

Kindergarten Pupils' Affective/Moral Growth: Its Implications to Early Childhood Education

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ABSTRACT

This study analysed the affective or moral growth of Kindergarten pupils and the implications of the findings to early childhood education. Ten Kindergarten pupils were chosen as subjects of this study. They were selected through systematic random procedure. To gather the data needed, the case study was used in the study. To supplement the information gathered, structured and unstructured interview were conducted to the subject pupils and their parents. To protect their identity and the privacy of the subjects, their real names were not used. As regards affective or moral growth, observations showed that some of them showed reverence and respect while praying and in making the sign of the cross; others were observed reluctant in praying. Although some of them knew the sign of the cross and the prayer, yet they were not that participative in spiritual activities. Almost all of them admitted to be regular churchgoers. Good social conduct seemed to be developing in them as well as the values of kindness, caring and generosity. They could also distinguish right from wrong, good from bad, truth from lies. Different emotions such as love or affection, fear, anger, sadness, and happiness were also exhibited by them. Some pupils were observed to be behaved in class; the talkative ones were observed to be courteous in their manner of speaking.

Key words: Affective/Moral Growth, Kindergarten Pupils, Teachers, Parents, and Early Childhood.

1. INTRODUCTION

Moral, social and emotion development during childhood can be regarded as one of the major aspects of socialization. School education plays an important role in the acquisition of moral norms. Childhood is the important time of human's socialization. One of the directions of

socialization is the acquisition of moral norms and moral development at that age. The social-cognitive psychological development in middle childhood provides necessary conditions for moral development. Moral development can be regarded as the process of development of behaviour regulation on the bases of interiorized system of norms with other facets

of development, morality does not form independently [1]. In keeping with the ways morality is defined, a main thrust of all the articles is a universalistic conception of its development. The universality of the development of moral judgments is tied to the propositions that moral development stems from children's experiences at home, the environment around them. Their physical, emotional, cognitive and social skills are influenced by their developing sense. Between the ages of two (2) and five (5), many children start to show morally-based behaviours and beliefs. According to Piaget as cited by Oswalt (n.d.), children between the ages of five (5) and 10 see the world through a Heteronomous Morality [2]. In other words, children think that authority figures such as parents and teachers have rules that young people must follow absolutely. Rules and discipline are real, unchangeable guidelines which are evolving, negotiable and sometime situational accordingly. As they grow older, they develop more abstract thinking, and become less self-focused. Children become capable of forming more flexible rules and applying them selectively for the sake of shared objectives and a desire to cooperate [3].

According to Kohlberg, young children at this age base their morality on a punishment and obedience orientation [4]. Much like Piaget, Kohlberg believed that young children behave morally because they fear authority and try to avoid punishment. In other words, little kids follow the rules and guidelines in order to stay from elders anger and trouble. It's too much to expect preschool-aged children to automatically "do the right thing"[5]. However, most young

children can understand the difference between "good" and "bad" behavior, and this understanding provides the basis for more complicated moral thinking in the future.

In comparison with the research that has been carried out on the intellectual development of children, much less empirical work has been done in this country on the moral development of children [6-7]. That the moral development of children is unimportant is contradicted ostensibly by the many writers on the aims of education who mention intellectual and moral, or character, education together as of equal importance.

The pre-schooler's self-concept develops rapidly due to interactions with family, peer groups and advancements made in moral understanding. Studies emphasized that identification is the process whereby children likened themselves to other individuals [7]. Peer group also may breed a competitive spirit among the members and nature patterns of conformity according to the groups accepted standards of behaviour. Compared to the generalized responses of infancy and toddlerhood, emotions are highly differentiated and distinguishable [8].

Learner's development is a complicated process in which have unique growth pattern depending upon the individual. On this note, it is imperative that a thorough understanding of the principles of development be considered to effect a successful transformation of the learner [9].

The researchers prompted to undertake this case study to have a first- hand information on the development of Kindergarten pupils particularly on the affective and moral growth

so as to help improve the quality of instruction provided for them.

The study aims to analyse the affective or moral growth of Kindergarten pupils; and seek implications of the affective or moral growth of Kindergarten to: teachers and parents.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The descriptive method of research was employed in obtaining information needed in the study. Descriptive researches according to Burns (2010) [10] may either be survey or case study. In this particular investigation, case study was adapted to analyse the affective or moral growth of ten Kindergarten pupils in a public elementary school. The main source of data in this study was ten (10) Kindergarten pupils selected through systematic random sampling procedure. Observation was the main technique used to gather the information needed. All the significant events on the daily activities of the pupils chosen as subjects in the study were listed down. However, other techniques were also used to supplement the information gathered through structured and unstructured interviews conducted to the subjects and their parents.

Parents were also interviewed at their convenience; permission to tape the interview was also secured. During the interview proper, the parents were asked some questions on the

affective or moral growth using the guide items for observation to corroborate facts already gleaned from the daily observations. To protect the identity and the privacy of the subjects, their real names were not used. During the observation period, a camera, a tape recorder, and a video cam were used to document and support the findings. Only five pupils during a given observation day were observed to carefully record the findings.

The checklist below is the parameters to observe the manifestation and consistency of the affective or moral development going among the target participants in the study. These are observed daily by the teacher and these are being confirmed through interview with the parents. The content of the checklist are shown in Table 1.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings on the affective or moral aspect of the ten subject-pupils revealed that almost all of them were regular church goers. It is automatic to them the time for going to their own churches. They are not being forced to join in their church services. Findings also showed that the said pupils knew how to pay respect and reverence while praying and even in making the sign of the cross, yet in other instances, some of the subject- pupils were not seen participative during such kind of spiritual activities.

Table 1. Content of the checklist

1.	The child is showing spiritual concern by observing religious activities like praying in the class and at home.
2.	The child is developing a sense of responsibility in going to church/ attending Sunday mass.
3.	The child is developing values and good social conduct.
5.	The child expresses different kinds of emotions like love and affection, fear and anger, etc.
6.	The child shows reverence and respect during spiritual activities.
7.	The child distinguishes right from wrong and good from bad at their level.
8.	The child behaves properly in class and in various situations.
9.	The child learns courteous gestures and words like saying Please, excuse me, thank you, may I pass, words with po and opo, may I go out, etc.

To them, God is a man who wears clothes of the people they know, and who has a flowing white beard and long white hair. Children accept what have been taught to them by their teacher that God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and a watcher who observes what people do.

The religious concepts of young children are realistic in the sense that they interpret what they hear and see from their teacher in terms of what they already know [11].

Values and good social conduct were also evident in them. This was manifested through the interview conducted with them by the researchers as well as the latter's daily observation with them. Values of being kind, caring and generous were some of the values seen in most of them.

Different emotions such as love or affection, happiness, fear, anger, and sadness were also observed. They are very vocal and candid with their feelings. They do not show inhibitions in showing what they feel [7].

Most of them talked in courteous way. They know so well where they are when talking to anyone else [12]. They even check someone of their members who are not showing respect and

courtesy to older individuals by using the Filipino words: po or opo (these are equivalent to yes but with respect and reverence).

During the preschool years, not only does an enormous amount of learning take place but also values and attitudes of curiosity in learning are formed.

Implications of the Findings to Teachers

The implications of the results of the study to the teachers are:

1. Inculcate values in their everyday lessons so that the awareness of the pupils on what is good and bad would be more enhanced.
2. Acknowledge children who show appropriate behaviour in class such as attitude of being kind, behaved, well - disciplined, caring, etc.
3. Make prayer as part of their assignment so that they would have regular time in praying.
4. Be a model of kindness, humility, courtesy, and care with the pupils. Teachers need to remember that children are "great imitators". They love to mimic whatever they see and hear.
5. Be fully aware of the emotions of each of their pupils and those with low and high intensity

level of emotions must be referred to the guidance counselor or the psychiatrist for possible assistance. A child who shows low intensity or “flat” level of emotion or high intensity level may be experiencing difficulties or family problems.

Implications of the Findings to Parents

The implications of the results of the study to parents are:

1. Train the child to do every good thing he needs as he grows up before he learns the bad things from others since no child is born with the knowledge of what is good and what is bad; they are only born with a mind to learn and to love things around him.
2. Be cautious in everything they do and they utter because children are great imitators.

Children particularly those aged three to five look up especially to their parents and guardians as their models in whatever they do and say.

3. Spend more quality time with children to enhance their spiritual development. Without parents to guide them, it would not be possible for children to go to church by themselves. Attending mass as a family gives family members feelings of bonding, togetherness and love. The conversation time with children can also be used by parents in building their morale, by ensuring them with touches that are welcomed and appreciated by the children. The best model children can have great influence on their children if they only relate or talk through telephone conversations or any similar means. There is no substitute for their physical presence and unconditional love. This implies

Table 1. Content of the checklist

No.	Content of the Checklist of Child's Moral Development	No. of Respondents Observed	Percentage (%)
1.	The child is showing spiritual concern by observing religious activities like praying in the class and at home.	6	60
2.	The child is developing a sense of responsibility in going to church/ attending Sunday mass.	9	90
3.	The child is developing values and good social conduct.	10	100
4.	The child is kind and caring toward peers.	9	90
5.	The child expresses different kinds of emotions like love and affection, fear and anger, etc.	10	100
6.	The child shows reverence and respect during spiritual activities.	6	60
7.	The child distinguishes right from wrong and good from bad at their level.	8	80
8.	The child behaves properly in class and in various situations.	6	60
9.	The child learns courteous gestures and words like saying Please, excuse me, thank you, may I pass, words with po and opo, may I go out, etc	9	90

then that parents need to be physically present most of the time to their children..

4. CONCLUSION

The Kindergarten pupils have different rates of development in terms of their affective and moral growth. Implications drawn from the findings of the study relative to affective or moral growth are intended to greatly assist teachers and parents to better understand the peculiar needs of children.

The home and the school are significant partners in providing environment in nurturing and cultivation of affective and moral development of younger learners. Consistency and unity of these two significant environments facilitate success in meeting such need for moral development. Thus, teachers and parents must work hand in hand to provide children varied experiences and activities that would nurture more their affective and moral growth.

The curriculum of kindergarten programs must be tailored and anchored to affective and moral development needs of the younger pupils.

Recommendation

The following are recommended for further studies.

1. Similar studies be conducted same group of young learners but exhibiting different economic status, environment, and other variables to test and establish universal affective and moral development. This leads in establishing common and universal standard of affective and moral development among this group of learners in spite of their differences.

2. The issue of what is moral is subjective, complicated, and culture bound. What might be moral to others may not be so to others. There are circumstances that morality is changing due to some factors. This creates confusion to young group of learners. This must be carefully and intricately addressed and clarified to them.

3. Program and practices that would propel awareness leading to having and being (valuing) the moral fiber of an individual which begins in the foundational stage of existence must be crafted. This must be the goal of a consistent and harmonious tandem of the home and school.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

NA

6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

NA

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