

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL ON DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS IN THE RECEPTION CLASS

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the impact of social withdrawal on development of relationships in the reception class. The purposes of the study were to:

1. establish why some students display the tendency to be withdrawn and end up getting isolated in a situation where they are supposed to be interacting freely with peers.
2. systematically uncover evidence of being withdrawn and being isolated.
3. measure the impact of being withdrawn on formation of relationships.
4. come up with possible ways the caregiver can use in handling the two educationally and socially undesirable characteristics.

Sociocultural theory was applied to guide the study, and its main thrust was that social interaction such as cooperative dialogues between children and more knowledgeable members of society is necessary for children to acquire the ways of thinking and behaving that make up a community's culture. The case study design, supported with explanatory design, was used to investigate the phenomenon of withdrawal in three cases, which together constituted the composite case study. Non-participant observation and interviews were the methods used to gather data. The data were both statistical and textual, and interpretation of the two sources was triangulated. Some of the findings were that children have different interests and expectations when coming for pre-school, as well as that some were withdrawn in a particular activity, but active in others. The main finding was experiential confirmation that indeed some pre-school learners tend to be withdrawn. Although there were limitations of confining the study to as few as three participants, the study had contributions to make both theoretically and practically. It demonstrated how the sociocultural theory can be applied for potential benefit of supporting the child. Recommendations were made, among them that workshops and in-service training of practitioners and policy makers should be encouraged.

Keywords: Social withdrawal, reception class, caregiver, sociocultural theory.

INTRODUCTION

The reception class has as one of its key objectives preparation of the individual child for entry into the first grade of primary school. Caregivers in the pre-school classes consciously strive to develop in the child a range of skills and attitudes in collaboration with the child's family, as the saying goes, "a child educated only at school is an uneducated child". The skills include language skills, number skills, skills to do with social interaction with peers, creativity skills, to name some. Such preparation is aimed at ensuring that the child would be able to cope with the demands of formal schooling at a later stage. Many early childhood teachers tend to place more focus on language and mathematics skills, and give minimum attention to social development. Social development is concerned with development of the individual's personality. The aspects of personality focused on in the present study are behaviours to do with the way the individual interacts with peers in pre-school contexts

where the caregiver plans that interaction should occur when children are mingling, whether in a planned activity or during playtime.

Keywords

Withdrawal: Behaviour in which the child does not want to communicate with peers.

Isolated: A child who is isolated has minimal contact or little in common with others.

Reception class: The transitional class before the child starts formal primary school. This is also referred to as Zero Grade.

Peer group: A group of people of approximately the same age, status, and interests.

Background

The study was conducted in one of the pre-schools in a suburb in Gaborone, the capital city of Botswana. The government of Botswana upholds a policy, encouraging parents to send their children to pre-school so as to lay foundation for entry into primary school. The researchers have experience with four- and five-year-olds, and the latter attend reception class, which is the transitional year before starting formal primary school.

There is abundant literature in which early childhood development scholars have shown that peer relations are crucial for children's development, and add to their ability to cope with cognitive skills. Berk (1997, p. 580) has observed that:

...scientists who have conducted studies with non-human primates, report that although peer bonds are usually not as intense as attachments to parents, their impact on social competence is considerable.

This view is corroborated by Bergin & Bergin (2009), who have ascertained that peer attachment has significant influence on early childhood development.

On the other hand, parent and peer associations seem to complement each other. The parent-child bond emphasizes caregiving and affection, providing children with the security they need to enter the world of peers. Hartup and Moore (1990) (as cited in Berk, 1997, p.580) say, "...Peer interaction consists mainly of play and socializing, permitting children to expand social skills first acquired within the family." As Cacioppo & Patrick (2008) also put it, peer interaction helps to minimize loneliness.

In their experiment, Suomi and Harlow (1978) established within their peer group, that peer-only reared monkeys do develop socially competent behaviour, and they are far better off than monkeys reared in isolation. Although the experiment was conducted in the 1970s, its significance has been confirmed by Berk (1997) in his study of how playing with others helps in the socialization of the early childhood learner. Thus, it is against this background that the present research is carried out.

Research Problem

In a reception class of 25, as many as six children showed symptoms of withdrawal, which led them to being isolated by peers. However, the symptoms manifested themselves at different degrees of seriousness. A symptom, in the context of this research, is a physical or mental sign that indicates a condition that is either desirable or undesirable. The persistence of the symptoms caused some concern in the researchers, and this motivated systematic investigation of the phenomena of 'withdrawal' and 'isolation'. Three most serious cases were identified for investigation, with the aim of measuring the extent to which the children were withdrawn and isolated, as well as the impact of the two phenomena on forming relationships (dependent variable). The researchers also investigated the possible explanation behind the withdrawal phenomenon (independent variables).

Thus, the problem under investigation is that when a child prefers to remain withdrawn, peers isolate him/her, and that results in slow development socially and cognitively. This situation was observed by the researchers among children who participated in the study in the reception class, a critical transitional stage before they start primary education. This problem has also been recognized elsewhere. For example, Rubin & Coplan (2004, p. 18) have observed that,

“...the study of children's and adolescents' solitary and withdrawn behaviour has been associated with such constructs as shyness, behavioral inhibition, isolation and rejection, social reticence, passivity, and peer neglect”.

Oftentimes, the referents mentioned in the citation have been used interchangeably, and inconsistencies in definitions and assessments have been pervasive. It is with this problem in mind that the current study was motivated.

Research questions

To address the problem, three research questions were posed, and the primary one was:

1. Why do some children remain withdrawn and isolated during activities when they are supposed to interact with peers?

The following subsidiary questions support the primary one, namely:

2. What evidence is there showing that a child is withdrawn and isolated?
3. What is the impact of social withdrawal on the formation of relationships?
4. How best can the caregiver handle the two personality traits of being withdrawn and being isolated?

Significance of the study

The Botswana Government has of late come up with a policy to encourage parents to send their children to pre-school. In a situation where many people believe that children go to school to learn numbers and words only (Maths and language), it is significant that learners be taught how to socialize with age mates, that is, consciously be taught how to interact with members of the group. This has positive implications on the way children will form relationships that enhance their ability to learn school subjects.

Limitations

The limitations of the study are that it is conducted in a single class, within a single institution, and with a limited number of participants. That means it may not be readily generalizable to other institutions, a shortcoming that most case studies are blamed for. A study on a larger scale would have to be conducted. Single case study analysis has been subject to a number of criticisms, the most common of which concerns the inter-related issues of methodological rigour, researcher subjectivity, and external validity. That means, scholars (e.g. Yin, 2009, p. 14 – 15) see the absence of systematic procedures for case study research as something that raises the greatest concern due to a relative absence of methodological guidelines.

In mitigation, however, the various forms of single case study analysis can – through the application of different qualitative and/or quantitative research methods – provide a nuanced, that is, sound empirically-rich, holistic account of the specific phenomena of withdrawal and isolation.

Ethical considerations

‘Ethics’ can be defined as ‘set of moral principles and rules of conduct’. Ethics in research, as one author has put it, relates to:

...the application of a system of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to promote the good, to be respectful, and to be fair...
(Sieber, 1993, p.14).

One of the dilemmas is that in everyday social life, we (as adults, parents, or researchers) have tended not to be respectful of children's views and opinions, and the challenge is to develop research strategies that are fair and respectful to the subjects of our research.

The issue of informed consent often dominates discussions on research with children. In many cases of this nature, consent is usually taken to mean consent from parents or those in *loco parentis*, and in this respect children are seen as their parents' property, devoid of the right to say 'no' to research. In this study the researchers obtained consent from a range of adult gatekeepers (parents, school teachers, the head teacher, and the school governors) before conducting the investigation.

Theoretical grounding

This section gives some ideas of what literature influenced the current study. It also includes theoretical grounding, which essentially is an element of the literature review.

The Swiss cognitive theorist, Jean Piaget (1896 – 1980) has influenced the modern field of child development. However, his theory has to do more with cognitive than social development, though it remains relevant today (See Sandwell, 2004). *His theory deals with stages of development, showing the characteristics of a child during a given stage, and how these shape the development.*

The preferred theory for the current study is *sociocultural theory* by the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (1896 – 1934). It examines the relationship of culturally-specific practices to

child development. According to Berk (1997), and the neo-Vygotskian Karpov (2013), the theory focuses on how culture – the values, beliefs, customs, and skills of a social group – is transmitted to the next generation. According to Vygotsky (1978), social interaction such as cooperative dialogues between children and more knowledgeable members of society is necessary for children to acquire the ways of thinking and behaving that make up a community's culture. Vygotsky believed that as adults and more expert peers help children master culturally meaningful activities, the communication between them becomes part of children's language to guide their own actions and acquire new skills.

Vygotsky's theory, is explained in <http://www.parentcentredparenting.com/> and Daniels (2001) who sum it up clearly as follows. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of human learning describes learning as a social process and the origination of human intelligence in society or culture. The major theme of the theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky believed everything is learned on two levels.

First, through interaction with others, and then integrated into the individual's mental structure.

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child (intra-psychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57)

Thus, the pre-school child who interacts with the caregiver and peers is likely to develop social skills that enhance social development and learning of cognitive skills.

A second aspect of Vygotsky's theory is the idea that the potential for cognitive development is limited to a "**zone of proximal development**" (ZPD). This "zone" is the area of exploration for which the child is cognitively prepared, but requires help and social interaction to fully develop (Briner, 1999). A teacher or more experienced peer is able to provide the learner with "scaffolding" to support the learner's evolving understanding of knowledge domains or development of complex social skills. Collaborative learning, discourse, modelling, and scaffolding are strategies for supporting the intellectual knowledge and social skills of learners and facilitating intentional learning. That accomplishment depends on conscious socialization.

Methodology

The case study design was preferred, as the researchers were able to reflect on practice by investigating a problem experienced in the educational context, and how it can be solved, a practice encouraged by scholars (e.g. Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2005:2). The case study is defined by Yin (2002:23) as:

...an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used

This is echoed further by Flyvbjerg (2006:220) who specifies that "...a case study is a detailed examination of a single example providing reliable information about the broader class of a phenomenon".

The population comprised 25 pupils of age five in the reception class. Out of these, three were identified on the basis of observed tendencies of withdrawal from activities supposed to be engaged in with peers. In the entire group were some learners who betrayed symptoms of withdrawal at different levels of seriousness. Only three were identified after a period of four weeks of general observation by the researchers, which led to the selection of the three cases.

Non-participant covert observation and oral interview were used as methods of data collection. In non-participant observation, the researcher observes the child without becoming actively involved in the activities. During covert observation, the researcher observes the children without allowing them to become aware that they are being observed. The researcher makes notes privately when the child is no longer present. Interviews with the parents and the children complemented non-participant observation. In that case, an interview schedule was used as instrument for data collection.

Procedure for data collection

These procedures were followed to collect data:

- a. Permission was sought from the school head and parents/guardians of participants to conduct the interview
- b. The observation schedule was piloted on a group of six individuals, who were perceived by the caregiver to be withdrawn and isolated.
- c. Three children were then selected from the six, using their scores on the observation criteria.
- d. In the subsequent four weeks, each individual was observed from the angles of behavior when working in groups, working when the teacher stood in front of the class, and when doing activities outside the classroom.
- e. The remaining two weeks were devoted to interviews with the children and also their parents

Data from observation were analysed statistically, showing how the participants fared on the pre-determined scale. Since this initial data collection procedure led to the interviews, the latter were analysed thematically in order to obtain information on what children thought about themselves, and how parents perceived their children. Analysis was referenced to the research problem and research questions, leading to recommendations that would enhance practice.

FINDINGS

This case study, as noted earlier, comprised three cases, which share the common phenomenon of withdrawal. This is summed up in Figure 1 below as a way of illuminating how the three cases displaying similar characteristics of withdrawal and isolation converge when it comes to analysis of data. The cases have been labeled CX, CY, and CZ, and the Figure shows that in their acknowledged individuality, their observed behaviours shares commonalities.

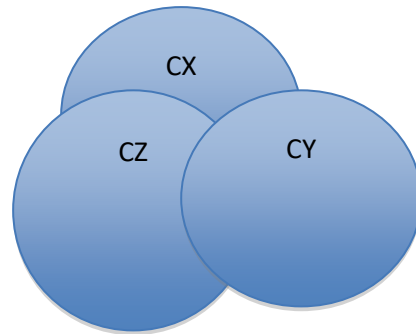


Figure 1 Convergence of cases into one case study

The findings are categorized according to the questions posed earlier in our discussion.

What evidence is there showing that a child is withdrawn?

The pre-determined observation schedule comprising several criteria was used to measure the dependent variable of withdrawal for each case. The findings are captured below, starting with Child X (CX).

Indicators of withdrawal behaviour (CX)

Child CX (Sex: female; Age:5; Stays with mother)

Key: 1= very low; 2=low; 3= high; 4=very high

Item	1	2	3	4
When the caregiver is standing before the class				
1. Eagerness to answer caregiver's questions	✓			
2. Initiating own questions	✓			
3. Showing a relaxed presence during lessons		✓		
4. Reacting well to criticism by peers		✓		
5. Bidding to be nominated to answer questions	✓			
6. Level of motivation as observed by the caregiver			✓	
When children are working in groups				
7. Initiating discussion with peers	✓			
8. Showing a relaxed expression during groupwork			✓	
9. Smiling and laughing with others		✓		
10. Taking part in jokes	✓			
11. Seeking clarification from peers	✓			
12. Cooperation with group members		✓		
When doing activities outside the classroom				
13. Voluntary participation in games		✓		
14. Evidence of team spirit		✓		
15. Control of temper	✓			
16. Control of emotions		✓		
17. Evidence of friendliness		✓		
18. Full involvement in the activity	✓			

Totals	8	16	6	0
Overall indicator	30 out of 72 possible points or 42%			

Interpretation

For this child, 16 out of 18 indicators (89%) were rated either very low or low, showing a very high degree of withdrawal. When the caregiver teaches while standing before the class, the child scores poorly regarding eagerness to answer caregiver's questions, and bidding to be nominated to answer questions. Lack of these characteristics was considered to negatively impact on good relationships with both the caregiver and peers. Surprisingly, the motivation for the child was rated high, and it was evidenced through a high level of interest as reflected facially. Failure to initiate questions also showed the child was withdrawn.

It is when working in groups that children are expected to interact more freely with peers. CX is either low or very low in all six indicators except maintaining a relaxed expression in her state of being withdrawn. Failure to initiate discussion among peers, not taking part in jokes, and failure to seek clarification on issues under discussion led to the conclusion that the child was definitely withdrawn, hence did not relate well.

While playing games outside the classroom, CX demonstrated either low or very low commitment to participation, team spirit, control of temper and emotions. This resulted in her being isolated, and casting a lone figure when most peers were enjoying themselves fully. In terms of impact of these indicators, it was concluded that failure to participate in games impacted negatively of relationships with peers.

Indicators of withdrawal (CY)

Child CY (Sex: male; Age: 5; Stays with both parents)

Key: 1= very low; 2=low; 3= high; 4=very high

Item	1	2	3	4
When the caregiver is standing before the class				
1. Eagerness to answer caregiver's questions	✓			
2. Initiating own questions	✓			
3. Showing a relaxed presence during lessons		✓		
4. Reacting well to criticism by peers		✓		
5. Bidding to be nominated to answer questions	✓			
6. Level of motivation as observed by the caregiver		✓		
When children are working in groups				
7. Initiating discussion with peers	✓			
8. Showing a relaxed expression during groupwork		✓		
9. Smiling and laughing with others		✓		
10. Taking part in jokes	✓			
11. Seeking clarification from peers	✓			
12. Cooperation with group members			✓	
When doing activities outside the classroom				

13. Voluntary participation in games			✓	
14. Evidence of team spirit			✓	
15. Control of temper			✓	
16. Control of emotions		✓		
17. Evidence of friendliness			✓	
18. Full involvement in the activity			✓	
Totals	6	12	18	0
Overall indicator	36 out of 72 possible points or 50%			

Interpretation

Child CY scored 36 out of 72 possible points or 50%. Analysis of results in the situation where the caregiver stands in front of the class led to the conclusion that there is no difference between this child (CY) and CX. For all the six indicators, the rating is either low or very low. The child showed that he was tense during lessons. It was concluded that he was possibly finding it difficult to relate well with both caregiver and peers. The same applied to working in groups, where all items reflected withdrawal, except a high level of cooperation with group members. He was observed to be most obliging when the group leader asked him to do something. Despite that, he remained reticent.

Rating CY while doing extra-mural activities revealed some surprising results. He scored very highly in all indicators, 17 out of 24 possible points (71%), except in the control of emotions, where he scored low. He tended to be impatient with players who did not meet his expectations. However, in other aspects he participated with motivation, while working as a team member. While in the field, he had friendly team-mates, which was the exact opposite of classroom and groupwork situations. It was concluded that CY seems to develop good relationships with peers when out of the classroom but not so in class.

Indicators of withdrawal (CZ)

Child CZ (Sex: male; Age: 5; Stays with grandmother)

Key: 1= very low; 2=low; 3= high; 4=very high

Item	1	2	3	4
When the caregiver is standing before the class				
1. Eagerness to answer caregiver's questions	✓			
2. Initiating own questions	✓	✓		
3. Showing a relaxed presence during lessons				
4. Reacting well to criticism by peers	✓			
5. Bidding to be nominated to answer questions	✓			
6. Level of motivation as observed by the caregiver		✓		
When children are working in groups				
7. Initiating discussion with peers	✓			
8. Showing a relaxed expression during groupwork		✓		
9. Smiling and laughing with others	✓			
10. Taking part in jokes	✓			

11. Seeking clarification from peers	✓			
12. Cooperation with group members		✓		
When doing activities outside the classroom				
13. Voluntary participation in games		✓		
14. Evidence of team spirit	✓			
15. Control of temper	✓			
16. Control of emotions	✓			
17. Evidence of friendliness		✓		
18. Full involvement in the activity		✓		
Totals				
Overall indicator	25 out of 72 possible points or 35%			

Interpretation

Out of the three cases, comparatively, CZ had the lowest rating of 25 out of 72 possible points or 35%. He scored either low or very low in all the 18 measurement criteria. This finding confirms evidence of withdrawal. The impact of the withdrawal on formation of relationships is the same as that observed in the analysis of two other children above, that is, CX and CY.

This section met one of the objectives of the study, namely, to systematically uncover evidence of being withdrawn and also indicate impact on formation of relationships. This also answered the question to do with available evidence of withdrawal.

Why do some children remain withdrawn and isolated during activities when they are supposed to interact with peers?

In the sequential use of observation and interview method, it was assumed that interviewing children and their parents or guardians would give clues on causes of withdrawal. This is actually a difficult question because normally, it is not easy for someone to say why they are withdrawn (in the case of participating children), or say why someone's child is withdrawn (in the case of parents). Besides, children and parents may not even know the meaning of withdrawal as an educational concept. Two interview schedules were used to elicit data. The researcher drew inferences from the responses in order to arrive at conclusions.

Findings from CX

CX is a girl, aged five years. She is the only child, and stays with the mother, who is a single parent. There are no other siblings, and in response, she said that she did not have any friends in the neighbourhood of their home. When asked what she enjoyed most in class, her response was that she enjoyed listening to stories told by the teacher. She also said that she did not enjoy games outside the classroom, and that during her free time she enjoys watching movies and playing games on the computer. By drawing inferences, it seems even at home CX does not have friends, and prefers to be alone while talking to movies and computer games. This possibly explains why she is withdrawn at school.

Findings from CY

CY is a boy aged five years, and is the third child, meaning there are two other siblings. He is the last-born, and lives with both parents who come from Malawi, and are working in Botswana on contract. He confirmed that he has friends in the neighbourhood, and said that he spends time playing games with friends outside the home. What he enjoys most at school is playing games outside, and during his free time he enjoys riding his bicycle in the yard and helping father in the vegetable garden. Interpretation of these data led to the conclusion that CY is not much interested in schoolwork, and prefers outdoor activities where he mingles freely with others. He also has interest in gardening as shown when he says he helps the father. He seems to get withdrawn when he is confined to the classroom, working on school subjects.

Findings from CZ

CZ is a boy aged five years, who lives with the grandmother and three other relatives aged 3, 6, and 8. His mother died two years ago, and the grandmother who works at Gaborone City Council is the guardian. CZ says that he has friends around, including the peer relatives. When asked what he spends time doing with the friends or relatives, he simply said, "Nothing". His answer was also the same when he was asked what he enjoys doing in class. However, he said that he enjoys soccer when outside the classroom, but rating showed that he scored either low or very low in the observation schedule. Although it is difficult to say why he is withdrawn, one can infer that there does not seem to be much educational support from the grandmother to encourage interaction. When he answered that they do nothing at home, one can conclude that he comes from a deprived environment where there are no toys and other playing items, hence the withdrawal.

The views expressed by parents and guardians

The custodians of the three cases volunteered their time to respond to the interview questions asked by the researcher. Responses complemented those given by the children.

Findings from Parent X

Parent X is a single mother who works as a secretary in one of the companies in Gaborone. They stay together, the two of them in a servant's quarters, and she does not allow her child to mingle with children of the landlord who live in the main house. She confirmed to the researchers that her daughter does not have friends around, and was happy that way because she feared that friends would teach her daughter bad things. She described the girl as a happy person at home, and to make her happy, she regularly bought TV games. She reported that her daughter found school to be boring. When asked what she thinks the school should do to make CX interact with others more freely, she suggested that the teacher should allow her daughter to play with female children only.

From this it was concluded that CX's withdrawal was likely caused by the attitude of the mother that she should not interact with others in the home neighbourhood. Further, the mother's suggestion to limit friendship to female children only also seems to have the potential of impacting negatively on formation of relationships.

Findings from Parent Y

Parent Y, the mother of CY, is an expatriate from Malawi. She and the husband are professionals who work in Gaborone. The child relates well with siblings and has friends around. According to the mother, the boy interacts freely when they are playing outside the house. However X has the problem of language, that is, Setswana. This makes it difficult for him to play freely with Batswana children. She confirmed that the son enjoys gardening, and that the father makes him happy by buying garden tools and computer games. When asked what his son thought about school, the mother replied that his son expected to see a garden at school.

The conclusion drawn from this is that the likely reason for his withdrawal at school is caused by the language problem. In groupwork, because the majority are Setswana speakers, they tend to use Setswana mostly, and the boy gets withdrawn. We can also conclude that CY is a clear case of someone who is practical and physical because he prefers physical work, gardening (which the school does not provide), and playing games (physical development) rather than school subjects.

Findings from Parent Z

Parent Z is a foster parent, grandmother of CZ who took over custody after the latter's mother died. She is in her late 50s, but still goes to work to support the four kids from three of her daughters. She indicated that she was struggling, and that food was often not enough. Asked whether CZ interacted freely with friends in the neighbourhood, she said that she did not know. She also did not know whether the boy had any friends. As to what the boy did during his free time, she said he walked in the neighbourhood with the other three kids. She thought at home the boy did not speak much and was reserved. She said that she made the boy happy at home by going to church with them. According to her, CZ said he did not find school enjoyable. About what the school could do to make CZ interact more at school, she said that she was not sure what could be done.

Some conclusions can be drawn from the scenario above, and one of them is that the grandmother does not seem aware that she has a role to play in promoting the children's development, other than providing food and shelter. This is shown when she says that she does not know whether CZ has friends, whether he interacts with such friends, or what he does during his free time.

DISCUSSION

Recapitulation of findings

As a unitary case study, the three cases display similar behaviours of withdrawal, though in some instances they do so differently. The differences add to better insight into the construct of withdrawal.

To summarise, the findings confirmed, through the objective instrument (observation schedule), and interviews of both children and their parents/guardians that indeed they are withdrawn. This was measured in three categories, namely: when the caregiver stands before the class; when pupils work in groups; and when performing physical exercises outside the classroom.

One key finding was that for all the three, participation in group activities ranges from low to very low, and similarly, there was low to very low participation in extra-mural activities, hence it was noticed they were isolated.

What questions arise?

The above-mentioned findings and their respective conclusions make it logical to raise questions for the researcher-caregiver of this study in particular, and caregivers in general. The questions are indicative of the crux of the study regarding how to address social inhibition at pre-school in Botswana. Balda and Duhan (2010) urge caregivers and researchers to foster socialization by actively addressing these questions.

What professional assistance should the caregiver render to the child who:

- appears to be motivated, but is withdrawn?
- has problems engaging with peers?
- prefers one activity to another though all activities are prescribed?
- is emotionally impatient with peers who do not meet his/her expectations?
- participates in groupwork but remains withdrawn in other activities?
- thinks school is boring?
- has parents who discourage her to interact with peers?
- has a different mother tongue from that of majority of peers?
- stays with a foster parent who has an approach that is negative?

These questions demonstrate the direct link with social cultural theory as discussed in Section 9.0. To recall Vygotsky's argument (1978, p. 57), "... Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level..." This means for the child to develop social skills, there is need for cultural mediation by the caregiver and interpersonal communication with peers and members of the cultural context. Bruner (1986) has referred to this as scaffolding, characterized as the support rendered the child by an adult.

The implications of the theory vis-à-vis the questions above are multi-faceted. The findings revealed a gap in the scaffolding that is current. Children require a more informed way of support. The failure to form relationships, and the negative impact of certain behaviours on the same, suggests that drawing on the sociocultural theory has the potential of improving caregiving practices. In particular the principle of the zone of proximal development needs to be borne in mind as the caregiver goes about the task of scaffolding. One of the principles of the ZPD states that through the assistance of a more capable person, a child is able to learn skills or aspects of a skill that go beyond the child's actual developmental or maturational level (cf. Kozulin, 2014).

Contribution of the study

The study unearthed childhood dispositions worth taking note of, such as seeing school as boring, some degree of selfishness due to lack of exposure to relating with others, unacceptable family and community background, to name some.

Secondly, the study has confirmed empirically that there are ways of shaping dispositions that are inhibitive, and account for withdrawal.

Thirdly, the study has demonstrated the need for multi-professional partnership, and for strong reciprocal links between home and early education settings.

Fourthly, both implicitly and explicitly, the study has shown that early educators need to attend to what children are learning; how they become socially acceptable learners; and how their learning is supported.

At practical level, the study has made a valid contribution by establishing causes of withdrawal through researched evidence. Building on that, and the logical questions emanating from the findings, the study has made a contribution in terms of suggesting how the caregivers could handle the different behaviours of withdrawal evidenced by children under their care.

At theoretical level, the study has made significant contribution in terms of how the absence or presence of an understanding of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory has the potential of exacerbating or enhancing the problem of childhood withdrawal, the focus of the study. Thus, the applicability of the said theory has been demonstrated in the Botswana context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Generally, educational research is carried out so that educationalists and educators derive benefit from findings. Similarly, studies that are specifically focused like the present one, are purposeful, having been motivated by the need to come up with solutions to an ethnographic problem. Premised on this, the recommendations below obtain.

1. Given that withdrawal, a socialization problem, is of commonplace occurrence in reception classes, it is recommended that both practicing caregivers, and pre-school heads be regularly taken through *in-service training* so that they re-visit the issue of child socialization, thereby updating their knowledge.
2. It is recommended that stakeholders in early childhood education be taken through *workshops* to appreciate a range of pertinent issues that are normally side-lined, for example, the need to take cognizance of individual differences, how to make the pre-school environment accommodating to children from different backgrounds, and children with different expectations about the school. While some of these notions may not be new, the idea of workshops has the advantage of creating a shared understanding among practitioners.
3. Parents and guardians are not necessarily educators. Their starting point is to merely send their child to a pre-school for different reasons such as so that their child has somewhere to be while they are at work; so that the child can learn how to write; or so that their child is taught how to speak English instead of speaking the mother tongue, Setswana in our case. Given this, not all may necessarily have educational reasons for sending the child to pre-school. They need guidance at the earliest point. It is, therefore recommended that the head of the pre-school regularly convenes meetings of all parents and guardians to share reciprocal expectations.
4. In many education systems, symptoms of withdrawal symptoms are detected later in the individual's school career. It is recommended that the Schools' Psychological Services of a country should put into place systems for early detection of withdrawal for proper rectification. This would set the foundation for coping with lifelong learning. The notion of 'lifelong learning refers to the

development of human potential through a continuously supportive process, which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding that they will require through their lifetimes.

5. The final recommendation is more individualized and focused on the caregiver. There are no ideas that remain appealing forever, and ideas of yesterday are commonly overtaken by events given the dynamics of change in human psychology and learning styles. It is, therefore, recommended that the individual caregiver makes it a habit to read up-to-date journals, research findings, and books. Reading should not end the day the caregiver receives her certificate at college.

CONCLUSION

A more conscious socialization of the pre-school child has the potential of preparing young children for entry into formal schooling. A care-giver who is able to successfully follow principles of socialization, such as those embodied in the sociocultural philosophy, helps counter child inhibition, so that children are not withdrawn from interaction with peers and care-givers. Also, the role of parents and guardians is duly recognized as a critical component in child socialization. The need for collaboration between the pre-school and the home cannot be overemphasized.

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