

Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory: As a Tool for Promoting Early Childhood Education in Nigeria

Baba Umar Abubakar

School of Vocational and Technical Education, Department of Education, Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic, Bauchi.

Abstract

The paper discusses Erikson's psychosocial theory and the implications for promoting early child education in Nigeria. The Federal Government of Nigeria, based on its concern for the education for Nigeria children, has given recognition in the National Policy on Education for the provision of early child education in the country. The paper examines the concepts education and early child education. Even though, different psychologist authorities/scholars in psychology have propounded theories in the stages of early childhood development and its significance to learning. Based on this the first four stages of Erikson's psychosocial theory early childhood have been examined. Emphasis of the paper is to the first four stages of early childhood development, because early child education centered and captured on the four stages of human development. The implications of the four stages in promoting early care and education has also been discussed. Promoting early childhood education will lay a solid foundation for the children. Therefore, conclusion and recommendations has been made.

Keywords: Early Child Education, Education.

Introduction

The early stages in human life is significant and cannot be overstressed to the formation and development of intelligence/mental activities, personality, social and emotional behaviour and character attributes of a child. A child, therefore is a human being between the stages of birth and puberty (Nongun, 2011). It thus, a young human being who is not yet an adult. The early years of a child is very vital and most crucial stage of life to learning and in education at large.

The concept education according to Onwuanaman and Ogunsanni (2007) in essence is a lifelong process through which an individual or the child acquires relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes which assist him/her to be useful to himself/herself, parents and the society in general. Furthermore, education is commonly seen as a process that foster and promote in the child desirable right changes in behaviour and attitudes. Early childhood education as in the National Policy of Education (2004) document is the type of education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering primary school level of the nation's educational institutions which include Nursery School, Kindergarten, Day care/Children Care Centre and Play group among others.

Early child education programmes is mainly focus to prepare children at the age of 3 – 5 years for formal education for primary schools. The pre-school stage of teaching and learning is a critical and vital stage to lay strong foundations for rapid physical, cognitive

and psychosocial growth and development of the child. (Sooter; 2013). It is a process for citizenship training and provision of quality education to children.

The paper will examine the concept education and early childhood education. The paper also discusses Erikson's psychosocial theory and the implications in promoting early childhood care and education in Nigeria.

Materials and Methods

This paper used qualitative data purely and were extracted from secondary sources which comprised of journal articles, thesis, textbooks and other statutory documents. The methodology conducted on this study is the critical analysis of existing literature for an accurate understanding of Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory as a tool for promoting early childhood education in Nigeria. Therefore, 130 documented materials were consulted. However, the most critically analyses journal articles were 10, which were consulted in order to come up with the conceptual framework of the study.

Literature

The Conceptual Framework

Education

The term 'education' has many definitions by different people as there are different authorities who have defined. To many people the concept education refers to as the process of training or upbringing and also sending children to School in a formal way. According to Omede (2015), education is a means of passing on to the child all that is required to make him or her fit well into the society.

Education, therefore, broadly in the context of the contemporary society and in the world of technology, is for national survival, an institution set by a society for its own development and continuity. Education thus, is the best tool that can provide the child with required knowledge, skills and character to fulfil his/her basic societal responsibilities (Onwuamanam and Ogunsanmi; 2007). Furthermore, education, can set one free from ignorance, backwardness, poverty and give the child/individual the ability to think, reason, understand, imitate and plan in order to become autonomous and self-reliance. Moreso, education is the greatest asset of any society to its citizens. It is indeed, the most important weapon for combating illiteracy and ignorance and under development alongside with all negative effects that brings societal setbacks in socio-economic, technological and political development.

Education, is explained as a process whereby the society through the schools, colleges, polytechnics, universities and institutions transmit in the child cultural heritage, values and knowledge, skills and character from one generation to another (Nongum; 2011).

In essence, the concept of education can be seen and explained as a cumulative process of the child development intellectual abilities, skills and acceptable character which forms all personality dispositions in life for the child proper function in adult life.

Early Childhood Education

Like other education concepts, the term “Early Childhood Education” has been viewed and explained in different perceptions by different people. The concept, it defines to mean as a semi-formal educational learning usually outside the home environment, whereby children from the age of 3 – 5 years exposed to play type of learning activities. The learning process is aim at the development of the children mental, social and physical learning relevant to their developmental age. (Nongun; 2011, Sooter; 2013).

According to Sooter (2013), Early child education, is the type of formal education set for children which are exposed to learning activities mean for physical, social, emotional, mental/psychological development or a preparatory stage, for primary level of educational institutions. The Early child education is centered on the philosophy of nurturing the children in order to meet their future physical, psychological/mental and social needs. Tor-Anyiin, (2008) posits that Early child education is the education that is offered to children who have not reached the age of 6 years for primary education level.

Early child education, offer more opportunities for children to learn through play activities, more stimulating learning environment is provided for the children. the purpose of Early child education as contained the National Policy on Education (2004) include:

1. To provide smooth transition from the home to school settings.
2. Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are not work such as forms, in the markets, offices among others.
3. To inculcate social norms, the spirit of inquiry and creativity in the child through exploitation of nature, the environment, art, music, playing with toys among others.
4. To develop in the children, sense of cooperation and team work spirit, learn good habits most specifically the habits of good health.
5. To teach the children the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms and learning through play activities.

In Nigeria, today in view of the increasing demands for early child education, most Colleges of Education and the Universities use Early child education as laboratory to prepare early childhood teachers and to conduct researchers (Onwuamanam and Ogunsanmi, 2007). The children are taught self-caring skills and intellectual learning with more emphasis placed on the children expression and practical demonstration of creativity, and above all, with great concern for caring skills as well as educating children.

The Theoretical Framework

Erick Eriskson's Psychosocial Theory

Many psychologists like Erik Erikson have in their various theories shown that early childhood experiences are vital and crucial in social development, with specific emphasis to psychosocial development.

Children according Erikson grow not only physically and mentally, but rather also socially and emotionally. Erik Erikson in (1963, 1968) believed that personality develops through confronting series of eight major psychosocial stages throughout an individual life. Erikson

further holds that each child displays a unique distinctive consistent pattern of thinking, feeling and behaving during the four stages of early childhood of development.

1. Basic Trust Versus Basic Mistrust (First year)

At this stage life depend completely and totally to their parents and the care givers. Erikson believed that the child at this stage, need, amount of love, received and the attention given, will largely determine whether to develop trust and mistrust to other people and world.

2. Autonomy and Shame and Doubt (1-2 years)

According Erik Erikson, during the first two years, children become ready to exercise their individuality from parents. Based on the theory, harsh demands during toilet training, children develop shame and doubt about their abilities to be independent in later life.

3. Initiative Versus Guilt (3 – 5 years)

Erikson believed that during stage of age from 3 – 5 years, children display great curiosity about the world. Consequently, if they are allowed freedom to explore to receive answers to their questions. They will develop sense of initiatives, but if they are punished, children tend to develop guilt about their desires and this great affect their curiosity in life, future character and personality.

4. Industry Versus Inferiority (6 – 12 years)

At the age of six years, Erikson believed that, the child's life begins to expand into school and increase their mental activities. According Erikson, children who experience pride and encourage in mastering a given task either by parents, caregivers and teachers develop industry and striving to attain greater given task. Furthermore, but lack of praise by parents, teachers and caregivers to the child for a given task or repeated failure lead children to develop sense of inferiority in later life and eventual abnormal personality development.

Implications of Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory on Early Child Education

Sigmund Freud (1933, 1964) in the theory of psychoanalytic, believed that the first five early years of a child is very important in personality development. if the appropriate gratification or the needs of the individual is not met and achieved, the individual will become fixated at this stage.

The first four stages of Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory are found to relevant, suitable and has the following implications to Early child education. It is vital to stress that, children at the Early childhood age, engage themselves with other activities most particularly play and with the same sex relationships, and peer groups. Erikson's view in the theory, revealed that establishing a stable, trusting relationship with caregivers is an important component of early social development in early child education. The implications of the theory are explained below.

1. Parental and caregivers love and caring to child needs

The theory indicated that where the child is shown parental love, caring and when his/her needs are met at the early years, the child tends to develop sense of trust. However, deprivations and lack of parental care leads to various abnormalities like mistrust, selfishness and consequently affects academic achievement and social adjustment in later schools.

2. Development of social learning through imitation and modeling

Children at the early years of development learn social skills and attitudes through what they see, touch and observe from their social environment. Children should be exposed to social interaction by observation, imitation or modeling of skills.

3. Children learn through play activities

The child at the early childhood stage, takes interest in play activities and to master specific skills. The games/play activities should relate to running, washing, reading, writing among others. If these activities are appreciated and praised by caregivers, parents and teachers the children can develop in industry and enhance academic attainment of the child in schools.

4. Teachers and caregivers should demonstrate child/learner friendly classroom environment

The teachers and caregivers are social agent saddle with the responsibility of transmitting acceptable values, and norms to children. children learn better and more effective when the classroom and school environment is favourable for learning. Teachers must develop concern, interest and the spirit of caring to children needs and welfare, they handle and entrusted to each other.

5. Provide attractive aesthetic child friendly classrooms environment

The beautification of classrooms and social environment with different pictures, letters, colours, shapes, real objects facilitate practical acquisition of knowledge, skills and character formation through learning. Early child education will become socially interactive and meaningful using the rich classroom and social environment for learning.

Early childhood education provides a secure and learning environment in which children develop life social skills. children, therefore require more stimulation and rich learning opportunities beyond the competency and scope of their parents and the caregivers. Furthermore, the child learns to develop social interaction and relationship between parents, teachers and the caregivers, and between the school and the home which are reciprocal and supportive, thus, provide orderly mainstreaming to primary school level of learning.

Conclusion

Provide Early child education to Nigeria children will improve, promote and sustain quantity education in the national's educational system. Early child education, thus far, should be based on child-centered, interactive and friendly participatory learning system. More so, it promotes child-safety and friendly classroom and school environment.

Early child education therefore, in the nation's educational system is crucial and important for the parents to be able to train and provide quality education for children adequately. Teamwork and cooperation approach are vital to be adopted between the home and school in educating the child. By its nature and dimensions, early child education requires orderly and organization of daily routine play activities and high level of commitments to teaching and learning.

Early child education by its goals maintains and promote quality learning, quality education, increase children future academic attainment, in an effort to train and prepare and equip children with required knowledge, skills and sound character for effective participation in the family and society at large.

Recommendations

To promote quality learning and education for Nigerian children, the need for conducive and friendly Early child education and Dare care centers cannot be ignored or questioned in the nation's educational system. Based on this, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Proprietors, organizations and individuals in charge of Early childhood care and education should provide conducive physical structures. Such as classrooms, administrative blocks, beautification of the school with flowers and trees and the general layout of the centers.
2. The Government at all levels should enforce law for the establishment of Early child care and Education to ensure adherence to standard and provision of quality education for Nigerian children.
3. The Ministry of Education and Local Government Education Authorities (LGEA) should ensure regular supervision and monitoring with a view to maintain standard with stiff penalties for offenders.
4. The Universities, Institute of Education and Colleges of Education should ensure that mounting of courses and programmes in training of early child education teachers and training of caregivers for handling day care centers.
5. Teachers and caregivers for Early childhood education should be friendly, caring and demonstrate the spirit of love in provision of children welfare and needs in the center. the teachers and caregivers be role model to the children for meaningful and effective teaching and learning.

References

Erikson, E.H. (1963) *Eight Ages of Man in Childhood and Society* (2nd ed.) New York: Norton.

- Nongun, P.A. (2011). Principles and Practices of Child Development Upbringing. Makurdi: Selfers Academic Press Ltd.
- National Policy on Education (2004). The Federal Government of Nigeria.
- Passen, M.W. & Smith, R.E. (2001). Psychology Frontiers and Applications. New York. McGraw-Hill Companies
- Omede, J. (2015) Private Participation in Education: Some Issues that matter; Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences. 3(1) 101 – 109
- Onwuamanam, O.Y. & Ogunsanmi (2007). Gender Imbalance on Primary School Environment in Ekiti State. Implications for Counselling: Conference paper presented at the 31st CASSON Conference, Covenant University, Otta. 17th August. 2007
- Sooter, T. (2013). Early Childhood Education in Nigeria: Issues and Problems. Journal of Educational and Social Research. 3 (5) 173 0 178
- Tor-Anyiin, S.A. (2008). Origin, Growth and Development of Pre-Primary and Primary Education in Nigeria. Makurdi-Selfer Academic Press. Ltd.