

TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF OVER-SCHOOLING OF PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN BY PRIVATE PROVIDERS OF EDUCATION IN KWALI AREA COUNCIL OF THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY (FCT)

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Abstract

This study investigated Teachers perception of over-schooling of pre-primary school children by private providers of Education. The study adopted a survey research design. The population comprised Private schools in Kwali Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory. All the 18 private schools in the Area Council were used for the study. From each school, 5 teachers were randomly selected, making a total of 90 teachers. Thus, the sample comprised 90 respondents. Instrument for data collection was an adapted questionnaire consisting of 21 items, titled Pre-Primary Over-schooling questionnaire (PPOS Q). The questionnaire was adapted from Okonkwo (2014). Cronbach Alpha method was used to establish the internal consistency of the instrument and a reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. Each of the items in the questionnaire was assigned a 4 point modified Likert scale worded as: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree, weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The data collected were analyzed using frequency count, weighted mean and Standard Deviation computation. The findings revealed that Pre-primary children are over-schooled in academic work, over assignment and staying in school longer than necessary. It was also found that over-schooling children leads to depression, mental ill health and children dropout from school. It was recommended that the nation poly on education should be made available in schools, regular monitoring of pre-primary education should be enforced.

Keywords: Perception, Teachers, Private Providers of Education, Over-schooling, Pre-Primary Education

Introduction

In every modern society it is believed that education is the key to national development and there is a need to maintain every level of education especially at the pre-primary stage, because it is the bedrock upon which all

other educational levels build. Once a child misses that early stage it is usually difficult for the learner to get back to the basics. Pre-primary education is a common practice in most societies; pre-primary education make provision for early childhood education programs of various types for children below the official school age (usually 6 years) mainly to prepare them for the rigors of primary education and beyond. Pre-primary education is the education given to younger learners before the age of entering primary education (6 years). Early childhood education or pre-primary education is defined by the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) as education given in an educational setting for children aged 3 through 5 years in preparing their entry into primary school. It comprises the crèche/day care (0-2years), nursery/play group (3-5years) and kindergarten (5-6years). It consists of activities that facilitate a child's learning, growth and development. This level of education is important as it strengthens the child's self-esteem and provides positive learning experiences as well as opportunities to interact with peers in diverse ways. It has a strong and positive impact on further learning during the primary level and beyond. Pre-primary education is very important for the development of young children before they enter formal school (Kaul, Venita, 2002). It helps in cognitive development of children at the early grades of primary education and it has strong bearing on attendance and participation of children once they enter primary school (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Ministry of Primary and Mass Education Operational Framework for Pre-Primary Education March 2008). Pre-primary education is considered to be very important for the child as it is the first step towards entering the world of knowledge as well as a healthy and purposeful life. It helps children become more independent and confident as well as promoting the all-round development of the children (Ramchandran, Jandhyala, and Saihjee, 2003) Children who have been to pre-primary schools tend to learn more rapidly through an organized curriculum, learning aids and by interacting with other children. The main purpose of pre-primary education is to prepare children physically, emotionally, socially, mentally, affectively, morally, intellectually, creative abilities, among others for formal schooling and to prevent poor performance and early drop out. It also helps older children particularly girls, to attend their schools making them free from responsibility of sibling care. Therefore, early childhood education including pre-primary education is regarded as a necessary area of intervention for the success of primary education. Maduewesi cited in Okonkwo (2014) noted that pre-primary education is necessary as a lifelong source of developing interest and aspiration among young children.

In the current National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) early childhood education is labeled as pre-primary education and is defined as the education given in an educational institution to children aged three to five plus prior to their entering the primary school. As stated in the policy document, the purpose of pre-primary education includes, among others: (i) Providing a smooth transition from the home to the school; (ii) preparing the child for the primary level of education; (iii) providing adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work; (iv) inculcating in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, and the local environment, playing with toys, artistic and musical activities, etc. (v) teaching the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes forms, etc. through play, and (vi) inculcating social norms.

The document lists a number of measures to be taken by government to ensure the achievement of the objectives of pre-primary education. They include: (i) encouraging private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education; (ii) making provision in Teacher Training institutions for production of specialist teachers in pre-primary education; (iii) ensuring that the medium of instruction will be principally the mother-tongue or the language of the local community; (iv) ensuring that the main method of teaching in pre-primary institutions will be through play; (v) regulating and controlling the operation of pre-primary education, ensuring adequate training of staff and provision of essential equipment. In addition to these measures, appropriate levels of Government (State and Local) are required to establish and enforce educational laws that will ensure that established pre-primary schools are well-run, pre-primary teachers well qualified, and other appropriate academic infrastructure provided. Ministries of education are expected to ensure maintenance of high standards.

The official recognition given to pre-primary education in the National Policy on Education (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013) combined with a number of factors give rise to an unprecedented expansion in the provision of child care and pre-primary education institution or nursery schools in the country. Nearly all the pre-primary education in Nigeria is provided by private proprietors.

At the pre-primary level, children ought to be taught according to the provisions and guidelines of the National Policy on Education, (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013), which recommends teaching of rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, among others, through play. Therefore, this level of education is not academic- oriented, but a play level during which children are prepared through play, for actual schooling. It is

more of a social service, and custodian in nature. It may be integrated into a primary school or can stand alone.

In an attempt to show how effective their nursery schools are, the proprietors of some combined nursery and primary schools admit children at the age of two and allow them to transit to the primary section of such schools at the age of five or even four, both of which are below the official school-going age. This transition to primary education below the official entry age often receives a nod from those parents who wish to show how fast their children can progress through the educational system, and how intelligent they are resulting to an over-schooling of the children.

Over-schooling means undergoing and undertaking the act or process of being trained, being drilled, instructed, taught or educated far above or in excess of what is provided in the curriculum (Okonkwo, 2014). The concept of over-schooling is explained in terms of over-education which is defined as the phenomenon in which individuals feel burdened or oppressed by the weight of their education (Bishop 1995). Similarly, Leuven and Oosterbeek (2011) viewed over-schooling as the difference between a worker's attained or completed level of school and the level of schooling required for the job the worker holds. Over-schooling describes the extent to which an individual possesses a level of education in excess of that which is required for his particular job (McGuinness, 2006) cited in Nkang and Uwah, 2013). Over-schooling involves the process of educational mismatch, that is, when the attained educational level exceeds the required level (Ibe-bassey, 2012). An over-schooled individual is one who has schooled or been taught in a school, beyond the level expected of him/her or one who has spent number of years in excess of the number required or expected of him/her.

According to Hulbert (2010), over-schooling is the push to excel both in and outside the classroom. In his opinion, it is a means of pushing pupils to succeed, a form of vigorous self-discipline resulting in top performance with the end justifying the means. Supporting the idea, Etiubon (2012), Ibiam and Aleke (2012) view over-schooling as a strong push by overzealous parents to make children succeed in their academic pursuit at all costs, an act of making children consider themselves exceptional in academic standards and this actually puts children under enormous pressure in order to satisfy parents' yearnings. Also, some parents, as a result of their low economic status, make their children to jump to the next class without considering the child's capability to cope in the new class.

Over-schooling could also be explained in terms of the act of young children being taught more than usual or too much at school. When young children are exposed to excessive schooling without necessarily minding their

biological and chronological age and their level of readiness, they are said to be over-schooled (Ibiam and Aleke, 2012). Over-schooling at the pre-primary school is also seen from the angle of difficult, strenuous and large amount of homework given to children which do not match their development level and their chronological age. The concept of over-schooling can also be explained in terms of the length of time spent by children in school activities, involvement in school related and overloaded academic activities, which is detrimental to their overall development and also has negative influence on both children's academic performance and study skills.

Although the National Policy on Education provided a simple curriculum for pre-primary education level where little teaching is done through play, this is often not followed as the proprietors overload the curriculum to the point that these children are made to stay long in school. In addition, most teachers at this level do not have teaching experience and requisite qualifications. Consequently, they teach the children what is beyond their intellectual development by overloading, overtaking and overburdening them. They give children difficult and strenuous homework at the end of the stressful day. Most parents contribute to the problem of over-schooling as they tend to believe that the longer the children stay in school, the more they learn. As a result, they send their children to private schools where they stay long hours in school and also attend schools during the holidays, they want to push their children to move fast in order to meet up with the new trend. This amounts to over-schooling. Over-schooling at this level can be stressful to the children and in fact makes schooling to be very stressful. Children at this level are denied rest and play which are very necessary for their cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. They are simply exposed to information above and beyond their chronological age and developmental task. Overstimulation of the children's brain through over tutoring may be detrimental to their mental development and functioning. It is against this background that this study investigated the perception of private providers of education on over-schooling of children at the pre-primary education level in Kwali Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory. To guide this study, the following research questions were postulated:

- What is the level of Over-Schooling of Pre-Primary school children by Private Providers of education?
- What are the effects of over-schooling on the development of children at the pre-primary school level?

Methods

The study adopted a survey research design. The population comprised Private school teachers in Kwali Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory. All the 18 private schools in the Area Council were used for the study. From each school, 5 teachers were randomly selected, making a total of 90 teachers. Thus, the sample comprised 90 respondents. Instrument for data collection was an adapted questionnaire consisting of 21 items. The questionnaire was adapted from Okonkwo (2014). Cronbach Alpha method was used to establish the internal consistency of the instrument and a reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. Each of the items in the questionnaire was assigned a 4 point modified Likert scale of: Strongly Agree, Agree, Dis Agree, and Strongly Disagreed, weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The data collected were analyzed using frequency count, weighted mean and Standard Deviation computation. For mean values between 2.5 and above, it was regarded as high level of over-schooling.

Results

Table 1: Mean score of teachers' perception on the level of over-schooling of children of pre-primary education level in private schools

S/N	Items	Mean	StD
1	Teachers in pre-primary schools do more of teaching than activities.	3.42	0.72
2	There is too much focus on academic work rather than activities in private schools	2.53	1.21
3	Children are only taught the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours and form through play at this level of education.	2.35	1.05
4	Children are too young to do academic work in pre-primary school.	2.72	1.15
5	Private schools focus on achieving better outcome rather than getting children to love learning	2.86	1.13
6	Teachers of private school are aware of the stipulations of the national policy on the academic of pre-primary children.	3.32	0.70
7	Proprietors of schools and teachers should allow children to learn more academic work than home chores	2.46	0.91
8	Children at this level should be allowed to play more especially with toys in pre-primary schools.	3.47	0.89
9	Children at this level should not be given project work in pre-primary schools	2.53	1.21
10	Academic work is overloading, over tasking and overburdening pre-primary school children.	3.32	0.70

11	Most times, the academic work given to the children is too high for their age	2.59	0.93
12	Private schools gives pre-primary children too much assignment	2.53	0.70
13	Giving assignments to children at the pre-primary level is burdensome.	3.58	0.50
14	I give my children too much assignment to keep them busy in pre-primary schools.	3.39	0.73
15	Children do not need too much homework to succeed in life	3.09	0.84
16	Children do not learn good study Habits by doing too much assignments	3.39	0.73
17	The children are not too young to be kept long after school.	2.29	0.99
Grand Mean		2.93	

Data in table 1 showed that Teachers perceived that pre-primary school children in private schools are over-schooled in academic work. All the seventeen items that addressed the research question on this issue have mean scores above 2.5, except for items 3,7 and 17 which have mean scores less than 2.5. Although items 3, 7 and 17 have mean scores less than 2.5, the responses showed that the respondents agreed that pre-primary school children are taught more academic work rather than activities and play. With a grand mean of 2.93, this implied over-schooling. The respondents supported the fact that instruction at this level should be activity based.

Table 2: Mean score of Private School Teachers on their perception of the effects of over-schooling on the development of children at the pre-primary school level

S/N	Items	Mean	StD
1	Requiring too much from children makes anxious and depressed	2.52	1.08
2	Too much academic work can lead to too much comparison of kids	3.11	0.99
3	Over-schooling children will lead to mental illness in future	3.59	0.49
4	Over-schooling will lead to children drop out from school	2.84	1.12
Grand Mean		3.01	

Data presented in Table 2 revealed that teachers agreed that over-schooling will make children anxious, lead to too much comparison, mental illness, dropout of children from school with mean scores of 2.52, 3.11, 3.59 and 2.84 respectively and a grand mean of 3.01.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that children at the pre-primary level of education are over-schooled in academic subjects given to them. The teachers do more of teaching at the pre-primary school level than activities. The focus of teachers at this level is on academic work and achieving better learning outcome. This is a violation of the guidelines as provide by the National policy on Education which recommends that Children should only be taught the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours and forms through play at this level of education. Though the private schools are aware of this recommendation, they fail to comply. The academic work given to children at this level is sometimes too high for their age. The over involvement of children in academic work at this level implies over-schooling.

The result also revealed that pre-primary school children are over-schooled in terms of assignments given to them. Private school providers agreed that most of the assignment/ homework given to these children are too demanding for their age. These children get so tired after the long stay in school that doing assignments becomes a burden to them. This amounts to over-schooling. This finding agrees with that of Kralovec and Buell (2000), Bennett and Kalish (2006), who discovered that too much homework, harm children's health and family time. Similarly, Umobong et al (2012) noted that teachers in private schools do not seem to bother about the volume of homework they give to children at this age.

The result of the study revealed that pre-primary school children are kept in school longer than necessary. This amounts to over-schooling. Allowing children to spend extra hours will just amount to waste of the children's leisure hours since the children and the teachers are already too tired to be effective. The findings revealed that teachers agreed that over-schooling will make children anxious, lead to too much comparison, mental illness, depression and dropout of children from school. This corroborates the findings of Uganga (2012) who said that over-tutoring might lead to over stimulation of the learner's brain which could be detrimental to the learner's wellbeing. It could lead to nervous disorder, depression and insanity. Wendy (2011) also expressed fear over the problem of over schooling as he states that excessive tutoring could damage a child's intrinsic motivation and self-esteem.

Conclusion

Over-schooling is of deep concern in education delivery, particularly at the pre-primary level of education. Children at this foundational level of education are denied time for fun, leisure and the opportunity to develop their interest through interaction with nature. This denial at this foundation level can affect their adult life. Pre-primary school children are over-schooled by too much academic work, demanding assignments and by keeping them longer in school. Though. The National Policy on Education provided guideline for pre-primary education, there is a violation of the guideline which resulted to the over-schooling of children. Based on these, the following recommendations were made:

- The provision of the National Policy on Education should be adhered to by all private schools
- There should be regular monitoring of pre-primary education by government through the Federal ministry of education and NERDC to ensure compliance
- The curriculum for pre-primary education developed by NERDC should be utilized by private school operators
- There should be a generic guideline for the implementation of pre-primary education.

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