

EFFECTIVENESS OF VARIOUS TEACHING METHODS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Abstract

It is crucial to note that Early Childhood is the most important stage of the total development of man and humanity. It is the formative period of life of an individual. Therefore, the early childhood education should be designed to enhance the development of the child. No wonder, professionals of early childhood observed that, children constitute the future leadership and workforce of every nation and they require serious commitment from adult. This study therefore seeks to identify the various teaching methods based on cone of experience as propounded by Dele's (1946).

Education has been recognized as a process of impacting some knowledge, skills and attitude to the learners. This could take place in varying schools with the purpose of ensuring total development of the children. It involves the exposure of the student, pupils and children to a system of relevant ideas, skills and habits that could refine them for their future roles. It could be assured that education in any society is concerned with transmission and acquisition of knowledge, experience and skills for some specific purposes. For whatever purpose the educational system is designed, it is necessary that there would be transmission, acquisition and utilisation of knowledge for education to take place (Akinkuotu, 2001).

Therefore, it is pertinent to note that childhood education is a unique strategic device to sustains the pace setting academic tempo for ensuring child survival, development and promotion as a viable basis for early childhood.

Hence, the place of various teaching method in the attainment of educational goal of the pre-primary level can not be over emphasized.

Concept of Early Childhood Education

According to the National Policy on Education (2004). Early childhood/pre-primary education is referred to as education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. It includes the crèche; kindergarten and the nursery.

Osanyin, (2002) has written that early childhood education is the overall development of the child socially, physically and intellectually. Since it is seen as the first phrase in a life-time of continuous learning and experience from birth to old age.

Akinbote (2001) asserted that as from conception to six years old the child undergoes rapid mental and physical development, demanding for encouragement from all and sundry.

Akinbote, Oduolowu, and Lawal (2001) have written that the concept of pre-primary education like most other concepts in education cannot be pinned down to only one definition. Maduwesi (2005) defined early childhood education or pre-primary school education as a semi-formal education arrangement usually outside the home whereby children from about the age of three are exposed through play like activities in a group setting to mental, social and physical learning suited to their under developmental age until the mandatory age of government approved formal schooling.

In addition, Maduewesi (2005) further gave the following as other terms used for this level of education.

- (a) Nursery school
- (b) Pre-school
- (c) Pervert cooperative nursery schools
- (d) Laboratory or practicing nursery schools
- (e) Kindergarten
- (f) Day –care or child centres and
- (g) Play group among others

Purpose of Pre-Primary/ Early Childhood Education

Early Childhood Education assists in early monitoring and sustenance of the intellectual, moral and physical abilities of the children. Therefore the objectives of early childhood education as enunciated in the National Policy on Education (2004) are as follows:-

- (a) effect a smooth transition from the home to the school.
- (b) prepare the child for primary level of education
- (c) provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the forms, in the markets, offices, etc)
- (d) inculcate social norms
- (e) inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys etc.
- (f) develop a sense of co-operation and team spirit.
- (g) Learn good habits, especially good health habits, and
- (h) teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms etc through play.

It is interesting to note that to achieve the above, government has a role to play which are as follow:

- (i) establish pre-primary sections in existing public schools and encourage both community/private efforts in the provisions of pre-primary education.
- (ii) make provision in teacher education programmes for specialization in early childhood education.
- (iii) ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community.
- (iv) develop the orthography of many more Nigerian languages and
- (v) produce textbooks in Nigerian languages
- (vi) ensure that the main method of teaching at this level shall be through play and that the curriculum of teacher education is oriented to achieve this; regulate and control the operation of pre-primary education.
- (vii) Set and monitor minimum standard for early childcare centre in the country and
- (viii) Ensure full participation of government, communities and teachers associations in the running and maintenance of early childhood education facilities.

Early Childhood Education and Development is in fact a start to life and a reliable foundation to continuing education. Learning begins at birth and at eight most brain wiring, language abilities, physical capabilities and cognitive foundations have been set in place. Investing in Early Childhood Education is investing in the whole child and dividends continue to pay off throughout the entire life cycle.

According to Osanyi (2002), early childhood education programmes prepare the child for formal schooling. A child who has attended a day care centres or pre-school prior to entering primary school adjusts better and more easily and readily accepts to learn. He also

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readily accepts to be away from home for a part of the day as he has been exposed to group experience and sitting in a classroom for a length of time.

Akinbote, Oduolowu and Lawal (2001) consider early childhood education as the education given to children from birth up to the age of six years. The implication of this is that education begins at birth and this levels of educations requires peculiar teaching methods which may be age bound.

National Policy of Education (2004) stipulates that early childhood education is that education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. It includes the crèche, the nursery and the kindergarten.

Teaching in ECE

To teach effectively in the pre-school it is important to understand the following:

- Play is at the heart of pre-school teaching and learning
- The child's developmental stage and level of skills acquisition in order to effectively plan sequence and evaluate learning in the preschooler
- Children need materials to manipulate in order to learn; therefore the environment should be structured in a manner that children have access to objects and play materials.
- The preschool atmosphere must provide freedom for preschoolers to explore and express; yet children need to have their limits set within the available time, space and objects clearly defined, discussed in a non-punitive, harsh manner and atmosphere.
- Children need time and space to engage in dramatic play need.
- The preschool curriculum must provide experiences in sensory stimulation and experiences – touch, taste, smell, slight-

hearing, language and social interactions.

- All the methods of teaching can be adapted into play way for effective teaching of preschool children.
- The teacher must be friendly, approachable, creative, and physically active. She/he must respect each child and seek means of improving his/her techniques of teaching.

Solid foundation depends on the achievable curriculum planning which enhances effective teaching methods in the conducive classroom environment which aids teaching and learning. Several programmes and curriculum exist in pre-primary and primary education. Some methods of teaching in Early Childhood Education as identify by Nzeribe (2004) are as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| Listening | Role play |
| Questions and answers | Discussion |
| Method | |
| Discussion | Demonstration |
| Lecture | |
| Play way method | |

Choosing a Teaching Method

Certain principles guide the choice of teaching methods. These are:

- ❖ the nature of instructional objectives i.e. learning domain of focus is based on intellectual, social, moral, psychomotor or aesthetic.
- ❖ the nature of lesson content
- ❖ the age, maturity and characteristics of the learners: the present capabilities and knowledge of learner.
- ❖ duration of the lesson: constraints imposed by school time table and use of facilities.
- ❖ Availability and cost of instructional materials: the availability, relevance and cost of materials and resources do affect the choice of teaching methods.

- ❖ The curriculum in some cases specifies the method to be adopted in teaching-learning.
- ❖ Class size –large, small or individual
- ❖ Research on teaching-learning methods: research has shown that certain methods are preferable with certain number of learners, as well as certain types of learners.
- ❖ The teacher characteristics
- ❖ The learning environment: (Nzeribe and Sawa, 2002). When a teacher chooses his method of teaching, he may decide to adopt teacher-centred or learner centred strategy or approach.

Effectiveness of Teaching Methods

Teaching method is describe as a set of patterns of interaction either between teacher and learners or between learners and learning experience intended to lead to a change in learners behaviour otherwise describe as learning outcome. Oshodi (2005) sees method as a combination of all human and materials resources by a teacher to promote effective teaching and learning. The success or failure of a lesson depends, inter alia on a teacher's choice of method. As a teacher teaching at the Early Childhood, must familiarize with different methods of teaching in order to determine which will be most effective in attaining his aims and objectives in a particular lesson.

The success in the use of any method depends on an intelligent analysis of the objectives, the pupils in the class, the curriculum content or the type of subject matter being taught. Not only these, the condition under which teaching is to take place. No single method is appropriate to all subjects, but is the existing need that determines the method to embark on.

Some methods used in teaching in the pre-primary schools include lecture, play-way, role-play, discussion, demonstration, problem

solving project – assignment, excursion/field trip inquiry, values clarification methods (Nzeribe 2001: Sawa 2001), and School-Based Teacher Development (SBTD) (Nwaboku, 2011)

1. Lecture Method

This method of teaching is sometimes referred to as the talk and chalk method of teaching. This is a traditional and prevalent method of teaching at all levels of Nigeria's educational system. In this method, the teacher is the sole repository of knowledge which he passes on to the learner whose duty is to make the expected response after the lesson. This method of teaching is discouraged in teaching children, because it could be boring if that teacher is not a good teacher. It does not allow for individual differences, hence slow learners might not keep pace with lesson delivery; and does not encourage learning by participation. However, in practice it is most commonly used in teaching Nigerian children

However, lecture way enhances listening skills in learners, enables the teacher to present a vast amount of information in shorter time, and very useful for teaching large class sizes which are characteristic of childhood education classes in Nigeria.

Lecture method in Early Childhood could be boring because it will not explore the potentials in children because it is not child centred. Care givers may be advised to avoid this method at the level of early childhood education.

2. Play Way Method

It is natural for children to play and they love to play. The philosophy of Maria Montessori and Froebel emphasized the place of play way method as a teaching methodology in childhood education. Children engage in various kinds of play. When at play children have high and sustained attention span, imagination and creativity. Play prepares children for successful adult living; to the adult, play may be for

pleasure and recreational, to the child, play is work and he/she plays with all his being. Suffice it to state at this point that there is a strong positive relation between play and learning in children. To facilitate play-way method, the teacher

- Should respect play initiated by children
- Observe children at play and introduce games that facilitate learning
- Understand individual differences in learners and expose children to games and play that will help achieve and strengthen their individuality.
- Structure the environment by bringing in materials and objects that children of a given age range like to play with.

3. Role Play

This is dramatic play that is unrehearsed, spontaneous and unstructured (Nzeribe, 2001). In teaching-learning situation, role play is used to help learners interpret certain situations. Topics that are taught with role-play are such that relate problematic issues in real life. Players are simply instructed to interpret such situations with their perceptions and feelings expressed. This method helps learners learn decision making, develop and express initiatives. Learners are also helped to understand how others feel about certain issues or conditions. To use this method for a lesson, teacher should

- Ensure the problematic situations to be role-played are of interest to learner.
- Story telling, pictures or other forms of illustration should be used to clarify concepts to learners/actors before being asked to role-play
- Learners perceptions should be discussed and salient points restated.

Role play in early childhood is tailored towards displaying and mimicking of parents, elder brothers and sisters, teachers and methods. When children display this, care givers should not interrupt this exercise. This method aids children to say what they know or feel about an individual.

4. Discussion Method

This type of discussion is slightly different from the concept discussed under class communication. Using this method in teaching-learning involves learners pooling together their ideas, analyzing, interpreting and weighing such ideas on given issues before arriving on a conclusion. In this method of teaching, the class is seen as the market place or shopping for experiences and contributions. This method helps children develop self confidence themselves and tolerance for other people's ideas.

To facilitate use of this method it is important to:

- Clearly explain concept, idea, issue and the scope of such to be discussed
- Allow children time and opportunity to prepare for the discussion
- Divide the class into groups
- Each group should elect/appoint a leader and recorder to guide discussion and note salient points.
- Learners should be encouraged to listen courteously to one another
- The overall class discussion should be guided by the teacher to avoid non-related goals of discussion, reiterate salient and relevant points raised.

This method enhances children at early childhood education to express self. The care-givers guide children not to deviate in the course of learning.

This method affords children to display their talents. Care givers identify talents and oral ability of each child as they imitate during demonstration.

5. Demonstration

This is a method of teaching that demands the learner to see, pay attention, and follow laid down procedures or steps. It is useful for learners to have objectives, materials or opportunity to imitate the teacher's demonstration in the lesson or soon after the lesson delivery. Demonstration method makes for immediate feedback to the learner. To facilitate use of demonstration it is useful to:

- Encourage learners to keenly observe teacher's demonstration
- The pace of demonstration should deliberately be slowed down to allow see what is being demonstrated
- Instruct the class to demonstrate/imitate skills being taught either in groups or as individuals after teacher's demonstration.

School –Based Teacher Development Programme

SBTD is an approach to in-service teacher education using carefully prepared training materials, self-learning and development of enabling skills for reflective teaching and active learning. It is cost effective and has inherent adaptive strategies to match specific environmental contexts.

SBTD methodologies achieve continuing professional development of teachers by building teachers' competencies while on the job: providing teacher mentoring and supervisory support, collaborative learning through cluster – meetings of participating teachers, and the active use of planned and detailed training materials.

This method equips care-givers to adopt teaching method that is child centered. Early childhood education that is built on SBTD will develop the mental ability of the children.

SBTD Emphasises Reflective Teaching Active Learning

Active Learning techniques offer opportunities to learners to engage in activities under a conducive, gender – sensitive, school environment where the teacher acts as the facilitator. It moves learners away from being passive listeners to becoming active participants in lessons. Active learning suggests that all learning activities involve some kind of experience or some kind of dialogue. Two main kinds of experience are “**Observing** and “**Doing**” while two main kinds of dialogue are “Dialogue with self” and “Dialogue with Others”.

- Learning through “**Observing**” involves not just viewing, but also intellectual analyses of events and objects of interest in a learning environment.
- Learning through “**Doing**” occurs when one is involved in demonstrating a performance, e.g designing and/or conducting an experiment, critiquing, writing, making an oral presentation, drawing a diagram.
- Learning through “**Dialogue with Self**” occurs when one is reflecting on a topic, thinking through issues, keeping a diary, writing a summary of what one has learned, considering effects of action taken, etc.
- Learning through “**Dialogue with Others**” occurs when one is reading a textbook, listening to a lecture, participating in group discussion, communication with another person, writing a letter or sending e-mail.

Reflective teaching enables the teacher to think through his/her teaching activities; plan, record, analyze and evaluate them on a continuous basis

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in order to improve professional practice. A teacher that uses active learning-methods is encouraged to constantly reflect on his/her actions both in the classroom and outside.

Cone of Experience

The cone of experience was first propounded by Edgar Dale in 1946 in his book, Audio-visual methods in teaching. He was an internationally renowned pioneer in the utilization of audio-visual materials in instruction. He also made major research contributions in the teaching of vocabulary and testing readability of texts. It was designed to show the progression of learning experiences from the concrete to the abstract.

application in the classroom. All teaching/learning must move from the bottom to the top of the cone. The upper level of the cone is for older students while the lower levels are for younger students and applicable for the effectiveness of various teaching methods in early childhood education.

Wiman and Meirhenry (1969) simplify the Dale’s cone of experience with the application of the five sense organs. Find a clearer picture from the diagram below.

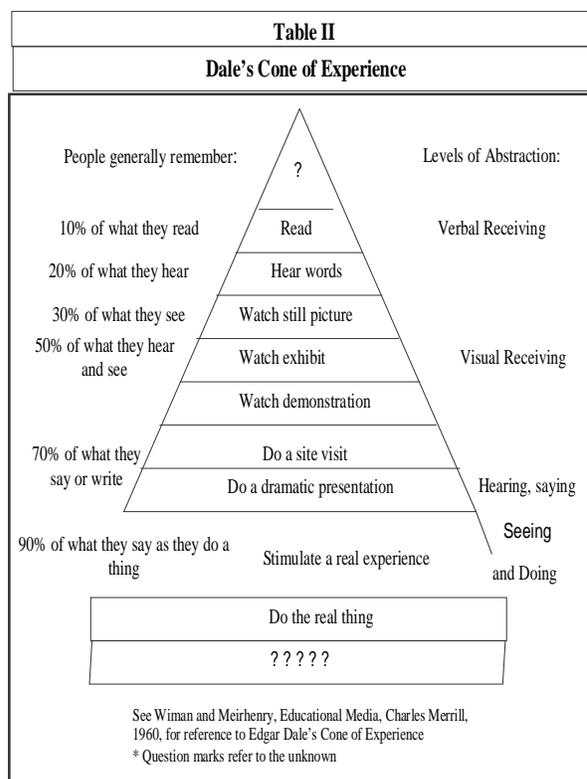
Table 1



Dale’s Cone of Experience

According to Dale (1946), the process of learning must begin in concrete experiences and move toward the abstract if mastery is to be obtained. The cone may lead to a more useful way of thinking about audio visual and their

Table II



Extract from Wiman and Meirhenry (1969)

The scholars turned the code of experience to cone of learning hence they arrived at the table below.

Table III
Cone of Learning

| CONE OF LEARNING | | | NATURE OF INVOLVEMENT | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| After 2 weeks we tend to remember | | | | |
| 10% of what we READ | Reading | Verbal Receiving | PASSIVE | |
| 20% of what we HEAR | Hearing Words | | | |
| 30% of what we SEE | Looking at pictures | | | |
| 50% of what we HEAR & SEE | Watching a movie looking at an exhibit Watching a demonstration Seeing it done on location | Visual Receiving | ACTIVE | |
| 70% of what we SAY | Participating in a discussion Giving a talk | Receiving/ Participating | | |
| 90% of what we SAY & DO | Doing a Dramatic Presentation Stimulating the Real Experience Doing the Real thing | Doing | | |
| SOURCE: EDGAR DALE | | | | |

The Methodology of Cone of Experience

As earlier noted in table III above, cone of experience emphasizes passive and active learning methodologies. Passive learning witnesses teachers active involvement in the classroom. In this cone, he provides the learning materials, interprets through teaching, expository, discussion, question and answer methods. at this level, the child hears, sees, watches pictures in textbooks or moving pictures without being actively involved.

Active learning techniques offer opportunities to learners to engage in activities under a conducive facilitator. Learners participate in classroom discussion, engage in dramatic presentation which stimulates the real experience of the learning.

Conclusion

From the foregoing there is no gain saying that effective teaching can not take place in isolation most especially at the foundational stage which form the bedrock for subsequent education. However, teachers need support to develop and use child centered teaching methods so that children can participate more in the learning process. There is a need to shift the forms of teaching from gaining knowledge to using knowledge and skills based on cone of experience. Therefore, it is obvious that successful teaching at the pre-primary school level demands from teacher investigative capability in order to make sensible decision on the choice of method to adopt on the cone experience which is the process of learning that begins in concrete experiences and move toward the abstract if mastery is to be obtained in the child.

Recommendations

Having considered various teaching methods and their relevance to early childhood education, we should recommend as follows:

That every care-giver should be trained for this level of education..

That care-givers should be interested in the progress of the child.

That teachers at early childhood level should adopt child centred methods in teaching.

That government should ensure that children should not be left in the hands of entrepreneurs – school owners.

That every school owners should possess a minimum certificate of NCE in Early Childhood and Care Education.

That government should ensure that unqualified teachers are flushed out of the system.

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