroom socialization and leadership practices as predictors of capacity building among early childhood educators.

Douglass (2019) conducted a study to examine leadership practices and workforce development in early childhood education settings. The study was carried out in the United States. The study was guided by three research questions. A mixed-methods

research design was adopted. The population comprised 500 early childhood educators and centre administrators, from which a sample of 250 participants was selected using purposive and random sampling techniques. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. The instruments were validated by experts in Educational Leadership and Early Childhood Education. Reliability was established through a pilot study, which yielded a coefficient of 0.84. Data were collected through face-to-face administration and interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using mean scores and regression analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that instructional leadership significantly enhanced educators' professional competence and that collaborative decision-making improved workforce development in early childhood education settings. This study is similar to the present study because both investigated leadership-related factors and capacity development among educators. However, it differed from the present study in location and scope, as it was conducted in the United States and focused on workforce development, whereas the present study investigates classroom socialization and leadership practices as predictors of capacity building among early childhood educators in Nigeria.

Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, and Bell (2022) conducted a study to examine effective pedagogical practices and educator development in early childhood education. The study was carried out in England. Four research questions guided the study. The researchers adopted a longitudinal research design. The population consisted of 450 early childhood educators, while a sample of 220 educators was selected using multistage sampling techniques. Observation schedules and questionnaires were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by experts in Early Childhood Education and Educational Research. Reliability was established through inter-rater reliability and Cronbach Alpha methods, yielding coefficients of 0.81 and 0.83 respectively. Data were collected through classroom observations and questionnaire administration. Mean scores, standard deviation, and multiple regression analysis were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that positive classroom socialization enhanced educators' instructional competence and that effective leadership support improved educators' professional capacity and teaching effectiveness. This study is similar to the present study because both examined classroom socialization and leadership-related factors in relation to educator development. However, it differed from the present study because it focused on pedagogical effectiveness and educator development generally, whereas the present study specifically investigates classroom socialization and leadership practices as predictors of capacity building among early childhood educators.

However, despite these recognized contributions of classroom socialization and leadership practices, there is still limited empirical evidence on how these practices are systematically utilized for capacity building among early childhood educators in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. This gap raises concerns about the extent to which educators are exposed to structured socialization experiences and leadership practices such as teamwork, mentoring, communication, and collaborative decision-making within their school environments. Hence, it is against this background that this study intends to investigate classroom socialization and leadership practices for capacity building among early childhood educators in selected primary schools in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State.

Statement of the Problem

The quality of early childhood education depends largely on the professional competence of educators, the effectiveness of classroom interaction, and the strength of

leadership practices that support continuous capacity development. Ideally, early childhood education settings should provide a rich environment where educators engage in consistent classroom socialization, collaborate through mentoring relationships, share professional experiences, and benefit from structured leadership practices that enhance their instructional competence and professional growth. In such an ideal situation, schools function as communities of practice where educators learn from one another, build teamwork, improve communication skills, and develop leadership capacities that strengthen teaching effectiveness and learner outcomes. However, the reality in many early childhood education settings is quite different. In several schools, opportunities for meaningful classroom socialization among educators are limited, resulting in weak professional collaboration, minimal mentoring relationships, and poor exchange of instructional experiences. In addition, leadership practices that should support educators' professional development are often not adequately structured or consistently implemented.

As a result, many early childhood educators operate in isolation, with limited access to professional guidance, teamwork opportunities, and systematic capacity-building programmes that could enhance their effectiveness in the classroom. This gap between the ideal and the real situation has continued to affect the quality of teaching and learning outcomes in early childhood education. The absence or weakness of effective classroom socialization and leadership practices has created challenges in building the capacity of early childhood educators, particularly in areas such as communication, teamwork, instructional delivery, classroom management, and professional development. Consequently, there is growing concern about whether existing classroom environments and leadership structures are adequately supporting educators in developing the competencies required for effective early childhood education practice. Therefore, the problem of this study is that despite the recognized importance of classroom socialization and leadership practices in enhancing professional capacity, many early childhood educators still experience limited opportunities for effective social interaction and leadership support, thereby constraining their capacity building and overall professional effectiveness in early childhood education settings in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate classroom socialization and leadership practices for capacity building among early childhood educators in selected primary schools in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. determine the extent to which classroom socialization practices support capacity building among early childhood educators;
2. examine teamwork practices used for capacity building among early childhood educators;
3. examine mentoring practices used for capacity building among early childhood educators;
4. examine communication practices used for capacity building among early childhood educators;
5. examine collaborative decision-making practices used for capacity building among early childhood educators.

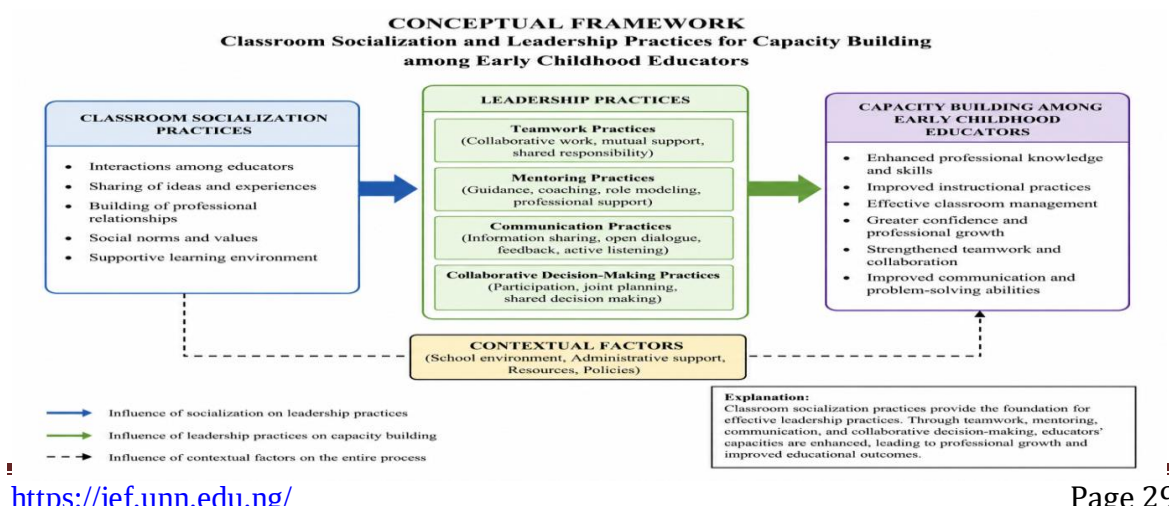
Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent to which classroom socialization practices support capacity building among early childhood educators?
2. What teamwork practices are used for capacity building among early childhood educators?
3. What mentoring practices are used for capacity building among early childhood educators?
4. What communication practices are used for capacity building among early childhood educators?
5. What collaborative decision-making practices are used for capacity building among early childhood educators?

Methods

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it allows for the collection of data from a defined population in order to describe existing conditions regarding classroom socialization and leadership practices for capacity building among early childhood educators. The study was carried out in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria. The area was selected because it has a considerable number of early childhood educators in primary schools, making it suitable for the study. The population of the study comprised 189 early childhood educators in selected primary schools within Nsukka Education Zone. Due to the manageable size of the population, no sampling technique was used; the entire population was studied. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled *Classroom Socialization and Leadership Practices Questionnaire (CSLPQ)*, developed based on the research questions. The questionnaire was used to obtain information on classroom socialization practices and leadership practices (teamwork, mentoring, communication, and collaborative decision-making) for capacity building among early childhood educators. The instrument was face-validated by three experts: two from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one from the Department of Science Education, Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Their inputs were used to ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the items. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.79, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Data were collected through direct administration of the questionnaire to the respondents with the assistance of trained research assistants where necessary. All completed questionnaires were retrieved and used for analysis. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. A 4-point Likert scale was used for scoring the responses. The decision rule was set at a mean score of 2.50. Any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted (A), while any item below 2.50 was rejected.



The above conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between classroom socialization practices, leadership practices, and capacity building among early childhood educators. It shows that classroom socialization provides the foundation for interaction, collaboration, and professional engagement among educators. These social processes support the development of leadership practices such as teamwork, mentoring, communication, and collaborative decision-making. In turn, these leadership practices lead to capacity building, reflected in improved professional skills, better instructional practices, and enhanced classroom management. The framework also highlights that when educators actively engage in these interconnected practices, their overall professional development is strengthened within early childhood education settings.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Extent to Which Classroom Socialization Practices Support Capacity Building among Early Childhood Educators

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std Dev	Rank	Decision
1	Classroom socialization allows educators to share teaching experiences for professional growth	3.42	0.61	1st	A
2	Classroom socialization promotes collaboration among early childhood educators	3.38	0.60	2nd	A
3	Classroom socialization improves communication among educators	3.35	0.62	3rd	A
4	Classroom socialization supports peer learning among educators	3.30	0.64	4th	A
5	Classroom socialization enhances classroom management skills among educators	3.28	0.66	5th	A
6	Classroom socialization promotes professional confidence among educators	3.25	0.67	6th	A
Aggregate Mean & Standard Deviation		3.33	0.63		A

Data in Table 1 shows that respondents agreed that classroom socialization practices support capacity building among early childhood educators. All the item mean scores are above the benchmark mean of 2.50, indicating acceptance of all statements. The highest-rated item shows that classroom socialization allows educators to share teaching experiences for professional growth, while the lowest-rated item still confirms that classroom socialization promotes professional confidence among educators. The aggregate mean score of 3.33 and standard deviation of 0.63 indicate a high level of agreement among respondents that classroom socialization significantly supports capacity building through collaboration, communication, peer learning, and professional development among early childhood educators in the study area.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Teamwork Practices Used for Capacity Building among Early Childhood Educators

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std Dev	Rank	Decision
1	Teamwork practices among educators promote shared lesson planning	3.40	0.60	1st	A
2	Teamwork allows educators to support one	3.38	0.62	2nd	A

	another in classroom activities				
3	Teamwork enhances problem-solving among early childhood educators	3.35	0.63	3rd	A
4	Teamwork improves instructional delivery through shared responsibilities	3.32	0.65	4th	A
5	Teamwork encourages exchange of teaching strategies among educators	3.30	0.66	5th	A
6	Teamwork strengthens professional growth and cooperation among educators	3.28	0.67	6th	A
Aggregate Mean & Standard Deviation		3.34	0.64		A

Data in Table 2 shows that respondents agreed that teamwork practices are used for capacity building among early childhood educators. All the item mean scores are above the benchmark mean of 2.50, indicating acceptance of all the statements. The highest-ranked item shows that teamwork promotes shared lesson planning among educators, while the lowest-ranked item still confirms that teamwork strengthens professional growth and cooperation among educators. The aggregate mean score of 3.34 and standard deviation of 0.64 indicate a high level of agreement among respondents that teamwork practices such as shared planning, collaboration in classroom activities, problem-solving, and exchange of teaching strategies are actively used for capacity building among early childhood educators in the study area.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Mentoring Practices Used for Capacity Building among Early Childhood Educators

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std Dev	Rank	Decision
1	Experienced educators provide guidance to less experienced colleagues for capacity building	3.45	0.58	1st	A
2	Mentoring practices include classroom observation and constructive feedback	3.40	0.60	2nd	A
3	Mentoring helps improve instructional delivery among early childhood educators	3.38	0.62	3rd	A
4	Mentoring supports professional confidence and classroom management skills	3.35	0.63	4th	A
5	Mentoring encourages continuous professional learning among educators	3.32	0.65	5th	A
6	Mentoring relationships strengthen professional growth in early childhood education	3.30	0.66	6th	A
Aggregate Mean & Standard Deviation		3.37	0.64		A

Data in Table 3 shows that respondents agreed that mentoring practices are used for capacity building among early childhood educators. All the item mean scores are above the benchmark mean of 2.50, indicating acceptance of all the statements. The highest-ranked item indicates that experienced educators provide guidance to less experienced colleagues, while the lowest-ranked item still confirms that mentoring relationships strengthen professional growth among educators. The aggregate mean score of 3.37 and standard deviation of 0.64 indicate a high level of agreement among respondents that mentoring practices such as guidance, classroom observation, feedback,

and professional support are actively used to enhance capacity building among early childhood educators in the study area.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Communication Practices Used for Capacity Building among Early Childhood Educators

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std Dev	Rank	Decision
1	Effective communication among educators promotes sharing of instructional ideas	3.36	0.71	1st	A
2	Regular communication improves coordination of classroom activities	3.21	0.69	3rd	A
3	Communication among educators enhances problem-solving in teaching situations	3.28	0.74	2nd	A
4	Open communication supports professional collaboration among educators	3.18	0.68	5th	A
5	Communication between educators and administrators improves classroom management	3.24	0.72	4th	A
6	Communication practices strengthen professional development among educators	3.15	0.75	6th	A
Aggregate Mean & Standard Deviation		3.24	0.71		A

Data in Table 4 shows that respondents agreed that communication practices are used for capacity building among early childhood educators. All the item mean scores are above the benchmark mean of 2.50, indicating acceptance of all the statements. The highest-ranked item indicates that effective communication promotes sharing of instructional ideas, while the lowest-ranked item still confirms that communication practices strengthen professional development among educators. The aggregate mean score of 3.24 and standard deviation of 0.71 indicate a generally high level of agreement among respondents that communication practices such as information sharing, coordination, open dialogue, and interaction with administrators are used for capacity building among early childhood educators in the study area.

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Collaborative Decision-Making Practices Used for Capacity Building among Early Childhood Educators

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std Dev	Rank	Decision
1	Educators are allowed to contribute ideas during classroom planning meetings	3.25	0.82	3rd	A
2	Collaborative decision-making improves staff cooperation in schools	3.39	0.64	1st	A
3	Educators participate in decisions affecting teaching and learning activities	3.17	0.79	4th	A
4	School leaders involve educators in resolving classroom-related challenges	3.32	0.71	2nd	A
5	Decision-making processes encourage shared responsibility among educators	3.10	0.85	5th	A
6	Collaborative decision-making provides opportunities for professional input in schools	3.07	0.83	6th	A
Aggregate Mean & Standard Deviation		3.22	0.74		A

Data in Table 5 shows that respondents agreed that collaborative decision-making practices are used for capacity building among early childhood educators. All the item mean scores are above the benchmark mean of 2.50, indicating acceptance of all the statements. The highest-ranked item indicates that collaborative decision-making improves staff cooperation in schools, while the lowest-ranked item still confirms that collaborative decision-making provides opportunities for professional input among educators. The aggregate mean score of 3.22 and standard deviation of 0.74 indicate that respondents generally agree that collaborative decision-making practices such as involvement in planning meetings, participation in instructional decisions, and shared problem-solving processes are used for capacity building among early childhood educators in the study area.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that classroom socialization practices support capacity building among early childhood educators to a high extent, particularly through professional interaction, shared experiences, and collaborative learning among educators. The findings further showed that classroom socialization enhances educators' teamwork spirit, communication skills, and professional confidence needed for effective classroom practice. The findings are in consonance with the study of Phillips, Johnson, and Iruka (2022), who posited that early care and education settings provide critical socialization contexts that promote professional growth and learning among educators through meaningful interactions. Similarly, Fabry (2024) maintained that relational and responsive interactions among educators strengthen pedagogical leadership and support continuous professional development in early childhood education environments.

The findings of the study revealed that teamwork practices used for capacity building among early childhood educators include collaborative lesson planning, peer support in classroom activities, and shared instructional responsibilities. These teamwork practices enable educators to work together in achieving instructional goals and improving classroom management skills. The findings are in consonance with the study of Sisson, Lash, Shin, and Whittington (2021), who posited that co-constructed leadership practices promote teamwork, shared responsibility, and collective engagement among early childhood educators. In the same vein, Heikkinen, Ahtiainen, and Fonsén (2022) found that communities of practice in early childhood education strengthen teamwork and professional learning through continuous collaboration and shared reflection.

The findings of the study revealed that mentoring practices used for capacity building among early childhood educators include guidance from experienced educators, classroom observation and feedback, and professional support for less experienced teachers. These mentoring practices help educators to improve instructional delivery and build professional confidence. The findings are in consonance with the study of Movahedazarhouli, Banerjee, and Luckner (2022), who posited that structured leadership development and mentoring systems are essential for strengthening educators' competencies and professional growth. Similarly, Fabry (2024) reported that supportive professional relationships and mentoring interactions enhance pedagogical leadership and continuous learning among early childhood educators.

The findings of the study revealed that communication practices used for capacity building among early childhood educators include regular information sharing, professional discussions, and open dialogue among educators and school administrators. These communication practices promote understanding, coordination, and effective

classroom management. The findings are in consonance with the study of Phillips, Johnson, and Iruka (2022), who posited that effective communication within early childhood education settings strengthens professional interaction and supports learning among educators. In addition, Sisson, Lash, Shin, and Whittington (2021) found that collaborative leadership practices encourage open communication, shared dialogue, and collective decision-making in educational settings.

The findings of the study revealed that collaborative decision-making practices used for capacity building among early childhood educators include involving educators in planning instructional activities, participating in school-based decisions, and contributing to classroom management strategies. These practices promote shared responsibility and professional engagement among educators. The findings are in consonance with the study of Heikkinen, Ahtiainen, and Fonsén (2022), who posited that collaborative leadership structures in early childhood education support shared decision-making and professional learning within communities of practice. Similarly, Movahedazarhouli, Banerjee, and Luckner (2022) maintained that system-based leadership approaches that include collaborative decision-making enhance educators' capacity building and institutional development.

Educational Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have important implications for early childhood education practice, teacher development, and school administration. The study shows that classroom socialization and leadership practices such as teamwork, mentoring, communication, and collaborative decision-making are essential for capacity building among early childhood educators. This implies that schools should be deliberately structured as professional learning communities where educators interact regularly, share experiences, and support one another in instructional practice. When such social environments are strengthened, educators are more likely to develop confidence, improve classroom management skills, and enhance their teaching effectiveness. The findings further imply that school administrators have a critical role to play in promoting leadership practices that support educators' professional growth. By encouraging teamwork, mentoring systems, effective communication channels, and shared decision-making processes, administrators can create a supportive environment that enhances teachers' capacity. This suggests that leadership in early childhood education should move beyond supervision alone to include active participation in developing educators' professional competencies. In addition, the study implies that teacher preparation and in-service training programmes should incorporate strong components of collaboration and leadership development. Educators need continuous opportunities to engage in mentoring relationships, professional dialogue, and collaborative planning in order to sustain improvement in teaching quality. This reinforces the need for educational stakeholders and policy makers to integrate structured capacity-building strategies into early childhood education programmes for long-term improvement in educational outcomes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that classroom socialization practices and leadership practices play a significant role in capacity building among early childhood educators in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. The study established that classroom socialization supports educators through collaboration, sharing of experiences, peer learning, and improved professional confidence. It was also concluded that leadership practices such as teamwork, mentoring, communication, and collaborative decision-

making are actively used among early childhood educators to enhance professional competence, instructional delivery, and classroom management. Generally, the findings indicate that these practices are well recognized and accepted as essential strategies for strengthening the capacity of early childhood educators in the study area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. School administrators should ensure that classroom socialization is consistently encouraged because it supports collaboration, professional interaction, and capacity building among early childhood educators.
2. Early childhood educators should be encouraged to engage in teamwork practices because it promotes shared lesson planning, cooperation, and improved instructional delivery.
3. Mentoring programmes should be strengthened in schools because it helps less experienced educators develop teaching skills, confidence, and professional competence.
4. Effective communication structures should be maintained in schools because it supports coordination, information sharing, and professional development among educators.
5. Collaborative decision-making should be promoted in school administration because it encourages educator participation, responsibility sharing, and improved capacity building.

REFERENCES

- Aina, J. K., & Bipath, K. (2020). Early childhood development and education in Nigeria: The challenges and prospects of universal implementation. *South African Journal of Education*, 40(2), 1–9.
- Douglass, A. (2019). *Leadership for quality early childhood education and care*. OECD Publishing.
- Fabry, A. (2024). Relational and responsive pedagogical leadership in early childhood education settings. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 49(4), 1–15.
- Heikkinen, K. M., Ahtiainen, R., & Fonsén, E. (2022). Leadership in early childhood education and care: Community of practice perspectives. *SAGE Open*, 12(2), 1–12.
- Movahedazarhouli, S., Banerjee, R., & Luckner, J. (2022). Leadership development and system building in early childhood education and care: Current issues and recommendations. *Early Years*, 43(4–5), 1045–1059.
- Ogunyemi, F. T., & Ragpot, L. (2015). Work and play in early childhood education: Views from Nigeria and South Africa. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 5(3), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v5i3.389>
- Phillips, D. A., Johnson, A. D., & Iruka, I. U. (2022). Early care and education settings as contexts for socialization: New directions for quality assessment. *Child Development Perspectives*, 16(3), 127–133.
- Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Muttock, S., Gilden, R., & Bell, D. (2002). *Researching effective pedagogy in the early years*. Department for Education and Skills.
- Sisson, J. H., Lash, M., Shin, A. M., & Whittington, V. (2021). Co-constructed leadership in early childhood education. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 27(4), 797–819.