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Influence of Parents' Support on Pupils' Transition From Pre-Primary Schools to Lower Primary Schools In Jimeta, Adamawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study focused on the influence of parents' support for pupils' transition from pre-primary schools to lower primary schools. The focus was on Jimeta, a major city that is located in Adamawa state, Nigeria. UNICEF views parents' readiness and support as the extent to which parents understand the importance of education for their children. The article further states that parental support in areas such as direct participation in school activities academic encouragement and expectations for pupils' attainment had helped pupils to experience the positive transition to school. The researchers used descriptive survey research design to gather information from selected respondents. Descriptive survey research design was considered appropriate for this study because facts, opinions and authentic information about the current study would be obtained. Parents' Support was measured by actions parents undertake which included: feeding and emotional support such as playing with a child, parents helping with homework and siblings familiarizing children to the schools before their enrolment in primary one. The study revealed that parents who agreed that they fed their children before they go to school were 87.65%. Parents unanimously agreed that they provide the necessary school materials for their children (100%). However, some 12% of parents confessed that they do not provide food for their children to take to school. Besides, 55% of parents declared that they assist their children with their homework. Finally, 42% of the parents said they encourage their children to attend school. The study revealed that parents visited their children's schools to find out about their performance. It also showed that parents assisted their children with their homework. Although the study revealed that quite a number of parents attended Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings, some never attended but send a representative. The study concluded that parents' support had helped pupils to transit to formal schooling but it was not very smooth.

Key words: Parents' support, transition from pre-primary schools to lower primary schools

Introduction

The Nigeria National Policy on Education¹ referred to pre-primary education as the education given to children in an institution of learning between the ages of three to five years or plus before they join primary education. The purpose of the policy was to promote smooth transition from home to school and to prepare children for the primary level education. However, it has been observed that this objective has not been met because children are still facing rough transition and majority of them are being enrolled directly into primary education without attending pre-primary school as stated by the education policy.

Considering the fact that transition has been recognized as a very significant factor in children's academic life, Perry, Dockett & Petriwsky² argued that it is necessary to establish the state of pupils' transition from pre-primary to lower primary schools, which means that Nigeria is also on the fore front of it. The Universal Basic Education³ revealed that most Nigerian pupils are faced with challenges of settling down in schools due to rough transition. However, in a study conducted in Abuja by Elizabeth⁴ it revealed that pupils' transition rate in Abuja was affected by factors such as poverty, illiteracy, low funding, inadequate parental support and poor school facilities. According to her, the transition rate from 2009 to 2010 stood at 44.83% and 49.11% respectively.

A study carried out by Tahir Dhanarajan⁵ revealed that Adamawa State is one of the educationally backward States in Nigeria. The study carried out by Elizabeth⁴ shed some light on the situation of transition in Nigeria. The focus was on Abuja, a major city that has different socio-economic characteristics from Adamawa. Consequently, the findings from Elizabeth's study could not be generalized to the situation of transition in Adamawa State. Therefore it was necessary to carry out studies on pupils' transition in Adamawa State.

Parents' support refers to the attitude and concerns that parent display towards children's transition from pre-primary and lower primary schools. UNICEF⁶ views parents' readiness and support as the extent to which parents understand the importance of education for their children. The study carried out by Kornrich et al⁷ revealed that parents in East and South Asia were involved in transition activities such as walking with the child to school, participating in school outings, excursions, fieldtrips and attending school open days. This had helped pupils to experience smooth transition and better school performance.

Furthermore, a study conducted in China by Lau et al.⁸ revealed that parental support in areas such as direct participation in school activities, academic encouragement and expectations for pupils' attainment had helped pupils to experience positive transition to school. The study reiterates that pupils whose parents were not actively supportive in their children's transition had rough transition. This study aimed at establishing whether parents' support had a positive impact on pupils' transition to lower primary schools in Jimeta.

UNICEF⁶ further assessed areas on parents' support in the UK which included; parents' knowledge of school systems and their ability to form and foster relationships with school personnel; parents' attitude about their roles and responsibilities as partners in their children's development. In a similar study conducted in Germany by Seinfeld⁹ areas where parents' support was inevitable were outlined as love,

care, affection and attention. The study further reiterated that, when parents provide safe home to children, it resulted in positive communication and positive transition to school. The above study had shown that children from diverse countries who have developed strong bonding with their parents may not have difficulty in adjusting to the complexity of the school community. The current study focused on parents' support in Jimeta in order to gain more specific information on the kind of support they received from their parents which have helped in their successful transition.

A research carried out in the United States by UNICEF¹⁰ noted that readiness should not be mainly seen as a condition of the child but also of the families, schools and communities. Evans¹¹ in his study revealed that when parents engage in parental programmes, and participate in activities geared towards children's education, it is a manifestation of a readiness construct. The above studies show that in South and East Asia, the UK, Germany and the US, parental support was much practiced. Their support has helped pupils to transit smoothly to school. The study in Jimeta concentrated on areas such as emotional, academic and material support and consequences of the same.

In China, studies have revealed that there were relatively few parents who enrolled their children in rural schools, as a result of insufficient school facilities. It was found in the study that, most parents had interest to support children's transition from pre-primary schools to lower primary schools but lacked access to school facilities^{12 & 13}. In another related study in Jamaica, it was discovered that poverty in Jamaican families had been found to adversely affect children's health, intellectual capabilities, academic achievement and behaviour which caused poor transition¹⁴. According to Weitzman, families face difficulty in providing a stimulating environment that would allow children to experience smooth transition to primary school. Parents' willingness is very important to the holistic development of the child. The above studies revealed that parents were willing to support their children to have smooth transition but had challenges such as poverty, illiteracy, poor rural settings with poor school facilities. The current study was set to find out how parents had supported their children to have smooth transition in Jimeta.

A study conducted in Kenya by Begi¹⁵ reported that Parents do support their children's education by attending Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, helping their children with homework and providing school materials. It also revealed that Parents' support depended on the level of their education and income. Furthermore, findings from another study carried out by Carol¹⁶ revealed that in Zanzibar, Tanzania and Togo, parents whose children had participated in pre-primary school do participate in active roles in school programmes. The study revealed that as children move to primary school, parents are likely to interact more with teachers.

Parents are also likely to show interest in their children's progress in school and also collaborate with school management. Furthermore, their support is evident when they are involved in their children's education at home as well. The attitude which parents exhibit would motivate children to attend school. It was evident that children across Egypt and other sub-Saharan Africa countries had been given less support than it is required in fostering a good start in education⁶. UNICEF report also confirmed that limited resources had made children to miss school especially children from disadvantaged families, this means they do not even transit to school.

In the Nigerian perspective, studies on parents' support were outlined by Charles et al¹⁷ and Flaxman and Inger¹⁸. They include parents' participation in children's school programmes such as attending PTA meetings, serving as resource persons as well as volunteering to teach and tell stories. Another study done by Ibrahim and Jamil¹⁹ disclosed that many parents in Nigeria do not realize how supportive they can be in pupils' transition to lower primary school. Ibrahim et al.²⁰ further lamented that some practitioners, policy makers, head teachers and teachers do not know how to facilitate school programmes that could promote pupils' transition to lower primary schools.

In a report compiled by EDORON²¹, the findings revealed that parents' support is low in Adamawa State. The report further laments that although PTA and other education bodies like the schools management committees exist their participation in education matters was barely felt. Documents like the Universal Basic Education (UBE) and The National Policy on Education (NPE) highlighted the importance of parents and community participation in the pupils' education. Despite these efforts, most parents do not engage in school programmes in Jimeta.

From the literature reviewed, it was noted that parents in developed countries like United States of America support their children during transition to school. It further revealed that some parents are willing to support their children during transitioning to school but lacked opportunities due to factors such as poverty, inferiority complex, illiteracy and belief. The researchers felt there was need to find out how parents support children's smooth transitioning to lower primary schools in Jimeta, Nigeria. This was because studies conducted on transitioning have been focusing on lack of adequate support from government, education planners, head teachers and NGOs especially in the Sub-Saharan African countries. This study focused on the kind of support parents offered to their children in the study locale which has different population and characteristics from the other communities.

Methodology

The researcher used descriptive survey research design to gather information from selected respondents. Descriptive survey research design was considered appropriate for this study because facts, opinions and authentic information about the current study would be obtained. It also draws conclusions from facts discovered. Parents' Support was measured by actions parents undertake which included: emotional support such as playing with a child, parents and siblings familiarizing children to the schools prior to their enrolment in primary one; providing adequate feeding, clothing and provision of a friendly home environment; material support which entails the provision of school uniform, school bags, shoes and stationery; academic support which includes helping children with homework, reading books, storytelling and discussing school matters with them regularly.

Series of interviews were conducted by the researchers with some of the parents in the respective sampled schools. The interview schedule was found to be appropriate as it made it possible to obtain the data required to meet the specific objectives of the study. This was possible as the instrument gave room for probing. Those parents who could not read and write were assisted by interpreters to record their views. Other parents who could not be available for the face to face interview were given the interview

schedule to fill at home. The interviews were based on the support that parents offered to their children which included; ensuring pupils' comfort, provision of school materials, provision of food to school, encouraging the children to attend school and visiting children's schools. The researchers also asked if parents helped their children with their homework. They further sought to find out if parents attend to pupils' needs and requests. Most of the respondents gave positive responses.

Findings

The general objective sought the influence of parents' support on pupils' transition from pre-primary schools to lower primary schools in Jimeta metropolis, Adamawa State, Nigeria. The results of the analysis of teachers' responses on parents' support and pupils' transition was obtained from the teachers' questionnaire and are presented in Table 4.7. To have a clear picture of parents' support and pupils' transition, the mean scores were calculated and table 4.8 presents the results.

Table 4.7: Parents' Support on Pupils' Transition

S/n	Items	Parents		Teachers	
		Fx	%	Fx	%
1.	Provision of food	213	87.65	30	12.35
2.	Provision of school materials	243	100.00	0	0.00
3.	Encouragement to participate in school activities	102	41.98	141	58.02
4.	Visitation to their schools	191	78.60	52	21.40
5.	Attending to their homework	134	55.14	109	44.86
6.	Attending PTA	158	65.02	85	34.98

The results on Table 4.7 show that parents who agreed that they fed their children before they go to school were 87.65%. The study revealed that all the parents unanimously agreed that they provide the necessary school materials for their children (100%). However, some parents said that they encourage their children to concentrate on school activities (41.98%). The parents that said they visited their children at school to find out about their performance were 78.6%, while 55.14% of the sampled parents indicated that they assisted their children with their homework and 65.02% of the parents confessed that they attend Parent Teachers Association meetings. However, some 12% of parents confessed that they did not provide food for their children to take to school. Finally, 42% of the parents said they encourage their children to attend school.

Table 4.8: Mean Scores on Parents' Support and Pupils' Transition

School	Parents Support	Transition
A	2.60	1.98
B	2.70	2.03
C	2.46	1.80
D	2.38	1.87
E	2.52	1.85
F	2.78	2.12
G	2.48	1.63
H	2.80	2.27
I	2.52	1.83
J	2.77	2.08
K	2.07	1.70
L	2.55	1.90
M	2.65	2.02
N	2.80	2.20
O	2.58	1.90
P	2.64	1.98
Q	2.60	1.93
R	2.33	1.70
Overall mean score	2.56(SD=0.19)	1.93(SD=0.17)

The results in Table 4.8 indicate that parents' support recorded an overall mean score of 2.56(SD=0.19) while transition had an overall mean score of 1.93(SD=0.17). The mean scores in parents' support show that parents' support was above average and pupils' transition was below average signify that there is a correlation between the two variables. It shows that if parents provide adequate support, transition will be very smooth. In this instance, parents' support was above average and transition rate was below average.

The current study findings agreed with that of Scott and Sylva²² on the influence of parental support on pupils' early education. It was discovered that most parents provided basic school materials for their children even when they were too busy to visit them in schools. This finding agreed with that of Pianta, et al.²³ who conducted a study on influence of collaboration between families and schools on kindergarten transition and found that parents ensured that their children were well fed before and after school.

The findings in this study also agreed with findings from a study conducted by Desforjes & Alberto²⁴ on the effectiveness of parents' role in school activities. It revealed that parents' support yielded positive results on pupils' transition. It is imperative to note that the support parents' offer to their children on the aspect of provision of school materials as well as feeding may be connected to the fact that most parents

who enrolled their children in the pre-primary school in Jimeta metropolis were educationally and economically stable.

The study disagreed with the findings of Kornrich⁷ that parents in East and South Asia were involved in transition activities such as walking with children to school, outings, excursion, attending open days and PTA meetings. Findings in Jimeta indicated that most parents were not so keen about such activities. This no doubt could be one of the reasons that many children in the public schools in Jimeta had rough transition to school. Findings of this study disagreed with the findings of Begi¹⁵ whose study revealed that parents helped their children with their homework and attending PTA meetings. In Jimeta, most of the parents complained of lack of adequate information about school programmes and time.

Most parents in Jimeta delegated some responsibilities to the uncles or aunties to their children to attend such occasions on their behalf. These findings further disagreed with that of Carol¹⁶ whose findings revealed that parents in Zambia, Tanzania and Togo participated and interacted more with teachers as such the level of parents' interest on their children's transition had a significant impact on pupils' transition. In Jimeta most parents do not visit their children's schools. They always have reasons to support their failure in the active participation towards their children's transition as presented by one of the parents.

I encourage my child to go to school every day because sometimes going to school feels discouraging. You know children need to be reminded on a daily bases that education is good. So as a parent I give examples of people who have excelled in life to encourage him. I also encourage him by buying some gifts and making good promises to him. (Parent 4)

It was established from the interview that parents play an important role in helping their children during transition. The way parents encourage their children on the importance of education is a good indication that parents care and support their children's education which in turn enhance smooth transition²⁵. Other studies have also revealed the important role that parents played in encouraging the child for example, participating in children's open day, games and cultural day²⁶. As provided by another parent.

I regularly visit my child's school when the school invites parents. I don't just go there on my own. For example I go there during open – day, graduation day and sport days. But for me to just go there to check on my child's performance, I don't, except when I am invited to come to the school. Sometimes I forget that my child is in school because of the nature of my job. (Parent 5)

It was established from the interview with the parents that parents are willing to support their children but because of the nature of their jobs, they are not actively involved. A study conducted by Chan²⁷ revealed that parents in China focused more on pupils' academics rather than personal skills. An empirical study conducted by Lau²⁸ revealed that parents who actively participated in their children's academics have encouraged the children and have themselves become more aware of transition programmes which enhanced smooth transition. The visit parents made helped in boosting pupils'

morally which subsequently made them to work hard to obtain good grades. One parent had stated the following;

I am an illiterate mother. I have not attained much in education but I make sure my child does his homework. I look for somebody close that can read and explain what the home work is all about. (Parent 6)

It was also established from the interview that a lot of parents do not have enough time for their children. Some parents share the responsibility but most often, the fathers are not there to assist. Helping children with homework is a source of concern to parents who are not literate.

A study conducted by Rushton²⁹ has established that parents are very much engaged as such they involved other siblings or any responsible relative in the house to help the younger children with their homework. In a descriptive study carried out by Cranes et al.³⁰ it revealed that the common reported challenges during transition involve fear of new environment and homework. It is clearly understood from the above findings that pupils are scared of much work and less play. Nevertheless, to some parents helping children was not a big deal but to some it was a challenge as pupils may get frustrated if left on their own. It was observed by the researchers that a lot of parents were committed to their children's education because they participated fully in supporting them. It was also observed that parents take their children to and from school every day. This has motivated the pupils to want to attend school, develop interest and feel happy about school.

Summary

On parents' support, the findings revealed that 87.65 of the parents said they feed their children before they go to school. All the parents responded positively as to whether they provided all the school materials that the children needed. Some parents testified that they encourage their children to concentrate on school activities while some said they visited their children's schools to find out about their performance. Findings also revealed that some parents confessed that they do not always provide food for their children indicating 12%. The study also established that parents' support recorded an overall mean score of 2.56 and SD of 0.19 while transition had an overall mean score of 1.93 and SD of 0.17. This meant that the mean scores in parents' support showed that parents' support was above average and pupils' transition was below average. This means that there is a correlation between the two variables. Findings further revealed that if parents provide adequate support to children, transition will be very smooth. In these findings, parents' support was above average and transition was below average.

Conclusion

Based on the fact that parents were able to provide school materials for their children and encouraged their children to concentrate on school activities are signs of good support. The study revealed that parents visited their children's schools to find out about their performance. It also showed that parents assisted their children with their homework even if they sort support from the other siblings or close relatives. Although the study revealed that quite a number of parents attended PTA meetings, some never attended but sent a representative. For instant, very few parents confessed that they do not provide

food for their children to take to school on a regular bases. Few parents also indicated that they encouraged their children to attend school. The study concluded that parents' support had helped pupils to transit to school but it was not very smooth.

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