

The Relationship between Primary School Teacher's Attitude to Work and Pupils' Academic Performance in Cross River State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

The study was aimed at investigating the relationship between primary school teacher's attitude to work and pupils' academic performance in cross river state, Nigeria. The research design adopted for this study was the Ex-post facto research design. The population of the study comprise sixty eight thousand two hundred and one (68,201) primary six pupils from nine hundred and ninety four (994) primary schools with a sample of five hundred (500) pupils. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire titled; Teachers Attitude to Work Questionnaire (TAWQ) which measured the variables used for the study (i.e. Teachers commitment, Teachers' punctuality to school and Teacher-pupil interaction). Achievement test was also developed to measure pupils' academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and Primary Science. Validation and reliability of the instruments was ascertained. The findings from the study revealed a significant relationship between the study's variables and pupils' academic performance in the subjects under study. It was recommended that, accommodation for teachers should be provided in the school compound as this would enable the teachers to be in school on time to begin instruction. Teachers should continue to have good inter-personal relationship with their pupils such as finding out about their academic progress. Such concern for pupils will capture their interest for study and as such enhance their performance.

Keywords: Teachers' attitude, punctuality to school, Teacher-pupil Interaction, Academic performance.

Introduction

The task of teaching in the Primary school is so demanding and pupils' learning in and out of the classroom is directly under the guidance of the teacher. In most cases, pupils' performance is determined by the attitude which teacher exhibit towards his or her job.

Attitude as defined by Ukpong (2000) refers to a state of personal line of action which may be exhibited overtly by actual choice. According to the author, attitude is classified into two; positive and negative. Positive attitude refers to favourable mental disposition which is directed to a target stimulus. It prepares one's mind and gives one the will-power towards responding to a target stimulus. Negative attitude on the other hand produces a dislike and aversion for the stimulus in question. For example, a teacher who enjoys good working relations and fair treatment at school is bound to develop positive attitude to work and pupils will follow suit. This attitude may lead to improved performance of pupils and attainment of educational goals. The reverse is the case if a teacher does not enjoy good working relations.

Naturally, primary school teachers demand that their salaries and other allowances be paid regularly and also enjoy promotion as at when due. But when this is lacking, dissatisfaction sets in and this may be expressed through such behavior as absenteeism, lateness to school, non-commitment to effective teaching and generally low productivity.

In this paper, teachers' attitude to work is examined in three dimensions thus: teachers' commitment, teachers' punctuality to school and teacher pupil interaction.

The classroom teacher is the sole manager of the teaching and learning process in a school. The teacher is thus responsible for the outcome of pupils learning. If a teacher must discharge his/her function effectively, he/she must be committed to his/her work. In other words, paramount in the teachers professional practices is the commitment to the growth need and adjustment of learners. It is therefore obligatory for teachers to ensure that pupils acquire desirable knowledge, values ideas concepts, principles and skills necessary for the overall growth, development and academic performance. The execution of such obligations according to Isangedighi (1998) is expressed in his/her teaching behavior and seriousness with which he/she handles his instructions.

Teaching as opined by Flanders (1970) and Isangedighi (1989) involves a reciprocal contact between the teacher and pupils. It covers the purpose dimension, the information dimension and the measurement and evaluation dimension. Commitment to quality teaching therefore is important for the teacher. Such a commitment takes into consideration the mastery of the subject matter, including the criteria for selection such as, validity, significance, ability, interest and learners abilities (Isangedighi, 1998). Effective teaching cannot be guaranteed without commitments to work and commitment to pupil's characteristics. Isangedighi (1998) further added that the teachers' knowledge of the learner's characteristics should cover the areas of talent, intelligence, skills, home background and their hereditary assets and liabilities. These factors according to Ezewu (1980) severally and interactively contribute to the child success or failure in school.

Aside from this, a teacher's commitment to work, by and large depends on the nature of his professional ethics. Okeke (1984) provided a list of principles that a committed teacher should imbibe. Among these principles are exemplariness in personal life, appropriate execution of contractual obligations, concern for learners' welfare, appropriate record keeping, professional co-operation with colleagues, avoidance of gossips and derogatory remarks etc. All these attributes of a committed teacher according to Isangedighi (1998) provide for professional image that is devoid of an air of humiliation, rejection and worthlessness. The air of personal pride, self-respect, bright appearance, habit of cleanliness, decent manner of dressing, polished language and polite attitude; constitute elements of

teachers' commitment that will promote an enviable image for the teacher, thereby bringing about high academic performance of pupils.

Teachers' punctuality to school is a vital factor or sub-variable of teachers attitude to work, which can affect academic performance of pupils. In other words, teachers who are always punctual to school can instill such attitude in pupils, and this can result in good academic performance of the pupils.

According to Alexander (2003), by the Guyana law, teachers are require to report for duty at least fifteen minutes before the start of lesson each day in order to prepare and to be ready to start work promptly. Unfortunately, some teachers do not always observe this. Alexander (2003) further maintained that, with respect to some schools, scores of pupils are tardy for a variety of frivolous reasons like, the unavailability of the right mini-bus, or waking up late, or running errands just before school. All these affect attendance rate of pupils to school. Therefore, when attendance rates of pupils are compared with punctuality rates of teachers, the author maintained that 63.5% of teaching-learning time is further reduced not quite imperceptibly. The two parties "scramble", at best, towards the end of the school year or near examination time to attempt to complete scheme of work or syllabus in order to compensate for time irretrievably lost. This results in poor performance of pupils and when the performance of pupils is assessed by external means like external examinations, the under achievement of pupils is seldom attributed to poor attendance and punctuality of teachers to work, since other reasons can be manufactured.

When teachers are absent or frequently come late to school, they deprive the learners the opportunity of experiencing full explanation of concepts. If the pupils are fortunate to have a particular lesson repeated, it might be an abbreviated version of the original lesson and at the expense of the later lessons, since teacher at this time will be in a hurry to cover up the syllabus so as to meet up with time. This situation according to Alexander (2003) results in under-achievement of pupils which may also lead to an increase in drop-out rate; thereby affecting negatively, parents' zeal to spend more money sending their children to school. The author further reiterated that, when a child's results at the end of five years are unsatisfactory, many parents feel that their money is wasted. In all of this, the author added that unacceptable attendance and punctuality rates by teachers to school can lead to poor pupils performance.

After a study of the implication of the above fact, it was concluded that there is need to take action to improve the existing unsatisfactory rate of teachers' punctuality to school. Alexander (2003) added that action should be taken on the one hand by parents, and on the other hand by schools and the departments of education. It was recommended that accurate records be kept of teachers' punctuality rate to school and reports should be promptly made at the end of the month. In the second place, it was firmly recommended that in cases where teachers' distance from school has a negative effect on pupils' performance, teacher should be placed in school nearer their homes.

According to Hazeltine (1999), there are several reasons why there may be a difference in the recording of lateness among teachers. Teachers are different. While, one may arrive school and quickly move into the classroom to get ready for the day's job, another may find all kinds of distractions on the way to school. Also, another may have more parents waiting to speak to him in the morning so that when they arrive school, it is later than 8:30 am. In all of this Hazaltine (1999) therefore advised that teachers should bear in mind that being punctual is a part of showing courtesy, which is a part of love, and a way people can express love and respect towards one another. The author also added that there are some differences in the way lateness is handled in school. Not only must teachers be on time in the morning, they must also be on time for each class during the day. With seven periods in a day and very specific time for each, the potential for disruption grows geometrically. Punctuality

therefore is an important life skill for the world of work, as it is not uncommon for teachers to be sent home or fired from work for showing up late always.

The interaction that exists in the classroom between the teacher and the pupils has a great role to play in influencing pupil's academic performance. Stressing the importance of good teacher-pupils relationship. Denga (1988) maintained that the teacher is a significant figure to all students. The way they copy what he says and what he is, shows that he can destroy and also build their characters. A friendly professional relationship with pupils according to Denga is capable of stimulating and motivating them to learn effectively. Knowing the needs of the individual children, establishing motivational relationship with them and being sensitive to their needs and problems is socially and psychologically healthy. On the other hand, an irritable, hostile sarcastic, autocratic, indifferent and impersonal teacher has poor inter-personal relationship with students and he's likely to scare them. These can dampen pupils' interest to learn thereby bring about poor academic performance.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between primary school teacher's attitude to work and pupils' academic performance in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study specifically seeks to find out if:

1. Attitude to work in terms of teachers' commitment relates to pupils, academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and Primary Science.
2. Attitude to work in terms of teachers' punctuality to school relates to pupils, academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and Primary Science.
3. Attitude to work in terms of teacher-pupils interaction relates to pupils, academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and Primary Science.

Research Questions

In order to carry out this study, the following research questions were asked:

- 1 To what extent does attitude to work in terms of teachers' commitment relates to pupils, academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and Primary Science.
- 2 How does attitude to work in terms of teachers' punctuality to school relate to pupils, academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and Primary Science.
- 3 To what extent does attitude to work in terms of teacher-pupils interaction relates to pupils, academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and Primary Science.

Hypotheses

The research questions stated earlier gave rise to the formulation of the following hypotheses:

- 1 Attitude to work in terms of teachers' commitment does not significantly relate to pupils' academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and Primary Science.
- 2 There is no significant relationship between attitude to work in terms of teachers' punctuality to school and pupils' academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and Primary Science.
- 3 Attitude to work in terms of teacher-pupils interaction does not significantly relate to pupils' academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and Primary Science.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was the Ex-post facto or causal comparative research design. The area of the study is Cross River State which is made up of eighteen Local Government Areas. The population of the study comprise seventeen thousand two hundred and twenty one (17,221) primary school teachers with sixty eight thousand two hundred and one (68,201) primary six pupils from nine hundred and ninety four (994) primary schools as at 2005/2006 academic year. These figures were obtained from the Cross River State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). Since the schools were stratified based on educational zones of Calabar, Ikom and Ogoja, proportionate stratified random sampling procedure was used.

The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire titled; Teachers Attitude to Work Questionnaire (TAWQ) which measured the variables used for the study (i.e. Teachers commitment, Teachers' punctuality to school and Teacher-pupil interaction).

Achievement test was also developed to measure pupils' academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and Primary Science. The instruments were validated and split half reliability coefficient was ascertained ranging from 0.68 to 0.75. The reliability coefficient for the three subjects was, 0.89 for English Language, 0.79 for Mathematics and 0.77 for primary Science. With this figures, the reliability of the instruments was ascertained.

Results and Discussions

After data collection and analysis, the following results were obtained:-

Hypothesis One

The first null hypothesis stated that attitude to work in terms to teacher's commitment does not significantly relate to pupil's academic performance in English language, Mathematics and primary Science.

To test this hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to determine the relationship between teacher's commitment and pupil's academic performance in the three subjects. The result is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between attitude to work in terms of teacher's commitment and pupil's academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and Primary Science, (N=500).

| Variables | X | SD | r |
|---|-------|------|-------|
| Attitude to work in terms of teacher's commitment (X) | 19.30 | 2.43 | |
| performance in English language (Y1) | 62.32 | 8.84 | .316* |
| Mathematics (Y2) | 42.28 | 7.29 | .192* |
| Primary Science (Y3) | 49.94 | 7.82 | .343* |

*Significant at .05; Critical $r=0.09$

The result of the analysis showed r-values of ($r=.316$; $p<.05$) for English Language, ($r=.192$; $p<.05$) for Mathematics and ($r=.343$; $p<.05$) for primary Science. These values were higher than the critical r-value of 0.09 at .05 level of significance with a degree of freedom of 498. This result was significant. The null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis retained. The implication of this is that attitude to work in terms of teachers' commitment significantly relate to pupils' academic performance in English language, Mathematics and Primary Science. In order words, the performance of pupils whether in English language, Mathematics and primary Science is dependent on the level of teacher's commitment to their job.

Hypothesis 2

This hypothesis stated that there is no significant relationship between Attitude to work in terms of teachers' punctuality to school and pupils' academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and Primary Science.

In order to test this hypothesis, the relationship between teachers' punctuality to school and pupils' performance in English language, Mathematics and Primary Science was determine, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between attitude to work in terms of teachers' punctuality to school and pupil's academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and primary Science, (N=500).

| Variables | X | SD | r |
|---|-------|------|-------|
| Attitude to work in terms of Teacher's level of commitment (X) | 19.33 | 6.03 | |
| Performance in English language (Y1) | 62.32 | 8.84 | .147* |
| Mathematics (Y2) | 42.28 | 7.29 | .161* |
| Primary Science (Y3) | 49.94 | 7.82 | .343* |

*Significant at .05; Critical $r=0.09$

The result showed a significant positive relationship between teachers' attitude to work in terms of teachers' punctuality to school and pupils' academic performance in English Language ($r=.147$; $p<.05$), Mathematics ($R=.161$; $p<.05$) and Primary Science ($r=.343$; $p<.05$)

From the result of the analysis, the r-values of .147 for English Language, .161 for Mathematics and .343 for Primary Science were found to be greater than the critical value of 0.09 at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom of 498. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and the alternate hypothesis retained.

The positive r-value means that, the higher the attitude to work in terms of teachers' punctuality to school, the higher the pupils' performance in English language, Mathematics, and primary Science. Conversely, the lower the teachers' punctuality to school the lower the pupils' performance in English language, mathematics, for Primary Science.

Hypothesis three

The null hypothesis speculated that attitude to work in terms of teachers-pupil relationship does not significantly relate to pupils' academic performance in English language, Mathematics and primary Science.

Using the Pearson product Moment Correlation Analysis, the relationship between teacher-pupil relationship pupils' academic performance in English language, Mathematics and primary Science was determined. The result is presented in Table 3

Table 3.

Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between attitude to work in terms of teacher-pupil relationship and pupil's academic performance in English Language, Mathematics and primary Science, (N=500)

| Variables | X | SD | r |
|--|-------|------|-------|
| Attitude to work in terms of teacher's level of commitment (X) | 19.39 | 1.60 | |
| Performance in English language (Y1) | 62.32 | 8.84 | .510* |
| Mathematics (Y2) | 42.28 | 7.29 | .321* |
| Primary Science (Y3) | 49.94 | 7.82 | .479* |

*Significant at .05; Critical $r=0.09$

The result of the finding showed r-values of .510, .321 and .479 for English language, Mathematics and Primary Science respectively. These values were higher than the critical r-values of 0.09 at a level of significance of 0.05 with a 498-degree of freedom. This result means that the higher the positive teacher-pupil relationship, the higher the pupils' academic performance in English language ($r=.510$; $p<.05$), Mathematics ($r=.321$; $p<.05$), and primary Science ($r=.479$; $p<.05$), while the lower the teacher-pupil relationship, the lower the pupils' academic performance in the three subjects. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and the alternate hypothesis retained.

Discussion of Research Findings

Teachers' level of commitment and pupils' academic performance

The findings of this hypothesis showed that attitude to work in terms of teachers' level of commitment has a significant relationship with pupils' academic performance in English language ($r=.316$; $p<.05$), Mathematics ($r=.192$; $p<.05$) and primary Science ($r=.343$; $p<.05$) (See Table)

This finding is in agreement with that of Mansarany (1987), who maintained that, effective teaching cannot be guaranteed without commitments to work and commitment in terms to pupils' characteristics. A teachers' level of commitment in terms of knowledge of the learners' characteristics according to Isangedighi 1998), should cover the area of talent, intelligence, skills, background and their hereditary assets and commitment to quality teaching. It is therefore important for teachers' to note that commitment takes into consideration the mastery of the subject matter.

The present finding is also in consonance with the finding of Essien (2004), who found out that the level of commitment of a teacher to his profession is significantly related to academic performance of students. The finding of this study in terms of teachers' level of commitment is also in agreement with the views of Esu, Enuokoha and Umoren (1998), who maintained that the vital ingredient in functional curriculum implementation is the teachers' professional commitment and, motivation. As a result, teachers' commitment to their work helps in the enhancement of the academic performance of pupils.

In the same vein, Okeke (1984), provided a list of principles that a committed teacher should imbibe. Among these principles are exemplariness in personal life, appropriate execution of contractual obligation, concern for learners' welfare, appropriate record keeping among others. All these attributes of a committed teacher have significant relation to academic performance and should be continually practiced.

The implication of the present finding is that attitude to work in terms of teachers' level of commitment relate to pupils' academic performance in English language, mathematics and primary Science. In order words, the performance of pupils whether in English language, Mathematics and Primary Science is dependent on the level of teachers' commitment to their job.

Teachers' punctuality to school and pupils' academic performance

The findings of this study revealed that there is a significant relationship between attitude to work in terms of teachers' punctuality to school and pupils' academic performance in English language. This findings supports the findings of Alexander (2003) who found out and reported that teachers who are frequently late to school deprive the learners the opportunity of experiencing full explanation of concept, which can affect their academic performance. Whereas, teachers who were always punctual to school instill such attitude in pupils and this significantly influence their academic performance positively. Alexander concluded that lack of teacher punctuality to school can lead to pupils' poor performance as well as increase drop-out rate of pupils from school; thus reducing parent's zeal to spend more money sending their children to school.

In another related findings, Hazeltine (1999), found a significant influence of teachers' punctuality to school on pupils' academic out-come. The researcher concluded that, being punctual to school as a teacher is a part of showing courtesy to the pupils, which is a way of expressing love and interest towards the pupils; and also a way of helping the pupil improve their academic performance.

The implication of the present findings is that, the higher the attitude to work in terms of teachers' punctuality to school, the higher the pupils will benefit from teaching which will be evident in their performance in English Language, Mathematics, and Primary Science. Conversely, the lower the teachers' punctuality to school the lower the pupils' performance in English Language, Mathematics, for Primary Science

Teacher-pupil interaction and pupils' academic performance

The findings of this hypothesis revealed that attitude to work in terms of teacher – pupil relationship significantly relate to pupils academic performance in English Language. By implication, this means that the better the relationship between the teacher and the pupils, the better the pupils academic performance. The finding of this hypothesis is in line with the finding of Aqua (1990), in a study on the influence of teacher-student relationship on academic performance of the gifted student. At the end of the study, the researcher found a significant influence of teacher-student relation on academic performance of the students.

The present study is also an affirmation of the study carried out by Reichie (1978), who studied twenty (20) pupils on a voluntary basis to find out their relationship with their

classroom teachers and how it affect their performance. It was concluded that pupils' relationship with teachers is very important to the learning process and the pupils' performances, and this was enhance when teachers were perceived as wanting to get acquainted with pupils' personally. In the same vein, Dale (1974) found out that a students' love for a particular teacher influences his love for the subject taught by that teacher. Conversely, when a student dislikes a teacher, he transfers the same dislike to the subject handled by the same teacher thereby resulting in poor performance in that subject. This suggests that the inter-personal relationship that exists in the school or classroom between the teacher and the pupil is very important as this could either make or mar the pupils' learning outcomes.

The finding also supports the findings of Acholonus (1991), who investigated the influence of teacher-student relation on the academic performance of student and discovered that a significant difference exists between the performances of student who related cordially with their teachers and those who did not. In other words, teachers who establish warm relationship with their pupils based on understanding; love and genuine concern for the academic success of the pupils create a learning environment that encourages pupils to achieve higher.

Suffice it to say that the relationship that exists between the teacher and the pupils in the classroom will directly affect the atmosphere that is created in the school. The teacher's personality can either help him to achieve his objective or deter him completely. For example, a teacher who is democratic is likely to foster creativity and this can bring about high academic outcome. The reverse is the case when a teacher is autocratic. In order that pupils' performance will be enhanced, Aqua (1990) advised that teachers should always have a friendly inter-personal relationship with pupils.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the attitude which teachers exhibit in school toward their work can affect the pupils' attitude towards their studies, thereby influencing their performance either negatively or positively.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. With regards to teachers punctuality to school, vehicle allowance should be given to teacher to enable them afford cars for themselves. Also, accommodation for teachers should be provided in the school compound. This would enable the teachers to be school on time to begin instruction.
2. Teachers should continue to have good inter-personal relationship with their pupils such as finding out about their academic progress. Such concern for pupils will capture their interest for study and as such enhance their performance.

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