



Human –Relations, Communications Skills and Teacher’s Job Performance in Federal Capital Territory Early Childhood Centers, Abuja, Nigeria

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Received January, 2019, Accepted Februarys, 2019, Published March, 2019

Abstract

The study examined the human relations and communications skills of the teacher and job performance in early childhood centres in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Six area councils were selected for the study. Purposive random sampling technique was used to select 75 centers, representing 100 percent of the population. Similarly seventy five head teachers served as respondents. NAEYC (1992) Guidelines for appropriate practice was adopted as the instrument for teacher’s performance standard, while human relations and communications skills of the teacher and job performance questionnaire (HRCSQ) and (TJPQ) was used to collect relevant data for the study. Mean scores and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation were used to analyze the data. Some of the major findings, among others, showed that 19 human relations and communication skills were required for effective implementation of early childhood education. Also, the teacher’s performances were to a great extent because of the skills. It was recommended that government should infuse a programme of teacher education in early childhood to enhance quality of education.

Key Words: Human relations and communication skills, teacher job performance, early childhood centres.

Introduction

The Teacher’s human relations and communication skills are imperative in bringing about effective implementation of education in Nigeria. Bennett (2010) explains that effective teachers are not only technically competent, but also creative in discharging their duties. They also combine good planning, organization, good decision-making technique, and possessing effective human relation and communication skills in relating to people (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). These requirements are also imperative in teachers’ job performance in early childhood education centres. It is therefore not surprising that the importance of early childhood education necessitated the establishment of Early Childhood Development (ECD) in Nigeria in 1987. This was through the efforts of UNICEF and Bernard van LEER, in partnership with Federal Government of Nigeria,

Human –Relations, Communications Skills and Teacher’s Job Performance in FCT.....

through the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), private sectors and NGOs. This partnership led to the establishment of national policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development in 2012. The policy provides the guidelines under which early childhood education operates. Furthermore, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2012) states in the National Policy on Education that, “Early childhood education is the care, protection, stimulation and learning promoted in children from age 0-5 years in a day care center, nursery or kindergarten.” Therefore, for effective implementation of this level of education, government directed:

- i. The setting and monitoring of minimum standards for Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) centers;
- ii. Establishing ECCE sections in public schools and encourage both community and private efforts in its provision based on set standards;
- iii. Making provisions in teacher education programmes for specialization in early childhood care and education, and retraining of teachers;
- iv. Ensuring that the curriculum of teacher education is oriented towards play method;
- v. Ensuring that ECCE Centers adopt the following caregiver-infant ratios-
 - a. Day Care Centre shall be 1:10;
 - b. Nursery and Kindergarten 1:25;
 - c. Ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the language of the immediate community; and to this end, will develop the orthography of more Nigerian languages; and produce textbooks, supplementary reads and other instructional materials in Nigerian languages.

These guidelines are meant to promote this level of education. However, for teachers to be able to perform on the job at this level of education, they must possess effective human relation and communication skills. To this end, Graham (2005) stated that teachers require knowledge, skills and attitudes to perform their duties appropriately, and these skills are the focus of this study (Oke, 2018).

Concept of Teachers' Human Relations and Communications Skills

The aim of teaching is to make pupils/students' learning possible. According to Queensland State Department of Education, Training and Employment (2012), teaching is a career that provides challenges, excitement, personal reward and a chance to encourage and support others to achieve their goals. The department affirms the personal qualities and skills of the teacher as: good at explaining subject matter; enjoy working with a wide range of people; enthusiasm; strong knowledge in particular subject areas; a good time manager; ability to work in a team as well as using your own initiative; ability to work under pressure; patience and possessing a good sense of humour; fair-minded; as well as coping well with change and challenge.

According to Sabitu and Balogun (2010), other important attributes of the teacher include knowledge of subject matter, communication ability, interest in the job and emotional stability of the teachers, which enable them to impart knowledge effectively to the pupils/students. More also, good teachers know that by listening to and working with colleagues, parents, other professionals and community members, they can inspire and help improve pupils' learning. This is the reason why Contreras (2016) explains that teachers should possess good communication skills; empathy; positive motivation; and the ability to deploy effective and positive body language. Furthermore, Great Teacher (2012) explains that a great teacher is the one a pupil or students remember and cherish for the rest of their lives. This is because such teachers often leave lasting impressions on the psyche of their pupils/students. This implies that a great teacher should possess the following attributes:

- i. Maintaining positive relations with students, staff and parents;
- ii. demonstrating willingness to share in school-related activities;
- iii. showing consideration in dealing with staff;
- iv. conducting all dealings with students, parents, staff, volunteers, etc. with tact, self-control, alertness and courtesy;
- v. encouraging open communication;
- vi. demonstrating an awareness of what their actions may have on those around them;

Human –Relations, Communications Skills and Teacher’s Job Performance in FCT.....

- vii. identifying, defining and attempting to resolve problems cooperatively with those involved; using of effective language when speaking and writing (avoid ‘you guys,’ ‘yeah’);
- viii. listening carefully and thoughtfully to students, staff members and parents;
- ix. being aware of mannerisms which distracts effective teaching;
- x. presenting ideas clearly and at the appropriate level for each audience; and
- xi. receiving requests and questions with an open mind (Great Teacher, 2012).

Noteworthy is the fact that the foundation in the educational life of the child is laid at the early years and how far the child could go educationally depends on how strong the foundation is. This means if a child is denied good education at the early stage; it is difficult for the child to fit appropriately into tertiary education later in life. The lesson here is that Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is very critical and sustains a child’s lifelong educational potential.

Concept of Teachers’ Job Performance

Teacher job performance as a concept has been linked to a number of factors. King (2007) explains that the concept could be viewed from both extrinsic and intrinsic angles. The emphasis is basically on demonstrating competence and use of social comparative standards for self-evaluation. Osmond (2009) affirms that teachers’ job performance to a large extent depends on the leadership of the school. This is why literature evidences show that leadership plays a vital role in influencing teachers’ performance (Pajares, 2002; King, 2007). King (2007) explains that:

Schools with performance goals are more extrinsically motivated, and primarily concerned with demonstrating their competence, and they are more likely to use social comparative standards to evaluate themselves against the performance of others engaged in the same tasks. However, performance orientation can be positive when it leads to a desire to out-perform others, or it can be negative when it leads to a desire to avoid failure and looking incompetent in front of others (p. 32).

Oniyama and Oniyama, (2005) buttressed the fact that motivation is imperative in teachers’ job performance. This explains why King, (2007) opined that schools with better organization and good

academic environment use that to motivate teachers' job performance. However three variables that further motivate teachers' job performance are good conditions of service, fringe benefits, and capacity building.

Models for Early Childhood Education

Beyond early childhood, there is a growing consensus about the methods and approaches which contribute to effective educational development, especially at the early childhood stage (Scottish Executive, 2005). There is therefore a wide range of theories on leadership (Nivala in Nivala and Hujala, 2002). Many of the authors writing in Nivala and Hujala, (2002) argued that leadership, change, collaboration and improvement will happen only if there is interaction between leaders and followers. The emphasis is on goal setting theory, which is geared towards mobilizing efforts, increasing persistence and then encouraging development strategies to achieve results.

Moreover, in directing attention, pupils tend to pay closer look at those attributes of the teacher that endears them to the teacher. This helps their development along the way. Prompting action on the other hand involves the measures of activities being carried out towards ensuring the realization of the goals set out from the outset. This explains the fact that the early childhood schools need to set out attainable objectives, with children's positive development as major goal, and then, the various steps that could ensure such attainment are pursued to its logical conclusion. Teachers are therefore expected to set standards and expectations for others to follow. As a matter of fact, the perceptions held regarding effective early childhood education lies within the characteristics and skills/competence of the teacher (Rodd, 2005). This is the reason why building relationships, shared decision-making and empowerment of others are seen as important characteristics of positive job performance (Scrivens in Nivala & Hujala, 2002).

There is no doubt that early childhood education is imperative for the effective development of a nation's educational system. This level of education has been experiencing numerous challenges in Nigeria. These challenges border on the human relations and communication skills of the teachers. However, this study on the human relation and communications skills of the teacher

Human –Relations, Communications Skills and Teacher’s Job Performance in FCT.....

and job performance in early childhood centres is therefore an attempt at examining how deploying the skills effectively could aid teachers’ job performance in early childhood education centres.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed at examining the human relation and communications skills of the teacher and the teacher’s job performance in early childhood centres in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja-Nigeria. Specifically, the aims of the study are to:

- i. examine the types of human relation and communication skills teachers possess in early childhood centres;
- ii. examine the extent at which teachers deploy these human relation and communication skills for effective job performance in early-childhood education centres.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What types of human relations and communication skills do teachers possess in early childhood centres?
2. To what extent do the teachers deploy these human relation and communication skills for effective job performance in early-childhood education centres?

Research Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant relationship between the human relation/communications skills of the teacher and job performance in early childhood centres.

Research Methodology

The study examined the human relations and communications skills of the teacher and job performance in early childhood centres in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Purposive random sampling technique was used to select 75 centers representing 65 percent of the population as sample size, which were sampled across the six area councils in FCT. The 75 teachers therefore served as respondents. Researcher-designed instruments tagged: “Human Relations and

Communications Skills of the Teacher and Job Performance Questionnaire (HCSTJPQ)", and the National Association of Young Children Educators' (NAEYC) (1992) Guidelines Development Appropriate Practice was adopted as the instrument for teacher's performance standard for the purpose of data collection. The instrument comprised two sections, having 35 item questions. Each section sought information on various types of teachers' human relations and communication skills, while section 2 sought information on teachers' performance based on National Association of Young Children Educators Performance bench mark titled: Teachers Effective Implementation Questionnaire (TEIDQ). The response categories were designed along two rating scales of great extent and low extent. Respondents were required to indicate their options regarding teachers' competence and possession of skills on the given rating scales.

The instrument was validated by experts in test and measurement in the University of Abuja. A pilot study was carried out with two early childhood centers outside the actual samples. The Pearson product correlation analysis was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. A reliability score of 0.67 was obtained, which was considered quite reliable. Seventy-five copies of the questionnaire were distributed. Data collected for the study were analyzed using frequencies, mean scores, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation.

Research Question1: Extent of teacher's possession of human relations and communication skills in early childhood centres?

Table 1 shows mean score of 2.9, which indicated that teachers were found to possess various human relations and communications skills. This can be observed in item 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25, in which they all exhibited both skills necessary to function effectively in early childhood centres. However, item 7, 10, 12, 14, 15, and 17, where the teachers exhibited low human relations and communication skills.

Table 1: Mean rating of the extent of teacher’s possession of human relations and communication skills (N=75)

S/N		Σ	Mean	Decision
1.	Maintaining positive relations with students, staff and parents	265	3.53	Great extent
2.	Demonstrating willingness to share in school-related activities.	254	3.38	Great extent
3.	Showing consideration in dealing with staff.	276	3.68	Great extent
4.	Conducting all dealings with students, parents, staff, volunteers, with tact, and elf-control.	277	3.70	Great extent
5.	Conducting all dealings with students, parents, staff, volunteers, with alertness and courtesy.	278	3.71	Great extent
6.	Encouraging open communication.	254	3.38	Great extent
7.	Demonstrating an awareness of what their actions may have on those around them.	167	2.22	Low extent
8.	Identifying, defining and attempting to resolve problems cooperatively with those involved using effective language when speaking and writing.	211	2.81	Great extent
9.	Listening carefully and thoughtfully to students, staff and parents.	258	3.44	Great extent
10.	Being aware of mannerisms which distract effective teaching.	163	2.18	Low extent
11.	Presenting ideas clearly and appropriately for each audience.	177	3.12	Great extent
12.	Receiving requests and questions with an open mind	159	2.12	Low extent
13.	Likes, respects, and values children	265	3.54	Great extent
14.	Takes risk and focus	166	2.22	Low extent
15.	Patient, dependable, reliable and caring individual	105	1.38	Low extent
16.	Is flexible and adapts well to the requirements of others	264	3.52	Great extent
17.	Maintain dignity and integrity	159	2.12	Low extent
18.	Openness and Firm	215	2.87	Great extent
19.	Confident of his ability	2.32	3.10	Great extent
20.	Sincere and straight forward	2.11	2.82	Great extent
21.	Fair and just to all his pupil	205	2.73	Great extent
22.	Sympathetic, kind and accommodating	269	3.59	Great extent
23.	Committed to his calling	197	2.62	Great extent
24.	Consistent in his behavior to all his pupils	218	2.91	Great extent
25.	Open minded in his relationship with his pupils and colleagues	187	2.50	Great extent
	Grand mean		72.43	
	Mean Score		2.90	Great extent

Research Question 2: To what extent do the teachers deploy these human relations and communication skills for effective job performance in early-childhood education centres?

Table 2 shows mean score of 2.97 of teachers’ performance standard, which is characterized as to a great extent, the implication of this is that teacher’s display of human relations and communication skill in the ECCE programs is rated to a very great extent. However, teachers’ performance in items 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34 and 35 were those duties teachers performed to the level of great extent. While in items 28 and 30 teachers performed to the level of low extent.

Table 2: Mean rating of the extent of Teachers’ Deployment of Human relations / Communication Skills for Job Performance, (N=75)

S/N		Σ	Mean	Decision
26.	Passion for children and teaching so as to positively influence their lives;	233	3.10	Great extent
27.	Clear objectives that could meet specific objectives of each class activity;	182	2.42	low extent
28.	Possess effective skills that can promote positive behaviors and needed change;	175	3.13	Great extent
29.	An engaging personality and teaching style that can hold students' attention always;	269	3.59	Great extent
30.	Possess high expectations of students and encourage them to always be at their best;	182	2.42	Low extent
31.	Possess good management skills and an overall sense of respect in the classroom;	218	2.91	Great extent
32.	Knowledgeable in curriculum and standards and ensuring they meet those standards.	165	2.61	Great extent
33.	Knowledgeable in subject matters to improve pupils’ academic development;	192	2.76	Great extent
34.	Strong rapport with students and establishes trusting relationships.	209	3.85	Great extent
35.	Good communication with parents and keeps them informed about their children, as well as making themselves available for phone calls, meetings, and emails.	179	2.89	Great extent
Grand total			2.97	Great extent

Research Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant relationship between the human relation/communications skills of the teacher and their job performance in early childhood centres.

Table 3: Relationship between Human Relation/Communications Skills of the Teacher and Job Performance

r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Df	Decision
.418	.000	73	Significant

**(P <0.05 level of significance*

Table 3 shows the results of the test of significant relationship between the human relation/communications skills of the teacher and teacher’s job performance in early childhood centres. The coefficient obtained was 0.418, with a p value = 0, which is less than the critical value at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that a significant relationship exists between the human relation/communications skills of the teacher and job performance in early childhood centres.

Discussion of findings

It was found in this study that the some human relations and communication skills possessed and exhibited by teachers in early childhood education centres, include: maintaining positive relations with students, staff and parents; demonstrating willingness to share in school-related

Human –Relations, Communications Skills and Teacher’s Job Performance in FCT.....

activities and showing consideration in dealing with staff. Others include conducting all dealings with students, parents, staff, volunteers, etc. with tact, self-control, alertness and courtesy, encouraging open communication, demonstrating an awareness of what their actions may have on those around them. Some other exhibited human relations and communication skills exhibited by ECCE teachers also include identifying, defining and attempting to resolve problems cooperatively with those involved, using of effective language when speaking and writing (avoid ‘you guys, ’ ‘yeah’), listening carefully and thoughtfully to students, staff members and parents. While others include being aware of mannerisms which distracts effective teaching, presenting ideas clearly and at the appropriate level for each audience, and receiving requests and questions with an open mind. This finding is in line with the earlier finding of Sabitu and Balogun (2010) and Great Teacher (2012) who found in their respective studies that there are positive human relations and communication skills a teacher should possess in order to be able to perform effectively on the job.

The finding also established that the performance of the teachers on the job based on the human relations and communication skills of the teacher is to a great extent an asset the school can have to bring about increased in pupils enrolment and development of the school and the school products under the tutelage of the teacher who has these positive human relations and communication skills. The skills tend to enhance their performance in such areas such as: strong knowledge of subject matter, being good at explaining subject matter, good time manager, passion for children and teaching so as to positively influence their lives; an engaging personality and teaching style that can hold students' attention always; possessing good management skills and an overall sense of respect in the classroom; strong rapport with students and establishing trusting relationships. This finding agrees with King (2007) and Osmond (2009) based on the fact that without these human relations and communication skills, a teacher could hardly function in the discharge of his or her duties.

Furthermore, the hypothesis tested shows that a significant relationship exists between the human relation/communications skills of the teacher and their job performance in early childhood centres. This very well agree with Contreras (2016) and Oniyama and Oniyama (2005) who were

able to prove from their studies that a relationship exists between human relations and communication skills and teachers' job performance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is reasonable to conclude that the effective use of human relation and communication skills could bring about effective implementation of early childhood education. These skills include maintaining positive relations with students, staff and parents; and demonstrating willingness to share in school-related activities. Other attributes of good human relations include showing consideration in dealing with staff, conducting all dealings with students, parents, staff, volunteers, etc. with tact, self-control, alertness and courtesy, encouraging open communication, demonstrating an awareness of what their actions may have on those around them. Others also include identifying, defining and attempting to resolve problems cooperatively with those involved, using of effective language when speaking and writing (avoid 'you guys, 'yeah') and listening carefully and thoughtfully to students, staff members and parents.

Recommendations:

Based on these findings, this paper recommends that: teachers need periodic training on human relations and communication skills in order to keep-pace with contemporary ways of dealing with pupils, colleagues and parents at the early childhood education centres.

There is also need for in-service training in childhood education for the teachers so as to be abreast with how best to handle children in childhood education centres. Finally the teachers need to develop individual strategies of reaching-out to the children so as to carry them along.

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