Dynamics of learning among pre-primary school learners in Uyo Senatorial District, Nigeria: An exploration of formal and informal education processes

By

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled 'Dynamics of learning among pre-primary schools learners in Uyo Senatorial District, Nigeria: An exploration of formal and informal education processes' is my own original and creative work. It has not been presented in any other publication for a higher degree. All sources of information are specifically acknowledged using references.

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Date: 15TH JULY 2019

CERTIFICATION

I certify that this thesis 'Dynamics of learning among pre-primary school learners in Uyo Senatorial District,Nigeria: An exploration of formal and informal education processes' is the original work by Arit Okonobong Atakpa with student number 214585516 in the Department of Early Childhood Development (ECD) under my supervision.

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Dr. Bonakele Y. Mhlongo

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God who has been my hope and stay.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Abstract

The concept 'Early Childhood Education' (ECE) or pre-primary education as it known in Nigeria is referred to as Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in the Republic of China. It is also called Early Childhood Development in Tanzania and South Africa. In the United States of America, this phase of education is known as ECE. In spite of the many different names given to this level of education by different countries, this is the kind of education which children between the ages of three and five receive. Therefore, the focus of this study was to explore the dynamics that surround the way pre-primary school learners learn in formal and informal education settings. In specific terms, the purpose of this study was to provide an in-depth description on the forces that impact learning of young children between the ages of three and five both at school and home. By engaging in research into the learning among pre-primary school learners, I shed some light on the dynamics that impact ways in which children learn both at school and home.

In the light of the above this study therefore seeks to achieve the following objectives: to examine the language pre-primary school learners adopt for learning; to examine the impact of language on pre-primary school learners' learning; and to understand the dynamics that surround the way pre-primary school learners learn in formal and informal education settings. Based on the research objectives stated above, three key research questions were developed to guide the study. The questions are: what language do pre-primary school learners adopt for learning? How does language impact pre-primary school learners' learning? What are the dynamics that surround the way pre-primary school learners learn in formal and informal education settings?

Based on the nature of the study which bordered on the social phenomena, a qualitative approach was adopted. In line with this approach, an interpretive paradigm was adopted in order to make sense of and to have an in-depth understanding of the dynamics that surround ways in which pre-primary school learners learn in formal and informal education settings. Individual and focus group interviews were designed and administered to 15 teachers and 8 parents from three schools. The transcribed data was subjected to an open coding and the emerging themes were subjected to thematic analysis.

From the findings, it was discovered that the language of the immediate community, the mother and English language were the languages used in the teaching of the children in formal and informal settings. In line with the second question, it was indicated that identification, presentation, discussion of objects, development of literacy skills, and promoting communication had a possible impact on language in pre-primary school learners' learning. In addition, the dynamics that influenced ways children learned were through playing, imitation, story-telling and folktales, and drawing enhanced by children's readiness to learn, children's willingness to learn, children's maturity, availability of instructional resources, and parents'/teachers' attitude towards children .

One of the recommendations was that children who come from ethnic group different from where the school is located, and who want to attend pre-primary school in area, should first and foremost, be subjected to six months training in the language of immediate community or mother tongue and that subjecting the children to six months language familiarisation will assist them to adjust immediately in the class as well as ensuring uniformity of language in the classroom.

KEY WORDS: Language, pre-primary school, learners' learning, children, formal and informal education settings, dynamics, Uyo Senatorial District, Nigeria

LIST OF ACRONYMS

DECE - Department of Early Childhood Education

ECD - Early Childhood Development

EI - Education International

EFA -Education for All

NPE - National Policy on Education

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

UBE - Universal Basic Education

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNCEF - United Nations Children's Emergency Fund

ZPD - Zone of proximal development

What about ECE - Early Childhood Education

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<center>**Chapter one**</center>

<center>**Introduction**</center>

1.1   Background to the study

Pre-school learning is globally acknowledged as a learning process that prepares children for inclusive human development. The dynamic of the preschool learning is a process that helps to cater for the learning needs of children towards their cognitive, physical, emotional and social development. Specifically in Nigeria and Africa to a large extent, preschool learning is sine qua non for effective adaptation of pupils during their school age compared to others who were not opportune to attend such learning situations. Effiong, Obushi and Adebola (2017) acknowledge that during preschool stage of development, children devote special attention to social situations that are likely to represent learning opportunities because adults communicate their intension through interactions and songs as techniques in teaching them something.

It is observed that when adults make eye contact, call a child's name, and point for the baby's benefit, these signals lead children to recognise that someone is teaching them, and this awareness can affect how and what they learn. These active manipulative activities during learning situation are capable of promoting social, attitudinal and affective predisposition for children to achieve independence, self-motivation and creativity to enhance positive self-esteem as well as effective learning gains among preschoolers (Effiong & Akpan, 2017). Thus, it tends to make the preschoolers more competent in pursuing deliberate approaches to learning with trial and error technique as informal experimentation for the development of motor skills.

The dynamics of learning is a concept that is all-encompassing. It involves the pupils' activities in learning, parents or caregivers' roles at home and teachers' role in school learning environment. The activities of parents and teachers tend to support the dynamics of learning because they provide direction for the children to emerge as effective learners. It is

<center>1</center>

postulated that the dynamics of learning practice could provide the educators the opportunity to teach children in a way that can make them aware of their cognitive progress at preschool stage of life (Effiong, Obushi & Adebola, 2017). Teachers in this perspective can involve their deliberately attempt to enlist the child's existing knowledge and skills in new learning opportunities that may make them a complete learning organism.

Thus, Effiong, Obushi and Adebola (2017) establish that children who are coping with the dynamics of learning may have the opportunity to develop effective language and comprehension skills through activities that teach sequencing, rhyming, classification, synonyms and antonyms, while cutting, pasting, drawing, colouring and tracing help important pre-writing skills development. The authors articulate that these children would acquire effectiveness in language and numeracy through leaning important subjects such as English, Mathematics, Art, and Basic Science. These activities are capable of determining the quality of early education children acquires due to the standardisation of curriculum, learning environment and the teachers used as opposed to the informal setting without such considerations.

Although, in informal setting of preschools learning, children are well fed, safe and clean as it is done in the preschool formal education environment. But sometimes the determination of the level and quality of learning engagement in age-appropriate activities may be difficult to ascertain. Even when they are using similar curricula, which can provide a guiding philosophy for program activities with teacher interactions and the design of the physical indoor and outdoor environment, yet children's learning outcome still differ due to environmental setting. Besides, curricula help teachers to effectively structure and arrange classroom activities sequentially, target particular activities to build skills or meet development milestones, and build on prior learning and experiences (Pramling & Fleer,

2009). The experiences that a child has in their earliest years may help to shape their development, and teachers play an important role in creating those experiences.

The dynamics of learning practically encourage a well-trained and highly skilled teacher to tailor their interactions to fit the needs of the child, using responsive language, engaging them in important classroom activities, fostering independence, and creating a language-rich environment (Coburn, Bae & Turner, 2008). Akiva (2012) states that the learning environment needs to involve engaging developmentally, appropriate materials and be arranged to promote independence and exploration based on children's different stages of development. The author iterated that learning centers for informal setting of preschool learners are clearly set aside in a learning environment where children can have easy access to materials and engage in independent and self-directed learning activities; which can be an effective way to organize and support developing abilities, encourage interactions, create opportunities for role playing, and promote literacy skills.

It is obvious that most of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries and some middle income countries have turned to universal pre-primary education in order to give her children a better start in life (UNESCO, 2004). However, there is significant empirical evidence affirming that pre-primary school programs which are directed towards the advantaged and disadvantaged children have significant benefits. In another development, Ruhm, (2004), Baker et al. (2005) argues that separating pre-primary age children from their mothers while they are working may have detrimental effects on child development. This assertion is based on fact that children learn how to speak properly within sociocultural settings in which they grow up (McLoyd, 1998). It is against this background that this study is carried out to explore the dynamics that surrounds the way pre-primary school learners learn at the formal and informal education settings. In specific term, the purpose of this study is to provide a thick description on the

forces that impact learning of young children between the ages of three and five both at the school and home.

The purpose of this chapter is to orientate my audience to the study. This is done, first and foremost, by looking at the focus and purpose of the study, the motivation/rationale for embarking on this study. This will be followed subsequently by giving a brief description of both the geography and education system of Nigeria specifically on pre-primary which is focus of the study. Furthermore, the chapter also presents the statement of the problem. The focus, purpose and objectives of the study and the key research questions which guided the study are given undiluted attention. Thereafter, I present the significance of the study, theoretical perspective and methodology underpinning the study. This is followed by conceptualisation of the key concepts as used in the study. However, this chapter concludes by providing an outline of the format of the thesis and a summation of the chapter contents.

1.2 The focus and purpose of the study

Most of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries and some middle income countries have turned to universal pre-primary education in order to give her children a better start in life (UNESCO, 2004). However, there is significant empirical evidence affirming that pre-primary school programs which are directed towards the advantaged and disadvantaged children have significant benefits. In another development, Ruhm, (2004), Baker et al. (2005) argues that separating pre-primary age children from their mothers while they are working may have detrimental effects on child development. This assertion is based on fact that children learn how to speak properly within sociocultural settings in which they grow up (McLoyd, 1998). Therefore, the focus of this study is to explore the dynamics that surrounds the way pre-primary school learners learn at the formal and informal education settings. In specific term, the purpose of this study is to provide a thick description on the forces that impact learning of young children between the ages of three and five both at the school and home.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Preschool education is the type of education that takes place in the life of children before the official primary school age, which is 6 years in Nigeria. Preschool education is categorised as pre-primary school, crèche, and play group or day care centre. Children that pass through these categories of education learn with age appropriate materials and the learning contents make them different from others who do not have this opportunity. During these period of learning children learns through play, language and demonstration with objects to internalise their learning. They tend to assimilate through hearing, observations and demonstrations by means of touching, perceiving, and sense of feeling. Hence, during preschool age, they are always becoming forceful in their movement as they are trying to discover the world around them.

At the age of 2 children they curious in watching and imitate other children to learn faster and better. At home they learn easily from their mothers and other family members depending on children's relationship with them. The capacity of learning among children depends on their biological and environmental provisions that support their learning for productive livelihood. Parents or caregivers have responsibility concerning children's learning at home and teachers in school have roles to play. These contributions to effective learning in children are supported by the dynamics of learning that is central to the discussion of this study.

However, dynamics of learning involves the supportive efforts or forces that can either from the biological dispositions of the child that help learning take place and/or the environmental affects. Its also concern about the parents or caregivers at homes which has fundamental roles to play in the learning needs of the child; the learning centres or day care centres in terms of informal setting as well as classroom teachers whose professionalism, are saddled with the responsibility to cater for the learning needs of children when they are in school. These are the determinant of the learning among children. When these dynamisms are

not present, it tend to affect children's learning expectations for ensuring better outcome among children. But if they supportive, they tend to encourage effective learning gains. This is because when the activities of learning available at the learning situation are perfect, it would help to develop in children, effective language repertoire, qualitative learning engagement; it fosters independence and creativity among them as well as preparing them for the task of primary school learning. This has instigated the curiosity of the researcher to examine whether these dynamic actors of learning are involved in the learning process of children towards ensuring effective learning in them. Hence, it has become the rationale for this study to examine the dynamic of learning among pre-primary school learners in Uyo Senatorial District of Nigeria.

The earliest word made by a child consists of babbing and other types of non-verbal sounds, some of which are used to attract attention, to engage in imitative play, and to take part in games during the first year of life (Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2010). The vocabulary grows gradually at first- at 12 months an average child has a vocabulary of between two and three words, at 24 months it has approximately 154, at 36 months it knows 2500 words (Smith, 2009). At the same time children learn how to combine words into grammatical sentences, and are building up a structure of meanings in which the words are related. However, the meanings of words are at first very vague and inaccurate, but greater elaboration and depth of meanings develops with time and as a result of listening and asking questions (McIvor, 2006).

According to Wolff and Ekkehard (2000), language develops slowly and gradually for children in schools, perhaps because these children are rewarded less for using it and more rapidly at home, probably because of their greater association with adults (Macdonald, 2002). Wolff and Ekkehards (2000) argue that learning is faster for the children of more educated parents. In children, much early sound takes the form of monologues that accompany action which helps to control behaviour (Johnston, 2006). According to Riojas-Cortez (2001), this is most common at the ages between two and four. A great deal of speech when others are present is 'egocentric' because the child does not put his/herself in the position of the listener, or worry too much about whether the message is being received. However, at some point

middle childhood speech becomes more 'sociocentric'-the child addresses his/her hearer, considers his/her point of view and also tries to influence him/her, or actually exchange ideas with him/her (Niparko, Tobey, Thal, Eisenberg, Wang, Quittner, & CDaCI Investigative Team, 2010).

In light of the above, this study seeks to examine the way language impact learning and also look at the dynamics that surrounds the way pre-primary school learners learn at the formal and informal education settings.

1.4 Rationale/motivation for the study

There are three considerations driving the rationale and motivation of this study. In other words, the rationale for this study is three-fold namely: personal, professional and academic. For the purposes of clarity and orderliness, I will begin by looking at from the perspective of personal motivation, this will be followed by professional and academic.

From the personal perspective, I am a mother of three. My first child was born in 1987, followed by the second one in 1990 and the last one came in 1993. During the infantile stage of my children's development, I did observe the way they learned at home and school were unique. It was unique in the sense that they began by altering words such 'mma' and 'ppa' when they were just one and half year old. My observation was not in doubt when I realised that between the age of three and five, all my children were able to communicate and learn both at home and in school effectively. It is the manner in which my children learned that prompted me to embark on this study.

Professionally, I was an early childhood teacher for 15 years in Nigeria. During this period of my teaching career, I discovered that majority of the children admitted at the pre-primary school, who were between the ages of three and five were unable to speak fluently either in their mother tongue or English during early days of their admission. With the passing of time, I observed that these children who could not speak fluently have suddenly started speaking. However, the ability of these children to speak ultimately resulted in their ability to learn.

In another development, I am lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE) at one of the Colleges of Education in Nigeria. In one of the lectures, I was asked by one of the students to explain the forces that make children between of three and five years who initially could not learn at time of their admission to immediately begin to learn and understand certain letters, symbols and alphabets. In spite of the fact I tried to respond to the

question to the best of my ability, within me I knew that I have failed to really address the question. Therefore, my inability to answer this question posed to me by my student necessitated my curiosity to embark of the study in order to unravel the dynamics that surrounds the learners' ability to learn at the formal and informal education setting in Nigeria.

From the academic point of view, I discovered that a lot of studies have been conducted by researchers and scholars nationally and internationally on early childhood education. For instance, at the national level scholars such as Macdonald (1991) researched on 'eager to talk and learn and think: bilingual primary education in South Africa. Barnard (2001) worked on early intervention, parent involvement in early schooling and long-term school success. Portela (2007) studied on an assessment of the motor ability of learners in the foundation phase of primary school education. Internationally, Lidz and Peña (1996) conducted a study on the dynamic Assessment: the model, its relevance as a nonbiased approach, and its application to Latino American preschool children. Osakwe (2009) researched on the effect of early childhood education experience on the academic performances of primary school children. From all indications, literature has indicated that no academic work has been done this area, in light of the above, this gap ignites my curiosity to dabble into the study.

1.5 Description of research site

Fig.1: Map of Nigeria showing Akwa Ibom State

Source: www.nigmap.com

Fig. 2: The map of Akwa Ibom State showing Uyo senatorial district in yellow

Source: www.maps-streetview.com/Nigeria/Uyo.

While the previous section dealt with the rationale and motivation for my study, this section is aimed at providing a vivid picture of the context in relation to the research site. This study is conducted in Uyo senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Uyo senatorial district is located in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. Uyo senatorial district has common boundaries in the North by the Cross River State, in the South by the Eket senatorial district, in the East by Republic of Cameroun and in the West by Ikot Ekpene senatorial. Uyo senatorial district consist of nine Local Governments Areas namely Uyo, Uruan, Ibesikpo, Nsit Atai, Etinan, Nsit Ibom, Nsit Ubium, Itu and Ibiono Ibom. It is the only Senatorial District wholly inhabited by Ibibio ethnic group and blessed with former Military Administrators, captains of industry, technocrats and abundance agricultural produce to enumerate but a few.

Politically, Uyo district has in stock political icons that have made indelible mark in the sands of time. Former notable political figures from this senatorial are as follows: late Etukudo Ekproh, late Eyo Uyo, and Late Obong Akpan Isemin. Currently, Otuekong Sunny Jackson Udoh, Senator John Udoedehe, Senator Effiong Bob, Obong Victor Attah, among others are

holding various political position within and outside the state. In spite of the fact that this senatorial district is rated as the least among other senatorial districts, in terms of numerical strength, one unique feature of Uyo Senatorial District is that it has always been in the front burner of producing governors since the creation of the state. Uyo senatorial district has so far produced Late Obong Akpan Isemin, Obong Arc.Victor Attah and Chief Udom Emmanuel as the first, second and fouth civilian governors of the state respectively.

In the context of economy, Uyo senatorial district is predominantly agrarian and the economic sector is dominated by local subsistence farmers who cultivate major crops like cassava (Manihot spp.) yam (Dioscorea spp.) rice (Oryza spp.) plantain (Musa paradisiaca) maize (Zea mays) cocoa (Theobroma cacao) rubber (Havea brasillensis) and oil palm (Elais guineensis) (Akpabio, Eniang & Egwali, 2006). Uyo is rich in marine fishery (Effiong, 2012). According to Frank (2014), Uyo senatorial district is the second largest producers of aquatic products in Akwa Ibom State. In spite of this, the artisanal fishermen who produce the bulk of the product are still relatively subsistent, highly versatile with low income outlay, poor fish distribution net-work, poor processing methods, high post-harvest losses of (35-40%) and an incredible adverse demographic/socio-economic and environmental situation (Frank & Umo, 2015).

Educationally, Uyo senatorial district is blessed with all levels of education ranging from pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. In specific term, this senatorial district has two higher institutions namely; Akwa Ibom State College of Education and University of Uyo. There are about 230 secondary schools in Uyo senatorial district (Federal Ministry of Education, 2014). In a similar vein, there are 158 secondary, 210 primary and 152 pre-primary schools in the district.

Since Uyo senatorial district is an integral part of Nigeria, this district adopted the new 9-3-4 system of education which started in 2006 by the federal government of Nigeria. This system of education has the first nine years of basic and compulsory education up to the JSS three level, three years in the senior secondary school and four years in the tertiary institutions. In other words, this is a type of educational system wherein the recipient of the education would spend nine years in the primary and junior school, three years in the senior secondary school, and four years in the higher institutions. According to Uwaifo and Uddin (2009), this system was designed to eradicate illiteracy and also to streamline the over-crowed nature of subjects offered at the basic education level.

1.6 Research Questions

Based on the research objectives stated above, the following key research questions are developed to guide the study. The questions are as follows:

1. How does language impact pre-primary school learners' learning?
2. How do children learn at the formal and informal education settings?
3. What are the dynamics that surrounds the way pre-primary school learners learn at the formal and informal education settings?

1.7 Objectives of the study

By engaging in research into the learning among pre-primary school learners, I hope to shed some light on the dynamics that impact ways in which children learn both at school and home. In light of the above, this study, therefore, seeks to achieve the following objectives:

➢ To examine the language pre-primary school learners adopt for learning.
➢ To examine the impact of language on pre-primary school learners' learning
➢ To understand the dynamics that surrounds the way pre-primary school learners learn at the formal and informal education settings.

1.8 Significance of the study

In any research conducted, there are potential beneficiaries. This study is not an exception. I want to state that my study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the field of early childhood education from the findings reached in the following areas.

There is an ongoing debate among teachers in the pre-primary institutions and parents about the manner in which children learn. While one school of thought says that children in the pre-primary school learn properly in their mother tongue, another school of thought believe that children at this level of education learn using the second language. In furtherance to the above, this study is of immense benefit specifically to the teachers and parents because it offers them an opportunity to understand the language which when adopted significantly impact children's learning.

In another vein, the children between the ages of two and four adopt different ways such as play, game, among others to learn. Therefore, this research work will assist in educating `teachers and parents on other forces that aid the children's learning. Furthermore, as earlier stated in the rationale of the study that no scholarly work has been done in the dynamics of

learning amongst pre-primary school learners, the findings of this thesis will serves as a reference material to other scholars and researchers who will be conducting a study in the early childhood education or education in general.

1.9 An overview of the theoretical framework, research design and methodology

In this section, I provide a preliminary overview of my theories, research design and the methodology adopted. However, a detailed discussion of the research design and the rationale for the choice of my methodology is unpacked in chapters of this thesis**.**

1.9.1 Theoretical underpinning the study

In this study, I intend to adopt the Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of human learning of 1978. Vygotsky's theory looks at learning as a social process and the origination of human intelligence in the culture or society. In other words, Vygotsky (1978) argues that human beings do not act directly on the physical world without the intermediary of tools. Here, the tools from the Vygotsky's point of view are artefacts created by human beings under specific cultural and historical conditions, and as such they carry with them the characteristics of the culture in question (Lantolf, 2000). Vygostky's theory is relevant to this study because it deals on how social situation of learning affect learning positively or negatively.

The theory will expose the dynamics of social environment of informal and formal settings and their cultural benefits to the learning gains of the child. The characteristics of this theory such as zone of proximal development (ZPD) will help to explain the responsibility of caregivers and teachers at the learning situation on how they can predict the child's future development in terms of cognition, socio-emotional, language and personality towards solving a higher order tasks due to the learning tasks given to the child. The theory will help to explicate how mediation as a characteristics of Vygostsky's theory can play a role to encourage learning; scaffolding – the capacity of parents or teachers in their respective setting as more knowledgeable or advance person in assisting the development needs of the child by altering their learning tasks. It would explain different aspect of environmental cultures that support effective learning and those that posses challenges to learning. This theory has the capacity to accommodate this study and tend to protect the explanation of children's successful learning, It will describe how environment should be created by parents or caregivers at homes, day care centres regarding children's learning informally and in addition to that of the school, what teachers should do and adapt as environmental features that can encourage learning.

1.9.2 Qualitative research methodology

In this study, I adopt qualitative approach as the general research methodology. The reason for the choice of the qualitative is informed by the nature of the study under exploration. In other words, this approach is thought to be most suitable because it allowed this researcher to develop in-depth accounts of the dynamics of learning among the pre-primary school learners at the formal and informal education processes.

1.9.3 Research paradigm

In line with qualitative approach adopted, this study is guided by the interpretive approach which is concerned with the meaning making and strives to comprehend the subjective world of human experience (Bailey, 2007; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). According to Bailey (2007), interpretive paradigm is based on the premise that human beings create meaning in their worlds and the meaning is socially constructed as a result of interaction with others. As mentioned earlier, I adopted a qualitative approach which is mainly concerned with understanding the lived experiences of the participants' worlds and meaning they make of that experience from their perspective as they experience the problem in a real-life situation (Merriam, 2007). In furtherance to the adoption of interpretive approach and in order to address the key research questions stated above, I adopted a case study design. My aim is to understand holistically the dynamics of learning among the pre-primary school learners at the formal and informal education processes.

1.9.4 Research sampling

In this study, purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants who are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the forces that impact learning among the pre-primary school learners at the formal and informal education processes. This sampling method was relevant for the study. This is because I wanted teachers and parents with comprehensive knowledge and experience in teaching and parenting to explain to me those forces that impact learning on children. The sample size consisted of 15 teachers who teach pre-primary level and parents whose children are between the ages of zero and six years. The choices of the schools were based on the number of teachers who are willing to participate in

the study. Furthermore, teachers' experiences and expertise in teaching pre-primary school also played a crucial role in the choice of the participants.

1.9.5 Data gathering approach

Brown (2008) argues that one of the merits of the case study approach is that it allows the researcher to use a variety of research methods to generate data. In this study, however, semi-structured individual interviews which consist of open ended questions were appropriate techniques used in the gathering of the data. During the interviews session, I made use of tape recorder for the recording of the conversations with my participants. Furthermore, I also made use of field notes to take down some important points raised by my participants. After all, Mulhall (2002) argues that field notes serve play a crucial role in connecting researchers and their subjects in the writing of an ethnographic study.

1.9.6 Data analysis method

In the qualitative research, data analysis involves aiming to uncover and /or understand the big picture by using the data to describe the phenomenon and its meaning (Thorne, 2000). Scholars such as Charmaz (2006), Corbin and Strauss (2008), Bernard and Ryan (2010) argue that data analysis begins when a researcher is on the field. This is because in the research field, the researcher has to select important things (data) which are relevant to the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In this study, the data collected in the field were transcribed and subjected to an open coding. I want to state that the themes that emerged from the open opening were analysed using thematic analysis including transcribed, coded, and categorisation of themes and thematic analysis used in analysing the data was highlighted and explained

1.10 Organisational structure of the thesis

The dissertation has seven chapters. These chapters are outlined below.

Chapter one

The first chapter orientates my readers on the study under exploration. From all indications, the study begins with the introduction, background to the study, focus and purpose of the study, rationale and motivation for the study. Other important subheadings in this section are the statement of the problems, objectives of the study, key research questions guiding the

study, significance of the study, organisational structure of the study, definitions of terms and conclusion.

Chapter two

My chapter two focused on the historical development of early childhood education in the World. However, a particular reference was paid to countries such as USA, Germany, China and South Africa. Lastly, I looked at the development of early childhood education in Nigeria in which, from all indications, the study is situated.

Chapter three

Chapter three focused the review of the literature. Here, I looked at other scholarly positions that related to the phenomenon under study. I began by looking at the meaning of language, and the importance of mother tongue to pre-primary school children. Thereafter, I discussed types of learning used, methods in which children learn. I extensively discussed the dynamics that inform the children's ability to learn at the formal and informal education environment. In my literature, I identified the gap and also filled this gap.

Chapter four

In chapter four of this thesis, I looked the theoretical framework of the study. I identified a theoretical framework which is significant to the study. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory was appropriately chosen and adopted for the study. The theory advocates that learning including language as a semiotic process where participation in socially mediated activities is essential. This theory is used to tease out the impact language has on children learning and the forces that surround the way children learn at the formal and informal settings.

Chapter five

Chapter five discussed the research design with emphasise on the methodology. In other words, this chapter provided a broad methodological orientation of the study. I located the study within a qualitative research approach and interpretive framework, adopting both semi structured interview and focus group interview to elicit information from the participants. Furthermore, research methods adopted in the study has been critically explained. The

research methods adopted include: purposive sampling, data generations and analysis techniques, design limitations, trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter six

In chapter six of this thesis, I focused on the presentation and discussion of the data which bordered on the research questions developed in chapter one. I presented and discussed themes that emerged from the type of language pre-primary school learners adopt for learning, the way in which language impact pre-primary school learners' learning and the dynamics that surrounds learning among pre-primary school learners at the formal and informal settings.

Chapter seven

In this chapter, my effort is geared towards presenting the entire summary of the thesis. Furthermore, this chapter provided concluding remarks based on the research findings as reported in chapters five and six. The implications of this research study and some implications for further research were also highlighted. Furthermore, I went further to elucidate how this study contributed to the body of knowledge on early childhood education.

1.11 Explanation of the key concepts

In this section, I tried to explain some concepts as used in the study. An operational definition of concepts defines a concept solely in terms of the operations (or methods) used to produce and measure it. These concepts are explained below.

1.11.1 Learning

Ormrod (1999) look at learning from two standpoints, which is, from the cognitive and behavourist angles. From the cognitive perspective, Ormrod (1999) says that learning is a relatively permanent change in mental associations due to experience. In other words, it connotes an internal change in behaviour that cannot be seen or observed. Learning is seen to have taken place when some permanent changes occur (Ormrod, 1999). In the context of behaviourist perspectives, Ormrod (1999) sees learning as a relatively permanent change in behaviour due to experience. It denotes a permanent change in behaviour, that is, an external change that can be observed or seen. In this study, the objective is to explore the dynamics of learning among pre-primary school learners in formal and informal education processes.

1.11.2 Pre-primary school

Pre-primary school is the foundation stage of schooling system. In other words, it is considered as the bedrock of other levels of education. In Nigeria context, the pre-primary education, as pronounced by the policy, is that phase which prepares the child for primary school. In other words, the phase prior to primary school is the area of focus. In Nigeria, the Universal Basic Education Act of 2000 quotes pre-primary, which has to do with pre-primary school given to children between ages three to five, as an integral part of basic schooling, (Sollid, 2014). It epitomises the first significant step in achieving the goals of Education for All (EFA).

1.11.3 Dynamics

This concept 'dynamics' is commonly used in physics, mathematics and other allied disciplines. In recent time, it has found expression in the education. In education, dynamics describe how forces act on the education system resulting in motion of the education system. This study seeks to unravel the forces that impact learning among pre-primary school learners in the formal and informal education processes, (Sollid (2014).

1.11.4 Formal education process

AS stated by Barros, Neves, Hori and Torres (2011), formal education is seen as a systematic, organised education model, structured and administered according to the set of laws, policies, norms and acts, presenting a rather rigid curriculum as regards objectives, content and methodologies of teaching and learning. From all indications, this is characterised by a contiguous education process which necessarily involves the educators, the learners and the classrooms that constitute the institution. In this study, formal education process is the pre-primary school in Uyo senatorial district.

1.11.5 Informal education

Informal education is a direct opposite of formal education process. Informal education does not correspond to an organised and systematic setting of education, rather, it is locally based and relates to people in their local community. It does not necessarily include the objectives and subjects usually encompassed in the conventional curricula. Instead, it is characterised by the integrated involvement of people of all ages, use of community learning resources and research to bring about community change and recognition that people can learn through, with and from each other to create a better world (Yusuf, Daramola & Jekayinfa,, 2011).

1.11.6 Language

Barros, Neves, Hori and Torres (2011) look at language as a system of representation that enables persons to encode and convey meaning through the production and combination of signs. Language is a system of communication which is based on words and the combination of words into sentences. Language is made up of tens of thousands of signs which are combinations of form and meaning. Form in verbal language is a arrangement of sounds, in written language for instance, a sequence of letters, that is, depending on the kind of writing system one is referring to.

1.11.7 Mother tongue

Mother tongue is regarded as the language a person acquires from birth. This can be viewed as the language a child acquires first and in which he/she begins the first verbal communication. The Kenya Institute of Education (2002) look at mother tongue as the initial language a child acquires in his/her community. Gupta (1997) declares that the mother tongue is linked to ancestral background. This is the language which is spoken by a parent or parents of a child in a particular community. Sollid (2008) sees the mother tongue as the language a child acquires and uses in communication with his/her surroundings. However, this language is often used by children most of the time.

1.12 Summary

In this study, this chapter served as an introductory chapter to the phenomena under exploration. I began by giving a background to and elucidating the focus and purpose of the study. Thereafter, I gave brief explanation of the statement of problem. This was subsequently followed by the presentation of the rationale and motivation of the study. I then provided brief objectives of the study and the key questions in which this study revolved around. In this chapter, the site in which this study is conducted has been clearly explained. This was followed by a brief outline of the methodological orientation of my study. I finally provided the organisational structure of my thesis and its chapters sequentially.

In my next chapter (chapter two), I intent to present and discuss the literature that focuses the dynamics of learning among pre-primary school learners in formal and informal education processes.

Chapter two

Historical development of early childhood education in the world: with a particular reference to Nigeria

2.1 Introduction

In chapter one of this study, I focused on the introduction, background, rationale, and objectives of the study. Additionally, I developed research questions that guide the study, significance of the study and organisational structure of the study were highlighted. In this chapter, effort is geared towards explaining the historical development of early childhood education in the world, early childhood education in countries such as USA, Germany, China and South Africa were critically discussed. Lastly, I intend to look at the development of early childhood education in Nigeria.

2.2 Conceptualisation of Early childhood education

Early childhood education is the type of education that is provided for children between the ages of 2 to 5 years. Early childhood education is initiated to protect children development before the actual formal primary school learning age in order for such a child to adapt to the learning situation. As concerns for the care and education of children aged 1−8 gain increasing attention worldwide, research into the methods of achieving best results has equally been on the rise (Bodrova, Germeroth & Leong 2013; Kamerman 2006; UNESCO 2014; Woodhead 2006). One major outcome of these advocacy and research efforts in early childhood care, development and education is the popularity of construct known as early childhood education. This construct, in simple terms, implies the application of the principles of instructional practices in children's education and care especially during their formative years (Ogunyemi & Ragpot, 2016).

Scholars conceptualised early childhood education base on their perspectives (Maduewesi, 2005; Holst, 2010; Härkönen, 2013). Accordingly, Holst (2010) see early childhood education as the education for children ranging from zero or birth to eight years of life. The author observes that in some cases, early childhood education start from nursery education or pre-primary as the case may be. The author articulated that early childhood education has a variety of processes and mechanisms that sustain and support development during the early

years of life; further emphases that such education encompasses physical, social and emotional care, intellectual stimulation, health care and nutrition among others. This implies that early childhood education have a whole range of processes to be followed rather one straight up process. Härkönen (2013) provides a conceptualisation of early childhood education or pre-primary education as education before primary school age. The author establishes that early childhood education is a practical science, which deals with the processes of learning or education before the official school going age. Hence, with these level of knowledge, early childhood education tend to be versatile and dynamic in its operations to accommodate different idiosyncrasies of those involved within that circle.

Härkönen (2013) argues that early childhood education can provide enduring engagement in the development of child´s personality. The author explained that early childhood education encompasses basic care which natures the child but prepares a child for further transition into primary school of other phases as the case might be. The author further enunciated that early childhood education create inter-active process in the sphere of life at home, day care and preschool that is purposefully aimed to support all-encompassing personality development of children between the ages of 1 and six years. That being the case, teaching and learning into one broad functional sphere where the child gets nourished for all round growth and development. Thus, to the extent that the processes is capable of strengthening teaching and learning capabilities into consideration of both formal and informal learning situation.

Early childhood education is an education of children below the age of 6 and above the age of 2. The name given to early childhood education in United State of America is known as early childhool education and care. In United State of America, early childhood education is recognised as the education of children at the age of 5 and it must be completely funded by the Government and the people. It is the education with a wide range of part-day, full-school-day, and full-work-day programs, under educational, social welfare, and commercial auspices, funded and delivered in a variety of ways in both the public and the private sectors, designed sometimes with an emphasis on the "care" component of ECEC and at other times with stress on "education" or with equal attention to both (Kamerman & Gatenio-Gabel, 2007).

Early childhood education in China refers to education for children from birth to age of 6. There are mainly three types of early childhood education and care institutions in China. Nurseries are for children of 1–3 years old, kindergartens are for children of 3–6 years old,

and the so-called "preschool classes" attached to primary schools are for 5–6 years old children (Zhu, 2002). Traditionally, the Ministration of Education is in charge of kindergartens and the Ministration of Hygiene is in charge of nurseries. Nowadays, kindergartens in some areas begin to enrol children of 2–3 years old, and also provide education and guidance service for 0–2 year old children and their families. The Chinese government made policies by which early childhood education and care institutions might be run by multi-department, multi-unit and others — in social sectors and with multi-funds. As Tobin, Yeh and Karasawa (2006) argued that preschools are institutions that both reflect and support the cultures of which they are a part. In this sense, preschools are inherently conservative institutions, institutions mandated to produce the kind of child the culture most values.

In South Africa, Early Childhood Development is seen as a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to 9 years of age with the active participation of their parents and caregivers. The South African Department of Education (2001) states clearly that it will only be responsible for children aged 5–9 years, whilst the Department of Social Development will focus on children from birth to 4 year of age and the Department of Health covers all from birth to 9 years in terms of health related issues. Integrated in the South African constitution is the Bill of Rights, which makes provision for the socioeconomic rights of children. Although these rights include right to basic education and protection from neglect, abuse and exploitation, the evidence suggests that 'South Africa still has a long way to go to effect quality of life for the majority of her children' (Atmore, van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2012).

These definitions if nothing but one thing agree on the single idea that early childhood education deals with learning for children whether formal or informal but turn to differ about the specifications of this. Within a married of definitions, it is vital to adopt a single definition which would inform the rest of the study and shape how early childhood education is understood or not understood as the case might be. Within the confines of this study therefore, early childhood education would be defined as the processes of learning whether formal or informal which children engaged with within a teaching and learning environment to enhance their development. While this definition does not stick to one particular definition discussed above, it draws from a variety of them to create room for further discussion around the field of early childhood education and the dynamics associated with it.

Holst (2010) argues that early childhood education has been given different names in different parts of the world and has been made to include or exclude a variety of things as a result of this different names. He continues that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for example refers to early childhood education as early childhood care and education, while the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) see or refer to early childhood education and care. The World Bank on the other hand brands it as early child development, while the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) calls it early childhood development. Education International on its part maintains the name of early childhood education. All these appellations take into consideration different processes and activities that this stage of education involves as it strives to contribute to the development of the child. Holst (2010) adds that all the above categorisations and names contribute to the cognitive and other domains of child development making early childhood education, education occurring before (in cases where they are such) compulsory schooling which is provided in a variety of settings like pre-schools, kindergartens, nurseries, childcare centres, crèches and other similar institutions. This variety of settings is informed by the importance of early childhood education and the different initiatives instituted by different nations to cater for this part of the population.

Early childhood education is the crux of development for child and it is vital for the nation to take initiatives to ensure that children get appropriate education commensurate to their level of development. Theorising about the importance of early childhood education, Education International (EI) (2006, p.6) stated:

Early childhood is the most critical period for cognitive and social development, the acquisition of languages and early literacy. Children are active learners from birth, and the first years are vital. Early childhood education (ECE) should be recognized as a first step of basic education, as a fully integrated sector within national education systems. Provision should be universally accessible and free for all children […] High quality ECE provides the foundation for life-long learning and stimulates children's social, emotional, physical, cognitive and linguistic development.

From this perspective, it is vital to trace the history of early childhood education both at the international level and at the national level to show the relevance of the same if the dynamics of early amongst is to be understood.

2.3 History of Early Childhood Education

Kamerman (2006) observe that the first trace of early childhood education erupted in early 19th century in Europe and other developing countries like India and China. At this stage, several distinctions were made between 'kindergartens specifically for teaching and learning and nurseries or crèche to provide care. She continues that the field developed slowly up until after the Second World War. This trend was set by several eastern European socialist countries, which made extensive developments in terms of theory and practice immediately after the war. However, prior to this, France made a formal integration of preschool into her education system in 1886 and later made extensive reviews of this in the 1950s as *ecole maternelle*. Cannella (1997) argues that the end of colonialism in Africa and the emergence of independence Africa states as well as the dramatic upsurge in female labour force led to further development of early childhood education since more and more women were becoming employed creating a need for spaces where their children can be taken care of while they work. In addition, the continuous development of new policies in Europe and the U.S., patenting to the child and family created a debate about care vs development as critical issues which early childhood education must grapple with as a field. Three significant world surveys carried out by UNESCO help trace these developments in the early childhood education. These three surveys, one in 1961, a second in 1974 (but published in 1976), and a third in 1988 (published in 1991), (Fisher, 1991; Mialaret, 1976; UNESCO, 1961) inform the core of what constitutes the history of early childhood education. Kamerman (2006) further opines that in 1939 of ministers of education in several countries were surveyed by the International Bureau of Education and the results reveal that preschool was developing gradually but had great potentials for the future because several programs to enhance it were being organised by both the government and the private sector. As a result of this survey, the UNESCO send out a memorandum same year outlining ''the need for child care facilities for the growing numbers of working mothers and stressed the value of preschool''(Kamerman, 2006, p. 3). The memo also states that ''the programs should be voluntary, free or with fees similar to those in primary school, cover the full work day, and provide better trained teachers''(Kamerman, 2006, p. 3). Another memorandum advanced at the 1946 UNESCO organized conference on early childhood education ''stressed the importance of early childhood education and care services and the inadequate supply even in the developed countries. It noted the diversity of programs both nationally and cross-nationally and their poor quality. And it emphasised the key roles of government and NGOs in developing the field, concluding with a strong recommendation for a more active role by UNESCO''(Kamerman, 2006, p. 4). Morrison (2012) adding to this maintains that with the

crisis and destruction of World War II, the next initiative at obtaining a global picture of early childhood education was the 1961 UNESCO survey which reports from 65 countries. The reports indicated that only 25 percent of the responses came from developing countries, with only Liberia and South Africa responding in Africa and China, Japan, India, Iran, Korea, and Malaysia responding from the Asian continent (UNESCO, 1961). In some countries like Malaysia, the results indicated that early childhood education was not an educational priority, while in the Philippines it was largely managed by private organisations with almost no government intervention. Also, the report indicated that most countries preferred the term 'kindergarten' in describing early childhood education, while others used it to distinguish different programs for 'preschool'. However, a majority of the nations used the term to describe all programs developed for children from the age of zero to compulsory school age of six. Keys findings of the 1961 UNESCO survey according to Kamerman (2006, pp. 4-5) were:

1. Compulsory primary school was and should be-the first educational priority for countries, and not all had achieved this goal yet.

2. Nowhere does pre-primary education seek to undermine or usurp the role of parents and the family. Nonetheless, given the rising numbers of mothers working outside the home, such programs were becoming more and more essential.

3. Where spaces were limited, priority was being given by most to children who are neglected, abused, reared with inadequate parenting.

4. Certain initiatives appeared to have been successful and were spreading across country boundaries, as countries borrowed ideas and learned from others' experiences.

5. The programs were expensive to establish and operate.

6. There was a shortage of qualified teachers in all countries.

7. The status of pre-primary school teachers was low. In almost half the countries, the salaries for preschool teachers were lower than those of primary school teachers.

8. There was very little research on pre-primary schools and on their impact on children and child development.

Fifty-five years after this survey, Gehris, Gooze, and Whitaker (2015) and Maloney, Converse, Gibbs, Levine, and Beilock (2015) argue that pre-school is still lacking behind in research output. Research at the contextual level has mostly focused on primary school learners (Barnard, 2001; Lidz & Peña, 1996; Macdonald, 1991; Osakwe, 2009) and their experiences with the preschool being neglected. This study located in the Uyo Senatorial District is one of many attempts to fill the lacuna in the body of knowledge about contextual happenings in pre-school around the world in general and Nigeria in particular. Kamerman (2006) further add that the findings of the survey further revealed that seventy-five percent early childhood education providers were NGOs or private with only communist countries who represented one-third of the survey group, having only public programs. Worthy of note also was the fact that the majority of private providers were women's groups, or religious institutions, and the programs were rather voluntary except in two countries were they were compulsory were it was compulsory for five year olds, and the focus was on the "whole child," with special consideration on behaviour, physical, aesthetics, social, and cognitive development(UNESCO, 1961). There was no evidence of research carried out to support these programs except in Sweden where a special lab was established for research on pre-primary education in Stockholm in 1957. From the survey it was clear that early childhood education lacked funding, policy, facilities, trained teachers and variety on how it should be enacted(Kamerman, 2006).

In another UNESCO memo circulated in 1972, UNESCO stated that: "Due mainly to member states' priorities, educational areas and levels, until 1970 the organization had only a general concern with pre-school education" (Kamerman, 2006, p. 6). The memo highlighted the need for collaboration amongst member states and different organisation in the development of pre-school education. This became the first major step in promoting early childhood education at the international level as it led to a collaboration of several international organizations like UNICEF and UNESCO. It also reported that for the first-time pre-primary education was budgeted for, by UNESCO for 1971-72 period to assist member states to develop new programs and initiatives in the field. This led to more intervention by the UNESCO and its subsequent definition of pre-primary to mean public nursery schools, kindergartens, and infant schools, but excluding day care(Kamerman, 2006; Sommer et al., 2012).

Another milestone in the history of early childhood education was the 1974 survey report (Mialaret, 1976) which broaden the definition of preschool beyond formal education. It also

recognised the different names given to early childhood education in different countries; pre-primary school, preschool, kindergarten, nursery school, early childhood education (ECE), early childhood care and education, or education and care. Sixty-seven countries responded to this survey and the major findings highlighted or focus on formal schooling with goals being; care for children while mothers work, socialisation, cognitive stimulation, intellectual development and preparation for primary school and overall child development.

It also pointed out several issues with the implementation of early childhood education in these countries such as an inadequate supply of places, nowhere near yet available to all, located primarily in urban and affluent communities, inadequate physical facilities - unqualified and inadequately trained teachers, a short day in many countries, inadequate to meet the needs of working mothers, insufficient places for disadvantaged children and/or handicapped children and fragmentation across government ministries with policy making responsibility, especially education, social welfare, and health (Kamerman, 2006, p. 8).

It was therefore clear that very little was being done to respond to the challenges posed by early childhood education. Myers (1992, p. 12) concludes that "on the basis of the available evidence, giving priority to support for preschool interventions could not be justified…. And very little was being done directly within the World Bank to attend to child development and virtually nothing had been done within the education sector". This shows that although some research was being done in early childhood education, very little change was being effected.

The third UNESCO report which contributed greatly to the history of early childhood education was the 1988 survey, the findings of which were published in 1991 (Fisher, 1991). Fisher (1991, p. i) argues for a need for a more congruent definition of early childhood education and defines it as "programs intended to provide care and/or education for children from their birth until the ages of six or seven years. They are organised by government ministries or agencies concerned with the education, development, care, and welfare of children up to age 6 or 7 or by non-governmental organisations such as women's groups, religious institutions, or parent groups''. These definitions further opened up the concept of early childhood education, and raise major trends as far as the topic is concerned. Communities and day-care centres were seen as pivotal in the provision of early childhood education. Worthy of note also was the expanded role of day care centres, its inclusion as part of early childhood education and its explicit label of 'Early Childhood Care and Education'

(emphasis in the original). Fisher (1991, p. 4) further pointed out that the findings of the survey revealed that:

The primary goals listed in the survey responses were the total development of the child (including physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development), the intellectual development of the child, preparation for primary school (for the three to six years old) or providing health care (for the under 3s), and care for children while parents worked.

These three surveys and other developments from different nations led to four key considerations for early childhood education. These key considerations focused on ''protective services for neglected children and the children of poor working mothers. It also focused on enhancing or enriching the development of middle class children, responding to the needs of the growing numbers of women in the labour force, who wanted decent quality and affordable care for their children and preparing young children for school has been an added factor''(Kamerman, 2006, p. 17). As a result of this, different nations take different initiatives to ensure the development of early childhood education. In Europe, this heralded the Education for all conferences where early childhood education was one of the principal themes. These conferences and the continuous initiative by the government and the private sector in Europe and Asia as demonstrated by the survey led to the development of two key important motives of early childhood education was has influence the provision of early childhood education till date in Europe and Asia. These motives invariably increasing awareness of the importance of the early years for subsequent child development and learning, and the expansion of the supply of programs to stimulate and support economic and social development.'' (Kamerman, 2006, p. 20)) have necessitated the continuous support of the World Bank, UNICEF, Education International, UNESCO and other international organisations of early childhood education in Europe in particular and elsewhere around the globe in general.

These developments in Europe in the discipline of early childhood education also sparked drastic changes and developments in Africa in early childhood education. Africa which as at 2002 had the youngest population in the world (ADEA Newsletter, 2002) (half of the population are children under 14 and 20 percent under 5), as well as the highest mortality rate in the world for children owing to chronic malnutrition, inadequate food supply, poverty, armed conflict and/or HIV/AIDS. ADEA continued that children in Africa "will probably not receive any Early Childhood Development (ECD) care, since such services are still very rare

in Africa"(ADEA, 2002, p. 5). Enrolment in early childhood education in Africa started improving drastically from the 1990s in response to the World Summit for Children, the 1990 Jomtien and Dakar conferences. The private sectors responded more speedily to this drive, providing over seventy percent of the tuition centres. This was followed by several initiatives by the government in different countries to regularise the provision of early childhood education and care. In some countries, the provision of early childhood education and care was more rigorous and enhanced while in others it hardly received any attention. In Mauritius for example, the percentage of children enrolled in early childhood education and care grew to over 90 percent, while in DR Congo and Djibouti, it was less than one percent(Kamerman, 2006). ADEA (2002) argues that in Africa early childhood education and care is still considered a luxury, especially in the rural communities.

2.4 Early childhood education in some countries in the World

In this section, I intend to discuss early childhood education in countries such as United States of America (USA), Germany, China and South Africa. The choice of these countries is based on the fact that they spread across various continents of the world.

2.4.1 Early childhood education in USA

Early childhood education (or nursery schools in US Census Bureau reports) contain the range of programs offered under public and private education auspices or providing compensatory education under special legislation and are largely half-day or cover the normal school day. In line with the education policy of USA, early childhood education is not centrally administered. This level of education is control by each of state in USA. According to Lawal (2009), the level of education is specifically design for children under five. Kamerman and Gatenio-Gabel (2007) argue that most children in early childhood education programs, entry into a formal early childhood program would be when children are between three and five years old.

The official history of early childhood education in the USA started with two developments namely: day nurseries (child care centres), first established in the 1830s under voluntary auspices and designed to care for the 'unfortunate' children of working mothers; and nursery schools, developing from the early education programs in Massachusetts also first established in the 1830s (Kamerman & Gatenio-Gabel, 2007). Day nurseries grow in response to pressures exerted by the rapid industrialisation and massive immigration of people which took place in the latter part of the century. The early childhood education was custodial in

nature, focusing solely on basic care and supervision of the children from zero to three years. During war times-the Civil War, World War I, and World War II- these programs grow in numbers, only to decline when war ended (Barnett, 2007). Early childhood education expanded slowly during the 19th century and experienced a significant increase only in the mid1960s and early 1970s when a confluence of factors led to the significant expansion of both program types.

In the context of education policy, as earlier stated above USA has no coherent national early childhood education policy. The primary responsibility for education is at the level of the states, not the Federal government, creating a barrier to the development of a national system for early childhood education. U.S. federal government through the Congress, plays a significant role in formulating policies and goals and facilitates the states' and localities 'major roles in the actual implementation of programs to suit the particular needs and preferences of their state (Kamerman & Gatenio-Gabel, 2007). According to Kagan and Stewart (2005), federal government's policy making efforts have primarily engrossed on making services accessible to children who are at risk, due to economic, biological, social, or psychological circumstances or combinations of these, providing child care services as an incentive for mothers receiving social assistance to gain entry to the labour force. From all indications, as at 2015 academic year, there are about 4,112,347 early childhood education centres and over six million children in USA (Education Commission of the States, 2015).

2.4.2 Early childhood education in Germany

The first early childhood education otherwise known as kindergarten was opened up in the 1817 by Froebel in Keilhau, Germany. According to Moore (2002), Froebel called for German women to come together and support the kindergarten. This is because he sees children as plants and teachers as gardeners, the term kindergarten evolved, kinder meaning child and garten meaning garden. In other words, Froebel's school was so named kindergarten to reflect his belief that children should be nurtured and nourished like plants in a garden. With this achievement, other kindergartens were established across the length and breadth of Germany. In Germany, early childhood education is designed for children between the ages of zero and four. Furthermore, most of the people that patronises the centres are parents who are in paid employment. According to Allen (2000, p.12), the goals of early childhood education in Germany are: loving attention, sensitive care based on stable

relationships, sympathetic support appropriate to development stage; empathy and support in stressful situations, unconditional acceptance, safety and security.

In the context of pedagogy, pedagogical activity in early childhood education of the Germany is based on the standard programme. The programme involved objectives, tasks and content of the education in accordance with the age differences and taking into account children's development stages (Allen, 2006). The programme is centrally designed for the early childhood education centres by the German government. There are approximately 256832 early childhood education centres and with over three million children in Germany (Willekens, Scheiwe & Nawrotzki, 2015).

From the definitions above, it is clear that preschool is a part of early childhood education especially since pre-school most often do not have specific nationally guided curriculum but focus more on care and support for the individual to learning basic things about life. Härkönen (2013) combining all three previous definitions provide a more soothing and rigorous definition of early childhood education by theorising it as early childhood practice, early childhood education science, early childhood education subject and early childhood thinking as a wholesome system. This definition takes early childhood education beyond the boundaries of teaching and learning, research, cognitive abilities or developmental foregrounds for the children to the processes that the child goes through from the ages of zero to six. As such whatever meaningful activity that takes place within this period and which contributes to the development of the child can be considered as part of early childhood education.

2.4.3 Early childhood education in China

In China, early childhood education refers to education for children between the ages of zero and six. According to Zhu (2009), there are mainly three types of early childhood education and care institutions in China. Nurseries are for children of zero to three years old, kindergartens are for children between three and six years old, and the so-called 'preschool classes' attached to primary schools are for between five and six years old children (Zhu, 2002). Traditionally, the Ministration of Education is solely responsible for kindergartens and the Ministration of Hygiene is responsible for nurseries. In the area of administration and control, Chinese government make policies by which early childhood education and care institutions might be run by multi-department, multi-unit and others-in social sectors and with multi-funds (Zhu, 2009).

In China, early childhood education is a part of basic education in which Chinese government pays attention on the 9-year compulsory education, that is, 6 years for primary education and 3-year for middle school education. Early childhood education is not compulsory education in China. Therefore, parents are at liberty send their children to these centres. In 2014, there were 129945 thousand kindergartens with over one million staff members including teachers and directors (Li & Deng, 2016). According to Xi (2014), the national enrolment of children in kindergarten was also impressive in 2012. In the area of curriculum, the curriculum approaches in China are becoming more diverse and it aligned with the increasingly open and diversified society. However, various curricula such as the Project Approach, Reggio Emilia and Montessori have been widely adopted and localised (Li & Li, 2003).

Early childhood education in China refers to education for children from birth to age of 6. There are mainly three types of early childhood education and care institutions in China. Nurseries are for children of 1–3 years old, kindergartens are for children of 3–6 years old, and the so-called "preschool classes" attached to primary schools are for 5–6 years old children (Zhu, 2002). Traditionally, the Ministration of Education is in charge of kindergartens and the Ministration of Hygiene is in charge of nurseries. Nowadays, kindergartens in some areas begin to enrol children of 2–3 years old, and also provide education and guidance service for 0–2 year old children and their families. The Chinese government made policies by which early childhood education and care institutions might be run by multi-department, multi-unit and others — in social sectors and with multi-funds. As Tobin, Yeh and Karasawa (2006) argued that preschools are institutions that both reflect and support the cultures of which they are a part. In this sense, preschools are inherently conservative institutions, institutions mandated to produce the kind of child the culture most values.

2.4.4 Early childhood education in South Africa

In South Africa, early childhood education development refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children between zero and nine years of age, with the active participation of their parents and caregivers. In a similar vein, White Paper (1995) defines Early Childhood Development (ECD) as an umbrella term which refers to the processes by which children from birth to nine years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially. ECD programmes consist of a variety of strategies and a wide range of services directed towards assisting families and communities to meet the needs of children

between zero and nine years. The essence of early childhood education development is to protect the child's rights to develop his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential (Chisholm, 2015).

In South Africa, early childhood education development centres (ECDC) is not compulsory. However, working parents prefer to send their children to these centres for care while at work. Furthermore, due to years of inequality in South Africa, majority of black parents are unable to send their children to these centres. In the context of the curriculum, national Department of Education through Consultative Forum on Curriculum came up with the curriculum which should be subject-bound, an integrated approach should be employed allowing for progressive opportunities for development leading to a gradual refinement of children's perceptions and which respond to the needs of the whole child (Cleghorn & Prochner, 2010). Official records from the Department of Education indicate that there is a total of 50,482 registered early childhood development centres in the country with over 1,030,473 learners' population.

In South Africa, Early Childhood Development is seen as a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to 9 years of age with the active participation of their parents and caregivers. The South African Department of Education (2001) states clearly that it will only be responsible for children aged 5–9 years, whilst the Department of Social Development will focus on children from birth to 4 year of age and the Department of Health covers all from birth to 9 years in terms of health related issues. Integrated in the South African constitution is the Bill of Rights, which makes provision for the socioeconomic rights of children. Although these rights include right to basic education and protection from neglect, abuse and exploitation, the evidence suggests that 'South Africa still has a long way to go to effect quality of life for the majority of her children' (Atmore, van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2012).

2.5 Early childhood education in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the history of early childhood education dates back to the early 19th century with the coming of Christian missionaries who brought with them formal education of the Western world. The earliest form of early childhood education in Nigeria according to Fafunwa (1974), was organised by church members especially wives of missionaries who spend their time teaching and taking care of children. They continued this for about an hour every Sunday when parents were attending church service. Since the attendance of these services

was never consistent, children never completed a program, also especially because there was no formal curriculum until the missionaries started establishing schools (Fafunwa, 1974). Akinbote, Oduolowu, and Lawal (2001) argue that the first or earliest church based schools were actually formal schools operating in several informal settings. And the teachers who were attached to these schools were usually experienced or trained members of the church who had been groomed in teaching the scriptures and possess full or credible knowledge of the scriptures to the class. These classes often took place on Sundays between 10 to 11 a.m. The teachers often began by introducing several short choruses, after which they conducted prayers sessions before proceeding to teach short stories from the bible. These lessons often ended which assessment, which comprised of question and answer sessions.

Morrison (2012) supported that early childhood education can be defined as the teaching of young children whether informally or formally up until the age of about eight. He continues that pre-school is, a subset of early childhood education, denotes the education of children from birth to age four or six in some nations. So pre-school is undoubtedly a part of early childhood education. Sommer et al. (2012) offer an alternative definition when they argue that early childhood education involves activities as well as experiences in some cases that are aimed at effecting developmental changes in children before they formally enrol in elementary school. These activities can be directed towards area of teaching, learning, and other vital processes, which children can engage in to keep them developing mentally and otherwise.

Maduewesi (2005) defines early childhood education ''as encompassing the overall social, physical, and intellectual development and education of children below the age of six years''. This means that early childhood education aims at the development of the child as a whole and not just the cognitive or physical aspect. Ejieh (2006) offers another definition of early childhood education in Nigeria by considering it to be ''pre-school education programmes of various sorts for children below the official school-going age (usually six years) mainly to prepare them for education in primary schools." Ejieh's definition focuses, more on the age of preschool as well as its ability to prepare children for primary school education. NPE (2004) and its revised editions of 1981, 1998 and 2004 defines early childhood education as including the crèche, nursery and kindergarten as other institutions for such education, where children below the age of six to be instructed in a formal setting.

The learners often enjoyed these lessons because it was practically learner centred and full of activities like hand clapping, singing and drama. After several Sundays, these schools often transform to pre-primary schools or nursery schools as some called it. These schools then began on Mondays, concluded on Fridays for about four hours daily, and were taught by women with limited education. Pupils or learners in these schools were mostly children of church members, although the children of a few non-members were admitted(Oduolowu, 2003). There was no formal age for schooling at this level since children were admitted from the age of one to seven. The curriculum of these schools focused largely on bible doctrines and principles, which constituted the core of missionary work. To enhance the understanding of the bible and to make new meaning basic mathematics or arithmetic, counting, memorization, and songs constituted part of the content. As the classes went on, the pupils were subsequently promoted to primary schools which were created as the needs arises or as the schools became bigger and learners progressed (Oduolowu, 2003). These early childhood education and care centres became child-minding facilities for parents most of whom were farmers who daily went to their farms and needed people to take care of their children or worked outside of their immediate environment since especially due to low levels of development.

Oduolowu (2003) articulates that as time went on other preschools were established Government Reservation Areas for the children of Europeans living in such areas as well the few elite Nigerians who had grown along the ranks. But with the advent of independence, there was economic changes which let to development and the creation of several new schools as more and more Nigerians desired to be educated and emulate the examples of their colonial masters. Furthermore, the increase in women activism and job quarters for women created further needs for early childhood education and care centre. The practice of hiring maids, and leaving children with grandmothers had grown out of fashion as more and more women wanted to show case themselves as educated and advance the course of feminism (Oduolowu, 2003). Obanya (2002) further argues that preschool has gradually grown popular in Nigeria as a result of the increasing awareness of the benefits associated with early childhood education.

With the increasing popularity of preschool, the Nigerian government took several steps to maximise the benefits of preschool both for the nation and for the individuals. These steps in the early days culminated in three National Policy on Education policies (NPE, 2004), however, Gabriel (2013) argues that government efforts in enhancing early childhood

education ended at policy level with little or no practical contributions made towards enhancing the discipline. Oduolowu (2003) adding to this, further theorise that the cost involve in advancing early childhood education as well as the global economic crunch of the late eighties and early nineties made government spending on early childhood education difficult. The rippling effects of HIV/AIDS and other diseases like malaria, military coups, and military rule had devastating effects on developing countries.

2.5.1 National Policy on Education and Early childhood education in Nigeria

Oluwafemi, Nma, Osita, and Olugbenga (2014) and Newman and Obed (2015) argue that the current National Policy on Education (2013) in Nigeria makes several provision for early childhood education. This section of the policy, which pertains to preschool, encourages participation from both the private sector and different communities to contribute towards the development of this discipline. The policy outlines nine point agenda for the early childhood education. NPE (2013) outlines several ideas about the philosophy of education in Nigeria. It points out that education in Nigeria aims at empowering Nigerians to live in unity and harmony as indissoluble, indivisible, sovereign and democratic nation build on principles of equality, justice and freedom. It also seeks to promote solidarity in Africa as well as world peace through practical understanding. The philosophy of education is built on five basic believes that:

i) Education is an instrument for social change and national development,

ii) Education is vital in promoting a united and progressive nation,

iii) Education brings to the lime light the creative skills and potentials of citizens for self-actualisation and society development,

iv) Education is the right of every citizen of Nigeria regardless of his or her social status, gender, colour, religion, tribal origin, or contextual individual challenges.

v) Education should be functional, of great quality, comprehensive and address the needs of the Nigerian society (National Policy on Education, 2013, p. 1).

Education in Nigeria no matter the level is therefore geared towards the total development of the individual into a sound and responsible citizen, who would for the development of the nation. From the philosophy of education and the basic believes about education the goals for education in Nigeria are developed. According to the National policy on Education (2013),

there are five goals of education in Nigeria and these goals form the backbone of early childhood education in Nigeria. These goals are:

a) The sound development of the child or individual into a morally patriotic and effective citizen,

b) The immediate and total incorporation of the individual into the Nigerian community in particular and the world in general,

c) The provision of educational opportunities which are qualitative, and equally accessed by all citizens of Nigeria at all levels of the social strata, both within and outside the formal education system,

d) The inculcation of national unity, national consciousness and values in the education system,

e) And the development of physical, mental, social, and psychological competencies, abilities and skills with which the individual will contribute positively to the wellbeing of the nation (National Policy on Education, 2013, p. 2).

To ensure the realisation of the goals of education in Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (2013) points out several steps the Federal Government of Nigeria must take to facilitate the provision of education as well as the achievement of these goals. The Federal should therefore ensure that:

a) All educational engagements beginning from early childhood education to university education must be learner centred to guarantee maximum self-actualisation,

b) All teaching regardless of the level should be practical, experiential, activity based and powered by information and communication technology,

c) Education would be driven or directed to meet the needs of the community,

d) All arms of the government should work together to promote the establishment of resources needed by schools like reading clubs whether in schools or in the community, community libraries, playgrounds amongst others, to ensure effective and enhanced learning,

e) Incentives are allocated to foster and promote the study of sciences at all levels of the educational ladder,

f) Continuing education should be promoted and made part and parcel of the educational process

g) Education is provided in the language of the immediate community or the mother tongue beginning from preschool to the first four years of basic education. Every child shall must learn one Nigerian language (p. 2).

Early childhood education should therefore engulf all these principles or goals with the support of the government to ensure quality because every child matters. Without quality, national development as well as self-actualisation would be impossible. The National Policy on Education makes further allocation for the provision of education at all levels. The NPE (2013, p.3) points out the following to ensure quality:

1. Respect for self-worth and dignity of the individual,

2. Faith in the individual's abilities to make seasoned and rational decisions,

3. Interpersonal human relations enhanced by moral and spiritual principles,

4. Shared responsibility for the development of the society, promotion of the development of the child psychologically, physically and emotionally

5. The development of functional competencies and skills appropriate for self-reliance (National Policy on Education, 2013, p. 3).

NPE (2013) further articulates that basic education in Nigeria is provided to children between the ages of 0 to 15 years old and this is divided into four sections. The first section is 0-4 early child care development and education, and these is principally in the hands of individual providers, communities, and social development services. This is provided in day-cares and crèches and is not considered part of the formal education system because there is no official curriculum or guideline concerning what is to be done at this level of the educational ladder. The second section spans 5-6 years and this is referred to as pre-primary. The pre-primary which is considered part of the formal education has formal guidelines provided by the Federal government for education. The third section is primary education

which spans over a six years period, running from 7-12 years approximately. The last section is the junior secondary which runs for three years from 13 to 15.

2.5.2   The roles of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in National Policy on Education

For purposes of harmonisation, monitoring and policy coordination the Federal Government of Nigeria instituted the Universal Basic Education (UBE) to guide the provision of basic education both formal and informal. The UBE has as objectives:

a) Developing and promoting a strong consciousness in all Nigerian citizens for education, as well as a robust commitment to the continuous promotion of education.

b) Providing free, compulsory and universal basic education for all Nigerians within the school going age.

c) Providing measures for the eradication or reduction of school drop-out (excluding Early Child Care Development and Education) through enhanced efficiency, teacher efficacy, quality and relevance.

d) Providing through specific interventions, complementary approaches and the general promotion of Universal Basic Education support which suits the learning needs of young Nigerians who for one reason or another had dropped out of school.

e) Ensuring that all young Nigerians of school going age acquire levels of numeracy, literacy, life and communication skills which is commensurate to their level on the educational ladder. As well as civic, moral, ethical and security values vital for developing habits of lifelong learning or becoming a lifelong learner.

The UBE therefore creates a platform for the provision of basic education both formal and informal. Though there is no formal curriculum for Early Child Care Development and Education, these objectives of Universal Basic Education helps to guide all providers of informal education on what direction to direct such education. It also offers some guidance to parents, so they can have an idea what they are paying for and be able to measure if these objectives are met.

Drawing from the goals of education in Nigeria, the National Policy on Education theorises a five-point goal for Basic Education in Nigeria. These points are as follows;

1) Equip every child within the school going age with basic skills and knowledge for wealth creation, educational advancement and entrepreneurship.

2) Build and groom young Nigerians to be patriotic, and perform their civic duties thereby contributing to the socio-economic development of the nation.

3) The raising of morally upright and politically correct Nigerians who possess the skills and ability to think individually, as well as who appreciate the dignity of labour.

4) Encourage the drive for nation building, national consciousness, and peaceful co-existence regardless of the state of the individual or tribal affiliations.

5) Provide every opportunity necessary for the development manipulative skills which will empower the child to function within his or her full capacity in the society (National Policy on Education, 2013, p. 5).

2.5.3 Universal Basic Education (UBE) with Early Child Care Development and Education

Taking into consideration the philosophy of education in Nigeria; the five basic believes that inform the philosophy of education, the five goals of education in Nigeria, the seven steps the government is expected to take to ensure the achievement of educational goals, the five point agendas that must be taken to ensure quality education in Nigeria, and the goals for basic education in Nigeria, the National Policy of Education clearly articulates eight key constructs which culminates into the purpose of Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria. These key constructs inform the provision of ECCDE in all parts of Nigeria. It becomes vital to carefully articulate them in this study especially because of the discordant voices (as already theorised earlier) expressing themselves in the field of early childhood education and particularly in the definition of early childhood education. Since there is a division in the academia whether early childhood education should include both day-care or crèches (referred to officially or from a policy perspective in the Nigerian context as Early Child Care Development and Education) which is informal education and preschool which is formal or just preschool, it becomes vital to understand government legislature on this issues so as to provide a thorough platform for the study of ''The dynamics of learning amongst pre-primary school learners in Uyo Senatorial District, Nigeria: An exploration of formal and informal education processes''. This also becomes extremely relevant because

learning is continuous especially in the Nigerian context where both ECCDE and preschool and mutually inclusive or mutually enforcing. These key constructs are as follows;

a) Ensure smooth and stress free movement or transition from home to school.

b) Equip the child with basic skills for primary education

c) Provide intensive and adequate security, supervision and care for children while their parents are at work or at different individual engagements.

d) Build in every Nigerian or the child social norms as well as moral values necessary for active and responsible citizenship.

e) Build in the child a conscious desire for knowledge and creativity through the exploration of nature or inspiring artefacts like music, other forms of arts, the environment, toys and many other resources, which would help sustain the spirit of enquiry in the child.

f) Instil in the child or develop cooperative skills or a sense of cooperation and teamwork, which is vital for nation building and national development.

g) Empower the child to develop good habits, especially good health habits towards his or herself and towards others.

h) Empower the child with basic skills of numbers, shapes, forms, colours, and letters amongst others through play (National Policy on Education, 2013, p.10).

The key constructs which make up the purpose of ECCDE provide guiding principles for the provision of education at this level and it gives government and the other stake holders a way of structuring ECCDE in Nigeria though it doesn't constitute part of the formal education system. Furthermore, from the purpose, it is clear that ECCDE is the backbone of education in Nigeria especially since it is where the foundation is laid for future engagements. Akinbote et al. (2001) argue that every child's ability especially a child within the Nigerian context ability to fully maximise his or her potentials or 'God given talents' is highly dependent on the kind of encouragement and stimulation the child receives from his or her home or immediate surrounding environment. However, since Nigeria is an under developed nation with high rate of socio-economic imbalances, poverty, and unemployment, many parents cannot afford to provide their children with the necessary encouragement and stimulation

required total development. In addition, because of high unemployment, most parents are either busy in farms or working in big cities and have little or no time to provide the care, support and stimulation needed by children for all round development. ECCDE is therefore the principal way of mitigating this circumstances and providing the children with the necessary care, support, and inspiration or stimulation needed for their development. In ECCDE, the child is provided with necessary opportunities and tools to stimulate mental, physical and psychological development, which is not readily available at home. The purpose further caters for children with disabilities whose parents most often lack the ability, skills and knowledge to detect and deal with such disabilities. Most parents cannot even detect these disabilities in their children early leading to further damage. The challenges or disabilities could be physical like deafness, partial or complete, short sightedness, long-sightedness, amongst others. The challenges could also be psychological or emotional ranging from restlessness, fear, etc. The teachers' experts and teachers in ECCDE who are highly skilled in early childhood development, psychosocial and cognitive development, could help detect such challenges and provide vital advice, and or care alert necessary authorities, or the parents so that further steps can be taken for the development of the child. To this effect, the ECCDE is quite vital in the modern world, for the care and security of the child when their parents have gone to works. Ejieh (2006) further argues that proper emotional, social, physical and cognitive development of the child. ECCDE is also empowered by experts in brain and or child development and these experts have argued that from 0 to four or five years is very critical in all areas of development for the child especially character and personality development (Gabriel, 2013). The purpose of ECCDE in Nigeria must be met for the values and benefits to be manifested in the child. To ensure that these eight key constructs, which make up the purpose is met, the National Policy on Education articulates a ten point steps that the Federal Government must take to ensure that this purpose is met. These steps are as follows;

1. The Federal government will set standards and create monitoring mechanisms, which would ensure that the standards are continuously met in ECCDE centres.

2. The government shall develop and distribute curriculum and support materials like the Integrated Early Child Development Policy, Integrated Early Child Development Curriculum, National Minimum Standard for the establishment of Early Child Care Education Centres, Integrated Early Child Development Implementation Guideline

and all other curriculum or support materials that will enhance the implementation of the ECCDE.

3. The government must encourage individual, community and private efforts in the building of new or the enhancement of existing ECCDE centres based on the standards provided by National Minimum Standard for the establishment of Early Child Care Education Centres.

4. The government must make allocation or provision in teacher education studies or programs for specialisation in early child care and education, as well as the retraining of teachers who had previously specialise in different areas but now want to specialise in early child care and education.

5. The government must also ensure that the curriculum of teacher education programs especially early childcare and education is directed or oriented towards the play-way method

6. The government will also ensure that ECCDE Centres take or assume the following caregiver children or infant ratio:

    a) Crèche shall be 1:10

    b) Nursery will be 1:25

7. The government shall develop ECCDE curriculum and support materials for nationwide implementation.

8. The government shall directly control and supervise the quality of ECCDE centres to make sure that they are of the same standards nationwide.

9. The government will also make provision for the production and effective utilisation of instructional and learning materials in quantities that would be commensurate to the number of centres and students.

10. The government will also take measures to insure that the language of teaching and learning or medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue or the language used by the immediate locality where in is the school located. To ensure this, the government will:

a) Develop and enhance the orthography of more Nigerian languages to ensure that all languages may be used as the language of teaching and learning.

b) Ensure the writing of new textbooks and the translation of existing ones, develop supplementary materials and other instructional or support materials into Nigerian languages (National Policy on Education, 2013, p. 10).

It is therefore clear that the success of ECCDE in Nigeria is dependent on both the government and the private sector or the individual responsible for the centres. Maloney et al. (2015) argues that without direct government input and support, the early childhood education would not succeed. Although the NPE makes adequate provision for government action and intervention, policy most often fails to be translated into practice. Ejieh (2006) argues that because of funding challenges, little government subsidy and community input, most early childhood education centres function as a manifold unit, that is both formal and informal education spanning from ECCDE and pre-primary. Oluwafemi et al. (2014) argues that only a few child-care and or child-minding centres function in such manner and the trend is changing with these institutions operate both ECCDE and pre-primary and later apply for licence to operate as ECCDE, pre-primary and primary school. They continue that most of these schools or centres admit children from whatever age their parents are willing to part with them, while others only admit from the ages of two, and later translate to pre-primary or primary school as the case might be between the ages of 4 to 7. The number of children in this ECCDE centres vary from one to the other and these depends on the place where the centres is located or the teachers who teach in the schools or centres.

Ejieh (2006) further point out that owing to the increasing demand for ECCDE in Nigeria, more and more ECCDE centres are being open and it doesn't take long for these centres to be full because more and more parents are increasingly getting employment. Citing data or the findings of an unpublished study conducted in one of the ECCDE centres in Ile-Ife (by the same author) revealed that though the school or centre started with only two children in 1995, just a year later the number increased to 5 and by 1997 the school got authorisation to operate as pre-primary school causing the attendance to jump to fifty-four (54) children and six (6) teachers. By 1999 the school got permission to operate a primary school and the number of children jumped to one hundred and five (105) with twelve (12) both teaching and non-teaching staff. By 2004, the number of children in the school had more than doubled to two hundred and eighty (280) children. The number of teaching and non-teaching staff had grown

by four with the number of teachers increasing to twenty-four and the number of non-teaching staff increasing to eight (Ejieh, 2006). He continues that in recent times, ECCDE centres are growing up like trees everywhere and in unlikely places like university campuses, college premises, industrial and business organisation buildings, church premises, and residential buildings rented in part or whole for use as ECCDE centres, pre-primary or primary schools. While in some other towns or communities, buildings are constructed purposefully as for education and used for such purposes. Though these structures vary in terms of aesthetics and quality most often what influence the number of children attending an ECCDE is the community where the centre is found.

Gabriel (2013) says that with a few exceptions (the ECCDE centres established by some universities, colleges of education, companies or wealthy individuals) the quality of teachers facilitating learning in ECCDE centres is generally poor. These exceptions often employ the services of highly qualified university graduates or holders of Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE) to facilitate teaching and learning in such institutions. While several other centres often employ one or none at all and mix them with grade two teachers and secondary school graduates, School Certificate or General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) qualification. Gabriel continues that the school fees for these institutions also often differ with some having very low fees and some having ridiculously high school fees which is often commensurate or not to the resources available in the school, the location of the school, the quality of teachers teaching in the school and the level of care and security provided in the school.

Alabi and Ijaiya (2014) further points out that some schools employ unqualified teachers and pay them low amounts of money as a strategy to make the schools more accessible to the public in terms of the school fees paid, thereby maintaining a high profit margin. In a place like Nigeria where a majority of early childhood education providers come from the private sector or a private individual, there are bound to be several issues in the implementation of policy pertaining to early childhood education. The NPE, which provides guidelines for the provision of early childhood education, is often implemented differently with some centres failing to address all issues raised by the NPE. Since individuals get into education as a business for profit making purposes mainly, would definitely cut corners to increase their profit margin.

Akinbote, Osuji, and Salawu (2014) argue that the short comings of the implementation of the National Policy Education especially in the early childhood early is largely due to the failure or inability of the Federal Government to set guidelines for the provision of early childhood education and take measures to ensure that to put into effect or implement the guidelines developed. Concurring with this Alabi and Ijaiya (2014) maintain that of all the steps outlined by the National Policy on Education which the government must take, the only one the Federal Government has successfully implemented is issuing of licences or permission for the operation of ECCDE centres, and pre-primary schools in the country by the private sector or individuals with little involvement or participation by the public sector. This is made worse by the lack of supervision by the government to ensure that the guidelines provided by the policy sets us. This lack of maintenance or supervision has let to a continuous increase in the number of ECCDE centres and pre-primary schools in the country though with little or no significant steps taken by the public or private teacher education institutions in Nigeria to trained more skilled teachers in the early childhood education discipline. This lack of attraction or inability of the discipline to attract university students is due to lack of initiative taken by the federal government or state governments to establish public ECCDE centres or pre-primary schools, which would employ university graduates. Since teaching in the private sector yields little or no fruits or pays barely 'peanuts' most university students move away from this discipline to other disciplines in teaching wherein they can get employment in state or federal schools and earn quality wages. Ejieh (2006) and Akinbote et al. (2014) further argue that working in the ECCDE centres or pre-primary institutions is unattractive for students who want to be specialist in education because of the individuals or organisations who own these schools offer very low wages with little or no job security associated to it pushing students to other disciplines where security is guaranteed with the government. The government have failed both at the federal level and at the state level to ensure the translation of materials into Nigerian languages, neither has any new materials been developed to enhance learning in the mother tongue or language of the immediate community as the case might be (Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014).

Akinbote et al. (2014)further argue that though the federal government as well as the state government have failed to take necessary steps in this regard to enhance the development of Nigerian languages making it more accessible as languages of teaching and learning, even if they were to, this would meet stiff resistance from most parents who want their children to learn and be fluent in the official language (which is English) as early as possible to

guarantee command of the language in the future. Since ECCDE and pre-primary is basically provided by individuals or private institutions, and are principally for profit making, they turn to respond to the needs of the public rather than what the government desires, also owing to the fact that there is little or no government intervention or support to regulate education at this level. Oduolowu (2003) add that contrary to government believe or ideology that children should be taught in the mother tongue, most Nigerians who come from the middle calls of lower class and are able to find the means or resources to patronize early childhood education want their children to study in English since it has a promise of a better tomorrow rather than study in the mother tongue or indigenous language and end up unemployed. Since language acquisition is easiest as a child, most parents therefore prefer their children to learn or study in ECCDE centres or pre-primary schools in English since they are already learning the indigenous language or mother tongue at home. However, Alabi and Ijaiya (2014) argue that some parents prefer their children to be taught in the indigenous language at ECCDE centres and English while in pre-primary or a local language as a medium of instruments for both of ECCDE and pre-primary school. To further understand, how both ECCDE and pre-primary schools operate, it is vital to explore what the guidelines provided NPE in relation to pre-primary. NPE (2013) articulates eight keys objectives for pre-primary education which spans over a one year period for children age five or six prior to their entering primary school. The objectives of pre-primary according to NPE (2013, p.9) are as follows;

a) To ensure and effect a smooth transition or movement from home to school

b) To prepare all children for the primary level education in Nigeria,

c) To provide standard security, care, and supervision for children thereby building a firm foundation for a better citizenry for the nation while their parents are at work.

d) To build in every child social and moral values which makes the core of the society.

e) To improve on the desire for creativity, and enquiry instilled or honed in the child at the ECCDE level and ensure that the passion for excellence and lifelong learning is sustained through the exploration of the environment or art forms like; music, dance, drama etc.

f) To build on and enhance the team spirit as well as cooperative skills developed at the ECCDE level or instil it afresh in those who did not attend the ECCDE, thereby enhancing the quality of experience they would have in the primary school.

g) To enhance the knowledge of good habits especially good health habits in children who already have (in this case those who attended the ECCDE) or stimulate the development of such in every child to ensure the moralisation of the future society.

h) To instil in children basic ideas or skills of numeracy, writing, and literacy for their development in the primary school.

The eight objectives are similar to those of the ECCDE cater for the total development of the child. It considers to basic kinds of learners; those who attended ECCDE and those who did not. This is because ECCDE as well as pre-primary is not compulsory as such parents can decide whether they want their children to attend or not. The policy objectives for pre-primary builds on ECCDE for those who attended ECCDE by catering for the enhancement of the skills development and improving their social as well as cultural capital so that by the time they enter primary school they are better equipped for formal schooling. On the other hand, it looks at those who did not attend ECCDE and hopes to generate in them basic skills as well as the development of these skills such that these children would be more than ready to enter primary school. Since the early years are crucial for a child's development as already pointed out elsewhere, the government or the policy makes allocation for the development of the child in totality to enhance not only their learning abilities but their capacity acquire and store information.

To ensure these objectives are met, the policy creates a six point action point for the government to take in the drive to ensure that the objectives for pre-primary education are met. These Action Points are as follows:

a) The federal government would develop and implement quality assurance guidelines or standards as well as monitor the provision or pre-primary education and take necessary steps for its improvement.

b) Develop and distribute curriculum materials, policies patterning to pre-primary education, national minimum standards for the provision of pre-primary education, curriculum implementation materials, and other documents necessary for a vibrant and impactful pre-primary education.

c) Generate and distribute monetary resources through appropriate channels for the funding of pre-primary education.

d) Take necessary steps for the training and retraining of teachers as the case might be teaching at this level of the academic ladder. Opportunities for constant professional development and capacity building must also be made available for all teachers at this level.

e) The federal government would also embank on several sensitisation and awareness campaigns about pre-primary education, its value for the society and encourage parents to send their children for the one year pre-primary education.

f) Lastly, the federal government must also take steps to ensure that all relevant ministries, departments and agencies as well as private partners working together for the development of pre-primary education synergise strategies and work together for proper implementation of the one-year pre-primary education especially due to its multi-sectoral nature or the diversity of stake holders involved in the field. For effective teaching, therefore, the government will ensure that teaching and learning ratio at the pre-primary level in relation to teachers and pupil is 1:25 (that is one teacher teaching twenty-five pupils).

In Nigeria like elsewhere in the world, policy has always failed to translate to practice and in cases where it has been translated to practice, it is never the way it was planned. As already pointed out, the federal government has done little or nothing to keeps its own part of the bargain, as such there are still a lot of challenges with the provision of early childhood education in Nigeria. This is one of the reasons for this study, especially since it seeks to explore the dynamics of learning amongst pre-primary learners in one of the districts in Nigeria. By doing so, the study would be exploring the formal and informal processes of learning, thereby throwing more light on the state of pre-primary education and how it is facilitated since teaching and learning cannot be separated and both are mutually enforcing. To better understand this, it is vital to look at the dynamics or approaches of teaching and learning in early childhood education. This is discussed in the next section of this literature review.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, I looked at all the definitions advanced by various researchers and scholars on the early childhood education. Furthermore, historical development of early childhood education was discussed with particular reference to countries such as USA, Germany, China and South Africa. Lastly, I discussed early childhood education in Nigeria and the policies that aid its operation. Equally National Policy on Education with references to Early childhood education in Nigeria has been deliberated with the five basic believes upon which philosophy of education is built. The roles of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in National Policy on Education have also been discussed with the five basic objectives of the policy inclusive. In my next chapter, I will try and present the literature review that will as a guide in analysing the data.

Chapter three

Review of the related literature

3.1 Introduction

Chapter two of this thesis focused on the historical development of early childhood education in countries such as USA, Germany, China and South Africa. In addition, I explained the historical trend of early childhood education in Nigeria and all the dynamics that impact its operation.

In chapter three of study, an attempt was made to review the relevant literature to the study under exploration. A review of related literature, if clearly comprehend, is paramount to any research endeavour. This is because as Hart (2009) assert, without a literature review a scholar would not be able to acquire an understanding of the research that has already been done, how it has been researched, and what the key issues are. Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006, p.20) were more specific in this regard and argue that:

A literature review in any research includes the notion to sharpen and deepen the theoretical framework of the research, to familiarise the researcher with the latest developments in the area of research, to identify gaps in knowledge, as well as weaknesses in previous research studies, to discover connections, contradictions or other relations between different research findings by comparing various explorations, to identify variables that must be considered in the research, to study the definitions used in previous research studies as well as the characteristics of the populations or research sample investigated with the aim of adopting them for the new research and to study the advantages and disadvantages of the research methods used by other researchers in order to adopt or improve on them in one's own research.

In addition, Grix (2010) is of the view that a literature review provides an empirical basis for a subsequent development of hypotheses and research efforts, identifying areas that have already been covered by the researcher(s) to avoid repetition. In light of the above, literature review is conducted in the study in order to understand the dynamics of learning among pre-primary school learners in formal and informal education processes at Uyo Senatorial district of Nigeria.

For the purpose of clarity, I looked at the literature review around the language use by pre-primary school children, the importance of mother tongue, different types of learning use in the pre-primary school children and the dynamics or approaches of learning in the formal and informal settings.

3.2 Language as a tool of communication and instruction

Language is an important factor that promotes children's learning at the formal and informal settings. Araromi (2005) opine that language is the medium of communication, however, without it human beings would have difficulty to exist. According to Tannenbaum and Berkovich (2005), language is important to all manners of transmission of knowledge, values and socialisation processes. From the Ejieh's (2004) perspective, a language is an indispensable tool in the education of the child. In the same vein, Zhang and Alex (1995) maintain that language acquisition is a natural process for children that occur without effort, although the ability to communicate increases with age, this does not mean that such growth will lead to perfection. Language is central to learning which develops the ability of reading, writing and playing, this is linked to linguistic achievement in school (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2008).

3.2.1 Mother tongue as the language of learning

According to UNESCO (2008), the medium of instruction and knowledge of language is very important to learning. UNESCO (2008) opine that, to enhance quality in learners' learning, the value of mother tongue instruction in early childhood and primary 1 to 3 classes of primary school must be encouraged. In addition, UNESCO (2008) encourage the protection of children's home or indigenous languages and the preservation of the linguistic diversity asserting that it needs serious efforts to make sure that pre-primary learners should be educated in their mother tongue. The above assertion was supported by Ball (2010) who report that the issues of language acquisition and the goal of Education for All (EFA) call for urgent attention to encourage the provision of quality education in their home language for learners.

In 2009, the former Oyo State Commissioner for Education, Youth and Sports in Nigeria delivered a speech in which he stated that using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in pre-primary and primary schools was based on the fact that learners understand better when they are taught and learnt in their local languages, and they easily use the experience gained from the language to respond to their classroom issues.

Internationally, in Nepal, Nepali is a lingua franca (Khati, 2011). This language was given the status of an official language, therefore, Nepali (as mother tongue) is useful in translating English concepts quickly and easily by the teacher to the learners in class for effective understanding (Khati, 2011). Speaking in the same vein, Khanal (2004) had earlier stated that that moderate and judicious use of the mother tongue (Nepali) promotes the learning and teaching of the target language. According to Alidou, Boly, Brock-Utne, Diallo, Heugh and Wolff (2006), early education in home languages is important and can be lasting and valuable when it is adopted as a language of instruction for children between the ages of two and eight years in pre-primary and primary education. Additionally, Alidou, et al (2006) maintain that reading and writing in the mother tongue should not only be narrating of stories to the children in the first three years of school. Rather, it should be developed to the level that written texts and oral language used for learning and teaching mathematics, science, history and geography in the primary school.

A study carried out by Kocakulah, Ustunluoglu and Kocakulah (2005) in Turkey indicate that learners who were taught "Energy" in a second language, could not understand effectively in class as those in the Turkish language. This was based on the fact that the learners did not understand the foreign language very well and it also was believed that learners would have performed effectively if they were taught in their mother tongue. Furthermore, learning through the mother tongue provides an easy stepping stone for the transition from home to school. In a study conducted by Mathooko (2009), the scholar posits that an indigenous medium is educationally preferable because it connects teaching with the home lives of the children. From all indications, it must be founded on cognitive ideas formed during the learners' preschool experiences (Mathooko, 2009). Scholars such as Wilson and Kamana (2001), Wilson, Kamana and Rawlins (2006), Heugh (2008), Tembe and Norton (2008) argues that learning in a language different from the mother tongue of the learners puts them under intellectual pressure, this is because they have to learn new concepts in the second language. This may create a difficult situation whereby the learners have to cope with the problems that emerge from the second language used as a medium of instruction in schools (Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2010). Additionally, Lightbown (2008) stressed that becoming completely fluent in English language is not, as many have claimed, 'easy as pie,' rather, takes several years. Thus, it is a mistake to assume that to allow day care or preschool children to learn in a second language is appropriate to prepare the children for academic success.

In another vein, a study conducted in Philippines, learners in grade 1 to 3 in the Lubuagan public schools were taught in their home language. Findings indicated that teachers did not only record high levels of participation among the learners, and they themselves started to use the home language orally which promote children's friendly learning environment in the schools. Similarly, in a study conducted in Turkey by Kabadayi (2005), it was discussed that the mother tongue enhances continuity in the child's learning process and maximises his intellectual development. In Mali, where 'pedagogies convergente bilingual education program' was operational since 1987, there were high achievement in language and mathematics in bilingual schools compared to monolingual schools (UNESCO, 2008).

Culturally, aside from preserving the cultural heritage of the people, it was reported by Kan and Kohnert (2005) mother tongue education facilitates smooth transition from the children's home to school, inculcates permanent literacy in the learners, it prepares the learners to be ready for learning and gives the learners the opportunity to transfer learning effectively. Alidou and Mallam (2004) observes that the continued dominance of English at the pre-primary and primary schools do impede learning more so as the majority of the learners enrolling into the pre-primary and primary schools are from various mother tongue homes and neighbourhoods.

3.3 The dynamics or approaches of learning in early childhood education/pre-primary school

Learning and teaching is a complicated. Jordan, Carlile and Stack (2008) argues that learning is a complicated science with different approaches. Learning is therefore the process of acquiring new information and expanding existing schemata for development purposes. These scholars continue that learning has several general principles which make it effective. Bowman (1993, p. 120) articulate that ''learning is primarily a social activity and participation in the social life of the school is central for learning to occur''. She continues that teachers principally determine or orchestrate what is learnt and how what is learnt is learnt. The dynamics or approaches of learning among children are therefore largely depended on the teachers, what these teachers teach and how they facilitate what they are teaching. Jordan et al. (2008) maintain that there are several approaches to learning in the pre-primary or early childhood education (as it is called in a majority of literature in the field as already pointed out in chapter two of thesis) and this is dependent on the resources available, and the quality of teachers facilitating the learning. Since dynamics refer to the

forces which stimulate growth or change within a particular entity(Abrahamson & Sánchez-García, 2016). The dynamics of learning is how the process stimulates or enhances learning. These processes are therefore in line with the approaches of learning since they both communicate how learning takes place and how such learning is enhanced.

Polychroni, Koukoura, and Anagnostou (2006), Hyson (2008) and Li-Grining, Votruba-Drzal, Maldonado-Carreño, and Haas (2010) argue that children are different and have different abilities and these abilities inform the way they learn and react to whatever they come across. Jordan et al. (2008) and Li-Grining et al. (2010) further argue that research has shown that 5 percent of children learn effectively through lecture or silencing to the teacher directly. Another 10 percent of children learn better by reading from books and other materials. Even though they sit in classes and listen to the teacher and engage in several activities, they learn better by reading. Furthermore, 15 percent of the children are visual learners or learn through visual arts (Li-Grining, et al, 2010). This means that they are more photographic in their memory and pictures make more sense to them. Another 30 percent of children learn better though demonstrations. When the teacher demonstrates in the classroom their understanding is heightened. Adding to this, another 50 percent learn better through small group engagements or work.

Once they become participants in group endeavours whatever they might be doing, the knowledge acquired or constructed from such processes is enhanced. A great percentage of children or pupils, about 75 percent to be exact learn better through experimental work. Experimenting becomes an amazing tool or approach to construct knowledge and because it is constructed out of excitement and experience, the children own their knowledge and keep it. But a greater percentage of children, 90 percent to be precise learn more through peer tutoring. These children by engaging in education activities with their peers learn more rather than engagements with the teacher. The idea of peer tutoring which was development strong from Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" informs the dynamics or many approaches to teaching and learning in early childhood education today. Hannan (1996, p.20) an expert in child learning builds on Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" and recommends a "third/third/third" approach child learning cultured or founded from the zone of proximal development, with children ''spending a third of proximal learning time in friendship pairings/groupings, a third in single gender non-friendship pairings and a third in mixed gender pairings, so that within one half term everyone works with everyone else." This works better with activity based learning as well as other learning approaches which encourages

participative approaches to learning or learning which stimulates development both at the individual level and at the classroom level.

From the above, it is clear that there are many individuals learning styles and children depending on their context, with some learners being dominant or having abilities in more than one particular style. These dynamics of learning be it visual or spatial, auditory or kinaesthetic all have different things to offer or help the child to develop effectively in different areas. Kinaesthetic learners or children are kinaesthetically oriented learn best when they are physically engaged either by touching, feeling, or doing. Visual learners or those who learn more by seeing information or creating mental pictures of what is being said learning more in spaces with enhanced resources, while auditory learners prefer to hear information because their auditory senses are more heighten. These learning dynamics would influence the way teaching and learning unfolds in the classroom. Howard Gardner's theory of multiply intelligence helps expatiate on different learning styles or ways in which children learn. Gardner (2011) and Gardner (2015) argue that the theory of multiple intelligences is basically a psychological and educational theory which argues that different kinds of intelligences exists amongst human beings. Gardner argues that children have varying levels of abilities or intelligences which makes every child in the classroom unique and important. Gardner's theory which came to the lime light 1983 in the book; Frames of Mind: The theory of Multiple Intelligences, which heighted seven key intelligences or learning styles as he called them. In this work, he defined the first seven intelligences. He added another two in another book published in 1999 titled; Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21 Century. According to Gardner (1983), these intelligences are: linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, bodily/kinaesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, inter-personal intelligence, intra-personal intelligence, naturalist intelligence, existential intelligence and spatial intelligence.

3.3.1 Linguistic intelligence

Linguistics intelligence as a learning style or dynamic empowers children to make more sense of the world around them through language or communication. Their linguistic abilities are heightened making them more linguistically inclined to learning. This explains why some children have been reported to speak as earlier as between six to nine months (Bertrand, 2007). Learners who learn using this approach use words to interpret and understand the

world in which they live and in turn communicate this meaning easily linguistically. Learners find the words to express themselves in ways in which other learners would not.

3.3.2 Logical-mathematical intelligence

Another learning style used by children is the logical-mathematical intelligence, wherein children are more inclined to understand abstract or immaterial relations. Although these concepts don't physically exist in the world, they can easily imagine and document it with their brains. Children who would naturally excel in science, mathematics and technology use this approach as a principal learning style. With this style or dynamic of learning children are good in solving practical problems because they have a strong sense of imagination and can quickly test or implement their ideas in their head or on paper without waiting for a real-life situation to try it out.

3.3.3 Spatial intelligence

Spatial intelligence on the one hand as a learning style or dynamic deals with the ability by learners to process or perceive visual or spatial information easily, and transform this information into other visuals that helps them make more sense of the situation. Some learners find it easier to express themselves better in visuals or pictures rather than words. There are reasons why philosophers would accept the picture of a thing as a definition of such a thing. Children using this learning style find it easy to visually represent their ideas. Other children who use the bodily/kinaesthetic intelligence as their dynamic of learning, use themselves as examples in the learning process. Learners learn better when engaged in role plays, songs, dance, choreographies or any activity that would enable them using their entire body or parts of it in the teaching and learning process. Children using this dynamic or approach to learning would also excel in hands on projects that involve craft or some form of hand work.

While others use their bodies to make meaning, others who learn better using musical intelligence as a learning style understand, create and communicate meaning or knowledge made out of sound. Learners prefer to memorise lessons into songs and easily lock on melodies and rhythms faster than numbers, pictures or words. In early childhood education, where a lord of singing and repetition is done, this becomes vital.

3.3.4 Inter-personal intelligence.

Another learning style used by children in early childhood education is inter-personal intelligence. This kind of intelligence empowers children to understand and make distinctions about feelings, expressions and intentions of others. To Gardner (1983), this learning style focuses on temperaments, mannerisms, moods, motivations and intentions that manifest itself in the class. Since teachers do not only communicate with their voice but also with their mannerisms, there are several children who easily pick and make meaning of signals portrayed by the teachers (Gardner, 2013). On the other hand, intra-personal intelligence is a learning style used by children who learn more by constructing knowledge based on their experiences. Through their experiences children distinguish between their feelings, to build accurate mental models which represent themselves and their ways of life or meaning construction (Gardner, 2013). Children who learn from this approach use their experiences both positive and negative to improve their knowledge base. While some children learn better by using their experiences, some others learn better by using the environment.

3.3.5 Naturalist intelligence

Naturalist intelligence is another style of learning which empowers children to make meaning from environmental features. Naturalist intelligence makes sense of whatever the society has to offer which others don't make sense of. Twenty-three years after his seminal work on multiple intelligences, Gardner (2006) added the naturalist intelligence to his original seven intelligences in his book, "Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons in Theory and Practice." He previously laid out his original theory with seven identified intelligences. He argued that there are better or at least alternative ways to measure intelligence than standard IQ tests for students in both regular and special education. According to him, all people are born with one or more "intelligences," The best way to test, and develop, these intelligences is by practicing skills in these areas, says Gardner, and not through paper-and-pencil/online tests.

3.3.6 Existential intelligence

The last learning style advocated by Gardner is the existential intelligence. This learning style sees children develop the capacity to reflect or makes meaning of philosophical issues which or other thing which other children would not understand. This is the least developed or used learning style by children especially in the early childhood education.

This type of intelligence give children the ability to use intuition, thought and meta-cognition to ask and answer deep questions about human existence. Children with this type of intelligence can ask such questions as:

- Who are we? Why are we alive?
- Do we have a purpose?
- Why and how are we conscious?
- What is the meaning of life?

According to Gardner, "These are questions that transcend perception; they concern issues that are too big or small to be perceived by our five sensory systems." Socrates and the Buddha are examples of famous figures who exhibited an exceptional level of existential intelligence. Children adopt this intelligence in their learning process.

3.4 Learning dynamics in children

Portilho and Beltrami (2011) and Adler (2015) articulate four learning dynamics used by children in the early childhood education in the teaching and learning process. The first of this learning approach is active learning.

3.4.1 Active learning in children

Active learning is a dynamic of learning where children learn by practically engaging in activities, like writing, reading, discussion, debates, projects or problem solving which encourages analysis, engagement, synthesis, and evaluation of the situation or the case study (Svoboda, Ruest, Spears, Roeche, & Opperman, 2015). This task sparks creativity in children and ensure that their abilities whatever they are, are being expressed. Since children enjoy or like discovering new things, this approach empowers them or gives them the opportunity to fine tune their skills. Goodman (2014) conducted a study on 'observing children in the classroom' using multiple regression as the analytical tool, finding shows that attention span of children is very short and starts dwindling after the first ten minutes, after the first ten minutes, it is difficult for the child to maintain his or her attention on what is being said in the classroom. Since early childhood education is about stimulating growth, Goodman (2014) encourages creativity and the desire for lifelong learning, active learning becomes an apt way to go. According to Freeman et al. (2014), since learning is informed by teaching, regardless of what style or dynamic the child uses to learn, without proper facilitation such skills would not be properly developed. Though children can only maintain their attention better by doing

or being engagement, their teachers therefore need to encourage the active learning among children as the go through early childhood education. By using active learning or engaging active learning in the classroom, empower children to further encode or reinforces what has already been learned so as to harness such materials or concepts for effective skill development (Settles, 2012). By engaging in this activity, children have the opportunity of getting immediate and constant feedback to enhance development. This processing of lesson material provide children the opportunity to connect what has just been learnt with what was previously learnt, thereby providing meaning to their experiences, as well as reasons for further experiences (Engeström, 2014). By doing this, children gain self confidence in themselves as well as their learning abilities and the desire to work with others or communicate what they have learnt. Portilho and Beltrami (2011) add that this active learning style make children more cheerful, in the classroom as they feel comfortable to communicate their opinions and engage in different activities as a result of their for creativity and curiosity to learn new things. This desire helps children to go beyond what has been requested to learn more. This explains why children in the classroom always produce different assessment products. Their learning styles inform how learners learn, what they learn and how teaching and learning is facilitated in the classroom.

3.4.2 Reflective learning in children

The second learning dynamic propounded by Portilho and Beltrami (2011) and Adler (2015) is the reflective learning. According to Alder (2015), children who learn using this style like to observe what is happening in the classroom, analyse the situation as well as the environment in which it is taking place as well as the classroom, before acting. Learners prefer to listen to everyone else, reflects upon their ideas before making an argument or propounding their ideas. In some cases, they hardly say anything, but focus on what others are saying. Such children express self-restrain and focus on knowledge construction. Children who learning using this approach are predominantly introverts (Adler, 2015). In a study conducted by Zhang, Coutinho, Zhang, Quan and Schuller (2015) on agreement-based dynamic active learning with least and medium certainty query strategies, these authors found that children always often perform better in assessment task because of their ability to reflect effectively before responding. Midgley (2014) argues that the desire to reflect before responding creates in the child the desire for details which culminates into the desire for life-long learning which is what is encouraged in children. The particular attention to details

demonstrated by children who use this dynamic for learning is their strongest strength as learners.

3.4.3 Theoretical perspective of children's learning

The third learning style articulated by Portilho and Beltrami (2011) and Adler (2015) is theoretical learning style. This type of learner is highly organised and plans task in a particular way which others would not. Patrick and Mantzicopoulos (2015) says that the child starts every activity, knowing fully well what he/she wants to do and how he/she wants to do regardless of whether it is wrong or right. This helps build self confidence in the child, and empower them to constantly avoid being ridiculed in the classroom or by their friends whatever the case might be (Patrick & Mantzicopoulos, 2015). The child who learns using the theoretical approach focuses highly on planning in general, with particular interest on what to do with information received, how to receive information passed across and how to respond to the information. This causes the learner to be prepared before coming to class in anticipation of the lesson and the activities which are to follow the lesson (Noddings, 2015). Such children perform exceptionally well in puzzles, mathematics, and other games in general (Patrick & Mantzicopoulos, 2015). Children who learn principally using this approach always want to know why a particular thin is happening the way it is as well as how it is happening. This helps the children to gather facts about a phenomenon.

3.4.4 Pragmatic learning in children

The last learning approach or dynamic used by children by Portilho and especially in early childhood education offering Beltrami (2011) and Adler (2015) is the pragmatic learning style. Using this approach to learning means that the child relies heavily on the self (meaning that they have a strong sense of self or their level of self-confidence is quite high) and is determined to do whatever needs to be done at all cost no matter what it takes. Östman and Wickman (2014) add that this approach to learning sees the individual highly focused on the task at hand regardless of what other class mates or individuals are saying. Learners' choices are always fast, calculated and highly useful or focus based on their level of confidence and determination (Threeton & Walter, 2016). Entwistle and Ramsden (2015) aver that within this learning approach, if a problem arises in the course of the lesson or task in which the child is engaged in, he/she wants to fix it immediately before moving on. Like the name of the approach, the pragmatic child enjoys the practicality of things as well as the innovations that might erupt from such task or activity.

As already articulated, ECCDE in Nigeria aims principally at instilling in children national values, ethical behaviour, skills, creativity and the passion for lifelong learning, and this can only be archived if teaching and learning is purely learner centred. This means that learners take more responsibility for their learning and assert themselves in whatever way they can in the classroom. Although several learning approaches have been discussed, it is vital to discuss other learning styles which tally practically with the vision for education in Nigeria as well as what it encourages. To this effect, five learning approaches or dynamics would be discussed which has particular significance to the Nigeria context as well as what ECCDE aims at achieving in the child. These approaches are; activity based learning, experiential learning, game based learning, competency based learning, and play based learning.

3.5 Forces influencing learning in children

Parpala, Lindblom-Ylänne, Komulainen and Entwistle (2013), Schmeck (2013) advance four approaches that influence learning among children in pre-primary or early childhood education. I want to state that some of the approaches were mentioned by the previous scholars, however, it is pertinent to highlight these approaches for clarity sake. According to Schmeck (2013), the forces that influence learning are as follows: activity based learning, experiential learning, game based learning and play based learning.

3.5.1 Activity based learning in school

According to Nudzor, Dare, Oduro, Bosu, and Addy (2015), activity based learning is a cognitive approach to learning wherein a child 'constructs' his/her own miniatures of knowledge from current and past experiences and knowledge as a result of an interaction with data stored in the mind. The child actively searches for new knowledge or information or discovers new information as a result of an activity in which the child is engaged in. the child therefore gains, adapts, and consumes the new information or knowledge acquired as the activity unfolds. Niesz and Krishnamurthy (2014) adding to this argue that activity based learning is a unique way of learning which children can use (if the facilitator drives the learning in that direction since teaching and learning work hand in hand) to develop at all levels. This is because the principles of activity based learning as an approach to learning and teaching or teaching and learning leaves a majority of the responsibility on the learner rather than the teacher. Nudzor et al. (2015, p. 23) argue that with activity based learning, learning is an active and constructive process where the child has a tangible input of "doing", and engagement with the world or the activity thereby constructing some form of meaning

depending on the activity. Riding and Rayner (2013) sees activity based learning as engaging and the child expects the teacher to provide activities with which they can engage their minds and hands. Furthermore, activity-based learning is seen as a social activity, where a connection is made with the activity and other human beings or experiences (Hall, Kellar, & Weinstein, 2016). This makes the learning contextual in nature because it is derived from particular activities which might produces experiences which are not universally applicable or acceptable depending on the activity. So learning experiences and life experiences are interwoven and knowledge construction is on the bases of previous knowledge, meaning that the activities in which learners engage in must be interconnected one way or another to ensure that the knowledge constructed is continuous and harmonised (Nudzor et al., 2015). For this to happen, the teachers' efforts (his activities in the classroom and the activities provided to the learners) must be at the level or state of the child and theorise a path into the learning area on the basis of previous experience or knowledge. Studies conducted by Niesz and Krishnamurthy (2014) on activity based learning using pre-primary school learners in China indicated that learning takes time and is a continuous process (which explains the concept of lifelong learning) wherein children try, retry, ponder upon old and new ideas alike, try them out, use them in whatever way and finally play with them. In this way, the knowledge or experience gain moved from the realm of theory into the world of practice making more meaning to the learner (Niesz & Krishnamurthy, 2014).

Furthermore, Stößlein and Changchun (2009) argue that children who learn from an activity perspective respond to learning stimuli in a particular or predictable way, because their minds have been program towards that direction. Since the purpose of early childhood education in Nigeria (pre-primary education) is the development of the whole child (NPE, 2013), the experiences of the child over the years constitute the central core or elements of education. Stößlein and Changchun (2009) point out that children should be free to choose how they want to learn and what they want to learn, this way we ensure that the individual experiences they have accumulated in the is engaged or used in the learning process, thereby encouraging creativity and the expression of such which is one of the core values of the National Education Policy in Nigeria. According to Hwang, Sung, Hung and Huang (2013), depending on the level or age of a children or learner, these children can develop or can be assisted to develop individualised plans for learning which who portray their unique abilities and characteristics as learners. NPE (2013) opine that the early years of a child are critical for the development of the child, as well as the learning habits this children are going to grow up

with, it is vital to see and understand them as individuals. Stößlein and Changchun (2009) argue that this individuality should be unconditionally prized above all else. For this to happen within the framework of activity based learning or amongst learners who learn principally by actively engaging or putting their hands and heads to work, teachers input or influence is minimal as they facilitate learning experiences for every child. But letting or causing children to engage in activities in the classroom, gives the teacher the opportunity to go around the classroom and provide assistance to every child especially when the teacher to pupil ratio is respected (Ching, 2014). This creates a rich environment, where children can pick up and develop different signals from their activities as well as the activities of their friends as they all manifest in the classroom. Activity based learning therefore is a unique dynamic or approach of learning which is vital in the development of the child at all levels. And when this is linked to a context like Nigeria in general and Uyo Senatorial District in particular where socio-economic realities as wells as cultural barriers produces different challenges in the lives of children, the individuality of the child is vital for total development. The teacher therefore prioritises every child making their learning meaningful.

3.5.2 Experiential learning in children

The second approach or dynamic of learning amongst children within the early childhood education face experiential learning. Kolb (2014) look at experiential learning as a process of knowledge construction used by children or learners to construct knowledge, develop skills which are value laden directly from experiences accumulated from outside formal academic settings. For such construction of knowledge to take place, activities which include research, projects, and service learning or other professional and creative experiences developed by the teacher. Wurdinger and Carlson (2010, p.2) add to this argue that ''experiential learning is a learning style, philosophy or methodology which learners carefully employ to direct their learning in the knowledge construction process, through focused reflection with the purpose of developing skills and clarifying values." This implies that experiential learning is an active process in which every child that engages in it must be prepared to practically engage with the task at hand to enhance the knowledge creation or construction process. Jarmon, Traphagan, Mayrath, and Trivedi (2009) further articulate that experiential learning can be seen as learning by doing, learning through action, learning through discovery, learning through experience, or learning through exploration, using well-articulated paradigms or maxims. Gentry and McGinnis (2014, p. 25) in his study, provides examples of such maxims which can or should guide experiential learning to include "I hear and I forget, I see and I

remember, I do and I understand, tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I will learn, there is an intimate and necessary relation between the process of actual experience and education." These three quotations offer clarity on what experiential learning should look like and how its unfold. Experiential learning is therefore border on learning which provides practical learning experiences for children in other to enhance their meaning making processes. Wurdinger and Carlson (2010, p.63) contain that "children using experiential learning as basic approach to learn involved learning process through discussion, group work, hands-on participation, and applying information outside the classroom."

In experiential learning, Jordan et al. (2008) identifies four basic types of experiential learning to include: rational experiential learning, reflective experiential learning, transformative cyclical experiential learning and experiential learning. In the context of rational experiential learning, Jordan et al (2008) argue is a process which takes off with a problem. In other words, it is a problem-based learning. The problem is then given serious consideration in a systematic manner by the learner (Hwang, Sung, Hung, Huang & Tsai, 2012). This approach raises questions about the desire for problems owing to the fact that not all experiences are built on problems or all learning engagements in the classroom involves a problem.

For reflective experiential learning, this involves a style of learning in which children are able to respond to unpredictable situations or experience with care and intelligence, which he argues is the basis for meaning or world making activity (Pritchard, 2013). This scholar argues that knowledge is embedded in skills and vice versa and it is the reflective utilisation of the one that the other is harnessed. This makes reflection very critical or unavoidable in constructing new tacit knowledge. Building on this, Eppich and Cheng (2015) offer two basic types of reflection to include reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. In the context of reflection-in–action, these authors see the child reflecting in the meaning making process. For example, a child reflecting while counting one to ten or adding three apples and three apples. The reflection occurs at the time of the learning thereby fine-tuning the skill and demystifying the process (Eppich & Cheng, 2015). On reflection-on-action, on the other hand, sees the learner or child reflecting after the exercise or examination (Eppich & Cheng, 2015). The child looks back at what he/she did, identifies the errors, correct, thereby improving on their meaning making abilities.

In the area of cyclical experiential learning, Kolb (2014) argues that learning is a cycle and this cycle can never be broken especially because experiences never end and meaning making is based on experience. Furthermore, the human mind especially that of a child can hardly be directed to begins process an idea from a particular point, the learning cycle is non-linear, as such begins from anywhere and keeps going around and round.

This is graphically demonstrated below.

Figure 3.1: **Cyclical experiential learning**
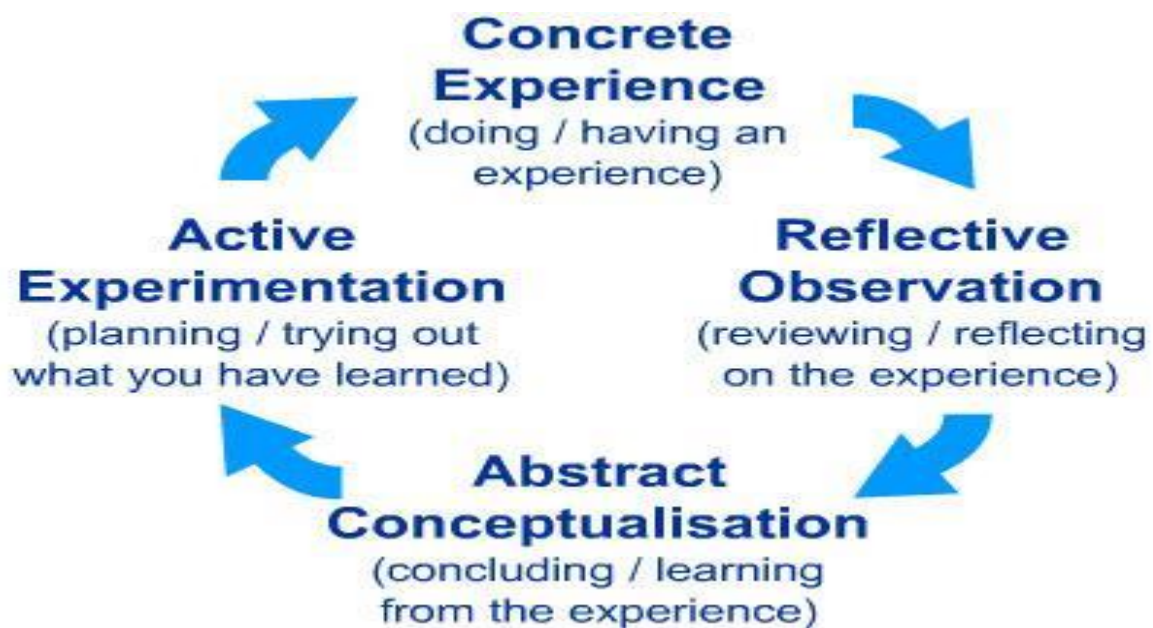
Source: Adopted from Kolb (2014)

Figure 3.1 above shows that there are four steps in the cyclical experiential learning plot namely: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. The concrete experience stage is a reflective point where the child has full knowledge and conscious of the situation or problem and can experience as real or see it with the optical eyes (Kolb, 2014). This is gotten through the process of engaging and this leads to reflective observation, where the child carefully observes or reflects on the just concluded action which leads to the development or formulation of abstract rules or concepts about the phenomenon or experience for future purposes or experience (Klob, 2014). This rules or abstract formulations are then tested through experimentation leading to further modification and refinement of the experiential cycle and this keeps the cycle continuous.

This is represented in figure 3.2 below.

Figure 3.2: **Operation of the cyclical experiential learning process**
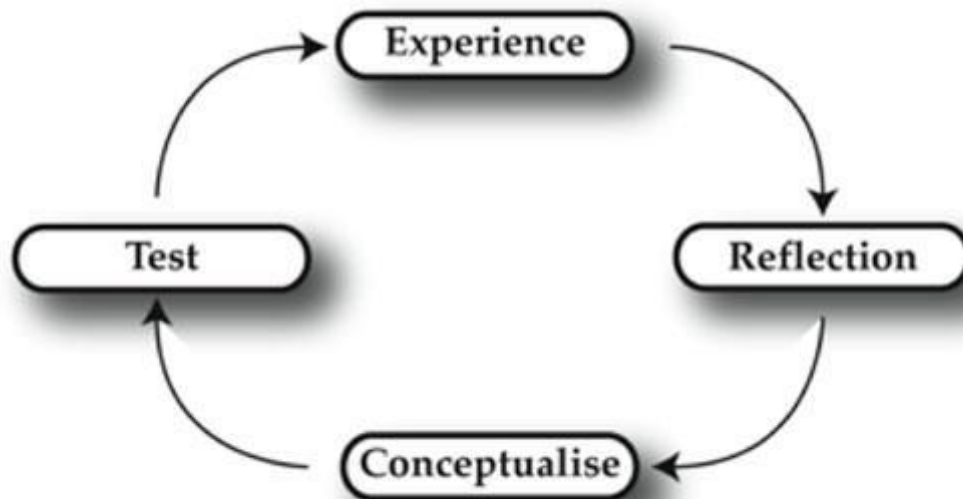
Source: Adopted from Kolb, 2014

Kolb (2014) view learning as a process in which a learner grows in, the more he/she accumulates more experiences the more he/she understand. This makes learning an integrated process in which all stages are mutually enforceable with none being more important than the other (Klob, 2014). With this cycle, it is possible to start learning at any point, or enter the cycle at any stage (Engeström, 2014).

Concerning transformative experiential learning, Mezirow (1997) is built on reflection which invariable leads to transformation. Slavich and Zimbardo (2012) contain that reflective processes which takes place when people change their learning habits or schema. The change in ways of sees things which begins with reflection on a set of attitudes, beliefs, or emotional reactions which the individual often exhibits, leads to further meaning making processes, interpreted and re-interpreted on the basis of previous experiences and a "clusters of meaning schemes" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 18). When this happens, that is, the changing of the meaning schemes, new process of knowledge construction are born, leading to transformation (Hyson, 2008). Experiential learning, therefore, is of great significance to in learning in early childhood development since it offers different windows through which learning can take place and how those who do learn using this learning style learning. This is therefore vital

especially in the Nigeria context where educational resources are few and the only resources the child might have in abundance is the ideological ware or social capital.

3.5.3 Game based learning in children

In the context of game based learning, Vandercruysse, Vandewaetere and Clarebout (2012) says that it involve the use of games as a tool for learning in the classroom or any other environment. This means that games are a resource or tool which children can use to learn making, while having fun. Garris, Ahlers and Driskell (2002) provide an alternative definition of game based learning by considering it to be the use of games to support teaching and learning. In other words, game based learning is the ability to use intricate parts of a game to make meaning in the classroom creating room for meaningful experience to be created. Game based learning sees other materials associated with game as rules of the game for which the creation of meaning is tied to. The rules become the content of learning for easy assimilation (Tobias, Fletcher, & Wind, 2014). Meyer (2013) in the study of game-based language learning for pre-school children in Copenhagen, Denmark indicate that children perform maximally when they use play as the form of instruction. Similarly, Crookall (2007, p.23) make a case for "the need to integrate play into learning models" based on research in language play in learners' socialisation and early language play. In the same vein, Baltra (1990, p.446) observes that "playing is a very old and widespread form of learning and young children do their learning mainly through games or game-like activities, it is then not surprising that most educational activities in the preschool years try to simulate games."

In game based learning, Peterson (2010) say that the games can be computer based or practical physical games which children can use to improve their learning curve. Game-based learning as a dynamic of learning in the classroom empower children to understand contextual content knowledge better. Game based learning can be used in studying different subjects like languages through games like scrabble and puzzles, mathematics or arithmetic in games like cheers, puzzles, Ludo, draft amongst others (Fantuzzo, Perry, & McDermott, 2004). The figure below shows different aspects of game based learning which manifest itself in the process.

Figure 3.3: **Game based learning**

Input
- Instructional content
- Game characteristics

Process
- Judgments
- Game cycle
- Debriefing
- System feedback
- Behaviour

Outcome
- Learning outcomes
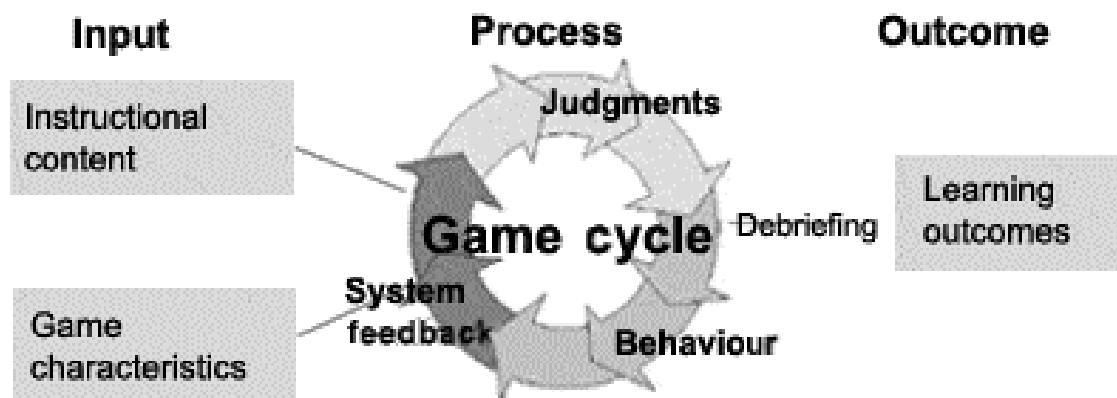
Source: Adopted from Garris et al, 2002

Anthony, DiPerna, and Amato (2014) observe that game based learning must utilise games which are didactic in nature, or have specific built in functions or experiences for educational purposes for it to enhance the process of meaning in the classroom. This means that there are games designed specifically for educational purposes, having some inbuilt characteristics to contribute to the process of meaning making (Sørensen & Meyer, 2011). According to using Bullough, Hall-Kenyon, MacKay and Marshall (2014), example of games which is used for learning include; pure strategy, rolling dice, playing cards and video games, especially those having one form of human interaction or another with a user interface to which would ultimate generate visual for the user or learner on the device which the child is. Additionally, Östman and Wickman (2014), Cojocariu and Boghian (2014) opine that games designed for educational purposes balances subject matter with real world situations. And this is done or can be done from a variety of perspectives, method, meaning, didactic procedure, or organization. Pivec (2007) and Hwang, Chiu, and Chen (2015) argue that there are a variety of benefits or advantages of game based learning, among which is the fact that it facilitates the construction of knowledge and the understanding of the knowledge constructed. Furthermore, game based learning also assists in the illustration of concepts since children can practically see the concepts they are dealing with (Pivec, 2007), it also helps in the construction of practical skills since children construct or develop and use these skills in the games they are playing. They can also transfer these skills to others by playing with them as well as reproduce or develop other skills related to the ones they have as a result of the game (Chiu & Chen, 2015).

According to Hsiao and Chen (2016) and Kim, Park, and Baek (2009), game based learning is particularly relevant to children in early childhood education and care. Game based learning in a context like Nigeria where education is essential for the development of the nation, because it helps to connect learning technologies (whatever this might be at the local context) with different learning experiences making learning anchored on tangible things. Since we are dealing with children in the early childhood education phase, education needs to be fun to keep learners engaged. Games are practically fun or a form of entertainment design for pleasure or enjoyment using materials or subject context which would enhance meaning making in the teaching and learning process. Games also have stringent rules which players must follow for the game to be interesting and fun. The rules constitute the structure of knowledge which is difficult to establish at the ECCDE level because it deals with children. The rules of the game help establish a structure for learning. Games also have goals, often build into levels which the player is expected to attain per time. Depending on the game, the goals vary and these goals provide motivation to the individual to continue play. Education in itself also has goals which have already been articulated in several parts of this chapter. It becomes easy to blend the goals of the game with that of the education and provide motivation for children to learn continuously (Laughlin, 2008). Games are also interactive and depending on the kind of game, the individual is either playing with an electronic device, another individual or the game itself as the case might be. This interactive nature help children to have a hands-on experience of learning or learning by doing since they practically play the games themselves (Ifenthaler, Eseryel & Ge, 2012).

Lin and Hou (2015) add that games also have objectives, outcomes and feedbacks, since each scenario of the game has objectives to be met as well as outcomes to be achieved. The player of the game knows whether they have achieved both the objective and outcome or not is through the feedback provided by the game. This process ensures that learning takes place, since a similar process is what directs education. The confirmation of learning or the lack therefore is the feedback provided at teacher on the basis of what has been done by the child. This ability to merge both educational processes and those of a game constitute what gives game based learning is credence. All games also have a win state or several win states built within the game to provide self-gratification for player, to provide a reason or motivation for playing (Ifenthaler, Eseryel & Ge, 2012). Without the win state or states, there would be little or no reason to play the game. Since in education there are also grades or classes to be complete wherein the individual feels self-gratified and if there are no levels or grade for

education, there would be no division between early childhood education and care with primary school, or primary school with secondary school, or secondary school with high school as well as higher school with the university (Sung & Hwang, 2013). It is this notion of win state or states that ensure progress in academics.

Nuttall, Edwards, Mantilla, Grieshaber, and Wood (2015) and Yilmaz (2016) adding to the above, point out that games have problems which must be solved thereby developing problem solving skills. This skill which is important in early childhood education, particularly, in a context like Nigeria where the context is replete with several challenges. Building problem solving skills in children at this level becomes vital for the development of the child.

Game based learning is essential in early childhood education because it places the player (child) at the centre of the game and the ability to navigate through the game enhances the self-esteem of the child making whatever they learn personal (Kapp, 2012). In game based learning, a child is not force or pressure to learn, rather, child should be given opportunities to learn every second enhancing learner motivation (Qian & Clark, 2016). At this level, children are able to link to ideas and experiences, to practical situations presented by the game. Game based learning is therefore important as learning approach which can be used or which is used especially in early childhood education to enhance the construction of knowledge.

3.5.4 Play based learning in children

Play based learning is a context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representation (Moore, Edwards, Cutter-Mackenzie & Boyd, 2014). From this definition, it is clear that play based learning is not simply about children doing whatever they like, as they run around, but a conscious exercise undertaken to guide learning. According to Sumsion, Grieshaber, McArdle and Shield (2014), play covers a wide variety of things and can range from the unstructured actions with little or no active adult support to a highly-structured activity led by specific instructions and directions from the teacher. Whichever direction play takes, the most significant issue is its ability to contribute to learning in the ECCDE. Though a child led or child-initiated play, free play or choice play is important for the continuous development of the child's cognitive abilities (Roussou, 2004), the role of the teacher is not only by ensuring that the play is purpose, but that some form of meaning is constructed from it. Children by virtue of their being children, regardless of their age love to play, and it taping into it in the

teaching and learning process gives them the opportunity to develop physical competence as well as make sense of the real world or the world in which they live, while interacting with others, express and control their emotions (Roussou, 2004).

Edwards and Hammer (2006) make a case for play based learning in early childhood education use Froebel's model kindergarten. These scholars held that children learned best when they were allowed to initiate play with one another or their peers. According to Ailwood (2007), play is the primary mechanism through which children encounter and explore their immediate environment. Platz and Arellano(2011), Cutter-Mackenzie et al., (2014) argue that children would learn through their play, and therefore, learn to live in harmony with others and nature.

Stephen and Edwards (2015) conducted a study in 'digital play and technologies in the early years in Britain. From all indications, observation method of data generation was adopted. Findings indicated that play helps to harness special abilities in the child which would probably remain hidden if such opportunities are not provided for its expression. Within the Nigerian context, this is why the National Education Policy in Nigeria specifically recommends play as an approach to learning. In line with above assertion, Edwards (2013, p.54) add that play must always be in agreement with the total life of the child as well as with his environment, and cannot stand in isolation or be divorced from it; play will then be educative, serious and meaningful. Through it, life becomes more relevant." Play based learning from this perspective is seen as a tool to give live meaning, as well as provide opportunities through which the child can make meaning of the world in which they live in. Nolan and Kilderry (2010, p.113) cannot therefore be far from the truth when they argue that:

Post-developmental orientations are inspired by theories and practices located outside child development theory, and suggest that play, and the pedagogical use of play, are not governed by individual children's 'needs'. Instead children are viewed as competent, socially active learners who are able to co-construct their learning intentions, learning strategies and learning outcomes in culturally meaningful ways with peers and adults.

It has been asserted by Yelland, Gilbert and Turner (2014) that without the engagement of play as a tool for learning, children's development would be skewed thereby inhibiting their ability to construct meaningfully in the future. It is through play that children develop their social capital amass a variety of learning experiences upon which they would lean for the rest

of their lives. Anning, Cullen and Fleer (2004) conclude by saying that children learn through play continues to constitute pedagogical 'givens' in many early years' settings.

3.5.4.1Types of play in children

According to Warner (2004), Gaskins, Haight, and Lancy (2007), there generally five orientations to play, all of which are culturally oriented or are articulated from a cultural perceptions. These views of play have significant consequences on how play is facilitated in schools, the level of parental involvement in play, and the pattern of children's play. These five orientations of play are: solitary play, parallel play, imitative play and cooperative play.

According toWarner (2004), solitary play involves when child plays alone in the formal or informal setting. All children like solitary play at times in school or at home. Playing alone is the first major step of play development that children have learnt how to interact with others during play time (Coplan, 2011). Children will learn reactions and signals when their parents and minders play with them from the time they are born. However, they will not yet have the skills to play together with them until later in their development.

In the context of parallel play, this occurs when a child plays beside another child without interacting (Coplan, 2011). A child will observe the other child and often imitate what they do. Children enjoy parallel play. According to Gil (2012), each child benefits from the group setting and from observing and often copying others, but will not interact directly with the other children.

Concerning imitative play, Gil (2012) argue that this occur when a child and another child copy each other. One child starts to jump and soon others start jumping. Or an adult begins folding clothes and before one realise it a child will tries to do the same. Borrowing from Vygotsky's notion of imitation, it become clear that children learn effectively when they imitate each other or adult.

In the area of cooperative play, is happens when a child gets older, he/she will start to play with other children. Yuill, Hinske, Williams and Leith (2014) opine that cooperative play deals with solving a problem by working together to achieve a common goal. Cooperative play encourages children to think in a team-oriented manner. As cooperative play requires children to interact, it facilitates them expressing their thoughts and balancing them with the perspectives of others, which both helps them deal with their own feelings and promotes social growth and sharing (Bretherton, 2014).

Play among children is pointed out as a principal learning dynamic for pre-primary learners in Nigeria. However, the forces that influence children to learning will be meaningless when the issue of social settings in which learning occur is not addressed. In light of the above, since the formal and informal process of learning in the early childhood education in the Oyo district is the crux of this study, this last section would review literature around this subject in Nigeria, thereby explaining why this study is vital.

3.6 Children learn through stories and folktales

The stories we tell and listen shape our lives, our reality, and they give meaning to everyday events (Gnjatovic, 2014). Stories and folktales are like a bridge that connects the past, present and the future of human existence. Often, we are not even aware how many stories or folktales we tell in a day. Children learn from the stories and folktales we narrate day in day out. Engel (2008) argues that a child who failed to listen to storytelling his/her life, cannot be fully literate. Gnjatovic (2014) avow that stories children tell or the one that are told to children are very important for their development. Additionally, Engel (2008) opine that stories children narrate can say more about the child, his dreams, fears, reality and his/her imagination. Most times elders in the community or teachers are unaware of the importance of stories, it is amazing that children learn when telling or listening to the stories or folktales. Rawson (2002) argues that a child's imagination sometimes is more captivating than their reality. Rawson went on to say that stories as a map of the child's inner world that is already explored and where the child feels safe. From all indications, storytelling is part of a child's daily activities. Usually a child develops dialogues and make up stories while playing in the class or at home. Stories, irrespective of whether they are fairy tales or narratives made up by the teacher or parents mirror a perfect plot for dramatic play (Fromberg & Bergen, 2006). In favour to this perspective goes the fact that play and learning process in early childhood is perceived as inseparable (Zigler & Bishop-Josef, 2009), and if children were not taught to see it differently, with the pedagogical approach, for example, they will never separate play from learning (Pramling Samuelsson & Asplund Carlsson, 2008). From this point of view, stories can be regarded as an educational tool in which children learn from. In a similar vein, stories are appearing naturally in children's play and can be a great asset in any educational activity. Pramling Samuelsson, Asplund Carlsson, Olsson, Pramling and Wallerstedt (2009) says that the benefits of storytelling indicate that the use of story and folktales impact children's self-esteem, hearten creative thinking, enhance literacy skills like listening, reading and writing.

Hamilton and Weiss (2005) maintained that story time is often full of fun and play, and that is a vital condition for a successful learning process in a child.

Ahn and Filipenko (2007) argue that storytelling and children's narratives affect the way children form the picture of self and construct an understanding of the world. Work of Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer and Lowrance (2004) and Collins (2006) indicate how storytellings affect literacy skills and language development in children. Additionally, Coskie, Trudel and Vohs (2010) look at the role of storytelling in creating orderly community among children. Parents and adults in the community have interesting stories to narrate to the children. By listening to stories in the group, children have sense of oneness and belonging which is very precious for them in early age. Another instance in which storytelling can have multi-value is a multicultural aspect of child development. Oral history of different communities presents the source of knowledge about human history and culture, it allows to one society to preserve its heritage. According to Santora (2005), social, cultural and historical awareness stories create in children spirit of harmony, this is because children learn to respect diverse cultures. Amour (2003) observes that by combining children's natural storytelling capability with multicultural literature, children's appreciation of diverse culture is enriched. In line with Amour's (2003) argument, Jewett (2011) opine that the way parents tell stories makes children to become more familiar with their tradition and also connected to global culture. From the studies mentioned above, it is worthy to say that children learn effectively through stories and folktales in their early stage of development.

3.7 Formal and informal processes of education in Nigeria

In this section, I look at formal and informal settings that influence children to learn. I begin with the issue of formal learning setting in which children in pre-primary education used.

3.7.1 Formal learning setting

Folkestad (2006) look at formal learning setting as a place in which all learning activities plan and delivered under the auspices of an accredited institution of learning. According to Aderinoye (2007), is an organised and structured institution where learning process, guided by specific learning objectives in which the teacher is aimed to achieve at the end of such learning. A child that goes to such institution does so intentionally with the sole of learning objectives in mind, as well as the expected outcomes. In other words, the intention of learner is principally to gain knowledge, develop skills and build or develop competence in the area

where the learning activity is taking place. Folkestad (2006) add that when we talk of formal education, we are talking about initial education and training system as designated by the government of the nation.

In Nigeria, there are factors that influence pre-primary school learners to learn. Abolarin (2014) list factors that enhance children to learn in pre-primary school to include: relevant instructional materials, method of teaching, and friendly teachers, these are discussed below.

3.7.1.1 Instructional Materials

Relevant instructional materials are a panacea for effective learning to take at pre-primary education level. For learning to be effective and interesting in the preschool programme, the teachers must use different types of toys as play materials (Abolarin, 2014). Toys which are physical and man-made objects are employ as tools of play for children, thereby providing them great fun and amusement. Obadiah (2008) reports that educational toys are items that challenge, stimulate or encourage children to learn through play in the school. In an environment where there are insufficient toys in the school, Abolarin (2014) say that it is necessary for teacher or school authority to ensure that improvisation of learning items are made. This scholar (Abolarin) is of the view that the preschool children learn through experimentation, discovery, visual process and playing with objects. According to Tambowua, (2013), good toys assist children cognitive growth and the development of fine motor skills that can improve attention span and problem-solving ability. Stipek, Feiler, Daniels and Milburn (1995) observe that there are various forms of toys which are meant for different age groups. Chiaka (2008) opine that for effective learning in pre-school environment, teachers should use toys that are appropriate for age of the children and also relevant to the topics. Furthermore, the child should be able to use the toys easily without adult assistance, and these toys should be items that are related to the child's environment or community (Hua, & Lohya, 2006). In addition, toys use for the learning should be safe, that is not having sharp edge, durable, beautiful, re-usable and affordable. According to Hua and Lohya (2006), use of toys should aid in children to develop positive social interactions through free expression of his/her emotions or concern for others. In a similar vein, teachers at the pre-primary school should be conversant with how to use toys and what learning is to be imparted in the learners from the use of each toy should be specified. The availability of instructional materials increases the probability that children would learn more, retain better what they learn and improve their performance on the skills that they are expected to develop.

Frempong (2007) observe that young children are capable of understanding abstract ideas better if they are provided with sufficient materials and concrete experiences with the phenomenon that they are to understand.

3.7.1.2 Methods of teaching in pre-primary school

The application of appropriate teaching strategies at that pre-primary school children is a solution to effective learning. Abolarin (2014) say that the most effective method of teaching pre-primary children is play method which was originated by Maria Montessori. Abolarin is of the view that play method is an active method of teaching that is child-centred and also based on child development theories. Biswas (2012) contain that the significance of play in teaching is that a child is happiest when engrossed in play and play can happen in different forms such as imitation of family members, to playing with toys, or playing tag, hide seek or simply running about with other children. A study conducted by Esomonu (2005) in Nigeria on the use of play method in pre-primary schools indicates that playful situations keep the children alert, active and responsive.

In a sharp contrast, Ekeyi (2013) in his study say that the most appropriate teaching method to be used at pre-primary school level is the demonstration. Mundi (2006) see demonstration method as a display or an exhibition usually done by the teacher while the children watch with keen interest and this involves showing how something works or the steps involved in the process. Scholars such as Ogwo and Oranu (2006), Ayang and Idaka (2012) contain that demonstration method is the most widely used instructional method at the pre-primary education level for acquisition of practical skills as it involves verbal and practical illustration of a given procedure. Essa (2012) opine that by showing learners how to perform an activity as well as telling them about the activity stimulate both their visual and auditory responses and therefore accelerates the learning process in the class.

Others scholars such as Popoola (2014), Corno and Anderman (2015) say that a teacher at pre-primary school should not restrict his/herself to play or demonstration method, rather, he/she should combine all of the methods for effective learning to take place. Clements and Sarama, (2014) in their study on effective teaching and learning methods in early childhood education in China, finding indicate that the application of a single method such as play, demonstration, rote, and other methods is counterproductive at the early childhood education level. These scholars submit that the combination of various methods depending on the circumstance is the most appropriate method of teaching.

3.7.1.3 Friendly teachers

A study conducted on early childhood education teachers' friendliness in London indicate that there is a tremendous opportunity for children's social and emotional growth during the preschool years if a teacher exhibit some degree of friendship with the children (Epstein, 2009). To be friendly assist the children to feel secure, confident, and likeable. Rimm-Kaufman and Sandilos (2013) in their study say that improving learners' relationships with teachers has important, positive and long-lasting implications for both learners' academic and social development. In a similar vein, McCaleb (2013) argue that those learners who have close, positive and supportive relationships with their teachers will attain higher levels of achievement than those students with more conflict in their relationships. According to Thompson (1998), the most critical weapon available to pre-primary education teachers who want to foster a favourable learning climate is a positive relationship with our students.

It is worthy to note that leaners who have uncomfortable relationship with their teachers finds it hard to concentrate in the class activity. This assertion was supported by Canter and Canter (1997, p.6) who state that "we all can recall classes in which we did not try very hard because we did not like our teachers." Teachers' friendly disposition at the foundation phase of formal education is important because it make children to have undiluted likeness for education. A study on learners' respect to teachers was conducted using multiple regression by Kohn (1996), a result of the finding shows that children are more likely to be respectful when important adults in their lives respect them. Furthermore, children are more likely to care about others if they know they are cared about (Kohn, 1996). In a sharp contrast, Marzano (2003) contain that learners will resist rules and procedures along with the consequent disciplinary actions if the foundation of a good relationship is lacking. This scholar (Marzano) goes on to argue that relationships are perhaps more important at the pre-primary school levels than at the high school level because this is the stage in which children learn everything both positive and negative.

3.8 Informal learning setting

Unlike formal learning environment where learning takes place in an organised, structured and systematic environment, informal learning happens though in an organised and systematic setting, but without policy framework that drive its operation. Most times, informal education is also referred to as traditional education. This is because the 'unseen curricular' used by the parents or members of the community is gotten from the community.

According to Sennett (2012), informal learning may be seen as the learning that comes as a part of being involved in youth and community organisations. From all indications, informal learning setting consists of places which are not officially designated for learning and teaching, but it happens unconsciously and children learn in such situations. Dip (1978) says that home is a geographical space in which informal learning take place.

3.8.1 Learning from home

A home is a dwelling place where a child grows up. It is pertinent to say that irrespective of where an individual was given birth to, he/she grows up in a house where his/her parent(s) and other siblings' lives. Therefore, informal learning occurs when parents or any member of the immediate community expose children to certain activities such as story-telling, play, jokes, riddles among others which help them to develop mentally, emotionally and physically (Manolitsis et al., 2009).

Bradley, Corwyn, Burchinal, McAdoo and García Coll (2001) argue that children between the ages of zero and four learn effectively from the parents and other siblings. These scholars are of the view that learning that occur in children is through imitation from adult in the community. In a similar vein, Taylor, Clayton and Rowley (2004) observe that children's cognitive development and educational careers are also influenced by characteristics of the family and home learning environment. Bornstein and Bradley (2008) in their study exploring the nature and variation of early years home learning environments have found high variation between families such as family composition, housing, income, as well as parental educational beliefs and expectations impact the quality of the home learning environment.

Son and Morrison (2010) recently researched on the stability of the home environment as children approach school entry. However, the findings show that the quality of the home environment at age 36 months was highly correlated with the quality of the home environment at age 54 months. Additionally, it was also revealed that home environments are also subject to change and seem to improve as children approach school entry (Son & Morrison, 2010). In addition, Totsika and Sylva (2004) conducted a study using different measures of the home learning environment, the results have shown that it has a considerable influence on young children's cognitive development and educational outcomes. For instance, quality of the home environment as measured by the 'Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment Inventory' has shown positive correlation with outcomes

including general cognitive ability and language (Totsika & Sylva, 2004). In addition, Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) submit that other indicators of the home learning environment associated with better cognitive outcomes are quality of dialogic reading, use of complex language, responsiveness and warmth in interactions and library visits.

In the section below, I looked at mother tongue as a language that promotes children's learning in pre-primary educatio.

3.9 The Relationship between Mother Tongue and English Language

The mother tongue is part of a child's personal, social and cultural identity. Mother tongue is the home language, the language a child supposed to know before one start schooling. It is this identification we get from speaking our mother tongue that enforces successful social patterns of acting and speaking (Yadav, 2014). Yadav (2014) states that the diverse social backgrounds make it unique and appealing for society to recognise the use of mother tongue for language expressions. The mother tongue is an indispensable instrument for the development of intellectual, physical and moral aspects of children's education. Habits, conducts, values, virtues, customs and beliefs are all formed and shaped through the mother tongue.

Early Childhood Care and Education, Sandeep (2007) points out the overlooked advantages of multilingual education in the early years. When children are offered opportunities to learn in their mother tongue, they are more likely to enroll and succeed in school and their parents are more likely to communicate with teachers and participate in their children's learning. Mother tongue-based education especially benefits disadvantaged groups, including children from rural communities and girls, who tend to have less exposure to an official language. They tend to stay in school longer, achieve better and repeat grades less often when they are taught in their mother tongue.

Most children speak a home language that differs from the language of instruction in education programs. Research also confirms that children learn best in their mother tongue as a prelude to and complement of bilingual and multilingual education (Shin, 2008). It is noted that children successfully retain their mother tongue while acquiring additional languages depends on several interacting factors. In language description, the mother tongue is classified as L1, while other language including English is L2 respectively. The mother tongue can be derived from a person's ancestral heritage or the parents/caregivers determine

through early language experiences what language the child will speak (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2011).

Studies show that six to eight years of education in a language are necessary to develop the level of literacy and verbal proficiency required for academic achievement in secondary school. To retain their mother tongue, children whose first language is not the medium of instruction must have: Continued interaction with their family and community in their first language on increasingly complex topics that go beyond household matters; Ongoing formal instruction in their first language to develop reading and writing skills; and Exposure to positive parental attitudes to maintaining the mother tongue, both as a

It is often seen that language contact in the various communities impacts the languages that children learn to speak and subsequently what language is identified as a mother tongue (Makoni, 2016). For example, the migration of people from areas in which one language is the mother tongue and more dominantly used, to other places where there is an influence of the local community that speaks a different language. In these cases, people may change from speaking their original mother tongue to taking up and using the mother tongue of the dominant group (Fishman, 2008). It therefore becomes difficult to clearly identify and differentiate the mother tongue of individuals. Infants are often found to have more than one mother tongue. African children originate from bilingual homes and multilingual communities and therefore can have more than one mother tongue (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). Research has however found that learners with an indigenous mother tongue that is well established are more able to transfer linguistic and academic skills to learning English (Nel, 2008). Children arrive at school with in their mother tongues and are able to express their needs and speak in social and contextualised situations (Nel & Nel, 2013). There is linear relationship between mother's tongue and English language in the study area. In Akwa Ibom State generally, many parents forced their children to speak English language at homes for their general communication or conversation. These children get adapted with the speaking of English language and most of them do not even understand their home language which supposed to be regarded as the mother tongue. Thus, children are lacking in their mother tongue learning and in most homes English language become a general language of the home, which has incidentally replaced their cultural or community language as mother tongue. On this account, it is postulated that there is linear relationship between mother tongue and English language as the language of instruction. Even in public pre-primary setting of the area, hardly before the cultural language is used for communication, where

English has been adopted as a general language, even when they are not from Britain or America.

3.10 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed on language as the medium of communication and instruction and the importance of mother tongue at the pre-primary school. Furthermore, I reviewed the literature that bordered on dynamics of learning in early childhood education or pre-primary, formal and informal settings. In other words, in this chapter efforts were made to tease out various scholarships that relate to the topic under exploration. I discussed various scholarly views that illustrate ways in which learners learn in the formal setting. I made mention of linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, bodily/kinaesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, inter-personal intelligence, intra-personal intelligence, naturalist intelligence, existential intelligence and spatial intelligence that help children to learn. Furthermore, I reviewed literature on formal and informal settings that learning in children happened. In the area of formal setting, relying on Abolarin (2014), I said that factors that enhance children to learn in pre-primary school include: relevant instructional materials, method of teaching, and friendly teachers. On the other hand, I retreated that house is a geographical space that learning occurs in children.

The next chapter, which is chapter four looks at the theoretical framework that underpin the study.

Chapter four

Conceptual and theoretical frameworks underpinning the study

4.1 Introduction

This study look at the dynamics of learning among pre-primary school learners in Uyo Senatorial District, Nigeria: an exploration of formal and informal education processes. Chapter three of this thesis focused on an analysis of existing literature on the phenomena under exploration.

However, chapter unpacks the theoretical framework that underpins this study and serves as lenses to guide data generation and analysis. To achieve this, sociocultural learning is deploy to tease out the dynamics that influence ways in which pre-primary school learners learn at the formal and informal settings. In order for my audience to understand the way in which the theory was used in the study, it is pertinent to explain some key concepts that are tight to sociocultural learning theory and these are Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), mediation, and scaffolding.

4.2 Theoretical perspectives that inform my study

Vygotsky was born in Russia in the year 1896 to the Jewish family. He had interest to history, philosophy and language studies. Lev Vygotsky was the first person who developed the idea of the sociocultural learning theory. Kozulin (2002) assert that Vygotsky's work got recognition mainly after his death. He devoted most of his energy to the description of sociocultural learning theory and this theory has become the best part of his work.

There is confusion among novice researchers between Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory and the social constructivism. One school of thought says that there is no different between the two theories, while another school of thought believes that there are distinctions between the theories. Scholars like Packer and Goicoechea (2000) look at social constructivism as an important of social processes in individual knowledge building. In other words, social constructivism is based on a social ontology that insists that human agents do not exist independently from their social environment and its collectively shared systems of meanings ('culture' in a broad sense) (Risse, 2007). On the other hand, sociocultural perspectives focuses on the learning from a cultural point of view and emphasises the interdependence of social and individual processes in the co-construction of knowledge in

individual (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Sociocultural approach looks at the cultural amplifiers as personal and social resources that mediate between the social and the individual construction of meaning (Vygotsky, 1978).

From all indications, it is clear that there is a weak distinction between the two theories. Sociocultural learning theory emphasises role in development of cooperative dialogues between children and more knowledgeable members of the society. That child learns the culture of his/her community (ways of thinking and behaving) from the interactions. In the context of social constructivism, knowledge is individually constructed and socially mediated. By participating in a broad range of activities with others, learners appropriate (internalise) the outcomes produced by working together, these outcomes could include both new strategies and knowledge (Fosnot, 2013)

Though there is a closeness and interrelationship existing between sociocultural learning and social constructivism theories, I decided to adopt sociocultural learning as the principal theory for this study. Palincsar (2005) argues that the two theories overlap and are by no means discrete. The dynamics of learning among pre-primary school learners are conceptualised around the blended notions of participation and acquisition. Sfard (1998, p.5) observe "in recent time educational research is caught between two metaphors, the acquisition metaphor and the participation metaphor." It is pertinent to say that the acquisition metaphor characterises learning in terms of knowledge gain and concept development. In the context of the participation metaphor, it is characterise in terms of participation in the activity of a community. Furthermore, Sfard (1998) assert that focusing exclusively on one metaphor and ignoring or neglecting the other may lead to theoretical distortions. For instance, exclusive dependence on the acquisition metaphor may leads to the philosophical dilemma of trying to explain how individuals can acquire knowledge of something that is not known to them. On the other hand, exclusive dependence on the participation metaphor can make explaining how knowledge is generated across contextual boundaries difficult. Sfard (1998) say that the acquisition and participation metaphors offer complementary accounts of learning.

4.3 Socio cultural learning theory

Socio-cultural theory maintains that learning is an active process in which the context plays an important role (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Goos (2004), learning is not just an individual matter but develops within a social context. Sociocultural learning theory place the

social context at the centre of learning, and that without it the development of the mind is impossible (Cole & Wertsch, 2001). This is because learning is mediated. Lantolf (2000) argues that Vygotsky finds an important role for what he calls 'tools' in humans understanding of the world and of themselves. According to Lantolf (2000), Vygotsky advocates that humans do not act directly on the physical world without the intermediary of tools. Whether symbolic or signs, tools in Vygotsky's view are 'artefacts' that is created by humans under specific cultural (culture specific) and historical conditions, and as such they carry with them the characteristics of the culture in question (Turuk, 2008). It is applied as aids in solving problems that cannot be resolved in the same way in their absence (Leach & Scott, 2003). In turn, these artefacts also exert an influence on the people who use them in that it give rise to hitherto unknown activities and hitherto unknown ways of understanding phenomena in the world. Therefore, artefacts are subject to modification as they are transfered from one generation to another one. However, each generation tries to rework them in order to meet the needs and aspirations of its people and communities (Turuk, 2008). Vygotsky (1978) argues that the role of a psychologist in this context is to understand how human social and mental activity is organised through culturally constructed artefacts. Furthermore, Vygotsky (1978) maintain that the sociocultural environment presents the child with a variety of tasks and demands, and engages the child in his world through the tools. In the early stages of development, Vygotsky contains that the child is completely dependent on other people, usually the parents or other family members, who initiate the child's actions by telling him/her as to what to do, how to do it, as well as what not to do (Turuk, 2008). Parents or other members of the family, as representatives of the culture and the channel through which the culture navigates into the child, actualise these instructions primarily through language. On ways in which children do appropriate the cultural and social heritages, Frawley (1997) recounts that the child acquires the knowledge through personal contacts and interactions with people as the first step (interpsychological plane), thereafter, assimilates and internalises this knowledge adding his personal value to it (intrapsychological plane). However, the transition from social to personal property in Vygotsky's view is not a 'mere copying work'. Rather, it is a transformation of what had been learnt through interaction into personal values (Turuk, 2008). Vygotsky (1978) submits that this is what also happens in schools. Learners do not merely copy teachers capabilities, instead, they transform what teachers give them during the processes of appropriation.

Vygotsky (1978) says that psychology has deprived itself of crucial information to the understanding of complex aspects of human behaviour by refusing to study consciousness. The refusal in Frawley's (1997) view has restricted the role of psychology to just the explanation of elementary connections between a living being and the world. According to Frawley (1997), consciousness distinguishes human behaviour from other living organisms and links a person's knowledge to his/her behaviour. The consciousness arises, functions and develops in the process of individual's interaction with reality based on his/her socio-historical practices (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). Vygotsky (1978) maintains that socially meaningful activity has to be considered as the explanatory principle for understanding consciousness and the scholar (Vygotsky) rejects any attempt to decouple consciousness from behaviour. Lantolf and Pavlenko (1995) opine that the latter understanding of consciousness in teaching is embodied in the concept of metacognition that includes functions such as planning, voluntary attention, logical memory, problem solving and evaluation. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996, p.199) argue that sociocultural theory emphasise that education should be concerned "not just with theories of instruction, instead with learning to learn, developing skills and strategies to continue to learn, with making learning experiences meaningful and relevant to the learner, with developing and growing as a whole individual". John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) contains that the sociocultural learning theory asserts that education can never be value-free, rather, it must be underpinned by a set of beliefs about the type of society that is being constructed and the types of explicit and implicit messages that will best deliver those beliefs. The beliefs should manifest also in the ways in which teachers interact with the learners.

According to Turuk (2008), sociocultural learning theory has a holistic perspective about the act of learning. Kozulin (2003) contain that the sociocultural learning theory is against the idea of the discrete teaching of skills. Instead, Kozulin (2003) maintain that meaning should constitute the central aspects of any unit of learning. Any unit of learning should be offered in all its complexity rather than skills and knowledge offered in isolation (Turuk, 2008). Sociocultural learning theory focus the importance of what the learner brings to any learning setting as an active meaning-maker and problem-solver. Furthermore, the theory acknowledges the dynamic nature of the interplay between teachers, learners and tasks and provides a view of learning as arising from interactions with others (McInerney, 2013). Ellis (2000) asserts that sociocultural theory assumes that learning occur not through interaction, rather, in interaction. The learner first succeeds in performing a new task with the help of

another person such as teacher or parents and then internalise the task so that he/she can perform it on his/her own. In this way, the social interaction that takes place is advocated to mediate learning (Turuk, 2008). According to Ellis (2000), the sociocultural learning theory goes further to say interactions that positively mediate learning are those in which the learners scaffold the new tasks (Lantolf, Thorne, & Poehner, 2015).

Fundamental to Vygotsky's perspective on development and learning is that higher mental functioning in the child is develops from his/her social life (Vygotsky, 1978). In the first instance, the language and other semiotic mechanisms offer the means for ideas to be talked through and communicated on the social ground and, following the process of internalisation, language and other semiotic modes offer the channels for child's thinking. Vygotsky (1978) opine that the relationship between language and thought is direct, and that cognitive development results from social communication. Furthermore, Vygotsky describes the social construction of knowledge within a certain zone he refers to as a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In my next section, I intend to focus on Vygotsky's notion of the ZPD as it enhances ways in which children learn.

4.4 THE ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT AND APPROPRIATION

Despite the fact that ZPD is a key Vygotskian concept, it has been interpreted and re-interpreted in different ways after the death of Vygotsky in 1934 (Burr, 2015). Different scholars such as Lantolf (2002), Shayer (2002) and Daniels (2016) have used it in different ways, and it appears that there is no single acceptable interpretation. It is rather unfortunate that Vygotsky fail to live long enough to elaborate and clarify his notion of the ZPD. In a similar development, Shayer (2002) argues that Vygotsky's introduction of the concept 'ZPD' was due to his dissatisfaction with two practical issues in educational psychology namely: the assessment of a child's intellectual abilities and the evaluation of the instructional practices. Concerning the first issue, Vygotsky (1978) observes that the established techniques of testing a child only determine the actual level of development, it does not measure the potential ability of the child. In Vygotsky's view, psychology should focus on the issue of predicting a child's future growth (Turuk, 2009). Because of the value Vygotsky attached to the importance of predicting a child's future capabilities, he propounded the notion of ZPD.

Vygotsky (1978) conceptualise ZPD as "the distance between a child's actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving, and the higher level of potential

development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable person". In other words, the common conceptualisation of the ZPD presupposes interaction between a more competent individual and a less competent individual on a task, such that the less competent individual becomes independently proficient at what was initially a jointly accomplished task. In Vygotsky's view, ZPD assists in determining a child's mental functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that are currently in an embryonic stage, but will mature tomorrow. Furthermore, Turuk (2009), Pritchard (2013) contain that the study of ZPD is also significant because, it is a dynamic region of sensitivity in the child in which the transition from inter-psychological to intra-psychological functioning takes effect.

Guk and Kellogg (2007) observes that a crucial characteristics of learning in Vygotsky's view is that it creates a ZPD, that is to say, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with other individuals in his/her environment and in cooperation with his/her person. When once the processes are internalised, it turn out to be part of the child's independent developmental attainment. Vygotsky (1978) opine that ZPD does not only play the role of instruction, however, developmental (biological) factors also have a role to play in it. According to Veresov (2004), the two jointly determined by the child's level of development and the form of instruction involved. Veresov (2004) goes on to say that instruction and development do not directly coincide, rather, it represent two processes that exist in a complex interrelationship. Guk and Kellogg (2007) argue that the child can operate only within the limit that is strictly fixed by the level of the child's development and intellectual capacities and possibilities. At this point, Shayer (2002) contain that good instruction should proceed ahead of development and should awaken and rouse to life an entire set of functions, which are at the level of maturation and rest in the ZPD. It is in this way that instruction can play an extremely significant role in the child's development. In Shayer's (2002) view, this suggest that the 'natural or spontaneous' thinking lags behind the intellectual challenge of schooling, however, at the same time; this natural thinking provides children with new tools for thinking to meet the learning demands of the school. In addition, it suggests that teachers or parents are responsible for offering learning contexts in which the instruction marches ahead of the development and leads it.

4.5 Mediation

The concept of the mediation of human actions (acts of thought inclusive) is fundamental to Vygotsky's theorising and is, perhaps, its defining characteristic (Moll, 2005). According to Vygotsky (1978), mediation refers to the part played by other individual in the children's life, persons who promote and enhance their learning by selecting and shaping the learning experiences presented to the children. Vygotsky (1978) is of the view that the secret of effective learning rests on the nature of the social interaction between two or more individuals with diverse levels of skills and knowledge. According to Fernyhough (2008), this involves assisting the child to move into and through the next layer of knowledge or comprehension. Lee and Smagorinsky (2000) observe that Vygotsky see tools as mediators and one of the important tools is language. Therefore, the use of language to assist children move into and through their ZPD is of paramount importance to sociocultural learning theory.

In a similar vein, Bussi and Mariotti (2008) argue that Vygotsky look at the learning process not as a solitary exploration of the environment by the child on his own, but it is a process of the child's appropriation of the methods of actions that exist in a particular culture. Turuk (2008) contain that in the process of appropriation, symbolic tools or artefacts play an important role. However, Kozulin (2002) compartmentalise mediators into two sections namely: human and symbolic. In Kozulin's (2002) view, human mediation usually tries to answer the question concerning what kind of involvement on the part of the adult is effective in enhancing the child's performance, while symbolic mediation focuses on what changes in the child's performance can be brought about by the introduction of the child to symbolic tools-mediators.

Furthermore, three themes exist in Vygotsky's sociocultural learning approach to mediated action (Palincsar, 2005). These include a reliance on genetic or developmental analysis, higher mental functions are derivable from social interaction, and tools and signs such as language (Wertsch, 1995) mediate human action on both the social and individual plane. For Vygotsky, meaning is constructed through a combination of language and the cultural setting and that when a child indulges in play he/she is extending to new limits already existing skills (Akers, 2011). In addition, Vygotsky (1978) says that human beings are different from their animal relations. This is because they bring to the learning environment an evolutionary capacity to adapt and manipulate their environment and have consequently built up cultural and historical tools (Steels & Kaplan, 2002). The collective social history is brought to the

classroom setting, transmitted from the teacher to the learner and from the learner to another learner through the process of mediation. However, Vygotsky (1978) describes the mediational process as being goal directed and a conscious tasks in which the teacher creates an environment that is conducive to learning (Shepard, 2000). According to Vygotsky (1978), mediation occurs with the assistance of signs and that this gives it its generative quality. It encompasses the cultural and social qualities of the relationship between the teacher who is the mediator and the child.

Language occurs at the same time as the child begins to use symbols (Donato & McCormick, 1994). The language opens the door to understanding things that are not necessarily present. According to Bruner (1997), though Piaget refused to use the term 'mediation', he (Piaget) sees child's development as being 'interactionist'. This is because it is dependent on a reciprocal mutually dependent interaction between individuals and their environments that could be regarded as a form of mediation (Donato & McCormick, 1994). From all indications, the mind mediates between the social world and child's experience. The child influences the parent to give him/her with something he/she require and the parent then influences the child by giving him/her what has been requested. In this way mediation and self-regulation are interrelated (Wertsch & Del Rio, 1995). When the child is able to independently use a new skill, such as reading, he/she have internalised the new knowledge that he/she acquired from meditational strategies and are now able to regulate their behaviour around their newly acquired skill of reading.

According to Karpov (2005), learners begin to regulate their learning in the course of mediation, acquiring and mastering new psychological tools which resulting in the development of new mental processes. Kozulin and Presseisen (1995, p.52) argue "the learning of specific abilities in one domain transforms the intellectual functioning in other areas". However, the mental processes outgrow the child's current activity, which creates the basis for their switching to a new activity (Daniels, 2016). For Vygotsky, an individual does not develop in a straight line, instead, he/she develops through "discontinuity, a replacement of one function by another, a displacement and conflict of two systems" (Vygotsky, 1997, p.225). Furthermore, the higher mental processes are mediated through the psychological tools such as language, symbols and signs (Daniel, 2016). Language, symbols and signs which are the instrument of learning are taught by elderly person (Daniel, 2016). For instance, the teacher to children during their mutual activities and they are internalised by the child thereby working as a further mediation (Karpov (2005). From the Vygotskian point of

view, mediation not only creates Zones of proximal development of new mental processes, but also creates ZPD of new activities of children through the conversion of their goals into motives and actions into activities (Karpov, 2005).

Vygotsky (1978) contain that consciousness is created by socially mediated task. However, the internalisation of socially entrenched and historically developed tasks is the distinguishing feature of human psychology (Vygotsky, 1978). Steels and Kaplan (2002) observe that mediation is a theme that runs throughout the work of Vygotsky and is associated with his view of how someone uses 'tools' to manage psychological development and human consciousness. The concept 'tools' refers to any manner of things a person use such as pens, spoons and paper, to more complex things such as language, belief systems and religion. The core of the mediation concept is inter-subjectivity which is explained by Wertsch (2007) as the creation of a shared understanding between the learner and the teacher. It is pertinent to say that Vygotsky builds a channel between social and historical processes and the development of human mental processes through mediation. Cole and Wertsch (1996) say that it is not a matter of bringing to the internal plane a product that was produced externally, rather, it is a matter of social engagement that leaves the child changed. Children internalise forms of mediation that are provided by cultures, social history and schooling systems. This places our mental functioning within a socio-historical situation (Wertsch, 2007).

Wertsch (2007) described Vygotsky's theory of mediation in two ways namely: explicit and implicit mediation. In Wertsch's view, the development of mediated action contains a dynamic transition from minimal appreciation of the meaning and functional significance of a sign form to ever increasing levels of sophistication. Explicit mediation is intentionally introduced 'signs' through a more capable old people who is directing a specific task with a view to stimulating learning and to facilitate its organisation. While implicit mediation is difficult to detect and does not need to be intentionally introduced as it is already part of the ongoing task. Wertsch (2007) illustrate an example of implicit mediation to include language that provides the source of ongoing communication that allows for mediation in the first instance. According to Donato McCormick (1994), Vygotsky's approach to learning and instruction is to encourage children to master the use of cultural tools through mediation.

Vygotsky (1978) opines that the hallmark of the relationship between signs and behaviour, between word and thought and between child and mediation, is that it undergoes fundamental

change. Minick (2005) contains that it is a process of socialisation makes the child to be an 'expert' at using cultural tools. The implication is that a child who is beginning to read in school in a loud voice will eventually move from reading aloud to reading silently (Steels & Kaplan, 2002). For Vygotsky (1978) language is an important mediator. In support to Vygotsky assertion, Harrison (2011) argues that language gives children a powerful way to solve problems. Furthermore, it is essential for self-regulation and facilitates inter-subjectivity (Ashton, 1996).

According to Rogoff and Chavajay (1995), communication and shared problem solving intrinsically bridge the gap between old and new knowledge and between the differing understanding of partners (whether their understanding is at the same or at different levels), as children attempt to resolve contradictions or search for the common ground of shared understanding. Minick (2005) put forward the assertion that Vygotsky conceived language within the context of schooling as being part of a system of knowledge whereby learning occurs through specific word meanings that assist the child to establish scientific concepts. Dixon-Krauss (1996) reports that teachers assist learners to build bridges between what they already known and the new knowledge they are acquiring. Learning to read or write is a period that learners are made to rapidly master new knowledge so that they can progress in their academic endeavours. Therefore, it is essential to provide a learning environment that would support this process.

Bussi and Mariotti (2008) illustrated how applying tools of mediation to children who are struggling to access understanding in texts resulted in a great enhancement in their performance when analysing texts. Relying from the assumption that children fail to advance beyond the initial stages of reading, because they are not aware of how to engage with the text, that is, they do not actively engage with the text or have the tools to understand what they are reading. For intervention purpose, Bussi and Mariotti (2008) adopted a reciprocal teaching approach with scaffolded learning which allowed the children to engage within their individual ZPD. Bussi and Mariotti (2008) consciously drew from the children's existing knowledge to summarise expository texts. The intervention methods adopted involved making explicit steps that skilled readers would adopt automatically such as asking questions that the text would provoke, predicting the next step in a story or resolving ambiguity (Fernyhough, 2008). The child was told to play the part of the teacher and to discuss the text with another child. These grade seven children showed a remarkable improvement over a series of formal lessons moving from the bottom 7% of their class to the level of the class

average. From all indications, it is pertinent to say that appropriate cultural tools were adopted and internalised which permitted children to validate their own relationship to the text and their social world. It will not be out conclude that to Vygotsky children were able to progressively internalise self-regulatory steps that became automatic (Fernyhough, 2008).

4.6 Scaffolding

In spite of the fact that there is a strong connection between the concept of scaffolding and Vygotsky's work, however, the concept of scaffolding did not originate with Vygotsky. Rather, it is widely documented that Bruner was the first person to introduce scaffolding metaphor in 1985 his analysis of the role of tutoring in problem solving (Berk & Winsler, 1995). According to Cole and Wertsch (2001), the concept 'scaffolding' was traditionally been used to refer to the process in which a teacher or more knowledgeable person assists a child, altering the learning task so the child can solve problems or accomplish tasks that would otherwise be out of reach. In the words of Bruner (1985, p. 25):

If the child is enable to advance by being under the tutelage of an adult or a more competent peer, then the tutor or the aiding peer serves the learner as a vicarious form of consciousness until such a time as the learner is able to master his own action through his own consciousness and control. When the child achieves that conscious control over a new function or conceptual system, it is then that he is able to use it as a tool. Up to that point the tutor in effect performs the critical function of 'scaffolding' the learning task to make it possible for the child, in Vygotsky 's words, to internalise external knowledge and convert it into a tool for conscious control.

There is an agreement among scholars such as Daniels (2001), Krause at al. (2003) and among others that Vygotskian sociocultural theory and the notion of the zone of proximal development are at the heart of the concept of scaffolding. In addition, scaffolding may be seen as a direct application and operationalisation of Vygotsky's concept of teaching within the ZPD (Dixon- Krauss, 1996). Wells (1999, p. 127) look at scaffolding as "a way of operationalising Vygotsky's (1987) notion of working in the zone of proximal development". Furthermore, Wells (1999, p.127) mentioned three significant features that give educational scaffolding its particular character to include: "the essentially dialogical nature of the discourse in which knowledge is co-constructed, the significance of the kind of activity in which knowing is embedded, and the role of artefacts that mediate knowing".

Drawing from the construction theory, scaffolding represents a supportive relationship between the teacher and the child, collaborating to construct knowledge with the ultimate goal of the teacher relinquishing control and responsibility to the child (Stone, 1998). The child is not a passive in the teacher-child relationship. Scaffolding is a fluid interpersonal process whereby both the teacher-child actively builds a common understanding or inter-subjectivity through language and the use of mediated tools or signs (Wells (1999). As scaffolding occurs within the individual child's ZPD, it is unique to a specific learning situation and is not a kind of applied 'recipe' that can be used in the same way for all the children.

In similar vein, Van de Pol et al. (2010) observe that scaffolding can employ specific means such as modelling and the use of open-ended questions. Instead scaffolding can only occurs when the three features of scaffolding such as contingency, fading and transfer of responsibility are present. According to Van de Pol et al. (2010), contingency is the teacher's capacity to be responsive and to determine the baseline level of the learner's ZPD. While fading is refers to as the gradual withdrawal of support as the teacher perceives the learner's competency increasing. Transfer of responsibility occurs when the children takes full control of their learning and is able to perform any activity assigned independently. Additionally, Van de Pol et al.'s (2010) research finding using the notion of scaffolding established that it is problematic with regard to measurement, this is because it is a complex and dynamic process that take place over time while conventional forms of measurement require a static state in order to establish the validity.

4.7 Critiques of Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory

In this section, I look at the scholars who challenge Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory. In spite of the general acceptability of sociocultural learning theory in the field of education, there are some pockets of criticisms. For instance, scholars like Wertsch andToma (1991), Phillips (1995), Cobb and Yackel (1996), Matusov and Hayes (2000), Chaiklin (2003), among others subjected Vygotsky's work to series of criticisms. Phillips (1995) says that Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory stands in stark contrast to the cognitive learning theories of the positivistivist paradigm that look at learning as an internal psychological process isolated in the mind of the learner and largely free from the social and physical contexts within which it occur. In addition, Ellis (1997, p.45) argue that the source of development in sociocultural learning theory is social interaction, the theory has difficulty

accounting for the appearance of unattested First Language (L1) forms in Second Language (L2) speaker performance, and therefore it is better seen as a sociolinguistic rather than a psycholinguistic theory. Therefore, to be more specific, L2 speakers often regularise the past tense of English verbs like take, eat and go (taked, eated, goed,), but the regular forms do not occur in the speech of adult native speakers of English (Lantolf &Thorne, 2000). It was reported by Lantolf and Thorne (2000) that poor tenses were created by the learners through an analogical process that uses regular past tense forms as a model (for example, talked, reached, pushed). Since the incorrect regular forms are not in the linguistic environment, rather, the learners manufacture it, social factor alone is not sufficient to explain the learning process. The problem is that the argument is rest on the mistaken assumption that sociocultural learning proposes that learning is simply that of imitation process. As shown in my discussion of ZPD and scaffolding, this is not what this theory proposes. Indeed, it argues that internalisation through imitation is not a matter of copying but entails an active, and frequently creative, reasoning process (Lantolf &Thorne, 2000).

Another criticism of the theory relates more directly to the ZPD, which is easily the most extensively used and yet rarely understood of the fundamental concepts of sociocultural learning theory (Chaiklin, 2003). According to Chaiklin (2003), there are two delusions about the ZPD. First, the ZPD is the same as scaffolding or assisted performance. Second, it is similar to Krashen's assertion that language acquisition occurs when a person is enclosed by target language input at $i + 1$, where i is the acquirer's current level of competence and $+ 1$ connotes the stage immediately following i in a natural order developmental sequence (Foster & Ohta, 2005). According to (Krashen 1982), the learner progress from stage i to stage $i +1$ by understanding input containing $i + 1$. The two assumptions are inaccurate. Scaffolding is a concept propounded by Jerome Bruner to refer to as any type of adult-child (expert-novice) assisted performance (Foster & Ohta, 2005). However, this is not what the ZPD represents. In expert-novice interactions, the focus is to complete the task instead of assisting the learner to develop. The task is usually carried out by other-regulation in which the adult controls the child's performance instead of searching for opportunities to relinquish control to the child (Min, 2006). According to Stetsenko (1999, p. 36), "scaffolding, unlike the ZPD, is thought of in terms of the amount of assistance provided by the expert to the novice rather than in terms of the quality, and changes in the quality, of assistance negotiated between expert and novice."

4.8 Application of sociocultural learning theory at formal setting

Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory has been widely adopted in the early childhood education. The implications of the theory in understanding the dynamics of learning among pre-primary school learners in Uyo senatorial district of Nigeria can be summarised as below.

The traces of Vygotsky's thought could be seen in the process approaches that appeared as a reaction against the dominant product approaches in the 1970s. The product approaches are grounded on behaviourist principles and relate language teaching to linguistic form, discrete linguistics skills and habit formation (Schunk, Meece, & Pintrich, 2012). These scholars contain that language comprises of part that should be learned and mastered independently in a graded manner. According to Paris and Paris (2001), the learner's role in the class is to receive and follow the teacher's instructions. From the perspective of process approaches, learners should be taught using 'systematic thinking skills' (McGuinness, 1999). As a result, planning, setting goals, drafting and creating ideas became part of teaching methods in the classroom, specifically in the area of reading and writing. Additionally, Badger et al (2000) observes that the social aspect of teaching language turn out to be an important part of language classroom literature as directed by Genre Approach. The supporters of Genre Approach such as Jinlong (2001), Hyland (2003), Oxford (2013) among others held that language should be accessible and accepted as a tool for teachers to apply in teaching. However, the theoretical basis of Genre Approach is rooted on the systemic functional model that describes theory of genre as the theory of language application. In the study, the emphasis is on the dynamics that aid learning using language as medium of instruction, which is in line with Vygotsky's views of the role of language as a social medium for communication.

The significance of meaning construction in the act of learning is a hot issue in language classroom interactions. However, it is pertinent to say that the application of approaches such as integrative teaching of reading and writing is nothing but a recognition of the importance of meaningful interaction of language learners with texts in the class. According to Zimmerman (1997), enhancing learners' competency in language should not be regarded as mastering of the skills. Too much concentration on skills may deny learners or children from engaging with what may be regarded as an aspect of literacy such as meaning construction, competency, fluency and flexibility with dealing with texts as readers and writers (Lemke, 2001). Mercer, Dawes, Wegerif and Sams (2004) hold that if this aspect is ignored, teachers

will be inculcating in the learners what Kubota (1998) referred to as 'fixed routines' and 'dogmatic treatment of skills.' It has been argued that such skills make learners or children to develop one-way thinking that rejects what is not in lie with the existing knowledge (Kubota, 1998). Learners will develop a convergent type of thinking that will prevent their abilities to deal with activities that require complex thinking. Invariably, this may retard learners' abilities to develop multiple skills necessary for their success in their academic life (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000). Mercer, Dawes, Wegerif and Sams (2004) report that once the focus of teaching is on meaning construction, learners will be able to assimilate, internalise and integrate the new information with the information that have been already possessed, hence understand the new information better and add personal values to it. Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory holds that learning happens when the learner actively transforms his/her world and does not merely conform to it (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Johnson (2006) echoed the importance of meaning construction and fluency in language when he proposed simultaneous dual focus on form and accuracy together with meaning and fluency in language as the appropriate way of enhancing learners' level of proficiency and understanding.

The application of sociocultural theory principles on pre-primary learners at the formal and informal settings is located within the task-based approach. This approach focuses on the significance of social and collaborative aspects of learning. Ford and Forman (2006) observe that sociocultural learning theory focuses on ways in which the learners accomplishes activity and how the interaction between learners can scaffold and support in the language acquisition process. Lantolf (2000) suggest that collaboration and interaction among learners create a collective ZPD from which each learner can draw from as a collective pool. Gibbons (2002) suggest that teachers or parents should give more attention to the properties of activity that aim to enhance communicative efficiency as well as language achievement. Seedhouse (1999) contains that task-based contexts arouse learners to mobilise all their linguistic resources and push their linguistic knowledge to the boundary, a situation that Seedhouse completely question. A more optimistic view comes from Littlewood (2007) who think that task-based activity is not connected to any particular approach, rather, it is a useful method for the teaching of language-centred tasks, learning-centred tasks and learner-centred tasks. Littlewood (2007) recommends sequencing of tasks in a suitable manner to ensure that the demand on language is in line with the learners' levels of proficiency and mastery. The fundamental focus of task-based approach is on the role of interaction and collaboration

among leaners, and ways in which the learners scaffold each other through interaction, a point that is necessary in Vygotsky's notion of learning.

The issue of language internalisation is important in Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory. In this perspective, teachers are not to focus so much on teaching concrete facts rather they should also target their learners into an abstract world as a means of assisting them to develop multiple skills that will empower them to engage on complex learning tasks (Turuk, 2009). Simister (2004) knows the importance of the learners' personal voice, therefore, he argue that emphasis on the regurgitation of facts and repetition of accepted ideas will only produce dull and uninspired learners. The implication is that learners should be taught on how to develop, adjust strategies and assimilate learning tasks into their own personal world. Recently, the role of abstract thinking in learners' intellectual development has been recognised and an agitation for the introduction of literature in the class. Hence, the teaching of storey telling is assumed to improve learners' vocabularies and support the development of learners' critical thinking. It involves moving the learners away from the repetitive recall types of learning which focus on language structure into abstraction. Thus, learners can have interest in the development of the available language. Accordingly they could develop a self-motivated attitude towards learning the language to encourage cognitive abilities.

The notion of ZPD is a challenge for teachers. Shayer (2002) contains that teachers should know the limits of his/her learners, hence teach to the limits of learners' ZPD and no further. In addition, Guerrero Nieto (2007) observes that determining a learners' ZPD is an act of negotiated discovery that should be realised through interaction between the learners and the teacher. The interaction assists the teacher to determine exactly what the learner can accomplish alone and what he/she desires assistance to accomplish. Shayer (2002) argue that more research is required to enable teachers in each school discipline to know how far ahead of development the learning they choose for their learners should be. Furthermore, Shayer (2002) opines that mere cognitive level matching leaves the learners' mental development stagnant. However, on the other hand, conceptualising extremely high above learners' ability may lead to frustration and disappointment. Therefore, it is the teachers' role to create the balance (Shayer, 2002).

In the context of language learning, Williams et al. (1997) says that ZPD may be regarded as complementary to interlanguage theory. According to Consolo (2006), the theory conceives of each learner's understanding of the language system as being gradually reshaped as it

develops and more closely approximates towards the target language system. The ZPD can be regarded as the next level of understanding in the learners' interlanguage (Consolo, 2006). The notion of scaffolding and mediation are very essential for learners in pre-primary school context. They imply that explicit instruction in language learning is still required. For instance, there is an outcry against emphasis on teaching grammar in the class. It is observed that despite much time spent on teaching grammar, texts produced by second language learners are ungrammatical (Van Lier, 2014). Even though this is a fact acknowledge by so many including second language learners, it might be a mistake for people to conceive that the learners will gain the language the way children acquire their first language. Second language learners need coaching and explicit instruction in order to appropriate the fundamental skills of second language. Lack of such skills as Salmon (2008) assert, may prevent their progress and improvement as competent writers, readers and language users. From the second langauge, there is still a need for learning tasks and stages to be graded to facilitate easy comprehension and knowledgeable persons such as teachers, instructors to take learners through different layers of knowledge and understanding before being left on their own. The learners cannot handle these activities independently particularly at the early stages of their learning.

4.9 Application of sociocultural learning theory at informal setting

According to Serpell and Hatano (1997), in any society many chances for learning and cognitive development arise as a child participate in daily activities. Learning conditions outside of classroom range from specialised and intentional situations, like apprenticeships, to sophisticated informal situations like observation and participation on routines and community ceremonies (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2006). In spite of the fact that less formal environments of learning are not prescribed by place, curriculum and time, Roth Lee (2007) argue that they share specific structural features. As cultural practices, they comprise a set of actions that are shared by a group of people in the community. The actions have normative anticipations that go beyond the immediate circumstance, and they are part of the regular cultural fibre.

Social interaction is integral to the task (Callanan & Braswell, 2006). Most children learn about an important cultural artifact when they socialise and work with adults or their peers in problem-solving situations involving task. Additionally, Callanan and Braswell (2006) say that children's experiences with their parents and other adults in science museums that

stimulate active exploration of displays can enhance opportunities to learn about literacy and science. Zuengler and Miller (2006) opine that social processes at various phases of learning also have been discovered in explorations of the teaching of specific cultural skills in apprenticeships. For example, Marsick and Watkins (2001) say that boys learning how to weave in the Dioula community in Cote d'Ivoire. In line with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the ZPD, Marsick and Watkins (2001, p.29) argue that "there was careful scaffolding in the beginning phases of learning to weave, like setting up the loom, working with the threads, and learning the traditional patterns, and less scaffolding once a youth had mastered the basics of weaving."

From the Wells' (1999) perspective, informal learning also happens as children take part in the authentic task, goal-directed units of life whose primary focus is not to instruct a child but to carry out the task itself. Children learn in the context of authentic task by participating in the task right alongside other members of the community who are engaged in the task. However, Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to this process of learning as a legitimate peripheral participation. Here, the learner is allowed to have sustained but nonintrusive contact with an adult who is engaged in a task (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Adults in the community make their task readily available to children and children learn by observing the adult that carry out task.

According to Eshach (2007), informal learning is not a passive engagement on the part of the child. Rather, children decisively allocate their attention with the aim of learning about the task. However, the child's efforts may consist of listening in on the conversations of more experienced individuals, probing into their behaviours. With the increasing in age, the child's skills and interests change and the nature of his/her participation in informal cultural tasks, and the expectations and responsibilities pertaining to his/her participation also change (Eshach, 2007). An elderly person have to support the child's involvement and learning in these task through the process of guided participation in which the child is a full participant (Roberts, 2006).

Summarily, it is pertinent to say that informal learning in the context of cultural tasks positively contribute to learning and cognitive development in significant ways. For instance, when a child take part in informal learning, the regular behaviour of the culture, the thinking and values that correspond with the behaviour become part of the child's own psychological make-up. Because the task is important to the community enhances the meaning and consequences of child's participation in it (Swanwick, 2005)

4.10   Language and cognition

Language is a medium of communication. According to Urdang (2008), language is a body of words and systems common to people of the same community nation of the same geographical area or the same cultural tradition. It is also the communication by voice, using arbitrary, auditory symbols in conventional ways with conventional meanings. Language is any set or system of such symbols as used in a more or less uniform fashion by a number of people, who are thus enabled to communicate intelligibly with one another. Bullon (2005) defined language as a system of communication by written or spoken words, which is used by the people of a particular country or area. Colman (2003) has it that language is a conventional system of communicative sounds and sometimes (though not necessarily) written symbols capable of fulfilling the following hierarchy of functions such as expressing a communicator's physical, emotional, or cognitive state, issuing signals that can elicit responses from other individuals, describing a concept, idea or external state affairs, and connecting on a pervious communication.

It is stated that based on the functions and characteristics of Language, it could stated that language is capable of assisting cognition. This is because cognition is an aspect of perceiving, thinking, and acquisition of mental images that can help dissemination of information, which can also produce by activities of language. Cognition is the mental activation involved in acquiring and processing information (Colman, 2003). The ability to use language is a very important part of human cognition. It is this ability which distinguishes us from other animals (Garden 2003). Development according to Bullon (2005) is the process of gradually becoming bigger, better, stronger or more advanced. It is qualitative increase in the functioning of an individual as a result of maturation and experience. A child generally is a human between the stages of birth and puberty, or in the developmental stage childhood is between infancy and adulthood.

Speakers of different languages learn different sets of grammatical elements that must be used in every utterance (Burling, 2005). Language draws from and influences our thought processes. However, there is a controversy centered around the extent of this interaction. Nature proponents see language as a very autonomous ability, while nurture proponents tend to see it as more inseparable from other, general cognitive abilities. However, both language and cognition are found within the Piaget stages of cognitive development which centres between first day of life to 2years (Ikediashi, 2014). Clark (2004) has it that some researchers

focus on the first year of cognitive development and assume that some children build on this to begin with, and then narrow their focus to just what happens in a specific language. In other words, children first build on what they know before acquiring language, and then use language as well in the constructing of additional categories (Ikediashi, 2014).

The point here is that cognition and language interact in a cyclical fashion as children learn more. For example, a baby who is sucking the breast of the mother looks on the face and remarks it as it does to the care-giver on cue, and easily recognizes the face. The child marks the faces of the older siblings and those that are very close relations but run away or avoids being carried by strangers. It is postulated that language help children to reconstruct their cognitive and conceptual realisation because through cognition, perception and information discrimination is possible. Effiong (2019) discloses that the different between animal and human beings in term of language is that animal verbalise their language sound directly as it comes, whereas human being use cognition in their language repertoire that make it possible for them to discriminate verbalised sounds and language.

According to Hashinieto, McGregor, and Graham, (2007) as quoted by Andrea (2012), by eight years of age, most children readily acknowledge both thematic and taxonomic relationships. The similarities, in over-all performances suggest that the emergence of taxonomic relations is largely determined by general cognitive abilities. The authors opined that the bilingual children's need to store and retrieve more words across two linguistic systems may have rendered taxonomic relations more salient. They reported that a study by kaushanskaya and Faroqisah (2009) examined the effects of bilingualism on adults to resolve cross-linguistic inconsistence during novel word-learning and came up with the findings that indicate that knowledge of two languages may shield bilinguals from native-language interference during novel word-learning. They wrote that their findings indicate that bilingualism facilitates word learning performance in adults, although the precise mechanism of this advantage remains unknown. The influence on children I think should be subject to vigorous experimental research paradigms, because there is conventional clamour for early childhood education in the mother tongue. From the foregoing, on cognitive development, it can be asserted that linguistic and cognitive processes interact across the life-span, with linguistic function tied t development of cognitive control throughout childhood and to its decline during old age.

Ikediashi (2014) states that:

1) The fact that bilingual children like Nigerian children are richer in Semantic differentiation from monolinguals due to their diversity of terminological-semantic information means that they could benefit more if exposed to wider diversity of range of subject matter better than what is presently done with a limited range of subjects in their syllabus.

2) There has been the general tendency to regard bilingualism as an inadvertent contributory factor to proactive and retroactive inhibition of speech. However the study by Kaushanskaya et al (2009) have shown that bilingualism could damper interference effects at new word learning and even facilitates word-learning in adults.

3) Language plays a fundamental role in the development of cosmology (which includes scientific thinking that precipitate technological breakthrough).

4) Nigerians (unlike Westerners) are not cognizant of fundamental role of languages not only for economic transactions of the 21st century but also exposure to broader vistas of cosmologies and world views necessary in problem solving paradigms.

5) Minority languages can easily go extinct and they need preservation including electronic and textual documentations.

6) Mother tongue in rural areas are influenced negatively by modernization trends if the speakers easily embrace western culture.

7) Prominent elites, journalist, politicians and educationists have not contributed significantly to the development of their languages e.g Igbo language.

8) Urban parents hardly teach the mother tongue to for their children who are only educated by cultural ragamuffins of home-videos and Hollywood.

Conclusively, language significantly influences cognitive skills. It is stated that children should be exposed to a wider range of subject matter at school to take advantage of their bilingual capabilities in terminological semantic analysis. Mother tongue as an home languages in Nigeria should be encouraged for every pupil to help them feel at home in every part of Nigeria and build a great nation not measured by state of origin but state of impact. Accordingly our mother tongue needs real enrichment as it shapes our cognition and world view.

.4.11 Summary

In this chapter three, Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory was used as a lens for the data generation and interpretation. Sociocultural learning theory highlights that the learning look

at the cultural amplifiers as personal and social resources that mediates between the social and the individual construction of meaning. Importance concepts such as ZPD, mediation and scaffolding that help in the understanding the dynamics of sociocultural learning theory were discussed. In the context of mediation, it was established that elderly people (teachers inclusive) and learners are given chance to mediate and help each other in the construction of zones of proximal development in which everyone (teachers and children) learns and develops (Donato 2000). Additionally, sociocultural learning theory emphasises that during instruction, responsiveness of the structure and function of language is created by using it socially. Therefore, it is pertinent to say that this theory will assist in explaining the dynamics that influence ways in which pre-primary school learners both in informal and formal settings.

The theorist iterated that a child is absolutely dependent on socio-cultural interactions among people. This implies that different cultural environment affect the child's socialisation such as the parents (home culture) and teachers (school cultural environment). They jointly or severally initiates the child's learning through their actions and inactions, perhaps instructing the child on what to do, how to do it, as well as what the child should not do. These individuals impact on the child's life through social interventions as supported by their socio-cultural environments. Thereby, a child learns and internalises these attitudes and behaviours in addition to inculcating as personal value. Hence, this theory is support this research works to consolidate the foundation of learning dynamics into the pre-primary school learners' ability to learn at the formal and informal education settings. The next chapter of this thesis focused on the research methodology and design.

Chapter five

Research design and methodology

5.1 Introduction

In chapter four of this thesis, I critically looked into the theoretical frameworks that were developed for this study. In this chapter, however, I focused on the research design and methodology for the study which bordered on the dynamics of learning among pre-primary school learners at the formal and informal education processes.

It is my view that an appropriate research study relies on the quality of research design adopted for the study. In agreement to this assertion, Flick (2007) argues that the quality of any research project is enhanced by solid crafting of the research design. Therefore, in line with Flick (2007) position, I commenced this chapter with the conceptualisation of my research design, this was subsequently followed by the choice of paradigm which was critically explained. In furtherance to the above, the issue of the ontology and epistemology that underpinned my study were unpacked. Similarly, I looked at the research methodology which was appropriate for my study, the reasons that informed my choice of the methodology was discussed. In similar vein, I explained that the study was located within the case study perspective. Also, I discussed the instruments used in gathering the data. Before the conclusion of this chapter, I did explain methods of data analysis which include: transcribed, coded, and categorisation of themes and thematic analysis used in analysing the data.

5.2 Research design: Define

In the opinion of scholars such as Scott and Morrision (2006), every researcher is a designer. For instance, in a profession such as town planning, it is obvious that a town planner would diligently structure and come out with a clear layout of the city before the actual commencement of the build-up of the city. From the educational perspective, researchers would not begin data gathering of any kind without an appropriate research design. This is because embarking on such a mission without appropriate research design would render the research findings unreliable (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009). Supporting this assertion, Maree (2011) avows that the adoption of an appropriate research design is a

panacea that road-mapped any study to its logical conclusion. Before I looked at the actual research design for this study, it was pertinent to give brief definitions of research design.

The word 'research design' has been well explained by qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods researchers. Because of the nature of this study which bordered on qualitative approach, I restricted the discussion on research design and its appropriateness in my study to the scholarly positions of qualitative researchers such as Nworgu, (1991), Scott and Morrison (2005), Babbie and Mouton (2007), McMillan and Schumacher (2009) and Morrison (2009). In the context of the meaning of research design, Nworgu (1991) sees research design as a plan or blueprint which specifies how data relating to a given problem should be collected and analysed. According to Scott and Morrison (2005), research design refers to the schema or plan that constitutes the entire research study. In another vein, Babbie and Mouton (2007) view research design as a plan or structured framework of how one intend conducting the research process in order to solve the research problem. From the point of view of Babbie and Mouton (2007), the methodology and methods which a researcher adopts in conducting his/her research is what research design stands for. However, what I inferred from the Babbie and Mouton's argument is that the research design provides a plan that shows the way research is to be conducted in such a way that it answers the research questions. From the perspective of McMillan and Schumacher (2009), a research design is a blueprint of research that deals with four problems namely; what questions to study, what data are relevant, what data to collect and how to analyse the data. This view gives credence to the formulation of appropriate and acceptable research questions since this will act as a guide in arriving at a workable research design. In furtherance to the above assertion, a particular research design informs the researcher the importance of certain data and the nature of the said data to his/her study. The methods that will be employed in the analysis of data rely solely on the type of research design adapted (Scott &Morrison, 2009). In summary, it may be concluded that a research design demonstrates that the problem for exploration is doable given available resources (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009).

This bring us to the issue of the importance of research design in a research in which Nworgu (1991) contends that it provides the researcher with the necessary framework or blueprint for tackling a particular educational problem. In the course of investigating a given educational problem the researcher is faced with many issues. These issues from the perspective Nworgu (1991, p.23) are: what constitute the target population, what portion of this (the target population) should be involved in the study and how this should be determined (sample and

sampling technique), how to collect and organise data pertinent to the problem under exploration and the kind of analysis that is appropriate for the study. Taking an appropriate decision on these salient issues is often facilitated in the context of the framework provided by research design (Maree, 2011). Nworgu (1991) opine that without such framework it should perhaps be very difficult for appropriate decisions to be reached on those issues. In this study, my research design are made of the following components; interpretive paradigm, ontological and epistemological considerations, qualitative approach, methodology and methods that unpacked below.

5.3 Research paradigm

The concept 'paradigm' is derived from a Greek word *paradeigma.* In the 15th century, this concept was first introduced in English to mean 'an example or pattern'. However, Kuhn (1972) reported that for over 400 years, the word 'paradigm' was mainly used in English language to sort the verbs, nouns and other parts of speech. The use of paradigm in English language continued until 1960s, when David Baltimore used this term to refer to a theoretical framework in his research work on cancer (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Baltimore's application of paradigm in his study necessitated other scholars not only in natural sciences but also in social sciences and education to use this term to conduct research study.

Researchers have given various definitions of a paradigm. For instance, Kuhn (1977) use the terms 'paradigm' to refer to an integrated cluster of substantive concepts, variables and problems attached with corresponding methodological approaches and tools. Filstead (1979) define a paradigm as a set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organised study of the world. Patton (1990) understands a paradigm as a world view, a general perspective, and a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. Guba (1990) in his view argued that paradigm is an interpretative framework, which is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world, how it should be understood and studied. In the words of Taylor, Kermode and Roberts (2007), a paradigm is a broad view or perspective of something. In similar vein, Terre-Blanche and Durrheim (2007) sees a paradigm as an all-encompassing system of interrelated practice and thinking that define for researchers the nature of their enquiry. In a similar manner, Shuttleworth (2008) view a paradigm as a framework containing all of the commonly accepted views about a subject, a structure of what direction research should take

and how it should be performed. In spite of these definitions, it would not be out of place to conclude that a paradigm is a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field.

5.4 Types of research paradigms

In the context of types of paradigms, scholars such as Guba (1990); Gephart (1999); Greene, Benjamin and Goodyear (2001) say that there three research paradigms namely: positivism, post-positivism and interpretivism. However, a researcher like Coe (2012) reports that there are four types of paradigms and it include: positivist, post-positivist, critical and interpretivist paradigms. It is pertinent to give a brief discussion of each and every one of the paradigm mentioned before I give a vivid discussion of the paradigm chosen for this study.

5.4.1 Positivism

Positivism has been conceptualised by numerous researchers over the decades. For instance, Kolakowski (1972) and Krauss (2005) argue that positivism embraces a four point doctrine. These doctrines are: (a) the rule of phenomenalism, which asserts that there is only experience, all abstractions be they "matter" or "spirit" have to be rejected; (b) the rule of nominalism – which asserts that words, generalisations, abstractions, among others are linguistic phenomena and do not give new insight into the world; (c) the separation of facts from values; and (d) the unity of the scientific method (Krauss, 2005, p.761). Bisman (2002) sees positivism as an epistemology which seeks to explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituent elements. In conclusion, positivism prevails in science and assumes that science quantitatively measures independent facts about a single apprehensible reality (Healy & Perry, 2000).

5.4.2 Post-positivism

According to Zammito (2004), postpositivists believe that a reality exists, though he holds that it can be known only imperfectly and probabilistically. Ryan (20013) opine that post-positivism stress meaning and the creation of new knowledge, and are able to support committed social movements, that is, movements that aspire to change the world and contribute towards social justice. In postpositivism, it is believed that human knowledge is based not on unchallengeable, rock-solid foundations, but rather upon human conjectures (Zammito, 2004).

5.4.3 Critical paradigm

Critical paradigm is another school of thought that emphasises the reflective assessments and critique of society and culture by applying knowledge from the social sciences and the humanities (Morgan, 2012). In other words, critical paradigm is particularly focused on the issue of power relations within the society and interaction of race, class, gender, education, economy, religion and other social institutions that contribute to a social system (Asghar, 2013). However, critical paradigm does not only highlight and explain these social factors that cause oppressive and powerful groups to dominate the suppressed and repressed section of society, but it also strives for a social set up based on equality for all the members (Bohman, 2013).

After a brief discussion of the three paradigms, it is pertinent to dealt extensively on the interpretive paradigm. This is because I have chosen interpretive as an appropriate paradigm for this study. However, the choice of interpretive paradigm for this study is based on the nature of research which bordered on the dynamics of learning among pre-primary school learners at the formal and informal education processes.

5.4.4 Interpretive paradigm

The interpretivist tradition has exerted a strong influence on education research over the past 40 years. Interpretive paradigm is seen as an alternative to the positivist paradigm (Ponterotto, 2005). Interpretive paradigm in its purest form separates itself from social constructionism, adherents of which argue that social reality can be described in different ways, all of which are equally valid (Scott & Morrison, 2005). An interpretive researcher assume that our knowledge of reality is gained only through social construction such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, documents, tools and other artefacts (Klein & Myers, 1999, p.69). Interpretive researchers argue for the uniqueness of human inquiry, therefore, to completely comprehend human action by means of interpretations is to argue for an altogether different aim from natural science. This position was earlier canvassed was by Erickson (1990, p. 98) who maintains thus:

If people take action on the ground of their interpretation of the actions of others, then meaning interpretations themselves are causal for humans. This is not true in nature. This billiard ball does not make sense of its environment. But the human actor in society does and

different humans make sense different. They impute meaning to others' actions and take their own actions in accord with the meaning interpretations they have made.

In a similar vein, Hansen (2004) avows that the interpretive researchers are of the views that reality is constructed in the mind of the individual, rather than being an externally singular entity. Additionally, the purpose of any research study within the interpretive paradigm is to understand and interpret a specific context as it is, rather than to generalise or replicate the study (Schwandt, 2000). Myers (2009) argues that the premise of interpretivists is that access to reality (whether given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings. In another vein, Goldkuhl (2012) submit that the proponents of interpretive paradigm emphasise the goal of understanding the lived experiences from the point of view of those who live with it day to day. Additionally, the interpretive researchers seek to understand studied people through accessing the meanings that participants attached to those social worlds (Bryman & Bell, 2007). To be specific, interpretivism supported researchers in terms of exploring their world by interpreting the understanding of individuals (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). In light of the above, I adopts interpretive paradigm in the study in order to make undiluted interpretation of the dynamics that surrounds the pre-primary school learners' ability to learn at the formal and informal education setting in Nigeria. The end of this section opens another important section in this thesis which is the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the study. These are unpacked below.

5.5 Ontological assumption for the study

The concept 'ontology' use by social scientists was borrowed from philosophy. According to Ding and Foo (2001), ontology is the shared understanding of some domains of interest, which is often conceived as a set of classes (concepts), relations, functions, axioms and instances. Primarily, ontology means the theory of being (Dong, Li & Wang, 2006). Poetschke (2009) added that ontology is concerns with the question on how the world is built. Ontology focuses on what is the form and nature of reality, and what can be known about that reality (Morse, 2005). Blaikie (2000) give a brief definition of ontology as claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other. In furtherance to the above, ontological assumption in any social science research is that the social world and what passes as 'reality' is a projection of individual consciousness; it is an act of creative

imagination and of dubious intersubjective status (Guba, 1990). According to Bryman (2001), reality is masked by those human processes which judge and interpret the phenomenon in consciousness prior to the full understanding of the structure of meaning it expresses. It was a result of position held by Bryman (2001) that Scotland (2012) argues that in a qualitative study a researcher need to take a position regarding their perceptions of how things really are and how things really work. Based on this notion, however, what constitute reality in this study is constructed in the mind of this researcher as it relates to the dynamics surrounding the pre-primary school learners' ability to learn at the formal and informal education setting. With the knowledge gained I have been able to carry out the study with good result made.

5.6 Epistemological assumption for the study

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), epistemology focuses on the theory of knowledge. From Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill's (2007) perspective, epistemology dwells on what constitutes an acceptable knowledge in the field of study. In specific term, epistemological assumptions in social sciences focus on the knowledge-gathering process and ways of developing new models or theories which are better than rival models and theories (Scotland, 2012). In the words of Crotty (1998), the process in which knowledge is generated is continuously changing, never in a static or constant position. In light of the above, Wellington, Bathmaker, Hunt, McCulloch and Sikes (2005) argue that epistemological assumptions in any research are concerned with how researcher(s) knows, the nature of knowledge, what constitutes knowledge, where knowledge comes from and whose knowledge it is, and what it is possible to know and understand and re-present. In qualitative research approach, the question that usually in mind of researchers are: how we know what we know or what is the nature of the relationship existing between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). In this study, however, I was the sole investigator who interacted with all the participants (teachers and parents). This interaction has made me to realise and understand the dynamics of learning among pre-primary school learners at the formal and informal education processes for the development of our pre-scholars.

5.7 Locating this study in the qualitative approach

I mentioned in my chapter one that this study fall within the qualitative approach. Before I dwell extensively on the qualitative approach employed for the study, I intend to give a brief description of other forms of approaches used by researchers. According to Newman and

Benz (1998), Creswell (2012), there are three types of research approaches used by researchers. Creswell (2012) listed the approaches to include: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Unquestionably, these three approaches are not as discrete as it appears. Newman and Benz (1998) argue that qualitative and quantitative approaches should not be seen as polar opposites or dichotomies. Rather, they represent different ends on a continuum (Newman & Benz, 1998). However, the main difference between quantitative and qualitative approach fall on the distinction between 'explanation' and 'understanding' as the focus of exploration (Huysamen, 2001). While the characteristic of quantitative approach is the scientific search for 'cause and effect', on the other hand, qualitative approach is the search for an understanding of human experience (D'amant, 2009). In another development, mixed methods approach is an inquiry that seeks to combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell, 2012). Mixed methods approach is more than simply collecting and analysing both kinds of data, rather, it also involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). I explained these characteristics of quantitative and mixed approaches in the discussion as well as in my defence for the use of the qualitative approach.

There are various ways in which qualitative researchers define qualitative approach. For example, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) define qualitative study as a broad class of empirical procedures designed to describe and interpret the experiences of research participants in a context-specific setting. Warren (2001) sees qualitative research as a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2010) argue that qualitative research always looks into human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves. Despite different definitions of qualitative research being expressed by these researchers, there exist common grounds in the context of understanding, description and interpretation of social phenomena rather than merely explaining human's behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2007).

Some researchers such as Newman and Benz (1998), Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007), among others says that research questions influence the research approach in a research. Nieuwenhuis (2012) argue that some research questions that are addressed more appropriately from the qualitative approach focus on the persons and how they interact in their social settings, and how they see themselves in their natural environment. Additionally, questions relating to 'why' and 'how' are generally pointed towards qualitative research

(Flick, 2007). Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state that in qualitative research researchers attempt to reveal not only what happens but how it happens and, most importantly, why it happens the way it does. However, at the outset I state that my first research question which addresses how the children learn at the formal and informal education settings and the second research question, which focuses on the dynamics that surrounds the way pre-primary school children learn at the formal and informal education settings rest squarely on the qualitative approach.

Additionally, qualitative approach emphasises the lived experiences of the participants (Lichtman, 2006). In other words, the researcher tries to understand the world of the research participants and this can therefore be explained as understanding the life experiences of the persons. Therefore, the central aim of qualitative researcher is to see the world from the perspective of the participants, and understand the phenomenon from the participants' experiences. This statement aptly describes the aim of this study, which was to explore the the dynamics that surrounds the way pre-primary school learners' learn at the formal and informal education settings.

Additionally, in the qualitative approach process the researcher has a major role to play. According to Lichtman (2006, p.12), it is through the researcher's eyes and ears that data are collected, information is gathered, settings are viewed, and realities are constructed". However, detailed consideration is given to the holistic picture or situation of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Following a similar line of argument is Maree (2011), who says that qualitative research approach is aim at understanding a phenomenon by looking at the overall picture instead of focusing on it as isolated variables. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) opines that the researcher can only interpret and bring meaning to the data collected if he or she is able to understand the data in a wider social, educational and historic context. Based on the statement discussed above, my study looked at to the dynamics surrounding the pre-primary school learners' ability to learn at the formal and informal education setting.

Lastly, I adopted qualitative research approach because of its "fluid, evolving and dynamic nature" as opposed to the rigidity of quantitative research and mixed methods (Nieuwenhuis, 2011, p. 13). The adoption of the qualitative research approach enables this researcher to engage the case study approach, which allowed for the use of different research instruments. Additionally, I was also able to move back and forth between data generation and the analysis

of data. This was a move away from a linear approach, from data generation to the analysis of data (Flick, 2007). The process that exists between the phases is regarded as an iterative process with great emphasis on recurrence, hence implying that the process is non-linear (Cohen, Manion &Morrison, 2011).

Having provided a detail explanation and articulation for the adoption of qualitative research approach in this study, I moved a step further with defining a case study and arguing for the reason of its selection in my study. This helped me carry out the study and came up with reliable results.

5.8 Case study

Yin (2009) sees a case study as a research approach used in various situations to add to our knowledge and understanding of an individual, group, organisation, social, political and related phenomena. Saunders (2005) refers to a case study as an explanation or in-depth analysis of a "bounded system" (bound by time and/or place) or a single or multiple cases, over a period of time. In a similar vein, Swanborn (2010, p.13) defines a case study as a study of social phenomenon carried out within the boundaries of one social system (the case) or within the boundaries of a few social systems (the cases), such as people, organisations, groups, individuals, local communities or nation-states, in which the phenomenon to be studies enrols. Drawing from the above conceptualisation, it would be out of place to say that a case study is as a detailed examination of a social phenomenon within specific context.

In the context of the application of a case study in the research, Yin (2009) comes up with three main reasons for the adoption of the case study in the study. Yin (2009) says that the use of 'how' or 'why' research question(s) that seek to explain the present circumstance justify the engagement of the case study. However, the more the research question necessitates an intensive and in-depth explanation of the phenomenon, the higher the appropriateness of the case study approach in the study (Swanborn, 2010). With this in mind, my first research question that focused on how children learn at the formal and informal education settings clearly articulated the need for an intensive and in-depth description of the way in which children learn in formal and informal environments. Additionally, Yin (2009) says that a case study is a preferred approach when the researcher has little control over the events related to the social phenomena. In the context of the third reason, Yin (2009) indicates that a case study focuses on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. Therefore, the case study approach was utilised because it allowed for an in-depth

understanding of the dynamics surrounding the pre-primary school learners' ability to learn at the formal and informal education setting.

Another merit of the case study approach is its potential to allow for the use of different approaches or methods to gather information. In line with the qualitative research methodology, a case study connotes a detailed and in-depth study of a case or cases. Merriam (1998) also observe that a case study is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case. Similarly, the case study analyses relations between the factors that describe present status or influence change or growth (VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007). Bassey (2007) goes on to argue that a case study involves being where the action is, taking evidence from the research respondents.

Following the line of argument by scholars in the preceding statements, a case study allowed me to probe beneath the surface and get a deep understanding of the dynamics surrounding the pre-primary school learners' ability to learn at the formal and informal education setting.

Creswell (2007) recognises three variations in case studies that are linked to the intent of the case analysis. Creswell (2007) mention the single instrumental case study as the first variable in which the researcher looks at an issue and chooses a case. This assertion was supported by Stake (2008), who reports that the instrumental case study is observed primarily to provide insight into a case. The second one is the intrinsic case study that emphases on the case itself, because in this case the case presents a unique situation. The third variation of the case study is the collective or multiple case studies. The position held by Creswell (2007) was affirmed by McMillan and Schumacher (2006), Bassey (2007), Demetriou (2009) who refers to it as multiple-site case studies. In this study, I would say that it is multiple-sites case study, because the dynamics surrounding the pre-primary school learners' ability to learn will be looked from the formal and informal education settings. Furthermore, I opted to use multiple-sites case study as it has the potential to offer insight and exploration into the dynamics surrounding the pre-primary school learners' ability to learn at the formal and informal education setting.

In another circumstance, Yin (2009) argue that the data gathered from multiple cases are often considered as being more convincing, and the study is thus understand as being more robust and rich. Furthermore, Yin (2009) opines that the analytical advantages of using multiple cases may be substantial. However, the criticisms regarding the use of a single case

approach largely mirror uncertainties about the uniqueness or artificial conditions related to the case (Yin, 2009).

In another development, Creswell (2009, p.12) has a different view about the use of multiple cases as he says that the study "of more than one case dilutes the overall analysis". The implication is that the research findings may be influenced. In light of views expressed by Creswell (2007) and Yin (2009), I deliberately selected parents and teachers as I emphatically believed that they would strengthen the research findings, as against to the use of a single case study. Notwithstanding the views of Creswell (2007) and Yin (2009), Swanborn (2010) says that the major challenge facing the use of the case study approach is its lack of representativeness of the wider population or community. Interestingly, the implication is that the findings cannot be generalised in other senatorial districts in Nigeria aside from Uyo.

5.9 Research Population

Research population is the total of all the individuals who have certain characteristics and are of interest to a researcher (Maree, 2011). Similarly, the population of a research is an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications (Polit & Hungler, 1999). In this study, the population are all the mothers who have children between the ages of three and five. Additionally, all the pre-primary school teachers in Nigeria also form the population of the study.

5.10 Sampling technique

According to Flick (2008), there is uncertainty surrounding the use of the concept 'sampling' in qualitative study. However, qualitative researchers are focused on the selecting the 'appropriate' cases for their studies. From all indications, these cases are not chosen in a haphazard way. Rather, through deliberation, the researcher chooses his or her case(s). However, this implies that the cases were identified in a systematic manner. Therefore, it is appropriate to use the concept sampling, as is done in my study. Flick (2008) contains that sampling is an essential stage in designing qualitative research, as it is when the researcher reduces the vast number of possible materials and cases for a study to a manageable and at the same time justifiable selection of cases and materials. Based on the above discussion, it is pertinent to conclude that word sampling is the process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the entire population of the study. In this study, I adopt purposive sample approach and it is explained below.

5.10.1 Purposive sampling

According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), purposive sampling technique is often referred to as nonprobability sampling or purposeful sampling. However, purposive sampling technique in the research involves selecting certain unit which is based on a specific purpose rather than randomly (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013). In a similar development, McMillan and Schumacher (2006) says that in purposive technique, the sample chosen is based on the researcher's knowledge about the research population and a decision is made about the subjects that should be chosen to offer the best information for the focus of the study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) contend that purposive technique is deliberatively selective. In light of the above, I have to be selective as the focus of this study is on the dynamics surrounding the pre-primary school learners' ability to learn at the formal and informal education setting. Therefore, I needed to choose both the schools and participants that had some characteristics of the phenomenon under exploration. As a result, the schools and participants were carefully 'handpicked'. However, with the knowledge of the phenomenon under exploration, I chose these samples deliberately to meet the purpose of this study, which is the essence of purposive sampling technique.

As discussed above, the characteristics for the selection of the three schools were:

- Pre-primary school was of five years old since its establishment.

- The pupils' population was above 200 learners.

- The teachers' strength was seven and above.

In the same manner, the criteria used in the selection of the children's parents were as follows:

➢ The parent had to be a woman of about 35 years and above

➢ The woman had to be a mother, that is, has at least a child.

➢ The woman's child should have attended one the three school

➢ The woman was willing to participate in the study

In the context of teachers, they were selected based on the following characteristics:

❖ The teacher must have taught for atleast five years at the pre-primary school level.

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- ❖ He/she must have National Certificate of Education (NCE)

- ❖ He/she is willing to take part in the research.

5.10.2 Sampling size

As mentioned above, I used purposive sampling technique to choose the total of 15 pre-primary school's teachers for the study. For clarity, five teachers each from three pre-primary schools chosen were handpicked. Similarly, eight parents were also picked for the study. These parents The table 4.1 below indicates the number of teachers in each of the school selected and the number of parents whose child attend any of the three schools.

Table 5.1: Summary of the teachers' profile

Name of School	Teachers	Age	Qualifications	Experience
Odoro primary and Sec. school, Uyo	Ms. Mary Edem	40 years	NCE	10 years
	Ms. Christiana	38 years	NCE	15 years
	Ms. Precious	45 years	NCE	23 years
	Ms. Hellen	39 years	NCE	12 years
	Ms. Nkoyo	42 years	NCE	18 years
Government Primary school, Itu	Ms. Imaobong	55 years	NCE	28 years
	Ms. Atim	36 years	B.Ed.	8 years
	Ms. Emem	42 years	NCE	16 years
	Ms. Glory	38 years	NCE	10 years
	Ms. Patience	43 years	NCE	17 years
Afaha Nsit preparatory school, Nsit Ibom	Ms. Adiaha	35 years	B.Ed	8 years

	Ms. Ekaowo	39 years	B.Ed.	10 years
	Ms. Vivian	44 years	NCE	14 years
	Ms. Alice	38 years	B.Ed.	16 years
	Ms. Mfon	43 years	B.Ed	19 years

This section focuses on the detail biographical information of the teachers employed for the study. These teachers' details enabled me to embark on the analysis of their personal and professional backgrounds as it relates to dynamics surrounding the pre-primary school learners' ability to learn at the formal and informal education setting.

Table 5.1 indicates that Ms Mary, Christiana, Precious, Hellen and Nkoyo who teaches in Odoro primary school, Uyo are of the ages of 40,38,45,39 and 42 respectively. Also, they all possess the minimum teaching qualification of National Certificate of Education (NCE). Furthermore, all the teachers who willingly accepted to take part in the study have more the five years cognate teaching experience in the pre-primary education.

In the similar vein, Ms Imaobong, Atim, Emem, Glory and Patience are of the age of 36, 42, 38, 43, and 35 respectively. Exception of Atim who possess Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), every other person selected in the school has the minimum teaching qualification. It is pertinent to say that all these participants more than five years teaching in the school.

In Afaha Nsit preparatory school, Ms Adiaha is about 35 years of age. She has a Bachelor of Education specialising on Early Childhood Education. Aside from the possession of degree, she has taught in the school for eight years. In addition, Ms. Ekaowo, Vivian, Alice, and Mfon are 39, 44, 38 and 43 years of age respectively. In the area of qualification, all of them have the Bachelor of Education except Ms Vivian who possesses the National Certificate of Education. It is very clear that all my participants are females. Here, the selection of females was not intentional. Rather, male teachers in the Akwa Ibom State prefer teaching in the high schools, while females dominate pre-primary and primary schools.

Table 5.2: Summary of parents' profile

Parents	Age	No. of Children	Year of last birth
Ms. Pricilla	41 years	3	2008
Ms. Ime	36 years	2	2010
Ms. Rose	42 years	4	2009
Ms. Udeme	38 years	2	2007
Ms. Victoria	35 years	2	2011
Ms. Iboro	35 years	3	2012
Ms. Eno	38 years	2	2010
Ms. Bassey	37 years	4	2011

The table 5.2 above indicate the eight parents selected for the participation in the study. From all indications, all the parents selected were from 35 years old and above. Additionally, all of the parents selected have more than a child. Similarly, it is clear that Ms Pricilla had her last child in the year 2008. However, Ms Iboro last born was in 2012. This implies that her last child is in the pre-primary school.

5.10.3 Research sites and descriptions

5.10.3.1 Odoro primary school, Uyo

Odoro primary school, Uyo is sited in the Uyo Central Business District (CBD). The school is considered by the generality of Akwa Ibom people as an elite school. The reason for this notion is because of the high tuition fees charged and the availability resources in the school. The school was established in 1998 by a private individual. The school had both pre-primary and primary sections and it occupied approximately 2100 metres of land. The school was fenced and it had only one entrance with a big gate. Additionally, the school had six buildings with 22 classrooms. In each of this building, there were six toilets. In the area of sport facilities, the school has a big football field, tennis court, slides, swings and netball and volleyball courts. The school also have board games like carrom and chess.

From the official school documents, the school had a learners' population of 1530. Out of the number, 320 pupils were in pre-primary section. The academic staff population was on 34, while the non-academic staff strength was13. My discussion with the head of school revealed that there was high level of discipline in the school. There was a strict access control in the school. All visitors (I inclusive) had to sign in and were often directed to a special parking space by the gatekeeper. Teachers were always on ground during breaks monitoring learners' behaviour.

5.10.3.2 Government Primary school, Itu

Itu Government primary school was located in Itu Local Government Area. It was founded in 1989 by Akwa Ibom State government. It takes less than 45 minutes' drive to reach the school from Itu Local Government Council. The school offered competitive training to young children whose parents/guardians desire first class education. Within Itu local government area, this school had a bit more infrastructure, and in work force compared to other schools. Furthermore, the state of the art academic blocks and classrooms, a multi-purpose built amphitheatre and functional instructional/learning equipment were scenes to behold. There were about eight main buildings in the school. Inside these buildings, there were about 31 classrooms with over 16 toilets. The principal's office and the offices of two deputy principals were located in the main building facing the school gate.

In the area of sport facilities, the school was blessed with a standard football field, tennis court and basketball court. There were other indoor game facilities such as badminton, table tennis and billiards in the school.

In the context of both staff and pupils' population, the school had more 45 academic staff. It is pertinent to know that over 96% of the staff in the school were females. Similarly, all the major positions in the school were occupied by females. However, there were 13 non-academic staff in the school. The school has large learners' population. From the official record availed in the school, there were 2650 learners in the school. Out of this number, 280 were in pre-primary section.

5.10.3.3Afaha Nsit preparatory school, Nsit Ibom

Afaha Nsit preparatory school, Nsit Ibom was established by the governing council of College of Education, Afaha Nsit. The school was established as a demonstration institution for students-teachers from the College of Education. This school was located inside the

College of Education. Since it was viewed as demonstration institution, there were only two main blocks that house the school. Inside these three blocks, there were four toilet facilities. I was informed that two toilets were meant for the staff while the other two were designed for the pupils. The two blocks has ten classrooms. Each of the classrooms was designed for the comfort of the children.

There were twelve academic and three non-academic staff in the school. As a staff of College of Education, I realise that all the staff in Afaha Nsit preparatory school were paid by the College of Education. In the context of learners' population, record indicated that there were 260 pupils in the school.

5.11 Methods of data collection

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), data collection is the process in which the researcher collects the information needed to answer the research problem. In qualitative study, there are various ways of gathering data. Creswell (2012) list the methods of data collection to include: semi-structured interview, focus group interview, observation, questionnaire, documents, and archive. It is pertinent to say that each of this method has its own merits and demerits. The adoption of any of the method depends on the nature of research (Merriam, 2009). In light of the above, I adopted both semi structured interview and focus group interview to elicit information from the participants. These two instruments (semi structured interview and focus group interview) are explained below.

5.11.1 Semi-structured interview

As mentioned above, the research instrument used for the collection of data was semi-structured interview. According to Silverman (2005), a semi-structured interview as an instrument in which the content and procedures are organised in advance. Rule and John (2011) says that a semi-structured interview is a set of pre-set questions which initiate the discussion, and is followed by further questions which arise from the discussion. In another development, Mason (2002, p. 62) list the characteristics of a good semi structured interview to include:

- The interactional exchange of dialogue (between two or more participants, in face-to-face or other contexts).

- A thematic, topic-centred, biographical or narrative approach where the researcher has topics, themes or issues he/she wish to cover, but with a fluid and flexible structure.

- A perspective regarding knowledge as situated and contextual, requiring the researcher to ensure that relevant contexts are brought into focus so that the situated knowledge can be produced. Meanings and understandings are created in an interaction, which is effectively a co-production, involving the construction or reconstruction of knowledge.

In light of the above, I adopted semi structured interview so as to gather undiluted information from the participants on the dynamics that surround the pre-primary school learners' ability to learn at the formal and informal education setting.

5.11.2 Focus group interview

As mentioned above, I used focus group interview to elicit information from the participants. According to Wisker (2004), focus group interview is the type of in-depth interview accomplished in a group, whose meetings present characteristics defined with respect to the proposal, size, composition, and interview procedure. Denscombe (2007) argue that a focus group interview consists of a small group of people, usually between six and nine in number, who are brought together by a trained interviewer (the researcher) to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about a given research topic. Scholars such as Casey and Krueger (2000) argue that focus group interview provides a more natural environment than that of individual interview because the research respondents are influencing and influenced by others- just as they are in real life. In other words, research participants were more comfortable discussing in a group than in an individual interview. This interaction often generates more discussion hence more information is received. It is based on these immense benefits of focus group interview that I designed for use in this study.

5.12 Gaining access to the participants

In accessing the research site, the researcher must locate a setting in which the study is to be conducted. This needs a careful planning because the researcher most often operates through 'gate keepers' who would assist him/her to gain access to the research site and participants (Miller & Salkind, 2002). As mentioned earlier, since the three schools (research sites) were picked, I started the process of negotiating for the access to the schools. I was forced to keep in my mind that having access to my participants would have a great impact on the

relationship that I as a researcher would have with my participants and that it would also significantly influence the way they would respond to the interview questions (Yates, 2001). Drawing from the literature, I realise that having access to my participants is one of the most challenging issues when conducting a research study. However, the major challenge in terms of accessing the participants was 'selling' the research idea to relevant stakeholders (Ministry of Education, principals, teachers and parents). This involves informing them of the full details regarding the research topic and the processes that will be involved in gathering the information.

Luckily for me, access to the schools was not as difficult as I had envisaged because the principal from the three selected schools were people who were interested in the study, therefore, they were very willing to assist in any way possible. Furthermore, these principals were university graduates who understood the importance of research. Even so, I was very careful and strategic in my approach. Before then, I called the three principals during the short Easter holidays to explain my intentions to conduct research in their schools. I made an appointment to meet with each of the three principals and to explain the research process in person. It was a relief to find that the three principals were excited about this and welcomed me warmly. After securing an access to these schools, I followed the formalities by sending a letter to the Chairperson, Akwa Ibom State Universal Basic Education Commission requesting the permission to conduct interview in the three selected schools. Another letter was also written to each of the three principals requesting permission to conduct research in their schools. It is pertinent to say that positive responses were received from these four people authorising me to embark on the interview. I personally informed all my focus group participants about the interview after I have gotten the approval from chairperson of the commission and their principals. I told them the exact date and time for the interview and requested them to be ready.

Concerning the parents, I wrote a letter to the requesting them to participate in the study. It was surprising that all the parents selected replied with the affirmation that they were interested in the study and ready to take part. Another most interesting thing was that all the selected parents were able to communicate in English language. This, therefore, removed the issue of looking for the translators to assist in the interviewing. Just like my relationship with the teachers, I also established a cordial relationship with the parents. I ensured that before the actual of the interview, I visited in their different houses to keep them abreast of the interview.

5.12.1 Interview process

Before the actual date, time, venue of the interview, I negotiated with all the interviewees. In other words, all my participants were informed of the date, time and venue of the interview. For the parents, the interviews were organised in their houses, while the teachers' interviews were held in the school compound. Before the actual date of the interview, I bought tape recorder and I provided myself with field note for use in the field. The use of audio recorder was to ensure that every word from the participants was recorded. Additionally, the field note was used in order to record personal observation, reflections and perceived body language shown while interacting with my participants during the period of data collection. Furthermore, in the field note I wrote down other observations relevant to this study during one-on-one and focus group interview with the parents and teachers respectively. According to Mosia (2011), the use of field note assists the researcher to gain insight into participants' views that they could not express verbally during the cause of the interview. Looking at the interview process, I would say that the interviews did go as I anticipated. Both the individuals and focus group actively participated in the interview.

During the actual interview, Edward and Holland (2013) focus on the flow of the interview and emphasis that in the area of their conversational development, interview display a similar flow. In this study, however, I began with the introduction of the research topic and the purpose of the study was articulated. From all indications, this helps in setting the tone of the interview as well as establishing an excellent rapport with my participants. During the interview, I made sure that my participants had enough time to respond to every question asked. With the aim of gathering rich data, I allowed my participants leeway to respond to questions that were not on the interview schedule. However, I made sure that the questions which were developed on the interview schedule were appropriately responded to.

Stacey and Vincent (2011) argue that during the process of interviewing, it may be necessary for the participant to summarise his/her responses. According to Keightley, Pickering and Allett (2012), the interviewer should avoid summarising or even paraphrasing as it may result in the answers becoming distorted. In order to avoid distorting facts, I preferred my participants to summarise the responses in line with Stacey and Vincent's (2011) position. This immensely helps me in getting a clearer picture of their responses, as well as cross check if my initial understanding corresponded with that of the participants (Guest, Bunch & Johnson, 2006). Additionally, I asked for more clarification or explanation of concepts used

by the participants. Drawing from the above discussion, though the interview was audio recorded, I also wrote down some points in my field note. This note was significant as it was used as part of an initial analysis, and was beneficial in assisting me to achieve more clarity.

In the course of the interview, I frequently checked the recording gadget so as to avoid any mishaps or malfunctioning. First and foremost, I began the interview with the parents of the children. A day was allotted for each of the eight parents. After I was done with parents, I moved on to the focus group interview with teachers. After I concluded the interview, I had to go back to all my participants thanking for their time.

5.13 Transcription of the interview

According to Halcomb and Davidson (2006), transcription of interview is the process of reproducing verbatim the spoken words from the audio-taped interview into written text. Poland (1995) argues that verbatim transcription is a word-for-word reproduction of verbal interview, in which the written words are an exact replication of the audio-recorded words. In other vein, Henning et al (2011) contend that the issue of verbatim transcription of interview is very challenging to most novice researchers due to inter-subjective nature of human communication. However, MacLean, Meyer and Estable (2004) opine that the way in which interview content is heard or perceived by the transcriber play a major role in the form and accuracy of the transcription. Supporting the above notion, Davidson (2009) argues that the reliability of the transcription is influenced by the accuracy of the speech recognition.

After the conclusion of the interview, I engaged in transcribing the data. The transcription was time-consuming. However, it enables me to familiarise myself with the rich data collected. Additionally, Oliver (2005) contends that in the process of transcribing the data the researcher is often close to the data, however, the better he/she understand the data, the more competent he/she will be in labelling units of meaning. As I immersed in the process of transcribing the interview, it emerged that all the responses did not need further elaboration. This is because it was very clear and understandable. Therefore, there was no need for me to follow up the interview. In spite of this, I went on to present the transcribed documents to my participants to read so as to ensure that I did not misunderstand them or remove the critical issues made by them. Interestingly, I told my participants to highlight areas which need to be deleted, modified or added so as to clarify their responses. I want to state that all my participants agreed that the transcribed data were verbatim of their words. This led me to another important issue in the study and that is coding the transcribed data.

5.13.1 Coding of data

Before I subject the transcribed data to analysis in which its adoption was informed by the literature review, theoretical frameworks, research design and paradigm, I reduced the transcribed data to manageable proportions through coding. In qualitative approach, Saldana, (2008) says that coding is a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data. Newby (2010) see coding as the translation of question responses, text, photographs and respondent information to specific categories for the purpose of analysis. Gläser and Laudel (2013) describe coding as the ascription of a category label to a piece of data, that is either decided in advance or in response to the data that have been collected. Additionally, coding is as a process of choosing labels and also assigning them to different parts of data (Rule & John, 2011). The various definitions advance by these scholars notwithstanding, Seidel and Kelle (1995, p.42) highlight the roles of coding in the qualitative research to include: noticing relevant phenomena, collecting examples of those phenomena, and analysing those phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns and structures.

Though coding is necessary in every research study, the process of its execution is challenging and time demanding. According to Rule and John (2011), this is because coding demands intelligent, analytic and systematic decisions about what the research data says. With this in my mind, I adopted open coding system. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) contend that an open coding is a label that a researcher attaches to a piece of text to describe in-depth and categorise that piece of text. In this study, I want to state that coding was done manually. However, this involves the use of paper, notebooks, coloured pens and files. At a certain point, I adopted 'cut-and-paste' method in categorising the concepts, sentences, phrases, among others that were similar. Apparently, this was not only stressful, but very laborious. However, the benefit was that I was constantly in touch with my data. From the open coding adopted, I was able to label, categorise and select the key themes that emerged from the dynamics that surround the pre-primary school learners' ability to learn at the formal and informal education settings. This was subsequently followed by the use of thematic analysis for analysing the themes which emanated from the data. This is explained below.

5.14 Data analysis

Data analysis is fundamental and central in any research study. However, many young researchers often faced with problem of what to do with volumes of data gathered. This may be viewed as the critical area in qualitative study. My subsequent discussion focuses on this area. Before looking into data analysis, it is pertinent to state that data gathering, data analysis and report writing are not separate rigid stages in a research study (Creswell, 2010). Rather the processes are intertwined and occur simultaneously (Elif Kale-Lostuvali, 2007). In support of the assertion, Silverman (2010) contend that the data analysis process in qualitative study is ongoing, emerging, iterative or non-linear. However, this suggests that any qualitative researcher may go back and forth from data gathering to data analysis. In foregrounding the above assertion, I would say that the research process is a cyclical one which involves data gathering, data analysis and writing of the findings.

In the context of the conceptualisation of data analysis, Bogdan and Bilken (1992) look at data analysis as the process of systematically scrutinising and arranging the observation field notes, interview scripts and other materials one gathered in the field, in order to increase one's understanding of these and to present findings to others. In the same vein, Ritchie and Spencer (2002) defined data analysis as an attempt to organise, account for and provide explanations of data so that meaning can be made of them. Silverman (2010) refers to data analysis as the search for patterns in data-recurrent behaviours, objects, or a body of knowledge. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Thematic analysis seeks to unearth the themes salient in the text at various levels (Silverman, 2010). Based on the above definitions, I may not be out of context to say that data analysis is the bringing of meanings to and making sense of the data collected from the field. In light of the above, I adopted thematic analysis in order to bring meanings and understanding on the dynamics that surround the pre-primary school learners' ability to learn at the formal and informal education environments. In this study, the actual data analysis is presented and discussed in chapters six and seven.

5.15 Ethical Issues in the research

In this section, I explained the ethical issues adopted before I embark on interviewing of my participants. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), research ethics is explicitly interested in the analysis of ethical issues that are raised when people are involved as

participants in research. Additionally, research ethics educates and monitors researcher that conduct research to ensure a high level of ethical standard is adhered to (Oliver, 2003).There are five main objectives in research ethics (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), this involves the protection of human participants from harm or any form of abuse, informed consent is obtained, confidentiality of the participants, right to discontinue participation, right to privacy, and respecting the participants' time. These are discussed below.

5. 15.1Informed consent

In the context of informed consent, Anderson (1993) listed six critical elements to informed consent, and it consists of providing an explanation as well as the objectives of the research study and the instrument to be used. Maree (2011) contends that it is appropriate to provide a precise and understandable explanation of the nature and objectives of the study to the participants. Drawing from Maree's (2011) assertion, I explain to all the participants the nature of the study, its objectives, and the application of semi-structured and focus group interviews. In the area of the second principle, which is the describing the potential risks or negative consequences to the participants. Here, I inform all my participants that the interview section will be free of harm or risk. The third element is the description of the potential benefits that can be expected from the study. I made all my participants realise that on completion of the study, it will be of immense benefits to them by offering an insight into the dynamics surrounding the ability of the children in the formal and informal settings. The fifth objective involves giving or providing an answer to any question regarding my research study. Finally, by assuring that the participation is voluntary and that any participant has the right to withdraw during the interview at any point. Relying from the principles of informed consent, I wrote official letters to the parents and teachers requesting their participation in the study. Informed consent form which I have designed was also explained to the parents and teachers before they signed. Furthermore, all participants were informed that participation is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw at any time in the study.

5.15.2 The right to discontinue participation

In a research like the one under exploration, it is important to respect the participant's decision to withdraw from the interview at any point in time. As I have mentioned, I informed all the participants of this right to withdraw from the interview.

5.15.3 Confidentiality

According to Bell (2006), there is a distinction between confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality is a promise made by the researcher to the participants that they will not be identified or presented in identifiable form (Kaiser, 2009). While Wiles, Crow, Heath and Charles (2006) argue that anonymity is a promise that even the researcher will not be able to tell which responses came from which respondent. In a similar vein, Gregory (2003) has said that confidentiality means that the information given to the researcher will not be given to others and will be used for the research purpose only. Wright, Waters and Nicholls (2004) argue by stating that all participants have the right to know that access to the information they have divulged will be limited to the people and purposes that they had given consent to. Drawing from the Wright, Waters and Nicholls's (2004) notion, I did tell my participants of adhering to the confidentiality. In fact, this was done by giving all my participants and the sampled schools fictitious names (pseudonyms).

5.15.4 Right to privacy

Concerning the right to privacy, it was observed that technical devices like audio-recorder were a threat to the participants particularly teachers. This is because in Nigeria, government employees are not allowed to grant interview. Since I used an audio-recorder I had to obtain permission from all my participants and I also assured them that I have earlier applied to the Chairperson, Akwa Ibom State Universal Basic Education Commission, and that permission was granted.

5.15.5 Respecting the participants' time

According to Lounsbury, Reynolds, Rapkin, Robson, and Ostroff (2007), it is unethical to waste the research participants' time on irrelevant issues. Realising that everyone's time is precious, I tried to ensure that interview started on time and I actually focus on the issues which are relevant to the study.

5.16 Trustworthiness of the study

The use of the concepts such as internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity in the research is often appropriate within the boundaries of conventional positivist paradigm or quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). However, the adoption of these concepts is inappropriate in qualitative inquiry (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). In light of the above, qualitative study just like its quantitative and mixed methods counterparts should aim at degree of validity and reliability. Therefore, in order to establish validity and reliability in qualitative research, qualitative researchers used the word 'trustworthiness' (Merriam, 2009). For a study to be trustworthy, Guba (1981); Lincoln and Guba (1985) listed four criteria which are necessary in qualitative research endeavour and they are as follows: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Despite the fact a scholar like Seale (1999) agrees to the consensus reached by the academic community and accords importance to the influential view highlighted by (Guba 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There is some disagreement over Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness criteria as the yardstick with which to assess and ensure quality of the research. Here it will be a waste of time to focus on these critiques. Rather, I focused on the criteria set out by Guba (1981). The table 5.3 below shows the strategies adopted for establishment of trustworthiness in the qualitative study.

Table 5.3 Strategies for establishment of trustworthiness

Strategy	Criteria
Credibility	a) Prolonged and varied field experience b) Time sampling c) Reflexivity d) Triangulation e) Members checking
Transferability	a) Nominated sample b) Comparison of sample to demographic data c) Dense description
Dependability	a) Dependability audit b) Dense description of research methods c) Stepwise replication d) Triangulation Peer examination
Confirmability	a) Confirmability audit b) Triangulation c) Reflexivity

Source: Adapted from Guba (1981)

5.16.1 Credibility

According to Macnee and McCabe (2008), credibility is the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research outcomes. Credibility establishes whether or not the findings of the research actually represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' original positions (Gasson, 2004). However, According to Gasson (2004), credibility can be achieved by prolonged engagement with the

research participants, persistent observation in the field, the use of peer researchers, researcher reflexivity and participant checks. Shenton (2004) added that credibility can also be enhanced through the adoption of triangulation. Here, triangulation involves the use of various methods in the collection of data. In this study, however, I adopted individual and focus group interviews to achieve some degree of credibility. Additionally, the transcribed data was subsequently taken to the participants to check and re-check if the information they volunteered was adequately captured.

5.16.2 Transferabilty

Patton (2005) says that transferability is the degree to which the results of a research can be generalised or transferred to another context or setting. It is truism that the aim of a case study is not to generalise. Rather, it is out to explore and understand events and issues in their natural settings (Krefting, 1999). According to Mertens and McLaughlin (2004), qualitative researchers say that the transferability of findings is determined by the reader which is based on the comparisons of the context of the study with that of their own knowledge. Drawing from the above discussion, the study is explored in a specific context. Therefore, the contextual factor(s) has to be given considerable attention. In this study an in-depth and rich description of the research site as well as that of the participants was done. Additionally, detailed information regarding the context of the study was explained so as to allow my audience to decide whether or not the findings of this study are related to their own position or not.

5.16.3 Dependability

According to Veale (2001), dependability refers to how a researcher can ascertain whether the findings of a study can be repeated with the same research participants under the same conditions. Bitsch (2005) says that dependability is the stability of findings over time. In the same manner, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) argue that dependability allow the research participants to evaluate the findings and the interpretation and recommendations of the study to ensure that they are supported by the data obtained from the research participants. In this study, I ensure that all the data collected were thoroughly audited through the process transcription. In the context of stepwise replication, I also employed two of my colleagues to look at data obtained from the field over and over to established dependability. The data was coded after it has been transcribed, two weeks the first code I went back to re-code the data so as to ensure that dependability is adhere to.

5.16.4 Confirmability

In the area of confirmability, Tobin and Begley (2004) opine that confirmability is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the researcher's imagination, but are derivable from the data collected from the field. In a similar development, Anney (2014) argues that confirmability is the degree to which the results of the study could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers. Guba (1991), Brown (2009) contains that confirmability of qualitative research could be achieved through an audit trial, reflexive journal and triangulation. In this study, I tried to identify and also avoid potential areas of bias, distortion of research facts and alternative explanations which serve the purpose of further enhancing the confirmability of my study. In the area of triangulation, I tried to establish a good rapport with all my research participants to ensure that the information was obtained in a hitch free environment. Additionally, I also employed different strategies of data such as individual, focus group interviews and field note to ensure that confirmability is adhere to.

5.17 Challenges in collecting data

In any research study, there is element of challenges that a researcher faced while gathering data in the field. This study is not an exception. I want to state that in the course of obtaining information from my participants, I encountered series of challenges. One of the challenges was the issue of the focus group interview. It was very difficult to gather all the teachers selected for the focus group interview during official hours because all of them have different teaching period. For instance, when Ms Atim was having a class with her pupils by 10.15 am, Ms Emem was free during the period. To overcome this challenge, I was compelled to conduct the focus group interview after the official hour.

Another challenge I encountered was in the area of conducting the interview with children's mothers. I came to the realisation that all the women selected were married. The custom in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria does not permit anybody to interview another man's wife without the authorisation from the husband. It was a difficult task to contact the husbands of my participants. I overcame this challenge by visiting each husband of my participant to obtain a verbal permission to interview their wives.

5.18 Summary

This study focused on the dynamics of learning among pre-primary school learners in the formal and informal education processes. This chapter explained the research design and methodology adopted for my study. I explained that the study is a qualitative in nature. I did mention that the qualitative approach was adopted order to gather enough information and also give a thick or an in-depth description of the dynamics surrounding the pre-primary school learners' ability to learn at the formal and informal education setting in Nigeria. In line with the qualitative approach, the study was located within the interpretive paradigm. In the area of the methods adopted for the study, I mentioned that three schools were purposively selected as my research site. I went a step further to mention that eight parents and 15 teachers were selected for the interviews. The research instrument used was semi structured interview. The interviews were conducted and the data obtained from the field was subjected to transcription and open coding. The data was subjected to thematic analysis.

In the next chapter of this thesis, I intend to presents a description and analysis of the dynamics of learning among pre-primary school learners in the formal and informal education processes.

Chapter six

Data presentation and discussion: ways in which young children learn

6.1 Introduction

Within the previous chapter, the research design and methodology used to generate data were discussed along with the justifications for the research process adopted in the study. For clarity purpose, I want to state categorically clear that qualitative approach, interpretive paradigm, purposive sampling technique, semi-interview and thematic analysis were all processes I used to unpack the dynamics that surrounds ways in which learners learn at the formal and informal education setting in Uyo senatorial district, Nigeria.

However, chapter six reflect on how I made sense of the data through the lenses of the literature review and theoretical framework illuminated in the preceding chapters three and four respectively. In addition, I was guided by the research questions that informed the common interview questions. I intend to present the data and discuss them simultaneously. The reason for the presentation and discussion of data simultaneously is to stop this dissertation on chapter seven, which in my view is the appropriate. But before I do that, I find it appropriate to once again refer to the key research questions that appropriately shaped the study:

1. What language do pre-primary school children adopt for learning?

2. How does language impact pre-primary school children's learning?

3. How do children learn in formal and informal education settings?

4. What are the dynamics that surround the way pre-primary school children learn in formal and informal education settings?

I want to state that to strengthen my data presentation and discussion, I cited the actual verbatim responses of my participants, with the intention of presenting reasoned arguments. Since the study is located within qualitative approach, my effort is geared towards capturing the lived experiences of the participants through their voices. Furthermore, the main themes and sub-themes emerged are highlighted in table 6.1 and are discussed below.

Table 6.1 Emerging themes

Main-themes	Sub-themes	Pages
Theme 1: Type of language pre-primary school children adopt for learning	1. Language of immediate community 2. Mother tongue 3. English language	P.125 P.127 P.131
Theme 2: Ways in which language impacts pre-primary school children's learning	1. Identification presentation and discussion of objects 2. Development of literacy skills 3. Promoting communication	P. 136 P.140 P.143
Theme 3: Ways children learn in formal and informal education settings	1. Playing 2. Imitation 3. Story-telling and folktales 4. Drawing	P. 145 P.150 P.155 P.160
Theme 4: The dynamics that surround the way pre-primary school learners learn in formal and informal education settings	1. Children's readiness to learn 2. Children's willingness to learn 3. Children's maturity 4. Availability of instructional resources 5. Parents'/teachers' attitude towards children	P. 163 P. 166 P.168 P. 170 P. 173

6.2 Type of language pre-primary school children adopt for learning

6.2.1 Adoption of language of immediate community

From the data analysis, some parents and the members of the two focus groups said that the language of immediate community is adopted by the children to learn in the formal and informal settings. For instance, Ms Bassey reported that children between the ages of two and four years learn using the language of immediate community. When I asked her what she meant by language of immediate community, Ms Bassey replied;

> *The language of immediate community is the language in which majority of the people living in a particular community use both in communication and conducting business activities. In fact, it is a language commonly used by the inhabitants (parents and teachers inclusive) of particular geographical area (interview, 2016).*

In addition to Ms Bassey's view, Ms Pricilla reported that most children learn by adopting a particular language spoken by the generality of the people living in a particular geographical space. Ms Pricilla went on to say that a child by birth can come from particular geographical area, but live in another geographical location, he/she should be able to learn through the language spoken in that geographical location in which he/she lives.

In affirming Ms Pricilla's assertion, Ms Iboro cited an example from few children who lives in her neighbourhood. She said that these children originally come from Ondo state where Yoruba language is spoken, but because the children's parents live in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State where Ibibio language is spoken, they are not only able to communicate in Ibibio, but they use Ibibio as an official language of teaching and learning in the pre-primary school.

Similarly, a member of focus group one (Alice) stated that in most cases children learn from the language of immediate community as stated in the official government document (National Policy on Education of 2004). According to Alice, the concept 'language of immediate community' is defined in the official government policy document. However, it is our wisdom to look at language of immediate community in the context of dominant language spoken in the village, town, city or state in which a school is located.

On the second thought, Alice reported that the adoption of language of immediate community is only practicable in the rural and semi urban schools where close to about 99% of children attending these schools are from the area. In the rural and semi urban schools, there is

uniformity on the language spoken by the children attending these schools, this is because they all come from the same geographical area where the school is located. As a result, they are able to learn through the common language spoken by the community.

Notwithstanding the view expressed by Alice, another member of focus group (Patience) added that though children learn effectively using the language which is commonly spoken by the community, she added that the situation is quite different in urban schools where children from different ethnic nationalities with their own language converged in the school. Juliana declared:

> *It is very common for children to learn in the language of immediate community if they the school is located in rural or semi-urban areas, this is because in such areas the children speak the same language. But the situation is entirely different in the urban schools where children come from various ethnic groups. These children speak different languages in schools, therefore, to learn in the language of immediate community become entirely impracticable (interview, August, 2016).*

In furtherance to the above, Imaobong said:

> *I want to tell you that even some us teachers in these schools find it difficult to communicate with these children, this is because of the various languages spoken in the class (interview, 2016).*

From the above narrative, it has been asserted that children at the formal and informal settings adopted language of their immediate community to learn. The language of immediate community, from my own interpretation, is the language commonly and widely spoken by the community where the children reside. From my interpretative perspective, children irrespective of where they come from are able to communicate with each other through socialisation such as play, games, among others. Through this socialisation process, children are able to speak and learn through the language of immediate community. Apparently, this might be the reason children easily understand and learn in the language of immediate community than their parents.

The fact that majority of my participants accepted the assertion that children adopted language of immediate community to learn, however, there was another school of thought

that objected to this notion. Minority of the participants revealed that the children can only adopt language of immediate community if they live or attend schools in the rural or semi-urban areas. This is because in such areas there is only one language spoken. However, in the urban areas where children from various ethnic groups co-habits, this is practically impossible. Children find it difficult to learn in the language of immediate community because of diverse languages spoken. In other words, the children speak various languages based on where they come from.

It can also be argued that children who come from different ethnic groups and speak languages different from the one spoken by the people where they live, with time the children are able to learn with the language of the immediate community. Here, the Zone of Proximal Development allows these children to be pulled forward in their language abilities with the aid of the people from the community or a more knowledgeable person in the community. Additionally, Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development call for the withdrawal of the typical demonstration method of teaching and allows children to become involved in the learning process and internalise one another's actions to reach a higher level than they would have previously (Schmittau, 2004). Furthermore, through Vygotsky's (1978) scaffolding, a person may give tasks that structure interactions between the children or children and adult members of the community, this trigger conversation which allow children to participate in activities that might be too difficult.

6.2.2 Adoption of mother tongue language

The issue of mother tongue also featured prominently as the language adopted by the children at the formal and informal settings during my conversation with all the participants. Ms Victoria was of the opinion that the child of about a year old begins to talk by imitating the language spoken by the parents. She went on to say that most times the language spoken by the parents is the mother tongue. I was compelled to ask Ms Victoria what she understands by the concept 'mother tongue.' In response, she said;

> *My understanding of 'mother tongue' is, it is the language that children learn and speak first after birth through their parents at home (Interview, 2016).*

Ms Victoria added that as the name implies, this language is commonly spoken either by the mother or father or anybody the child spends his/her first two years with after birth.

In a similar circumstance, Ms Ime looked at mother tongue in the context of a native language spoken by the generality of the family members in the house. According to Ms Ime, mother tongue language is the language which indicates the child's ethnic group. For instance, a child who speaks Yoruba or Ibibio language at home is an indication that he/she is from Yoruba or Ibibio ethnic group. Based on Ms Ime's narrative, I was forced to interrogate further by asking, supposing the child's father comes from one of ethnic group which speaks a different language and the mother comes from another ethnic group which speaks another language, and the child speaks these two languages fluently based on their exposure, which of the languages can be regarded as mother tongue language. In response, Ms Ime declared:

> *It is obvious that at home, mothers speak their native language with their children than fathers. This is because the fathers are not always very close to the children like their mothers. The fathers spend most of their time outside only to come back late at night, while mothers at all times spend time with their children. Therefore, the mothers' language becomes a dominant one in which the children adopted for learning both at home and school (interview, 2016).*

The quotation above indicated that children born to parents from different ethnic backgrounds though may speak the two languages spoken by the parents. However, the children adopt their mothers' native language as their first language because of the closeness to their mothers. It was further established that due to fathers' absence from home, children seem to rarely speak their fathers' native language. This, invariably, make the children to learn through their mothers' native language which in other words is the mother tongue.

Further, Ms Eno reported that aside from the fact that children between the ages of two and four adopted mother tongue to learn both at home and in school, the language also enhances traditional culture and national heritage through the preservation and valuing of the indigenous identities. Ms Eno reiterated that children understand good morals when they learn in their mother tongue. Ms Eno avowed;

> *When the children learn Bible Knowledge using mother tongue as a language of instruction, they understand the importance of the moral values embedded in it which they emulate (interview, 2016).*

Ms Rose also expressed her mind as follows:

The richness in Ibibio culture can only be leant and understood in Ibibio language, therefore, this would make the children to be responsible citizens in future (interview, 2016).

From the narrative, it has been revealed that the richness of a particular culture cannot be appreciated outside of its language. This is because the meanings and connotations of words, phrases, idioms and proverbs cannot be easily translated to other languages. For instance, Ibibio as a language of instruction assists the children to increase their cognitive comprehension of the subject matter. In addition, it aids the children to identify the differences in the alphabets when they compare it with the English language alphabet.

In furtherance to the above narrative, a member of the focus group (Ms Patricia) said that there are certain songs, plays, idioms and proverbs that are better understood when expressed in the mother tongue. Ms Patricia explained:

Children learn certain important societal values through songs, plays, dance, idioms and proverbs. I want to say Ibibio songs and dance connotes much information about Ibibio culture and traditions (interview, 2016).

Another member of the focus group in the person of Ms. Vivian added that to make the children to learn in their mother tongue is a thing of joy to all of us, this is because we (the teachers) will be able to communicate and explain effectively on certain topics which are difficult for the children to either pronounced or understood in English language. Moreover, this immensely assists the slow learners in the class to learn at their own pace.

Notwithstanding the view held Ms. Vivian, Ms. Mary Edem reported that when children are taught in their mother tongue, it promotes the integration of people's culture into the school curriculum, which invariably provides a culturally sensitive curriculum hence making the children to develop a positive perception towards their culture. In addition, Ms Emem maintained that mother tongue is an essential educational pedagogy that enables the children to build a better basic cognitive ability which facilitate faster acquisition of second language.

Ms Emem maintained:

Let me tell you that when a child learns in mother tongue, he/she will easily understand the basic concepts and meanings in the language. This ultimately will help

the child to learn the second language since most languages has similar pronunciation (interview, 2016).

From the above narratives, it was indicated that songs, dance, idioms and proverbs when expressed in the mother tongue positively align the children with their culture and tradition. Children from a particular ethnic group could rightly claim their roots if they are able to demonstrate mastery of their language. In other words, children's ability to communicate effectively in their first or mother tongue connects them to their different ethnic groups and also assist them in shaping their identities. From all indications, it is an aberration in some ethnic groups in Nigeria when their children do not speak and learn in their mother tongue. Elders of these ethnic groups regard such children as outcast and uneducated. Here, an educated child is measured on the ability of the child to speak, write and read in his/her mother tongue. Obviously, this might be the reason Efik adage say 'speak your mother tongue and let me tell you which ethnic group you come from.'

In furtherance to the above, Ms.Nkoyo stated that mother tongue language is adopted by the children to learn in pre-primary level because of its benefits. She reported that the use of mother tongue language by the pre-primary school children enhance a smooth transition from home to school. Ms Nkoyo added:

Most children feel frightened on their first day in the school. They feel strange and excluded when they are taught in their second language. This situation compels most of them to refuse to attend school in the first few days of resumption. But when the children are taught in their mother tongue, they become less-tense and stable for any serious academic exercise (interview, 2016).

From the extracts, it is obvious that children's adoption of mother tongue language at the pre-primary school level significantly promoted from home to school transition. From all indications, at the beginning of each school year, the children whose parents or wards registered them in the school for the first time, usually cries at getting to the school. This is because the school environment appears to be bigger than their houses and full of diverse people. Furthermore, the school environment becomes hustle to the children when second language is introduced as the language of communication and instruction in the school. It was

established that the hustle environment the children were subjected may to lead to their eventual dropping out of school.

Similarly, it was also asserted that children who learn in their mother tongue do not find it difficult when a second or additional language is introduced as the primary language of instruction in the later stage of the primary education. Fluency and literacy in the mother tongue ultimately lay a cognitive and linguistic foundation for learning other additional languages. In other words, when a child receives formal instruction in his/her mother tongue at the primary school level, then gradually transition to academic learning in the English language, he/she would learn the second language as quickly as possible. Additionally, from the interpretive point of view, children who do not learn in their mother tongue lack self-confidence as learners, moreover, their interest in what they learn decline and this lead to poor academic performance which ultimately culminate in early drop out of school.

The finding of this study is in line with UNESCO (2008) position, who reported that to enhance quality in children's learning, the value of mother tongue instruction in early childhood and primary 1 to 3 classes of primary school should be encouraged. Furthermore, UNESCO (2008) encourage the protection of children's home or indigenous languages and the preservation of the linguistic diversity asserting that it needs serious efforts to make sure that pre-primary children should be educated in their mother tongue. In addition, Ball (2010) who reported that the issues of language acquisition and the goal of Education for All (EFA) call for urgent attention to encourage the provision of quality education in their home language for learners. The findings have relevance to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory which emphasised the children's accomplishment of a task and the interaction between children and parents that scaffold and assist in the mother tongue acquisition process. In addition, to learn in the mother tongue enriches children's vocabularies. It also supports the development of children's critical thinking, thereby moving the children away from the parrot-like types of learning into concrete learning, whereby children may have personal appreciation of the language they acquire which consequently makes them to develop a self-motivated attitude towards learning (Turuk, 2008).

6.2.3 Adoption of English language

When asked which of the languages the pre-primary school children adopted to learn, my participants answered by saying that the English language is most times used by the children. From the perspective of the parents, Ms Ime stated that the children who were born to parents

from different ethnic groups with different language backgrounds are the ones who usually learn in English language. This is because their parents do not understand each other's indigenous language, therefore, they communicate with each other through English language. In light of the above, their children are compelled to learn in English language which is now the children's first language.

In a similar circumstance, Ms Bassey responded:

> *Children who have dual citizenship are the people who exclusively learn in English language. These children learn in English language because they could not adopt the home language of either the mother or father hence resort to the adoption of the second language as their first language (interview, 2016).*

The above narratives indicated that the children at the informal setting speak and learn in English language because of their inability to speak their mother or father's home language. It was understood that the children's parents who come from different ethnic nationalities and could not speak one home language as a result of their backgrounds, their children are compelled to communicate and learn in English language as their first language due to language uniformity at home.

In a sharp contrast, Ms Pricilla said that some parents made their children to learn in English language because of social prestige attached to it. With the word 'social prestige,' I was forced to ask the correlation between the children learning in English language and the parents' social prestige. Ms Pricilla explained:

> *In this part of the world, most parents usually enroll and pay exorbitant tuition fees for their children in the pre-primary schools provided English language is used as official language of communication and instruction. This is because it is a thing of pride for parents if their children speak or learn in English language fluently (interview, 2016).*

From all indications, this extract indicated that the parents are of the view that when their children speak and learn in English language, the children's Intelligence Quotient (IQ) is high and that the ability to comprehend the content of the subject is equally high since the subject is written in English language. Based on this premise and despite financial challenges, parents endeavour to register their children in highly charged tuition fees pre-primary schools.

From the analysis, it was also established that social prestige compels the parents to force their children to learn in English language. For instance, Ms Rose said that at the social gathering some parents openly boasted that their children of about three years or there about communicate fluently in English language. In order for the other parents not to feel inferior, they also enroll their children in an English speaking school.

Apart from the social prestige, Ms Udeme reported that most parents wanted their children to learn in English language since it is the official language used in the school. Ms Udeme declared:

> *I want to inform you that we want our children to learn in English language since the language is an official medium of instruction in the school. Therefore, speaking English with their children at home will assist them to master whatever subjects they are taught in the pre-primary school (interview, 2016).*

This narrative indicated that most parents began to teach and also force their children to learn in English language at the early age. They were of the opinion that making their children to speak and learn in English language at the early age helps them immensely in familiarising them with the medium which is going to be used in school. In other words, exposing children at the tender age to English language psychologically and emotionally preparing them for what is expected of them when they are in the pre-primary school.

Still on the issue of the adoption of English language to learn by the children, a member of focus group (Ms Atim) said that though the National Policy on Education (2004), section 2, sub-section 3 clearly stipulates that "the medium of instruction will be principally the mother-tongue or the language of the community," English language is still openly adopted in most of the pre-primary schools in the semi urban and urban areas. I probed further why the schools in semi-urban and urban areas still allow children to learn in English language against the official government policy. In response, Ms Atim stated as follows:

> *One important thing is that most of these pre-primary schools in Akwa Ibom State are owned by private individuals and organisations. Therefore, they only implement their own school's policy which is at variance with the official government policy (interview, August, 2006).*

This extract illustrated that most schools in semi-urban and urban areas are owned by the private individuals and organisations, therefore, they do what they like regardless of what the

official government policy stipulates. From my interpretive point of view, the reason why private individuals and organisations adopted English language as a medium of instruction in their schools is that, there is a popular belief in Nigeria that children who speak and learn in English language are regarded as highly intelligent individuals. Furthermore, it was revealed that the heads of primary schools in Nigeria prefer children who speak and learn in English language for admission into their schools, because there is an assumption that these children will be able to cope with academic tasks which are taught in English language. This finding is at variance with position held by Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar (2010) who reported that learning in a English language put the children under intellectual pressure because they have to learn new concepts in the second language. According to these scholars, this may create a difficult situation whereby the children have to cope with the problems that emerge from the second language used as a medium of instruction in schools. Earlier, Lightbown (2008) stated that becoming completely fluent in English language is not, as many have claimed, 'easy as pie,' rather, takes several years. Therefore, it is a mistake to assume that to allow day-care or preschool's children to learn in a second language is appropriate to prepare the children for academic success.

In another circumstance, another member of the focus group (Ms Glory) stated that aside from the parents' societal prestige and the assumption that the children who speak and learn in English language have a high degree of intelligence, the children who speak and learn in English language in the school is due to the environmental factor. Elaborating on the issue of environmental factor, Ms. Glory explained:

> *By referring to environmental factor, it means that children speak and learn in English language because of the cosmopolitan nature of the area which they live and the location where their schools situates. In the cosmopolitan cities like Abuja, Lagos, Uyo and among others, it is easy for the children to speak and learn in English language because of the amalgam of diverse people from different tribes in Nigeria and other countries. The migration of different people to the cities made it impossible for the children in their mother tongue or language of immediate community (interview, 2016).*

This suggests that children who live in urban areas find it difficult to learn in mother tongue or language of immediate community as stipulated in the National policy on Education of 2004. The children's inability to learn in their mother tongue or language of immediate

community was because of the coming together of people of different racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. Within a particular neighbourhood, a child may live with other neighbours who happens to come from other tribes and speak other languages from his/her own, therefore, the child's ability to acquire other languages becomes very difficult hence the use of English language as his/her first language to learn in the pre-primary school. According to Mothibeli (2005), children who have the privilege to receive their formal schooling in first language (English language) for at least six years have higher levels of academic achievement than those who must transition too soon to education in a medium they lack the metacognitive skills to understand.

In furtherance to the above, another member of the focus group in the person of Ms Hellen said:

> *Most parents have realised that with the increasing importance of English as a global language and a vehicle of prosperity in business, trade and commerce, therefore, they want their children to learn in English language from the early age (interview, 2016).*

Similarly, Ms Precious added:

> *I want to state that if one visits any pre-primary school in the Akwa Ibom State, pictures of animals and objects on the wall of the class are all written in English language. Children are made to identify these pictures by the teachers. Moreover, some food items which the children brought to the school such as biscuits, peanuts, sweet and ice cream the label are all written in English language, therefore, these children are unconsciously prevented from learning in native language (interview, 2016).*

From the extracts, it has been established that in the years past, languages such as Greek, Latin, Portuguese and Spaniard at one time or the other were used as an official language for global trade, industry and commerce. Children were made to learn in these languages so that when they grow old, they will be able to be engaged in this global trade, industry and commerce. In recent time, the attention has since been shifted to English language as a medium used for the transaction of business the world over. For instance, English language is used for business quotations, for writing of instruction on how to use any machines or equipment, financial transaction, research in business, sports, among others. Bearing this in mind, and the fact that the world has become a global village, most parents want their

children to use English language at the early age in order to be able to communicate with others globally in the area of commerce, trade, industry, sports, education, research, and music.

In a similar vein, the finding indicated that English language is adopted in pre-primary school through the introduction of pictures of animals and objects in the class. Children are made to identify and pronounce the names of these animals and object which are written in English. It was established that since the classroom is decorated by pictures and objects with English inscription, children are compelled to learn in English language hence relegating their mother tongue to the background.

In the literature, the issue of English language adopted by the children at the pre-primary school in order to use for global business transaction and sports, among others were not mentioned. In light of the above, the findings serve as a new knowledge in the field of early childhood education.

6.3 Ways in which language impact pre-primary school children's learning

In this section, effort was geared towards answering the second research question that bordered on ways in which language impact pre-primary school children's learning.

Aside from the fact that language plays a crucial role in social interaction as propounded by Vygotsky (1978), it is also an important agent in the transmission of the cultural and social values. Furthermore, education is language-based, therefore, language is used at home and in school as a vehicle of thinking and communication that assists children to learn and understand the knowledge being imparted on them by the parents and teachers.

In Nigeria, though the official government policy stipulates that the pre-primary school children should learn in their mother tongue or language of immediate community (NPE, 2004). However, the responses from my participants in the context of the first research question indicated that depending on where the children live, they adopted mother tongue, language of immediate community and English language to learn at the formal and informal settings. With this in mind, this analysis revolved around these three languages that the children adopted as a medium of communication and instruction at home and school.

6.3.1 Identification, presentation and discussion of objects

My participants explained that though language is the medium of communication and instruction at home and in school, it also significantly impart learning among the children in the area of identification, presentation and discussion of objects in the classroom. Specifically, Ms Pricilla stated that at home her children especially when they were between the ages of one and three years old, language was used to identify, present and discuss freely with her children. Ms Pricilla maintained that she used language to identify and present objects such as spoons, plates, beds, and toys among others to her children. She continued by saying that through language the functions of those objects were also explained to the children at home.

In addition, Ms Bassey avowed that without language children will be regarded as dummies or less human. This is because they would not be able to express their feelings, minds and thoughts to other members of the family or community. I, therefore, probed further why children who could not speak language may be regarded as dummies or less human considering the fact the children with speech challenges can still use sign language. In response, Ms Bassey declared:

> *You see, in the rural communities like ours, children who cannot speak in any of the language are seen as dummies or less human. In fact, those children are usually kept away from other members of the community. The issue where these physical challenged children are exposed to sign language is very rare in this community (interview, 2016).*

From the narratives, it was asserted that language acquisition significantly impact ways in which children learn in the context of the identification, presentation and discussion of objects in pre-primary school and at home. From the perspective of traditional education, the parents use language to educate their young ones at home. They usually made their children imitate the family values. The acquisition of the language of a community allows the children to become a full member of that family or community. Additionally, it serves as an 'identity card' for the children because it signify where they originates. For instance, if a child speaks and discuss freely in Ibibio language, he/she is assumed to come from Ibibio land even though he/she is not from this ethnic group. In line with the above assertion, Tang (2002) argued that acquisition of language by the children allows them to become more aware of the similarities and differences between cultures and linguistic structures.

Similarly, findings also indicated that any child who is unable to speak any of the languages is tagged by the family members or members of the community as a dummy or less human, despite the fact that the child may be proficient in sign language. From all indications, the stigmatisation of children with language barrier negatively impacts their learning outcomes.

In another circumstance, Ms Udeme narrated that language acquisition in the children immensely impart learning in the area of knowing certain cooking utensils at home. Since Ms Udeme statement was not clear, I requested her to explain what she meant by certain cooking utensils, Ms Udeme replied:

> *Our girl children do not know the names of certain traditional cooking utensils in the kitchen. Moreover, they do not also know the function of some of these utensils. Therefore, we use our local language to teach them the names and functions of some of the traditional cooking utensils. When this is done, the children will able to learn, understand and appreciate our local cooking utensils" (interview, 2016).*

From the above quotation, it has been established that language plays an important role in our kitchen. In recent time, due to civilisation and the production of modern cooking utensils, our local cooking utensils have been relegated to the background. Children do not know the names of some of the local cooking equipment. They are acquainted with those from the western world. Therefore, in order for the children to be conversant with the traditional cooking equipment, parents used mother tongue to show and highlight the importance of these equipment in the house. This finding is in consistent with the assertion by Hart and Risley (1995) who reported that parents who talk about objects and events in their immediate community, also engage in joint attention with their children as they label objects have children whose language acquisition is more advanced and they tends to comprehend things easily and effectively.

Notwithstanding the views expressed by the individual parents, the opinion of the focus group members in this direction was that there will be no teaching or learning in the pre-primary school without language. This is because it is through language that teachers used to impart knowledge on the children. Conversely, it is through language that children to comprehend what have been taught by the teachers.

For instance, Ms Christiana clearly stated:

We teachers use language to teach and effect clarification if children do not understand what was taught in the class. Furthermore, it is through this language that the children ask question(s) where they appear confused or not understood (interview, 2016).

In addition, another member in person of Ms Adiaha said:

Children use language in written tasks and in the construction of sentences to clarify and build meaning in the class. Furthermore, language allows children to repeatedly evaluate and clarify communication with regard to choice of subject contents (interview, 2016).

Apparently, the quotations above indicated that language is used at pre-primary school level to construct sentences which draw meaning both to children and teachers. For instance, teachers mostly use the identification and demonstration teaching strategies in the classroom. These teaching strategies are effectively adopted in the class with the assistance of language. When a teacher talks to the children or tell them to observe what he/she is doing in the class, language in whatever form is used to pass this information to the children. In order for the children to comprehend what the teacher says, they should, first and foremost, have to listen attentively to words that come out from the teacher in form of language. According to Schleppegrell, Greer and Taylor (2008), academic language presents information and interpretation in new ways, using vocabulary, grammar, and text structures that children can learn to recognise when they read and to adopt when they write.

In a similar circumstance, Ms. Emem and Ms. Glory reported that the language usage by children in the pre-primary school level assist them to improve their vocabulary which eventually leads to process of new ideas and higher levels of comprehension of the subject content. It was stated that children who talk more frequently in the class, aside from increasing their level of vocabulary and developing higher level of intelligence, it also helps them by improving their ego.

From the narrative, it was established that language plays a significant role at the pre-primary school level. Teachers use language to communicate effectively with the children in the classroom. From all indications, teaching and learning can only take place when there are actions and reactions between a teacher and the children. These actions and reactions occur within the classroom and it is made possible by language from both the teacher and children.

From the interpretive point of view, an environment is regarded as a pre-primary school setting when a teacher using any form of language identify, present and discuss on objects for the children to learn from. The assimilation of the subject content by the children is transmitted through language.

The findings are in line with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory which advocated that the crucial feature of learning is to awaken a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the children are interacting through language with people in their environment and in cooperation with their peers. Additionally, once these processes are internalised, it become part of the independent academic achievement of the children.

It was established that the language significantly impact learning among the children at the pre-primary school through the identification, presentation and discussion of the objects. However, in the literature, nothing has been mentioned in this regard, therefore, the finding serves as a new knowledge in the field of early childhood education.

6.3.2 Development of literacy skills

The issue of the development of literacy skills was unanimously mentioned as the impact in which language enhance at the pre-primary school children. Specifically, Ms Bassey stated that when a child is given to birth, he/she will not be able to anything during early stage of his/her development. As the child grows, he/she through social interaction which is largely assisted by language is able to do what he/she could not do at birth.

Ms Udeme added:

> *I want to say that children between the ages of one and two years old, their vocabulary expand considerably during this period. This enable the children to use different grammatical forms and the understanding of language become clearer. Children within this age bracket, learn one to four words in a day (interview, 2016).*

In a similar circumstance, Ms Ime informed me that children use language to express themselves to other members of the family. This is done through the mastery of words and concepts. Children's language becomes increasingly complex as they begin to combine morphemes. For instance, a word like 'play' is a single morpheme, and so is the suffixíng, which is when, join together with a verb to name an action. The concept 'playing' comprises

two morphemes. Therefore, Ms Ime declared that children grow much older, the mean length of their ranting improves. At this point, children begin to adopt and make use of short, simple and clear sentences for other people in the family or community to understand.

In addition to the above, Ms Atim observed that children naturally begin to make a complete sentence when they are about 15 months old. At the initial stage, a child may be thirsty, he/she will only be able to say 'water,' possibly pointing to where water is kept. However, as the child grows older, he/she is able to express emotion by saying 'I want to drink water.'

Ms Nkoyo and Ms Precious mentioned three stages in which children acquire language. According to Ms Precious the stages are holophrases, telegraphic and overextension. Ms Nkoyo opined that during the holophrases children are unable to make a complete sentence. Rather, they make some disjointed utterances which are very difficult for both the teachers and other members of the community to comprehend. At this point, the children are unable to express their emotion, rather, they resort to crying to attract attention.

In the area of telegraphic speech, the group pointed that the children are able to improve, increase and expand their vocabulary. According to Ms Precious, telegraphic speech naturally consists of syntax and semantic. At this stage, children are able to make simple correct sentences. For instance, a child would that he/she is hungry for water, rather than he/she is thirsty for water.

In the context of overextension stage, Ms Nkoyo established that children at this stage move from telegraphic speech which border on the construction of simple sentences to little complex ones. Ms Precious reported that after telegraphic speech, there is no three-word stage. This is because at this stage, children begin to produce extended sentences just like their parents. Here, the children's vocabulary seemingly increases at astronomical rate. They started becoming skilful in the use of sentences.

Corroborating on the Ms Nkoyo and Ms Precious, another member of focus group in person of Ms Mary Edem declared:

> *In the overextension stage, children orations become pronounced and fluent for the teachers or any adult member of community to hear and understand. At this stage, the children spend most of their time talking either to the teachers or peers (interview, 2016).*

The above narratives clearly indicated that children at birth use undifferentiated crying to pass information or communicate with their parents. The crying could not be differentiated whether it is for the pain, hunger, discomfort and loneliness. With the passage of time, however, children begin to utter consonant-vowel together. For instance, at the age of eight months children are able to utter sound like 'papa or mama.' At the age of 15 months, the babbling sound from the children changes to more audible words. Children are able to use telegraphic speech that contains some words that convey meaning to the parents or teachers. At this stage, it was declared that children's vocabulary rapidly expand and increase to about 80 words per minutes. However, in spite of the fact children speak about 80 words per minutes, they are able to understand the concrete words only such as 'food', 'meat', 'sugar'. At this stage, the children are not able to logically construct any sentence that makes meaning. Parents or teachers are always left in their world of guessing of what the children says.

From the age of two to four years, children's language become progressing. The same thing applies to their vocabulary and the length of sentence construction become increased hence children's ability to use all parts of speech. Children's understanding of concrete words suddenly moved to abstract meanings of such words. In support of this assertion, Mayekiso (2011) argued that at the age of five, children are capable of producing sentences that are efficient, complex and adult-like. The author revealed that the majority of the children at this age speak more and ask so many questions in a few minutes. Parents or teachers often feel bored when their children 'disturb' them with so many questions.

In furtherance to the above, it was said that between the ages of three and four years children begin to comprehend figurative expression such as 'the water is cold to take my bath'. By the age of five children has been able to understand imagery objects such as 'God lives in heaven'. From my position as a researcher, I would say that language development of the children in the formal and informal settings does not only involve an increasing and expanding vocabulary or better sentence construction, rather, it also comprise of the increasing ability to adapt language to the context in which it is used. Similarly, the increase sophistication that children display in their language acquisition is partially attributable to their adoption of language rules, which they learn from listening to the speech of people from their immediate environment. From all indications, it is apparent that the higher-level aspects of oral language proficiency and efficiency among pre-primary school children significantly impact positively their reading skill ability. In furtherance to the above, the course of learning

to read among children depends on the development of oral language skills, metalinguistic skills, alphabet familiarity, exposure to print and the understanding of print concepts.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory has relevance to the findings because it is believed that meaning is constructed through a combination of language. At home, child adopts language to express his/her feelings or emotion to the parents. While playing with his/her siblings, language is applied in order to make the play meaningful. Without the use of language, the play engaged by the children may be boring and meaningless. Language is used to identify the type of play children engage on.

From the school perspective, Vygotsky (1978) believed that human beings are very different from animals because they bring to the learning environment an evolutionary capacity to adapt and manipulate their environment. This is done through the use of language. Knowledge is generated in the classroom and transferred from learner to learner or from the teacher to learners through language. It is the language that opens the door to understanding subjects taught in the school. For Vygotsky (1978), language is the most important mediator. It offers the children a powerful way to solve problems. According to Harrison (2011), it is important for self-regulation and Ashton (1996) argued that it facilitates inter-subjectivity.

6.3.3 Promoting communication

In this section, the data analysis indicated that the use of appropriate language in the classroom positively promote good communication between the teacher and children, parents and children or among children. From the informal setting, Ms Ime reported that parents usually involve their children in an interaction at home. According to Ms Ime, this interaction may be on social and religious issues. Elaborating on social and religious issues, Ms Ime contained that some parents narrates stories concerning the tradition and culture of the Ibibio people or any other social issue that concern human beings to their children. During the story telling processes, questions were generated and asked by the children in relation to certain grey areas that need clarification. For the children to understand the totality of the story, parents respond to those questions raised. Here, the use of language during the interaction between parents and their children promotes communication among children.

In the religious grounds, parents use communication to inform the children on certain biblical injunctions which need to be obeyed. For instance, children are taught on the benefits on respect not only for their parents, but any adult in the community.

Concurring Ms Ime's view, Ms Victoria declared:

Children between the ages of two and four need polite and friendly communication with their parents in order to develop physically, socially and emotionally. During infancy, children engage in so many activities which could be injurious to their body. Most parents are compelled to reprimand violently, instead of using good line of communication to correct them (interview, 2016).

In furtherance to the above, Ms Victoria maintained:

When vulgar language is used on the children, they look physically, socially and emotionally unstable. This greatly affects their development. But when children are appropriately spoken to, they look happy at home (interview, 2016).

In addition to the above narratives, a member of the focus group (Ms. Hellen) said that communication is very beneficial for teachers in the development of their own use of language, behaviour, and teaching strategies which resulted in good relationship and a sense of community, instead of creating a feeling of insecurity and division in the classroom. Ms Hellen argued that as teachers, they need to be aware about promoting a safe culture in the class. This could be done through the use of appropriate line of communication. However, through the subtleties of communication alone, the teacher can alienate children and ultimately turn off their motivation for whatever learning that would ensue.

Similarly, Ms Precious declared:

From the attitude and perception perspective, I would say that negative attitude and perception of teachers decrease learning. Conversely, positive attitude and perception increase learning in children in the classroom (interview, 2016).

From the narratives, it has been indicated that the use of appropriate communication skill is one of the most effective tools for creating a conducive environment both at home and in the school. From the informal setting perspective, findings showed that the parents should use appropriate communication with their children at home in order for the children to develop physically, socially and emotionally. However, it was established that the children who suffer verbal abuse from the parents or any member of the community develop physical and mental retardation. These features usually cause some children at home to develop certain traits unbecoming of the normal children.

From the formal perspective, it was apparent that teachers having a polite and friendly communication with their learners in the classroom enhance positive learning habit among the pre-primary school. It has been asserted that listening and feedback are the important element in communication. In light of the above, the teachers should develop good listening skill to accommodate children utterances. Furthermore, prompt feedback from the teachers should be given to the children so as to have their confidence. In other words, when children submitted a task to the teacher and the teacher quickly made the necessary corrections for the children, based on the corrections the children will adapt and adhere to the teacher's corrections. From indications, this teacher-children interaction significantly creates a cordial and stable relationship between them. This amicable relationship will not only create a conducive learning climate, but it will enhance a stable class attendance among pre-primary school children.

From all indications, we discovered from the analysis that appropriate communication positively impact children's learning at the pre-primary school. Obviously, the findings is not supported by any scholarly work in the literature, therefore, it is a ground breaking one which serves as a new knowledge in early childhood education discipline.

6.4 Ways children learn at the formal and informal education settings

6.4.1 Children learn through play

All parents interviewed were unanimous in their responses by saying that children actively learn by involving themselves in any kind of play. It was reported that parents are their children's first and best playmates. Additionally, it was said that parents have a role on being involved in their children's play. Some of my participants asserted that children tend to be more creative when their parents are involved in their play. The best playtime happens when the parents plays alongside their children. Specifically, Ms Ime made mention two of her children whom she said began to learn by actively engaging in various types of play. She stated:

> *I observed that all my children began to learn once they are three months old. I also noticed that during breastfeeding, my child begin to play with my breast. He moved to another breast after he had exhausted milk of the first breast. While the child is sucking, he/she will be using his/her legs to playfully kick her (interview, 2016).*

In the same vein, Ms Rose mentioned that all her four children started to learn through playing. She went on to say that her children especially girls engaged on play such as novelty-cooking, house-keeping and parenting. She said that by engaging in such play, the children learn to cook, keep the house clean and take care of her junior ones when she is away to work. Aside from the children learning through play such as cooking, housekeeping and parenting, Ms Eno added that two of her boys initiated play like hide and seek, football and puzzle. Further probe into Ms Eno's view on how play like 'hide and seek' helps her children to learn, she responded:

> *My children like hide and seek because it assist them to express themselves freely at home. Aside from that, their mental and physical wellbeing are always stable due to the exercise my children. From my observation, the children learn faster when they engage in such activity (interview, 2016).*

In addition to Ms Eno's view, Ms Pricilla also reported that her three children used football to develop their talent. She said that the skills demonstrated by her children today in the school football team were first learnt at home during their playtime. She asserted that her children are delightful to watch while they are in the field of play. When asked the importance of football to children, Ms Pricilla answered:

> *Football helps children to grow and learn fast at home. Children grow properly when they actively exercise their body. In addition, their psychomotor domain is efficiently functional when activity like football is displayed among children. Therefore, football not only contributes to the mental stability of the children, but it also helps them to integrate socially with their peers (interview, 2016).*

Similarly, another participant in the person of Ms Bassey categorically stated that her four children learn from various kinds of play they often engaged in. She was of the view that children like to play about 12 hours in a day. She maintained that most of the play engaged by children between the ages of one and three years was mainly indoors. Ms Bassey cited running around the house, jumping, climbing chairs and tables as some of the plays engaged by children. When I probed further the reason why children run, jump and climb chairs, Ms Bassey declared:

You know children, they rarely sit still for five minutes. I would not say the children aimlessly run, jump and climb chairs around the house. They learn effectively from these activities they engage themselves in (interview, 2016).

According to Ms Iboro, children play almost 11 hours in a day, except they are either sick or sleeping. It is certain that children often make mistakes while they are playing. However, these mistakes were often corrected by either the child or their parents. The correction of the mistakes by the child lead to the acquisition of new knowledge since the child might have learnt from the mistake.

From the above narrative, it can be deduced that play such as football, hide and seek, completing puzzles, cooking, house-keeping and parenting assist children to learn effectively at informal setting. These activities help children's psychomotor domain to function effectively hence enhancing children's intellectual efficiency. From my interpretive position and within the Nigerian context, a child's display of mastery of certain arts such as cooking, house-keeping, hide and seek among others is a reflection of his/her acquisition of intellectualism. Within the sphere of traditional African education, children practice and learn effectively and efficiently when they look at the activity in which elders in the society engage in. For instance, the cooking of local delicacy by children was 'professionally' taught by their parents or elders in the community.

Aside from the informal setting in which parents authoritatively said that children learned from, teachers whom I formed into focus group one and two equally reported that children learn effectively by involving themselves in different types of play. For instance, Ms Ekaowo said that there are various types of play and children do involve in more than one type of play at any time. She mentioned the type of play that children engage in to include; creative play, language play and physical play. I asked her to explain the nature of all types of play mentioned. This was how Ms Ekaowo responded:

In creative play, children explore, use their bodies and objects to make and do things. They also share their feelings, ideas and thoughts together with one another. I want to tell you that a good example of creative play is dancing, painting, playing with junk and recycled materials, working with play-dough and clay, and using their imaginations (interview, August, 2016).

In the area of language play, it was reported that it starts early in life with children under the age of one playing with sounds and words. This play is an active process that soon develops into making up of new words and playing with rhymes. Ms Victoria was of the view that language play involves unrehearsed and spontaneous manipulation of sound, jokes and funny stories. In language play, children rarely remain silent for a minute. They are always seen playing around the classroom and talking with their peers. By playing around and talking with their peers, language is used in communicating with one another in which children eventually learn from. Elaborating the responses, another member in the focus group in the person of Ms Mary Edem declared:

> *Children acquire a lot of vocabulary during play time. They communicate with each other and also explain the rules and what they intend to achieve during play. They learn dialogue which is not taught by the class teacher. In fact, dialogues encourage-talking, listening, and conversation all these activities bring out language skills (interview, 2016).*

In language, Vygotsky (1978) maintained that play makes a crucial contribution to the development of the unique human aptitude for using various forms of symbolic representation, whereby various kinds of symbols carry specific, culturally defined meanings. These forms of symbolic representation include drawing and other forms of visual art, visual imagination, language in all its various forms, mathematical symbol systems, musical notation, dance, drama and so on.

In physical play, Ms Nkoyo said that the children develop, practice and refine bodily movements and control same. According to Ms Nkoyo, this involves moving of the limbs or whole body. Most physical play requires a child to involve his /her whole body. For instance, Ms Atim mentioned physical play like follow the leader, statues, skipping, ring-a-ring-a-roses, throwing and hide-and-seek in which the whole body of a child is applied. It was further said that apart from the fact that these activities promote hand-eye coordination, spatial awareness, fine motor control, two handed coordination and manipulative strength, undoubtedly, children learn effectively when these activities are being used. Ms Atim concluded that the sensory feedback from these activities indicate how children first learn about their immediate environment. From the analysis, it may be suggested that physical play is related to children's developing whole body and hand-eye co-ordination, and this is important in building body strength and endurance.

Concerning pretend play, I was informed that children involve in pretending play such as imagining objects, actions and situations and act the same way the objects, actions and situations took place. As a child grows, his/her imagination and play become increasingly complex. I was told that children make up stories and scenarios and act them the way it happens. Similarly, it was reported that children also take part in fantasy play about things that are not real such as fairies or super heroes.

In same manner, Ms Ekaowo said:

> *Children get involved in pretending play such as play fighting and wrestling in which children are enjoying themselves but do not get hurt. These types of play are important as children learn and experiment with the parameters of acceptable physical behaviour (interview, August, 2016).*

In the same vain, Ms Alice maintained that play is regarded as the first medium through which a child explores the use of symbol systems, most understandably through pretence. She said that pretence play becomes a 'transition' from the 'purely situational constraints of young children' to the adult capability for abstract thought. It was asserted that play allows children to consolidate their understandings of their environment and also facilitates their development of the representational abilities they will use to think through ideas as an adult.

Similarly, Ms Parience asserted that the children in my preschool classroom have been involved in different kinds of animal play throughout the day. The school has so many animal toys in the classroom for the children to play with. The children used this chance to display their animal play using these materials. In this new play experiences, children in my class comfortably shared their knowledge of the animals they were playing with, and also deliberated possible actions in which animals perform. This interaction gave the children the chance to act as teachers and learners during the period they were exchanging knowledge and ideas. It was also asserted that in this play, the children had the chance to maintain inter-subjectivity through collaboration in the play situations. They acted as teachers and as well as learners who tacitly structures communication through the exchange of their ideas and knowledge.

Playing with the objects has also been identified as mainly associated with the production of private speech, with children readily commentating on activity they engage themselves on. Ms Mary Edem affirmed that this function is of help to the children to maintain their

attention, keep goals of the activity in mind, monitor progress, make choices concerning ways to proceed, and regulate themselves through the task.

From the narrative, it has been established that certain types of children's play (mostly play with objects and pretence) were often accompanied by self-directed or private speech, where children are observed self-commentate as they play. Furthermore, the role of play in supporting children's development of metacognitive and self-regulatory abilities has been identified. Furthermore, when a child plays with other children, he/she learns socially acceptable behaviour. Children, when playing are very intolerant towards those who do not follow them satisfactorily. Such intolerant compel children to learn how to adjust to others in order to be accepted. From the manifold functions of playing, play in children signifies a total experience of all aspect of life and it allows them to find their place in life. Similarly, play encourages the children's emotional well-being and development because it gives children pleasure, supports a feeling of mastery, the identification and expression of feelings and it fulfils a therapeutic function.

From all indications, Moore, Edwards, Cutter-Mackenzie and Boyd (2014) looked at play based learning as a context for learning which children organise and make sense of their social worlds as they engage actively with people, objects and representation. As Sumsion, Grieshaber, McArdle and Shield (2014) declared, play covers a wide variety of things and it can range from the unstructured actions with little or no active adult support to a highly-structured activity led by specific instructions and directions from the parents or elders in the community. In light of the above, this finding is in agreement with the position canvassed by Platz and Arellano(2011), Cutter-Mackenzie et al., (2014) that children learn through their play, and therefore, learn to live in harmony with others and nature. In support to the above assertion, Stephen and Edwards's (2015) study on play in the early life of a child in Britain revealed that play helps children to harness their special abilities which would probably remain hidden if such opportunities are not provided for its expression. The sociocultural learning theory of Vygotsky strongly supported play as being an activity in which children are encouraged to move above their current cognitive level. Vygotsky cited by Berk (1994, p.31) stated that "play creates a zone of proximal development in the child. In play, the child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior, in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development." Hirsh-Pasek and Golinkoff (2003) said that through play children receive the scaffolding

from parents or elders and peers which Vygotsky theorise as increasing the development by guiding children to accomplish more tough tasks.

6.4.2 Children learn through imitation of others

My participants echoed that children between the ages of seven months and four years learn by imitating their parents or any older member of the family. According to Ms Rose, young children are good in observation. They imitate actions and reactions from either their peers or elders of the family. Ms Rose said that during the infantile stage of children's development, the three domains (cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains) in the children develop rapidly, hence they make use of these domains to imitate what others do in their presence.

Similarly, Ms Ime said that children who live communally learn faster than those who lived in an isolated environment. She based her view on the ground that children who lived with other members of the community interact with so many people and they learn very fast. Conversely, children who stay in an isolated environment do not learn faster, because their interaction with other members of the society is limited or restricted. Ms Ime said:

> *I learnt something among my siblings. My children who live in the township where children move and interact freely with one another learn faster than my brother's children who lived in government reserved area (GRA), where they can only interact with their parents due to artificial boundary erected to prevent the movement between compound (interview, July, 2016).*

Ms Ime concluded by saying that young children should be exposed to different kinds of people in order for them to acquaint and imitate others and learns in the process. From my interpretive position, Ms Ime's assertion that children should be allowed to associate with people in the community is based on the fact that language is a vehicle in which children use in communicating with other members of the community. Therefore, allowing children the wider geographical space to communicate helps immensely in their learning processes. This position was earlier canvassed by Vygotsky (1978) in his sociocultural learning theory that language and other semiotic mechanisms offer the means for ideas to be talked through and communicated on the social ground and, following the process of internalisation, language and other semiotic modes offer the channels for child's thinking.

In spite of Ms Ime's position in which she encouraged young children to live communally, other participants substantially disagreed with her view. For instance, though Ms Pricilla

agreed to the position held by Ms Ime on the issue of young children imitates their parents or other members of the family. However, she appeared to differ in the area which relates to making children to live communally. Ms Pricilla reported that exposing young children between the ages of seven months and four years to all manners of people is not only risky but dangerous. She declared:

> *Children at this age brackets cannot think independently, they solely depend on others for their action, therefore, exposing them at this tenderly age to all manner of people is risky and dangerous. This is because children imitate both good and bad things in the community (interview, 2016).*

Elaborating on this point Ms Bassey stated:

> *I am not comfortable with the view that children should be allowed to live with people of questionable character. This is because they will imitate the wrong things perpetuated by adults in the society (interview, 2016).*

Quite unlike the earlier school of thought that says children should be allowed to relate widely with other members of the community in order to learn and acquire more knowledge, Ms Pricilla and Ms Bassey's rejection of this position held by others was based on fact that the children may copy adults in everything, be it good or bad. Therefore, allowing children to have unrestricted access to everyone in the community is like dropping atomic bomb in one's house which when explode can cause unimaginable damage to both the house and inhabitants.

The issue of children learning through imitation was also reported by the all members of the focus groups. For instance, Ms Hellen said that children imitate either their peers or adults in their immediate environment in order to learn from them. She said that learning takes place when children constantly practice action of the model. Furthermore, it was also pointed out that though children imitate peers or adults in the society, they only imitate what they are interested in. This invariably means that children are selective in their approach to imitating their peers or adults. Additionally, Ms Nkoyo said that children's willingness to imitate may be voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary in the sense that a child is willingly and selectively imitates certain action carried out by his/her peers or adults. Elaborating more, Ms Alice declared;

> *A child imitates someone voluntarily when he/she likes the action of the person whom he/she imitates. During the imitation process, a child has to select a particular action he/she likes and practice this action over time, this is how the learn (interview, 2016).*

It was also pointed out that children in the play situations imitate their peers voluntarily. For instance, Ms Mfon cited play such as dance in which children imitate their peers and adults in the community. Furthermore, Ms Vivian cited cultural dance such as *Ekumbi* that young children imitate other adult members of the community. Here, *Ekumbi* is the popular traditional dance of Ibibio people of Akwa Ibom State. Children particularly from Ibibio extraction need to understand how to display their hands, legs and body to the rhythm of the music. The display of hands, legs and body must be demonstrated first by the elders of the community and the children imitate this action. Children do that because they want to be seen as socially integrated and inclusive.

From the above quotation, it has been discovered that children like to imitate primarily on the basis of what they are interested in. However, when an action or task appear not to interest the children, they do not imitate hence learning does not occur when they imitates. With the explanation of how voluntary imitation happens in the children, therefore, I was compelled to ask how involuntary imitation occurs in children. In response, Ms Patience said:

> *Involuntary imitation occurs when children are given a task in the class to perform. The teacher will first and foremost perform the task for the children to see. After the teacher had performed the task, he/she (teacher) will tell the children to follow this/her steps and perform the same task (interview, 2016).*

Here, the teacher is regarded as a resource person for children to imitate from. From all indications, it was declared that this type of learning occurs in a formal setting like a school where rules are set and children should follow the set rules.

In another vein, Ms Nkoyo said that children's imitation as any other cognitive processes, is not innate. It changes due to the subjects' actions on the objects in the community. Ms Nkoyo argued that it is an extension of the action, that is, movement where the children can see themselves as doing the action. It evolves a moment when the action becomes internalised and the children acquires the possibility of imitating events even in the absence of teachers. According to Ms Nkoyo, imitation has two different but complementary functions, one is the cognitive function that makes learning about environment possible, and

the other is an interpersonal function that allows children to share their experiences with peers or teachers. She said that children imitate primarily because they want to understand their peers or teachers' intention in communicating, that is, they are going to imitate whatever they think that their peers or teachers want to be imitated, hence feeding social interaction. It is apparent that imitation is an important characteristic of the construction of social skills.

Additionally, Ms Atim argued that children are good observant and they use imitation as an instrument for creating social skills. She cited a task in the class in which they did for children in the class to imitate, thereafter, they ask the children to carry out the task as they did. For instance, a performance task like 'drawing and painting of a boy' was performed by the teacher for the children to observe. After the task (drawing and painting of a boy) was repeated twice, the teacher asked the children to do the task exactly the way he/she did. Ms Patience specifically explained how she made the children in her class learn. She declared:

> *We are going to identify and write alphabet. Let watch what I am doing by identifying and writing letter 'E'. I will perform the task more than twice for every child to observe. I asked everyone in the class to do the way I did (interview, 2016).*

From the findings, it was discovered that children certainly do imitate instrumental behaviours to gain object-related and causal knowledge. However, it is obvious that most of what children learn through imitation is not based on causal reasoning. Rather, it is based on social conventionality. Furthermore, children adopt imitation to gain the conventional behaviours. To be efficient culturally or educationally, children should use imitation to acquire both instrumental skills and the conventions of their social groups.

This finding was in support of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory who argued that children first succeeds in performing a new task with the help of another person such as teacher or parents and then internalise the task so that he/she can perform it on his/her own. Though this finding is strongly supported by scholars such as Bradley, Corwyn, Burchinal, McAdoo and García Coll (2001), Taylor, Clayton and Rowley (2004), Bornstein and Bradley (2008) who argued that children between the ages of zero and four learn effectively from the parents and other siblings in the community. However, this finding is at variance with position held by the proponents of pragmatic learning theory such as Östman and Wickman (2014), Adler (2015) who observed that children relies heavily on the self (meaning that they have a strong sense of self or their level of self-confidence is quite high) and is determined to do whatever needs to be done at all cost no matter what it takes. In addition, Entwistle and

Ramsden (2015) maintained that within this learning approach, if a problem arises in the course of the task in which children is engaged in, they will readily fix it immediately before moving on.

6.4.3 Children learn through stories and folktales from adults

When the issue of stories and folktales was raised, all my participants agreed that there are many occasions in which they employ stories and folktales in school and at home to teach the children. I was made to understand that in Nigeria, though the stories and folktales are used as a teaching method, it is also one of the subjects taught by teachers in pre-primary schools. Stories and folktales are useful when teachers present some topics to the children in the class. It was reported by Ms Adiaha that teachers used stories and folktales as a part of the curriculum and also as a useful teaching tool in pre-primary schools. She said that storytelling and folktales definitely are part of the pre-primary school curriculum and practice.

The Curriculum for the pre-primary school in Nigeria clearly set the guidelines for the teachers so that they achieve certain developmental and learning goals with the children. According to Ms Adiaha, the curriculum for pre-primary school in Nigeria include: reading readiness, number readiness, elementary science, writing, drawing and painting, rhymes, social studies, storytelling, physical exercises, bible knowledge, moral instruction and computer. Another member of focus group in person of Ms Emem said that the pre-primary school where she is teaching has a library. Among other instructional materials, the library has in stock a number of storybooks that she likes to use in teaching the children in her class. She went on to say that her school is located in a riverine area of the Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria where fishing activity is carried out, therefore, she usually uses stories about good fisherman to teach the children the importance of agriculture to the nation.

From all indications, stories and folktales have their educational and informative components. It was agreed that stories can be seen as a motivating instrument in the learning process and as a correlative connection between other activities. It was also indicated that stories and folktales could be used to illustrate the importance of activities such as agriculture, nation building and the benefits derivable from hard work.

The narrative above notwithstanding, Ms Atim declared that most children have difficulties to sit still for two or five minutes and follow any activity done in the class. She said that stories and folktales are usually useful in regulating children's behaviour in the class. The

common argument was that when children arrive in the morning, teachers have to come with the solution on how to keep the attention of children in the class before they start their daily activities. It therefore turns out that storytelling and folktales are ways in which children's restlessness are kept in check by teachers. Ms Patience declared;

> *When a teacher entered his or her class in the morning, he/she sees that all the children in his/her class are moving around the class. At times, they jump and run around not knowing what to do. In order to have the children's attention, teacher gets them together through telling the children sweet and interesting stories (interview, 2016).*

From what the teacher says above, it is obvious that morning time is a bit tempestuous with a lot of children coming to the class with no clear objectives in mind. Teachers appreciate storytelling activity that they use to attract children's interest and to prevent them from making the class noisy and rowdy. From my interpretive point of view, stories and folktales are used not only as a good instructional resource in the class, but it is also used to make children calm down and be focused during lesson period in the class.

During the interview, Ms Mary Edem added that the stories are at times used to amuse children when they come back from any outdoor activity or when they stay indoors for too long due to either bad weather or visitation of an important personality from the Ministry of Education. Ms Mary Edem said:

> *In the class, anytime when we noticed that children are bored by listening to the lesson, we will quickly look for story books which are full of pictures and give it to the children to look at. We will narrate the story in the book for listening pleasure. Furthermore, when it is a rainy day where children cannot go out for outdoor play, we tell the stories to keep them busy academically (interview, 2016).*

From the citation above, the group indicated the two occasions where stories were used in their professional practice. First, realising that children's attention in a particular lesson may not go beyond 20 minutes, teachers will introduce storytelling in order to eliminate their boredom. Second, it was established that stories were normally introduced in the class for the children when the atmospheric condition is unfriendly for the children to go out for outdoor activities such as playing football, running, playing hide and seek, among others.

Another way the teacher and children use stories to teach and learn respectively is by regulating their behaviour through problem solving situations. It was reported that children learn effectively when they are confronted with life problems. Children are seen as great adventurers, they are willing to explore and solve difficult task. Teachers assist children to solve some of these difficult tasks by telling them stories about certain events in order for them to draw from the story and learn about the task indirectly. Additionally, it was mentioned that teachers use stories and folktales to connect with the children through story characters. Ms Glory declared:

> Sometimes when we noticed that children cannot solve problem on their own, as a result they will get angry with themselves. In order for them to solve the problem, the teacher will tell the story about a 'woman who hurriedly prepare food and she ended up not putting all the condiments (interview, 2016).

Many situations arise where teachers intervene by assisting children to solve difficult task are very common in pre-primary schools in Nigeria. The group said that stories such as 'women and food preparation' were used to illustrate to the children the need to be patient and not be in a hurry in life. The group maintained that anything which is done in a hurry usually ended in a disaster. In other words, the group found storytelling activities as a good way to make the children more responsible in life. Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory stressed the importance of the context in which learning process takes place in a child. It is significant that the environment should be stimulating for children to learn. The group argued that storytelling and folktales make the environment more relax for children to learn. If one considers the Vygotsky's theory, it can be deduced that through social interactions, as in the case of this finding, children easier developed higher mental processes like perception and attention through storytelling. Sociocultural environment affects those processes and they become more effective. If perception or attention is developed, it therefore follows that children's social interactions and awareness of their behaviour will be on a more appropriate level.

In the context of informal setting, the issue that children learn from stories and folktales was also mentioned by the parents. They particularly said that girl children like to listen to 'love' stories, while boys like 'adventurous' stories. In the area of girl children, Ms Rose narrated that her girl child usually come to her every evening after dinner and requested love stories from her. Ms Rose said that most times she was tired after a hard day work, but she had no

option than sit her child down and tell her nice stories. At this point, I interrogated Ms Rose on the type of stories being narrated to her child. She replied:

> *You see, not all stories are educative. I prefer to tell stories in which my child will learn from. Stories from the Bible encourages the child to be morally upright are sometimes narrated to my child (interview, 2016).*

Ms Victoria reported that her girls are interested in stories such as 'how the tortoise got its scars, monkey and the shark, the lazy town's people, the wisdom of the Eagle and the treachery of the hyena and the pregnant virgin'. Ms Victoria maintained that listening to such stories made her children learn from it. Ms Victoria declared:

> *I want to report that my children learn a lot from these stories. In fact, some of the mistakes made by major characters in a story are easily noticed by my children and they vowed not to commit such hideous mistake in life (interview, 2016).*

Ms Ime's view was not entirely different from Ms Rose and Victoria, however, she added that aside from the stories in which she often narrated to her children to learn from, folktales are another short but interesting stories that a child took delight in. She particularly mentioned a folktale title, 'the disobedient daughter who married a skull' as one of the numerous folktales she likes to narrate to her children. The title of the folktale was so interesting, as a result I asked Ms Ime to explain to me the knowledge from derivable by the children. In response, Ms Ime said:

> *The story is all about a young beautiful girl (Affiong) who refused to married all the young men who sought her hand in marriage despite her parents' entreaties because they are not rich. The skull in the spirit world heard about it, he borrowed money and cars from other ghosts. Affiong agreed to marry the skull on seeing these riches. However, Affiong discovered her mistake of marrying skull when she got to his house (interview, 2016).*

According to Ms Ime, her children realised from the story that greed is destructive. Therefore, they promised not to behave like Affiong, rather, they vowed to handover their fortune and misfortune to the Almighty God who is the giver of everything. From the narrative, it is apparent that Ms Ime's children did not only learn about good morals from the story alone, they also learn on how to be satisfied with the little they have, knowing very well that all things come from God.

In another vein, Ms Eno and Iboro reported that their male children like adventurous stories like bad hunters, when the Lion feeds, the dogs of war, heart of darkness, among others. Based on this, I was forced to probe further why male children like listening to adventurous stories, Ms Iboro responded:

> *In Akwa Ibom state of Nigeria, male children from birth are trained and made to think like warriors. They are trained not to cry over small issues, rather, they are groomed to take charge of any situation they happen to find themselves (interview, 2016).*

From all indications, I was made to understand that some male children were prevented by their fathers from listening to love stories being told by their mothers. This decision is often taken so as to prevent their male children from acting or behaving cowardly in the face of aggression. In Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, it is believed that male children are warriors from birth and that the environment in anyway should not alter this. In addition, Ms Pricilla reported that most times male children are not only being told adventurous stories, they are being taken to the scene of the events for them to have a first-hand knowledge and also learn from the primary source(s).

I, therefore, asked whether taking the male children to the scene of the events does not cause him a nightmare or emotional instability considering the children's age. In response, Ms Pricilla declared:

> *I want to tell you that taking our male children to the scene of the events does not cause any emotional or psychological harm to them. Instead, it makes our male children to learn and understand the culture of the community and be ready to defence it when they are of age (interview, 2016).*

Ms Udeme added that our husbands are happy to see that their male children being exposed to stories that make their male children to development physically and mentally. Additionally, wives are usually called upon in the village square to inform the entire village of the paternity of male children who could not face blood. From the above narrative, it is evident that male children are seen as warriors who will defend the community from external aggression. Therefore, it will not be out of place to prepare them for this role from birth. In another circumstance, male child paternity is normally called to question when he acts differently from age long societal norm. From my interpretive perspective, the role the

society constructed and assigned to male children in Nigeria accord them unnecessary importance over girl children.

From the findings, it should be deduced that stories and folktales aside from the fact that it is used for the preservation of the culture and tradition of the society, it has educational and entertaining elements. Tingöy et al. (2006) argued that storytelling is an art where a good storyteller presents real or fictive events through words, images and sounds. Additionally, they said that stories and folktales are one of the oldest educational tools and that in recent time the stories can be seen as traditional, and also as a technologically modern educational tool that children learn from. The finding of this study showed that children used stories and folktales as educational as well as entertaining tool. Children learn effectively when stories and folktales are narrated. This finding is supported by Daniel (2007) who observed that there are possibilities for the teachers to integrate stories in every activity because it assists the children to development physically, emotionally and mentally. The areas where the stories can be used as an educational tool are diverse and it is up to the teachers to decide how and when they are going to use a story. Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden and Bell (2002) stated that for the learning process to take place, a child need to choose appropriate learning strategies. Furthermore, the finding is in line with Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory which says that children learn about an important cultural artifact when they socialise and work with adults or their peers in problem-solving situations involving task. Supporting the above assertion, Callanan and Braswell (2006) say that children's experiences with their parents and other adults in science museums (stories) that stimulate active exploration of displays can enhance opportunities to learn about literacy and science.

6.4.4 Children learn through drawing

From the data analysis, it was revealed that drawing forms an essential part of promoting the development of a child in his/her early years. Children's drawings look like disorderly scribblings, but with practice and as fine motor control increases, their drawing become more recognisable. Ms Ime reported that another important thing a child does after playing is drawing. She said that most children like to draw while they are playing on the sand. For instance, she cited many instances where her children will draw football, radio and other objects in the house. Most times, her children draw an object they observed on the street or in the church. It was stated that her children may not know the name of the object, but after drawing they will ask her to name the object. Looking at the picture drawn, Ms Ime said that

she normally mention the name of the object that they might have drawn and informed them of the function of the said object to her children.

Notwithstanding the narrative of Ms Ime, Ms Bassey also declared that drawing is part of a child way of learning. She maintained that a child may draw a picture of a man, and name certain facial features in the picture such as nose, eyes, mouth teeth, ears and chin. Based on the facial features identified in the picture, children began to touch, name, and understand the functions of these facial features in body. From all indications, it is apparent that the children aside from understanding the function of each feature in the body through drawing, they easily identify where those features are located in the body. It will also not be out of place to conclude that pictures serve as excellent stimulus for identification and discussion, therefore, it can be used to develop a child language skills and stimulate his/her imagination.

In addition, Ms Udeme said that children draw to tell stories, share ideas and thoughts with their peers. In her words, Ms Udeme declared:

> *My children made various drawings portraying various activities in the house. They draw my wedding picture which is hung on the sitting room. From the drawing, they were able to ask where the wedding was organised and the significance of white gown I worn on the day of the wedding (interview, 2016).*

From the quotation above, it is apparent that through drawing the children were able to understand the importance of wedding in the society. Moreover, they were offspring from parents' unionism. Furthermore, children were able to understand the importance of wedding gown which is the signification of purity of girl in Ibibio culture. From the foregoing, it is obvious that children represent their experiences through various forms of drawing and as they grow, they move from scribbling stage to pre-schematic stage. In other words, as the children gets older and their fine motor control increases, their drawings become more complex, realistic and differentiated.

In the context of formal setting, all the members of the focus groups strongly agreed that children learn through drawing. For instance, Ms Adiaha one said that most times children were paired around a table (facing each other) and they were asked to draw a picture of an antelope which was displayed in front of the class. As she was moved around the table, the children were told to talk with one another about their drawings. There were extensive discussions on each drawing by the children. Children were asked to identify different

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features in an antelope. For example, when children were asked to show the eyes of an antelope, the children pointed to the eyes of an antelope saying 'this is the eyes of an antelope' and were asked 'what are eyes used for? Children responded; 'an antelope use eyes to see.' The identifications and functions of various organs in an antelope continued for a certain period until all the children in the class were able to recite the functions.

The above narrative attests to the fact that children do not only learn through drawing, teachers can also use drawing to teach in the class. Furthermore, ideas emerged when children sat around the table, drawing and talking at the same time. While some children identified the organs in an antelope, others talked about the functions of those organs in the classroom. This task encouraged children's social skills as they interacted among themselves. In addition, the ability of the children to communicate non-verbally and verbally, invariably, develops children's linguistic, creative and imaginative skills. The uninterrupted discussions among the children raised the quality of social interaction and also the learning environment. Talking with each other while drawing, made the children feel closer and also made the social interactions very enriching.

In a similar vein, Ms Mfon stated that drawing is not only used by children to learn, it also promotes children's communication in the class. According to her, at pre-primary school level huge attention is placed on the creative arts and drawing is one of those elements. From the data analysis, it was revealed that at the beginning, children find it extremely difficult to hold pencils, as time went on they develop motor skills which made them to use pencils easily. The development of motor skills in children enables them to draw.

In a similar vein, Ms Ekaowo affirmed:

> *Drawing is a valuable way for the children to learn about and interpret their environment. Therefore, there is a huge celebration when children scribble a picture to represent something. Drawing is very important in terms of the use of the pencil for developing writing skills (interview, 2016).*

Aside from the quotation above, some members of the group such as Ms Alice, Ms Mary Edem, Ms Glory and Ms Vivian stated that drawing enhances children's language development. They stressed that children talk often when they are drawing and this assists them immensely in developing their language and social competence. Specifically, Ms Glory emphasised that children's drawing is valued by having them displayed in the classroom for

other classmates to see. This give the children needed encouragement and confidence to learn more at home and in school.

Concerning children communication, I interrogated them further by asking how drawing can have positively impact on children's communication in the class. In response, Ms Alice declared:

> *Some children are linguistically deprived. This is because they come from home backgrounds where parents and siblings' vocabulary is extremely limited, therefore, so drawing assists them to develop their vocabularies hence enhance communication (interview, 2016).*

The above quotation explained how children develop their communication skills through drawing. It was established that children who has limited vocabulary as result of coming from a poor socioeconomic background, use drawing to enhance their communication skills. It is evident that the children, whose parents' educational status and family income are low, find it difficult to communicate freely with others whose educational status and income are high. From my interpretive point of view, the inability of this group of children to freely communicate with others is a function of their lack of exposure to communication equipment such as radio, television and mobile phones. Therefore, children talking fluently about drawing with their peers or teachers not only enhance communication skills, it also gives with the liberty to experiment and express their ideas and actions in whatever they choose.

In my literature, scholars were silent the issue of the children learn through drawing. Additionally, it was also not established in the literature that drawing enhances communication skills among pre-primary school children. In light of the above, the finding serves as a new knowledge in early childhood education discipline. Additionally, the finding is in agreement with Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory which advocated that children do not act directly on the physical world without the intermediary of tools. In this context, a tool in Vygotsky's view is the 'picture' that is drawn by the children under specific cultural and historical conditions.

6.5 The dynamics that surround the way pre-primary school learners learn at the formal and informal education settings

6.5.1 Children's readiness to learn

Both the parents and the some members of focus groups interviewed reported that the children learn when they are physically and mentally ready. For instance, Ms Bassey was of the view most children learn minutes after they were born. She said that when the child is born, the first thing the child does or learn is how to suck the mother's breast (colostrum). On the first day of the child's birth, the mother will put her breast in the child's mouth. She will even force the breast on the child in which initially the child may rejects it. The child's rejection of the breast is as result of the child inability to learn how to suck the breast of the mother. Few hours after the child was forcefully breastfed by the mother, and recognising breastmilk as the source of his/her food, the child will 'willingly' (ready) look for his/her mother to breastfeed him/her. In furtherance to the above, Ms Bassey reported that most times children cry in order to attract the mother's attention to breastfeed him or her.

Similarly, Ms Udeme said that the children's readiness to learn when a bright and colourful object is brought before them. Furthermore, the children's level of concentration also promotes learning. Ms Udeme declared:

> *If an object which is bright and beautiful is presented to the child, this will attract his/her attention. When attention of the child is brought under a particular focus, this is when children readiness to learn occurs. This is because the child's attention and interest is directed towards the bright object (interview, 2016).*

From the narrative, it is obvious that children like bright and beautiful colours. It is worthy to mention that bright and colourful colours always appeal to the children. Children's interests are always brought under specific focus through the presentation of a bright and colourful images and objects.

On the issue of child's level of concentration, Ms Udeme said that this play a crucial role on the children's ability to learn. She observed that children's physical and emotional consciousness has to be brought to focus for a specific period for learning to take place.

Ms Victoria also mentioned children's readiness to learn in the context of children's physical and emotional stability. She said that before a child learns, he/she should be physically stable.

Physical stability in the context of the ability to use his/her hands, legs, eyes, mouth, ears, nose and other vital organs in the body. In other words, therefore, it will be out of place to assert that the children with serious health problems or complications find it difficult to learn either at home or in school.

From this finding, it can be reasoned that children with physical disability have difficulty to learn tasks like kicking football in the case of a crippled child or drawing pictures in the case of blind child. It is worthy to mention that for the children to learn, some of the physical features if not all in the child's body should be functional and be ready to perform the assigned task.

In the context of emotional stable, Ms Ime concurred that the children with emotional instability find it extremely difficult to learn. For instance, if a child is stressed or disturbed emotionally, his/her willingness to learn diminishes. Similarly, children who suffer from one kind of abuse or other, their level of readiness to learn either at home or the classroom weaned. From the foregoing, it may be argued that the level of concentration of a child whose family is in crisis is zero, therefore, the child's willingness and readiness to learn is at zero point.

From the perspective of formal setting, Ms Hellen remarked that children's readiness to learn is very important in the classroom setting. She went to say that no child learns without getting his/herself ready for the task which is put before him/her. Ms Hellen declared:

> *As children especially at the preschool arrive in the classroom from their home, most of them are not ready for any serious academic exercise. The majority of them move aimlessly around the class. At this stage, the teacher has to prepare the mind of the children for the day's lesson. This is done through so many ways such as reminding the children what was taught the previous day, telling them short story, singing, among others (interview, 2016).*

In furtherance to the above, Ms Patience said that the issue of children's readiness to learn in the classroom setting is central in the mind of every professional teacher. At the pre-primary school level, the ability of the children to concentrate in the class is very limited. We always observed that at pre-primary school level, the children's concentration in the class during lesson is between 15 and 20 minutes. With this mind, a professional teacher should be able to constantly talk to the children for their attention. This is because teaching the pre-primary

school children without ensuring that their level of readiness is ascertained is an exercise in futility.

From the findings, it has been discovered that children's readiness to learn encompass physical and emotional balancing. From the physical perspective, children living with disability their readiness to learn are not always remote because of their inability to perform the task given by the teacher. The majority of the teachers in pre-primary school level are not trained to handle children living with disability. Therefore, the ability of teachers to prepare these children for learning is doubtful.

In the area of emotional stable, the findings discovered that the children state of mind should be free from all crises. Child from unstable home (whose parents are constantly fighting) or broken home usually has emotional issues. It is worthy to say that families that are disengaged often manifested in unsupportive and emotionally withdrawn children. In other words, unstable home does impact negatively on the emotion of the child, hence his/her readiness to learn in the class very rare.

In my literature, the issue of readiness of the children to learn as one of the dynamics that surround the way pre-primary school learners learn at the formal and informal education settings was not mentioned. Based on the above, the finding is a new knowledge in the early childhood education discipline. In another circumstance, this finding is in support of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory which says that education should be concerned not just with theories of instruction. Rather, it should also be focused on learners' readiness to learn in order to develop their skills.

6.5.2 Children's willingness to learn

From the data analysis, it was discovered that one of the dynamics surrounding the way pre-primary school children learn is the willingness of the children to learn. Ms Bassey said that children are complex being, therefore, they only learn what they want to learn at a particular time. Anything that a child sees as unimportant or it is against his/her interest the child will refuse to learn. Ms Bassey went on to say that she finds it difficult to convince her children to learn what they do not want to learn. A good example was cited that she told all her children to wash their hands properly each time they want to eat. She observed that while other children willingly wash hands each time they want to eat, her last child by name Victor

bluntly refused to wash his hand. Effort to convince him to wash his hand when he wants to eat was fruitless.

Corroborating Ms Bassey's view, Ms Rose stated:

> *Children willingness to learn depends on their mind set. Before a child learns, he/she should have interest on the subject. His/her inner mind should confer the importance and potential gain of the subject to the child (interview, 2016).*

In a similar vein, Ms Pricilla used African proverb to explain children's willingness to learn in an informal setting. She said:

> *Children's willingness to learn is akin to leading a cow to the river, but one cannot force the cow to drink from the river (interview, 2016).*

From the above narrative, it is obvious that some children have independent mind which cannot be easily changed once it is made up. It is common to see four children from the same family behaving differently. The exhibition of diverse behaviour by these children is a function of inherent individual differences. From all indications, this assertion is in sharp contrast to the position held by Vygotsky (1978) who says that sociocultural perspectives focus on the learning from a cultural point of view and emphasises the interdependence of social and individual processes in the co-construction of knowledge in individual.

Looking from the perspective of formal setting, Ms Vivian reported that children's interest in the classroom is difficult to understand because of their diversity. Whilst some children have interest in identification of letters, others have interest in drawing and painting. Based on their interest, the children will willingly learn what interest them.

Notwithstanding Ms Vivian's view, Ms Mary Edem pointed that some children like to learn because the subject is practical in nature, while others learn due to its theoretical perspective. In the words of Ms Mary Edem, she narrated:

> *Most children learn by doing practical work such as drawing, singing, painting and counting which motivates them. If you can get them to do something practical then they learn. Others like theoretical works such as reciting letters, memorising numbers, among others (interview, 2016).*

From the narrative, it is clear that children's desire to learn any subject in the class depends on their interest and willingness which would eventually leads to the accomplishment of their goals. However, it is extremely difficult if not impossible to compel children to learn out of their will. From all indications, it may be argued that by compelling children to learn any subject in the school against their will may lead to catastrophic consequences such as mass failure and high dropout rate. This finding is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory which say that to learn is not the straightforward appropriation of skills or knowledge from the outside in, but the progressive movement from external, socially mediated activity to internal mediational control by individual learners, which results in the transformation of both the self and the activity.

6.5.3 Maturity of children

The issue of children's maturity also emerged from the data analysis. For instance, Ms Ime recounted that for a child to learn effectively and efficiently, he /she should be matured both physically and mentally. Ms Ime also said that a child's physical development determines his/her level reasoning. A child of about either one or two years cannot reason and learn like a child of about four or five years. Ms Ime declared:

> *When my child was about one or two years old, the level of his learning was not as concrete as when he is seven years of age. At one or two year's old, he was only able to learn simple things such as identification of his father and siblings. However, when he is about seven years of age, he is not only able to identify his father and other siblings, but he learns about his immediate environment (interview, 2016).*

Ms Ime's view was supported by Ms Victoria who reported that children of two to three years old begin by learning simple things like alphabets, names of animals and names of objects, unlike children who are between the ages of seven and ten they are able to learn complex things such as construction of sentences, navigating his/her environment and understanding complex issues. Ms Victoria went on by saying that a child's level of reasoning is a function of his/her chorological age. A pre-primary school children are not capable of seriation, that is, they are not capable of arranging different objects according to the size, and they cannot reason that 2 is great than 1. The ability to develop this abstract reasoning occurs when children are of age or matured both physically and mentally.

The above assertion was also supported by Ms Udeme, who confirmed that the way a two year old child conceptualise issues is quite different from the way a ten or twelve years child does. Children within the age bracket of two and three cannot learn or think on their own. They are usually instructed on what to do by adult members of the family or community. Because of their immaturity, children are always not only guided, but they imitate their parents in all things they learn. Conversely, the children of over ten and above years of age because of their maturity level, they are able to think and learn independently. Though, they usually need a little or no support from elder member of the family due to their constant questionings. At this stage their level of intelligence is high. Obviously, most of the decisions taken by the children at this level are purely not dependence on their parents or any member of their community.

In the context of formal setting, Ms Alice stated that children from the age of ten and fifteen years old are anxious to learn. They are not only willing and ready to explore some complex issues, but they often ask some questions for clarification. I probed further why the children within the age bracket of ten and fifteen years old often ask questions more than children from two and four years of age. This is what Ms Alice said:

> *I want to let you know that the reason why children of ten and fifteen years old usually ask questions more than children of two and four years of age is because, they are mature and their Intelligent Quotient (IQ) is high (interview, 2016).*

Similarly, Ms Glory declared:

> *Children between the ages of two and four learn simple things because they cannot speak the language clearly. They can only speak few words which atimes cannot be understood by an adult (interview, 2016).*

From the quotations, it is obvious that the quality of questions being asked by children between ages of ten and fifteen years old is determined by their level of IQ. From all indications, children whose ages are between two and four years old have low IQ and also their level of understanding is low. Therefore, a child who is matured learn more than the one who is not. In addition, maturity of a child is also influence by the way the child speaks. Young children rarely speak well. The inability of the children to speak audibly is as a result of the incomplete development of their vocabularies due to immaturity. Here, the children have limited vocabulary, as a result they can only learn through rote learning or recitation. In

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similar vein, though pre-primary school children do count, this does not imply that they have a number concept. They can only memorise and recite the numbers as they are instructed and guided by their teacher.

From the findings, it was discovered that children's level of maturity played critical role in the way they learn. The children's physical, physiological and mental development leads to maturity and these in turn metamorphosise into the ability of the child to learn effectively. It was also asserted that the maturity level of the children significantly impact the way a child speaks and thinks. Children between the ages of two and four years usually use chant and recite method to learn. The chanting and reciting methods are used because they are not mature enough to learn through other methods such as description, explanation, discussion, among others. Moreover, their level of vocabulary is limited. However, when the children are more development physically, physiologically and mentally, the issue of learning through chanting and reciting is reduced and their usage of language for all forms of communicate increase and improve. At this point, the children are able to learn complex or abstract issues. In the literature, the children maturity level was not mentioned as one of the dynamics that impact learning at the pre-primary school level. In light of the above, the finding is new knowledge in the early childhood education.

6.5.4 Availability of instructional resources

The availability of instructional resources was also mentioned as one of the dynamics that surround the way children in pre-primary school learn. Here, l looked at the instructional resources in the area of both informal and formal settings.

From the informal setting, Ms Ime reported that she bought different toys for her children to play with. She mentioned that toys like baby doll, football, and novelty-car did influence her children's ability to learn more at home. In the context of football, Ms Ime stated that two of her children began to exhibit the football mastery from the age of two. Ms Ime added that she was forced to buy football for her children because of their constant crying for it. This singular act brought other children from the neighbourhood to her house to play with her children.

In the like manner, Ms Victoria declared:

My children not only use toys, but they also some household items to learn such as calendar, old newspapers and some animals found in the neighbourhood (interview, 2016).

When I interrogated her how the children learn through calendar, old newspapers and some animals around the neighbourhood, she stated:

In the area of calendar, I want to say that children will count the days and months in the calendar. They were able to able to know the number of days in a week, number of weeks in a month, and number of months in a year. In the area of old newspapers, my children use it to identify important personality in the Nigeria. Concerning some animals, children were able to identify and mention different kinds of animals found around our surroundings (interview, 2016).

The above narrative indicated that children were able to use almanac or calendar to count the number of days. Almanacs or calendars have numbers in which children count from one to thirty or thirty-one as the case may be. It is also observed that most almanacs or calendars carried the pictures of some very important personality in the society or important creational centres, therefore, children are able to identify those personalities with their portfolios or the locations of those recreational centres.

In furtherance to the above, old newspapers carried some important and beautiful pictures. Some of these pictures are the current or old president of Nigeria, presidents of other countries, state governors, ministers, animals, important buildings such as stadium, zoos, and airports, among others. From the pictures, the children are able to identify and mention the names of these important personality or places in Nigeria. Additionally, by using old newspapers the children especially from the rural or semi-urban areas where these facilities are not available will able to see them and learn about where they are found, the importance of it and the year they were established.

In context of instructional resources in formal setting, it was revealed that children learn effectively through the use of different instructional resources. In the pre-primary school level, different instructional resources such books, pictures, chalkboards, calendars, atlas, charts, colour pens, crayons, among others are used by the children to learn. Ms Hellen said:

Children in my class learn effectively when they are presented with some learning materials. For instance, we provide children with drawing book and crayons for them to paint the picture of either man or animal (interview, 2016).

Notwithstanding the opinion of Ms Hellen, Ms Alice added by saying that in this digital age, pre-primary school children are provided with the computers in the class to learn from. In some instances, some rich proprietors of some pre-primary schools in Nigeria offer televisions in the classrooms for the children to learn with. A mere mentioning of the provision of television sets in the classrooms sparked my curiosity to ask on how it enhances learning among children. In response, Ms Alice said:

The use of some electronic gadgets such as television set by the children is another significant area that aid the way they learn. Most pre-primary school children like cartoons to watch. For instance, cartoon like 'Tom and Jerry' is always of interest to the children. They learn significantly from such cartoon on the television (interview, 2016).

In the same vein, I asked whether it is beneficial to expose young children to internet at this early stage of their lives considering the negative vices that abound in it. In response, Ms Mary Edem stated:

Pre-primary school children generally like exploring internet. Aside from the fact that there are certain websites which may have negative impact on the children, however, there are equally some websites that are of great benefits to the children. For instance, the use internet to explore different types of animals, mountains, important cities in the world and religious pictures immensely adds value to the learning culture of the children (interview, 2016).

From the above quotation, it may be concluded that electronic gadgets such as television, computer, cell phone and overhead projector promote learning among pre-primary school children. Children learn effective from the internet. Pre-primary school children spend a greater amount of time exploring information from the internet. It is pertinent to say that educational programmes are effectively explored when children are assisted by teachers and they draw their attention to interesting aspect of the programme. If children navigate the internet alone or on their own, there is the tendency for them be passive explorers, and they may explore internet sites which are meant for the adults.

From all indications, the narratives indicated that the provision of the learning materials assist children immensely to learn in the classroom. Children's cognition, affective and psychomotor domains are developing when they are presented with the materials which aid their learning. It is apparent that the availability and usage of instructional resources by the children promote activity based learning. In activity based learning, the children actively search for new knowledge or information or discover new information as a result of an activity in which they engaged in. Activity based learning is a unique way of learning which children can use to develop at all levels. This is because the principles of activity based learning as an approach to learning leaves a majority of the responsibility with the children rather than the teacher.

From my literature, scholars such as Hua and Lohya (2006), Obadiah (2008), Tambowua (2013) have written extensively on instructional materials as effective learning tools in enhancing learning in pre-primary school children. Additionally, Abolarin (2014) alleged that the use of instructional materials such as toys, calendars and books do not only assist children to develop positive social interactions through free expression of their emotions or concern for others, but children are capable of understanding abstract ideas better if they are provided with sufficient materials. These findings find expression in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory which says that humans do not act directly on the physical world without the intermediary of tools (symbolic or sign tools). In Vygotsky's (1978) view, the tools are artefacts or instructional resources that is created by humans under specific cultural (culture specific) and historical conditions.

6.5.5 Parents/Teachers' attitude towards children

From the data analysis, it was indicated that young children need the support of the parents and teachers to learn effectively both at home and in school. In the area of parents' attitude, Ms Victoria specifically reported that most children between the ages of one and four years are dependent on their parents to learn. The children look up to their mothers, fathers or any member of the family for instruction and guidance. They usually listen and abide by whatsoever instructions their parents give to them. Furthermore, she said that children need words of encouragement from their parents in order to learn effectively.

When I asked Ms Victoria the type of encouragement children needs, she replied:

I want to tell you that some children are shy and reserved, they rarely talk in the house with other siblings. Therefore, the positive attitude from the parents or any member of the immediate family will ultimately bring out positive learning habits from them (interview, 2016).

To get a clearer picture of how children need encouragement from their parents to learn, I interrogated Ms Bassey to clarify on this area, she answered;

Most of our children are shy to speak when they are in the mist of other children or strangers. They usually cover their mouth or face when a stranger is in their presence. For these children to have confidence to speak or learn, their parents whom they are very close with have to be around them (interview, 2016).

Confirming the views of Ms Victoria and Ms Bassey, Ms Iboro added that parents play a crucial role in their children's ability to learn. This is done through the exhibition of appropriate attitude towards the children. According to Ms Iboro, appropriate attitude include loving, playing, and exhibition kindness towards the children. She went further to observe that parents should be friendly with their children at all times. Aside from that, she said that parents should give serious attention and also listen attentively to their children in order to address any challenge children may face. Ms Iboro concluded that when the children's challenges are listened to and addressed by the parents, it will act as a moral boaster for the children to learn.

In another vein, another participant in the person of Ms Rose very categorically her statement when she said that some parents exhibit abusive behaviour towards the children. For instance, abusive words such as 'idiot', 'useless child', and 'stupid', among others are often used by parents on their children. This singular act adversely affects their children's cognition which invariably affects the children's ability and willingness to learn.

In furtherance to the above narrative, Ms Eno said:

Some parents are so pre-occupied with office duties to the extent that they neglect their family's responsibilities. Due to the parents' exhaustion after the office hours, they often ignore their children. In fact, they always shout on their children if they attempt to come close to them. This attitude or behaviour by the parents compels their

children to distance themselves from them hence impact negatively the way children learn (Interview, 2016).

From the above analysis, it can be deduced that children learn effectively when they are in the comfort zone with their parents or love ones. Furthermore, it was established that some parents or love ones are not only very hash with the children, but they are abusive. Children appears to be timid and confused when they are around or with the abusive parents hence they forget what they intend to learn. Some children who live with abusive parents usually prefer to the caregiver they trust and can confide in. However, it may be asserted that children are not born with the physical ability to seek proximity to their parents by means of their own movement. Rather, they have a number of attachment behaviour that has the predictable outcome of increasing the proximity of the children to the caregiver. Here, attachment is the emotional bond that exists between two individuals as a result of the intimacy. From the interpretive perspective, it can be argued that children whose parents are friendlier, more supportive, more understanding, more affectionate, more generous and more playful are likely to be attached to the parents than those whose are not. In addition, the children's attachment towards the parents would result in their positive learning culture.

From the formal setting perspective, Ms Mary Edem held that teachers' attitude towards children in the classroom is very significant. It is either learning is promoted when positive attitude is shown to the children or impedes learning when negative attitude is exerted towards children. Additionally, Ms Christiana observed that teachers caring behaviour is very important if they want to create a conducive climate for learning for pre-primary school children. She opined that the children's relationship with their teachers is an important predictor of their commitment to their academic work. According to Christiana, the relationship exists because children internalise the values and standards of their teachers when the relationship is characterised by mutual respect and admiration.

In addition to Ms Christiana's view, Ms Imaobong reported:

> *I want to say that as teachers, we should develop a positive attitude with our children because it is a powerful tool that would impact on their lives. When this occur, the children will have confident that their teacher care for them. Therefore, they will enjoy being near to their teacher (interview, 2016).*

Supporting Ms Imaobong, Ms Hellen affirmed:

Madam, children know those who love and care for them. When a teacher express affection and care for her class children, they will give attention to whatever their teacher says in the class. My belief is that success occurs when the teacher cares for his/her class children (interview, 2016).

Notwithstanding the Ms Hellen's opinion, Ms Ekaowo said that apart from moving close to those teachers who love them, the children also become friendly with teachers who speak every well of them and equally encourage them both in the class and in the field of play. She observed that over time, the children whose teachers exhibited positive attitude/behaviour towards them learn faster during lesson and perform excellently well in the examinations.

From the narrative above, it was established teachers who are friendly and have accommodating attitude/behaviour towards their children in the classroom teachers usually influence the children to move close to them. By moving close to the teachers, the children are able to build trust on the teachers. When the trust between teachers and children is established, the children are free to confide on the teachers to find solution on any challenge they may face in the class.

From the interpretive perspective, it should be argued that a teacher's respect and ethical application of power in the class are key to the children's understanding of love and care. With respect for his/her class children, teacher can communicate care and love for the children even when he/she teach, play, discipline, mark and correct their assignments. The teacher's power is based upon the children admiration and respect for the teacher. Additionally, it may be asserted that the children when goes or does wrong in the class are willing to adjust their behaviour because they do not want to lose the love and respect of their teacher have for them. It may be out of place to conclude that children need to feel that their teachers love and care for them, want the best for them, and can go out of their way to invest in their success before children will give their full effort and attention in the class.

From all indications, this finding is strongly supported by Epstein (2009) who argued that there is a tremendous opportunity for children's social and emotional growth during the preschool years if a teacher exhibits some degree of friendship with the children. Similarly, Rimm-Kaufman and Sandilos (2013) in their study say that improving learners' relationships with teachers has important, positive and long-lasting implications for both learners' academic and social development. Additionally, McCaleb (2013) reported that those learners who have close, positive and supportive relationships with their teachers attain higher levels

of achievement than those students with more conflict in their relationships. In the context of relevance of the theory to the findings, Vygotsky argued that in order to determine the nature of development in a child, it is important to look at the social setting where the development happens. Vygotsky believed that children do not develop in isolation, instead in a social matrix. This social matrix is shaped by the interconnection of social relationships and interactions between the children and adults of the society.

6.6 Summary

In chapter six of this thesis, all the four questions were all addressed and the findings indicated that the language of immediate community, mother tongue language and English language were the language pre-primary school children adopted for learning.

It was also discovered that the potential ways in which language impact pre-primary school learners' learning were as follows: identification, presentation and discussion of objects, development of literacy skills and communication. Furthermore, it was established that children learn effectively through playing, imitation, story-telling and folktales, and drawing.

Additionally, the findings it was found that the dynamics that surrounds the way pre-primary school learners learn at the formal and informal education settings were: children's readiness to learn, children's willingness to learn, children's maturity, availability of instructional resources and parents/teachers' attitude towards children.

In my last chapter, I will briefly re-examine the entire chapters of this thesis, highlights the new knowledge found, present the recommendations and conclusion.

Chapter seven

Summary and conclusion: finally children has learned

7.1 Introduction

In chapter six of this thesis, I presented the themes that emerged from the data and discussed the findings.

In this concluding chapter, however, I intend to give a brief account of the purpose of the study. This was followed by brief account of an overview of the study. The summary of the key findings were reiterated. Based key findings discovered, new knowledge generated in the study was presented. The latter portion of the chapter makes recommendations and draws conclusion for the study.

7.2 Overview of the study

In this study, I explored the dynamics of learning among pre-primary school learners in the formal and informal education processes. I began by asking four key research questions that guided the study. To refresh my audience minds, the questions developed were as follows:

1. What language does pre-primary school learners adopt for learning?

2. How does language impact pre-primary school learners' learning?

3. How do children learn at the formal and informal education settings?

4. What are the dynamics that surrounds the way pre-primary school learners learn at the formal and informal education settings?

In chapter two of this thesis, the conceptualisation of early childhood education was discussed. From the perspective of Maduewesi (2005, p.18), early childhood education encompass the overall social, physical, and intellectual development and education of children below the age of six years. Additionally, Ejieh (2006, p.58) looked early childhood education as a pre-school education programmes of various sorts for children below the official school-going age (usually six years) mainly to prepare them for education in primary schools. After the development of working definition of early childhood education for the study, I went further to discuss on the historical development of early childhood education in

some selected countries of the world. A particular reference was paid to countries such as USA, Germany, China, South Africa and Nigeria.

Chapter three looked at the review of the relevant literature to the study under exploration. From the literature review, I discovered that many scholars and researchers have written so much on language use by pre-primary school children, the importance of mother tongue, and different types of learning use in the pre-primary school children. It was also revealed that not much has been written on the dynamics of learning in the formal and informal settings. However, I responded to this gap in the literature by providing empirical evidence on ways in which learners learn in the formal and informal settings.

From the theoretical framing perspective, I drew from the Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory to tease out the dynamics that influence ways in which pre-primary school learners learn at the formal and informal settings. I argued that the theory acknowledges the dynamic nature of the interplay between teachers, learners and tasks and provides a view of learning as arising from interactions with others (McInerney, 2013). Ellis (2000) asserted that sociocultural learning theory assumes that learning occur not through interaction, instead, in interaction. From all indications, this invariably indicated that the child first succeeds in performing a new task with the help of another person such as teacher or parents and then internalise the task so that he/she can perform it on his/her own. According to Turuk(2008), the social interaction that takes place is advocated to mediate learning.

Based on the nature of the study under exploration, I made use of qualitative approach to tease the dynamics that impact ways in which children learned at formal and informal settings. In line with the qualitative approach, interpretive paradigm was employed to understand the parents' and teachers' voices on the study under exploration. I want to state that the deployment of qualitative and interpretive approach in the study made me to distance myself from the positivist position which are common in early childhood education particularly in Nigeria.

I went further to develop interviews for the 15 pre-primary schools teachers and the eight parents to unfold and understand the dynamics that influence the children learning at the formal and informal settings. In my analysis, I adopted thematic analysis in which in Braun and Clarke's (2006) opinion is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Similarly, Silverman (2010) held that thematic analysis seeks to unearth the themes that are salient in the text at various levels. This analytical method was used to

explore the various voices of teachers and parents on the dynamics that influence ways in which children learn at formal and informal settings.

7.3 Summary of the key findings

In this next section, I tried to present the summary of the findings derivable from the four research questions earlier developed in chapter one and analysed in chapter six.

7.3.1 Language pre-primary school children used for learning

In my first research question, I posed the question as follow: What language does pre-primary school learners adopt for learning?

From the interviews with the teachers and parents, it was first and foremost asserted that language of immediate community was the first language used by the teachers and parents to teach the children both at school and home. From the teachers' perspective, it was reported that language of immediate community connotes the language which is widely spoken by the majority of the inhabitants of the community and adapted by the pre-school sited in the said community. Furthermore, it was argued that the children irrespective of where they came from, should be able to communicate on the language spoken by the generality of the people in the community. Additionally, it was reported that despite the fact that the use of language of immediate community by the children to learn at the pre-primary school level in Nigeria was an official directive from the Federal Ministry of Education, on the other hands socialisation through play, game, among other interactions significantly assisted the children the acquisition of the language.

From the parents' perspective, it was reported that children who lived and interacted with their peers or other members of the community should be able to adopt the language spoken in the neighbourhood as language of immediate community. They based their assertion on the fact that the children commonly interacted among themselves in the playground, as a result it significantly improve language acquisition. This finding corroborated O'Shannessy's (2013) assertion that the extensive peer-group interactions are believed to have played a role in the development of the mixed language in children.

Despite the fact that majority of the participants were of the view that the children who lived together in the same neighbourhood were able to speak the language of immediate community. Another school of thought held that in an urban or cosmopolitan environment,

the ability of the children from diverse ethnic groups to speak or learn in the language of their host community was out of place. This was because of the existence of multilingualism.

Findings also indicated that mother tongue was used by the pre-primary school children as the language of instruction. Teachers as well as parents taught the children in their mother tongue. It was revealed that children's use of mother tongue to learn provided good grounds for the understanding of the subject-matter rapidly. It was also argued that teachers' use of mother tongue in the class was for clarification purposes, that is, when effort has been made to communicate ideas in second language (L2) and the children still appear to be confused. From the Tang's (2002) view, mother tongue served as a supportive and facilitating role for the pre-primary school children. Furthermore, mother tongue adopted in written tasks is especially valuable because it aids to clarify and build meaning. Similarly, findings also showed that the use of mother tongue allowed children to become more aware of the similarities and differences that exist between cultures and linguistic structures.

In another circumstance, English language was also mentioned as one of the languages children used at school and home. In the context of the parents, it was asserted that the reason the English language was adopted was because of the interethnic marriage between the parents. Children from this background were unable to adapt to the language spoken either by the father or mother.

Aside from the inability of the children to adapt to either mother or father's indigenous language which compel them to learn in English language, other participants interviewed reported that parents want their children to be taught in English language for social prestige purpose. However, parents took pride when their children spoke in English language.

From the teachers' perspective, despite the fact that NPE (2004) stated that pre-primary school children should be taught principally the mother-tongue or the language of the community. Findings indicated that pre-primary school in semi-urban and urban areas teachers and children used English language to teach and learn respectively. Reason advanced for the adoption of English language was that most of these schools are owned by private individuals and organisations hence they decided language of instruction for their schools. Additionally, the majority of the school managers preferred to give admission to children who spoke and learned in English language. This is because there is a popular belief among the school managers that the children who can express themselves in English language will be able to successfully carry out academic tasks.

In a similar vein, most teachers reported that languages such as Greek, Latin, Portuguese and Spaniard at one time or the other were used as an official language for global trade, industry and commerce, therefore, the children were made to learn in these languages. In recent time, however, English language is taught and learned in pre-primary school for global trade purpose.

7.3.2 Ways language impacts pre-primary school children's learning

This section focused on the second question that bordered on how language impact pre-primary school learners' learning. From all indications, findings indicated that identification, presentation, discussion of objects, development of literacy skills and promoting communication. This is summarized below.

In the context of the identification, presentation and discussion of objects from the informal setting, findings indicated that the parents used language to identify an object for the children. It was revealed that children between the ages of one and three years used the language spoken by the parents to identify objects such as spoon, ball and among others. It was through the identification of such object that the children were able to know the object and its usefulness.

Similarly, it was reported that language significantly influenced children's identity. The participants argued that the child's acquisition of the language of a community allowed him/her to become member of the community in spite of the fact that he/she came from another ethnic group. The ability of a child to speak his/her mother tongue gave him/her sense of oneness and cultural identity.

From the formal setting, findings showed that the teachers in pre-primary schools adopted identification and demonstration as teaching strategies. It was found that children between the ages of one and three easily learned through identification of an object. From all indications, for children in pre-primary school to learn effectively and efficiently, the teacher has to demonstrate the task for them to see and imitate. Furthermore, the language the children used assisted them to improve their vocabulary which eventually led to the formation of new ideas and higher levels of comprehension of the subject content. For learning to take place, McRobbie and Tobin (1997) argued children should be encouraged to be involved in putting ideas into language, testing their understanding with peers or teachers and listening to and making sense of the ideas of other children.

The children's development of literacy skills was also mentioned as one of the potential impacts of language. It was asserted that the children used language to express themselves to other members of the family. From all indications, this was done through the mastery of words and concepts. For instance, as the child grows the language became increasingly complex and he/she began to combine morphemes. However, it was argued that the child uttered consonant-vowel together hence improving his/her vocabulary and the length of sentence construction became increased.

In the school or at home, children often played around with one another using language to as the vehicle of communication. During this play or any social interaction, children used language to express themselves, this significantly improved their communication skill.

7.3.3 The way children learned in school and at home

The use of play in an educational context and for purposes of learning and development was by no means a new phenomenon (Plass & Homer, 2015). However, the findings indicated that children at the pre-primary school learned through play. It was discovered that play such as football, puzzles, among others encouraged the children's emotional well-being and development because it gives children pleasure, supports a feeling of mastery, the identification and expression of feelings and it fulfils a therapeutic function. Play in children signified a total experience of all aspect of life and it allowed them to find their place in life.

Aside from play in which the children learned from, it was also revealed that the children learned through imitation. One of the participants stated that imitation has two different but complementary functions, one was the cognitive function that made learning about environment possible, and the other was an interpersonal function that allowed children to share their experiences with peers or teachers. Furthermore, it was argued that children imitate primarily because they want to understand their peers or teachers' intention in communicating, that is, they are going to imitate whatever they think that their peers or teachers want to be imitated, hence feeding social interaction. Here, imitation is an important characteristic of the construction of social skills. It was concluded that children used imitation to acquire both instrumental skills and the conventions of their social groups.

Stories and folktales were also mentioned as potential avenues in which the children in school and at home learned from. From the findings, though stories and folktales were used as a teaching method, it was seen as one of the subjects taught in pre-primary schools in Nigeria.

Furthermore, it was agreed that stories can be seen as a motivating instrument in the learning process and as a correlative connection between other activities. Additionally, it was mentioned that stories and folktales were used to illustrate the importance of activities such as agriculture, nation building and the benefits derivable from hard work.

From the perspective of children learning through drawing, findings indicated that both teachers and parents used drawing to assist children acquire vocabulary thereby increasing their communication skills. However, drawings made by children were determined by the stages of their development. For instance, a picture drawn by three or four year's old child differed in the area of expression with that of five years old child. This was because a child at this level was in the pre-schematic stage (3-4years), where the child develop schema by drawing at arbitrary in which to some extends is meaningless. At five years, the child was able to make sense through his/her drawing. Findings showed that children's ability to draw and portray their intentions has a positive relationship to their cognitive abilities. According to Wright (2007), narratives about children's drawing allowed them to share details about their daily activities with their teachers and parents.

7.4 Dynamics surrounding the way pre-primary school learners learn in school and at home

The last research question sought to explore the dynamics that surrounds the way pre-primary school learners learn at the formal and informal education settings. The results showed that for a child to learn he/she should be psychologically and emotionally read. Aside from the child's cognitive readiness, it was also argued that any child living with disability his/her readiness to learn weaned. Additionally, it was established that physically and emotionally abused children look withdrawn either at school or home. This significantly affects their academic performance.

In a similar vein, findings showed that the children's willingness to learn is a function of the children's mind. Some children prefer to learn at their own pace and time in order to perform excellently well. They distaste being coerced to learn. Therefore, their desire to learn depends on their interest and willingness which would eventually leads to the accomplishment of their goals. It was argued that compelling children to learn any subject in the school against their will lead to catastrophic consequences such as mass failure and high dropout rate.

Children's maturity was found to play a major role on how they learned. From the findings, it was found that children between two and three years old began learning simple things like alphabets, names of animals and objects. It was argued that during this stage, intuitive mode of thought prevails characterised by free association, fantasy and unique illogical meaning. However, as the child grows (5-7 years), the child became matured and should be able to learn fundamental skills such as reading, writing and calculating arithmetic problems.

In a similar circumstance, the availability of instructional resources was also mentioned as one of the dynamics that surround the way children in pre-primary school learn. In pre-primary school level, effective teaching and learning is done deployment of toys, textbooks, among others. Toys such as baby doll, football, and novelty-car influenced children's ability to learn. It was asserted that the use of instructional resources at this level was to stimulate the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development of the children.

Lastly, from the findings it was uncovered that young children between the ages of three and five need the support of the parents and teachers to learn effectively both at home and school. It was asserted that children were willing and ready to learn when their parents or teachers displayed appropriate attitude towards them. One of the participants explained appropriate attitude to include loving, playing, and exhibition kindness towards the children. However, it was reported that the children from abusive background rarely learned and most times they absent themselves from the school. The reason for the children's refusal to learn or absent from school was based on the degree of intimidation they were subjected to. This eroded the children's level of self-confidence at home and in the school.

7.5 Generation of new knowledge in early childhood education

I want to state that this section focuses on the contribution of this research to the body of knowledge on early childhood education. This is explained below.

Fig.: 7.1. The dynamics of knowledge generation in children

Figure 7.1 Forces that influence children's learning
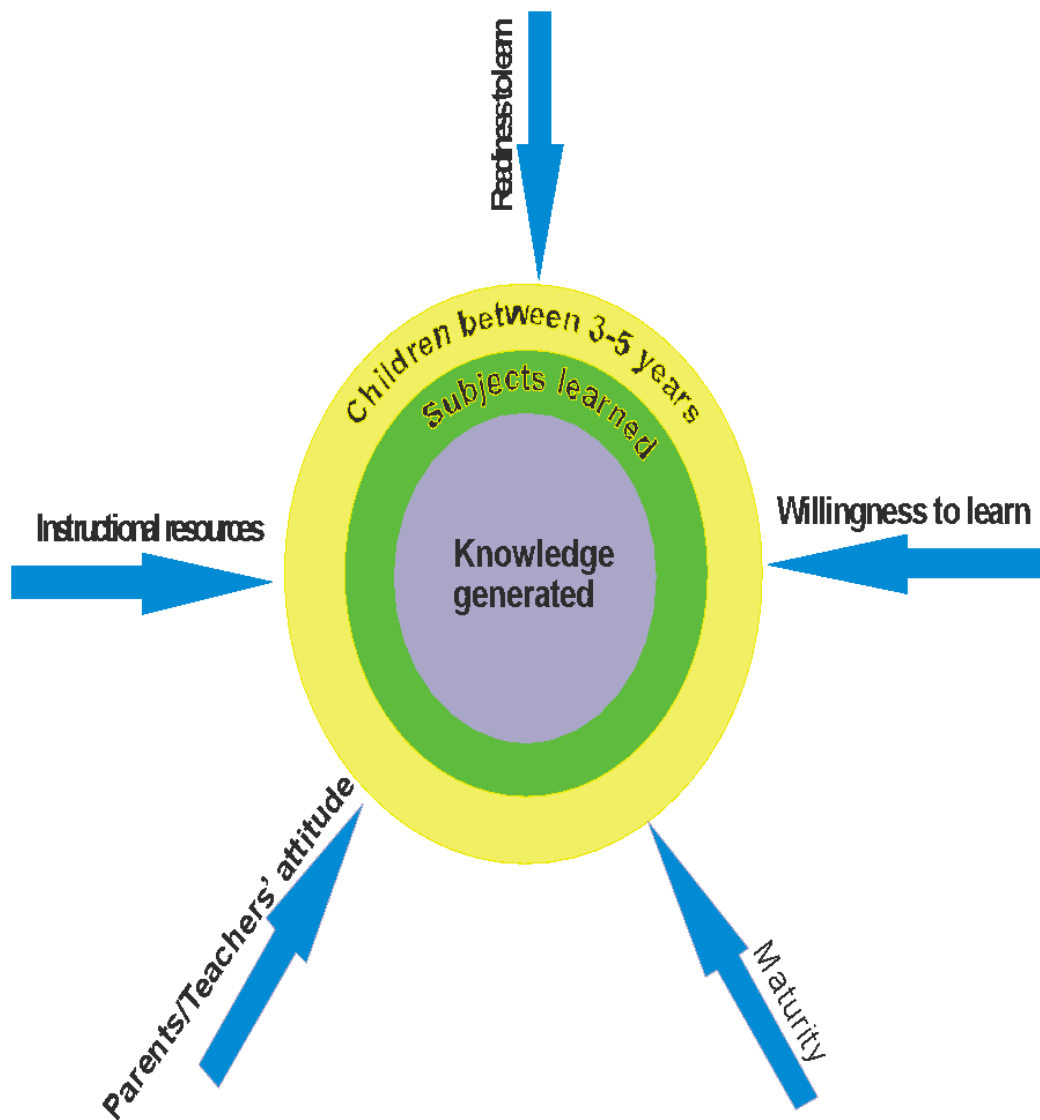
Figure 7.1 above illustrated the forces that positively influence the way in which the children between the ages of three and five gain knowledge through the subjects they learned. Children's ability to learn either at home or in school bordered on both external and internal factors. In the context of external factors, the parents/teachers' attitude, children's level of maturity, and the availability of instructional resources significantly encouraged learning among children. From all indications, children's ability to learn strives when an appropriate atmosphere is provided. In the area of internal factors, the willingness and readiness of the children to learn comes from the inside, that is, the mind. For instance, in a situation where

the child's mind does not find relevance on the subjects taught in the class, his/her level of concentration weaned hence his/her inability to learn.

Though Hordijk and Baud (2006), Tan and Tan (2014) argued that the knowledge generation in children is a complex and instantaneous human process that happens when children are involve in remote learning. In this study, this is not the case, rather, it has been established that learning in children is influenced by their mind and other peripheral factors such as the parents/teachers' attitude, children's level of maturity, and the availability of instructional resources and this in turn initiate knowledge generation in them. The above assertion serves as my contribution to knowledge in the field of early childhood education. This led us to the issue of limitations of the study and is explained below.

7.6 Limitations of the study

From the perspective of Simon and Goes (2013), limitations of the study are matters and occurrences that arise in a study which are out of the control of the researcher. In any research study conducted either in the small or large scale, there are some elements of challenges that the researcher confront. This position was held by Simon and Goes (2013), who said that every study, no matter how well it is conducted and constructed, has limitations. Based on the above assertion, it will not be out of place to say that this study has limitations.

Firstly, in my research methodology chapter, I clearly stated that interview schedules (individuals and focus group interviews) was constructed for the participants. I finally constructed the interview schedules which bordered on the subject under exploration. I encountered a limitation of distance in the process of data collection since the studies was done in South Africa while the respondents were selected across border, i.e. in Nigeria.

Secondly, since the research was conduct across border the time became a prominent limitation as the distance was remarkably far.

Thirdly, both acquisition of research materials and distance of coverage for data collection had high demand of money and this became another limitation to the study.

7.7 Considerations for future research

In this section, I present ideas that emerged from this study which could be further explored to contribute to the scholarly knowledge on early childhood education in Nigeria and globally.

It is more than a century since the introduction of early childhood education in Nigeria. It is pertinent to say that within this period, various research works have been carried out by national and international researchers. In my chapter one, I enumerated some of the scholars/researchers who had embarked on different studies on early childhood education in nationally and internationally. Additionally, in chapter two of this thesis I mentioned countries such as USA, Germany, China and South Africa where numerous studies were conducted on early childhood education. Despite the volume of research done, there were some existing gaps that sparked my curiosity to embark on this thesis. In the same manner, having painstakingly conducted research on the dynamics of learning among pre-primary school learners in Uyo senatorial district of Nigeria and having arrived at the findings which could not be generalised, I have discovered some gaps that need further research and these are stated below.

The findings indicated that the children between the ages of three and five years adopted either language of immediate community or mother tongue to learn at home and in school. The findings further revealed that English language is also used by the majority of the children in urban schools because of the coming together of children from different ethnic groups. However, the finding is silence on the issue of the challenges that children who speak language of immediate community or mother tongue face during the transition phase from home to school. For instance, a child who speak mother tongue or language of immediate community at home before his/her admission into pre-primary education, immediately he/she is admitted English language is introduced or vice versa. From the above explanation, it was appropriate for other researchers to explore the challenges pre-primary school children encounter in language acquisition during transition period from home to the school.

From the findings, I discovered that pre-primary school children learned effectively through playing, imitation, story-telling and folktales and drawing. This study acknowledged the importance of play in cognitive development of a child. Additionally, play became more abstract, symbolic, and social as children mature through various developmental phases. In the area of imitation, children learned from what they see others doing. It was asserted that they usually imitate their peers or adults in the community. Story-telling, folktales, and

drawing positively influence the way in which children learned at home and in school. Similarly, it was discovered that drawing for children has a great impact on their facility to communicate and on their overall development.

Aside from play, imitation, story-telling, folktales and drawing that my participants mentioned as initiators of learning. As a researcher, I was of the opinion that intuition may be one of the initiators of learning in pre-primary school children. After all scholars such as Piaget (1963), Lim, (2016) had reported that children learn through intuition. They argued that children between three and five years old learn by asking questions like, 'Why?' and 'How come?' However, in this study, it was revealed that intuitive learning by children was not mentioned. In light of the above, I strongly recommend that another researcher should embark on the same study but in a different context (Cameroon, USA or Britain) to establish whether results obtained will be different.

7.8 Recommendations

The study revealed the views and information expressed by both the parents and class teachers who participated in this study on the language that pre-primary school children used and dynamics that influenced the way in which children learn at the formal and informal settings. From the findings reached, the following recommendations were made to improve the use of language in pre-primary school and the forces that positively impact learning both at home and school.

a) From the findings, it was discovered that different languages such as language of immediate community, mother tongue and English language were adopted by the pre-primary school children at home and in the school. Furthermore, it was found that children who are not from the area where the school is located and whose language of immediate community or mother tongue is not their own, were compelled to learn in English language against the official government policy. In light of the above, I strongly recommend that children who come from ethnic group different from where the school is located, and who want to attend pre-primary school in area, should first and foremost, be subjected to six months training in the language of immediate community or mother tongue. Subjecting the children to six months language familiarisation will assist them to adjust immediately in the class. Furthermore, it will ensure uniformity of language in the classroom.

b) It was uncovered that children learn effectively when are ready and willing. From all indications, the children's willingness and readiness to learn depends on heavily on external factor such as school climate, attitude of parents/teachers and availability of resources. It has been observed that in Nigeria most of the pre-primary schools are ill-equipped and the teachers' attitudes towards the children most often are repulsive. Therefore, I suggest that a conducive environment should be created to ensure that the children's physical and emotional states are stable for the learning to take place. Additionally, there should be attitudinal change on the part of pre-primary school's teachers to accommodate children.

7.9 Conclusion

The debate on medium of instruction in pre-primary schools has been going on for over three decades in Nigeria. The National Policy on Education has stressed the importance of the language of immediate community and mother tongue in the training of the children (NPE, 2004). This study is very significant because it brought out the actual happenings at home and pre-primary school thus letting us to understand that a particular language adopted by the children. Pre-school children's ability to learn through the language of immediate community or mother tongue does not only preserve the cultural values of the people, but ensuring that learning is permanent in the children. Furthermore, it develops in the children readiness to learn and strengthens their identity.

In another circumstance, the children of today are the leaders of tomorrow, therefore, they should be well groomed cognitively, socially morally and culturally. However, the dynamics that influence the way children learn as highlighted in this thesis makes this achievable. Parents and teachers as the facilitators of knowledge was scrutinised through interviews and the findings revealed that children's willingness, readiness and maturity. Additionally, availability of instructional resources, parents and teachers' attitudes were the forces that positively influenced the children to learn.

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Appendix 1

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

27 May 2016

Ms Arit O Atakpa 214585516
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Atakpa

Protocol reference number: HSS/0326/016D
Project title: The dynamics of learning amongst pre-primary school learners in Uyo Senatorial District, Nigeria:
An investigation of formal and informal education processes.

Expedited Approval

In response to your application dated 04 April 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent
Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved
through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote
the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department
for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter
Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

....
Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Dr S Ntombela
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
cc School Administrator: Mrs B Bhengu-Mnguni, Mbalenhle Ngcobo, Philisiwe Ncayiyana, Tyzer Khumalo

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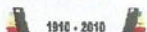
Appendix 2

Individual interview for the parents

1. Madam, please tell me the kind of language you use at home with the child?

2. Do you speak the same language as your husband? If not, how does your child manage to speak the dominant language?

3. How does the language spoken impact the child's learning ability?

4. Can you tell me how many years you have been a mother?

5. Please can you explain the first day you heard your child altering words?

6. Explain to me ways in which your child learns at home?

7. Please Madam, what are the dynamics that influence your child's learning at home?

8. Would you say that your culture has a positive influence on the way your child learns? If so, please can you explain this to me.

9. Would you agree that language spoken in your house and society also influences the manner in which your child learns at home? If you agree or not, can you gratefully explain your position.

10. What are those factors you consider very crucial that enhance your child's ability to learn at home?

11. Please Madam, can you give a detailed explanation on how the factors you consider 'crucial' are so important in the life of your child?

Appendix 3

Interview for the educators (focus group)

1. Madam, please tell me the kind of language you use in the school with the children?

2. What kind of language is spoken in the community where the school is located?

3. Are all the children in the class speaking the same language?

4. How does the language spoken impact the child's learning ability?

5. Can you tell me the years you have been a teacher at the pre-primary school level?

6. Please can you explain your experience with your children in the class on the first day of their admission.

7. Explain to me ways in which your child learn in your class.

8. Please, what are those dynamics that influence your children's ability to learn in the class?

9. Would you say that the culture of the school influences positively the way your children learns? If so, please can you explain this to me.

10. Would you agree that language spoken in the community also influences the manner in which your children learn in the class? If you agree or not, can you gratefully explain your position.

11. What are the factors you consider very crucial that enhance your children's ability to learn in the class?

12. Would you say that the school climate has a great impact on the way children learn? If yes or no, please explain your position.

13. What would you suggest as the likely antidotes to encourage the children to learn in the class?