

Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada and Nigeria: A Comparative Review of Policies, Practices, Challenges, and Future Directions

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
Article history: Published: August 2026 Keywords: Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Canada Nigeria Early Childhood Development Comparative Review	Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is widely recognized as the foundation for children's lifelong learning, health, and overall well-being. Experiences during the early years significantly influence children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Countries that invest in quality early childhood programmes often experience better educational outcomes, reduced inequality, and improved economic productivity. This review compares Early Childhood Education and Care systems in Canada and Nigeria by examining their policies, implementation practices, achievements, challenges, and future directions. The paper adopts a narrative review approach by integrating recent literature, government reports, and publications from international organizations published between 2020 and 2026. The review shows that Canada has developed a well-structured and highly regulated ECEC system supported by strong government investment, qualified educators, inclusive policies, and active family participation. In contrast, Nigeria has made notable progress through the National Policy on Education and the integration of Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE) into the education system. However, implementation remains a problem due to inadequate funding, shortages of trained teachers, poor infrastructure, limited access in rural communities, weak policy enforcement, and socioeconomic inequalities. The comparison demonstrates that while both countries recognize the importance of early childhood education, differences in governance, financing, quality assurance, and workforce development have resulted in varying levels of effectiveness. The review further identifies opportunities for Nigeria to strengthen its ECEC system by adapting selected best practices from Canada, including increased public investment, continuous teacher professional development, stronger quality monitoring, improved family engagement, inclusive education, and enhanced collaboration among governments, communities, and development partners. The paper concludes that improving early childhood education requires sustained political commitment, adequate funding, evidence-based policymaking, and partnerships that prioritize every child's right to quality education regardless of social or economic background.

1. Introduction

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) refers to the education, care, health, protection, and developmental support provided to children from birth to about eight years of age. It is one of the most important stages of human development because children's brains develop rapidly during the first few years of life. During this period, children acquire language, social skills, emotional regulation, creativity, and problem-solving abilities that shape their future learning and overall well-being (UNESCO, 2024; UNICEF, 2023).

Research consistently shows that children who receive quality early childhood education are more likely to perform better in school, complete higher levels of education, secure better employment opportunities, and enjoy improved health throughout their lives. Quality ECEC also reduces inequalities by providing children from disadvantaged backgrounds with a stronger foundation for learning and development (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2024).

Globally, governments and international organizations have recognized ECEC as a major driver of sustainable development. This recognition is reflected in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.2, which aims to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so they are ready for primary education by 2030 (United Nations, 2024). Achieving this goal requires countries to invest in qualified teachers, safe learning environments, inclusive education, and policies that support children and families.

However, Canada is widely known as one of the countries making significant progress in strengthening its early childhood education and care system. Through the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) initiative, federal, provincial, and territorial governments are working together to improve access, affordability, and quality of childcare services. The programme has expanded affordable childcare spaces, supported workforce development, and increased government investment in early learning across the country (Government of Canada, 2025).

On the other hand, Nigeria has also acknowledged the importance of early childhood education through the National Policy on Education and the implementation of Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE) programmes. These policies seek to provide children with quality learning experiences before they enter primary school. Despite these efforts, many Nigerian children continue to face challenges such as inadequate learning facilities, insufficient funding, limited access in rural communities, shortages of trained teachers, and weak policy implementation. These challenges affect the quality and availability of ECEC services across different regions of the country (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023; UNICEF Nigeria, 2024).

Although Canada and Nigeria differ in their economic development, governance structures, and educational resources, both countries recognize that investing in young children is essential for national development. Comparing their experiences provides considerably useful insights into effective policies, successful practices, and areas requiring improvement. Canada offers valuable lessons on financing, quality assurance, educator training, and family support, while Nigeria's experience highlights the importance of expanding access within resource-constrained settings.

Therefore, this review aims to compare Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada and Nigeria by examining their policy frameworks, implementation practices, achievements, challenges, and future directions. By identifying similarities, differences, and lessons from both countries, the paper seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions on improving early childhood education and ensuring that every child has access to quality learning opportunities during the most critical years of development.

2. Methodology

This review adopted a narrative literature review approach to examine and compare Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) systems in Canada and Nigeria. A narrative review was considered suitable because it allows the integration and discussion of information from different sources, including academic studies, government reports, policy documents, and publications from international organizations.

Relevant literature published mainly between 2020 and 2026 was reviewed from sources such as government education reports, UNICEF, UNESCO, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, and peer-reviewed academic journals. The search focused on key areas related to early childhood education, including policy development, accessibility, quality of services, teacher preparation, funding, inclusion, family involvement, and challenges affecting implementation.

The review selected literature that provided information about ECEC policies and practices in Canada and Nigeria. Documents were compared to identify similarities, differences, achievements, and gaps between the two countries. Attention was given more to how government commitment, financial investment, workforce development, and social factors influence the effectiveness of early childhood education systems.

The information gathered was analyzed thematically under major areas including policy frameworks, educational practices, challenges, and future opportunities. This comparative approach helps to provide a clearer understanding of how Canada and Nigeria address early childhood education and what lessons can be adapted to improve children's learning and development outcomes in both contexts.

3. Conceptual Review of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is a broad concept that combines education, childcare, health support, protection, and opportunities for children to develop essential skills during their early years. It focuses on children from birth until the beginning of formal schooling and recognizes that learning starts long before children enter primary school. ECEC programmes aim to support children's physical, cognitive, emotional, language, and social development through safe and stimulating environments (UNICEF, 2023).

A significant idea behind ECEC is that children learn best through active participation, play, exploration, and positive relationships with caregivers and educators. Unlike traditional views that consider early childhood education only as preparation for school, modern approaches emphasize the importance of developing the whole child. This includes building confidence, communication skills, creativity, independence, and the ability to interact positively with others (OECD, 2023).

Conversely, quality ECEC depends on several important factors, including trained educators, appropriate learning materials, child-friendly environments, inclusive practices, strong family involvement, and effective government policies. Studies show that when early childhood programmes are well designed and properly funded, they contribute to better educational outcomes and help reduce social inequalities, especially among children from disadvantaged backgrounds (UNESCO, 2024).

In the Canadian context, ECEC is viewed as an important social service and an investment in children's future. The Canadian approach emphasizes accessibility, affordability, inclusion, cultural diversity, and quality standards. Programmes are designed to support children's development while also helping families balance work and childcare responsibilities (Government of Canada, 2025).

On the contrary, in Nigeria, ECEC is recognized as the first stage of the education system through Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE). The Nigerian approach focuses on preparing children for primary education while promoting early learning, health, nutrition, and social development. However, differences in funding, infrastructure, teacher quality, and access continue to influence the effectiveness of ECEC programmes across the country (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023).

Therefore, ECEC can be understood as more than childcare or early schooling; it is a foundation for lifelong learning, equality, and national development. Comparing how Canada and Nigeria approach ECEC provides an opportunity to understand successful strategies and identify areas where improvements are needed.

4. Historical Development of Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada and Nigeria

The development of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Canada and Nigeria has been shaped by social needs, government policies, cultural values, and economic conditions. Although both countries recognize the importance of early childhood development, their systems have evolved differently due to differences in resources, governance, and educational structures.

In Canada, early childhood education developed gradually from community-based childcare services, kindergarten programmes, and private childcare initiatives. During the twentieth century, provinces and territories took primary responsibility for education and childcare regulation, resulting in different approaches across the country. Over time, research highlighting the importance of

early childhood development encouraged greater government involvement. However, recent reforms have focused on creating a more coordinated national approach through the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system, introduced in 2021 to improve affordability, accessibility, quality, and inclusion of childcare services across provinces and territories (Government of Canada, 2024).

The Canadian ECEC system has increasingly moved from viewing childcare as only a support service for working parents to recognizing it as an essential part of children's learning and development. Current policies emphasize play-based learning, qualified early childhood educators, culturally responsive practices, and support for children with diverse needs, including Indigenous children and children with disabilities (OECD, 2023).

Meanwhile, in Nigeria, early childhood education has existed through traditional family and community-based child-rearing practices for many years. However, formal recognition of ECEC became stronger after the introduction of national education policies that identified early childhood education as the foundation of the education system. The National Policy on Education introduced Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE) as a structured component aimed at preparing children for primary education and promoting their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023).

Despite policy recognition, Nigeria's ECEC development has faced several challenges. These include limited public investment, uneven access between urban and rural areas, inadequate infrastructure, and shortages of professionally trained early childhood educators. Many programmes are provided by private organizations, creating differences in quality and affordability among families (UNICEF Nigeria, 2024).

Comparatively, Canada has developed a more organized and publicly supported ECEC system, while Nigeria is still working toward expanding access and improving quality. However, both countries continue to recognize that strong early childhood education is essential for improving children's future opportunities and national development.

5. Policy Frameworks for Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada

Canada's Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system is guided by a combination of federal, provincial, and territorial policies. Since education and childcare responsibilities are shared among different levels of government, each province and territory develops its own regulations, curriculum approaches, and quality standards. However, recent national efforts have focused on creating a more coordinated system that ensures children across Canada have access to affordable and high-quality early learning opportunities.

A major development in Canadian ECEC policy is the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system, launched in 2021. The programme was created through agreements between the federal government and provinces and territories to improve childcare affordability, increase available spaces, support early childhood educators, and strengthen service quality. The policy aims to provide families with access to more affordable childcare while ensuring that children receive safe, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences (Government of Canada, 2024).

Canadian ECEC policies are based on principles of inclusion, diversity, and child-centred learning. Programmes recognize the importance of supporting children from different cultural backgrounds, including Indigenous communities, newcomers, and children with disabilities. Many provinces have developed frameworks that encourage play-based learning, positive relationships between educators and children, and strong partnerships with families (OECD, 2023).

Another important aspect of Canadian policy is the recognition of early childhood educators as professionals. Governments have focused more on improving educator training, wages, working conditions, and career development because the quality of early learning largely depends on the knowledge and skills of educators (Government of Canada, 2025).

Despite these achievements, challenges remain within the Canadian system. Some regions continue to experience shortages of childcare spaces, variations in service quality, and difficulties recruiting and retaining qualified early childhood educators. Rural and remote communities, especially Indigenous communities, still face barriers in accessing reliable childcare services (UNICEF, 2023).

Furthermore, Canada's ECEC policy framework demonstrates a strong commitment to treating early childhood education as an important public investment. The emphasis on affordability, quality improvement, professional educators, and inclusion provides useful lessons for countries seeking to strengthen their own early childhood systems.

6. Policy Frameworks for Early Childhood Education and Care in Nigeria

Nigeria recognizes Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) as an important stage of the education system through the National Policy on Education (NPE). The policy describes early childhood education as a foundation for children's physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development before entering primary school. It encourages the establishment of pre-primary education centres, training of early childhood educators, provision of learning materials, and collaboration between government, communities, and private organizations (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023).

The implementation of ECEC in Nigeria is mainly supported through the Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE) programme. The programme focuses on preparing young children for formal education while promoting health, nutrition, social skills, and positive learning experiences. It also emphasizes the importance of creating safe environments where children can learn through play and interaction (UNICEF Nigeria, 2024).

Although Nigeria has developed policies supporting early childhood education, implementation remains a major challenge. Responsibilities for ECEC are shared among federal, state, local governments, private providers, and communities, but coordination and funding limitations affect the effectiveness of programmes. Many public early childhood centres lack adequate classrooms, teaching materials, sanitation facilities, and trained educators, especially in rural and underserved communities (World Bank, 2023). Another challenge is the limited professional development opportunities for early childhood educators. While teacher training programmes exist, many caregivers working in early childhood centres do not receive sufficient specialized training in child development, inclusive education, classroom management, and play-based learning approaches. Improving educator quality remains essential for achieving better learning outcomes for Nigerian children (UNESCO, 2024).

Despite these challenges, Nigeria has opportunities to strengthen its ECEC system through increased government investment, improved monitoring of early childhood centres, stronger partnerships with private organizations, and adoption of evidence-based practices from successful international models. A stronger early childhood system can contribute significantly to reducing educational inequality and improving children's future opportunities.

7. Comparative Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care Policies in Canada and Nigeria

The ECEC policies of Canada and Nigeria show that both countries recognize early childhood education as an important foundation for children's development. However, the level of implementation, funding, and service delivery differs significantly due to differences in economic capacity, governance structures, and social conditions.

One major difference is the approach to government responsibility and financing. In Canada, early childhood education has increasingly become a shared public responsibility, with significant federal investment supporting provinces and territories through the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system. This approach focuses on improving affordability, increasing childcare spaces, supporting educators, and ensuring consistent quality standards across the country (Government of Canada, 2024).

In Nigeria, although ECEC is included in national education policy, implementation depends heavily on state governments, private providers, and community initiatives. Limited funding, weak monitoring systems, and unequal distribution of resources have affected the ability to provide quality early childhood services, particularly in rural areas and low-income communities (UNICEF Nigeria, 2024). Another important difference is workforce development. Canada places strong emphasis on professional training, certification, and improved working conditions for early childhood educators. This reflects the understanding that skilled educators are essential for providing quality learning experiences. In Nigeria, however, many early childhood workers still require more specialized training and professional support to meet international standards (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024).

Despite these differences, both countries face similar challenges, including shortages of qualified educators, increasing demand for childcare services, and the need to ensure inclusive learning opportunities for children from diverse backgrounds. Canada's experience demonstrates the importance of long-term government investment, strong regulation, and workforce support, while Nigeria highlights the need for flexible approaches that consider local communities and available resources.

Furthermore, the comparison suggests that Nigeria can benefit from adapting selected Canadian practices, particularly in areas such as educator development, quality assurance, data collection, and public investment. However, these approaches must be adjusted to fit Nigeria's social, cultural, and economic realities.

8. Early Childhood Education and Care Practices in Canada

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) practices in Canada are based on the belief that young children learn best through play, exploration, positive relationships, and active engagement with their environment. Canadian early childhood programmes focus on the overall development of children, including their cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and language skills. Rather than focusing only on academic preparation, the system emphasizes developing confidence, creativity, independence, and healthy relationships (OECD, 2023).

A common feature of Canadian ECEC practice is the use of play-based learning. Educators create environments where children can explore ideas, solve problems, communicate with others, and develop social skills through guided activities. Teachers act as facilitators who support children's curiosity rather than simply delivering information (Government of Canada, 2024).

Canadian childcare centres also emphasize inclusion and diversity. Programmes are designed to support children from different cultural backgrounds, Indigenous communities, immigrant families, and children with disabilities. Inclusive practices ensure that every child has the opportunity to participate and benefit from early learning experiences (UNICEF, 2023).

Another important aspect of Canadian ECEC practice is family involvement. Educators work closely with parents and caregivers because strong partnerships between families and childcare providers contribute positively to children's development. Regular communication, family participation, and respect for cultural values are important parts of service delivery (OECD, 2023).

However, the Canadian system still faces challenges. Some families experience difficulties accessing affordable childcare due to limited spaces, especially in rural and remote areas. There are also concerns about recruiting and retaining qualified early childhood educators because of workload pressures and workforce shortages (Government of Canada, 2025).

Furthermore, Canadian ECEC practices demonstrate a strong child-centred approach that combines education, care, inclusion, and family support. These practices provide useful lessons for improving early childhood services in other countries, including Nigeria.

9. Early Childhood Education and Care Practices in Nigeria

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) practices in Nigeria focus on preparing children for formal schooling while supporting their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. Nigerian early childhood centres use a combination of play, storytelling, songs, classroom activities, and basic literacy and numeracy exercises to introduce children to learning. These approaches aim to help children develop communication skills, confidence, creativity, and social interaction abilities before entering primary school (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023).

In many Nigerian early childhood settings, teachers and caregivers play a central role in guiding children's learning. However, the quality of teaching practices varies widely depending on the availability of trained educators, learning materials, and school resources. Some private early childhood centres provide relatively better learning environments, while many public and community-based centres struggle with overcrowded classrooms, limited teaching materials, and inadequate facilities (UNICEF Nigeria, 2024). Play-based learning is recognized as an important part of early childhood education in Nigeria, but in practice, some centres place greater emphasis on early academic instruction, such as reading, writing, and memorization. This approach is often influenced by parental expectations and the desire for children to perform well academically. However, research suggests that balanced approaches combining play, exploration, and guided learning are more effective for children's overall development (UNESCO, 2024).

Family and community involvement remain important features of Nigerian ECEC practices. Parents, caregivers, and community members often contribute to children's early learning and care, particularly where formal education services are limited. However, poverty, limited awareness, and unequal access to quality services continue to affect children's early learning experiences, especially in rural communities (World Bank, 2023).

Despite these challenges, Nigeria has opportunities to improve ECEC practices through better teacher training, stronger monitoring systems, increased investment in early learning resources, and greater support for inclusive education. Strengthening these areas will help ensure that more Nigerian children benefit from quality early childhood experiences.

10. Comparative Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care Practices in Canada and Nigeria

The ECEC practices in Canada and Nigeria share the common goal of supporting children's early development, but the way services are delivered differs because of differences in resources, educational systems, and social conditions.

One major similarity is that both countries recognize the importance of play, social interaction, and supportive learning environments in early childhood development. Educators in both contexts aim to help children develop communication skills, independence, creativity, and positive relationships with others (OECD, 2023).

However, a major difference exists in the availability and quality of resources. In Canada, early childhood centres generally operate within stronger regulatory frameworks, with better access to learning materials, trained educators, child safety standards, and structured quality monitoring systems. Government investment through the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system has further strengthened access and affordability of services (Government of Canada, 2024).

In Nigeria, ECEC practices are more varied. While some private and urban-based centres provide quality learning experiences, many public and rural centres face challenges such as inadequate classrooms, limited teaching materials, insufficient funding, and shortages of trained early childhood educators. These factors create differences in the quality of learning experiences available to children (UNICEF Nigeria, 2024).

Another difference is the approach to curriculum and teaching methods. Canadian ECEC programmes largely emphasize child-centred and play-based learning, where children actively explore and participate in activities. In Nigeria, although play-based learning is encouraged in policy documents, some centres still emphasize early academic skills and teacher-directed instruction due to cultural expectations and parental pressure (UNESCO, 2024).

The comparison shows that Canada's strength lies in strong policy implementation, professional workforce development, and consistent quality standards, while Nigeria's strength includes strong family and community involvement in child development. Nigeria can improve its ECEC system by strengthening educator training, increasing public investment, and adopting effective practices while considering its own cultural and social realities.

11. Major Challenges Affecting Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada and Nigeria

Although Canada and Nigeria have made progress in developing Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) systems, both countries continue to face challenges that affect access, quality, and sustainability of services.

In Canada, one of the major challenges is the shortage of qualified early childhood educators. The increasing demand for affordable childcare has created pressure on the workforce, with many educators facing concerns related to wages, workload, and career progression. Limited childcare spaces, especially in rural and remote communities, also remain a barrier for some families seeking quality services (Government of Canada, 2025).

Another challenge in Canada is ensuring equal access for all children. Although national initiatives have improved affordability, differences still exist between provinces and territories in terms of service availability, funding structures, and quality standards. Indigenous communities and families living in remote areas often experience additional barriers due to geographical challenges and limited infrastructure (OECD, 2023).

Nigeria faces more significant challenges due to limited resources and infrastructure. Many early childhood centres lack adequate classrooms, learning materials, sanitation facilities, and trained educators. Funding limitations and weak monitoring systems affect the effective implementation of early childhood policies, especially in rural and disadvantaged communities (UNICEF Nigeria, 2024).

Another major challenge in Nigeria is unequal access to quality ECEC. While some children in urban areas have access to private early learning centres, many children in rural communities have fewer opportunities. Poverty, low parental awareness, and social inequalities continue to influence children's participation in early childhood programmes (World Bank, 2023).

Despite these differences, both countries need continuous improvement in areas such as workforce development, quality assurance, inclusion, and sustainable financing. Addressing these challenges is important for ensuring that every child receives the support needed during the critical early years of life.

12. Lessons Nigeria Can Learn from Canada's Early Childhood Education and Care System

The comparison between Canada and Nigeria provides useful lessons that can support the improvement of Nigeria's Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system. While Nigeria has different social and economic conditions, some Canadian approaches can be adapted to strengthen early childhood services.

One important lesson is the need for stronger and sustained government investment. Canada's progress in ECEC has been supported by significant public funding aimed at improving access, affordability, and quality. Nigeria can benefit from increasing financial commitment to early childhood education, especially in public centres and underserved communities (Government of Canada, 2024; World Bank, 2023).

Another important lesson is the professional development of early childhood educators. Canada recognizes educators as key contributors to children's development and invests in training, certification, and improved working conditions. Nigeria can strengthen its ECEC system by expanding specialized teacher training programmes, improving professional standards, and providing continuous learning opportunities for caregivers and teachers (OECD, 2023).

Nigeria can also learn from Canada's emphasis on quality assurance and monitoring. Regular assessment of childcare centres, clear standards, and effective supervision help ensure that children receive safe and meaningful learning experiences. Strengthening monitoring systems in Nigeria would improve accountability and consistency across early childhood centres.

In addition, Canada's focus on inclusive education and family involvement provides valuable lessons. Supporting children from different backgrounds, including those with disabilities and vulnerable families, can help Nigeria create a more equitable early childhood system. Stronger partnerships between schools, parents, communities, and government agencies can also improve children's learning outcomes (UNICEF, 2023).

However, Nigeria should not simply copy the Canadian model. Effective reforms must consider Nigeria's cultural values, population size, economic realities, and community structures. Combining international best practices with local approaches can help develop an ECEC system that meets the needs of Nigerian children.

13. Future Directions for Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada and Nigeria

The future of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Canada and Nigeria depends on continued investment, innovation, and stronger partnerships among governments, educators, families, and communities. As societies change, early childhood systems must respond to new challenges such as increasing demand for childcare, technological changes, migration, and the need for more inclusive learning environments.

In Canada, future priorities include expanding childcare spaces, strengthening the early childhood workforce, and ensuring equal access for children in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. Continued investment in educator training, better working conditions, and improved quality standards will be important for maintaining a sustainable ECEC system (Government of Canada, 2025).

For Nigeria, the future of ECEC requires stronger policy implementation, increased government funding, and improved coordination among federal, state, and local authorities. Expanding access to affordable and quality early learning centres, especially in rural areas, will be essential for reducing educational inequalities. Greater investment in teacher preparation and learning resources will also improve the quality of early childhood services (UNICEF Nigeria, 2024).

Technology also presents opportunities for improving ECEC in both countries. Digital tools can support teacher training, learning resources, and communication between educators and families. However, technology should complement, rather than replace, human interaction, play, and relationships that are central to early childhood development (UNESCO, 2024).

Both Canada and Nigeria can benefit from stronger research and data systems. Reliable information on children's participation, learning outcomes, educator capacity, and service quality can help governments design better policies and measure progress.

Furthermore, the future of ECEC requires a child-centred approach that recognizes early childhood education as a long-term investment in human development. By strengthening policies, supporting educators, and ensuring inclusive access, both countries can improve opportunities for children and families.

14. Recommendations

Based on the comparison between Canada and Nigeria, several recommendations can help strengthen Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) systems in both countries.

First, governments in both countries should continue to increase investment in early childhood education. Adequate funding is necessary for developing quality learning spaces, providing teaching materials, supporting educators, and expanding access to underserved communities (UNICEF, 2023).

Second, Nigeria should strengthen the training and professional development of early childhood educators. Regular training, certification programmes, and improved working conditions will help teachers provide better learning experiences for young children. Canada's focus on educator quality provides a useful example that can be adapted to Nigeria's context (OECD, 2023).

Third, both countries should improve quality monitoring and accountability systems. Clear standards for childcare centres, regular assessment, and effective supervision can ensure that children receive safe and developmentally appropriate care and education (UNESCO, 2024).

Fourth, greater attention should be given to inclusive early childhood education. Policies should ensure that children with disabilities, children from low-income families, Indigenous communities, and other vulnerable groups have equal access to quality early learning opportunities.

Finally, stronger partnerships among governments, families, communities, private organizations, and international development agencies are needed. Collaboration can support innovation, increase resources, and create more sustainable early childhood education systems.

Therefore, by implementing these recommendations, Canada can continue improving accessibility and quality, while Nigeria can make significant progress toward building a stronger and more equitable ECEC system.

15. Conclusion

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) plays a critical role in shaping children's future development, learning abilities, and social well-being. This comparative review of Canada and Nigeria shows that both countries recognize the importance of investing in the early years, but differences exist in policy implementation, funding, workforce development, and access to quality services.

Canada has developed a more structured ECEC system supported by strong government investment, professional educators, quality standards, and inclusive practices. The Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system demonstrates a commitment to making early learning more accessible and affordable for families (Government of Canada, 2024). However, challenges such as workforce shortages and unequal access in some regions remain.

Nigeria has also made progress by recognizing early childhood education within national education policies and promoting Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE). However, challenges related to funding, infrastructure, teacher preparation, and unequal access continue to limit the effectiveness of many programmes (UNICEF Nigeria, 2024).

The comparison highlights that Nigeria can learn from Canada's experiences in areas such as educator professional development, quality assurance, government coordination, and inclusive education. However, reforms must be adapted to Nigeria's local realities, cultural values, and available resources.

In conclusion, quality early childhood education requires long-term commitment, strong policies, adequate investment, and collaboration among all stakeholders. Ensuring that every child has access to safe, inclusive, and stimulating early learning environments is essential for building healthier communities and achieving sustainable development in both countries.

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