

## **MANAGING TEACHING APPROACH IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE EDUCATION TOWARDS SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study embarked on managing teaching approach in early childhood care education towards skill development in Nigeria. This study determined the relationship between learner-centered approach, active learning, higher-order thinking and skill development of early childhood care education learners in North-central zone, Nigeria. Quantitative research designed was used for this study. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 338 head teachers and 361 teachers making a total number of 699 participants in public primary school with early childhood care education centre. Data was collected using Managing Teaching Approach in Early Childhood Care Education and Skill Development Questionnaire (MTAECCESDQ). Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and linear regression analysis were used to analyze the data collected. The findings show that learner-centered approach, active learning and higher-order thinking were positively and significantly correlated with skill development. Therefore, it was recommended that head teacher should continue to encourage the teachers to make use of learner-centered approach so as to improve learners' retention of knowledge and promote personalized learning and development. Also, head teachers and teachers should continue to inspire learners to participate in active learning in order to improve their critical thinking. Furthermore, the teachers should continue to guide learners to develop effective higher-order thinking so as to develop flexibility in thinking and reasoning skills to achieve early childhood care educational goals and objectives in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** teaching approach, active learning, higher-order thinking, learner-centred approach, skill development

### **INTRODUCTION**

The roles of education in the skill development of learners cannot be overemphasized. Education is the bedrock of a country's economy and has become more important for developing the next generation of innovators and creative thinkers. Using the innovative curriculum to assist the learners about the importance of creative thinking as the concept is extensively more than mere learning but a passion for learning and thereby provides the learners with the tools needed in the innovation economy. A school curriculum generally is envisioned to provide learners with the knowledge and skills required to build a positive life. In recent time, there is a growing concern that school curriculum needs to be restructured and reexamined to meet the global innovation. The word innovation about the school curriculum has become extensive in educational policy across the world.

Early childhood care education is seen as the foundation and organized form of education from early age to six years. This level of education is known by several other names, these include creche, nursery, kindergarten and care of children from about three months old to about six years old. The purposes of this level of education is to ensure the effective transition from home to school; inculcate in the child the spirit of creativity through

game plays; develop the sense of cooperative learning as well as provide solid foundation in cognitive, motor development and language. This implies that early childhood care education targets the overall development of the child in terms of physical growth and health, socio-emotional development and personal care.

Numerous studies have been conducted on teaching approach and development. Amal (2016) treatise has a focus on the impact of brainstorming method on innovative thinking development in primary school. Yung, Wong and Cheng (2003) focused on the teaching approach of science subject on student teachers' development. Liliama and Andreia (2014) using content analysis and semi-structured interview of 102 teachers centre on the purpose of exploring an innovative curricular programme in teaching language. Tess and Renata (2010) studied how teaching approach can enhance the recognitions of final year students' career aspirations. Oden and Kankam (2013) investigated the needs of teaching approach on pedagogical and competencies of students in Cape Coast university, Ghana. Using 300 education students as a sample for collecting data. The data gathered were analyzed using Pearson's product moment correlation and analysis of variance. The result revealed that teaching approach has a positive impact on pedagogical competencies of students. Ajibola (2008) innovation and curriculum development for basic education in Nigeria. Lagat (2017) conducted a study on the appropriateness of teaching methodologies and life skill education curriculum in Uasin Gishu county, Kenya. The study used stratified sampling techniques to employed 290 teachers and 85 county education officers. Data collected were analyzed using qualitative data analysis. The study established that lack of adequate presentation for evaluation and homework as well as end-term examinations hindered the implantation of life skill education curriculum in public primary schools. There are several areas of teaching approach skill development that are yet to be covered by these scholars. These areas include managing teaching approach in early childhood care education towards skill development in Nigeria. In addition, to the researcher' knowledge, there have been no research in Nigeria so far that have looked at learner-centered approach, active learning and higher-order thinking as critical indices to measure teaching approach towards skill development. As such, this study attempts to fill the breaches left by the preceding scholars. The following objectives have been formulated to:

- i. Examine the relationship between learner-centered approach and skill development in North-central zone, Nigeria.
- ii. Investigate the relationship between active learning and skill development in North-central zone, Nigeria.
- iii. Determine the relationship between higher-order thinking and skill development in North-central zone, Nigeria.
- iv. Find out the relationship among learner-centered approach, active learning, higher-order thinking and skill development in North-central zone, Nigeria.

## **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested:

- i. There is no significant relationship between learner-centered approach and skill development.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between active learning and skill development

- iii. There is no significant relationship between higher-order thinking and skill development
- iv. There is no significant relationship between teaching approach and skill development.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Managing Teaching Approach**

Curriculum refers to a system of instruction and learning with specific contents, measurement, resources and strategies to meet the stated educational goals and objectives under the guidance of the school (Olajide, 2016). This implies that curriculum is seen as the lesson content offer by a school which includes all the different courses, subjects, skills, knowledge, values and learning objectives that need to be imparted in the learners. Omoniyi (2000) states that curriculum is an agreement among education stakeholders on what learners should be taught during precise periods of their lives in school. Curriculum is a set of planned activities designed to implement a specific educational objective and guided by the school (Reid, 2012). Among recent innovations in the early childhood care education system are the introduction of computer in classroom, project-based learning, learner-centered approach, active learning, game-based learning and many other methods are often considered innovative in teaching and learning. Teaching approach in this study refers to learner-centered approach, active learning and higher-order thinking.

Learner-centered approach is a way of shifting the focus of instruction from the teacher to the learners. This shift helps the learners to develop an improved understanding of the lesson. This approach puts learners' interest first by recognizing their needs as center to the learning process. Learner-centered approach enhances an active relationship between the learners and the teacher, instead of pushing content towards the learners where they are just passive listeners (Obiyemi & Yusuf, 2016). This implies that learners determine what operates in the class and learn to communicate, interact and collaborate with one another.

Active learning is a way by which the learners demonstrate learning process, analyze an argument, apply a concept to a real-world via the use of materials and collaboration with others (Markant, Rugger, Gureckis & Xu, 2016). Active learning as an instructional approach can include different forms of activities such as role-playing, social collaboration, jigsaw technique, game-based learning, flipped, guided imagery, work exploration of material and the likes (Chrities & De-Graaff, 2017). It is a way of shifting learning from a passive to active learning process (Medini, 2018). Active learning may involve projects with class participation where teaching material is exemplified through hand-on experiments in which learners participate directly (Kvam, 2000).

Higher-order thinking can be seen as a way by which learners use multifaceted ways to think about what they are learning in terms of analysis, evaluation and syntheses. This means that it requires the ability to reflect on self-beliefs and someone else's opinions, and then see the correlation between those ideas. Limbach and Waugh (2010) explained that for learners to develop higher-order thinking, there are five lessons that must take place, namely: determining the learning objectives, teach through inquiry, practice, review understanding and feedback. Higher-order thinking is considered very crucial to modern educational

concept and system. It enables learners to acquire the ability to speedily acclimate with the technological changes and its effect on the individual and society at large (Jarwan, 2007).

## **Managing Teaching Approach and Skill Development**

The curriculum of early childhood care education must promote the concept of all-round development of the child. Nowadays, the training of children for school and for life should take into account on not only academic skill but also cognitive development (higher-order thinking, addressing problematic situation cooperation), non-cognitive development (emotional stability, tolerance, discipline, team sprits and the likes) and technical skill (aesthetic & creative skill, motricity & other psychomotor domain).

Skill developments of early childhood learners are important factors in determining how effective a young child learns and prepared for primary school education. Skill development in this study refers to the growth of learners in terms of cognitive skill, non-cognitive skills and technical skills. Cognitive skills are the basic mental abilities of learners to think, learn and study (Tess & Renata, 2010). This implies the ability of the child to achieve basic knowledge, critical thinking and ability to read and write. Non-cognitive skills on the other hand are personality traits and character which includes emotional stability consciousness, openness to learning, discipline, motivation, confidence, communication, teamwork among others (Amal, 2016).

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study focuses on Erikson and Erikson (1997) theory of development as cited in Peedicayil (2012). The theory is generally called theory of personality development. Erik's theory postulated that every human being passes through different stages in life. He explained that the stages are general that individual is said to have passed. Erik propounded eight life stages as follow: stage 1- trust Vs.doubt (infancy); stage 2- Independence Vs. shame (early childhood); stage 3- resourcefulness Vs. guiltiness (preschool); stage 4- industry Vs. inferiority (school age); stage 5- identity Vs. confusion (adolescence); stage 6- closeness Vs. loneliness (young adulthood); stage 7- generativity Vs. stagnation (middle adulthood); stage 8- integrity Vs. despair (maturity). The first stage of Erik's theory occurs between birth and one year of age where infant develop trust based on the dependability and quality of the child's caregiver for everything, he or she needs to survive such as food, warmth, safety, and love. However, caregivers who are inconsistent or unavailable to perform properly or taking appropriate care of children under their care will result to fear and mistrust. The second stage take place during early childhood age of 1 to 3 years, during this stage, the child develops a greater sense of personal control by gaining a little independence, while those who do not are left with a sense of self-doubt or shame. The third stage occur during the age of 3 to 5 years (preschool). At this stage, the children begin to exercise their power and control over the world through play and social interactions. However, those who fail to attain these skills are left with a sense of guilt. Stage four takes place during the early school year from 5 to 11 years where children begin to develop a sense of pride among peers. Otherwise develop a sense of inferiority. Stage five occurs during the turbulent teenager year from appropriate age of 12 to 18 years where learners show proof of learning and identify their individuality (self-explored). However, if the values are imposed rather than chosen by the child herself, they

become confuse. Stage six is the ego of 18 to 35 years where human being mature to satisfy relationship primarily through marriage and friends. However, if these needs are not obtainable or satisfactory, distance and isolation from others may occur. Stage seven takes place between the age of 35 to 55 years. This is the stage to perpetuate culture and transmit value through the family and if the individual doesn't get through this stage effectively, he can be stagnant. Stage eight takes place from age 55 years to death. This stage is where individual fulfilled with deep sense of life by contributing positively to life. On the other hand, adult that failed to achieve positive way of live despair at his experience.

Therefore, the first three stages of Erikson's personality development can be applied in early childhood care education system where the children are in the loving hand of parents or caregivers to meet their needs which will make them build trust and confidence. Also, the stage of autonomy is a stage of child-centered approach where child begins to explore the world at will, opportunity to build self-esteem, acquire new skill, learning right from wrong through active learning as well as stage of initiative where child create playing situation, showing creativity and take responsibility through higher-order thinking. The researcher anchored on the Erikson's development theory such that it focuses on lifelong principle where the unfolding of an individual happens throughout the life development and the progress in early stages influence later stages.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

Quantitative research design was adopted in this study. The designed was considered suitable due to the fact it helps researcher to determine the correlation that exist between teaching approach and skill development. It also supports by allowing the researcher to get the view of the sample population, using appropriate data analysis to analyze the collected data and reach a cogent conclusion about the population from the findings of the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Dillman, Jolene & Leah, 2014).

### **Population and Sampling Techniques**

This study focused on public primary schools with early care childhood education in North-central zone, Nigeria. There are 2,667 public primary schools with early childhood care education and 5,529 teachers in the North-central zone. The target population of this study consisted of 2,667 head teachers and 5,529 teachers in North-central zone as at the time of study. Sample of 338 head teachers and 361 teachers were chosen with the use of Research Advisor (2006) table of determining sample size of a known population.

Sample of 338 head teachers and 361 teachers making a total number of 699 participants were selected proportionally across north-central zone, Nigeria. This involves getting the population of head teachers and teachers in each selected public primary school with early childhood care education in North-central zone and choosing the sample proportionally from these populations as shown in Table 1. Stratified random sampling technique was used to choose head teachers and teachers from the sample schools in order to

ensure that all categories of head teachers and teachers were given equivalent opportunity of being chosen.

**Table 1**  
*Population Sample*

S/N	North-central zone	Total number of schools with ECCE	Sample Head teachers	Total number of teachers in ECCE	Sample of teachers Selected
1	Kwara State	761	96	941	62
2	Benue State	252	32	446	29
3	Kogi State	574	73	1,167	76
4	Nasarawa State	164	21	861	56
5	Niger State	646	82	1,507	98
6	Plateau State	142	18	375	25
7	FCT	128	16	232	15
	Total	2,667	338	5,529	361

### **Instrument**

A self-constructed questionnaire titled “Managing Teaching Approach in Early Childhood Care Education and Skill Development Questionnaire (MTAECCESDQ) and adapted questionnaire were used as the instrument for this study. A total of 28 items were used to measure teaching approach with three sub-variables: learner-centered approach (12 items), active learning (10 items), and higher-order thinking (6 items). The items of questionnaire regarding skill development was concluded from Chynette (2005) on cognitive skills with (6 items), and non-cognitive skills with (6 items), Puspita and Aloysius (2019) on technical skills with (6 items). Participants responded to four Likert scale point as follow: 4 = Strongly Agree (SA), 3 = Agree (A), 2 = Disagree (D) and 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD). The norm mean is given accordingly:  $4 + 3 + 2 + 1 / 4 = 2.50$ . the norm mean portrays that any item that is above or equal to the norm mean value of 2.50 is interpreted as agreed while the value below the norm mean value is disagreed by the participants (Brown, 2000; Allen & Christopher, 2007) conclude that 4-point Likert scale answer format was easier and faster to complete than 5 to 7-point scales answer format.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Validity of the instrument was done by giving the draft copies of the instrument to two experts in measurement and evaluation and two experts in educational management to look into the accuracy and appropriateness of the instrument. Based on their observations and recommendations, relevant corrections and adjustment were made. Furthermore, 35 corrected copies were further administered to head teachers and teachers who are part of the sample to spot their clearness of the items of wording and instructions of the questions and scales so as to discover if there may be any challenges in filled the questionnaire. Thus, some recommendations made were corrected properly before sending the final copies. The reliability of the instrument was done with the use of Cronbach’s alpha as shown in Table 2 and the value for Cronbach’s alpha was for this study was proven to be tolerable and reliable.

Table 2 shows the result of the reliability test for MTAECESDQ for curriculum innovation, these are learner-centered approach, active learning and higher-order thinking. The Cronbach’s alpha value for learner centered approach is 0.82 covering up to 12 items, 0.84 for active learning with 10 items and 0.86 for higher-order thinking with 6 items. Also, on skill development variables, the Cronbach’s alpha value for sub-variables are 0.78 for cognitive skills, 0.82 for non-cognitive skills and 0.80 for technical skills. Values above 0.70 are considered tolerable and reliable (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009; Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010).

Table 2  
*Reliability Test for MTAECESDQ*

Variables	Sub-variables	N	Cronbach’s alpha	Decision
Teaching approach	Learner-centered approach	12	0.82	All items are tolerable and reliable
	Active learning	10	0.84	All items are tolerable and reliable
	Higher-order thinking	6	0.86	All items are tolerable and reliable
Skill development	Cognitive skills	6	0.78	All items are tolerable and reliable
	Non-cognitive skills	6	0.82	All items are tolerable and reliable
	Technical skills	6	0.80	All items are tolerable and reliable

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The participants were contacted in their respective offices to discuss the basis of the study before the administering of the questionnaire. The researcher with the support of two research assistants personally administered the questionnaire to the head teachers and teachers of the sample public primary schools with early childhood care education. Appropriate distribution of questionnaires was also aided with the cooperation of colleagues and friends in the sample schools. The questionnaires were administered to over 750 participants consisting of the selected head teachers and teachers in public primary schools with early childhood care education. After 2 weeks, all the filled questionnaires were recovered from the participants. However, a total of 708 questionnaires were returned and filled properly. therefore, the returned number meets the suggestion of Research Advisor (2006) with a number of 699 participants sample in this study. In the guideline provided by (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011), this study emphasized on ethical issues in guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality of participants responses.

### **Data Analysis**

The data gathered for the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation to determine the objectives of the study. Inferential statistics such as Pearson product moment correlation and linear multiple regression statistical analysis was used to test the hypotheses at (0.5) significance level to determine the acceptable or rejection or the hypotheses.

### **Demography Data of Participants**

This section presents complete demographic information of participants made from the data collected in this study using simple percentage.

Table 3 reveals the demographic information of the participants that are involved in this study. Majority 566 (81%) participants are female and 133 (19%) are male. Based on average age, majority 234 (33%) of the participants are between ages 31-40 years while 132 (19%) of the participants are ages 51 years above. In terms of qualification of participants, majority 488 (70%) are NCE holder while 10 (1%) are master degree holder. Majority 270 (39%) have 10-20 years' experience, while 212 participants (30%) have 11-20 years' experience in the sample public primary schools with early childhood care education.

Table 3  
*Demographic Profile of the Participants*

		N = 699	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	133	19%
	Female	566	81%
		699	100%
Average age	21-30	234	33%
	31-40	207	30%
	41-50	126	18%
	51 above	132	19%
		699	100%
Qualification	NCE	488	70%
	B.Ed.	201	29%
	M.Ed	10	1%
		699	100%
Years of experience.	1-10 years	270	39%
	10-20 years	212	30%
	21 years above	217	31%
		699	100%

## FINDINGS

This part discusses the result of the findings based on research objectives.

### **Objective 1: Examine the relationship between learner-centered approach and skill development in North-central zone.**

Table 4 presents the mean and standard deviation responses of head teachers and teachers on learner-centered approach in public primary schools in North-central zone, Nigeria.

The overall perception of the participants on learner-centered approach as shown in table is interpreted as "Agreed" ( $M = 2.89$ ,  $SD = 0.979$ ). This reveals that participants agreed that learner-centered approach improve skill development of early childhood care education learners in North-central zone, Nigeria. Also, all the responses obtained mean values higher than the norm mean value of 2.50. This shows that participants agreed that learner-centered approach i) improves learners' retention of knowledge ( $M = 2.80$ ,  $SD = 1.029$ ), ii) enhances personalized learning and development ( $M = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 0.964$ ), iii) improves collaborative learning ( $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = 0.972$ ), iv) enhances problem-solving and decision-making skills ( $M = 2.88$ ,  $SD = 0.992$ ), v) gives room for individual differences in learner learning styles ( $M = 2.96$ ,  $SD = 0.967$ ), vi) encourages learners' persistence in learning ( $M = 2.76$ ,  $SD = 1.028$ ), vii) increases learners' motivation to remain engaged in the learning process ( $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = 0.974$ ), viii) fosters



communication and social skills ( $M = 2.92, SD = 0.956$ ), ix) improves performance of learning in the classroom ( $M = 2.94, SD = 0.984$ ), x) greatly influences learners' interest in lesson ( $M = 2.90, SD = 0.964$ ), xi) learner-centered approach makes learning more fun ( $M = 2.98, SD = 0.931$ ), xii) develops learners' autonomy and independence ( $M = 2.87, SD = 0.992$ ).

**Table 4**  
*Mean and Standard Deviation of Items on Learner-centered Approach*

S/N	Learner-centered Approach	Participants Responses		
		Mean	SD	Decision
1	Learner-centered approach improves learners' retention of knowledge.	2.80	1.029	Agreed
2	Enhances personalized learning and development.	2.90	0.964	Agreed
3	Learner-centered approach improves collaborative learning.	2.93	0.972	Agreed
4	Enhances problem-solving and decision-making skills.	2.88	0.992	Agreed
5	Gives room for individual differences in learner learning styles.	2.96	0.967	Agreed
6	Encourages learners' persistence in learning.	2.76	1.028	Agreed
7	Increases learners' motivation to remain engaged in the learning process.	2.94	0.974	Agreed
8	Fosters communication and social skills.	2.92	0.956	Agreed
9	Improves performance of learning in the classroom.	2.94	0.984	Agreed
10	Greatly influences learners' interest in lesson.	2.90	0.964	Agreed
11	Learner-centered approach makes learning more fun.	2.98	0.931	Agreed
12	Develops learners' autonomy and independence.	2.87	0.992	Agreed
	Overall Mean	2.89	0.979	

(Mean 2.50 Agree, Mean < 2.50 Disagree)

**Objective 2: Investigate the relationship between active learning and skill development in north-central zone.**

Table 5 shows the analysis of the participants responses for the construct of active learning and skill development of early childhood care learners in North-central zone.

Table 5 revealed the overall perception of participants on active learning is interpreted as "Agreed" ( $M = 2.88, SD = 0.972$ ). This shows that participants agreed that active learning enhance skill development of learners in early childhood care education in North-central zone, Nigeria. In addition, all responses obtained mean values higher than the norm mean value of 2.50. This shows that participants agreed that active learning i) encourages critical thinking ( $M = 2.80, SD = 1.002$ ), ii) Helps learners on better understanding of their world ( $M = 2.93, SD = 0.964$ ), iii) encourages development of social skills ( $M = 2.78, SD = 1.032$ ), iv) encourages further learning ( $M = 2.91, SD = 0.959$ ), v) helps learners to develop life-long learning skills ( $M = 2.93, SD = 0.964$ ), vi) helps to evaluate evidence in learning ( $M = 2.80, SD = 0.956$ ), vii) helps learners to be imaginative and systematic in learning process ( $M = 2.88, SD = 1.002$ ), viii) increases learners' positive attitude to learning ( $M = 2.93, SD = 0.964$ ), ix) improves oral and written communication ( $M = 2.96, SD = 0.910$ ), x) helps learners to overcome some shyness ( $M = 2.88, SD = 0.972$ ).

**Table 5**  
*Mean and Standard Deviation of Items on Active Learning*

S/N	Active Learning	Participants Responses		Decision
		Mean	SD	
13	Active learning encourages critical thinking.	2.80	1.002	Agreed
14	Helps learners on better understanding of their world.	2.93	0.964	Agreed
15	Encourages development of social skills.	2.78	1.032	Agreed
16	Encourages further learning.	2.91	0.959	Agreed
17	Helps learners to develop life-long learning skills.	2.93	0.964	Agreed
18	Active learning helps to evaluate evidence in learning.	2.80	0.956	Agreed
19	Helps learners to be imaginative and systematic in learning process.	2.88	1.002	Agreed
20	Increases learners' positive attitude to learning.	2.93	0.964	Agreed
21	Improves oral and written communication.	2.96	0.910	Agreed
22	Helps learners to overcome some shyness.	2.88	0.962	Agreed
Overall Mean		2.88	0.972	

(Mean > 2.50 Agree, Mean < 2.50 Disagree)

**Objective 3: Determine the relationship between higher-order thinking and skill development in North-central zone.**

Table 6 revealed the analysis of the participants' responses for the construct of higher-order thinking and skill development.

Table 6 revealed the overall perception of participants on higher-order thinking is interpreted as "Agreed" (M = 2.94, SD = 0.966). this shown that participants agreed that higher-order thinking boost skill development of early childhood care education learners in North-central zone, Nigeria. Furthermore, all responses obtained mean values higher than the norm mean value of 2.50. this shows that participants agreed that higher-order thinking i) develops flexibility in thinking and reasoning skills (M = 2.97, SD = 0.977), ii) helps learners to generate confidence and self-esteem (M = 2.99, SD = 0.922), iii) offers opportunities to highlight the cognitive aspects of practical work (M = 2.85, SD = 1.018), iv) helps learners to develop habit of effective learning (M = 2.90, SD = 0.985), v) helps to bring resilient in the face of challenges (M = 3.02, SD = 0.926), vi) helps learners to be inventive, creative and entrepreneurial (M = 2.91, SD = 0.968).

**Table 6**  
*Mean and Standard Deviation on Higher-order Thinking*

S/N	Higher-order Thinking	Participants Responses		Decision
		Mean	SD	
23	Develops flexibility in thinking and reasoning skills.	2.97	0.977	Agreed
24	Helps learners to generate confidence and self-esteem.	2.99	0.922	Agreed
25	Offers opportunities to highlight the cognitive aspects of practical work.	2.85	1.018	Agreed
26	Helps learners to develop habit of effective learning.	2.90	0.985	Agreed
27	Higher-order thinking helps to bring resilient in the face of challenges.	3.02	0.926	Agreed
28	Helps learners to be inventive, creative and entrepreneurial.	2.91	0.968	Agreed
Overall Mean		2.94	0.966	

(Mean > 2.50 Agree, Mean < 2.50 Disagree).

## Hypotheses Testing

Pearson product moment correlation coefficient statistic was used in this study to test the set hypotheses as follow:

***H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between learner-centered approach and skill development.***

Table 7 reveals that learner-centered approach has a significant and positive relationship with skill development of learners in early childhood care education with calculated r-value = .830;  $p < .000$ . This shows that there is a significant relationship between learner-centered approach and skill development of early childhood care education learners in North-central zone, Nigeria. Thus, the hypothesis which state that there is no significant relationship between learner-centered approach and skill development is rejected (Creswell, 2015).

Table 7  
*Correlational Analysis for Learner-Centered Approach and Skill Development*

		Learner-centered Approach	Skill Development
Learner-centered Approach	Pearson Correlation	1	.830**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		.000
	N	699	699
Skill Development	Pearson Correlation	.830**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	699	699

***H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between active learning and skill development.***

Table 8 shows that active learning has a significant and positive relationship with skill development of learners in early childhood care education with calculated r-value = .923;  $p < .000$ . This reveals that there is a significant relationship between active learning and skill development of early childhood care education learners in North-central zone, Nigeria. Thus, the hypothesis which state that there is no significant relationship between active learning and skill development is rejected (Orodho, 2009).

Table 8  
*Correlational Analysis for Active Learning and Skill Development*

		Active Learning	Skill Development
Active Learning	Pearson Correlation	1	.923
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		.000
	N	699	699
Skill Development	Pearson Correlation	.923	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	699	699

***H<sub>0</sub>*: There is no significant relationship between higher-order thinking and skill development.**

Table 9 indicates that higher-order thinking has a significant and positive relationship with skill development of learners in early childhood care education with calculated r-value = .902;  $p < .000$ . This shows that there is a significant relationship between higher-order thinking and skill development of early childhood care education learners in North-central zone, Nigeria. Therefore, the hypothesis which state that there is no significant relationship between higher-order thinking and skill development is rejected (Patton, 2001).

*Linear Regression Analysis*

Table 9  
*Correlational Analysis for Higher-order Thinking and Skill Development*

		Higher-order Thinking	Skill Development
Higher-order Thinking	Pearson Correlation	1	.902**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		.000
	N	699	699
Skill Development	Pearson Correlation	.902**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	699	699

**Objective 4: To find out the relationship among learner-centered approach, active learning, higher-order thinking and skill development in North-central zone, Nigeria.**

This presents the linear regression finding that measured the relationship between teaching approach and skill development of early childhood care education learners in North-central zone, Nigeria.

Table 10 reveals that teaching approach has significant effect on skill development with .706 of R square value from the table. Thus, the result revealed that teaching approach could have positive impact on skill development.

Table 10  
*Linear Regression of Teaching approach and Skill Development*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.116	0.706	0.604	0,586

a. Predictors: (constant), Learner-centered approach, Active learning and Higher-order thinking

According to Table 11, the standard regression weight of the beta coefficients value for teaching approach was 1.040 which shows that improve in teaching approach bring about skill development in early childhood care education learners. Furthermore, revealed that teaching approach and skill development were absolutely related. T-test of 8.521 was sufficiently high with corresponding p-value of 0.000. Therefore, in comparison, learner-centered approach has the highest impact (Beta=0.502) follow by active learning (Beta=0.121) and higher-order thinking (Beta=065). In summary, there is significant and perfect relationship among teaching approach in terms of learner-centered approach, active learning, higher-order thinking and skill development.

**Table 11**  
*Linear Regression Coefficient for Teaching approach and Skill Development*

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	1.040	0.223		8.521	0.000
Learner-centered Approach	0.504	0.244	0.502	1.447	0.112
Active Learning	0.142	0.188	0.121	0.708	0.104
Higher-order Thinking	0.138	0.238	0.065	0.606	0.542

a. Dependent Variable: Skill Development

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

The findings in table 4 shows that learner-centered approach improve skill development of early childhood care education learners in North-central zone, Nigeria. Results from hypothesis one revealed that there is significant and positive relationship between learner-centered approach and skill development in North-central zone, Nigeria. The finding concurs with Westbrook, Durrani, Brown, Orr, Pryor, Boddy and Salvi (2013) that learner-centered approach is more effective than traditional or teacher-centered approach in teaching. The finding is in line with Obiyemi and Yusuf (2016) that learner-centered approach provides learners with some additional flexibility that improved their possibilities to learn. The finding conforms to Dano-Hinosolango and Vedula-Dinagsao (2014) that learner-centered approach contributed positively to learners' learning skills. This finding agreed with Juanita and Michael (2016) that teaching approach enhanced self-efficacy of learners for class performance and skilled.

The findings in Table 5 show that active learning enhances skill development of early childhood care education learners in North-central zone, Nigeria. Results from hypothesis two reveals that there is significant and perfect relationship between active learning and skill development. This finding is germane to Chrities and De-Graaff (2017) that active learning designed to get learners to thick about what they are doing through meaningful learning activities. This finding also agreed with Abdullahi and Tijani (2019) that active learning increase the transparency of learners' progress and allow teachers to more easily monitor and adapt to learners. This finding is in line with Chynette (2005) that active learning provides learners an opportunity to develop soft skills and other skills required for productive performance. This finding is in line with Murunga (2018) that learners whose teachers employed a variety of the approaches were more active and responded better to classroom activities.

The findings in table 6 shows that higher-order thinking boost early childhood care education learners' skill development in North-central zone, Nigeria. Results from hypothesis three shows that there is significant relationship between higher-order thinking and skill development. This finding agreed with Puspita and Aloysius (2019) that higher-order thinking increases learner skills in term of analyzing, evaluating, interpreting and conceptualizing. The finding conforms to Jarwan (2007) that higher-order thinking provides

learners with the opportunity to show their feelings, emotions as well as develop their personalities.

The finding of regression analysis revealed that there is a positive relationship between teaching approach and skill development of learners in early childhood care education in North-central zone, Nigeria. This finding conforms to Tess and Renata (2010) that innovative curriculum assists learners to build realistic career goals for the immediate future. Similarly, this finding agreed with Lavy (2011) that analytical and critical skills have significant effect on learners' achievement. However, this finding disagreed with Haeck, Lefebvre and Merrigan (2014) that project problem-based and self-directed learning reduced learner's achievement in the classroom.

The findings of this study will help the government and head teachers to develop curriculum that will holistically enrich children's skills, knowledge, social and emotional capacities as well as intellectual and practical understanding. Also, this finding will be of benefit to teachers to create a positive climate for learning in order to achieve the stated educational goals and objectives. Furthermore, this finding would serve as a reference point for future researchers in the field of education.

Head teachers should continue to encourage teacher to make use of learner-centered approach so as to improves learners' retention of knowledge, enhances personalized learning and development, improves collaborative learning, enhances problem-solving and decision-making skills, gives room for individual differences in learner learning styles, encourages learners' persistence in learning, increases learners' motivation to remain engaged in the learning process, fosters communication and social skills, improves performance of learning in the classroom, greatly influences learners' interest in lesson, makes learning more fun as well as develops learners' autonomy and independence. Also, head teachers and teachers should continue to inspire learners to participate in active learning in order to improve their critical thinking, helps learners to better understanding of their world, encourages learners development of social skills, encourages further learning, helps learners to develop life-long learning skills, helps to evaluate evidence in learning, helps learners to be imaginative and systematic in learning process, increases learners' positive attitude to learning, improves oral and written communication as well as helps learners to overcome some shyness. Furthermore, teachers should continue to guide learners to develop effective higher-order thinking so as to develops flexibility in thinking and reasoning skills, helps learners to generate confidence and self-esteem, offers opportunities to highlight the cognitive aspects of practical work, helps learners to develop habit of effective learning, helps to bring resilient in the face of challenges as well as helps learners to be inventive, creative and entrepreneurial. In addition, teaching approach is a perfect way of improving learners' skill development for self-directed learning, active learning and higher-order thinking in to achieve early childhood care educational goals and objectives.

## **CONCLUSION**

Teaching approach as an importance measure for appropriate skill development of learners toward achieves early childhood care educational goals. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concluded that there was positive relationship between the three variable of teaching approach (learner-centered approach, active learning & higher-order thinking) and skill development as they were found to be correlate one another.

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