Fostering Teacher-Pupil Relationship for Effective Learning in Public Primary Schools in Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State

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Abstract

This study focused on ways teachers can foster positive teacher-pupil relationships in public primary schools in Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State. The study was guided by one research question. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised of 503 public primary school teachers in 53 public primary schools in Orumba North LGA. Proportionate stratified sampling was used in selecting 100 teachers from the population. Simple random sampling was used to select 20 schools. A 20 item structured questionnaire titled Teacher-Pupil Relationship Questionnaire (TPRQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts. A reliability co-efficient of 0.82 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha. The data collected were analyzed using mean. The findings of this study revealed some of teachers' characteristics that can foster positive relationships with pupils to include having patience with pupils, giving individualized attention to pupils, encouraging pupils to ask questions in the classroom among others. The researchers recommended among others that all the stakeholders in the educational system- the teachers, educational managers, policy makers should give a priority attention to positive teacher-pupil relationship as it plays a pivotal role in the teaching and learning process.

Keywords: Primary education, teacher-pupil relationship, effective learning

Introduction

Education is said to be a veritable tool of human and national development. It plays a crucial role in the development of a nation since it is recognized that the level of education in the developed country is far higher than in the developing countries. Udegbe (2014) posits education as the process of individual development in which a person becomes capable of useful behaviours. Experts in knowledge state that the foundation of an individual's optimum development is laid down during the early years of life, particularly from birth through early childhood and middle childhood. This range covers pre-primary and primary education.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education (2013), defined primary education as the education given to children aged six to twelve. According to the policy, the rest of the education system is built upon it and is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. This makes primary education to be important at the early stage of the children. Education at this level requires the use of human approach as an interactive process and the teacher is at the

center of the interaction. A teacher is seen as individual who trains, encourages, and supports pupils to attain knowledge, competencies, values and skills. As teacher spend a large amount of time (5 to 6 hours) daily teaching and interacting with pupils, they tend to build relationships. This relationship is an integral part of the teaching and learning process as the teachers' success in facilitating pupils learning is directly related to the quality of support offered through this relationship.

Teachers who have positive relationship with their pupils create classroom environment that enhances learning and meet pupils developmental, emotional, and educational needs. Children develop and learn to a large extent, as a function of their interactions with adults and peers. The quality of the interactions between adults and children is an important proximal context of children's learning and development. Several studies have found out that the way adults and children interact in the classroom is critical to children's language, literacy, cognitive, socio emotional and self-regulation development (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD] 2005; Hamre & Pianta, 2006; Split, Koomen, &Thijs, 2011). Teacher-pupil relationship can be defined as a shared understanding of acceptance, trust, respect, care and cooperation that emerged out of teachers' ongoing interactions with pupils. Ajaegbo and Ajaegbo (2014), defined teacher-pupil relationship as a situation in which a professionally trained teacher interacts with his or her pupils in a classroom to impart knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to bring about a desirable change in behavior. Teacher-pupil relationship should be positive, warm, supportive, symbiotic and goal-oriented. Apart from imparting knowledge and skills which is the primary aim of the teacher, human values such as respect, hard work, honesty, care, obedience among others should be inculcated through this relationship.

Researches have shown that teacher-pupil relationship has a significant influence on pupils learning and also a factor in raising pupils' academic success. Learning according to Ejiofor (2014), is a process of imbibing new ideas by an organism according to his/her ability which may or may not be noticed immediately in the behavior. However, in this context, learning is defined as a process of reconstructing previous knowledge in order to take in new knowledge, ideas, and skills through experience which may result to change in behavior of an individual. Effective learning generally means more knowledge generation (construction) with others (co-construction), and less independent knowledge acquisition (coverage). Effective learning can be defined as a

learning activity that takes place in a well prepared environment where teachers use appropriate teaching strategies to engage pupils in active construction of knowledge with others which promotes collaboration for learning and pupils taking responsibility of their learning. Watkins (2002), defined effective learning as an activity of construction, handled with (or in the context of) others driven by learner's agency in addition to monitoring and review of whether approaches and strategies are proving effective for the particular goals and context. Recently, many researchers and educators have given recent attention to the features of an effective learning environment. As postulated by Heick (2018), 10 characteristics of a highly effective learning environment includes: learners ask more questions than the teacher, questions are valued over answers, ideas come from divergent sources, a variety of learning models are used, classroom learning 'empties' into a connected community, learning is personalized by a variety of criteria, assessment is persistent, authentic, transparent and never punitive, the criteria for success is diverse, transparent, and co-created with students and families, learning habits are constantly modeled, and there are constant and creative opportunities for practice and growth. According to Kutt (2019), effective learning takes place in classrooms where teachers' strategies include: establishing and maintaining a good classroom ethos in which pupils are motivated to learn, planning, preparing and organizing lessons well, setting a good example and fostering good relationships with pupils, and having a high but attainable expectations of pupils. Effective learning is achievable where teacher relates positively to pupils.

Teachers have capabilities and skills to assist pupils develop to their full potentials and transform them to become useful individuals in the society at large. Howes and Ritchie (2002), provided teacher behaviours that promote positive relationships quality among teachers and pupils to include being positive, warm, sensitive and responsive. The teacher provides a sense of continuity or predictability throughout the day and teacher's words are kind and affirm the child. According to the authors, the teacher uses prompts to assist with transitions, active listening and validation of the pupil's feeling and experiences. Overall, the teacher appears genuinely interested and demonstrates a sense of caring through smiles, gestures and words of encouragement. As highlighted by Ajaegbo and Ajaegbo (2014), the following are conditions through which teacher-pupil relationships can be developed. Teacher's possession of admirable and acceptable qualities, conducive classroom environment, consideration of the needs and interests of pupils, skillful

handling of pupils' problems, effective communication mechanism, positive relationships with pupils' parents, evaluation of learning experiences, among others.

The relevance of teacher-pupil relationship in the learning environment cannot be undermined. It was evident in Spilt, Koomen and Thijs (2011), as a major factor affecting pupils' development, school engagement and academic motivation, and it forms the basis of the social context in which learning takes place. Pianta, Hamre and Allen (2012), asserted that through relationship and interactions in the classroom, relational, competence and relevance support are made available to pupils. Positive teacher-pupil relationships provide the foundation for successful adaptation to the social and academic environment for very young children at the onset of their formal education. Tyler and Boelter (2018), aptly observed that learners who think that their teacher is not cooperative towards them have low concentration in knowledge and are less participating in the learning environment. Seidl cited in Akhtar, Hussain, Afzal and Gilani (2019), posits that if pupils' relationships with their teachers are positive, they will be more involved and thus more interested about their learning. Conversely, Akhtar, et al opined that positive interactions foster learner's self-correction and social skills improvement and lower the level of behavior problems.

Positive relationships between teachers and pupils ultimately promote a sense of school belonging and encourage pupils to participate cooperatively in classroom activities and also influence pupils' relationship with peers (pupil-to-pupil acceptance) in the classroom. Positive teacher-pupil relationship has shown to be inevitable in the teaching-learning process as absence or abuse of it is detrimental to pupils learning and performance and therefore must be encouraged. The review of literature showed the teacher is at center of this relationship, if a teacher displays certain characteristics such as sensitivity, warmth, and effective behavior management techniques, there is evidence to suggest that this facilitates positive teacher-pupil relationships and in contrast, if a teacher lacks these characteristics, teacher-pupil relationships tend to be less positive. Against this backdrop therefore, the researchers intend to determine teacher-pupil relationship for effective learning in public primary schools in Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Academic success depends on a variety of factors and these factors can have a positive or negative effect on pupils' ability to stay motivated and succeed in school. Recent observation shows that there are poor learning outcomes in primary schools which increases as years go by yet teachers use diverse teaching methods to teach. If this situation is not remediated, the long term effect will bear on national development and set the upcoming generation backwards in the global scheme of events as well as the technological advancement. The poor teacher-pupil relationship may be a contributing factor to dwindling in standard of primary education. It therefore becomes crucial to investigate teacher-pupil relationship in order to foster effective learning in public primary schools in Orumba North LGA.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to determine the teacher-pupil relationship for effective learning in public primary schools in Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State. Specifically, the study intends to;

1. Determine ways teachers can use to foster positive teacher-pupil relationships.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study.

1. What ways can teachers use to foster positive teacher-pupil relationship?

Method

This study focused on ways teachers can foster positive teacher-pupil relationships in public primary schools in Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State. The study was guided by one research question. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised of 503 public primary school teachers in 53 public primary schools in Orumba North LGA. Proportionate stratified sampling was used in selecting 100 teachers from the population. Simple random sampling was used to select 20 schools. A 20 item structured questionnaire titled Teacher-Pupil Relationship Questionnaire (TPRQ) was used for data collection. A four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA)-4 points, Agree (A)-3 points, Disagree (D)-2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD)-1 point were used. The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts. A reliability co-efficient of 0.82 was obtained using

Cronbach Alpha. The data collected were analyzed using mean. The mean scores of 2.50 and above were regarded as agree while mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as disagree.

Result

Research Question 1: What ways can teachers use to foster positive teacher-pupil relationship?

Table 1: Teachers' Mean score responses on ways to foster positive teacher-pupil relationship.

S/N	TO BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH PUPILS TEACHERS MUST:	$\bar{X}$	DECISION
1	Give pupils listening ears	3.58	Agree
2	Use child-centered teaching strategy	3.58	Agree
3	Encourage pupils to ask questions in the class	3.67	Agree
4	Encourage pupils by reinforcing their good performances	3.84	Agree
5	Give individualized attention to pupils	3.33	Agree
6	Allow parents to be involved in their children's learning	3.70	Agree
7	Use effective communication mechanism	3.72	Agree
8	Consider the needs and interest of the pupils	3.32	Agree
9	Possess admirable and acceptable qualities like being kind and patient with pupils	3.75	Agree
10	Create safe, secure and caring learning environment	2.67	Agree
11	Encourage pupils to do home work	2.72	Agree
12	Encourage group work among pupils	3.69	Agree
13	Correct pupils' classwork errors with love	3.40	Agree
14	Give immediate feedback to pupils	3.36	Agree
15	Encourage pupils' free access to teacher	3.54	Agree
16	Handle pupils family problems confidentially	2.89	Agree
17	Be responsive in solving pupils' problem	3.31	Agree
18	Diversify teaching skills to meet individual pupil's need	3.54	Agree
19	Observe and assess pupils always	3.40	Agree
20	Give advice to pupils often	3.39	Agree

From the table 1 presented above, the respondents agreed to all the items so listed as the ways teachers can use to foster positive teacher-pupil relationship. This could be seen from the

mean scores of 3.58, 3.58, 3.67, 3.84, 3.33, 3.70, 3.72, 3.32, 3.75, 2.67, 2.72, 3.69, 3.40, 3.36, 3.54, 2.89, 3.31, 3.54, 3.40, and 3.39 which is above 2.50 set as the bench mark for agreement.

Discussion

Findings from table 1 revealed that giving pupils listening ears, using child-centered teaching strategy, encouraging pupils to ask questions in the class, encouraging pupils by reinforcing their good performances, giving individualized attention to pupils, allowing parents to be involved in their children's learning, using effective communication mechanism, considering the needs and interest of the pupils, possessing admirable and acceptable qualities like being kind and patient with pupils and creating safe, secure and caring learning environment among others are the ways teachers can use to foster positive teacher-pupil relationship. These findings collaborate the findings of Howes and Ritchie (2002) who enumerated the teacher's quality to be supportive, positive, warm, sensitive, responsive and active listen. These findings are also in line with that of Ajaegbo and Ajaegbo (2014), who posits that the necessary factors for effective teacher-pupil relationship include effective communication, addressing pupils' needs and interests, teacher effectiveness, cordial relationship with pupils' parents, handling pupils' problems among others.

Conclusion

The classroom environment performs an important role in maintaining pupils' curiosity and interests. Positive teacher-pupil relationship should be seen as crucial element in the learning environment. When pupils observe a sense of security, control and belongingness, they are more involved in learning with eagerness and strength. Creating a learning environment that promotes positive teacher-pupil relationship and healthy collaboration can make pupils focus and active learners. These relationships provide opportunities for peer interactions and also promotes holistic development of pupils.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers should depict good qualities, use child-centered approach and appropriate learning instructional materials in teaching these pupils in order to make learning meaningful, attractive and interesting to them.

2. Seminars and workshops should be frequently organized by state government for teachers to provide them with firsthand information on how to build and foster positive teacher-pupil relationship and the need to encourage the relationships.
3. All stakeholders in the educational system the teachers, educational managers, policy makers should give a priority attention to positive teacher-pupil relationship as it plays a pivotal role in the teaching and learning process.

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