



ISSN : 2350-0743

www.ijramr.com



*International Journal of Recent Advances in Multidisciplinary Research*

*Vol. 03, Issue 09, pp.1817-1820, September, 2016*

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### AN INVESTIGATION OF PUBLIC PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF PSYCHOLOGY TO EDUCATION IN ABAKALIKI LGA EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA

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#### ARTICLE INFO

##### **Article History:**

Received 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2016  
Received in revised form  
15<sup>th</sup> July, 2016  
Accepted 07<sup>th</sup> August, 2016  
Published online 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2016

##### **Keywords:**

Investigation,  
Public Primary  
and Secondary School,  
Psychology,  
Education.

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#### ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to investigate primary and secondary school teachers' perception on the contributions of psychology to education. Descriptive survey design was used and one hundred and twenty (120) public school teachers in Abakaliki LGA of Ebonyi State were selected for the study. A 20-item structured questionnaire was used to elicit information. Simple percentage was used in the analysis. The findings of the study include as follows: that perception of primary and secondary school teachers on the contributions of psychology to education is positive. The findings however, showed that the rate at which primary and secondary school teachers employ psychology principles in teaching and learning is low. Accordingly, it was recommended that course contents on psychology in teacher training institutions should be more comprehensive, hence workshops and seminars should be organized for teachers on how to apply psychological principles in their teaching and learning.

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#### INTRODUCTION

The contributions of psychology to education need to be always highlighted by educationists, school managers, counselors, teachers and other relevant stake holders. However, psychologists including Clifford (1990), Eke (1992) and Mangal (2012), have reported that psychology is not only important in teaching and learning but in the whole field of education. The relevant factors which have brought psychology to the forefront of education need to be realized. The factors include issues of human growth and development, individual differences, teaching and learning, evaluation, learning disorders, behavioural problems, counselling, motivation and so on. The point stressed here is that it is these phenomena among others, that showcase the contributions of psychology to education at all levels, Reddy, Lautz & Hulme (2010). Education is a veritable tool for human and national development and psychology plays a crucial role in actualizing this function. Agulanna and Nwachukwu (2001) psychology is indeed a tool for effective teaching. Effective teaching is not simply a matter of one person with more knowledge transmitting it to another.

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Effecting teaching and learning requires the use of so many tested strategies. In teaching a new topic for instance, an effective teacher must have to organise and present his or her lesson in such a way that it will be meaningful to the learner. Meaningfulness enhances motivation and retention of learned materials and could be achieved by the teacher through the teacher's use of appropriate and corresponding teaching methods and strategies in relation to the psychological principles and characteristics of the learner. As Ugwu (1997) argued, an individual at birth is equipped with certain biological make-up which is not enough for harmonious life in the society. As a result, education comes in to provide a child with necessary tools, skills, habits, attitudes and information required for full preparation, integration and successful adult life in the society.

The society sets the standard upon which a child's character is considered appropriate or in appropriate and it is the effort of education to inculcate the desirable behaviours in the child, Coon and Mitterer (2008) However, the extent to which education equips a child with the desirable behaviour depends on certain circumstances surrounding the child and how effective those circumstances are manipulated. It is for this reason that psychology is brought into education to help remove the impediments to a child's acquisition of the desired behaviours which education is expected to inculcate.

Against this background, the focus of this paper is to investigate primary and secondary school teachers' perception on the contribution of psychology to education.

### Statement of the Problem

The impact of psychology on education particularly in teaching and learning is yet to be fully realized by many teachers, educators and other relevant stake holders in education. For that reason, the output in the education industry has not been encouraging. For example, Okafor (2012) and Eluu (2013) in their separate reports have frowned upon pupils' and students' poor academic performance in primary and secondary schools. It was obvious that the schools do not effectively psychological principles. The situation therefore needs to be addressed. This will be possible only if those involved in education industry are made to realize the relative impact of psychology on education and then apply the psychological principles that will bring about positive change in the system. Posed as a question therefore, the problem of this study is "What are the perceptions of primary and secondary school teachers on the contribution of psychology to education?"

### Research Questions

In addressing the problems highlighted in this paper, the following research questions are relevant:

- What are teachers' perception of the relationship between psychology and education?
- What educational areas is psychology particularly concerned with?
- In what ways does psychology contribute to bring improvement in education?
- How do primary and secondary school teachers apply psychological principles to facilitate teaching and learning?

## METHODS

A descriptive survey design was used to elicit information from 120 public primary and secondary school teachers in Abakaliki LGA of Ebonyi State. A total of 6 primary schools and 6 secondary schools were randomly selected for the study out of which ten teachers each were subsequently randomly sampled from each school by balloting.

### Instrument

The instrument titled "*Contribution of Psychology to Education Questionnaire* (COPTED) was used. A 20-item structured questionnaire was constructed for responses to be made as "Yes" or "No". The items were designed to generate information based on the relationship of psychology and education identified by the researcher. The instrument was both content and construct validated and the reliability coefficient was calculated using Kuder Richardson (K-R 20). A value of 0.75 was obtained ( $R=0.75$ ). The Contribution of Psychology to Education Questionnaire (COPTED) surveyed the opinion of the teachers used. The instrument has four parts, A,B,C,D and each part sought information related to the relationship of psychology and education in various areas.

The researcher administered the questionnaire by reaching the respondents directly. The data collected was analyzed using simple percentage and responses by less than 50% of respondents were seen as negative and vice versa.

## RESULTS

### Research Question 1:

What are primary and secondary school teachers' perception of the relationship between psychology and education?

To address this question, data were collected and analyzed using percentage. The finding is presented in table 1 below.

The findings presented in Table 1 show that psychology is highly related to education. The individual scores of the items in this case are all on the higher side and therefore reveal the following: solution to educational problems (75%), improvement of teaching and learning (73.7%) brings instructional innovations into education (70.8%) control of human behavior at learning (60%) and improvement of teachers' efficiency (72.5%).

### Research Question 2

What educational areas is psychology mostly concerned with?

In Table 2, data presented shows teachers' acceptance of the areas that are the main focus of psychology. The data are as follows: concern for the learner's guidance (69.2%), concern for the teacher (79.2%), concern for effective curriculum evaluation (78%) concern for method (60%), method and concern for learning environment (79.2%)

### Research Question 3

In what ways does psychology contribute to bring improvement in education?

Table 3 contains data showing teachers' views of the areas in which psychology contributes to education as follows: ensures proper child growth and development (65%), takes care of individual differences, (50%), encourages good teaching method (51.8%) identifies and addresses teaching problems (55.8%) and encourages use of motivation (60.8%)

### Research Question 4

How do primary and secondary school teachers apply psychological principles to facilitate teaching and learning?

Table 4 Shows that the extent to which primary and secondary school teachers fail to apply psychological principles to enhance teaching and learning is very high. The scores are shown as follows:

Planning lessons to suit the learner (72.5%), not adjusting teaching method to suit the learner (73.3%), failure to consider individual differences (70.8%), failure to apply mentally suitable instructional materials (81.7%) and failure to motivate learners (69.2%).

**Table 1. Teachers' Perception of Relationship Between Psychology and Education**

S/N	No of Variables	Yes	%	No	%	N
1	Psychology solves most educational problems	90	75	30	25	120
2	Psychology does not improve teaching & learning	32	26.7	88	73.7	120
3	Psychology brings instructional innovations into education	85	70.8	35	29.2	120
4	Psychology effectively controls human behavior at learning	72	60	48	40	120
5	Psychology does not improve teachers efficiency	33	27.5	87	72.5	120

**Table 2. Scope of Psychology in Education**

S/N	No of Variables	Yes	%	No	%	N
1	Psychology is concerned about the learners' guidance	86	69.2	25	20.8	120
2	Psychology does not concern the teachers	25	20.8	95	79.2	120
3	Psychology has a focus on effective curriculum evaluation	78	65	42	35	120
4	Psychology does not involve teaching method	42	35	78	65	120
5	Psychology encourages good learning environment	95	79.2	25	20.8	120

**Table 3. Contributions of Psychology to Education**

S/N	No of Variables	Yes	%	No	%	N
1	Psychology ensure proper child growth and development.	78	65	42	35	120
2	It takes care of individual differences	60	50	60	50	120
3	It encourages good teaching method	62	51.7	58	48.3	120
4	It identifies and addresses learning problems	67	55.8	53	44.2	120
5	It encourages use of motivation	73	60.8	47	39.2	120

**Table 4. Extent to which Primary and Secondary School Teachers apply Psychological Principles to Enhance Teaching and Learning**

S/N	No of Variables	Yes	%	No	%	N
1	Lesson are usually planned to suit the learner	33	27.5	87	72.5	120
2	Teaching methods are always adjusted to suit the learners	32	26.7	88	73.3	120
3	Individual differences are always considered	35	29.2	85	70.8	120
4	Mentally suitable instructional materials are always employed	22	18.3	98	81.7	120
5	Pupils are always motivated using	34	30.8	86	69.2	120

## DISCUSSION

The perception of primary and secondary school teachers on the relationship between psychology and education is very high as data on Table 1 has shown. Results from the table show that teachers perceive that psychology solves most educational problems as well as improve teaching and learning as indicated by 75% and 88% of the respondents in item numbers 1 and 2 of table 1. In addition, teachers perceive that psychology brings instructional innovations into education, control human behavior effectively and improves teachers' efficiency. This is as realized from responses in item numbers 3 to 5 of the same table 1. This is in line with the views of Clifford (1990), Ugwu (1997), Mangal (2012) and Chauhan (2013) that education cannot be effectively inculcated in the learners if teachers do not acquire the knowledge of science of behavior of individuals through the study of psychology. The knowledge of the learners including their abilities, interests, attitudes, temperaments and others, will enable teachers to choose lesson contents and fashion their teaching methods to suit them. As Chauhan (2013) argued, teachers cannot bring about desirable changes in children in a situation where they (teachers) lack the knowledge of their (students) science of behavior. Result from table 2 shows that the areas in education that are of particular concern in psychology include the learner, the teacher, the curriculum or content, the methodology and learning situation.

It is as a result of the concern of these areas in psychology that Chauhan (2013) pointed out that psychology is applied in education and to the entire educative process. Achilike (2011) highlighted some focal areas of psychology to include as follows:

- **The learner:** The learner is the most important element because without him there would be no learning. A great deal of what happens to the learner in the classroom can be psychologically handled namely, his personality, his uniqueness with others, developmental characteristic, mental health, intelligence and so on.
- **The learning process:** This refers to whatever thing that happens during teaching and learning. Psychology is applied in that situation to find efficient ways of organizing and directing learning towards specific goals.
- **The learning situation:** This means the environment in which the learner finds himself and also in which the learning process occurs. The knowledge of psychology helps to moderate the learning situation to enhance effective learning. The teacher's method of controlling the learning experience is through the manipulation of the environment in such a way as to set up stimulating situations which will evoke the kind of desired behavior.
- **Evaluation of learning outcomes:** The conduct of assessments and researches which yield results that are

used to solve educational problems are mostly based on psychological knowledge.

Table 3 presents data which show that psychology contributes to education in the following ways namely: understanding developmental characteristics, individual differences, the nature of classroom learning, teaching methods, behavioural problems, motivation and learning. Along this line, Chauhan (2013) identified other areas in which psychology contributes to education to include curriculum design, measurement of learning outcomes, research processes, guidance services, development of positive attitude and group dynamics. In Table 4, data presented show that the rate at which primary and secondary school teachers fail to apply psychological principles in teaching and learning is relatively high. This is worrisome considering the fact that teaching and learning cannot be effectively and successfully carried out without the application of certain psychological principles such as making the lesson to be learner centered, taking proper care of differences of learners, use of instructional materials and motivational techniques. This is consistent with the view of Clifford (1990), Echuwen (1999) that in order to facilitate learning, favourable atmosphere must be created so that learning becomes interesting, enriching and rewarding. Put differently, learning cannot meaningfully occur in a situation where the state of affairs is not favourable to a learner.

### Conclusion

The findings of this study show some primary and secondary school teachers perceive a relationship between psychology and education and also perceive some contributions of psychology to education, although most teachers do not apply its principles in teaching and learning. For educational objectives to be achieved, teaching and learning must be meaningful. For the meaningfulness to be attained, teachers at both primary and secondary schools must not undermine the contributions of psychology to education in their perception. The use of psychological principles in teaching and learning is the key to successful and tension free classroom activities and environment and can never be overemphasized.

### Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- There is need to expand the contents of the courses offered in psychology in teacher training institutions. This will enable student teachers to acquire broad-based psychological knowledge that will help them to effectively offer education at the classroom level
- Students should be properly guided to realize various ways in which psychology can be used to bring about improvements in education and how to actualize it.

- Schools should be adequately equipped with various learning resources that will assist teachers apply various psychological principles during teaching-learning process.
- Relevant authorities in the school system should always carry out routine inspection of teaching and learning activities to ensure that teachers apply the psychological principles needed to bring improvement in education.
- Government and other relevant authorities responsible for recruitment and posting of teachers to schools should ensure that it is only teachers who are educationally biased that should teach in schools.
- Seminars and workshop updates on how to apply psychological principles in teaching and learning methodologies should always be organized for teachers by relevant authorities.
- Various workshops on effective measurement and evaluation learners, guidance and counselling and educational research methodologies are imperative.

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