

## **A Survey of Teachers' Knowledge and Application of Teaching Techniques in Early Childhood Education**

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### **Abstract**

*The primary purpose of this study was to identify teachers' knowledge of teaching techniques and how they were applied in Early Childhood education, whether their qualifications contributed to their knowledge and effective use of teaching techniques as well as the areas they found challenging in the discharge of their duties. The study was anchored on the play theory by Jean Piaget. Using the survey method and with the aid of a questionnaire as an instrument, the researcher sampled the opinions of 53 teachers purposively selected from 10 schools in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The findings showed that the teachers were fully aware of teaching techniques. The techniques or methods commonly used were play-way, demonstration, activity method, dramatization and role playing method. Also, the act of questioning was mostly applied and they adopted whatever technique that helped them to deliver the lessons. Majority of the respondents also admitted that the knowledge of subject matter contributes to the effective use of teaching techniques. Based on the findings, recommendations were made that government and other regulatory bodies should ensure that only professionally qualified teachers were recruited to teach Early Childhood Education. The teachers need to constantly acquaint themselves with subject matter that they teach since the knowledge of subject matter contributes to knowledge and application of teaching techniques. It was also recommended that teachers should be humble enough to invite professionals to help them in areas where they have difficulty instead of adopting any method that seems right to them. They should always consult, collaborate with or seek for assistance from experienced teachers.*

**Keywords:** Teachers' knowledge, Teaching techniques, Early childhood, Pedagogy, Learner

### **Introduction**

Early Childhood Education can be referred to as the rearing of children or the formal teaching of young ones below the official school age of six years in day-care, kindergarten or nursery. Some scholars even extend the age to eight. It is a child's first contact with a formal school system. This is an important period in a child's development. It is where his personality is formed. During this period

of teaching, children are prepared to enter and succeed in the higher classes (grade school). They are taught to be independent, self-sufficient, social, open to interpretations, and critical in their thinking. This makes it important for the educators of these children to be professional people, who have undergone training in Early Childhood Education and are grounded in the pedagogical knowledge required for teaching.

Teachers play an important role in fostering the intellectual and social development of children during their formative years. The education that teachers give plays a key role in determining the future prospects of their pupils. At whatever stage of learning, whether in elementary, secondary or tertiary or whether in private or public schools, teachers provide the tools and the environment for their learners to develop into responsible adults.

Early childhood period is a crucial stage in a child's development. Teaching is very much paramount. This implies that the teacher remains a key factor in the successful implementation of the early childhood education programme. Bornfreund (2011) believed that the quality of instruction that children received in prekindergarten through the third grade could make a lasting impact on how well they would perform throughout their school years. With excellent teaching throughout this period of their lives, children are more likely to build effectively on what they learned. More importantly, strong teachers in these early years are critical to instilling in children the love for learning and excitement for school that build on itself at each grade level.

The central pedagogical issue for Early Childhood Education is how teachers assist children to construct subject knowledge. The assistance can only be meaningful when teachers possess the required knowledge. Shulman (1986) identified seven knowledge domains for teachers, and pedagogical content knowledge is one of them. He further identified three components of pedagogical content knowledge to include: knowledge of a subject; knowledge of children's existing knowledge and beliefs about the subject; and knowledge of effective ways to teach this subject to children.

This study paid attention to the knowledge of the effective ways of teaching or the knowledge of the teaching techniques or strategies in early childhood. The truth is that if a teacher's subject knowledge is high and the knowledge of what the children know is adequate, the teacher will understand what technique to employ to help the children learn better. Kankan and Abroampa (2016) believed that the use of effective instructional strategies lay at the heart of engaging learners and instruction in Early Childhood Education. Teaching learners at the Early Childhood Education level requires the use of

developmentally appropriate strategies that are interactive in order to generate varying affective outcomes. In a study, Wertheim and Leyser in Kankan and Abroampa, (2016, p.71) argued that “teachers with high self-efficacy were more likely to concentrate on individualized instruction and to adapt teaching practices more readily to the children’s needs by employing varying instructional strategies like role play, dramatization and simulation, among others.” Such teachers work with ease and flexibility and also spend more time with learners. This naturally fosters an interplay that produces a network of relationships: between and among agents at work; teacher-learner; learner-learner and learner-learning resources that breed tolerance, confidence and cooperation among young learners. Moreso, making assessment meaningful for children involves using tools that are appropriate for the children to use.

Teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and skill are very important in Early Childhood Education as these encourage or promote children’s creativity, problem solving ability, critical thinking skills, learning dispositions, and socio-emotional/behavioural development skills. Studies (Shulman, 1986; Cullen, 1999; Hedges and Cullen, 2003) have shown that there is high concern about what young children learn and how teachers help them to acquire knowledge in their environment. In fact, more research evidence attributes quality educational experiences in early years to the successes children record in the academic and other aspects of their lives (Mligo, Mitchell and Bell, 2016). This has thus, necessitated a survey of teachers’ knowledge and application of teaching techniques or strategies in Early Childhood Education. Emphasis was particularly placed on how the teachers of young children schools in Benin City, Edo State, utilized their pedagogical content knowledge in the classrooms.

### **Statement of Problem**

The overall goal for children in any educational setup is “to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.9). To achieve this, broad knowledge is commonly promoted in the curriculum, including literacy, numeracy, science, health, geography, arts and music (Edwards and Knight, 1994).

The contention is that teachers need comprehensive subject knowledge to support children’s learning, but the underlying matter is the means through which the subject knowledge is inculcated in the learner. This study therefore, sought to understand what knowledge teachers in Early Childhood Education possessed about the teaching techniques and to what extent they applied those techniques in effective teaching and learning.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were drawn to guide the study.

1. What knowledge of teaching techniques do early childhood educators possess?
2. Do the educators apply the teaching techniques?
3. Do teachers' qualifications contribute to their knowledge and the effective use of teaching techniques?
4. Which areas do early childhood educators experience challenges in their application of teaching techniques?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on the Play theory, which was developed by Jean Piaget in the 1920s. He gave insight into the cognitive development of children, identifying that what we as adults might just refer to as 'play' was a systematic process of learning that had identifiable stages from birth to adulthood. According to Simatwa (2010) Piaget's theory asserted that intellectual development was a direct continuation of inborn biological development, that the child was born biologically equipped to make a variety of motor responses, which provided him with the framework for the thought processes that will follow.

His theory of play (also known as developmental stage theory) was based on the idea that cognitive or intellectual development, and in particular, the learning of language, required appropriate environmental stimuli and experiences as the child matured. He suggested that there were two key processes; assimilation (of new knowledge and experience) and accommodation of those into the child's existing internal organised patterns of thought and behaviour, known as schemas.

As a child develops, he creates schemata for each of his experiences and the knowledge he gains, he stores for reference when he comes across the same or similar experiences. The new knowledge from these experiences is assimilated by the child and then accommodated into existing schemata often updating those schemata with the new experience.

It is the assembled schemas that people use when they interact with the world and people around them, and the richer a child's learning (play) environment, Piaget theorised, the better the schemata and schemas would be.

Piaget stressed that as children matured mentally, they passed sequentially through four major stages of cognitive development, each stage having four several sub stages. The major stages of cognitive growth are:

1. Sensory motor stage – 0 -2 years

2. Preoperational or intuitive stage – 2- 7 years
3. Concrete operations stage – 7 -11 years
4. Formal operations stage 11 – 15 years

Piaget's assumption about children is that:

- Children construct their own knowledge in response to their experiences.
- Children learn many things on their own without the intervention of older children or adults.
- Children are intrinsically motivated to learn and do not need rewards from adults to motivate them.

Piaget's theory has far reaching implications for instructional management in schools. His levels of cognitive development may be used as broad and general guides to sequential planning of class activities and selection of teaching techniques. The teaching methodology and teaching materials, and the learning activities should be those which are appropriate to each of the cognitive developmental stages of the learners.

The relevance of the theory to the study can be seen in the fact that the more teachers understand the different stages of the cognitive development of the learners, the easier they would select methods to use to help them acquire knowledge. In other words, when teachers understand how pupils learn, they can aid them to learn.

## **Conceptual and Literature Review**

### **Early Childhood Education**

Early Childhood Education is a starting point for a child's development and the key foundation of the Nigerian Educational System. It generally refers to programmes appropriate for children from 0 to 8 years. It is also known as pre-primary education. According to Obiweluozor (2015), pre-primary education is the education given to younger learners before the age of entering primary education (6 years). The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) explained that Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE) included the crèche, the nursery and the kindergarten. The 2013 Edition of The National Policy on Education made a modification in the categorization into ECCDE and Kindergarten. It described ECCDE as the care, protection and stimulation of and learning promised to children from 0-4 years in a crèche or nursery. The kindergarten according to the Policy, is the one-year education given to children

aged 5 prior to their entering primary school. The kindergarten has been included in the free, compulsory, universal and qualitative Basic Education.

Early Childhood Education can be traced to the efforts of prominent European education experts like: John Amos Comenius (1590-1690), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1782 – 1788), Joan Heinrich Pestalozzi (1748-1827) and Friedrich Froebel (1782-1851). Those experts championed the right of children to early education. Many educationist and scholars including Maduewesi (1999) and Fafunwa (1967) supported and advocated for the views held by those earlier educators that there was the need for good Early Childhood Education to help learners develop their full potential.

The importance of pre-primary education cannot be overemphasized as it enables children to improve on their self-confidence since they are given an opportunity to interact with their peers and adults too. Pre-primary education enhances independence and helps curb the tendency of children who are highly aggressive during group activities. Children's interactions with their peers and adults help to widen their scope of understanding and also gain mastery of the world around them. Pre-primary education is vital to the child, parents and society because it permits a smooth transition from home to school and it enables the child to feel free to interact with other people outside his immediate family members. The pre-primary school helps to sharpen the children's cognitive domain through learning rhymes and songs while playing on the slides and swings helps in physical development and builds their muscles. Structured play with building blocks and puzzles, baby dolls, and teddy bears helps in the emotional development of the children.

At the pre-primary school stage, children learn to share and co-operate with others instead of developing selfish tendencies. Exposure to pre-primary education goes a long way in teaching each child how to understand and manage their emotions. The provision of pre-primary education assists working class parents who have no relations or house helps to take care of their children while they are at work. The children are exposed to reading and writing. Statistical research has shown that children who have experienced early childhood or pre-primary programmes are more likely than other children to remain in primary school and achieve good results (UNESCO, 1995).

The emerging emphasis on the importance of the early years in human growth and development has prompted a more critical need for professional early childhood educators. No wonder Early Childhood Associations advocate that all early childhood settings should have qualified early childhood teachers who are recognised as professionals.

In recent years, early childhood educator's concern about the preparation of practitioners, has prompted a call for increased professional development. In Early Childhood Education, professional development involves the use of professional knowledge and skills to meet the needs of children and families, and collaborate with community agencies and other professional groups. The process of professional development includes the improvement of knowledge and competence of practitioners because competent educators who work with young children are essential to ensuring the high quality of Early Childhood Education Programmes.

### **Teaching Techniques**

Teaching in its generic sense is a system of activities/actions which is intended to induce learning. It is what occurs when teachers, by virtue of their instructional activities, succeed wholly or in part in enabling pupils to learn. Teaching facilitates desirable learning outcomes. In initiating and implementing effective teaching and desirable learning outcomes, the teacher engages himself in certain activities and uses certain approaches or strategies. These activities, approaches or strategies are usually referred to as teaching methods, strategies or techniques. Specifically, a teaching method is an approach or a position which a teacher adopts to explain subject matter to learners (Gill and Kusum, 2017).

The methods of teaching in pre-primary school or in Early Childhood Education should be able to stimulate the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development of the child. Basically, Osanyin in Nwaubani (2004) noted that teaching at that level should help the child to unfold his natural talents through actions in the external world of human and things.

The above view was supported by the ideas of Froebel and Maria Montessori on the education of the nursery child. Both advocated activities as veritable means of teaching the nursery child. Again, they argued that such activities must be creative and should reflect the needs, desires and delight of children at that stage or level. The appropriate teaching methods for this level should emphasize activities like play, drawing, painting, modeling, listening to stories, telling stories, singing, dancing, dramatizing, etc. These activities are in line with the instructional objectives of the National Policy on Education for pre-primary education which espouse "inculcating in the pre-school child the spirit of inquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature and the local environment, playing with toys, artistic and musical activities" (FRN, 2013)

The child at this stage is a creative and curious personality who should be assisted to learn within the realm of his own environment and interest. To achieve this, the teacher must be prepared to arouse and sustain children's interest in

classroom activities. By and large, the learning methods that could be effectively employed are play-way method, role playing, dramatization, demonstration, activity method, group discussion, conventional method, among others.

### **Impact of Teaching Methods on Pupils' Learning Achievement**

One of the responsibilities of government for pre-primary education is to promote the training of qualified pre-primary school teachers in adequate number. This indicates that government recognises the importance of qualified teachers in implementing pre-primary education curriculum. The type of methods teachers use in imparting knowledge and skills go a long way in determining the success of pre-primary education but what the teachers do not have they cannot give. As rightly put by FRN (2004), no educational system can rise above the quality of its teacher. In the same vein, can a nation rise above the quality of her education? Teachers need to ensure that appropriate teaching methods or a combination of two or more methods are used in order to achieve the stated aims and objectives of the lesson note.

The skillful and competent teacher uses as many methods and techniques as possible because there is no single method which is regarded as the best for every teaching situation. In a single lesson therefore, the teacher can employ more than one method to facilitate learning. The success of every method depends on the calibre of the teacher and his professional experience in the field of teaching. Studies have shown that coupled with appropriate instructional materials, the right choice of methods facilitate learning achievement, to a large extent. This applies at all levels of education and particularly pre-primary which deals with the foundation of learning and development.

A successful teaching is a product of an effective and efficient teaching process. Teaching is considered an all-purpose profession engaged in human resource development for individual and economic growth. Sequeira (2012) saw teaching as a set of events, outside the learners which was designed to support the internal process of learning. Teaching is also an attempt to help someone acquire or change some skill, attitude, knowledge, idea or appreciation. In other words, the teacher's task is to create or influence desirable changes in behaviour or in tendencies towards behaviour in his students/pupils. Effective teaching involves informing and explaining, stimulating, directing, guiding, administering, identifying what to learn, method of learning, problems, evaluating, reporting, recording, classroom management, socializing and school-community relationship, among others (Shulman, 1986; Hedges, 2002; Obiweuluzor, 2015).



### **Relevance of Teacher Knowledge to Pupils' Academic Achievement**

One of the biggest puzzles in educational production today is the teacher quality puzzle. While there is clear evidence that teacher quality is a key determinant of student learning, little is known about which specific observable characteristics of teachers can account for this impact (Aaronson, Barrow and Sander, 2007)

The vast existing literature on education production functions hints at teacher knowledge as one – possibly – the only factor reasonably consistently associated with growth in student achievement. The saying that you can't give what you don't have holds true here. It is only the teachers who are knowledgeable in the different teaching techniques and are able to apply them that send home the lessons better.

Teacher knowledge is a component of teacher professionalism. Although there is no firm consensus on the field of education as to exactly what constitutes high-quality teaching or a quality teacher, The Center for High Impact Philanthropy (2007) believed that quality teachers impacted positively on the learners. They are always learning, trying to gain mastery of their study areas as well as the method of teaching. They transfer knowledge of their subject matter and the learning process through good communication, diagnostic skills, understanding of different learning styles and cultural influences, knowledge about child development, and the ability to marshal a broad array of techniques to meet students' needs. They set high expectations and support students in achieving them. They establish an environment conducive to learning, and leverage available resources outside as well as inside the classroom.

While this description could apply to teachers working with students of all ages, it resonates most strongly with teaching at the pre-primary level. By contrast, discussions of teaching and teaching quality during the early-childhood years tend to focus more heavily on the knowledge of child development. Specifically, the early-childhood literature emphasizes: the importance of knowing how to best promote children's social and emotional needs; organizing the learning environment for young children; helping children make connections, and encouraging language skills and higher order thinking (Pianta & Hadden, 2008; Sadowski, 2006). The assumption is that quality early-childhood teachers possess these abilities which will translate into academic and developmental success in future schooling and life.

### **Methodology**

This study used the survey method for the purpose of generating data from teachers in nursery schools in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.

Survey research is one in which a group of people or a phenomenon is studied by collecting and analysing data considered to be a representative sample of the entire population. The population for this study comprised 528 Kindergarten (KG) 1 to 3 teachers in 114 private nursery schools in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The record was obtained following a head count by the researcher since the official record from the Ministry of Education did not capture all the schools found in the Local Government Area. The percentage formula for sample determination was employed and the researcher approximately selected 10 percent of the population which was 53. Ten schools were purposively selected and five teachers from each of the schools formed the respondents for the questionnaire used. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was used to calculate the correlation between the two scores obtained from the reliability test, and a reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained. The instrument was therefore adjudged to be reliable. Simple percentage was used to analyse the data collected.

## **Results**

The data obtained from the distribution of questionnaire were presented. A total of 53 copies of the questionnaire were distributed but 49 (92%) copies were returned and found useful.

**Table 1: Respondents' qualification**

| <b>Highest qualification</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>WASSCE</b>                | 08               | 16.33             |
| <b>OND/HND</b>               | 09               | 18.37             |
| <b>NCE</b>                   | 19               | 38.78             |
| <b>B.ED</b>                  | 06               | 12.24             |
| <b>PGDE</b>                  | 01               | 2.04              |
| <b>OTHERS</b>                | 06               | 12.24             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                 | <b>49</b>        | <b>100.00</b>     |

Table 1 showed that a little above half of the respondents (38.78%; 12.24%; 2.04%) had a background in the field of education. A total of 6 or 12.24% of the respondents had other qualifications other than in Education.

**Research Question one:** What knowledge of teaching techniques do early childhood educators possess?

**Table 2: Respondents' knowledge of teaching techniques**

| Question   | Responses | Frequency | Percentage    |
|--|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| <b>Do you have an idea of teaching techniques?</b> | Yes       | 49        | 100           |
|  | No        | 00        | 00            |
| <b>Total</b>                                       |           | <b>49</b> | <b>100.00</b> |

Table 2 showed that all the respondents have knowledge of teaching techniques. It made it easier for them to answer the other questions.

**Table 3: The commonly used teaching techniques**

| Question   | Responses       | Frequency | Percentage    |
|--|-----------------|-----------|---------------|
| <b>Which teaching techniques do you commonly use in teaching children?</b> | Play-way method | 23        | 46.94         |
|  | Role playing    | 01        | 2.04          |
|  | Demonstration   | 15        | 30.61         |
|  | Dramatization   | 05        | 10.20         |
|  | Activity method | 05        | 10.20         |
|  | Others          | 00        | 00            |
| <b>Total</b>   |                 | <b>49</b> | <b>100.00</b> |

The commonly used teaching techniques as presented in table 3 were the play-way method (46.94%) and demonstration (30.61%). Others were role playing (22.45%), dramatization and activity methods (10.20%).

**Research Question two:** How do the educators apply the teaching techniques in teaching their pupils?

**Table 4: Application of teaching techniques**

| Question  | Responses  | Frequency | Percentage   |
|---|--|-----------|--------------|
| <b>How do you use the teaching techniques in pupils' education?</b> | I guide them to identify and understand concepts | 10        | <b>20.41</b> |
|   | I make them write                                | 10        | <b>20.41</b> |
|   | I ask them questions                             | 23        | <b>46.94</b> |
|   | I engage them in playful activities              | 06        | <b>12.24</b> |
|   |  |           |              |
| <b>Total</b>  |  | <b>49</b> | <b>100</b>   |

In Table 4, almost half of the respondents 23 (46.94%) affirmed that in the application of the teaching method, questioning was mostly used. Ten respondents, representing 20.41% guided the pupils to identify and understand different concepts. Another 10 respondents, representing 20.41%, made them write while 6 (12.24%) respondents engaged them in playful activities.

**Research Question three:** Do teachers' qualifications contribute to their knowledge and effective use of teaching techniques?

**Table 5: Effects of qualification on teaching techniques**

| Question  | Responses   | Frequency | Percentage    |
|---|---|-----------|---------------|
| <b>What effect do you think your qualification has on the application of teaching techniques?</b> | It gives me better knowledge of the techniques      | 22        | 44.90         |
|   | It gives me a better understanding of the pupils    | 10        | 20.41         |
|   | It helps me to understand when I am making progress | 12        | 24.49         |
|   | No effect   | 05        | 10.20         |
| <b>Total</b>  |   | <b>49</b> | <b>100.00</b> |

Table 5 showed that 22 (44.90%) respondents agreed that their qualification made them to understand the different techniques better. Ten (10) respondents, representing 20.41%, said it helped them to understand the pupils better while 12 (24.49%) respondents said it helped them to realise when they made progress. The remaining five (5) respondents representing 10.20% admitted that their qualification did not contribute to their knowledge on the effective use of teaching techniques.

**Research Question four:** What areas do early childhood educators experience challenges in their application of teaching techniques?

**Table 6: Areas of difficulty in the application of teaching techniques**

| Question   | Responses      | Frequency | Percentage    |
|--|----------------|-----------|---------------|
| <b>Which areas do you find difficult to apply teaching techniques?</b> | Language       | 21        | 42.86         |
|  | Number work    | 03        | 6.12          |
|  | Social habits  | 03        | 6.12          |
|  | Colouring      | 15        | 30.61         |
|  | Health habits  | 02        | 4.08          |
|  | Others specify | 05        | 10.20         |
| <b>Total</b>   |                | <b>49</b> | <b>100.00</b> |

Table 6 showed that even with the knowledge of teaching techniques, 21 (42.86) respondents admitted that in the teaching of Language, they had difficulty in applying teaching techniques. That was closely followed by colouring as 15 respondents representing 30.61% said they had difficulty. In number work, social habits and health habits, the teachers (respondents) seemed to have less trouble applying teaching techniques.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The data gathered from the study showed that the respondents had adequate background in the field of Education. The teachers' explanation that they had very adequate knowledge in the use of teaching techniques was deemed impressive. Majority of the respondents (38 or 77.55%) said that the teaching techniques they commonly used were the play-way and demonstration method. Play is natural to children and the easiest way to get their attention is to teach them using the play-way methods. Also, the common belief that demonstrating a particular act makes it stick better plays out well in the case of children. They learn faster when their activities are loaded with demonstration.

The techniques common to Early Childhood Education actually lend themselves to interactive engagement and provide opportunities for purposeful play. The extent of interactivity, however, depends on how well teachers use them. The study showed that questioning was mostly employed. Asking question helps the children to express themselves in ways that assist the teacher to understand them better, thereby spotting areas of difficulty. Asking question can also involve soliciting children's ideas about what to do and how to do it. For instance, the teacher tells the children, "it is raining, how should we dress to keep dry?", or "what can we do inside instead?" The children will provide answers and the teacher can guide them accordingly.

The other options like guiding the pupils to identify and understand concepts, and writing what the teacher writes on the board even though had lesser percentages they were equally important. Teachers also have the opportunity of engaging the pupils in playful activities. This could involve forming groups for the children. Formation of groups for children at this stage could be for the purpose of helping them to express and share ideas and feelings and creating a climate of discourse that values conversations, dialogue, questions and reflections. This also affords the children the opportunity to know one another better.

The respondents affirmed that the qualification they had contributed to their knowledge of and effective use of teaching techniques. The various effects of the qualification were presented on Table 5. What could be deduced from the table was the fact that from their training programmes, they had learnt the techniques

that promoted teaching of certain subject matters. The knowledge of teaching techniques also helped the teachers to understand their pupils better.

The study also sought to understand whether a limitation in subject matter knowledge affected application of teaching techniques. The respondents agreed that the knowledge of subject matter had an effect on the application of teaching technique. That was in line with the study by Farquhar (2003), Cullen (1999) and Hayney (2000) who believed that a teacher's subject knowledge help to extend children's knowledge.

The teachers also outlined their areas of difficulty in the application of teaching techniques. In the order of prominence, the areas included Language, colouring, number work and social habits. The implication of this response is that most of the teachers in Early Childhood Education do not have a background in Language or do not understand clearly how to handle Language lessons in play-way method.

It was found in research question 3 that when teachers are challenged in the application of teaching techniques, they applied any technique which enabled them to deliver the subject matter while 10 respondents representing 20.41% said they invite core professionals to handle those areas. The remaining 11% of the respondents said they gave the areas to pupils as take home assignment or they skipped the topic. The choice of teaching methods or techniques itself, as Halstead and Taylor (2000) believed, is value laden, and the way content or knowledge is manipulated and exploited to enable learners to acquire values is critical.

## **Conclusions**

Teachers are one of the key elements in any school, and effective teaching is one of the key propellers for school improvement. This is so important especially in Early Childhood Education since this stage forms the foundation of any academic endeavour. Effective teachers are knowledgeable about curriculum content and the strategies for teaching it. In order to achieve good teaching, good subject knowledge is a prerequisite. Teaching strategies must base learning on inquiry, investigation and critical study in situations where genuine purposes, needs and wants are experienced. For this reason, the role of teachers and their teaching strategies are never ending topics in all educational settings. From the study, it was clear that the teachers were exposed to teaching techniques appropriate for Early Childhood Education. Although they are challenged in several ways, they are able to push through in order to deliver effective teaching.

## Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusions reached, the study recommended that:

1. Early childhood educators should constantly attend workshops and conferences to help them acquire knowledge in the other areas apart from their field of study.
2. Government and other regulatory bodies should ensure that only professionally qualified teachers are recruited in Early Childhood Education.
3. The principles of teaching and learning should be emphasized in the teacher education programme to guaranty teachers' effectiveness.
4. There is the need for teachers to develop enough techniques in their 'professional methods' bag' in order to boost the learners' interest in what they teach.
5. Whenever teachers have challenges in the application of teaching techniques, they should not hesitate to call professionals or seek knowledge. They should always consult, collaborate with or seek assistance from experienced teachers.

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