The Effects of Training on Pre-school Teachers Practices in Oyo State, Nigeria

Dr. Esther Oduolowu (Corresponding author)

Early Childhood Education Unit, Department of Teacher Education

University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

E-mail: omorinola2000@yahoo.com

Fatimah Ayodele Oyesomi

c/o Department of Teacher Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan

Nigeria

E-mail: fattyoyeone@gmail.com

Abstract

The survey of daycare and nursery schools in Nigeria conducted by National Commission for Colleges of Education in 2004 revealed that teachers are not trained for this level of education and most early years programmes are managed by people who have never been in the classroom. Because of this, Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), organized series of training for teachers of pre-schools to improve their quality on child development curriculum interpretation, teaching method and evaluation techniques. This study therefore investigated the teaching practices of those preschool teachers exposed to the training in Ibarapa East Local Government Area of Oyo State. It adopted the descriptive survey research design. Thirty two pre-school teachers participated in the study. Two instruments titled "Pre-school Teachers Teaching Practices Questionnaire" (PTTPQ) and "Pre-school Teachers Observation Schedule" (PTOS) were used to gather relevant data. Findings of the study revealed the pre-school teachers used teacher-centred method of teaching with few materials provided. It was also revealed that the pre-school teachers used the new curriculum but did not encourage hands-on activities in learning the content of the curriculum. Among others, it was recommended that trained pre-school teachers should be recruited to teach in the pre-schools and workshops should be organized to train and re-train those on the job regularly on pedagogy.

Key words: Training, Curriculum Implementation, Teaching Practices, Early Childhood Education

1. Introduction

The right to education has been well articulated in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948. The declaration recognizes the intrinsic value of education, under pinned by strong, moral and legal foundation. Seen in this light, education is an indispensable means of unlocking and protecting other human right components by providing the scaffolding that are required to secure and participate in social and political activity. UNESCO (2002) has submitted that if the right to education is guaranteed, access to it from the very beginning and enjoyment of other rights is enhanced (UNESCO, 2002).

In the pre-Jomtien years, private pre-primary schools in Nigeria receive no form of financial support from the government, these institutions rely on proprietor's capital and from fees collected from the parents, in addition no early childhood institution provided free child care services and there is no legislative limit to fees that can be charged (Onibokun, 1989) . Early education for children below six years of age was in the hands of private individuals and religious organizations and the teaching was based on cognitive domain only (Jayesimi 2005). Government's responsibility did not go beyond setting guidelines for the establishment of pre-schools largely referred to as nursery schools. Most children from poor homes could not benefit from early childhood education as their parents could not afford the fees paid in these schools (Jayesimi 2005).

In 1990, the declaration of the world conference on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand, affirmed that learning begins at birth. This Article 5 of Jomtien Declaration that learning begins at birth became an issue which calls for early childhood care and initial education. This initial education can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities and institutional programmes (Barnett, 2006).

In the post-Jomtien years, various interventions took place in Nigeria. During this period National Policy for Integrated early childhood development was developed to move Nigeria from a single sectorial approach to multi-sectorial pursuit, converging interventions in health, training, nutrition, care, stimulation, protection and participation of the child. Another intervention include development of a unified curriculum which was all encompassing and divided into two   sections, the first section caters for aged 0-3 while the second section caters for aged 3-5years. (Okoro 2004). With counterpart funding provided by the Nigeria government both at federal and state levels for early childhood programmes, donor agencies such as UNICEF, increased their own funding and expanding their operation to include many more communities, throughout the country. With support from UNICEF, the Nigeria Education Research and Development Council (NERDC), a Federal Ministry of Education parastatal trained teachers/care givers and developed training manual for pre-school teachers to improve the quality of delivery of early childhood care and development programmes in Nigeria.

The maxim that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers clearly demonstrates the role of teachers in implementing those changing situations in the early

childhood education in Nigeria. The crux of early childhood education in Nigeria is the quality of teachers to implement the policy as innovations in early childhood education often take a lot of inputs and preparations before implementations. Any innovation in education relies a lot on the preparedness of the teachers who are termed the curriculum implementers. Every educational system in any known human society requires highly skilled teaching personnel to sustain it. This explains why the teachers are regarded as the most important element in the school system. It is generally believed that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Hence training is often organized for teachers to upgrade and update their knowledge and skills. Training is conceived as an organized procedure by which people learn and acquire knowledge and skills for a definite purpose (Oyisto, 1997). Nwanchuku (1990) also sees training as the process of increasing human efficiency through which people are offered the opportunity to acquire new skills and current knowledge required in carrying out various specialized tasks in their place of work. Training and re-training are necessary if efficiency and profit are to be attained. Training enables them to acquire new and improved skills and knowledge that will enable them to perform better thereby enhancing their level of productivity. Training and re-training for teachers therefore, is capable of enhancing their level of performance and also enabling them to cope with the ever increasing challenges of educating people in the country (Woghiren, 1997).

In Nigeria, the need for qualified teachers in the pre-schools has gained pre-eminence because it is considered as a means of providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge. Teachers training programme is often planned and systematically tailored and applied for cultivation of those who teach or will teach in primary schools. Those people therefore do not exhibit the required competencies needed to handle pre-school children. Also in some cases, people who are not teachers are employed to be in charge of pre-school children and for these reasons, the type of early childhood education given in Nigeria, particularly in   Ibarapa East Local Government Area of Oyo State is in question, therefore providing a general knowledge training for pre-school teachers has become necessary.

The need for qualified pre-school teachers has prompted Oyo State Universal Basic Education Board (OYOSUBEB) to organize training   for pre-school teachers between 13th and 16th December 2005 to providel qualified teaching personnel in the pre-schools. The teachers were trained on the new curriculum, they were exposed to various activities in curriculum goals and objectives, select subject matter (content) choose materials and identify resources in the school and community, sequence or re-sequence the subject matter, decide on types of instructional plans, try out new programmes and create ways to provide for all kinds of individual differences in the classroom.

The trainees were also exposed to the best method of teaching children which is play. They were trained on the importance of play, learn, how to create time and space out of the little they have for play. The training also involved explanation of physical development of the child, this is to   allow the teachers have clear profile of the physical condition, personal background of the child and give knowledge of any potential risk to the child (related to health e.g. allergy to

drugs and foods etc). The participants were selected on the basis of those that are in charge of pre-school section in the public primary schools.

1.1 *Statement of the Problem*

This paper investigated the teaching practices of pre-school teachers exposed to early childhood education training in Ibarapa East Local Government Area of Oyo State.

1.2 *Research Questions*

The following research questions were answered in this study.

i. To what extent do pre-school teachers in Ibarapa East Local Government Area make use of the new curriculum designed for pre-primary level of education?

ii. Are the pre-school teachers in Ibarapa East Local Government Area able to plan child –centred lesson?

iii. What common teaching methods do pre-school teachers in Ibarapa East Local Government Area use?

iv. Do teachers of pre-school in Ibarapa East Local Government Area arrange learning environment to allow children activities?

2. Methodology

2.1 *Research Design*

The research design adopted for this study was the descriptive survey research design. This research design is a design that gives room for detailed description of situation, events or phenomenon under study. This design was adopted therefore because it enabled the researchers to accurately and objectively describe the teaching practices of the trained preschool teachers.

2.2 *Population of the Study*

The population of the study consisted of the entire pre-school teachers from the sixteen public primary schools that attended the training given by Oyo State Universal Basic Education Board (OYO SUBEB) between 13th and 16th of December 2005.

2.3 *Sample and Sampling Techniques*

The sample for this study comprised of all the respondents in the population. The reason for this is that all the pre-school teachers that attended the training could be reached by the researchers. Thirty two teachers were involved in this training from Ibarapa East Local Government and these teachers were still working in the pre-school section in the Local Government. Therefore the study used what is termed as "census", a type of survey research that uses the total population.

2.4 *Research Instruments*

The researchers used two instruments to gather relevant data for the study. The instruments were a questionnaire titled "Pre-school Teachers Teaching Practices Questionnaire" (PTTPQ) and an observation schedule which was titled "Pre-school Teachers Observation Schedule" (PTOS).

The Questionnaire (PTTPQ) is made up of three sections (A-C) Sections. Section A was based on the teachers' demographic information. It covered their sex, age, educational qualification, teaching experience and class taught. Section B solicited information on the utilization and interpretation of pre-school curriculum. Ten items on the early childhood curriculum utilization and interpretation were generated for this section. Responses to this section were based on Yes and No and on open ended. The section C of this instrument was based on the evaluation techniques adopted by the trained teachers. The techniques identified in the section are test, examination, and interview, and questionnaire, assignment, filling gap, observation, memory verse, project and dictation.

The second instrument "Pre-School Teachers Observation Scheduled (PTOS)" contained only two sections. Section A elicited information on the ability of the trained teachers to plan child-centred lesson. Section B sought information on teaching method adopted by the teacher. Section C sought information on the ability of the teachers to arrange classroom to allow children activities and section D sought information on the implementation strategies that the trained teachers acquired during their training.

For all the sections (Sections A, B, C and D), the checklist method was adopted for rating responses generated. For section A, the response sets and points adopted were Cannot plan child-centred lesson (1), Can plan child-centred lesson with help (2), Able to plan child-centred lesson (3) and Very able to plan child-centred lesson (4). For section B, the following were adopted Not used (1), Sparingly used (2), Used (3) and Always used (4). The for section C, the response sets and points were Classroom poorly arranged (1), Arrangement fairly done (2), Arrangement adequately done (3) and Arrangement very adequately done (4). For section D, the sets were Not Adequate (1), Scarcely Adequate (2), Adequate (3) and Very Adequate (4).

2.5 *Validation and Reliability of Instrument*

For face and content validity of the instruments used, experts in early childhood education and in research and test construction were consulted. After this, twenty copies of the instruments were administered to nursery school teachers who were not part of the sample for the main study and the data gathered was used to compute the reliability co-efficient of the instruments. Using the Guttman split-half technique, the PTTPQ yielded reliability coefficient of 0.79 while the Cronbach Alpha technique was used to calculate the reliability coefficient of PTOS which yielded reliability coefficient of 0.90.

2.6 *Method of Data Collection*

The researchers visited the schools used for the study, explained the objective of the research and obtained permission from the school heads to administer the instruments. The

researches administered the instruments personally and retrieved them immediately. After their completion, the researchers observed the pre-school teachers while teaching and they also checked through the teachers' lesson plan to fill the PTOS.

2.7 *Method of Data Analysis*

Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics which include frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviations.

3. Result

Research Question 1: To what extent do pre–school teachers in Ibarapa East Local Government make use of the new curriculum for pre-primary level of education?

Table 1

S/N	Items	Response Option	F	%
1	Do you pay detailed attention to all aspects in the curriculum?	No	18	56.3
		YES	14	43.7
2	Do you follow the content of the curriculum strictly?	NO	17	53.1
		YES	15	46.9
3a	Is your behavioral objectives always related to one stated in the curriculum?	NO	6	18.8
		YES	26	81.3
3b	If yes, what learning domain do you normally set your behavioral objectives?	Cognitive	24	75.00
		Psychomotor	14	48.8
		Affective	8	25.0
		Attendance	1	3.1
4a	Do you evaluate the children using evaluation techniques stated in the curriculum?	NO	3	9.4
		YES	27	84.4
4b	If yes state the technique you do use	Observation	7	2.9
		Test	5	15.6
		Rating Scale	2	6.2
		Play way method	5	15.6
		Punctuality	1	3.1
		Questionnaire	8	25.0
		Oral Test	9	28.1
		Assignment	14	43.8
		Examination	5	15.6
		Check List	2	6.2
		Neatness	1	3.1
		Inventory	2	6.2
		Politeness	1	3.1
		Emotional stability	1	3.1
5a	Do you adopt child-centred method in your	NO	6	18.8

	teaching?	YES	22	68.8
5b	If yes, state the specific methods you adopt.	Play-way method	21	65.6
		Manipulation of Material	2	6.2
		Discussion Method	3	9.4
		Dramatization	11	34.4
		Observation	4	12.5
		Demonstration	1	3.1
		Story telling	1	3.1
		Assignment	3	9.4
		Project	2	6.2

Table shows the Use of Pre-School Curriculum by the Trained Teachers

Table 1 reveals that the teachers do not pay detailed attention to all the aspects in the curriculum (56.3%), hence they do not follow the content of the curriculum strictly (53.1%). Though they state their behavioral objectives to follow the ones suggested in the curriculum (81.3%), 75% agreed that they stated objectives in cognitive domain, 43.8% agreed that they stated objectives in psycho-motor while only 25% stated it in affective. One of them demonstrated ignorance by indicating that he/she used to state objective in "attendance". The table also indicates that majority of the teachers do evaluate the children's learning using evaluation technique suggested by the curriculum (84.4%). But common evaluation technique used is assignment (43.8%), only (21.9%), (25%), (28.1 %) of these teachers used observation, questionnaire and oral test to evaluate the children. Very few (62%), (15.6%), (6.2%) and (6.2%) of the teachers used rating scale, examination, checklist and inventory to evaluate the children respectively. Some of the teachers demonstrated ignorance by stating that they use play way method (15.6 %), punctuality (3.1%), neatness (3.1%), politeness (3.1%) and emotional stability (3.1 %) to evaluate the children. The teachers claimed that they used child-centred method of teaching (68.8 %). But the common method mentioned by the teachers is play-way method (65.5%). 34.4 % mentioned that they used dramatization. Other methods used by few of these teachers are manipulative strategy (6.2 %) demonstration (3.1%), storytelling (3.1%) and project (6.2 %). From all these it could be inferred that the trained teachers though use the new curriculum but to little extent.

Research Question 2:- Are the pre-school Teachers in Ibarapa East Local Government area able to plan child-centred lesson?

Table 2

Table shows the Ability of the Trained Teachers to Plan Child–Centered Lesson

S/N	Statement	4	3	2	1	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Entry behaviour of the children identified	5 (15.6)	16 (50.0)	10 (31.1)	1 (3.1)	2.78	.75
2	Needed Materials listed	3 (9.4)	17 (53.1)	12 (37.5)	_ (0.0)	2.72	.63
3	The lesson plan allows manipulation of materials	_ (0.0)	8 (25.0)	17 (53.1)	7 (21.9)	2.03	.69
4	Behavioural objectives measure all the 3 domains	- (0.0)	6 (18.8)	22 (68.8)	4 (12.5)	2.06	.56
5	Activities are child centred	- (0.0)	1 (3.1)	12 (37.5)	19 (59.4)	1.44	.56
6	Pupils activities highlighted	- (0.0)	20 (62.5)	12 (37.5)	- (0.0)	2.63	.49
7	Correspond teachers activities highlighted	5 (15.6)	17 (53.1)	10 (31.3)	- (0.0)	2.84	.68
8	Evaluation tools appropriate	- (0.0)	5 (15.6)	26 (81.3)	1 (3.1)	2.13	.42
9	Evaluation areas covered the stated objectives	- (0.0)	8 (25.0)	20 (62.5)	4 (12.5)	2.13	.61

KEY:

1 - Cannot plan child-centred lesson
2 - Can plan child-centred lesson with help
3 - Able to plan child-centred lesson
4 - Very able to plan child-centred lesson

Table 2 reveals the ability of the trained teachers to plan child-centred lesson. The table shows that the trained teachers are able to do the following: entry behaviour of the children (X=2.78), needed materials listed (X= 2.72), pupils activities highlighted (X=2.63) and correspond teacher activities highlighted (X=2.84). The table also reveals that the teachers can do the following with help: lesson plan allows manipulation of materials (x=2.03), behavioural objective covers the 3 domains (X=2.06), appropriate evaluation tools (X=2.13) and evaluation areas cover the stated objectives (X = 2.13). It is also shown in the table that the teachers cannot plan child centred lesson (X=1.44). From this table, it can be inferred that the trained teachers did not plan child-centred lesson.

Research Question 3:- What common teaching methods do pre-school teachers in Ibarapa East Local Government Area use?

Table 3Method

S/N	Statement	4	3	2	1	Mean	St. Dev.
1	Using activities based method	- (0.0)	2 (6.3)	19 (59.4)	11 (34.4)	1.71	.58
2	Ensure the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction	5 15.6)	8 (25.0)	10 (31.3)	9 (28.1)	2.28	1.05
3	Using teacher centred method	21 (65.6)	11 (34.4)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	3.65	.48
4	Supervise the child's exploration of the environment	- (00)	5 (156)	18 (56.3)	7 (21.9)	1.81	.78
5	Give tasks that can encourage thinking or solving problems	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	14 (43.8)	17 (53.1)	1.40	.55
6	Provide counting materials	10 (31.3)	13 (40.6)	8 (25.0)	1 (3.1)	3.0	.84
7	Child decides what to learn	- (0.0)	1 (3.1)	4 (12.5)	27 (54.4)	1.18	.47
8	Provide manipulative objects	- (0.0)	3 (9.4)	23 (71.9)	6 (18.8)	1.90	.53
9	Provide pictures, books, sing songs and rhyme	7 (21.9	13 (40.6)	10 (31.3)	2 (6.3)	2.78	.87
10	Provide home and nature corner, chart/ posters	5 (15.6)	8 (25.0)	15 (46.9)	4 (12.5)	2.43	.91

Table shows the Methods of Teaching Commonly used by Pre-School Teachers

KEY

1 - Not used
2 - Sparingly used
3 - Used
4 - Always used

Table 3 reveals the method of teaching that is commonly used by the pre-school teacher. The table shows that the following are sparingly used: activities based method (X= 1.71), ensure the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction (X= 2.28), supervise the child's exploration of the environment (X =1.81), Provide manipulative objects (X= 1.90) and provide home and nature corner, chart/posters (X =2.43). The method that is always used is the teachers centered method (X = 3.65). Those methods that are only used are that teachers provided counting

materials (X= 3.0) and provided pictures, books and songs and rhyme with children (X = 2.78). The methods that are not used at all are that children are given tasks that can encourage thinking or solving problems (X=1.40) and the the child decided what to learn (X=1.18) . The main result expressed in this table is that the method of teaching adopted by the trained pre-school teachers is teacher-centred methods.

Research Question 4:- Do Teachers of Pre-school in Ibarapa East Local Government Area Arrange Learning Environment to allow Children Activities?

Table 4

S/N	Statement	4	3	2	1	Mean	Std. D.
1	Provide enough materials for manipulation	- (0.0)	5 15.6)	24 (75.0)	3 (9.4)	2.06	.50
2	Arrange the classroom to allow children activities	- (0.0)	4 (12.5)	21 (65.6)	7 (21.9)	1.90	.58
3	Encourage participation in group activities	- (0.0)	13 (40.6)	19 (59.4)	- (0.0)	2.87	.42
4	Foster interaction among children	1 (3.1)	17 (53.1)	9 (28.1)	5 (15.6)	2.43	.80

Table shows Pre-school Teachers' Arrangement of Learning Environment to allow Children Activities

KEY

1 - Classroom poorly arranged
2 - Arrangement fairly done
3 - Arrangement adequately done
4 - Arrangement very adequately done

Table 4 reveals how the pre-school teachers arrange learning environment to allow children's activities. The table shows that in arranging the learning environment, the following are fairly done: provide enough materials for manipulation (X=2.06), arrangement of classroom to allow children activities (X= 1.90) and foster interaction among children (X=2.43). The arrangement that is adequately done is encouragement of participation in group activities (X = 2.78). The main summary in this table is that although the trained teachers claimed to encourage participation in group activities, they fail to arrange the classroom to allow children activities.

4. Discussion

On research question 1, result in table 1 revealed that the trained teachers though use the new curriculum but to a little extent. These findings agree with the findings of Nneji (2000) who claimed that one of the greatest problems of early childhood education is curriculum implementation. The finding is in line with the Federal Government/UNESCO (1993) Situation and Policy Analysis (SAPA) which reported that the curriculum was not found in the pre-school institutions. Currently, there are very few pre-schools that have the curriculum in their centres/schools. The reason for this may be the poor dissemination strategies of the government parastatal that is mandated to do distribute the curriculum. The unavailability of the curriculum in the schools may also be as result of the bottle-neck between NERDC and SUBEB. This bottleneck might have arisen from a number of factors one of which is the policy that encourage private sector in running the affairs of this level of education. The result suggests that in the absence of guidelines and copies of the curriculum for pre-primary institutions, proprietors and teachers resort to curricular of their choice.

On research question 2, table 2 shows that pre-school teachers in Ibarapa East Local Government Area of Oyo State did not plan child centred lesson. This findings contradicts the Montessori philosophy which built on the belief that children are highly capable learners who need minimal teacher input to learn from their environment. This finding is contrary to the findings of Ejieh (2006), Mindes (2007), Marcon (2002), UNESCO (1998) and Sacks and Ruzzi (2005). Their findings suggest that children do significantly better in an early childhood development programme that is child-directed, less academic, has strong parental involvement to further the goals of promoting critical thinking and collaboration among young children, respects cultural diversity, used appropriate early intervention assessment.

Based on research question 3, the results in table 3 indicates that the method of teaching adopted by pre-school teachers in Ibarapa East Local Government Area of Oyo state was not the play-way method which is stipulated in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004). This finding contradicts the submission of Ellyat (2004), Davidson (1998) and Froebel's position on the method of teaching that should be used for pre-schoolers. This finding may be due to the fact that there are inadequate specialists in early childhood education and that most of the teachers in pre-primary classes were co-opted from primary school level at the take off of the programme. This finding further emphasized that if the pre-school teachers use play-way method of teaching for pre-school children, they are likely to have a better opportunity to explore, create and discover their potential to maximum.

Also, the finding showed that the teachers provide materials for learning but the material were there for recreation purpose because the teachers were not trained how to use it. Most of the teaching is based on rote learning. This may be due to the parents' perception of learning in pre-school because the yardstick for addressing the quality of learning seems to be the age at which the children attending pre-school are able to recite, memorize information, poems, verses and passages.

The finding on research question 4 showed that the teacher did not arrange the classroom to allow children's activities although there was enough space. Also, enough materials were not provided and interaction between the child and others were not fostered. This finding shows that the learning environment does not give room for children interaction. The result of this finding supports that of Odulowu (2004) who claimed that the learning environment of a typical Nigerian school is largely not conducive for learning.

5. Conclusion

A good number of pre-primary schools in Nigeria are administered by private individuals despite the policies requiring governmental intervention and involvement in the early childhood education administration. The early childhood education programme is confronted with challenges of training, recruitment and certification of early childhood teachers. Provision of continuous capacity buildings, learning materials that are appropriate and a nationally accepted child-friendly curriculum for teaching pre-school children are indispensably needed. The role of child's environment as teacher must be prioritized. The researcher found that if a child is placed in a stimulating environment his/her total development is enhanced. It is understood through the study that Early childhood education should not be solely based on formal curricular, but on child directed education.

6. Recommendations

There is need to employ well trained teachers for the pre-schools classes. Knowledgeable and skilled teachers should handle children at the pre-school level. Capacity building workshops should be organized to train and re-trained pre-school teachers regularly on pre-school pedagogy. Those who are on the job need to be abreast of the new development. Pre-school teachers should be actively involved in designing of the curriculum so that they will be in good stead to implement it. Pre-school teachers are often confronted with the problem of inadequate facilities and instructional materials which do not encourage meaningful and purposeful learning. Pre-school teachers should be retrained therefore in the use of available local materials to design and use in the classroom for stimulation and learning.

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