

Pre-Primary Students' insights regarding School, Teacher and their Education

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Abstract

Perceptions are the depiction of personal experiences and significant to explore. The insights of children regarding school, teacher and education require a keen investigation to improve the teaching learning process for early aged children. The study aimed to explore the hidden concepts of pre-primary students and to find out the reasons behind their specific impression. A qualitative phenomenological inquiry was planned and semi structured interview protocol was used to collect data. Formal consent of parents and school administration was taken before recording interviews of individual children aged 4-7 who were purposefully selected. Thematic analysis was done to extract the meaning of the data and it was found that children have contrasting insights about school, teacher and education. The negative insights regarding school and teachers could affect the learning of the students and may discourage them to feel good at school. Therefore, it was suggested that insights of students should be unveiled and modified if found negative.

Keywords: Insights, pre-primary students, school, teacher, studies

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Introduction

Childhood is the base period for every human and it shapes the personality to a great extent. Every child is unique and special in spite of the common characteristic pattern at each developmental stage (Gardner, 1985). Every child perceives and experiences the society from their family perspective before school admission and afterwards depends on peers and teachers for further information. For a child, school age is the period of acquisition of knowledge about the world around them (David, Bjorklund, Anthony & Pellegrini, 2000).

Over the school years the concrete self-concept gradually moves toward a more abstract, more comparative, more generalized and self-defined. In the early school years children realize that their characteristics are relatively stable and a global sense of self-worth is developed. Children begin to include social aspects such as reference to social groups in their self-descriptions and increase their reference to social comparison. Children begin to differentiate between real and ideal self. Moreover, self-evaluation become more realistic because of increased social competence and perspective taking (Harter, 2006). There is notable increase in comparative self-assessments during middle childhood especially in school context. Preschool children pay very little attention to how well others do at particular task and most of them are confident that they are the smartest kid in their class (Bukowski, Buhrmester & Underwood, 2011). Specific problem related to acquisition of formal education are uncovered during this period. Budding of self-including, self-awareness and self-esteem arises at this age. The achievement of each youngster from numerous points of view decided how a kid learns and grows rationally, candidly and socially. Children also explore their level of academic performance, aptitude, special interest in subjects (Alvin, 2015). Children experiencing frequent and intense motion have heightened emotionality because these motions tend to be more unpleasant than pleasant. It may come from physical or environmental cause or from both. Children learn themselves to manage the emotions and find to let out the unexpressed emotional state by trial and error. They ventilate the pent-up unpleasant emotions by strenuous play, by hearty or even by crying. Once the child discovers the emotional energy catharsis of letting out the emotional energy it becomes a new way for older children to handle emotional expressions (Bruner, 1997). Long term research studies have shown that school children who are cooperative, helpful, empathetic in settling of disputes without adult intervention, having democratic values, fairness and justice engage less in delinquent behavior and also they show greater emotional control and social skills such as cooperation; less violence and increased self-esteem (Hart & Karmel, 1996).

If in case they had bad experience at early stage of life they will emerge as negative personality and vice versa. In this early age as children can't share their experiences but their insight can be explored to interpret their experiences. It is argued that children explore and develop in an interpersonal setting their perception of world through their senses, through observation and questioning. It is important to realize and difficult to understand these insight and even more difficult to capture and reflect them it is subjective (Hart, & Karmel, 1996). The key to children potential learning is how we help them learn. Three fundamental factors that facilitate proper development are: quality of environment (school) quality of interactions (learning) and quality of teachers (teachers) (Division of Early childhood, 2009). As different theorist Bukowski, Buhrmester, and Underwood (2011) had established the fact that 3-7 years of a child's life can play a key role in character building of a child, as in this stage child begin to absorb the world around them and develop their insight through experiences. Carlson (2003) found that children undergo important psychological changes during the age 5-7, these transition go far beyond responses to Piagetian tasks including behavior in a variety of learning and social contexts. Children become much more rational, logical and approach life in a conceptual manner because they are developing concrete operational thought.

Children between 2 and 3 years old understand the mental states through perception, desire and emotions. Children perceive other people's view what is in front of their eyes and not necessarily in front of the children's eyes. Children understand that desires can be achieved by trying for it. Children can differentiate positive and negative emotions. Children have minimal understanding of how mental skills are linked to behavior. Children between 4 and 5 years understand that mind represent object and events accurately or inaccurately (Broughton, 1978).

Hypothesis of psyche Stipek (2005) alludes to a man's conviction about the brain and the capacity to comprehend other individuals' psychological states. Piaget trusted those youngsters under 6 or 7 experience difficulties in perceiving other individuals' contemplations. But some other studies have found that even 2 and 3 years old can understand others state of mind (Bruner, 1997). Lying and deception is a form of evidence for theory of mind. Researchers found that 3 years old are capable of trying to deceive someone else. Hence, children begin to understand some aspects of other people's thinking by age 3 and 4 well before the age proposed by Piaget (Hawell, 2004).

The early long sections of life are brimming with hues sounds, encounters and tests. Youngsters learn through their faculties alongside associations with others deal with that each connection builds up intellectual structure in youngsters Jean Piaget (1896-1980). Theory of mind alludes to the consciousness of one's own oriental procedures and

that of others. It changes as the youngster goes through the formative time frame (Flavell & Wellman, 2004). Young children's meta memory is limited. Preschool children have an inflated opinion of their memory abilities. Children's understanding of their memory abilities and skill in evaluating their performance on memory tasks improves by eleven or twelve years of age (David, Bjorklund, Anthony & Pellegrini, 2000). Some scholars are of the view that young children are biologically ready to perceive people in a special way as organisms are for internal mental state, and this facilitates their perception regarding people behavior with help of those mental states (Leslie, 1994). Any relationship in child's life can be challenging and supportive (Rubin, Colpan, Chen, Bowker, & McDoland, 2011). Young children differentiate themselves from others by means of physical and material attribute. Early childhood is characterized by unrealistically positive image, representation and overestimation of personal attributes (Harter, 2006). The overestimation of the self occurs because children find it difficult in differentiating their desired and actual competence, and the inability to engage in social comparison. Children during middle and late childhood change their self-evaluation and it becomes more self-complex. Children recognize the difference between inner and outer states and include subjective inner states in defining the self (Garcia, Hart & Ray, 1998). It has been broadly perceived that instructors influence the identity advancement of their pupil. An examination found that instructors who had finished quite a while of youngster ponder could advance more advantageous identity development in child. How the youngster sees his instructor's sentiments toward him/her? The point of present investigation is to show kids' understanding are the aftereffect of numerous impacts at work in their lives and to recommend that it is vital for educators to get proof about the manners in which their ones are taking a gander at school and instructors (Vinden, 2002).

Russian formative clinician Vygotsky (1978) underlines the significance of culture in intellectual improvement. His hypotheses stretch the crucial job of social cooperation in the improvement of perception, as he accepted emphatically that network assumes a focal job during the time spent making importance of the encounters. Youngsters' intellectual advancement happens because of social association in which, kids work with others to mutually tackle issues. Kids' subjective capacity increment when they are presented to data that falls inside their zone of proximal advancement. The zone of proximal advancement (ZPD) is where the youngster can nearly, however not totally, grasp or play out an errand on his or her own. Subjective advancement happens when guardians, instructors, or other help the youngster by introducing data that is both new and inside the ZPD. This sort of help is called scaffolding; it is the help for learning and critical thinking, to enhance autonomy and development. The kid's comprehension of the world is an outgrowth of connection with family and society of youngster's way of life.

Bandura (1977) discussed child sense of self-efficacy that lies during initial life years when the infant realizes that he or she can control certain events in the world. They come to realize that they also have some characteristics such as gender, size, name and qualities like shyness, clumsiness which ends up in forming self-awareness (Paris & Paris, 2001). As the toddler achieves the self-awareness, the behavior is much affected and leads to wide range of expressing one's own self. The one important and notable challenge among parents and caretakers is the "terrible twos" which is purely the outgrowth of self-awareness. Self-understanding is a child's cognitive representation of the self, the substance and the content of the child's self-conceptions. Children have to find and construct their own selves and it cannot be fostered by parents or culture. The understanding of self gets molded over the period of development (Amsterdam, Lewis & Brooks-Gunn., 1968, 1979).

The responses to this inquiry is of extensive significance to each educator since the understanding which youngsters have in regards to class and teachers have critical bearing on nature of learning. Past looks into this matter were in general to help the view that when youngsters like going to class and see their educator as well disposed, accommodating grown-ups their passionate, scholarly and social advancement is extraordinarily encouraged. Preschool children can think of themselves and define in concrete way. So, the present investigation is an attempt to explore the understanding of pre-primary students regarding school, teacher and education.

Significance of the study

This study tends to explore the insights of very young children in a scientific way. It is significant as it provides an opportunity to collect views of young students in a natural setting. By using the qualitative measures, it became more valuable in a sense that a great number of affective and cognitive variables are communicated by the young participants. Every child has the right to convey voice and have their own opinion. Their views and opinions were reasonably heard in this study. The intention of this study is to empower children as perceivers, having choice to respond according to their thinking. School represents ideals and hopes of the community. The insight which children have about school, teacher and education has significant bearing on quality of learning.

Statement of the problem and Research Objectives

A lot have been done in the past to investigate the understanding of extremely youthful youngsters, the association and organizing of thoughts is exceptionally close to home in youthful kids and has certain qualities. Kids are instantly embedded into social connection not long after their landing in world; every one of their needs are met by grown-ups (Vinden, 2002). Youngsters in general be focused on themselves and vigorously dependent on the prompt setting and their apparent thoughts. Their reasoning is perceptually ruled, drawn from direct experience that is the genuine thought process of present research.

The research objectives are to:

1. describe Positive and negative insights of children regarding school, teachers, and studies
2. explore general insights of children regarding school, teachers, and studies

Research Methodology

All the young children from three to seven years old, who have recently experienced a new relationship with teachers and school in social setting is the population of the study. Sample of 35 students from 3-7 years of age based on the researcher's judgment and purpose of research was selected for this study. Semi-Structured interview technique was used to capture students' insight. Interviews continued until the topic was exhausted or saturated, that is when interviewees (subjects or informants) introduced no new perspectives on the topic.

As it is the case in phenomenological study where researcher assume that there are some commonalities to how human beings perceive and interpret similar experiences, these commonalities are called 'essence'. This is done to relieve the minds of young participants to share the experiences they have in their minds. Once interview process along with audio recording completed, researchers go through each statement to get its meaning, extract what was considered relevant from each participant description and then cluster these statements into themes to integrate these themes into narrative description.

Data Analysis and Findings

The data was recorded interviews which were transcribed, translated, edited and cleaned for grammatical errors and summarized in the form of codes. Repetitive readings were done to extract the meanings and key terms out of the data. The key terms were classified, synthesized and consolidated inductively and in this way major theme of the data emerge.

Table 1
Positive and Negative Insights of Children Regarding School, Teachers, and Studies

Insight regarding school		Insight regarding teacher		Insight regarding studies	
Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Enjoyable place	A nightmare	Ideal personality	Strict person	Vehicle to fly	Boring
Learning place	A stressful place	A friend	Frightening person	Helping them to grow	Tiring
Friends pool		A wise person	Boring person	Fruitful activity	Bad
Prize winning sight		Story teller	Angry person	Interesting activity	Difficult
		Loving figure	Unhappy		A hindrance to enjoyment
		Thoughtful	Worried		
		Excited	Messy hair		
		cheerful			

Further analysis of the insights of children regarding school, teacher and their studies at school with positive and negative narrations are given below:

Insights about school

The overall responses of the children were very simple and straightforward but at the same time unique too, while the concepts of children regarding school were consolidated it was found that they perceive school as a place which is good for them, where they came for a purpose e.g. for study, for playing and meet people. It is a positive sign that they consider school a good place, where they want to come and enjoy activities. At the same time some children informed that they want to stop going to school as this will enable them to watch cartoons at home, this statement indicates that we need to introduce some more interesting activities within the school keeping in view the interest of children. Another positive finding revealed that they consider school as a safe place where they can enjoy indoor and outdoor activities in adequate manners with full freedom. This indicates that our schools are successful in providing them a safe and secure environment and sensory experiences.

Table 2

Some Examples of Students' Insights about School

Sr. no	Insight regarding school	Evidences
A	Positive	
i	Enjoyable place	I used to play in the school with friends. We play in the games period and sometimes in the class.
ii	Learning place	I go to school for learning. I want to read newspaper like my father.
iii	Friends pool	I have lot of friends in school. We enjoy being together.
iv	Prize winning sight	I will get a prize from school. Last year I won a trophy. It was exiting.
B.	Negative	
i	A nightmare	I don't like school because it is very bad place; I am scared to go to school. I like to be at home with mother.
ii	A stressful place	I don't feel relaxed in the school because I can't enjoy here. I have friends but they are always fighting with each other. Yesterday, I lost my lunch box. It was awful and my mother was also angry with me. My teacher also beat me sometimes. I don't want to come to school.

Insights regarding school were explored from simplest question as “what is school?”. For majority it was place of learning. In response to another question majority of students declared it good place, a student responded that if there is no school ‘he would love to watch cartoon instead of going to school’. In response to the question that “What do you get from school?”. Mostly they opined that they learn, study, read books, play with toys and get home work from school. But response of case no 15 was that they get “break for a yummy lunch” and case no 24 was of the view that they come to school so that they can get “prizes” that was somewhat unique in this flow. When students were asked to respond on this question as what work you doesn't like at school and why?. Variety of responses were given by the kids, such as fight, noise, beat, "gandi batein" (bad talks), having lunch, and in academics few of them said that they don't like "alif bay (Urdu alphabets), counting, drawing etc". In response to another such statement where researcher got response was that “What should not be at school” Case no 10 said “books” case no 2 said “Teacher beats and scolds with harsh looks” another said "it's bad thing to abuse and hurt someone". School is a place of social interaction and it provides them all opportunities to get all-round development. There were many students who love being at school and they miss such a pleasurable place that provide them multiple opportunities such as playing, study and above all healthy communicative environment. The views collected regarding school were mainly responded in optimistic and positive way by the young respondents.

It was observed by the researcher that if incentives, entertainments, motivation and lot of care are given with additional performance related opportunities and their voices listened well, students can be groomed in more satisfying way. They like school because it provides them maximum learning and civilized managed activities, but at the same time students didn't like a robot like routine and feels good when there is a holiday. Children are conscious about injury while playing, fight among fellows and few were conscious about fried edibles that can damage their health. Few students even share that they don't like hygienically weak fellows. They have few concerns regarding teachers' harsh behavior that she can show when someone doesn't perform accordingly.

Insights Regarding Teacher

Children's description of teacher's personality was also very positive and they see them as their family member and show their affection towards them by considering them like mother, sister and Aapi (elder sister). They specifically mentioned that they like smile of their teacher which depicts that they want a friendly and amicable teacher. Furthermore, they added that they like versatile teachers who provide them an opportunity to follow the dynamic activities. In nutshell, children consider teacher as an affectionate person who could love them and teach them in versatile manner. Any other image of the teacher is intolerable and undesirable. Nearly all children condemn the harsh attitude of teacher by giving negative gesture upon the strict attitude of teachers.

Table 3

Some Examples of Students' Insights Regarding Teacher

Sr. no	Insight regarding teacher	Evidence
A.	Positive	
i	Ideal personality	My teacher is best in the world I want to be like her when I will grow up.
ii	A friend	Hmmm, teacher is my best friend. She is always helping and friendly.
iii	A wise person	My teacher knows everything. She is the best.
iv	Story teller	My teacher is very good because she knows lot of stories about fairies and animals.
v	Loving figure	She brings sweets for me and loves me a lot. We play and sing rhymes with her.
B.	Negative	
i	Strict person	Oh, she is like a police. Always glare and harshly treat with all the kids.
ii	Frightening person	I am scared of her. I feel nervous when she is around.
iii	Boring person	My teacher doesn't tell stories and all the time asking to keep quiet, keep quiet.
iv	Angry person	She is always annoyed to all of us I don't know, why? She kept scolding all the time.....

Starting from this statement “Who is a teacher?”. Students’ response was as expected one i.e. “who teaches or madam” but some students (case no 8 &18) took it as a person “who is very pretty and beautiful”. In response to another question that why do you like your teacher? They all responded positively one example is the statement given by case no 11 that was “she smiles so I like her”. They all like to play games and enjoy the company of their teachers. Overall findings collected through a list of questions were positive and shows that at pre-primary level students get attached with their teachers and being with them provides them security or home like environment.

It was interesting to note that mostly children were inspired with their teachers that they imitate them and try to behave like them. They idealize them because they are well dressed, having permanent smile on their face, friendly discuss their problems, and manage students' behavior in smooth and organized way.

On the contrary, students do not have positive views about teachers if they handle them harshly, speak loudly, punish them with break detention, or do not follow the student’s interests. Pre-primary level is the level of learning new behavior if teacher is more optimistic and manages the students in positive way. Such a behavior will develop children in a well rounded personality.

Insights regarding studies/Education

As far as the concept of education/studies at school concerned, for them education is something which they must have to take as their parents want them to be a good boy/girl. Some children mentioned the professions too i.e. doctor, engineer, soldier and police. While some other mentioned the imaginary characters i.e. Doreamon, superman, batman and ironman etc. Some examples are given below:

Table 4
Some Examples of Students' Insights Regarding Studies/Education

Sr. no	Insight regarding studies	Evidences
A.	Positive	
i	Vehicle to fly	I will get wings to fly in the sky if I study by heart.
ii	Helping them to grow	I will grow faster if I daily study and then I'll be able to do everything that my father do.
iii	Fruitful activity	It is good because it will make me strong.
iv	Interesting activity	It is good because I am enjoying it. Every activity is interesting. Last Friday we made flowers with papers and it was amazing.
B.	Negative	
i	Boring	
ii	Tiring	I don't like studying books all the time. there is no fun in it.
iii	Bad	Its making me tired daily. yesterday, I fell asleep in the class. It's bad. I hate to study English and math..... just bad and very bad....
iv	Difficult	I feel bad because can't understand it. Math is difficult but English is even more difficult
v	A hindrance to enjoyment	Its snatching my play time and I don't want to study I want to play with my parents, friends and toys. After school we go to tuition and then we recite Holy Quran. It took so long that I usually get little time to play.

Young children/students' insight regarding education or studies were interesting to describe here. When they were asked that "Why do you study"? There was series of responses like "to get prize", to go ahead, to go in next class, madam says, to get knowledge, to become an officer, and many more. According to them 'alif bay (Urdu alphabets), 123 (counting), abc (English alphabets) and some words and rhymes were included in their course pack. They want to study because their baba (father), mama (mother) or teacher advise them to study if they want to be wise in their life.

Insights regarding studies is an important objective of present study which was responded in unique as well as conventional way. To grow, to change the behavior through learning is the natural aspiration of each individual which he/she fulfills gradually. Most of the students have natural positive intention for learning, some have the views that they study as they want to become officer, foji (Soldier), doctor, to grow or to get some job. They study as they think it a good activity.

Conclusion and Discussion

The findings from present research highlighted the importance of gaining young children's opinions of their educational experience. The insight of the children were explored because children, although immature, were giving clear and short perceptions regarding their educational experiences. The nature of the perceptions of the children about school, teacher and learning experience were both positive and negative. They can clearly mention their likes and dislikes. Children have both positive and negative perceptions about school, teacher and learning process. The perceptions of children were clear depiction of their school experiences and interaction, it is an alarming situation as our children even at this very early age 4-7 year have equal number of negative perceptions about school, teacher and learning process. It indicates the fault in our education system which we need to rectify. The negative perceptions of children could be converted into positive one by improving their learning experiences within the school. As children are more flexible in nature so it would not be a challenging task to modify their perceptions what they need only is "home away from home". Their growth and envelopment phase can be nurtured and encouraged. As scientific studies have revealed that early childhood educators hold the keys to future success for every child with whom they interact. Children come to school "built in" attitudes towards teachers. They perceive the school as place of satisfaction, pleasure and everlasting childhood memory development where their moral, intellectual and social skills are facilitated, while they perceive teachers as persons who will understand them and behave them amicably and emerge as an ideal. Education is perceived as something which will reward and help them win prizes. This concept is quite similar to the great philosopher Ibne Khaldoon (1332-1406) who stated that human being had a natural instinct to learn and get benefit out of it. Learning is natural instinct and his learning capability is the basis of education what is needed most is to provide him a conducive environment and productive experiences. Children learn, explore and perform according to their interest and environment of classroom. This finding is similar to Alvin's finding in 2015, in which he described that Children explore their level of academic performance, aptitude, special interest in subjects.

Recommendation

Based on the conclusion of the study it is recommended that teacher should be trained in a way that they could understand the perceptions of children and if found anything negative have an ability to modify that perceptions into positive one. Furthermore, the perceptions of children should be explored and discussed with all stakeholders to devise the strategies to improve teaching learning conditions for pre-schoolers.

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