



A GUIDE TO
TEACHING
PRACTICE
FOR STUDENT-TEACHERS
AND SUPERVISORS

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EDITED BY:
ADEBAYO M.S, Ph.D

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TEACHERS' ROLE AT MEETING THE BASIC NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

By

YAHAYA, Mohammed Ndagi
*Department of Early Childhood Education,
School of ECCE Primary Education
Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.*

&

AJADI, Babatunde Mustafa
*English Department, School of Languages
Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin*

Introduction

The Early childhood period is a critical time for developing human body chemistry such as the brain functions necessary to handle information, express emotions, and become proficient in language use. Early years in life are the most important to the formation of intelligence, personality and social behaviour of a child (Ejeh, 2006). The early childhood period is categorised from birth through age eight'infancy, toddlerhood, preschool age, kindergartner and primary school age (Charlesworth, 2012). The aim of Early Childhood Care Development Education) is to foster the proper development of the children, identify and address their problems, harness their potentials, mould their characters, enhance their learning, equip them for life challenges (Mahuta .2007). ECCDE is an aspect of the Universal Basic Education which was introduced in 1999 to increase the access of children to basic education in Nigeria. The form of education given to a child at this phase of development is called the early childhood/preschool/pre-primary education. Early childhood education is about honing and moulding the child, which will eventually form the basis of their lifelong journey.

New experience such as every word they learn, behaviour children adopt, is an investment in a more fruitful future of their world view. Although, children may have varying needs, they all have a lot of common needs which must be annex for a meaningful and impactful experience by the teacher. Therefore, as teachers, the greater impression stage on the child is in the early childhood years. Therefore, it becomes expedient for ECCDE teachers/professionals as caregivers to address these special needs (social,

emotional, cognitive, physical or educational needs). With a better understanding of these needs, teachers can make sure the children in their care are getting everything they need in order to have a healthy and happy childhood. However, if the teacher must fulfill all righteousness in meeting the needs of children in ECCDE, the teacher is expected to function in a variety of roles - decision making to organise instruction, manage learning and instructional strategies (Susan M. Sheridan et al. 2009).

Objectives of the Unit

At the end of the study of this unit, students should be able to:

1. define the concept early childhood education
2. list and explain the basic needs of children in early childhood education
3. list and explain the roles of teachers in meeting the basic needs of children in early childhood education

Early Childhood Care, Development and Education (ECCDE)

Generally, early childhood is defined as a time that "spans the prenatal period to eight years of child's age" (WHO and UNICEF, 2012), whereas, early childhood education is commonly referred to as preschool, pre-kindergarten, daycare, nursery school or simply early education. Despite the different names, they all have the same purpose - to prepare children for elementary education. To the governments of Malawi, Kenya and Zambia, Early childhood care and education is a:

"comprehensive approach to policies and programs for children from conception to eight years. It encompasses early learning and stimulation, health, education, nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation." (National Strategic Plan for Early Childhood

Development, 2008, Government of Malawi).

"framework that targets all children including the vulnerable and marginalized from conception to eight years of age ... and all these children have the same needs which consist of nutrition, health, nurture, protection, stimulation, and training ... "(National Early Childhood Development Policy Framework,

Republic of Kenya, June 2006).

provision of support "for every young child to realise his/her right to survival, to protection, and to care that will ensure optimal physical and psychosocial development from birth to age eight including infant stimulation, health and nutrition, early childhood education, community development... " (National Policy of Zambia on Early Childhood Care, Development, and Education: Investing into Our Children's Future, Everyone's Responsibility, 1st Draft by Mulenga, n.d.).

FRN (2004) refers- to -Early Childhood Care and Education (pre-primary education) as an education given in an educational institution to children aged 3-5 plus prior to their enrollment in the primary school. These are commonly used terminologies: Early Childhood Education (ECE), Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Early Childhood Care (ECC), Early Childhood Care' and Development (ECCD),' and Early Childhood Care for Development (WHO & UNICEF, 2012).

Historically, Childhood education in the form of nursery school or pre-primary education, as we know it today in Nigeria is largely a post-colonial development. That is to say, Early Childhood education in Nigeria did not receive its deserved official recognition until very recently (Tombowua 2013). However, the concept of infant schools in Nigeria was a product of the missionaries in the early 20th century. As groping for instruction in schools was not age- based during that period, some children aged six or even more, could be found in some of the infant classes (Tor - Anyiin, 2008). There is no doubt that, the phasing out of infant classes heralded the need by some parents for nursery schools. Thus, in 1977 with the introduction of

National Policy on Education, the need arises by the then military government of Nigeria for the official recognition of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria.

Objectives of Early Childhood Education

The objectives of early childhood education according to FRN (2004) are to: effect a smooth transition from home to school, prepare the child for the primary level of education, provide adequate care and supervision for the children, while their parents are at work, inculcate social norms, inculcate in the child the spirit of inquiry and creativity, through the

exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys and so on, develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit, learn good habits, especially good health habits, and teach' the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms through play.

Hierarchy of Basic Needs Common to Children

Indeed every human species has basic needs, which must be met for them to develop. The children are no exception. Some of the basic essential needs for children include warm, caring, and responsive adults; a sense of importance and significance; a way to relate to the world around them; opportunities to move and play; and teachers to help structure and support their learning. Abraham Maslow described the hierarchy of needs common to all human beings and especially children (theory of motivation), so as to ensure that the basic needs are met before children are able to focus on learning.

Physiological needs are hunger, thirst, and bodily comfort. The right nutrition and water, access to fresh air, and enough rest and exercise.

Safety needs are security and freedom from physical and emotional danger.

Belongingness is the sense of being comfortable with and connected to others that results from receiving acceptance, respect, and love.

Esteem is self-respect and respect from others. Esteem emerges from daily experiences that recognises children's effort, helps children see themselves as respectable, capable individuals.

Self - actualisation is achieving one's full potential, being creative and finding specialness in oneself

Therefore, the roles of a teacher is important here, to help children develop their full potential, and this can be achieved, when the teacher exhibits good knowledge and skills in child development, to realise positive outcomes for children.

Roles of Teachers in Meeting Children's Basic Needs

Many children come to school eager to learn. Some are well cared for at home and do not raise difficult questions about the roles of the teacher. But very many children exhibit this concern and make teachers feel helpless. Because, they have not been given the required support for learning, such as the stimulation needed for their brains to develop, or the opportunities to interact socially, play materials that would promote logical thinking, imagination, and multiple intelligences. The situations that have deprived or

harm the children both inside and outside the classroom may not be able to reverse by the ECCE teachers. However, teachers can make a difference through the creative approach (s) to learning.

The Creative teacher is expected to create a safety atmosphere for the children in the classroom. Equally, it is expected that strategies are deployed by the teacher in such that, the child feel emotionally secure, and having a sense of belonging. The teacher employs challenging activities and teaching strategies that are within children's reach. It also suggests giving children choices and a role in determining how, they will learn. These practices help children to feel competent, make decisions, and direct their own learning.

In specific terms, the early childhood teacher has many other duties that must be fulfilled to be successful in her role. The ECCE teacher is expected to:

- a. develop schedules and enforce routines
- b. maintain a safe and comfortable environment for teaching and learning
- c. provide age - appropriate supervision and discipline
- d. plan and implement lessons
- e. observe and communicate
- f. address cultural and special needs.

Summary

Early Childhood education is the foundation of child's development. Poor performance in the other levels of academic can be traced to this foundation level. So, a thorough knowledge of what and how education is being handled at this level is imperative by all stakeholders, especially the teachers. Hence, there is the need for a serious determination to identify, understand and implement (children's need) as teachers, the strategies that will necessarily enhance quality development of early childhood education in Nigeria.

Revision of Questions

1. What is Early Childhood Education (ECCE)?
2. list and explain the basic needs of children in Early Childhood Education (ECCE)
3. list and explain the roles of teachers in meeting the basic needs of children in early childhood education

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