

CAREGIVER IN PROMOTING SOCIO-COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILD: PROS AND CONS

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Abstract

This paper on the roles of the care givers in promoting the socio-cognitive development of the pre-school child is an x-ray of the social & cognitive characteristics of the pre-primary school child. The various traits that could be exhibited by the children of that age range and which could help the caregiver to discover whether the child is adjusting socially and learning intellectually were discussed. A caregiver is not just anybody hence the authors consulted many experts and property defined who a caregiver is. FRN through NCCE sees a caregiver as somebody who is knowledgeable in early childhood care and education. He should possess such qualities as enthusiasm, kindness, gentleness and tolerance. Indeed, the roles of the caregiver in promoting the socio-cognitive development of pre-school child discussed in this paper include: helping to build the personality of the child, assisting to set the social and the intellectual tone of the class, he sets the role of the counselor to free the children tension, frustration, insecurity, fear and anxiety. The caregiver also assists the child to improve the teaching learning environment to enhance the social and cognitive development of the child. He encourages the children of the age to ask questions, explore and experiment. To enhance the socio-cognitive development of the pre-school child, some recommendations / suggestions were made, among which include: as soon as the child enters kindergarten, he should have professional guidance-counsellors to observe and guide him. Any trait of social and cognitive maladjustment should be reported to the guidance-counsellor without delay. The caregiver should tolerate the individual differences in the children of this age. The percentage of the child's personality is based on his socio-cognitive developmental level.

Keywords: Caregiver, Socio-cognitive, Development, Pre-school, Child, Pros and Cons

Introduction

Careful analysis of behaviour trends in the pre-school years of life, supplemented by later studies from Ilg and Ames of the Gesell's institutes of child behavior (2013) make it apparent that a rather distinctive sequence of behaviour stages seems to occur repeatedly as the child matures. The first cycle of behaviour occurs between one and five years of age. For long range view, here are the cycles of behaviour which could be discovered if somebody observes closely the behavior of the child pre-school years of age. Pre-school years constitute the focal points at which behaviour seems to be in good equilibrium, the child has relatively little difficulty within himself or with the world around him. Each of these relatively smooth and untroubled ages is followed by a brief period when behaviour appears to be very much broken up, disturbed and troubled and when the child shows himself to be in a marked disequilibrium. According to Ilg and Ames (2013), the smoothness of 3 years old behavior characteristically breaks up at four and 5-years-old behavior breaks up at six.

The stability and instability of pre-school child's behaviour have significant impacts from the caregiver. The stability of pre-school child's socio-cognitive development is faster and more reliable when a caregiver sincerely exhibits his training skills on the child. The socio-cognitive development of the pre-school child does not develop faster when the caregiver delays the use of pedagogical skills in his teaching process.

Who is a Caregiver?

At every level of education in the world, the person who transfers knowledge to the children has an official name. At the tertiary school levels they are called lecturers, at the secondary school levels they are tutors or teachers, at the primary school level, they are addressed as teachers while at the nursery school levels they are referred to as caregivers or teachers. According to Federal Republic of Nigeria (National Commission for Colleges of Education) (2012), the preprimary educators i.e the caregivers should be people who are knowledgeable in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).

Such people should be equipped for the task, hence the need to train them in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) to be able to handle the children effectively. FGN (2012) still further opines that caregivers of young children therefore, should possess such qualities as enthusiasm, kindness, gentleness and tolerance. In addition, they should possess academic and professional qualifications, Nigeria Certification in Education (NCE).

Socio-Cognitive Development of Pre-School Child

People are social beings and the homes, schools, churches/mosques, etc are social places that require young children and their parents, teachers, significant other and peers working together cooperatively to develop socially and cognitively. According to Eggen and Kauchak (2001) in Obinaju and Ibiam (2012), social development describes the advances young people make in their ability to interact and get along with other people. Understanding social development is important because increased understanding helps us to guide our children in their attempts to become effective social human beings.

Similarly, Hepach, Vaish and Tomasello (2012) stated that cognitive development is an important area of child development. It has gained the attention of developmental psychologists for ages. Cognition is commonly used to cover in such aspects as reasoning, remembering, perceiving, judging and imagining. The child's cognitive functioning therefore involves activities of the mind. According to Obinaju and Ibiam (2012)(ed) cognitive development is the way in which a child manages his/her thinking and talents to create sense of the world and what is occurring around him/her.

A typical pre-school child uses the word "yes" quite easily as he formerly used the word "No". He likes to give as well as take. He likes to share both objects and experiences. He expresses his cooperative, easy-going attitude towards life in general. According to Sprinthall. Sprinthall & Oja (1994), he tends to be in equilibrium with people and things around him. He no longer seems to be

doing things always the same way. Greater maturity has led him to feel much more secure in his relationships with others.

The pre-school child is no longer rigid, inflexible, domineering and grasping. Now, he enjoys doing things even with people. People are important to him. Ilg and Ames (1985), he likes to make friends and will often willingly give up a toy or a privilege in order to stay in good graces of some other persons. A pre-school child has increased ability and has fast developing interest in language helps him to be a delightful companion and interesting group member. His own vocabulary and ability to use the language has in most cases increased tremendously. His appreciation of the language of others has similarly increased. He can be entertained and can entertain others by the use language. Ezeala (2008) says that a pre-school child goes forward positively to meet each new adventure. He added to state that temporarily, at this stage, many children reach what most parents and teachers consider to be a delightful stage of equilibrium.

They feel secure within themselves. One major area of socio-cognitive development among this age bracket is playing. Play at this level is an important way for toddlers to try out new skills and imitate things from people around.

In furtherance to the socio-cognitive development of a pre-school child at this stage, Eisembera, Spinrad, Taylor and Liew (2017) opined that there is tremendous and marked change of insecurity, disequilibrium and uncoordination. Poor and new co-ordination may express itself in any or all fields of behaviour. It may express only temporarily and very lightly in some children but may be considerably longer period and more markedly in others.

Certain environmental factors may exaggerate it and in many cases caused by growth factors. Isangedighi (2007) said that a pre-school child show considerable insecurity and great demand for exclusive attention from his friends. He is a uncertain contributor to any social situation because he is very shy one minute and over boisterous the next minute. At this stage, while manipulating simple household objects such as empty cartons, papers, etc, they give themselves valuable lessons in counting and problem solving. They learn to think creatively. At this age, children move away from parallel play towards a much more interactive form of play with others. When they interact, they learn about co-operation and sharing. Little girls love to play mummy and babies while boys like to imitate daddy's action figures and cartoon stars. Role-playing is an important way for pre-scholars to attempt to understand the adult world. Most times, a pre-school child is out of bounds in almost everything and direction. He hits, kicks and throws stones. He loves to defy parental/teacher's commands. Ezeala (2008) says the pre-school child seems to thrive on being just a defiant as he can manage. Severe punishment may have little chastening effect on him. He is brashly over confident in his own abilities. He needs to be allowed to test himself out. Most times they are self-motivating than they were earlier. Wondertime (2011) observed that at this age most children enlarge their vocabulary from about 200 words to 2000 words. However, pre-school children are great discussers. They have surprising wealth of materials and experiences to draw on and seem to be prompted by an intellectual, philosophizing sort of interest. They are interested in details and they like to be shown things. Their play is sometimes wild and sometimes less wild they are better able to accept frustrations.

The child of this age shows interest in seeing several sides of the picture. He is aware of front and back, of inside and outside. He is intellectually improved better than the very early stages.

As the chronological year's passby, the child continues to mature and his socio-cognitive development also changes. Indeed, pre-school stage marks in many children, a time of extreme and delightful equilibrium. Gone is the out-of-bounds exuberance of the pre-schooler.

Gone are the uncertainty and unpredictability of pre-school child. Ilg & Ames (1985) said that 5 years old child tends to be more reliable, stable and well adjusted. He is friendly and not too demanding in his relationships with others. His mother is the centre of his world and he likes to be near her.

Ilg & Ames (1958) also observed that he likes to do things with and for her, likes to obey her commands. This is the stage Sigmund Freud regards as the Oedipus complex. At the Oedipus complex, the child competes with the parent of the same sex for the affection of the opposite sex. In the words of Piaget in Ikediashi, Iroegbu & Agugoesi (2014)(ed), the pre-school child (5 year old) belongs to the pre-operational

stage and therefore is egocentric, sees the world from his own standpoint. At this stage of pre-school age, the child is still unable to conserve; the child fails to understand that things remain the same (constant) despite changes in their appearances (how they look). He is satisfied with himself and others are satisfied with him.

The Role of Caregivers in Promoting Socio-Cognitive Development of the Pre-School Child.

In all respects, the caregiver/teacher is a helper. He helps in building up the child's personality such as his social and cognitive stability. According to Ajagi (1987) learning involves a child's personal experience with the environment and the texture, the learning environment created, depends substantially on the caregiver/teacher. Isangedighi (2007: 381) said that "the caregiver/teacher is one who sets the social and intellectual tone for the class". He plays the role of the counselor for his pupils and thus helps to free them from inner tension, frustration, insecurity, fear, anxiety and low self-concept. Through the caregiver's assistance, learners are able to interact with each other leading to the acceptance and understanding of self and

others. According to Bryan, Master, and Walton (2014), the caregiver knows that all the uncertainties, insecurity, inco-ordination mark the pre-school child, it will help him to keep from blaming various aspects of the environment for any or all of the different inco-ordinations. It will stimulate the caregiver to improve the teaching - learning environment. It can also help the caregiver develop the patience to show the child the extra affection and understanding which the child so desperately needs at this age for social and cognitive development.

According to Ezeala (2008), the teacher provides the child with learning opportunities, which enable the child to advance to the next developmental level. This means that the teacher/caregiver does not just provide the appropriate materials and equipment and let the child "get on with it" instead, the teacher is expected to achieve a proper balance between actively guiding and directing children's thinking patterns and providing opportunities for children to explore by themselves.

In the words of Chernyaks and Kushnir, T.(2013) the caregiver/teacher encourages the children to ask questions, experiment, explore and so on, looking for the reason behind the child's answers, particularly the child's mistake the caregiver's/teacher's role is also to encourage children to learn from each other, to hear from others views which can help break down egocentricism. The caregiver also encourages peer interaction which helps cognitive development, as well as social values.

Ezeala (2008) states that the caregiver/teacher is the guide in the child's process of discovery and the curriculum is adapted to each child's individual needs and intellectual level. Obinaju and Ibiam (2012) opined that teaching should be made informal as far as possible especially at the pre-school level in order to sustain the attention and interest of the pupils.

Piaget's theory implies that the child should be allowed reasonable freedom to express his views on issues and to act without undue external pressure. Teachers should not impose their ideas on the child but could reason with him.

Some Qualities / Traits of a Good Caregiver

Patience: Those who provide care to others especially pre-schooler need to be patient.

Compassion: When someone has compassion for the children and others, he has understanding of what the child is going through and how to help the child learn.

Attentiveness: He pays attention to the needs of the child in order to enhance learning. All the individual differences of the children have to be accommodated to enable all types of children to learn.

Dependability: Since the caregiver/teacher is now a foster parent to the child, he has to be dependable to both the pupils and parents. Indeed, he has to be reliable. He should show up to provide the care that the child needs and parents count on him.

Trustworthy: He has to be trustworthy in character and in learning. The child sees him as a significant other and relies on him for the future. Therefore, the caregiver should possess such trait that will make the child

lean on him. Caregivers are often in a position that will allow them to have access to the belongings of the child he is caring for. It is crucial that the caregiver be someone who will not breach that trust by taking advantage of the child he is caring for. **Selflessness:** He considers the child first before considering himself. He even protects the interest of the child even against his own interest. To him, the child matters most. The child's socio-cognitive development is paramount.

Suggestions/Recommendations

All aspects of the child needs direction and counseling. It is therefore recommended that it is no long safe to leave the child without counseling and direction until the adolescent age. As soon as the child enters the kindergarten he should have a professional counselor around him, to monitor his socio-cognitive development.

The caregiver/teachers should report without procrastination any maladjusted behaviour to the counselor who should commence immediate observation. The caregiver should be sure that any method adopted to teach the child, should be commensurate to his age. Play is therefore recommended for teaching-learning process at this age.

The child should be allowed to explore the environment, for effective learning participation. The caregiver should involve the parents in the teaching-learning process of the pre-school child.

The teaching - learning environment should be good enough to stimulate co-operation and enhance effective learning by the pupils.

The caregiver should tolerate the children's individual differences. Both the extroverts, ambiverts and introverts will be found in the class, they should therefore be blended by the teacher so that no group or child will over-shadow the other. Indeed, teaching-learning process should be inclusive to accommodate special needs children.

At this stage, the children are inquisitive, explorative, and interrogative. Do not clamp them down when these traits begin to manifest, rather the caregiver should guide them to explore the environment to their problems and manage for better socio-cognitive development. The caregiver should create learning centres/areas in the classroom where the other domains may be developed alongside socio-cognitive domain.

The caregiver/teacher should endeavour to make teaching as informal as possible. Use available local and foreign instructional materials to drive home and achieve the objectives of the lesson.

Summary and Conclusion

The study considered the role of caregivers in promoting the socio-cognitive development of the pre-school child. Growth and development of the pre-school child have different characteristics as seen in the paper. The caregiver described in this work as "somebody who is knowledgeable in Early Childhood Care and Education". Some qualities/traits of good caregiver is also treated in this paper.

The roles of caregivers in promoting the socio-cognitive development of pre-school pupils are comprehensively discussed. They among others include: the caregivers sets the social and intellectual tone of the class. He also assists the pupils in managing the environment that could affect their social and cognitive development. The caregiver/teacher develops the patience to show the child that extra affection and understanding which he desperately needs at this age for effective socio-cognitive development. Indeed, the caregiver/teacher provides the child with adequate learning opportunities which enable him to advance to the next development level. The caregiver places the child at the centre to enable him effectively learns from all the resources the caregiver may provide.

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