EVALUATION OF TEACHING METHODS THAT EASE COMPREHENSION OF THE SUBJECT MATTER FOR PUPILS IN NURSERY AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN AKWA IBOM STATE

By

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated teaching methods that ease comprehension of subject matter for pupils in private nursery and primary schools. In carrying out the study, descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The study was carried out in Akwa Ibom State. The targeted population for the study comprised all teachers in private Nursery and Primary schools in Akwa Ibom State. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 60 teachers each from the three senatorial districts of the state which gave a total of 180 respondents used for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Comprehensive Teaching Methods for Pupils Questionnaire (CTMPQ)". Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by an expert in test, measurement, and evaluation in order to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, and completeness for the study under consideration. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.85, and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical technique such percentage analysis to answer research questions. The study concluded that effective teaching methods are crucial in early childhood education, shaping future academic success. The findings of the research revealed that among other teaching methods, 'hands-on learning' was the most prominent in easing children understanding of subject matters also, it was also observed from the results of the findings that the extent to which teaching methods ease children's understanding of subject matter was very high. One of the recommendations of the study was that teachers should utilise a variety of teaching methods, such as hands-on learning, visual aids, and storytelling, to address the different learning styles of pupils.

KEYWORDS: Teaching Methods, Comprehension, Subject Matter, Pupils, Nursery and Primary

School.

INTRODUCTION

Effective teaching methods are paramount in early childhood education, particularly in nursery and primary schools, where foundational learning experiences shape future academic success. The comprehension of subject matter at this stage is critical, as it influences children's cognitive development, learning habits, and overall attitude towards education. Hence, evaluating and implementing teaching methods that ease comprehension for young learners is essential. This evaluation not only enhances educational outcomes but also aligns with the pedagogical goals of early childhood education (Piaget, 1973; cited in Bati, 2022).

Recent studies emphasize the importance of adapting teaching methods to the developmental stages and individual needs of young children. In Nigeria, educational researchers like Adeyemo (2015) and Okebukola (2018) have highlighted the impact of child-centred and interactive teaching methods on improving comprehension among pupils. These methods, including hands-on learning, visual aids, and storytelling, are designed to engage children actively and make learning more relatable and enjoyable. Such approaches are particularly effective in addressing the diverse learning styles present in a typical classroom.

Hands-on learning, for example, allows children to interact directly with learning materials, fostering a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Studies by Adeyemo (2015) suggest that this method not only enhances cognitive skills but also improves retention and application of knowledge. Similarly, visual aids and multimedia tools cater to visual learners, making abstract concepts more tangible and easier to grasp. Mayer (2014) supports this by demonstrating how visual representations can significantly aid in comprehension and retention.

Storytelling, another powerful method, connects new information to familiar contexts, making it easier for children to understand and remember. According to Okebukola (2018), incorporating storytelling into the curriculum can enhance linguistic and cognitive skills, as it engages children's imaginations and emotions. Furthermore, cooperative learning, where pupils work in small groups to complete tasks, has been shown to improve comprehension through peer interaction and collaboration. Johnson and Johnson (1989) cited in Oxford (2016) noted that cooperative learning promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for young learners.

Differentiated instruction is also crucial in addressing the varying abilities and learning styles within a classroom. This method involves tailoring teaching strategies to meet individual needs, ensuring that all pupils have access to the curriculum at an appropriate level. Tomlinson (2001) and Nigerian scholars like Usman (2019) advocate for differentiated instruction as a means to enhance educational equity and effectiveness. By providing varied learning experiences, teachers can support each child's unique path to comprehension.

CONCEPT OF TEACHING METHODS

Teaching techniques, also known as teaching methods, are a collection of procedures and ideas that educators employ to help their students learn and teach in the most efficient way possible. Teaching methods can make or mar learning. According to Okono and Enang (2020) learning is an act of getting experience, knowledge, skills and values by understanding and synthesizing different types of information. Variety of strategies are employed as teaching

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approaches to assist pupils in meeting learning objectives. Instructional strategies aid students in learning the course material. The broad tenets, pedagogy, and management techniques applied in the classroom are known as teaching methods. A teacher's toolkit of ideas and techniques that help students learn is called a teaching method. The subject matter to be taught, the learners' respective levels of skill, and the limitations imposed by the learning environment all play a role in determining these tactics. A certain teaching strategy must consider the learner, the subject matter, and the kind of learning it is intended to facilitate in order to be effective and suitable. The teaching method is the mechanism that is used by the teacher to organise and implement a number of educational means and activities to achieve certain goals (Ismail, 2013).

According to Suaad and Hassan (2021), teaching methods are the methods and procedures for the planned and organised formation of teaching and learning. Furthermore, Ahmed (2005), cited in Al-Taai (2021), defined teaching methods as a system of conscious and purposeful actions in order to regulate the cognitive and practical activity of the student and secure his own acquisition of the educational content. Teaching strategies necessitate ongoing reciprocal influence between the instructor and the pupil. When creating a teaching strategy, the instructor plans the students' activities around the learning objective. This exercise provides the student with instructional content. The connection between teachers and students with the lesson's material and the accomplishment of its goals are facilitated by effective teaching methods. Teaching strategies are performance sets that educators employ to help students behave in anticipated ways. One element of the curriculum is teaching strategies. Teaching methods are methodical techniques or approaches that instructors use to transfer knowledge and support students' learning.

TYPES OF TEACHING METHODS

Teaching methods are varied and designed to suit different learning environments and student needs. Here are some key types of teaching methods:

- **Lecture-Based Learning:** A traditional teaching approach called lecture-based learning involves the teacher giving a monologue to a sizable class of students. This is an effective way to present a lot of information in a short amount of time. But it frequently lacks interactive features, and it might not be able to accommodate pupils with various learning preferences. (Shazia, Rabia, and Muhammad, 2021).
- **Inquiry-Based Learning:** Through inquiring, exploring, and studying, students actively participate in their own learning process through inquiry-based learning. This approach promotes analytical reasoning and problem-solving abilities. Research has indicated that this approach enhances comprehension and memorization of data. (Gholam, 2019).
- **Cooperative Learning:** In cooperative learning, students accomplish assignments as a group in small groups. This approach encourages communication, cooperation, and social contact. According to Gillies (2016), cooperative learning can enhance student engagement and academic achievement.
- **Flipped Classroom:** Through the use of videos and other non-traditional teaching materials, the flipped classroom approach subverts conventional teaching techniques. Afterwards, interactive exercises, conversations, and problem-solving take place throughout class time. This method allows for more personalised learning and has been found to improve student performance and satisfaction (Bishop & Verleger, 2019).

- **Differentiated Instruction:** Differentiated education is adjusting lesson plans and instructional resources to each student's unique set of demands. Depending on the preparedness, interests, and learning profiles of the students, this strategy may involve changing the material, procedures, goods, and learning settings. Tomlinson (2017) argues that differentiated instruction can support all students in reaching their full potential.

- **Blended Learning:** Blended learning is a flexible approach that can be tailored to meet the needs of diverse learners by combining traditional in-person training with online learning. Research indicates that blended learning can enhance student learning outcomes and provide more opportunities for personalised instruction (Graham, 2016).

- **Experiential Learning:** The focus of experiential learning is on learning from observation and experience. This approach include practical projects, simulations, and internships. Experiential learning helps students apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts and develop practical skills (Kolb, 2015).

- **Problem-Based Learning (PBL):** A student-centered method called "problem-based learning" teaches pupils by having them solve challenging, real-world situations. This approach encourages cooperation, self-directed learning, and critical thinking. According to Savery's (2015) research, PBL can help students become more adept at solving problems and retain information.

- **Project-Based Learning:** Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a dynamic teaching method where students gain knowledge and skills by working on long-term, multifaceted projects. These projects involve real-world challenges, encouraging deep exploration and critical thinking. PBL promotes collaboration, problem-solving, and application of interdisciplinary concepts. It allows students to take ownership of their learning, fostering creativity and independent research. Through PBL, students develop practical skills and a deeper understanding of subject matter.

- **Mentorship and Advanced Classes:** This method provide brilliant children with opportunities to learn from experts and engage in specialized coursework beyond the standard curriculum. Mentorship connects students with professionals who offer guidance, foster intellectual growth, and inspire future aspirations. Advanced classes challenge these students with more rigorous content, allowing them to explore subjects in greater depth and at an accelerated pace. This method supports their academic and personal development, ensuring they remain engaged and motivated. Overall, it nurtures their talents and prepares them for higher educational and career achievements.

- **Student Centric Approach:** This method focuses on tailoring education to meet individual learners' needs, interests, and abilities. It emphasizes active learning, critical thinking, and student engagement, allowing students to take ownership of their education. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding students through personalized learning experiences. This method promotes collaboration, self-paced learning, and the development of problem-solving skills. By prioritizing students' unique strengths and goals, the student-centric approach enhances motivation and academic success.

- **Montessori:** This teaching method emphasizes child-centered learning through hands-on activities and self-directed exploration. It fosters independence, creativity, and critical thinking by allowing children to choose their tasks within a structured

environment. The approach uses specially designed materials that cater to various developmental stages, promoting practical life skills, sensory development, and academic learning. Teachers act as guides, facilitating rather than directing learning, and encouraging collaborative and peaceful interactions. Montessori education aims to develop the whole child—academically, socially, emotionally, and physically.

TYPES OF TEACHING METHODS THAT EASE CHILDREN UNDERSTANDING

Teaching methods that cater to children's understanding are crucial for effective learning experiences. However, effective teaching methods are essential for facilitating children's understanding and promoting a positive learning experience. Applying these methods thoughtfully can enhance comprehension, retention, and engagement. Here are the various types teaching methods designed to ease understanding for children:

- **Hands-On Learning:** Hands-on learning involves activities where children directly interact with materials and manipulate objects to learn concepts. This method is particularly effective in early childhood education as it promotes sensory exploration and concrete understanding (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2016). The hands-on-learning teaching method combines activities that involve direct manipulation of materials. For example, in a science class, children can learn about plant biology by growing their own plants. In mathematics, using physical objects like blocks or beads to represent numbers can help children understand arithmetic concepts. Moreover, it also allows children to engage multiple senses, making abstract concepts more concrete and understandable (Bati, 2022).

- **Visual Aids and Multimedia:** Visual aids such as charts, diagrams, and multimedia presentations help children grasp abstract concepts more easily. These tools stimulate visual learning and can enhance retention of information (Mayer, 2014). Also, utilising visual aids such as diagrams, charts, videos and interactive whiteboards to complement verbal instructions aids in easing the children's understanding as the can display educational videos, animated explanations, and visual representations of complex ideas. Visual aids help children better retain information and understand complex concepts by providing visual context.

- **Storytelling:** Storytelling engages children's imaginations and emotions while conveying educational content through narrative structures. This method enhances comprehension by connecting abstract ideas to familiar contexts (Gambrell, 2011). As mentioned by Okono (2023) story telling or narration intrigues learning, as it arouses emotion, hence enabling learners to be attentive. Moreover, integrating storytelling into lessons makes the content relatable and memorable. For instance, teaching historical events through stories about characters' experiences can make history more engaging. In language arts, using stories to introduce new vocabulary can enhance language acquisition. Gambrell further explained that the storytelling teaching method also connects new information to existing knowledge, aiding memory retention and comprehension.

- **Games and Gamification:** Educational games and gamification techniques make learning fun and interactive for children. By incorporating game-like elements such as rewards and challenges, these methods motivate children to engage deeply with educational content (Pivec, Dziabenko, & Gütl, 2014). Furthermore, combining educational games and gamification elements into the curriculum also help in easing the children understanding. For example, using math games that require solving problems to

progress levels or language games that involve word puzzles can make learning fun and interactive. Games and gamification also increases motivation and engagement, encouraging active participation and reinforcing learning through play (Coleman & Money, 2020).

- **Cooperative Learning:** Cooperative learning encourages children to work together in small groups to achieve common learning goals. This method promotes peer interaction, collaboration, and shared problem-solving, which can enhance understanding through discussion and explanation (Gillies, 2016). Additionally, organizing students into small groups to work on projects or solve problems together and encouraging peer teaching, where students explain concepts to each other are the basic aim of the cooperative learning method. For example, in a science class, students can work in groups to conduct experiments and share their findings. The cooperative learning also boost collaboration, communication and social skills and also enhances understanding through peer interaction.

- **Differentiated Instruction:** Differentiated instruction tailors teaching methods and materials to accommodate children's diverse learning needs and preferences. By providing varied learning experiences, this approach ensures that all children can access and understand educational content effectively (Tomlinson, 2001; cited in Suwastini, Rinawati, Jayantini, & Dantes, 2021). Similarly, providing various learning materials and activities that cater to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners are the activities involved in this teaching method. For instance, offering reading materials at different levels of difficulty and the both written and oral instructions. Differentiated instruction also ensures that all students can access and engage with the curriculum, maximising individual learning potential (Tomlinson, 2014).

- **Project-Based Learning (PBL):** Project-Based Learning involves students working on complex, real-world projects over an extended period. This method encourages deep exploration of subjects, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. In a PBL setup, children are given a central question or challenge and must research, collaborate, and create a final product or presentation. For example, students might design a sustainable garden for their school, integrating science, math, and environmental studies. The hands-on nature of PBL helps children see the relevance of their studies and retain knowledge more effectively.

- **Mentorship and Advanced Classes:** Mentorship and advanced classes provide personalized guidance and challenge for gifted students. Mentorship involves pairing students with knowledgeable mentors who can provide insights, advice, and advanced knowledge in specific areas of interest. Advanced classes offer coursework that goes beyond the standard curriculum, allowing students to delve deeper into subjects they excel in or are passionate about. This approach ensures that advanced learners stay engaged and motivated by providing appropriate intellectual challenges and opportunities for growth.

- **Student-Centric Approach/Montessori:** The Montessori Method focuses on child-centered learning where students are encouraged to explore and learn at their own pace. Classrooms are designed with a variety of learning stations equipped with materials that cater to different developmental stages and learning styles. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding students in their individual learning journeys. This method emphasizes practical life skills, sensory development, and independent thinking. By

allowing children to choose their activities and providing a structured yet flexible environment, Montessori education nurtures intrinsic motivation and a love for learning.

TYPES OF TEACHING METHODS FOR TEACHING BRILLIANT CHILDREN

The following are teaching methods for brilliant children:

- **Student Centric Approach and Montessori:** In this approach, the students are seen as capable, individuals and the teachers act as a guide. The students are seen as capable, individuals and the teachers act as a guide. While the teachers do have a lot of authority, the students are given equal importance and they are taken into consideration. Continuous evaluation and assessments are done to understand the results and whether the goal has been achieved. In this approach, students bring their ideas and thoughts to the classroom. This teaching method is very effective for teaching brilliant children (Bordia, 2020).

- **Hands-On Learning:** Brilliant children thrive on engaging with practical activities that challenge their thinking. This method includes using experiments, building models, and conducting research projects that allow them to explore concepts in depth and apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios.

- **Visual Aids and Multimedia:** Advanced learners benefit from complex visual aids and multimedia resources that present information in a dynamic and detailed manner. High-quality documentaries, interactive simulations, and detailed diagrams can help them delve deeper into subjects and satisfy their curiosity.

- **Cooperative Learning:** Group projects and collaborative activities allow brilliant children to lead discussions, share insights, and learn from their peers. This method can help them develop social skills and gain diverse perspectives while working on complex, high-level tasks.

- **Differentiated Instruction:** Tailoring lessons to the advanced learning pace and interests of brilliant children ensures they remain challenged and engaged. This can include offering advanced coursework, independent study opportunities, and differentiated assignments that push them beyond standard curriculum.

- **Project-Based Learning:** Assigning long-term, multifaceted projects allows brilliant children to immerse themselves in complex topics. Projects that integrate various subjects and require extensive research, planning, and execution can provide the intellectual stimulation they need.

- **Mentorship and Advanced Classes:** Providing access to mentors or advanced classes can help brilliant children reach their full potential. Learning from experts and participating in advanced courses or extracurricular programs can offer them the specialized knowledge and challenges they seek.

- **Types of Teaching Methods to Teach Dull Children**
  - Teaching methods that can be effectively utilised for children who are slow learners include:

- **Visual Aids and Multimedia:** Visual aids like charts, diagrams, videos, and interactive multimedia presentations can significantly enhance comprehension. These tools help children visualise information, making it easier for them to remember and understand complex topics.

- **Storytelling:** Using stories to teach can capture children's attention and make learning more relatable. Storytelling can help explain difficult concepts in a simple and engaging manner, allowing children to learn through narrative and context.
- **Games and Gamification:** Incorporating educational games and gamified learning experiences can motivate and engage slow learners. Games can make learning fun and interactive, helping children practice skills in a low-pressure environment and encouraging participation.
    - Other teaching methods that can be used for teaching children who are slow learners include:
- **Repetition and Reinforcement:** Repeating information and concepts through various activities and exercises helps reinforce learning. Slow learners often benefit from revisiting material multiple times to build familiarity and confidence.
- **One-on-One Instruction:** Providing a dull student with attention through tutoring or personalised teaching sessions can address their learning challenges. This method allows teachers to focus on the unique needs of each child, offering customised support and guidance.
- **Positive Reinforcement and Encouragement:** Recognising and celebrating small achievements can boost the confidence and motivation of slow learners. Positive reinforcement helps create a supportive learning environment, encouraging children to persist and improve.

METHODOLOGY

In carrying out the study, descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The study was carried out in Akwa Ibom State. The targeted population for the study comprised all teachers in private Nursery and Primary schools in Akwa Ibom State. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 60 teachers each from the three senatorial districts of the state which gave a total of 180 respondents used for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Comprehensive Teaching Methods for Pupils Questionnaire (CTMPQ)". Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by an expert in test, measurement, and evaluation in order to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, and completeness for the study under consideration. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.85, and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical technique such percentage analysis to answer research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Question 1:
The research question sought to find out the type of teaching methods used to ease children understanding of the subject matter in private nursery and primary schools in Akwa Ibom State (see table 1).

Table 1:
Percentage analysis of the type of teaching methods used to ease children understanding of the subject matter in private nursery and primary schools in Akwa Ibom State

METHODS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Hands-On Learning	30	16.67**
Visual Aids and Multimedia	27	15
Story Telling	24	13.33
Games and Gamification	25	13.89
Cooperative Learning	19	10.56
Differentiated Instruction	16	8.89
Project-Based Learning (PBL)	14	7.78
Mentorship and Advanced Classes	12	6.67*
Student-Centric Approach/Montessori	13	7.22
TOTAL	180	100%

**   The highest percentage frequency
*   The least percentage frequency

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 1 presents the percentage analysis of the type of teaching methods used to ease children understanding of the subject matter in private nursery and primary schools in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the method tagged "Hands-On Learning" 30(16.67%) was rated as the most effective type of teaching methods used to ease children understanding of the subject matter in private nursery and primary schools in Akwa Ibom State, while "Mentorship and Advanced Classes" 12(6.67%) was rated as the least method. The result therefore is in agreement with the opinion of Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford (2016) who mentioned that hands-on learning method is particularly effective in early childhood education as it promotes sensory exploration and concrete understanding.

Research Question 2

The research question sought to find out the extent to which the teaching methods that eases children's understanding are used in private nursery and primary schools in Akwa Ibom State, (see table 2).

Table 2:
Percentage analysis of the extent to which the teaching methods that eases children's understanding are used in private nursery and primary schools in Akwa Ibom State

EXTENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Very High Extent	75	41.67**
High Extent	56	31.11
Low Extent	32	17.78
Very Low Extent	17	9.44*
TOTAL	180	100%

**   The highest percentage frequency

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*   The least percentage frequency

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 2 presents the percentage analysis of the extent to which the teaching methods that eases children's understanding are used in private nursery and primary schools in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage 75(41.67%) of the respondents affirmed that the extent is very high, while the least percentage 17(9.44%) of the respondents stated that the extent is very low. The result therefore is in agreement with the findings of Bati (2022) who emphasized on the importance of adapting teaching methods to the developmental stages and individual needs of young children.

CONCLUSION

Effective teaching methods are crucial in early childhood education, shaping future academic success. Comprehension at this stage influences children's cognitive development, learning habits, and overall attitude towards education. Evaluating and implementing methods that ease comprehension for young learners is essential. Research highlights the importance of adapting methods to developmental stages and individual needs. Child-centered approaches like hands-on learning, visual aids, and storytelling actively engage children, improving comprehension and retention. Differentiated instruction also addresses diverse abilities, ensuring educational equity. By employing these strategies, educators can create a supportive and effective learning environment for all pupils. The study also concluded that among other teaching methods, 'hands-on learning' was the most prominent in easing children understanding of subject matters also, it was also observed from the results of the findings that the extent to which teaching methods ease children's understanding of subject matter was very high.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should utilize a variety of teaching methods, such as hands-on learning, visual aids, and storytelling, to address the different learning styles of pupils. By integrating these methods into daily lessons, teachers can enhance comprehension and retention of subject matter, making learning more engaging and effective for all students.
- School management should ensure that teachers receive ongoing training in innovative and effective teaching strategies. This can include workshops, seminars, and access to educational resources that focus on methods proven to enhance comprehension. By investing in professional development, schools can equip teachers with the skills needed to address the diverse needs of their pupils.
- Teachers should tailor their teaching strategies to meet the individual needs and abilities of their pupils. Differentiated instruction involves providing varied learning activities and materials that cater to different levels of understanding and learning styles.

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