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CHILD LEARNING STYLES THROUGH PLAY: PROBATIVE EVIDENCE

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Abstract

The work focused on public primary schools in Olorunda Local Government Area, Osogbo in Osun State, which over the years has invested in terms of manpower and toys as materials to build the pupils academically, to improve the educational attainment of the public primary school pupils and to improve on the registration of school age children in public primary schools in the state, which have not been achieved. Teachers and schools in Olorunda L.GA were purposively sampled. The work observed that this puzzle is attributed to the saturation of the misfit method of teaching. Suggestions and solutions in order to upgrade and internalize the contributions of the philanthropist, government, parents and the teachers to academic growth of the state were proffered.

Keywords: Styles, Play, Educational attainment, Pupils.

Background

Education generally has a very broad exegesis. Its main function is the act of teaching and learning, sharing knowledge. It is a continuous process. In the western world, education goes beyond the ability to speak fluently and write. Education starts from the home, the parents are the first contact teacher a child comes across in life. The parents teach morals, religion and lead their children to a certain career. A child acts according to what he sees with his parents that is why parents are encouraged to do good things in the presence of their children, for their children directly or indirectly emulate the acts. A column in Christian Women Mirror (2015) child training says "All children, regardless of their age, pick parents as their role model. Your children, are your mirror image, they reflect back your attitudes and behavior P.3.

Education is a reflection, if it is properly handled, it reflects back positively. National policy on education submits that primary education is like a foundation of a building and if it is badly laid, problems will ensure later in life. Robert J. (2005) says education is the process by which one's mind develops through learning or the knowledge of skills that one gains being taught. When you acquire knowledge of a particular skill and it is shared to build others, that is, what is known as education?

Primary education remains the first recognized level of education to which other levels build. It remains the foundation of other levels of education and it contributes immensely to literacy level of the society. The primary education is expected to be free and compulsory with adequate facilities such as library, basic health scheme, counselor service (FGN, 2013)

The Federal Republic of Nigeria through the National Policy On Education (2013) described primary education as the education provided in an educational institution for children aged 6-11

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years and above. (P.34, 2013) In addition to that, it derived objectives of primary education as follows:

National policy on Education as:

- Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively.
- Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking.
- Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to life of society.
- Mould the character and develop sound attitude and moral in the child.
- Develop in the child ability to adapt to the child changing environment.
- Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him/her function within the limit of his/her capacity.
- Provide the child with the basic tool for further educational advancement including preparation for trade and crafts of the locality.

In the context of this work, education is strictly explained in the area of pre-school, elementary school, and the two stages have come to stay and they are interwoven. Presently in Osun State, primary education is classified into elementary school and middle school, the idea of pre-school which is generally known as Nursery School has been scrapped and left the operation in the hands of private owners. Early Childhood Education has different names by different people, some people refer to it as pre-school, basic school, elementary school, but generally known as Nursery School. This level of education is not properly discussed by National Policy on Education; it silenced on it but just agreed that it is left into the hands of private. How then will the children of those who could not afford nursery education enjoy the benefit of pre-school? Findings show that parents whose children fall into this category enroll their children in school at tender age and school due to lack of sufficient number enrolled now overlook under aged.

The situation mentioned demanded concerted efforts if the products of our primary schools are going to meet global standard. In that case, the dire need as a matter of urgency to incorporate and implement play away method in our primary schools with the aim of making primary schools efficient and effective. Materials should be provided to schools by government and lovers of education within our society. UBE (1999). "Education for all is the responsibility of all" in addition, to achieve the laudable objectives of primary education a number of subjects in primary schools should be taught through play away method and medium of instruction should be in mother tongue at the elementary level to give room for full participation.

Ogunyifio, O. (2006) says "child has its nature and its nature is demonstrated in unpretentious and honest ways it acts and does its things". These and many more are identified as the peculiar characteristics of the child. (P.3). A learning child of the age range of this stage cannot be devoid of play away method as a medium of learning.

This work recognized many learning styles which few of them are;

Learning by doing

Curiosity and Interest

Inquiry

Learning through stories

Play, Akinbote, R. Oduolowu, E. Lawal, B. (P.133)

Teaching and learning styles

Teaching the primary school child is an interesting but very demanding task which requires professional method of teaching. It can be very interesting if a teacher adopt a good method of teaching. If a child's education is not handled by expert, it can lead to fear or intimidation on the part of the pupil. The pragmatic aspect of teaching at primary school level is been neglected by teachers and this can be referred to as NPE (2013) which state the government intention to ensure that teaching methods employed in Nigeria primary schools are the types that could stimulate spirit of enquiry, problem solving, critical thinking and development of positive skills and values. However, the other side of the methods are what we see in our classrooms today, which stunted the pupils quest for critical thinking and even kills the spirit of curiosity in the pupil.

There are many methods of teaching that can be used in teaching in primary school pupils. Indeed these methods are at the times of interchangeable used through the bear distinct labels or identities. With respect to primary school pupils, teachers centered methods like lectures and other related methods and not usually emphasized. This is because apart from been quite above the ability of pupils, they can stultify independent problem-solving and inquiry abilities of pupils. Kayode, A Ajuzie, M. Nwaubani O (1997:82)

Teaching is a system of related instructions activities by instructor and learner which are intended to bring about smooth desirable learning outcomes. The activities strictly speaking include pre-teaching (preparation) classroom interaction (purposeful interaction between materials, the subjects matter, the learners and the teacher); and post-teaching (reflections, feedback and planning for next lesson) Obanya (1981:1-2)

Teaching method in primary school is to be child centered which will make teaching learning interesting and memorable. Many people have developed wrong impression about public school primary school, that they cannot reason or engage in reflective intellectual activities. Those who are of low class of economy that need to promote public primary school are not even found there. That is one of the reasons why we have so many much-room private school at every nook and cranny of the country. At the pre-primary and lower primary levels, teachers are equally expected to use methods that involve activities like play, imitation, game etc. those that involve more tasking cognitive activities can be employed as the child progress in chronological age and intellectual ability. Based on the foregoing, some primary school teaching method can be identified for effective use in the classroom. They include the inquiry problem solving method, presentation method (story telling) discussion method, role play and dramatization method, construction method, questioning and activity methods. Kayode, A Ajuzie, M Nwaubani O. (1997:84)

The method of teaching in primary school are enormous among which we have:

Play away method, many teachers in our pulic schools are yet to adopt play away method to teach their pupils. Some count eat as mere waste of time in which learners may just play without achieving anything. Oduolowu (2011:37) gives benefit of play, which means play as positive impact in pupils life as: cognitive enrichment and social and emotional developme

Story-telling: this method bulls learners vocabulary and it engages them in full participation of the teachings/learning method. The need to complement this strategy with child-centered instructional activities is to minimize teacher domination which is a unique feature of expository methods.

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Questioning method - this method permit learners to be free with their teacher and a teacher to elicit verbal responses from the learners on aspect of the subject matter while introducing new topic.

Play in Education

Play is a systematic way of doing what you enjoy and you derive pleasure in doing. It is done alone and it is usually done and enjoyed with peer group. Education comes through play and leads to education.

Numerous categories, definitions among other classifications of play are recorded in literature among which we have the following; Oduokwu (2011) describes play as pleasurable and enjoyable, spontaneous and voluntary, active, all engrossing child's private reality, literal, central activity in the life of healthy children often social but would be alone and free from external rules. She identified four types play as functional or practice play, creative play, dramatic play, and games and rules.

Pellegrini (1991) cited in Neville, B (2011) argues, for a flexible approach to definitions which does not limit interpretations. He suggests that play can be defined according to three dimensions;

- Play as disposition
- Play as context
- Play as observable behavior

On the other hand, Neville, B. Liz, W. Sue, R. (2001) says play as disposition includes intrinsic motivation, attention, exploration, non-literal behaviors, flexibility and active engagement. The context of play is usually familiar and stress-free and involves free choice.

Durojaye (1977) cited in Akinbote, R. Oduolowu, E. Lawal, B. (2001) put play as fundamental and necessary part of the child's activities. It is fundamental way of learning for the Nursery School child. Play can be of many different kinds, each serving a particular purpose. Play therefore can be categorized to include:

- Sensory play
- Imaginative/symbolic play
- Creative play and
- Social play.

Aparajita (2003) gives the following as some of the significant values of play: Physical Value, Social Value, Cognitive Value, Moral Value, Therapeutic Value, Recreational Value and Educational Value.

Play involves greater social interaction in learners. It develops physical, motor skill, language, emotional, social and intellectual ability in learners life as an essentially developmental process. it leads to physical co-ordination as well as social facilities, play serves two main functions which are:-

as a means of exploring physical, emotional and intellectual experiences.

as a means of assimilation of these experiences into behavioral pattern, social conventions and frames of reference against which future exploration or experience could be put to test.

In her own account, Oduokwu (2011) submits that play as a main aim is to ensure an overall integrated development of learners and some of them are:

- ▷ Free and structured play
- ▷ Individual group play
- ▷ Vigorous and Quite play
- ▷ Outdoor and indoor.

The use of play method in the learning style and in the classroom instruction has basis in the effect theory of Thordike theory of instrumental conditioning; it states that links are formed in the nervous system between stimuli and response. The links are also known as "bonds" Stimulus Response bond: (S-R). In the context of this work, play serves as stimulus to aid pupils learning, in a situation where learning is done without introduction of interlude as a play, or not allowing the pupils to have their way learning will not take place.

Statement of the problem

There have been hues about the performance of public primary schools in the state. The Universal Primary Education (UPE) of 1976 and 6-3-3-4 system of education failed due to lack of adequate planning. The introduction of UBE has not proved an improvement over the aforementioned. The man power engaged to teach these students are either not available or not well equipped with materials. The public primary schools which are not sufficiently equipped have led to the emergence of all kinds of private primary schools. This work, sampled both the schools and teachers with a view to assessed if the quantity of materials supplied to schools, and the methods teachers adopts in teaching are of value to improve on the products and services of our public primary schools.

Research Questions

Two research questions were generated for this work.

Are there adequate numbers of play materials in your school for pupils to enhance learning?

Do you use play away method to reach your pupils to afford them the opportunity of participating?

Methodology

From ten public primary schools, five schools in Urban and five rural areas. Five Schools each were used to know if the government concentrates on urban schools alone or extended her gesture to the rural schools as well.

Table 1: Mean (x) and Standard Deviation (s) of the perception scores of teachers
School type and gender group public primary school, out of the fifty teachers sampled in elementary school, only four were male teachers.

Research Instruments

The research instrument generated is self-constructed questionnaire named Teachers' perception of the use of play away method in classroom instructions (TPPCIQ). It consists of four

sections. Sections are contained information on demographic variables. Section two to four consist statements to generate information on the extent of the usage of the dimensions of play away method selected for this work - types of toys, availability of toys and last section demanded for teachers suggestion on the appropriate method of teaching which can improve the learners attitude towards learning. A four-point- Likert scale with the following response options were used to generate relevant data:-

Agreed A,
Strongly agreed SA
Disagreed-D,
Strongly disagreed SD

Validity and Reliability of the instrument

The instrument was validated by experts in both early childhood education and who examined the instrument for the face and content validity in the term of the phrase coverage of the play away method and structuring of the questionnaire where necessary corrections were made.

Procedure for data collection

In the ten schools, the instrument was administered to the teachers by the researcher. All the questionnaire administered were properly followed up with explanation where demanded and all were collected. The exercise lasted for almost two months.

Data Analysis

The data generated with the instrument were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, percentage and frequency count.

Results

The mean perception scores, the standard deviations for the method of teaching for each gender group, school location as well as teachers responses of the availability of materials to school and effective use of play away method to teach elementary school pupils as shown in table below;

Table 2, teachers response of the availability of the materials in the school, play away method as a tool to improve learning style.

Numbers in percentage %- Appropriate- Not appropriate Toys, Balls, puzzles, snake & ladder, seesaw, jangrover, television and digital video players.

Research Question 1: Are there adequate numbers of play materials in your school for pupils to enhance learning?

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents on the Adequate Numbers of Play Materials in school for pupils to Enhance Learning

Variables	Adequate%	Not Adequate%	Total
Toys	87 (45.5)	104 (54.5)	191
Balls	172 (90.1)	19 (9.9)	191
Puzzles	18 (9.4)	173 (90.6)	191
Snake & ladder	27 (14.1)	164 (85.9)	191
Seesaw,	18 (9.4)	173 (90.6)	191
Jangrover	129 (67.5)	62 (32.5)	191
Television and digital video	12 (6.3)	179 (93.7)	191

Table 1 revealed that the majority of respondents do not have play materials in their schools.

Research Question 2: Do you use play method to reach your pupils to afford them the opportunity of participation?

Table 2: Teachers Response of the Availability of the Materials in the School, Play away Method as a Tool to Improve Learning Style

Variables	most Often	Often	Not Often
Toys	21	73	97
Balls	138	19	34
Puzzles	6	15	170
Snake & ladder	23	17	151
Seesaw,	9	13	169
Jangrover	109	62	20
Television and digital video	12	119	60
Players			

The answers generated show that most of the public primary school teachers still don't know how to use play away method to teach their pupils and making adequate use of the materials provided by the government where available. They saw it as mere toys to play with during break time; even the assembly songs, majority of them are not a method of teaching but moral things for the pupils to do every day to teach moral education.

Discussion of the Findings

This work has revealed that the use of play away method in Olorunda Local Government Area of Osun State is not well embraced and the supply of play materials in terms of shopping corners, water play bowls, merry go round, nature corner, Television and digital video player were not sufficient where available and have not gone half way.

The number of male teachers in the profession is too minimal. The conventional method of teaching, the teacher alone rules over the class is what still fully in operation. The results shows that the government has not provided the said play equipment in elementary education and this may make the graduate of public primary school not to compete with the age grade from private school.

However, from the analysis it shows that some teachers were not trained on the use of play away method to teach. Another findings of this work, is that pupils' at elementary school are younger to

the stipulated age of National Policy on Education. The pupils at first grade class which primary one age range is between 4 and 5. Conclusively, the work submits that the implication of the findings is that the non-availability of play materials in our public primary schools and the attitude of the teachers towards the materials hinder the use of play away method.

Conclusion

The work submits that play equipment are insufficient in public primary schools in Okeho Local Government Area of Osun State and the teachers fall within the low average in terms of utilization of play away method to impact knowledge, when the equipments are damaged, pupils, the teachers are unable to address the problem.

Recommendation

The philanthropists and the lovers of education should give generously towards education, and donate play materials to the public primary school. UBE (1999) says "education for all is the responsibility of all" we should not burden the government alone with the load of providing for schools. The parents should be educated to see reasons why they should be part of their children's growth academically.

Teachers should be encouraged to make their teaching child centered, allow the pupils to have a say in the teaching, involve them in the teaching by using methods like questioning, enquiry among others.

Teachers should stop the act of "if it gets spoilt, it is government property". They should ensure that the materials in their schools are adequately utilized and taken care of.

The Pupils should be allowed to handle the play materials in their school and assignment should be given to pupils to make more toys for the classroom use.

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