



EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM: ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE  
OF TEACHING/LEARNING PROCESSES

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the historical perspectives of early childhood education. Early childhood education refers to the programme of education providing opportunities for genuine learning to children between 2-5 years prior to their entering the primary school. Philosophical foundations of early childhood education, philosophical values underlying early childhood education and the necessity of early childhood were also discussed. More so, in this paper, the problems of Nigeria nursery school education, curriculum development in early childhood education, and the various teaching methods for childhood early education were critically discussed. Some of the teaching methods discussed include the following; group method, discussion method, play-way method, and educative silence method. Based on the above, some concluding reflections were drawn.

*Keywords:* Historical, perspectives, early, childhood, education

1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is the programme of education providing opportunities for genuine learning to children between 2- 5 years prior to their entering the primary school. It is also a period teacher fulfill a complicated role that include elements of parental functions. Pre-primary school education is a concept used to describe the care and education of children from birth to six years. It comprises of Kindergarten as well as nursery. According to Bryant, "time lost in childhood cannot be recovered again" Austin in Odigie (2005). This statement would make us to appreciate the various philosophical views we are about to examine in this book. This also would show the impact early formative years play in the later development of the child. It is also as a result of awareness of the importance of these formative years that the Federal Government of Nigeria devoted Section Two of the National Policy on Education (2007) to early childhood education which stated thus:

- a) Effect smooth transition from home to the school.
- b) Prepare the child for the primary level of education
- c) Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets of offices etc.
- d) Inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature the environment, art, music and playing with toys.
- e) Inculcate social norms.
- 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, form etc. through play.

In course of pursuing the purpose stated especially in (c) above; (e) provides adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets of offices. The government has established early childhood centres in existing public schools and encouraged both community/private efforts in the provision of early childhood education and most recently, established teacher education programmes (education and research/careers) for specialization in early childhood, education ensure that the main method of teaching at this level shall be through play and that the curriculum is oriented to achieve the regulation and control the operation of early childhood set and monitor minimum standards for early childcare centres in the country and ensure full participation of government, communities In the running and maintenance of the facilities of early child care education.

### *1.1 Historical Perspective Of Early Childhood Education*

At the dawn of modern civilization, the focus of formal education in Greece as shown in Plato's Academy - "school of philosophic education statesman" (427- 342 BC) indicated that there was need to pay attention to the transmission of knowledge to children. This was highlighted when Plato recognized the Spartan training of the child as best suited to the child's early life and made theoretical provision for continuous education of children. Similarly, philosophers like Quintillion (35-95 AD) emphasized the importance of the education of children of ages one to seven. Rousseau (1712-1778), Pestalozzi (1746- 1827) and Froebel (1782-1852) tried to distinguish the curricula content and method of childhood education from those of adults. This movement gave rise to early Childhood education 45 exemplified by The Kindergarten opened by Froebel in 1837.

## 2. PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Prior to the establishment of nursery/primary schools, philosophers had seen the importance of these forms of education. The stand of the idealists originated from Plato (42-342 BC). He claimed that man's knowledge is basically a collection of ideas, which the soul had known in the perfect-world-of-ideas before it was buried in the human body. He maintained that knowledge is already within us in the form of innate ideas, which we do not acquire but are born with. It was Plato's idea to arrange education according to levels. Re also assigned to such levels appropriate ages and curricula. These stages were the nursery for children between the ages of 3-6 years, elementary stage for children between the ages of 7-12 years and secondary school for children between the ages of 12- 17 years.

Aristotle in support of Plato's principles opined that the function of education is to produce men who can think and that the quality of the society is actually a manifestation of the quality of education given. His method was more practical. In Aristotle's view, every individual should be allowed the opportunity to develop his talent to the fullest. This could be through his teaching method of known to the unknown. He went further to say that at birth; the child's mind could be described as raw clay. This clay, he postulated, is ready to

be moulded into a rational form. He advocated education as the instrument that could successfully mould the child.

The aspect of deductive logic called syllogism ‘which is credited to him, is a method of deductive reasoning. This is an argument in which certain things or premises, having been assumed, provide the reason for asserting that the conclusion is true. Thus syllogism contains two premises and a conclusion. For example:

- Every human stage has unique needs that influence its thinking
- Children constitute a human stage
- Children have unique needs that influence their thinking

Quintilian (35-95 AD) advocated that the child must have a nurse who should be chosen with great care in terms of her morals and the level of correctness of her speech. To Quintilian, imitation is the first and most important method of learning.

Erasmus (1446 - 1538), asserted that the whole concept of the theory and practice of education is very important especially in the early formative years of the child’s life. He emphasized the need for mothers to participate fully in the learning process of the child while fathers or teachers teach moral and give scriptural instructions.

Amos Comenius (1592-1670), advocated the building of schools in all towns and villages where children would be taught without tears or coercion, in addition, he suggested the ‘mother school’ where training actually aim at impacting in the child “the rudiments of all knowledge that we wish to give a human being for the need of life” Rusk(1969) His popularity stems from his books- “School of infancy” and “Orbis pictus“ which gave some illustrations on childhood teaching and learning process.

Rousseau (1712-1778) is credited with identifying the pre-primary school period of early childhood education as very important. The principle that we must respect the child’s cognitive, structural and emotional state is central to Rousseau’s philosophy. Rousseau (1911) stated that each child is a unique individual and should be studied and understood as such. Similarly Pestalozzi (1748-1827) was greatly influenced by Rousseau’s educational ideas. He asserted that education should be used to discover the natural principles of growth in a child and the unfolding mental powers of the child. He sees the home as the best place education can take place. The school was to catch up with the home. According to him, when representing abstract concepts in concrete forms one should use the immediate experience of the child and illustrate with instances. In his teachings, he made use of the interest of the child to proceed from the known to the unknown.

Kindergarten (children’s garden), which is a programme of education of children whose ages range between 3-5 years, was first opened by Fredrick Froebel (1782-1352) in Germany in 1837. Froebel’s philosophy was naturalistic. He felt that children should be allowed to play but that the teacher should arrange such plays that develop a system of gifts play- things” handiwork, gardening, games, even songs to teach the unity of the individual with God, nature and other people. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) was a medical doctor. She sees mental deficiency chiefly as pedagogical rather than a mental question. She advocated freedom for the child to use materials of his own choice either individually or with small peer groups of similar interest. Her curriculum was in two parts-motor educations, which is the ‘practical life and sensory education intended for training of the five senses. Elizabeth Peabody learnt the principle of Froebel’s Philosophy. In 1860, she opened a Kindergarten school in America and she saw in every child the potential of an adult. She noticed that goodness was to be found within the child but it needed time to unfold.

*Project Head Start*, was an American Government funded pilot project in America for children in the range of 3-5 years from low- income families. The idea was that if poverty were to be eradicated from the society, the cognitive ability of the poor should be stimulated. In [965, as part of President Johnson’s war on poverty, the American Congress authorized

funds for number of programmes aimed at providing learning experiences for children between 2-5 years from poor homes.

Since the rest of the educational system as we have seen so far is' built on the pre-primary school education foundation, the key to the success or failure of the whole educational system therefore depends on it. Moreover, the increasing spread of nursery schools into rural and sub-urban areas of Nigeria is gradually institutionalizing that level of education.

### 3. PHILOSOPHICAL VALUES UNDERLYING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Since values are standards of conduct, efficiency or worth that the society endorses, maintains and transmit to future generations, an accumulation of scientific research have strengthened public convention that the first years of the child's life are very critical for learning. It is unanimously agreed that the condition of his life when the child's mind and body are developing so rapidly will influence his later health, his intelligence, motivation, self image and his ability to relate to other human beings. One of the most influential and dramatic statements made in the early period of childhood educational development was by Benjamin Bloom in Odigie (2015) and it showed that changes in the rate of intellectual development occur between the period of birth and 17 years. Based on his analysis Bloom concluded that in terms of intelligence measured at 17 years about 50% of the development takes place between conception and the ages of 4 years; about 30% between the ages of 4 and 8 years and 20% between the ages of 8 and 17 years.

By implication, one half of' matured intelligence has developed between 0-4 years according to research findings of Bloom. It then means that a substantial portion of future school achievement is determined before the statutory age of 6 years when the conventional school system begins. Maria Montessori also affirmed that the first 2-6 years is the most critical period of the child's development. According to her, the child is restive during this period. He has a lot of energy and asks a lot of questions. The period 3-5 years has become so important that it has generated some favourable comment from modern authors and in educational reports.

Plowden in 1967 confirmed that the loss of the early stage of education might be missed forever. Smith also supported the idea that learning takes place from the beginning of life. Freud (1960) also supported the call for pre-primary education. If we assume that the findings of Benjamin Bloom and others have universal validity, then the implications are straight forward; we must then pay more attention to the early years than we have hitherto done. In doing this, we must bear in mind that the average Nigerian child is at a disadvantage compared with his counterparts in the advanced countries.

Though the child is eager and curious to learn, some people still believe that the child is to be seen and not to be heard. This practice naturally stifles the child's curiosity and impedes the development of his reasoning powers. Most parents particularly those who are illiterate tend to consider 3-year-old questions as irritating or sheer impertinence. Many parents even regard them as bad manners and at times punish the children for asking questions. Unfortunately too, many homes lack books, magazines, audio-visual aids, etc. which create the stimulating environment for the children, The absence of these things could be serious when we consider the suggestion of Bloom that deprivation in the early years of life can have far greater consequences than deprivation in later life.

#### 4. NECESSITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

##### 4.1 *The Child Care Giver*

It is important for early childhood care givers to know the beginning of early childhood development and intervention. The international convention policy on the right of the child recognizes that each child should be able to speak. Research in education has established that education in mother tongue is more effective and relevant to young children's needs. Communication is an act of conveying intended meaning to another entity through the means of understood signs and semiotic rules. As infants develop, they not only obtain information about the world from their eyes. They also gather information about the world through sensory receptors in their ears, skin, nose and tongue.

Among the stated objectives of early childhood education, the child care giver needs to know the skills the child needs to acquire and how they develop before the primary school stage. Their skills include; cognitive, communication, socio, emotional and psychomotor skills. As infants develop, they not only obtain information about the world from their eyes. They also gather information about the world through sensory receptors.

##### 4.2 *Can the Fetus Hear?*

A recent study examined the ability of human fetuses to recognize their own mother's voice. They will suck more rapidly on the nipple in order to listen to some sounds rather than others. For example, pregnant mothers read "The cat in the Hat" to their fetuses during the last few months of pregnancy. When they were born, the babies preferred listening to a recording of their mothers reading "The cat in the Hat" as evidence by their sucking on a nipple more when this recorded story on "The cat in the Hat" is being played than any other story. This study illustrates that an infant's brain has a remarkable ability to learn even before birth and reflects the ingenuity of researchers in assessing development (Santrock, 2007).

The diversity of theories makes understanding children's development a challenging undertaking. Constructivist theoretical view sees children as acquiring knowledge by constructing it mentally in interaction with the environment, Language is a system of intentional communication through. Since all human beings can communicate and children are human being there is the need to examine what can go wrong in early children communication development.

##### 4.3 *Threat to Early Language Development*

The threats are embedded in the following circumstances:

- a) When adults fail to talk frequently to children that is, socio-emotional processes (such as smiling). These include changes in an individual's relationship with children — in emotions, and in personality.
  - b) socio-cultural context of development which includes pattern of belief, religion, values, race and history
  - c) Good nutrition (d) interactive play.
- Critical and sensitive periods (window periods) red flag behaviours
- 0—3 months — infant does not turn when you speak or repeat sounds like cooing
  - 4—6 months — child does not look around for sources of sound e.g bell.
  - 7— 12 months — child does not turn when you call his name he only cries.

## 5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

There are existing theories, which justify the concept of early childhood education for all citizens. The argument for early childhood education is upheld in Nigeria because education all over the world has been seen as a powerful instrument for the overall development of man and society. For instance, the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (1948) stipulates that every child has a right to education. Apparently, this supports the need for children education in Nigeria. What then is the basis for childhood education? Can they learn concepts at such an early stage in life? The answers to these questions can be found in the explanations of Montessori learning theories and Piaget's cognitive theories.

Montessori sees the first five years of the child as most crucial. Children according to her do not learn because of bad teaching methods. She advocated the use of teaching methods that would arouse and sustain the interest of children. Therefore it is necessary to provide an educational opportunity for the child to begin his learning efforts at the time he would through play and without much constraint. To determine the level of mental operational task, which the individual child can exhibit at different stages of development, Jean Piaget, postulates his four-stage theory of cognitive development as follows; the first stage is sensori motor which falls between birth and two years, followed by preoperational stage (2-7 years), concrete operational stage (2-10 years) and formal operation stage (10 years & above). These theories therefore provide the basis for planning educational programmes for the nursery/primary children in Nigeria.

## 6. SOCIO-ECONOMIC VALUES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

In recent times, Nigerian parents want socio-economic provision for their children; this is vividly shown by the numerous institutions of nursery schools and playgroup centres springing up all around. Parents with unsuitable housing or inadequate play space need relief from the rigour of child rearing. Such relief is only found in nursery schools. Many parents are suffering from the rigour of high standard of child rearing expected today, as their knowledge of the child's need has greatly increased. This taken in conjunction with urbanization, the mobility of the family and consequent isolation of young mothers with their children in large housing estates makes the need for a supporting service of nursery apparent.

There is no doubt that parents, particularly mothers nowadays tend to spend fewer periods with their children due to exigencies of time. The society as well as the economy is changing. Generally, response to these changes is most likely to take most of the mothers away from home for most of the time.

In addition, the implementation of the universal free primary education (UPE) created some problems for working mothers because many house-holds opted for primary education. The traditional method of allowing grandparents to take care of children is fading away because most of them are incompetent at children education. Parents see nursery schools as the alternative place to keep their children especially during working hours.

By bringing children from different homes to interact, we are also developing them socially, Children will begin to mix freely and this will develop their emotions. It will also give the children the opportunity to tolerate one another and will instill in them the spirit of co-operation. There is no doubt that there is a great need for children from the deprived homes, slum areas and the under privileged to come to the nursery school. This is because nursery education provides an opportunity for children to learn through play under the supervision of skilled teachers. In fact the nursery education provides the opportunities for the earlier identification of children with special difficulties, which if neglected will inhibit the progress of the child. Consequently, Ofune in Odigie (2015) concluded that the first five years of a child's life are the most important years. He went further to summarize the

philosophy behind nursery education as follows; that nursery schools are essentially stimulating environment adequately provided with both teaching and study aids.

## 7. MORAL VALUES UNDERLYING NURSERY/PRIMARY EDUCATION

An increased interest in child matter over the years has been born out of knowledge that an educated healthy child is a foundation for a vibrant economic future of any nation, Ama et al in Odigie see children as ‘the custodian of people’s future’. Morality is concerned with the quality of human life. Etymologically, morality is derived from the Latin word ‘mores,’ which refers to the customs and practices of the people. Morality refers to that area of human behaviour, which is basically concerned with categories of right and wrong, good or bad. Morality is concerned with the things we ought to do or ought to avoid in our interpersonal relations.

Value, etymologically is a Latin word ‘Valere which means ‘to be worth. Angels in Odigie (2005) defines value as ‘the quality of a thing that makes it desirable, desired, useful or an object of interest. “Value connotes something that is qualitatively cherished, something that provides satisfaction or sense of achievement. Values are said to be of moral worth if they are cherished ways of life that promotes mutual welfare and ensure the common good of man. Values are those standards, of conduct, efficiency or worth that the society endures, maintains and transmits to future generations. It is pertinent that the school curriculum imbibes these values in the education of children in nursery/primary schools. Values in philosophy of education are of moral worth and it has to do with the disposition and willingness of the educated person to use the education for social change. Values are objectives to the extent that things have values in themselves. They are also subjective in that such values depend on personal taste or preferences. Since morality is also concerned with the quality -of human life, particularly that area of human behaviour, there is the need to teach children what is morally acceptable.

## 8. ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

In Nigeria, the historical trend emphasized the need and importance of pre-primary education. Indigenous education in pre-colonial Nigeria was sustained through participatory activities. Children learnt by doing. Traditionally, our children lived with extended families where they received many informal types of education, For instance, the learners were actively involved through age grade ceremonies, rituals, recitations, etc. Most often, elders tell them stories of past legends and heroes, which transmit values. While affirming that man receives different types of values-education, Okoh (1990) insisted that these values are determined by man’s culture and environment He stated thus: “The human condition in which the African lives is determined by his culture and environment. So when it comes to the question of what the African scale of value is, account has to be given of his human condition. “This is because he values only what affects him in his existential condition.”

Traditionally, Nigerians regard education as an integrated experience. In other words, it was not compartmentalized as in the modern western paradigm; Education in the pre-colonial context was therefore a continuous process, flexible enough to accommodate the divergent needs of its members. The major goal in indigenous education is the development of character, As 1”Fafunwa (1974) admits, indigenous education is a process terms of continuity and growth knowledge either to ensure social rational direction or both.

The history of the growth of pre-primary school education of which nursery education is an important part is a very fascinating one. We shall examine in 3ome details this aspect of our educational history at the various stages of our national development.

During the colonial period (when Nigeria was under the sovereignty of Britain), British personnel held key positions in government, industries and mercantile houses. Since many of them came down to Nigeria with their families, particularly their children, they found it imperative for them to establish educational centres, particularly small home groups for their children. Most of the colonial masters resided in government reservation areas (GRA). They thought it wise to establish schools for children in these compounds with their wives constituting a greater percentage of the school staff.

The emphasis of their teaching was on the rudiments of language and numbers as well as the development of the children's intellectual abilities. Shortly before independence, many Nigerians returned from abroad to take up positions in the government alongside the European counterparts. Most of these Nigerians arrived with some of their children born abroad and were anxious that these children should like their European counterparts, be educated in of transmitting culture in and for disseminating control or to guarantee Nigerian nursery schools and continue to speak English language as they did overseas without deterioration in standard. Many of them therefore emulated their European counterparts and sent their children to these schools. From independence onward, there was a noticeable change in the provision of pre-primary school education in the country.

### *8.1 Factors that led to changes in Nigeria Nursery Education*

After independence, many girls' schools were established. Women and girls who were formally in the kitchen, as help hands to their mothers, were being sent to schools with programmes for obtaining school certificate levels, professional and teachers' certificate courses. Invariably, in the 70s the Nigerian society became endowed with educated women and as a result, there was a societal demand for custodial care services of several children, who had to be left somewhere while their mothers were away at work.

With increased industrialization, many women found work alongside their male counterparts in places where they have to run shifts or stay for longer hours like in Banking. Moreover, the cost of living, which has been rising tremendously in the last two decades, has made it imperative for women to assist their husbands in providing daily necessities for their children/wards.

The Universal Primary Education programme launched by the Federal Government in 1976 provided opportunities for more children to go to school; this has also deprived housewives of their domestic servants.

## 9. PROBLEMS OF NIGERIA NURSERY SCHOOL EDUCATION

In Nigeria early childhood education is still being viewed by many as a period when children go to what they call Akara School' (play group). Moreover, some parents feel that sending children to school at an early age gives them the opportunity to attend to their own business. In addition, the Federal Government has given little or no attention to nursery school education. At present, besides the non-availability of a defined philosophy for nursery school education, the content and method of instruction in the curriculum is not uniform. Each nursery educationist designs what he feels as adequate for the children and provides any form of classroom for this fundamental phase. *"It is widely agreed that it is not enough to put children into schools, they also have to learn something that is relevant and stay in school"* (UNESCO, 1999). No nation can afford various proprietors to design its own curriculum. It is pertinent to note that nursery education in Nigeria has become a very lucrative business venture. Speck in Odigie (2016) observed that there are still many unlisted nurseries run for profit by people with no training and knowledge of children's needs. Most often, the proprietors are not trained teachers in early childhood education. The question is, to what extent are the owners of private nursery schools preparing our children for the next



stage of education? Again, some of the text books used in our schools are not familiar to the Nigerian nursery school children-nursery thymes, songs used according to the nature and environment in England and elsewhere are those used in Nigerian nursery schools. There is the need to teach according to the culture and environment of the children. As Mkpa (1999) succinctly puts it, “methods and practices cannot be divorced from the social cultural milieu.”

Another major issue that constitutes a problem to nursery school education in Nigerian is the quality of teachers. Most of the nursery schools are staffed with teachers with little or no experience. A good nursery school teacher must have professional training, i.e. basic knowledge about child development, skills as well as ideal personal qualities. Lack of an “organized body” to co-ordinate and control these nursery schools makes it easy for any of the nursery schools to operate a poor standard.

Finally, deciding on the best method of teaching young children poses a major problem. As a solution to all these problems in nursery school programme, Castle in 1976 noted thus:

“Nursery schools can be excellent for school children if they are used in the right way. The chief purpose of nursery school is to give children the opportunity to learn to play together to gain self-confidence. The children will also sing and recite poems which will improve their speech.”

#### 10. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

A curriculum embodies essential elements of knowledge and skills. It organizes both content and method of instruction for purposes of infirmity in a centralized endeavour realize the hopes of society. A well-planned curriculum reflects the philosophy of its planners. The organization of early childhood school curriculum depends to some extent on the ideological and theoretical perspective about young children. Early childhood curriculum is composed of programmes and activities that encourage self-initiative in learning creative arts, sustaining interest and motivation curricular activities are to prepare the child for a- natural interest in learning and formal schooling. It must be based also on what is considered worthwhile and valuable to learn. The content of the curriculum should be derived from the followings:

- a) An experienced based curriculum. The early childhood age deals with abstractions, so they need to have had an deal experience replete with stimulation of sense — through art, work, dramatic play and other verbal expressions. According to Peters in Barrow (1976) “to educate someone logically involves initiating the person into worthwhile activities by means that are morally acceptable”.
- b) The socio-cultural background. Curriculum must contain a conception of desirable ends towards which educational process can be channeled. Besides it should include instructional materials and time schedules.
- c) The early childhood school curriculum should cover the whole range of living. In some areas — for instance, mathematics — only few concepts are of concern to early childhood education. But the concepts are so important that they must be developed in a variety of situations so that they will be available as a foundation for later studies. “If the foundation is weak at this level, we cannot reasonably anticipate a solid intellectual and professional) output at the tertiary level” (Mkpa, in Odigie, 2016).

In support also Todd and Helen in Odigie (2016) cited thus: “Nursery school and kindergarten curricula provide the child with a wealth of sensory experience which constitutes the experiential background for reading, discussions and the mafia-c thinking prescribed in the elementary school curriculum.” Having examined some challenges in clued development research it is important to formulate an Early Childhood curriculum which embodies all the learning experiences the child acquires in order achieve specific developmental milestones. These milestones’ enable the child at the end of 5 years, to dress without help, show interest in the world around him by trying to read, write eligibly, use words to express feelings and to cope with difficult situation, like grow up activities, cooperative play according to the rules. According to UNICFF (2007) the components of early childhood curriculum comprises of:

- Physical development
- Affective/psychosocial development
- Cognitive development
- Food and nutrition
- Water and environmental sanitation
- t Safety measures and
- Protection issues.

## 11. THE CHILD AND THE CURRICULUM TEACHING METHODS

Education through teaching is a profound activity because virtually all activities in school involve value and value decisions at every level of teaching. Teaching by nature is a dynamic process. It involves a teacher in a conscious and deliberate act of teaching. It is however necessary to point out that any teaching method which denies the children freedom of developing their potentials or suppresses their reasoning ability is philosophically derelict and is indeed everything but teaching. According to Montessori:

“The organization of teaching method would be in vain without freedom for the expansion of all those energies which spring from title satisfaction of the child’s highest activities” (George in Odigie, 2016).

### *11.1 The Nature of Teaching*

Philosophically, the emphasis about teaching methods in education places the teacher as a source mainly to guide rather than direct teaching. The teacher helps the learner to arrange, and encourage discussion and concept formation. Teaching is a system of action intended to induce learning. Teaching therefore involves the teacher attempting to influence the children to learn something that the teacher thinks is valuable and worthwhile. As indicated by (UNESCO): “It is widely agreed that is not enough to put children into school. They also have to learn something relevant and stay in school.” Teaching can be looked at from the following three angles:

- Institutional acts of teaching.
- Logical acts of teaching
- Strategic acts of teaching.

Institutional acts of teaching include marking of attendance Register the implication of the Register, Staff meeting, School records, payment of levies, etc. Logical acts of teaching have something to do with the subject matter. Strategic acts of teaching deal with methods of teaching, which is the focus of this book. Philosophy and its pedagogical implications present a new dimension of teaching as a human activity that allows a good

measure of teacher-pupil' interaction and which allows the pupils' potentialities to unfold and progress according to their abilities. Edward (1983) defined teaching as: "A series of activities with intent, methods and content on one hand and achievement on the other hand, which may be carried out in any place through an interaction between a teacher and a learner". Invariably, the content and methods effect a change in the behaviour of the learner, which may enable him to improve himself intellectually and to play a specific role in the society.

### *11.2 What are Methods of Teaching?*

Ordinarily we could define a method as a means or system by which a skill is accomplished or a job is done. Methods of teaching are means by which the teacher attempts to bring about desired learning. Methods concern the way teachers organize the contents and techniques and teaching tools to achieve the desired results. Nwankwo (1996) defines method as the most positive way to learn and reach a lesson. 'Bajah (1983) reveals that teaching and learning become too difficult when methods are not in use, or they are poorly applied or poorly selected for the lesson to be taught. Callahan and Clerk (1997) similarly stated that over the years there have been cases wherein wrong information was transmitted due to poor use of methods.

### *11.3 Characteristics of Good Teaching Methods*

Any good teaching method should have the characteristics:

- a) Child centred activities.
- b) Precise objectives.
- c) Good choice of teaching aids.
- d) Starting from known to unknown simple to complex,
- e) Rightful choice of methods according to subject matter following

### *11.4 Some Teaching Methods Individual Method/Dalton Plan*

It is a teaching method intended to lead each child to acquire skills and knowledge through his own efforts. The Dalton Plan requires that the teacher should remain with his pupils to help them overcome any difficulty they may encounter. Through this method the teacher is able to identify very quickly the needs and interests of each child under his care. The method instills the spirit of self-reliance in the child. Both the bright and dull children participate equally and actively in work assigned to them. The plan also emphasizes the keeping of records of each child's progress. Despite its high demand on the teacher and also the waste of time and resources, it is still one of the most useful methods adopted in recent times.

### *11.5 Group Method*

The group method of teaching is a system designed to reduce the characteristically large size of a class to small units of two, five or more for the purpose of more effective teaching, control and supervision of the children. The criteria for grouping of children were:

- a) Mental ability.
- b) Physical ability/age,
- c) Mechanical ability.
- d) Social ability.

This grouping method makes each member of a group conscious of the part he is expected to play to project the personality of the group. It also promotes the spirit of co-operation among the members of the group. This method stimulates inter-group competition. Children are also trained for leadership and followership roles.

### *11.6 Discussion Method*

This method helps the child to develop his confidence in communication with others, it involves a greater degree of teacher-pupil interaction. It is a multiple-channel flow of communication. According to population education module (1988) the discussion method draws out information from participants. It is a “thinking together” process. We might wonder if children of nursery and early primary school age could discuss intelligently, yet all the ideas adults have were built up from childhood. Children are known for their curiosity and inquisitive nature. They want to know why certain things happen in their environment. The discussion method could be applied through the inclusion of environmental perception in Nursery/Primary Schools Curriculum.

### *11.7 Play-Way Method*

It may be questioned how play could possibly be an educational process. In what sense could play be called ‘serious?’ Logically, prior to all these questions is the conceptual question, “what is play.” Rousseau said that play ‘is natural’ (Dearden in Peters 1999). Similarly, Rousseau and Froebel in Rusk (1969) also view play as “essence” of something. Thus Froebel requires a kindergarten or ‘child garden’ where the essential nature of the child could be unfolded.

The advocates of this method are Froebel and Montessori amongst others. Froebel recognized that the child is naturally creative rather than receptive and that self-activity is one of the most important ways in which he learns. Montessori saw the value of play for learning and used carefully defined playthings’ to help feeble-minded children learn so well that they actually outstripped normal children in public examinations. She also made the classroom a place where the child was free to move around and work at his own pace and in accordance with his own preferences. The value of this lies in the freedom it gives the child to choose the activity he likes best. Froebel emphasizes the principle of growth, which says that, the child who does not play, does not develop, properly (Dearden, 1998).

### *11.8 Types of Play*

Children play role models at school for example mother, father, nurse, patient, etc. We might call this ‘playing at’ something or the dramatic method. Dramatization is an endeavour to perform as someone else would in reality as represented in a story. Bello (1981) holds the view that dramatic method is one of the best methods in teaching Nursery pupils. He stressed that except it is well organized, this method could be noisy, uninteresting and expensive. The dramatic method could be applied to all subjects. It would present a lesson in the most real way as against the abstract and verbal system previously administered in the class.

Another play-way method is the story telling. This method implies the presenting of a lesson in a most captivating, interesting and attention-promoting manner. It helps the child to recall easily, answers questions and readily retells the story. Children all over the world love stories. In most cases they compose and tell their own stories from their fantasies, dreams and daily plays. With their imaginations of life, they see their environment from different perspectives.

Stories, however, should be brief and very interesting. The method could commonly be used in those subjects that easily expire children's attention span and make them loose concentration. For example in a subject like mathematics, this method could be used to teach addition and subtraction of numbers, for instance, the story of the funny little mouse whose name is mathematics. He goes about everywhere in the streets, buses, banks, markets, mummy's kitchen; clashing numbers and items together (addition) and sometimes taking them away by separation (subtraction). Questions could be possibly asked in the process; for example, if the funny little mouse plasters two of my little fingers on my left hand, how many would I have left. Hey! What if he joins Ekikhalo's right toes to her left toes, how many would Ekikhalo have altogether? The questions do not break the story but continues it. Meanwhile the children think along and solve the problems.

This method could be used in an informal setting outside the class where children could pick materials around their school premises to solve problems. This kind of play could be called "play with" while the third kind is predominantly physical, e.g skipping, climbing, etc. Froebel asserted that the tender age is most time obsessed with play (Dearden in Petets, 1997). Therefore it is almost logical to take advantage of learning through play. Ulich in Rusk (1999) concurring with this view has opined thus: "play is to the child as ethical and devotion to work is to the adult."

Play activities arranged in a Nursery school is specifically educational and not just therapeutic or happiness-producing because it gives cognitive perspective to one's experience. Knowing therefore the importance of play in the learning process at this childhood stage, the writer introduces a perceptual teaching method tented "Montessori Educative Silence Method of Teaching."

## 12. EDUCATIVE SILENCE METHOD OF TEACHING

In early childhood education there are various methods of teaching. The question is, can there be an educative silence method of teaching? The idea as is known in most schools about silence is that it could be obtained only by a command. Silence means the suppression of every noise. It is not the succession of noises greater than the normal noise tolerable in a place as is generally considered in some schools. Silence in ordinary sense means to stop talking, quelling a disturbance, the opposite of noise or a disorder. On the other hand silence may have a positive meaning. It may indicate a state of normal condition of something which detaches us from the noise of common life, almost isolating the mind from outside voices. This is the educative silence method the writer is suggesting should be included in the Nigerian School Curriculum. To accomplish this, we need to perform various exercises to teach our lessons.

Teaching is an art and a science. It is an art because it involves guiding, directing and stimulating learning. It is also a science because it involves the possession of specialized knowledge. In practice, applying the proper methods could ease the difficulties experienced by teachers when teaching. The method of play introduced through this perceptual activity is a form of interpersonal influence which aims at effective teaching and learning. Plato sees play as "the best way to see the children 'education on the ground that any other way at this stage would involve compulsion and that will not be benefiting for free person'" (Lee, 1994). Teachers' Perception to Lesson Planning Educationists have a widely shared consensus about the importance of scheme of work and lesson plan in fostering effective teaching especially at the pro-primary and primary level of education, This fact is substantiated by the plethora of literary works that are already available on this subject.

Nevertheless, many Nigerians are justifiably perturbed about the increasing deterioration in the standard of nursery/primary major examinations and the quality of pupils produced by the school in recent times. Part of the blame for this problem has been attributed to teachers who as it is claimed deliberately disregard the fundamental educational precept

of lesson preparation and planning. This implied that teachers are in equipped that instructions would be structurally defective and incoherent. The importance of nursery/primary education upon which subsequent educational efforts are erected is made explicit in the following statement:

“And the first step as you know is always what matters most particularly when we are dealing with those that are young and tender. That is the time any impression we choose to make leaves a permanent mark” (Lee, 1994).

### 13. CONCLUSION

This chapter has looked into how early childhood education all began both in ancient and modern times and especially how it began in Nigeria and the importance of childhood care givers. It also gave a cursory look into how the objectives were found policies formulated through the philosophical perspective of early childhood Education. The importance of care givers who will teach what is embedded in the curriculum were highlighted with emphasizes the need for a child centered curriculum.

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