

## Enhancing positive teacher pupil relationships for quality learning outcomes in primary schools in Nigeria

<sup>1</sup> Bosah Ifeoma Patience, <sup>1</sup> Aleke Doris Ifeoma, <sup>2</sup> Asiegbu Emmanuel Chidubem

<sup>1</sup> Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

<sup>2</sup> Department of educational foundations and policy Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

### Abstract

The achievement of success in education depends on the level of warmth and supportive relationships the teachers create with and among the pupils. When there is a positive relationship between the teachers and the pupils, the expected quality learning outcomes on the part of the child will be possible, while the teacher will have job satisfaction. In other words, the quality of learning outcomes the child receives is dependent on the nature of teacher pupil relationships the teacher established. This is the challenge that faced this study which investigated how to enhance positive teacher-pupil relationships for quality learning outcomes in primary schools. The study used a descriptive survey research design. The sample population of the study comprised of 20 public primary schools and 20 teachers randomly selected. Questionnaire which was used for the collection of data was structured on a four points rating scale of strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and strongly disagree and was validated by 2 experts in department of early childhood and primary education and department of educational foundations both of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. One research question guided the study. The findings of the study showed that teachers accepted that for positive teacher pupil relationships to be enhanced in schools, the teachers must create an atmosphere of love and care, friendliness, trust, cooperation, motivation, effective communication among others. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended among others that the state government through the ministry of education should organise annually capacity building workshops and conferences for public primary school teachers in the state on the ways and need to encourage and sustain positive teacher pupil relationships in primary schools for quality learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** Relationship, teachers, primary, enhancing, performance and school.

### Introduction

Recently there seems to be a cry in media and from other sources that primary education is at present in an unfavorable learning condition due to poor learning environment and this invariably may have affected the learning outcomes of the pupils. Researchers have attributed such problems to some factors, constraints and challenges. Prominent among the constraints is teacher's characteristics. This is because learning is a social event, teachers must form emotionally and supportive relationship with the pupils to improve the pupils chances of achieving. The achievement of success in education depends on the level of warmth and supportive relationship the teachers creates with and among the pupils.

To properly address this issue of poor quality primary education in the country, the relationships teachers have with the pupils need to be examined and solutions on how to enhance such relationships be suggested. The more teachers know about their students, the better the rapport the teacher has with them and the more likely they are to benefit from the teacher's knowledge. To enhance positive pupils' learning outcomes, positive teacher pupil relationship consisting of a high level of warmth and low level of conflict has to be created. A teacher and a pupil who have the qualities of good communication, respect in a classroom and show interest in teaching from point of view of the teacher and learning from a child will establish a positive relationship in the classroom and this will enhance the learning of the pupils. The relationships between the teachers and the pupils serve as a connection between the two, which provides a better atmosphere for

learning. The more teachers relate with his or her pupils, the more likely they will be able to help the pupils learn at high level and accomplish faster.

By relationship, it meant interaction between individuals which can be expressed as friendship, affection, frequency of meeting, co-operation and open communication <sup>[1]</sup>. As observed by <sup>[2]</sup>, relationship can also be seen in activities like self-disclosure that can generate trust and love among people. In other words, relationship between people, usually follow a progression from non-intimate communication to deep unreserved self-disclosure. Relationships, whether positive or negative in nature have proven to have profound effects on quality of life.

The study carried out by <sup>[3]</sup>, found that well-being is directly tied to personal relationships. This well-being was accomplished specifically by providing love, intimacy, reassurance of worth, tangible assistance, guidance, physical support, a sense of belonging, having a sound board for emotional reactions and opinions, being able to say what you really think, providing opportunities to help others, and validation and support for the way we do things and interpret experience.

Relationships and interactions in the classroom are the media through which relational, competence and relevance support are made available to learners <sup>[4]</sup>. Conversely, <sup>[3]</sup> reported that the lack of high quality relationships resulted in negative effects including depression, anxiety and poor health in general.

### **Concept of quality learning**

The word quality has been used interchangeably with effectiveness, equity, and efficiency. Quality in the context of education includes according to [5] is learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities. It also includes environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender sensitive, and provides adequate resources and facilities.....process through which trained teachers use the teacher centered teaching approaches in well managed classrooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparity and finally it relates to outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes and are linked to national goals for education and productive participation in the society.

Learning can occur in anywhere under any situation but the positive learning outcomes generally desired by educators take place in quality learning environment. Such learning environment is made up of physical, psychological and service delivery tools. The quality of the learning environment such as school facilities, presence of adequate instructional materials, class size, peaceful, safe environment, teachers behaviour, school discipline, service delivery contribute to quality learning.

The environment, content and processes that learners encounter in schools lead to diverse results, some intended and others unintended. Quality learners' outcomes are universal expected effect of the educational system. They include what children know and can do, as well as the attitude and expectations they have for themselves and their society. Therefore quality learning should be considered to be a multifaceted construct that comprises different domains of learning.

### **Concept of teacher-pupil relationship (TPR)**

Teacher-pupil relationships are defined as caring and authentic relationships between teachers and the pupils. Teacher-pupil relationships were defined by [4] as emotions based experiences that emerge out of teacher's on-going interactions with their pupils. The relationship between a teacher and the pupils is that of understanding each other's requirements and coming to provisos with each other's expectations. Healthy relationships with teachers have imperative, constructive and enduring implications for pupils' intellectual and collective development [6].

The teacher-pupil relationship is one of the most powerful elements within the learning environment. It is a major factor affecting students' development, school engagement and academic motivation, and it forms the basis of the social context in which learning takes place [7],[8]. It was argued by [9] that pupils who have close, positive and supportive relationships with their teachers will attain higher levels of achievement than those pupils with more conflict relationships. In the same vein, Kohn [10] asserts that children are more likely to be respectful when important adults in their lives respect them. They are more likely to care about others if they know they are cared about. According to [11], positive teacher-pupils relationships are classified as having the presence of closeness, warmth and positivity.

Erikson's psychosocial theory of development considers the impact of external factors, social factors and society on personality development from childhood to adulthood. The

principal implications of Erikson's theory for primary education relates to the characteristics of stage four (Industry Vs. Inferiority). During this stage, children are capable of learning, creating and accomplishing numerous new skills and knowledge, thus developing a sense of industry. This is also a very social stage of development and if a child experiences unresolved feelings of inadequacy and inferiority among his peers, he can have serious problems in terms of competence and self-esteem.

This is also a time when the child is praised for the 'doing' for achievement. It is important to help the child feel that he can pursue a task and do it well. Where all these activities are approved and rewarded by the adults (teachers), the child will develop a sense of self-worth and will think positively. The child will participate in more activities which will enhance his development and academic outcomes.

### **Why teacher –pupil relationships?**

A sizable literature provides evidence that strong and supportive relationships between teachers and students are fundamental to the healthy development of all children in schools [12].

Healthy relationships with teachers have imperative, constructive and ending implications for students' intellectual and collective development [6]. 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. If a child feels a special connection to a teacher, experiences recurrent communication with a teacher, and receives more directions and extol than rejection from the teacher, then the child is likely to become more trustful of that teacher, show more engagement in the academic content presented, display better classroom behaviour, and achieve superior levels academically [6]. In addition [13] emphasised that a good learning environment occurs when children feel they can trust their teachers, and by his attitude the teacher shows willingness to help and guide the children. the type of relationship that should exist between teachers and pupils should be warm, close, positive and friendly so as to bring about effective transfer of learning among pupils [14]. With confidence on their teacher and a healthy classroom created, the pupils will learn better.

Positive teacher behaviours promoting positive relationship quality includes being positive, warm, sensitive, and responsive. The teacher provides a sense of continuity or predictability throughout the day and the teacher's words are kind and affirm the child. The teacher uses prompts to assist with transitions, active listening, and validation of the child's feelings and experiences. Overall, the teacher appears genuinely interested and demonstrates a sense of caring through similes, gestures, and words of encouragement.

**Statement of the problem:** Learning is a social event and teachers must form emotionally and supportive relationship with the pupils to improve the pupils chances of learning. The nature of the relationship created will determine the quality of learning pupils will have. This is the challenge that faced this study which examined how teachers can enhance positive teacher –pupil relationships for quality learning outcomes in primary schools. It is expected that the findings of the study will be significant to all the stakeholders in education. It will help the pupils and teachers to know how to create and sustain

positive teacher pupil relationships for quality learning among. To the school administrators, the findings of the study will expose to them the kind of expected behaviour and environment that would enhance positive teacher pupil relationship better learning in primary schools.

**Methodology**

This study which focused on how to enhance positive teacher pupil relationships for quality learning outcomes among primary schools pupils used descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised of all the 667 teachers in 43 public primary schools within Awka urban area. The sample of this study comprised of 20 public primary schools selected using random sampling technique from the 43 public primary schools. The proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select 20 teachers. The instrument for data collection was a 10 item questionnaire designed using likert four point scale of strongly agree (SA)-4points, Agree (A)-3 points, disagree (D)- 2 points and strongly disagree (SD)-1 point. The instrument was validated by 3 experts lecturers in department of early childhood and primary education, and department of educational foundations both of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. The reliability of the instrument which was tested in Idemili education zone yielded a reliability co-efficient value of 0.82 using cronbach alpha statistical tool. The research instrument was deemed valid and suitable for use. The data collated was analyzed using mean and a mean of 2.50 and above suggests that the instrument is accepted and a mean below 2.50 suggests rejection. One research question guided the study.

**Research question:** What are the views of teachers on how positive teacher pupil relationships should be enhanced to increase pupils’ quality learning outcome?

**Presentation of result**

**Table 1:** Mean scores of teachers’ responses on how positive teacher -pupil relationships should be enhanced to increase pupils’ quality learning outcomes in public primary schools in Awka urban area.

S/N	ITEMS	Cal X	Decision
	To enhance positive teacher pupil relationships, the teacher must create an atmosphere of:		
1	Love and care	3.35	Accepted
2	Willingness to help	3.32	Accepted
3	Security	3.58	Accepted
4	openness	3.62	Accepted
5	Guidance and support	3.53	Accepted
6	Friendliness	3.77	Accepted
7.	Motivation	3.22	Accepted
8.	Acceptance	3.03	Accepted
9.	Effective free communications	3.11	Accepted
10	Trust	3.00	Accepted

From the table presented above, the responses of the teachers towards the 10 items on how to enhance positive teacher – pupils relationships were accepted. This could be seen from the scores of the mean responses 3.35, 3.32, 3.58, 3.62, 3.53, 3.77, 3.22, 3.03, 3.11, 3.00.

**Discussion of the Findings**

The respondents agreed on all of the items that were meant to elicit their opinions on how to enhance positive teacher-pupil relationships for quality learning outcomes. This could be seen in the mean scores of their responses. They agreed that to enhance positive teacher pupil relationships, teacher must create an atmosphere of love and care, willingness to help the pupils, security for both, openness by the teacher, friendliness towards the pupils, creativity and exploration, trust, interaction, communication among others. The atmosphere must be supportive, receptive and warm. This aligned with assertion made by [11] that positive teacher-pupil relationships are classified as having the presence of closeness, warmth and positivity. This finding also agreed with the findings of [14] and [13] that the type of relationship that should exist between teachers and pupils should be warm, close, positive and friendly so as to bring about effective transfer of learning among pupils and that good learning environment occurs when children feel they can trust their teachers, and by his attitude the teacher shows willingness to help and guide the children. The findings of this study are also in tandem with the findings of [3] that well-being is directly tied to personal relationships. This well-being was accomplished specifically by providing love, intimacy, reassurance of worth, tangible assistance, guidance, physical support, a sense of belonging, having a sound board for emotional reactions and opinions, being able to say what you really think, providing opportunities to help others, and The researchers found out that teachers were fully aware of how to enhance positive teacher-pupil relationship in classrooms but the issue lies on implementation.

**Conclusion**

Through this study, it was discovered that to enhance positive teacher-pupil relationships for quality learning, the teachers must create a conducive learning environment characterised with love, care, openness on the side of both the pupils and teachers, friendliness, trust, security, effective and free communication and motivation. The researchers therefore concluded that for quality of primary education to improve in the state and in the country at large those vital attributes that promote positive teacher pupil relationships earlier discussed must be implemented in schools.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were given to enhance positive changes in the teaching-learning process. The state government through the ministry of education should annually organise capacity building workshops and conferences, for public primary school teachers in the state on the ways and need to establish positive teacher pupil relationships for quality learning outcome. This would help to provide teachers with up-to-date information on the ways to promote better academic achievement of the pupils. It is recommended that schools should occasionally organise teachers and pupils interactive sections. This would promote effective communication link between teachers and pupils. The state and local government should establish minimal staff transfer to encourage attachment and promote relationships.

## Reference

1. Clement JD. Nigeria student-teacher attitude to teaching as a care. *Journal of Educational Research*. 2004; 4(2):17-29.
2. Fabiyi AA. The Reciprocal nature of influence between leader subordinates. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 2005; 3(1):42-51.
3. Landford JE, Antonica TC, Akiyama H, Takahashi K. A quantitative and qualitative approach to social relationships and wellbeing in the United States and Japan. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*. 2005; 36(1):1-22.
4. Pianta RC, Hamre BK, Allen JP. Teacher- Student relationships and engagement: conceptualizing, measuring, and improving the capacity of classroom interactions. In S.L. Christenson (Ed.), *Handbook of student engagement* New York, NY: Guildford, 2012, 365-386.
5. UNICE, Curriculum report card. Working paper series. Education section programme division. new York, N Yauthor, 2010
6. Alvina C. A positive student-teacher relationship. Retrieved Jan, 25, 2015
7. from.deccaherald.com/content/389965/a-positive-
8. Hughes JN, Kwok O. Influence of student teacher and parent-teachers relationships on lower achieving readers' engagement and achievement in the primary grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 2007; 99(1):39-51.
9. Retrieved from [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2140005/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2140005/).
10. Split J, Koomen HM, Thijs J. Teacher wellbeing:the importance of teacher-student relationships'. *Educational Psychology review* 2011; 23(4):457-477.
11. Rim-Kaufma SE, Early DM, Cox MJ. Early behavioural attributes and teachers sensitivity as predictors of competent behaviour in the kindergarten classroom. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*. 2002; 23(4):45-470.
12. Kohn A. *Beyond discipline: from Compliance to community*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervisor and Curriculum Development, 1996.
13. Hamre BK, Pianta RC. Early teacher-child relationships and the trajectory of children's school outcomes through eighth grade. *Child Development* 2001; 72(2):625-638.
14. Hamre BK, Pianta RC. Student-Teacher relationships. In G.C, Bear K.M., Minke. (Eds), *Children Needs ill: Development, Prevention and Intervention*. National Association of School Psychologist Washington DC, 2006, 49-59.
15. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1562002227>.
16. Grant M. *School method with younger children* Ibadan. Evans brothers. Nigeria, 2006.
17. Ijaduola LO. A Survey of teacher-student relations in secondary schools in Ogun State. *African Research Review* 2007; 1(3):65-75.
18. Retrieved from [www.ajol.info/index.php/aferrev/article/view/41013](http://www.ajol.info/index.php/aferrev/article/view/41013).