

TEACHERS' CHARACTERISTIC ON MOTIVATION OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN LEARNING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN STAREHE DISTRICT IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out the influence of teachers' characteristic on motivation of pre-school children in learning the English language in Nairobi County. The study adopted a descriptive survey design that employed quantitative and qualitative approaches. Questionnaires, interviews and observations were used to collect data from teachers, head teachers and pre-school children. Data was analyzed by the use of percentages and frequencies. The findings were presented in charts, tables and discussions. The study revealed that teachers who have long experience in teaching motivate pre-school children better than those who have just graduated from colleges. The study also established that teachers, head teachers and parents provide learning materials for learning and this contributes to the positive attitude that they have towards motivation of pre-school children. The study concluded that there is a need to have regular in service training for the pre-school teachers for them to learn new teaching methodologies.

KEYWORDS: English Language, Characteristics, Motivation, Pre-School

INTRODUCTION

The role of pre-school teachers in the development of children is very vital as they provide early childhood care and education through a variety of teaching strategies. The teachers plan and implement a curriculum that covers various areas of child's development such as, motor skills, social skills, emotional development and language development. They introduce children to reading, writing, vocabulary expansion and creative arts. Pre-school children learn through play, discovery and exploitation. Therefore, pre-school teachers capitalize on children's play for development of vocabulary and sentence structure. They use stories, poems, dramatic play, games, news telling, picture reading and so forth.

In order to motivate children successfully, the pre-school teachers should be experienced in their profession and have a positive attitude towards teaching. They should also appreciate and respond to individual and cultural differences of the children in order to encourage the children to learn. The teachers should be organized, dependable, patient, creative, and should employ multicultural methods of teaching. They should co-operate and communicate effectively with other teachers, support staff, parents and members of the community in order to create a warm learning atmosphere for the children. Farnham and Greenwald (1999) assert that teacher's characteristics such as academic and professional qualifications have a great influence on the ways he motivates the pre-school children in achieving the expected interest, completion of language activities, neatness in class work and active participation in the language lesson.

Teachers' Experience and Attitudes on Motivation of Pre-School Children in Learning the English Language

An experienced teacher understands the psychological needs of the children such as love, friendship and intimacy which help motivate children in the learning of all the language activities. Children need to feel that their teacher loves them as individuals and is genuinely concerned about their well being. Teaching experience can be useful in learning as the teacher selects appropriate strategies and learning resources for instructions. Howes (1997) and Haushe (2001) explain that an experienced teacher has gained a variety of teaching as he has interacted with many children and materials for teaching at different stages. This experience may entail classroom practices that the teacher employs. These include ways in which he interacts with the children and the teaching strategies he uses to accomplish specific learning tasks. The practice may involve the use of instructional materials, verbal and non-verbal communication, performance provision of intellectual challenges and allowing the children to explain what they are learning.

In addition, teachers' attitude is also an important factor in determining the level of performance of the pre-school children. For example, if the teachers' attitude towards the teaching of English is negative it will affect the children's learning and their performance in English. This happens because the teacher is not enthusiastic in the delivery of the content. Mwangi (1986), Greenwald (1999) and Alvidrez (1999) opine that there is a relationship between teacher's attitude towards English and learners' performance in the language. Children who are taught by teachers with a negative attitude towards English perform poorly than those taught by teachers with a positive attitude. When children observe that the teacher is not interested in the subject, they also lose interest and feel attracted to the subject the teacher enjoys teaching.

A study by Addie (1999) and Bell (1978) revealed that the teachers' attitudes towards English had a significant relationship to the years of experience. Teachers with more than five years of teaching experience had a positive attitude towards English than teachers with less than five years of teaching experience. Oketch (1986) and Aiken (1970) explain that teachers attitude towards English is reflected in children's performance because children tend to follow what their teachers love most. The teacher's positive attitude towards English makes the children participate in the activities effectively and thus achieve good grades. That means that teachers who value their subject and spend time preparing for teaching create a powerful influence on the motivation of children.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey design which used a fixed mixed method approach to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Stratified sampling technique was used to select participants from schools. The participants comprised pre-school teachers, head teachers and 300 pre-school children. The instruments used for data collection included questionnaires, interviews and observation schedule. Data was analyzed in percentages and frequencies and were presented in charts, tables, and discussions.

Interpretation and Discussion of the Findings

The general objective of the study was to establish the teacher characteristics on the motivation of the pre-school children in learning the English language in Nairobi County. The specific objectives were as follows:

- Establish the impact of teachers' experience on motivation of pre-school children in learning the English language.

- Examine the influence of teachers' level of education on the motivation of pre-school children in learning the English language.
- Determine the influence of teachers' attitude on motivation of pre-school children in learning the English language.

Data was discussed as per each objective.

The first objective sought to establish the impact of teachers' experience on motivation of pre-school children in learning the English language. The findings are presented in figures 1 and 2.

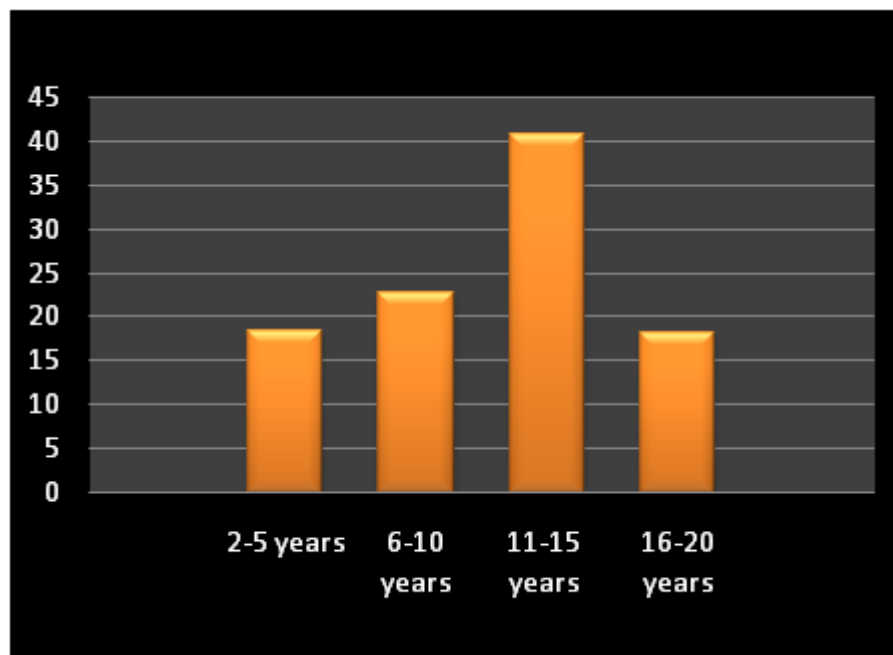


Figure 1: Teachers' Experience in Teaching

The analysis presented in Figure 1 shows that some teachers have between 11-15 years 9 (40.9%) of teaching experience. Those between 6-10 years of teaching experience were 5 (22.7%), while those between 2-5 years were 4 (18.2%), and 16-20 years of teaching experience were 4 (18.2%). The number of years in the profession indicates a good command of the challenges of teaching the English language as the teacher keeps on adjusting the instructional methods according to the need and the level of the students' understanding. This is in line with findings by Bell (1978) who said that teaching experience can be useful in teaching to motivate learners by ensuring that the teacher selects appropriate mode of instructions.

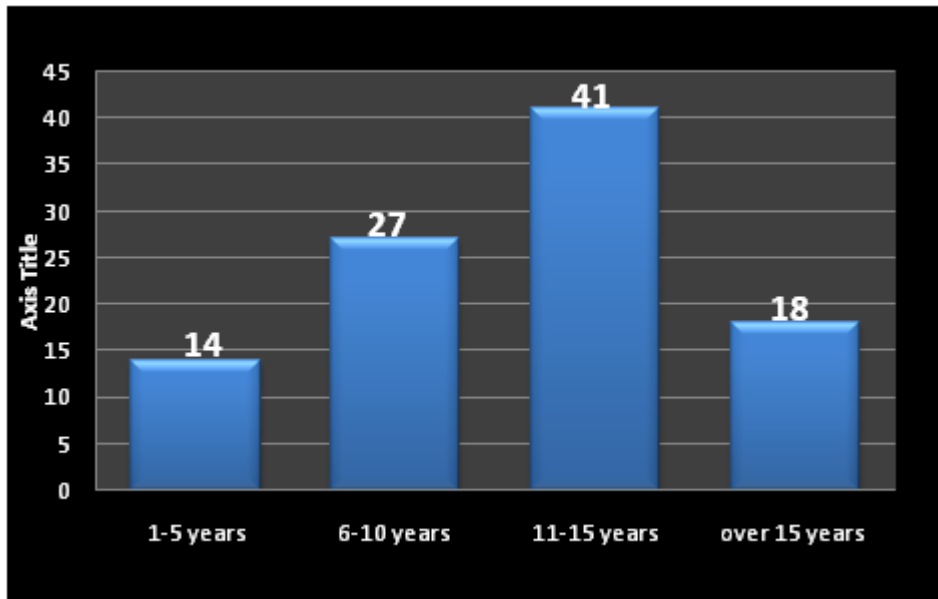


Figure 2: Head Teachers' Teaching Experience

The findings presented in figure 2 indicate a close resemblance of head teachers' experience with that of the teachers though with some slight difference. The indication is that a good number of head teachers, 9 (41%), can handle the subject and since they have long experience in teaching, they can motivate the learners through the activities they have observed and used through the years.

Objective two sought to examine the influence of teachers' level of education on motivation of pre-school children in learning the English language. The analysis is presented in Figure 3.

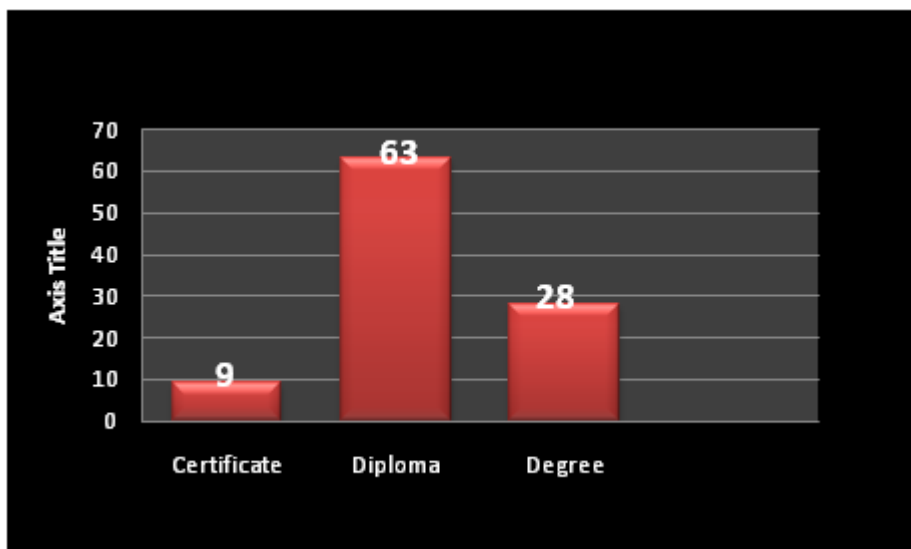


Figure 3: Teachers' Level of Education

The results presented in Figure 3 show that the teachers' academic and professional levels of education are as follows: Diploma 63%, Degree 28%, while 9% have a certificate. The level of education plays a great role in motivation of children because teachers understand the areas the learners need more exercises in order to master the concepts that are being taught. The findings confirm Greenwald (1999) suggestion that the teachers' level of education has a great influence

on the ways they motivate the children.

The third objective sought to determine the influence of teachers' attitude on motivation of pre-school children in learning the English Language. This is shown by the use of materials for different activities and the sources of the materials. The findings are shown in table 1 and figure 4.

Table 1: Teachers' Attitude about the Use of Instructional Materials

Teachers' Response		
Use of resource materials	Number	Percentage
I use resource materials often in the English lessons	5	22.7
I do not use resource materials often	16	72.7
I rarely use resource materials	1	4.6

The analysis presented in table 1 shows that only 5 (22.7%) of the teachers use instructional materials often, while 16 (72.7%) do not use resource materials frequently. This indicates that either they have a negative attitude toward the use of resource materials or they do not like using them.

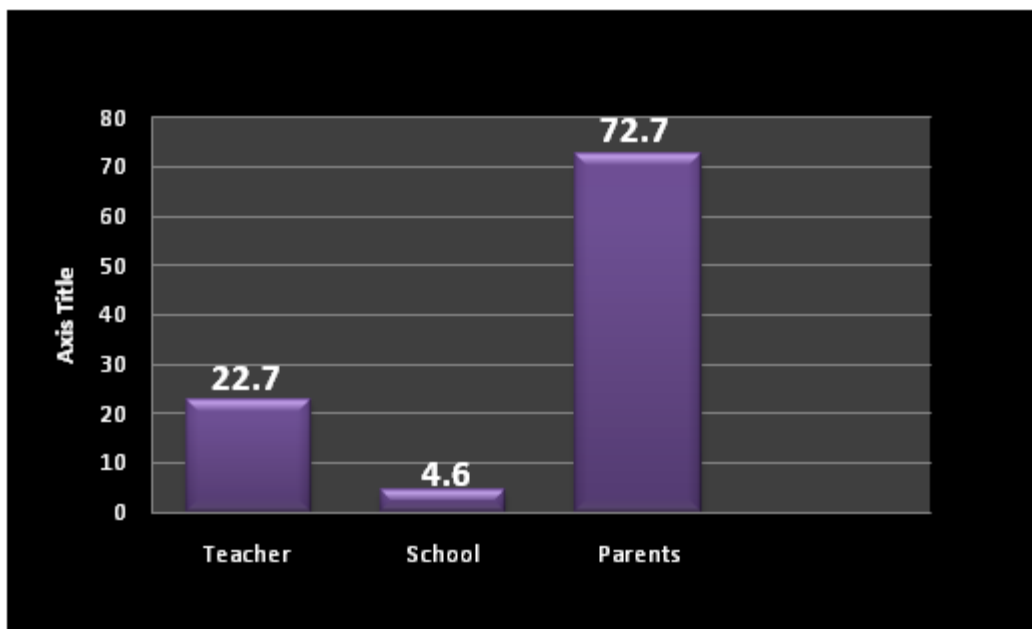


Figure 4: Source of Teaching Materials

The information contained in Figure 4 shows that teaching materials for children are provided by parents 9 (72.7%). Teachers provided 5 (22.7%), while 1 (4.6%) of the instructional materials is provided by the school. Provision of materials contributes to the teachers attitudes towards motivation on pre-school children because it indicates interest in the use of the materials. Many parents provide teaching materials, thus an indication that they have a positive attitude towards helping the children in order to perform highly in class. However, only 22.7% of the teachers show interest in the provision of materials which is an indication that either they are not very much in favour of the materials or they expect the parents to take that responsibility. These findings support a study by Oketch (1986) who found that teacher's attitude towards English is significantly related to the children's attitude and achievement. The poor state of children's performance in English at Starehe District is in line with what was found by Mwangi (1986), that teacher's negative attitude had been reflected in the children's poor performance in English.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that teacher's characteristics play a great role in motivating learners. Teachers who have positive attitude towards the English language encourage the children to participate in class activities so as to perform well in the subject. In addition, teachers who are trained and have long experience in teaching use a variety of learning resources which help the learners to have interest in learning as they use them in various activities. The study recommends in- service training for the teachers in order for them to learn modern teaching methodologies and how to cater for individual differences while teaching. They also need to be trained on the best methods to motivate learners in order to improve the children's performance in the English Language in Starehe District.

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