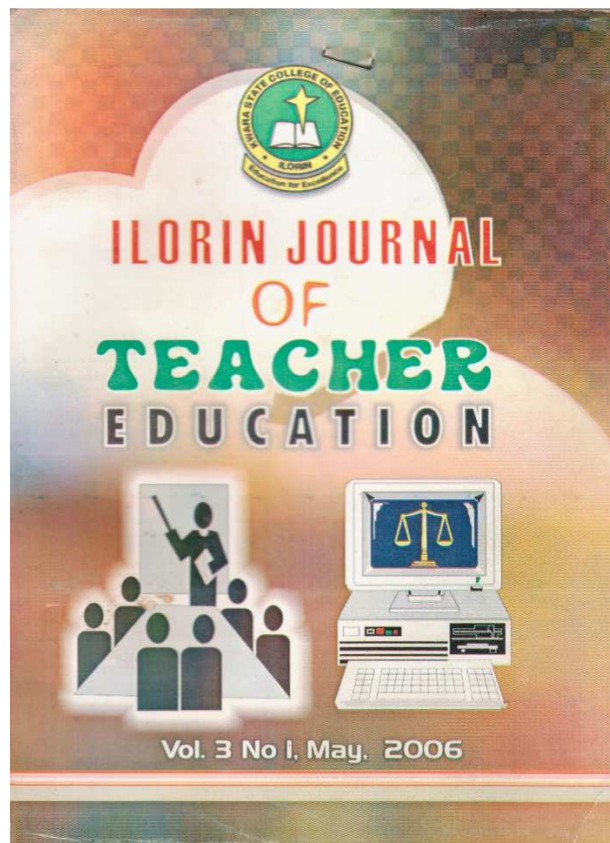


**METHODOLOGY AND PEDAGOGICAL ISSUES IN PRIMARY
SCHOOLS**

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines and discusses the various methods of teaching in primary schools. In view of the fact that there seem to be many lapses in the Nigerian educational system, especially at the primary school level, an attempt is made to examine the various pedagogical / methodological issues that are involved in teaching at the primary school level through the discussion of the Concept of Pedagogy, the Concept of Teaching, the Methods of Teaching and how to ensure effective teaching in schools.

Introduction

Education, has been seen by many as the only available means of fitting people to cope with this new world. A former American president, Bill Clinton said sometime ago, that if he is to make three priorities even in a society as educated as the US, the first would be education, the second, education, and third, education. In the Nigerian context, all stakeholders should say education, education, education until they can say no more; as expressed by Alonge (2005). This is because if you educate a human being, you are opening his eyes wide to the world and education is the basic tool for development. The priority that is being talked about here, is not in terms of human and material resources alone, but how education as a whole is being delivered; since it is not only the provision of these resources alone that determine the success of any educational system. The methodology employed too, is of great importance. This is corroborated by Smith & Laslett (1999), statement that in some schools, the conditions and consequences of learning appear to be arranged in ways which may discourage all, except the brightest, most competent and self motivated pupils. Indeed, Booth & Coulby (1987) suggest that attitudes fostered by certain approaches to the curriculum may actually produce pupil disaffection and once this happens, organizational goals may not be attained.

The Concept of Pedagogy

Page and Thomas (1978) define pedagogy as the art and science of teaching; while the British Encyclopedia Britannica simply describes it as the science of teaching. From these two similar definitions, one can deductively say pedagogy is concerned with the study of all that needs to be known to ensure that effective teaching is done in schools.

According to Vygotsky (1978), Effective teaching necessitates making difficult and principled choices, exercising careful judgment, and honoring the complex nature

of the educational mission. In addition to the technical knowledge and skills teachers have to use in their daily practice, they must all be aware of the ethical dimensions of their profession. In this light, the primary mission is to foster the development of skills, dispositions, and understand and acknowledge thoughtfully and responsibly a wide range of human needs and conditions. Thus, teachers must master a repertoire of instructional methods and strategies, yet remain critical and reflective about their practice. Their professional responsibilities focus on educating students, in addition to participating in wider activities within the school and in partnership with parents and the community.

Based on the latest developments in pedagogy, teaching has become more than an activity that conserves valued knowledge and skills by transmitting them to succeeding generations. Therefore, teachers also have the responsibility to challenge the existing structures, practices, and definitions of knowledge; to invent and test new approaches; and, where necessary, to pursue organizational change in a constant attempt to improve the school. As agents of public interest in a democracy, teachers through their work contribute to the dialogue about preserving and improving society, and they initiate future citizens into this ongoing public discourse.

The professional teaching standards represent the teaching profession's consensus on the critical aspects of the art and science of teaching (pedagogy) that characterize accomplished teachers in various fields. Cast in terms of actions that teachers take to advance student outcomes, these standards also incorporate the essential pedagogical knowledge, skills, dispositions, and commitments that allow teachers to practice at a high level. These standards have a fundamental philosophical foundation comprised of five core positions:

- Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
- Teachers know the subjects they teach and have the necessary pedagogical knowledge.
- Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
- Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
- Teachers are members of learning communities. (Rosenshine, 1986)

Different definitions and theories have been given concerning the concept of teaching. According to Clarke (1985), "to teach is to transform by informing to develop

a zest for lifelong learning, to help pupils become mature independent learners and architects of an exciting and challenging future". It can also be described as a cluster of activities that a teacher may engage in during a specific time

One set of theories look at teaching as a way of working with students. These theories hold that teaching is a process of interaction, somewhat like that; between players in a tennis match or dogs in a fight. The teacher does something to the students and the students do something in return. As a result of these reciprocal actions, the students learn. If interpersonal relations in the classroom are good, it is assumed that learning is not likely to occur and if it does, it will occur in less degree and with less stability. This view of teaching emphasizes the necessity for good classroom atmosphere, in which case, it holds that relationship between teacher and student must be friendly, cooperative and conducive to give and take in class work.

It is assumed also that, if students become involved in unsettled situations, they will engage cooperatively in trying to work out such situations and in so doing, they will learn. It is also understood that infrequently, the teacher will instruct the students and that he reserves instruction for those points where the difficulties threaten to become overwhelming. (Smith. & Laslett, 1999). According to this view, learning to teach consists in learning to ingratiate students; to enlist them in activities and to cooperate in ventures jointly worked out. To learn to teach, one must also learn to be alert to situations challenging to students.

Essentially teaching can be viewed in the following ways:

- Teaching is action to increase the odds that potential learners will learn.
- Teaching is action to point to learning towards desired accomplishment by learners.
- Teaching is action to make knowledge make sense Teaching is action to enhance the persons who are learners.

Knowing what teaching is, is not enough to make a teacher carry out the teaching activity as it should be done. It is also of paramount importance, that the teacher understands the different methodologies that can be employed while engaging in the teaching process. In choosing his tactics, there is the need for the teacher to consider not only his teaching goals, but also some other variables such as the subject matter, pupils and other classroom variables.

Good teaching, can be said to be good communication. Therefore, the teaching strategies should be consistent with good communication techniques. Since learning

is dependent on successful teacher-pupil intercommunication, there is the need for teachers to avail themselves of all the techniques and knowledge developed by experts in the field of education, to make teaching and learning a worthwhile experience.

There is an old saying that states “you can take a camel to water but cannot make it drink. This is to say that a teacher can organise the on but cannot make the pupils learn and yet this is one of the most important is that teachers have to do.

Every lesson is gradually built up in stages as follows;

(1) Planning and presentation: There are very good reasons for spending time on the careful planning and preparation of the work to be done in the class. This is because; Planning ensures that the teacher covers all the topics outlined in the syllabus. It makes teaching to be more effective as it focuses on what the teacher wants the pupils to learn and how he will acquire that learning. It also gives the teacher an opportunity to be creative. It allows him to create time to monitor the learning process. Lastly, it reduces the likelihood of problems of control when pupil tasks and activities have been planned.

One of the main reasons for planning is-that it allows the teacher to organise his material in a way that will interest the pupils and provide a variety of activities and tasks suitable for the range of ability in the class. While planning, the teacher needs to think of the following things:-

- The subject knowledge in relation to the syllabus.
- The organization and management of the class.
- The available resources, methods and strategies.
- Assessment. (Smith, C.J. & Laslett, R. (1999)

Subject knowledge:

Successful teaching and quality of pupil learning is closely related to the teacher’s own knowledge and understanding of the subjects and this knowledge needs to be built up gradually over time. There is the need for the teacher to check his own personal knowledge and understanding of each unit or topic as well as parts of the syllabus that have not been taught before. He needs to check also, the previous year’s work to find out whether it was covered or not and how can link the part of the syllabus to last year’s work, earlier lessons or other topics. The teacher also needs to read textbooks and the teachers’ manual carefully as they may be the only resource. He needs to visit teachers’ resources centres for any reference books; He must

get along well with other teachers in the school or find out if there is any meeting where he can meet other teachers and share ideas about teaching any part of the syllabus.

(b) Organization and Management

There is the need for the teacher to find out as much as he/she can about the class to be taught with regards to the school curriculum and sitting arrangement.

(c) Available resources

There is also the need for the teacher to be thoroughly familiar with the teaching and learning resources available for his class. Questions like;

- Are there sufficient textbooks for all pupils?
- Are there books for all the subjects to be taught?
- Is there a teacher's manual available or can the teacher borrow one from the head or another teacher?
- What teaching aids are available?
- Is there a nearby resource room or library in the school?
- Is there a nearby teacher's resource centre?
- What teaching aids will you need to collect or make?

(d) Methods and Strategies

No teaching method is clearly the best. Some teachers follow a traditional approach in which case, they prefer to make decisions about learning. Others prefer a more flexible approach and allow the pupils to make some decisions about their learning programme.

The best teachers are those who are able to use a variety of methods and activities. This is because pupils tend to learn more effectively if one uses a variety of teaching methods. Although teachers must adopt the proper teaching methods for the goals at which they are aiming, the success of the strategy rests on the understanding and skillful use of the appropriate teaching methods.

Teaching Methods

The image evoked by "teaching" is usually that of a classroom full of children presided over by an adult trying to cause the children to learn what the adult has in mind to teach them. The theories of instruction in the past have centred on teaching strategies and tactics. Although *teachers* must adopt the proper teaching strategies for the goals at which they are aiming, the success of the strategy rests on the skillful use of the appropriate teaching tactics.

One of the prominent areas of education which has attracted the attention of educationists through the age is the process of making the teaching - learning situation easy for both the teacher and the learners. This has led to the evolvement of various methods of teaching. Some of these methods have been in use since the time of Socrates while some surfaced in recent times. Researches are still going on to improve methodology in our schools. However, an attempt shall be made at examining some of such methods that can be used by teachers in a bid to ensure that effective teaching and learning is brought about in the school system, with particular reference to the primary school.

Problem- Solving Method:

It is a known fact that life is full of various problems and the problems have to be solved. It is a method which involves the students work in solving a problem. In this type of method, students are trained, using learning situations, to solve problems scientifically. The problem - solving method embraces a continuous, meaningful, well integrated activity beginning with a problematic situation. That students are given a problem which they are to find proven solutions to. It ends when the problem has been solved and the solution checked.

Story-Telling Method:

Story-Telling method is a method through which information or knowledge is acted by verbally narrating a story or parable. Stories provide a wealth of materials that can be used in different ways and in different subjects. Across, there is a great story - telling tradition. In most cases, this method is to gain the interest of pupils with a story linked to a new topic that is to be taught. This method is a simple teaching device that is often within the competence of most teachers. It also enables the recipients to learn in a relaxed entertaining manner. As good as this method appears to be, it should be that there is the need for the teacher to add some dramatic effect to the so as to attract the attention and interest of the pupils.

Play and Simulation Games:

Play can be described as an activity which employs the "make believe" medium for learning purposes, while Simulation means imitation. In the teaching situation, simulation refers to calculated copying of real life activities in a simplified manner so that it becomes more accessible and understood. Instead verbal descriptions or explanations, imaginary or miniature situations are led for learning activities. Simulation, games, games and role playing are methods employed by man to learn to

prepare themselves for further responsibilities in the family and the society and for recreation. In other words, all these have been in use by the young children to adjust themselves to their environment. Often, we see little children imitating the actions of the elders, play the role of the teacher, father, mother, etc. (Clarke,1970)

Poetry, Rhymes, Songs and Riddles:

Poetry grew out of an oral tradition of stories, songs and chants. Young children in particular like to repeat sounds, words and phrases. According to Quist (2000), Nursery rhymes, songs and riddles are the first poems that children. Researches have shown that rhyming words help pupils to develop language skills.

Direct instruction/Explicit learning:

Direct Instruction, also known as Explicit teaching “is a systematic method for presenting material in small steps, pausing to check for student understanding and eliciting active and successful participation from all the pupils. (Rosenshine, 1986). Rosenshine details six teaching functions as an important sequence in the method of explicit teaching. They are: daily review, presenting new material, guided practice, corrections and feedback, independent practise and weekly and monthly reviews. This method has been shown to be particularly effective in the teaching of Mathematical procedure and computations, reading decoding, explicit reading procedures, map skills, foreign language vocabulary etc. There are categories of educational technology that support this method of teaching. One of the first application software in the classroom was in the form of drill and practice programmes. Some could be in the form of spelling practice programme that provides verbal rewards every time a student spells a word correctly while some could be in the form of pupils being required to solve some mathematical sums, after which scores will be awarded for the correct sums.

Demonstration method

There are many simple demonstration exercises that can be done by the teacher at the primary school level, to teach certain concepts explicitly. While the teacher attempts to use the demonstration method in teaching, all he is required to do is to make a step by step plan and practice before demonstrating before the students. The demonstration should not be for too long, so that the pupils too can have the opportunity to repeat what the teacher demonstrated to them.

Experimentation and Discovery method

According to Durojaiye (1977), experiments and discovery are the means by

which children learn about their environment - what things are and what they do. Thus, pupils should be given different materials and facilities which will encourage experimentation and discovery, and they will be able to do things by themselves.

However, it must be noted that before the choice of a method to be used by the class teacher, there is always the need to think about the knowledge and skills of the pupils one is going to teach, their ability and the kind of experience they can bring to the lessons.

Qualities of Effective Teachers

Effective teachers display skills at creating curricula designed to build on students' present knowledge and understanding and move them to more sophisticated and in-depth abilities, knowledge, concepts and performances. They calibrate their responses to the interests and ability level of students, designing activities to the latter's "proximal zone" based on Vygotsky's concept, for learning and development, in addition, these educators employ a range of **notional** strategies and resources to match the variety of student skills and provide each student several ways of exploring important ideas, skills, and aptitudes. They understand how to work as facilitators, coaches, models, evaluators, managers, and advocates. Moreover, they know how to utilize various forms of play, different strategies for grouping learners, and different types of media and materials.

Such teachers observe and assess students in the context of ongoing classroom life. They are skilled in collecting and interpreting a variety of types of evidence to evaluate where each student is in a sequence or continuum of learning and development. They know how to move from assessment to decisions about curriculum, social support, and teaching strategies, to increase prospects for successful learning.

They understand and respect the diverse cultures, values, languages, family backgrounds of their students, use community people and settings as resources for learning, and involve parents and families as active partners in the student's total development. They reflect on their own performance in light of student progress, seek the views of colleagues and parents, and think about the options, and the consequences of their options. *Ever. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in the United States of America, seeks to identify and recognize teachers who effectively enhance student learning and demonstrate the high level of knowledge, skills, abilities, and commitments reflected in five core propositions which*

can be 'ed in any educational system and they are;

Teachers who are committed to students and their learning

Effective teachers are dedicated to making knowledge accessible to all students based on their belief that all students can learn. Thus, they treat their learners ably by acknowledging individual differences among students. Moreover, adjust their practice according to these individual differences based on observation and knowledge of their students' interests, abilities, skills, knowledge, family circumstances, and peer relationships. Accomplished teachers understand how students develop and learn. Therefore, these educators incorporate the prevailing theories of cognition and intelligence in their practice. In addition, they are aware of the influence of context and culture on behavior. Under these general circumstances, teachers develop students' cognitive capacity and their respect for learning. Equally important, they foster ants' self-esteem, motivation, character, civic responsibility, and their act for individual, cultural, religious, and racial differences.

Teachers who know the subjects they teach and have the necessary pedagogical knowledge

Accomplished teachers have a thorough understanding of the subject(s) they teach and appreciate how knowledge in their subject is created, organized, linked to other disciplines, and applied to real-world settings. Effective teachers master the pedagogical knowledge to be used to convey and reveal subject matter to students. They are aware of the preconceptions and background knowledge that students typically bring to- each subject and of strategies and instructional materials that can be of assistance.

Teachers who are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning

Accomplished teachers create, enrich, maintain, and alter instructional settings, materials, and strategies to capture and sustain the interest of their students and to make the most effective use of time. They also strive to engage students and adults in assisting their teaching as well as to enhance their practice with their colleagues' knowledge and expertise.

Effective teachers command a wide range of generic instructional techniques and use them appropriately. They manage efficiently both the students and the learning environment. Thus, instruction is organized and implemented to allow the schools' goals for students to be met.

They can assess the progress of individual students as well as that of the class

as a whole. They employ multiple methods for measuring student growth and understanding and can clearly explain student performance to parents.

Teachers who think systematically about their practice and learn from experience

Effective teachers are models of educated persons, exemplifying the virtues they seek to inspire in students—curiosity, tolerance, honesty, fairness, respect for diversity, and appreciation of cultural differences. They also exemplify the capacities that are prerequisites for intellectual growth—the ability to reason and take multiple perspectives, to be creative and take risks, and to adopt an experimental and problem-solving orientation.

They draw on their knowledge of human development, subject matter and instruction, and their understanding of their students to make principled judgments about sound practice. Their decisions are grounded not only in the literature, but also in their experience. They engage in lifelong learning that they seek to encourage in their students.

Striving to strengthen their teaching, they critically examine their practice, seek to expand their repertoire, deepen their knowledge, sharpen their judgment, and adapt their teaching to new findings, ideas, and theories.

Teachers who are members of learning communities

They contribute to the effectiveness of the school by working collaboratively with other professionals on instructional policy, curriculum and staff development. They can evaluate school progress and the allocation of school resources in the light of their understanding of state and local educational objectives. They are knowledgeable about specialized school and community resources that can be engaged for their students' benefit, and are skilled at employing such resources as needed.

They find ways to work collaboratively and creatively with parents, engaging them productively in the proper functioning of the school. Where all the aforementioned are done by the teachers in our schools, there is no way by which our educational goals and objectives would not be fully attained.

Having all the above discussed qualities, there is the likelihood that teachers would be able to perform excellently while practicing in the schools, which will of course lead to efficiency and effectiveness in the Nigerian educational system.

Conclusion

Conclusively, this paper would want to round up by observing that the Teaching profession is a very sensitive one as it has to determine what other professions would look like, in terms of what they are taught while in school. On the basis of this assertion therefore, all hands must be on deck to ensure that only the right set of people are made to join the profession, so that at the end of the day our educational system will be something to write home about Recommendations

In the light of the above discussed issues, this paper recommends that;

1. Only teachers who have gone through the professional training that should be allowed to practice in our schools.
2. The Federal Government in Collaboration with stake holders in the education industry should draw up a policy that will enforce all practicing teachers to go on staff development programmes from time to time. Such programmes are workshops, seminars and conferences where new and current techniques of teaching would be discussed
3. Teachers should not be promoted automatically but after they must have been tested on the subject matter they are expected to be experts in.

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