

Teachers' Utilization of Play-Way Method in Teaching Pre-Primary School Pupils in Ilorin West, Kwara State

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Abstract: *This project investigated teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils in Ilorin west. A descriptive survey research method was employed. Three research questions and three hypotheses was used to guide the study. The researcher designed questionnaire was adopted and was used to get information from the respondents. The study focused on preschool teachers and head teachers in all stratified selected schools in Ilorin. The population of the study was determined using simple random sampling technique to select a total population of 31 males and 89 females preschool teachers which amount total population of 120. Finding also revealed that , there is no any significant difference in teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on gender, there is no any significant difference in teachers' utilization of lay-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on teaching experience; and there is no any significant difference in teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary pupils based on educational qualification.*

Keywords: Utilization; Play-way; Pre-Primary School

Introduction

The need for educating children became an inevitable since education in a contemporary world is seen as the corner stone for the individual social and economic development. Education forms the basis for literacy, skill acquisition and technical advancement. That is why Benson (2010) described education as an indispensable tool for nation building and this involves a systematic training and instruction designed to transmit knowledge, skill, potentials and abilities, which enable an individual to contribute efficiently to his or her growth and development. Based on this, modern societies show serious concern in the education of their young ones. They make provisions for their under-age children through a program referred to as "early childhood education".

Early childhood is a period of readiness and that is why government showed concern in recognizing its importance. Since this level of education must start early in life. The Federal Government defined in the National Policy on Education (2004) early childhood/pre-primary education as education given in educational institutions to children prior to their entering the primary school. It includes the crèche, the nursery and the kindergarten. With the following objectives: providing a smooth transition from home to school, preparing the child for the primary level of education, providing adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work, inculcating in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity, through the exploration of nature, local environment and playing with toys, teaching the rudiments of number, letters, colors, shapes and forms through plays and inculcating social norms (P. 147) This work is concerned with pre-primary education.

The play-way teaching strategy is a flexible method that based on a child's interest and aptitude. It is unplanned and thus encourages complete freedom of expression. Incorporating ideas from other curricula or using inventive instructions and play-way teaching strategy can be modified to meet children's requirements. However, it's helpful if trained teachers implement the method. At the pre-school level, the play-way method is a very popular methodology of imparting education to children.

Play is one of the most important ways in which young children gain essential knowledge and skills. Children play to make sense of the world around them, and to find meaning in an experience by connecting it to something already known. Through play, children express and expand their understanding of their experiences. Therefore, it becomes apparent that selection of instructional materials for the children is very important. In other words, play method of teaching primarily involves allowing the pupils to learn and explore at their own pace. The teacher is therefore to guide the pupils in their activities as abilities of the pupils vary. However, at a tender age, play method of teaching helps the teachers to identify different abilities of each pupil and thus pay particular attention to their peculiar needs with respect to their mental and psychomotor development. For example, some can jump or run with ease (that is, sports-inclined), some can organize figures, arrange objects (geometrically or mathematically endowed), while some can draw and paint (art/architecturally inclined) etc. The teacher therefore encourages each child to develop along their peculiar "gifted" path. For young children, play is known to be their most natural activity which not only contributes to their development but also gives them satisfaction and enjoyment.

Findlay, Coscia, (2010) describes play as a straight exploration or learning activity which provide for information seeking behavior. It is a powerful inner force through which a child reaches out to interact with his environment and it involves movement and different sensory modes (Aleke, 2011). The child seems to learn more when he/she can move around, handle, and manipulate objects. Through such sensory motor activities, he/she learns much about the properties of matter and finds way(s) to adapt to a complex environment through play experiences related to cause and effects. Children who are prevented from having a wide range of sensory motor (play) experiences in these early years, due to illness, over protection, or other reasons are not likely to develop certain kinds of cognitive

information in the same way later. Play also refers to a range of voluntary intrinsic activities that are normally associated with pleasure and enjoyment. It also involves some manipulation of objects in the environment by a person with others.

Play-way method of teaching which was advocated by the National Policy on Education was expanded to involve manipulation of objects in the environment which are pleasant to children. This means that when the activity pleases the children (learners), the tendencies of learning taking place is high. The main purpose of the study is to specifically find out the extent of instructional material available because the availability will help in the study, also the extent of utilization of the available materials. This is because it is possible to have materials that are not well utilized and this is dependent on the teachers' expertise as it concerns training, workshop and seminar for proper information on how to handle or rescue children using play-way method of teaching. However, this method which is advocated by the National Policy on education for teaching early childhood learners seems not to be implemented in most Nigeria schools, as Ejieh (2006) observed:

Children begin learning from the time they born, to learn is to gain knowledge or skill by studying from experience. A learner is a person who is finding out about a subject and how to go about it. According to Okon,(2012) learning has been defined as a process by which man acquires and retains attitude, knowledge, understanding, skill and capabilities that cannot be attributed to inherent behaviour pattern of physical growth. Naturally, children like to play and it is their characteristics to play, enquire and explore, that is why Maria Montessori advocated for a prepared environment which gives children opportunity to explore and learn. These arouse the interest of the researcher to find out the teachers' attitudes towards the utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils in Ilorin.

Statement of the Problem

The methods used by teachers in teaching are critical to the achievement of the envisaged goals as stipulated in the National Policy on Education. The play-way method of teaching that is advocated in the national policy on pre-primary education seems not effectively used in most schools, perhaps because teachers are not well trained or may be because the materials used in play-way method of teaching are inadequate. This situation is worrisome and has motivated the researcher to carry out this study.

Studies abound in relation to play way method of teaching. For instance, Anthinia et al. (2016) studied the effect of play way method on interest of primary school pupils in Basic Science and reported that the pupils taught basic science using play-way method developed more interest than those taught with conventional method. Also, Muib (2018) explored the influence of play-way method on the academic performance of lower basic pupils' performance in English in Ilorin Kwara State and found that that Play-way method has positive impact on the academic performance of the pupils. Based on the available studies, there are not been a study conducted on teachers' attitudes towards the utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils in Ilorin west, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine teachers' attitudes towards the utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils in Ilorin west, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined:

1. Level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils;
2. Difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on gender;
3. Difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on teaching experience; and
4. Difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on educational qualification.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils?
2. Is there difference in teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on gender?
3. Is there difference in teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on teaching experience?
4. Is there difference in teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on educational qualification.

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on gender.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on teaching experience.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on educational qualification.

Literature Review

Education as a systematic process through which a child or an adult acquires knowledge, experience, skill and sound attitude is geared towards making an individual civilized, refined, cultured and educated. For a civilized and socialized society, education is

the only means. Its goal is to make an individual perfect. Every society gives importance to education because it is a panacea for all evils. It is the key to solve the various problems of life. Education is a process of waking up to life (Parankimalil, 2012).

Early childhood/pre-primary education is defined as the education given in an educational institution for children prior to their entering the primary school (FRN, 2004) it includes the crèche, the nursery and the kindergarten. The work is concerned with pre-primary, nursery education 3-5 years. Early childhood/pre-primary education is education given to children 3-5 of age in order to get them ready for primary education. This kind of education should be child-centered, actively oriented and systematic. A child being a young, delicate or sensitive being should be handled with care and love. Consequently, care should be given to and education started early for the child since research shows that the children who received good care during early childhood are more likely to benefit from later education and other social services.

According to Chukwu (2010), for children to be alive and well, aware and learning, empowered to participation, attention to early development is essential. The importance of early childhood education cannot be over emphasized. Early childhood education in the form of nursery school or pre-primary education as it is known today in Nigeria is largely a post-colonial development. As Nigerian educational administrators, policy makers and the then military government of Nigeria realized the need for it in the country; they gave it official recognition in the National Policy on Education in 1977 revised.

Play refers to a range of voluntary intrinsically motivated and personally directed activities that are normally associated with pleasures and enjoyment (Aleke, 2011). In the same vein David (2003) proffered that play is a quality that is quite different from an activity. Mark (2001) commented that play and work are words used to describe the same activity under different circumstances. Children acquire a lot of knowledge as they play. A child needs to play as much as he or she needs to sleep and eat. Concerted efforts have been made to identify the qualities of play, but this task is not without its ambiguities. For example, play is commonly described as a frivolous and non-serious activity (Aleke, 2011), yet when watching children at play, one is impressed at transfixed seriousness and absorption with which they engage in it. In the case of young children, play is known to be their most natural activity, such that instinctively they play without being motivated. It thus follows that this natural activity may be the best and most sensible way to teach children since they can learn in the process.

Play-way teaching strategy requires the ability to transform objects and actions symbolically and is carried out a step further by interactive social dialogue, negotiation and improvisation. Many cognitive strategies are exhibited during play, such as joint planning, negotiation, problem-solving and goal seeking. Play-way (method) plays a vital role in young children's lives and its duration may project through the primary school period as well. Play-way teaching strategy involves dramatization of learning experiences through the use of objects and symbols so as to attain effective teaching and learning. It engages many areas of the brain because it involves emotion, cognition, language and sensori-motor actions and thus promotes the development of dense synaptic connection (Coscia 2010).

In describing the effect of utilization of play-way method of teaching in pre-primary schools in Nigeria, Ejiel (2007) noted that no effort is made to ensure that play-way method of teaching is used in teaching pre-school children in Nigeria, as stipulated in the policy document (National Policy on Education, 2004). In the same vein, Okoro (2004), noted that majority of schools lack trained teachers on the use of play-way method of teaching that is advocated in the National Policy on pre-primary education in Nigeria. Very few, if any, nursery school teachers in the country have received formal training in the use of play-way method or any other type of learning and teaching activity to inculcate -social norms in pre-school children, as advocated in the policy document. Learning outcomes are statement that describe significant and essential learning that learners have achieved, and can reliably demonstrate at the end of a course or programme. Spady, (2016), an educational researcher who spearheaded the development of outcomes based education, suggest that the ability demonstrate learning is the key point. This demonstration of learning involves a performance in order to show significant learning that matters. He claims that significant content is essential. An outcome statement that incorporate this knowledge within a performance demonstration might include: The learners will demonstrate the ability to make engine repairs on a variety of automobiles.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey method. A survey method is a data collection tool used to gather information about individuals, collected self-report data from study participants (Agan, 2004). Survey was considered appropriate for this study because it involved direct contact with the samples that are relevant to the investigation, and this was used to examine the effect of utilization of play-way teaching strategy on the learning outcome of pre-primary school pupils in Ilorin. The study would investigate the teachers' attitudes towards the utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school in Ilorin, Kwara State. This study covers all pre-primary schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area. The target population of this study was all pre-primary school teachers and the head teachers. Few pre-primary schools was selected randomly for this study. For the sample, the study would adopt a Simple Random Sampling Technique (SRST) to select a sample of 120 participants. To elicit information from the respondents, researcher designed questionnaires was administered to the respondents.

A researcher designed questionnaire was adopted in order to obtain information for the research. The questionnaire will be designed for the pre-primary school teachers only with clear instruction. Questionnaire was found suitable as an instrument due to its advantages. The close-ended questionnaire to use comprises (2) sections; A and B. Section A comprises respondents' demographic data. Section B comprises questions on the teachers' attitudes towards utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-

primary school pupils. The data collected from the respondents was quantified using descriptive statistic (mean and standard deviation) for both demographic data and to answer the research question, while t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to test the research hypotheses.

Data Analysis and Result

Demographic characteristics of the sampled teachers were described using percentage. Three hypotheses were postulated. Hypothesis 1 was tested using independent t-test while hypotheses 2 and 3 were tested using One-way ANOVA, all at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1: Demographic Data of the Teachers

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
a. Gender		
Male	31	25.8
Female	89	74.2
Total	120	100.0
b. Years of Teaching Experience		
1-10 years	75	62.5
11-20 years	35	29.5
21 years +	10	8.0
Total	120	100.0
c. Qualification		
NCE/OND	31	25.8
B.Ed./B.Sc./HND	78	65.0
Others	11	9.2
Total	120	100.0

Results in Table 1 indicated that 120 teachers participated in the study out of which 31 (25.8%) were males while 89 (74.2%) were females. Also, 75 (62.5%) had between 1-10 years of teaching experience, 35 (29.5%) had between 11-20 years of teaching experience, and 10 (8%) had more than 20 years of teaching experience. Furthermore, 31 (25.8%) were holders of NCE/OND, 78 (65%) were holders of B.Ed./B.Sc./HND, and 11 (9.2%) were holders of M.Ed/M.Sc and above.

Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses raised were tested using independent t-test and One-way Analysis of Variance at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on gender.

Table 2: The t-Test on Difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on gender

Gender	No	Mean	Std.	t-value	Df	p-value	Remark
Male	31	21.45	1.12				
				0.26	118	0.79	NS
Female	89	21.39	1.06				

Results in Table 2 shows a t-value of 0.26 and p-value of 0.79 which is greater than 0.05 ($0.79 > 0.05$). Since 0.79 is greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on gender.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on teaching experience.

Table 3: Analysis of variance on difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on teaching experience

Sources	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Remark
Between Groups	0.917	2	0.459			
Within Groups	136.074	117	1.163	0.39	0.68	NS
Total	136.992	119				

$P > 0.05$

Results in Table 3 shows F-value of 0.39 and p-value of 0.68 which is greater than 0.05 ($0.68 > 0.05$). Since 0.68 is greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on teaching experience.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on educational qualification.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance on difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on educational qualification

Sources	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Remark
Between Groups	3.176	2	1.588			
Within Groups	133.816	117	1.144	1.39	0.25	NS
Total	136.992	119				

$P > 0.05$

Results in Table 4 shows F-value of 1.39 and p-value of 0.25 which is greater than 0.05 ($0.25 > 0.05$). Since 0.25 is greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on educational qualification.

Summary of Findings

Based on the data collected, analyzed and interpreted, the following findings are obtained:

1. There was no significant difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on gender.
2. There was no significant difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on teaching experience.
3. There was no significant difference in the level of teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on educational qualification.

Discussion of the Findings

This study examined teachers' attitudes towards the utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils in Ilorin west, Kwara state. The result of this study showed that there was no significant difference in teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on gender. This means teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils is independent of gender. This result supported the work of Aleke, (2011) who found that teachers were not different in their use of instructional methods.

The result of this study also showed that there was no significant difference in teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on teaching experience. This means that experience does not influence teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on teaching experience. This result corroborates that of Ezenwa, (2011) who submitted that there was no significant influence of experience on teachers' utilization of resources.

The result of this study further showed that there was no significant difference in teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on educational qualification. This means teachers' utilization of play-way method in

teaching pre-primary school pupils is independent of academic qualification. This result supported the work of Nwosu, (2003) who found that academic qualification does not influence teachers' utilization of teaching method.

Conclusion

This chapter contains the discussion of findings, conclusions of the study, recommendation for relevant stakeholders and suggestions for further studies. Based on the findings from this study, it was concluded that;

1. gender does teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils;
2. there was no difference in teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils based on teaching experience; and
3. teachers' utilization of play-way method in teaching pre-primary school pupils is independent of educational qualification.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings in this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Teachers should be enlightened on the importance on instructional materials in teaching.
2. Teachers should be enlightened on the proper usage of play-way method and its importance in children's learning.
3. Instructional materials needed for play-way method of teaching to be more effective should be provided for the teachers.
4. Teachers should be properly monitored on the proper usage of instructional materials where necessary.

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