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Sustaining Good Inter-Personal Relationships in Citizenship Education: A Case of Nyankomam R/C Basic School in Aowin Municipality in the Western Region of Ghana

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Abstract

The study was aimed at using simulation to demonstrate skills for sustaining good inter-personal relationships among pupils of Nyankomam R/C Primary four. The study involved forty-two pupils of Nyankomam R/C Primary four. The entire pupils in the class were chosen purposely for the study. The research instrument used was test. The study sought to answer the following research questions: (a) How can simulation can be used to define the concept good inter-personal relationships among pupils of Nyankomam R/C Primary 4? and (b) What are the importance of sustaining good inter-personal relationships among pupils? The study revealed that majority of the pupils have less knowledge on how to demonstrate skills for sustaining good inter-personal relationships in the pre-test. However, most of pupils had above average marks in the post-test as a result of the simulation technique used to demonstrate skills for sustaining good inter-personal relationships among pupils. It was recommended that teachers must do everything in their capacity to engage pupils in simulation during Citizenship Education lessons since it will create interest in pupils to study the subject.

Keywords

Simulation, Inter-Personal Relationships, Citizenship Education, Nyankomam, Basic School, Aowin Municipality, Western Region, Ghana

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1. Introduction and Background

An ‘interpersonal relationship’ is an association between two or more people that may range from fleeting to enduring. Interpersonal relationships usually involve some level of interdependence: people in a relationship tend to influence each other, share their thoughts and feelings, and engage in activities together. The relationships teachers have with each pupil, and that the students have with each other, are integral to a classroom culture that optimises learning. At the heart of such relationships is reciprocal respect, shared control of the learning process and the development of a learning community in which students are encouraged to see themselves as part of a team and therefore having a part to play in others’ learning as well as their own. Good inter-personal relationship with pupils can result in social cohesion which will bring about good academic performance whereby the less privileged can be helped by the intelligent ones.

The term ‘social cohesion’ is used to describe the bonds or

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'glue' that bring people together. Triggers for such bonds can include eating meals and playing games or doing activities with other people, collective/shared experiences and competitive sport. A cohesive community is one where strong bonds and relationships are developed between people of different backgrounds and circumstances. This normally results in sense of belonging. 'Sense of belonging' or 'community' in an educational environment has been defined as 'students' sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others (teacher and peers) in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the class. Failure to feel a sense of belonging may lead to feelings of social isolation, alienation, and loneliness. Studies consistently show that students who experience a sense of belonging in educational environments are more motivated, more engaged in school and classroom activities, and more dedicated to school. Students who feel they belong to learning environments also report greater enjoyment, enthusiasm, happiness, interest, and more confidence in engaging in learning activities, whereas those who feel isolated report greater anxiety, boredom, frustration, and sadness during the academic engagement which directly and negatively affects academic performance. It is on this that the researchers want to use simulation to demonstrate skills for sustaining good inter-personal relationships among pupils of Nyankomam R/C Primary four.

During teaching supervision at Nyankomam R/C Primary four, the researchers identified that the pupils could not demonstrate skills for sustaining good inter-personal relationships let alone mentioning its importance during a lesson in class with the class teacher. This was a problem seen with almost the entire class, identifying this problem, the researchers decided to use simulation to demonstrate skills for sustaining good inter-personal relationships among pupils of Nyankomam R/C Primary four. The study sought to answer the following research questions. 1. To what extend can simulation be used to the pupils of Nyankomam R/C Primary four define the concept inter-personal relationships? 2. What are the importance of sustaining good inter-personal relationships among pupils Nyankomam R/C Primary four?

2. Review of the Literature

Simulation is a technique for practice and learning that can be applied to many different disciplines and types of trainees. It is a technique (not a technology) to replace and amplify real experiences with guided ones, often "immersive" in nature, that evoke or replicate substantial aspects of the real world in a fully interactive fashion. "Immersive" here implies that participants are immersed in a task or setting as if it was the real world [7, 15]. Simulation may be defined as a role playing in which the process of teaching is enacted artificially and an effect is made to practice some important skill of communication through this [15]. Under this, the student-teacher and students simulate a particular role and try to develop an identity with the actual classroom environment. Thus, the whole simulated teaching programme becomes training in role perception and role playing. Simulation is the basis of sensitivity training, socio-drama, role playing and psycho drama, which provides avenue to students during teaching and learning activities in the classroom [1].

Simulation is an excellent avenue for students to learn experientially and provides opportunities for students to practice problem solving and psychomotor skills in a safe, controlled environment. This innovative teaching strategy incorporates not just skill acquisition, but also carries management concepts into the scenario, while requiring only one faculty member. Students simultaneously take one of two paths through the components of this method to achieve the same learning [10]. It is assumed that certain underlying skills to teaching can be modified, described and practiced like any other skill. It is also assumed that through role perception the psychological appreciation of the classroom, problems will grow and develop in the students' teacher as a basis for handling the problems in class [15]. Generally, simulations have been categorised into three: (a) those requiring assigned role-playing for interactions among students, (b) those where student interactions are computer-based (often referred to as simulation games), and (c) those in which students are placed into a simulated situation but interact with others as themselves rather than playing assigned roles [22].

Role play simulation is more required in classroom teaching and learning which aimed at developing public speaking skills. In the classroom situation simulation should be designed to suite the lesson objectives. Simulation based training techniques, tools, and strategies can be applied in designing structured learning experiences, measurement tool that linked to the targeted teamwork competences and learning objectives to put students in the classroom to learn on their own or to lecturing them about the classroom and as the major tool for assessment of performance [7, 9, 15].

However, the following four (4) stages can be considered when designing simulation in the classroom:

(1) Define teaching goals:

The first step in designing a simulation is debriefing the goals you wish to achieve in your classroom relative to the simulation exercise. Defining goals clearly is essential to determine the structure and methods of your simulation. It is also essential to be realistic about what you want to achieve.

This is focused on only a small number of significant concepts and goals rather than trying to create the simulation to end all simulations. In most instances simple is better than complex, especially if you want and need your students to get engaged quickly. Simulation should be constructed in line with the learning goals.

(2) Simulation construction:

Identify the major actors in the process and create role statements for each that focus on interests and motivations; Establish realistic structural or power relationships among the actors; Write a scenario or problem statement for actors to resolve; Assemble necessary data or resources; Create specific ground rules for students (eg. Length of simulation permitted interaction restrictions) for the running of the simulation.

(3) Running the simulation:

You must have everything before the start of the simulation, and you must be prepared to answer student questions about rules or other game element; otherwise, simulation will take on a life of its own and not to serve your teaching goals. After the simulation has been successfully run in class, debriefing should be used to assess the learning goals through questions.

(4) Debriefing:

Develop a series of questions that place the simulation into the context of the course. This includes examining differences between simulation and reality; actors and their constraints; and the reasons for specific outcomes. Your questions should be tied directly to your teaching goals to benefit both teachers and students [12].

The research showing the benefits of active learning suggests that a good way to use simulations would be to allow learners to discover the principles themselves by interacting with the simulation. It would seem that despite the likelihood that it would take longer to learn concepts through discovery learning than by direct instruction, once learned, these concepts should be better understood and better remembered [13]. Students taught with the simulations performed better on all questions and reported greater enjoyment of the class [16]. Simulation help students visualize and build a deep understanding of difficult and abstract statistical concept [19].

Notably in the classroom situation, students become active learners they are more motivated to succeed, while also becoming more critical in their views as a result of making their own decisions rather than simply accepting the ideas of others [17]. Successfully motivating students can significantly increase their participation, engagement, and learning as well [11, 21]. Solving problems, the basis of problem-based learning activities like simulations, can be very motivating for students, while also aiding retention and application [5]. Significant learning is brought about by simulations because gathering information, making key decisions, and reaching conclusions are “in the hands and minds of the students” [11].

Educators can assess a student's preparedness for the practical placement component. Simulations have the power to recreate complex, dynamic, political processes in the classroom, allowing students to examine the motivations, behavioural constraints, resources and interactions among institutional actors. In the classroom situation it encourages students’ participation and mirror real world situations [12]. Simulations help students acquire discipline-specific knowledge that can be transferred to a professional setting, while teaching processes are involved in a particular discipline [11]. They also engage students in a form of active learning, which involves doing things and thinking about the things they are doing”. Active learning not only requires student involvement through action and participation, it also requires intellectual, physical, and/or emotional energy in a “learner-focused approach that is based upon changing learners’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes” which enhances competences in learners [2, 18].

Simulation-based training is just one training approach that particularly focuses on providing trainees with the opportunities to develop and practice the required competences and receive feedback [25]. The use of simulation allows students to engage beyond the traditional classroom lectures to a more active learning method where students are responsible for making decisions. This active participation by students results in increased retention of knowledge and decision making skills [4]. It has been shown that actively engaging students in real time scenarios affords a much richer learning experience [4, 23]. Simulation is a form of authentic assessment [14]. When exposed to active, experiential, reflective and contextual learning approaches such as simulated environments, students can see the direct relevance of their educational experience to their future practice:

(1) Educators can assess a student's preparedness for the practical placement component of their degree.

(2) Technology-based forms of simulation can enable instant feedback to students.

(3) Simulations are effective means of evaluating students' competences, such as their professionalism, as well as their content knowledge [14].

A paper presented on “Why collaborative simulations provide a powerful learning experience for students and how

to develop one" identified six consistently benefits for using a collaborative simulation to teach:

(1) Students learn to evaluate information more carefully

(2) Students realize that making assumptions can cause big problems.

(3) Students discover that the unexpected can and will happen.

(4) Students experience the difficulty of making decisions during an evolving situation.

(5) Students learn to handle many aspects of professional teamwork.

(6) Students gain a better understanding of the complementary roles of public relations and journalism [22]. These six (6) collaborative simulations have great impact on students' learning.

Simulation has great impact on different kinds of learning as categorized by Bloom (1956). Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning consists of six hierarchically ordered levels. From lowest to highest, the six kinds of learning are as follows:

(1) *Knowledge*: the ability to recall the appropriate facts, data, and information. Knowledge includes activities such as defining, describing, identifying, and the like.

(2) *Comprehension*: the ability to understand the meaning of information. Comprehension includes activities such as citing, explaining, giving examples, summarizing, generalizing, and so on.

(3) *Application*: the ability to use concepts and information in a new situation. Application includes activities such as applying, constructing, predicting, solving, and so on.

(4) *Analysis*: the ability to break information down into components in order to better understand the issue, draw conclusions, and make inferences. Analysis includes activities such as analyzing, comparing, contrasting, distinguishing, and so on.

(5) *Synthesis*: the ability to bring the different aspects of an issue together in order to understand the big picture. Synthesis includes activities such as formulating, integrating, negotiating, and so on.

(6) *Evaluation*: the ability to make a judgment about the value of concepts and ideas based upon personal values/opinion in the absence of a real right/wrong answer. Evaluation includes activities such as concluding, deciding, defending, judging, supporting, and so on.

The principal disadvantages of using simulation is that the teacher must sacrifice a degree of substantive coverage in return for a degree level of student understanding on what might be narrower of topics [12]. The relevance of simulation can be seen by students in citizenship education classroom when teachers guide students to have open discussion on inter-personal relationship as a topic.

An inter-personal relationship is an association between two or more people that may range in duration from brief to enduring. This association may be based on inference, love, solidarity, regular business interactions, or some other type of social commitment. Interpersonal relationships are formed in the context of social, cultural and other influences. The context can vary from family or kinship relations, friendship, and marriage, relations with associates, work, clubs, neighborhoods, and places of worship. They may be regulated by law, custom, or mutual agreement, and are the basis of social groups and society as a whole. From a philosophical point of view, a personal relationship is a choice. The choice can be made if three conditions are met: you know who he/she is, what he/she expects from you, and what you can expect from him/her. If you were misinformed then you did not choose for it, and hence it is not a relationship

The various types of good inter-personal relationships are used to sustain unity in very social environment. Types of relationships, is normally viewed as a connection between individuals, such as a romantic or intimate relationship, or a parent-child relationship [27]. Individuals can also have relationships with groups of people, such as the relation between a pastor and his congregation, an uncle and a family, or a mayor and a town. Finally, groups or even nations may have relations with each other, though this is a much broader domain than that covered under the topic of interpersonal relationships. Most scholarly work on relationships focuses on the small subset of interpersonal relationships involving romantic partners in pairs or dyads [27].

Inter-personal relationships usually involve some level of interdependence. People in a relationship tend to influence each other, share their thoughts and feelings, and engage in activities together. Because of this interdependence, most things that change or impact one member of the relationship will have some level of impact on the other member. The study of interpersonal relationships, involves several branches of the social sciences, including such disciplines as sociology, psychology, anthropology, and social work. Interpersonal skills are extremely vital when trying to develop a relationship with another person. The scientific study of relationships evolved during the 1990s and came to be referred to as 'relationship science which distinguishes itself from anecdotal evidence or pseudo-experts by basing conclusions on data and objective analysis. Interpersonal ties are also a subject in mathematical sociology [27].

Inter-personal relationships are dynamic systems that change continuously during their existence [26]. Like living organisms, relationships have a beginning, a lifespan, and an end, they tend to grow and improve gradually, as people get to know each other and become closer emotionally, or they gradually deteriorate as people drift apart, move on with their lives and form new relationships with others [26]. Friendships may involve some degree of transitivity. In other words, a person may become a friend of an existing friend's friend. However, if two people have a sexual relationship with the same person, they may become competitors rather than friends. Accordingly, sexual behaviour with the sexual partner of a friend may damage the friendship. Sexual activities between two friends tend to alter that relationship, either by "taking it to the next level" or by severing it [26]. Traditional psychologists specializing in close relationships have focused on relationship dysfunction, positive psychology argues that relationship health is not merely the absence of relationship dysfunction [26]. Healthy relationships are built on a foundation of secure attachment and are maintained with love and purposeful positive relationship behaviours. Additionally, healthy relationships can be made to "flourish." Positive psychologists are exploring what makes existing relationships flourish and what skills can be taught to partners to enhance their existing and future personal relationships. A social skills approach posits that individuals differ in their degree of communication skill, which has implications for their relationships. Relationships in which partners possess and enact relevant communication skills are more satisfying and stable than relationships in which partners lack appropriate communication skills [26].

Positive psychologists use the term "flourishing relationships" describes interpersonal relationships that are not merely happy, but instead characterized by intimacy, growth, and resilience. Flourishing relationships also allow a dynamic balance between focus on the intimate relationships and focus on other social relationships. Some researchers criticize positive psychology for studying positive processes in isolation from negative processes [27]. Positive psychologists argue that positive and negative processes in relationships may be better understood as functionally independent, not as opposites of each other [8].

3. Methodology

The research design chosen was action research. Action research was chosen because it can serve as a chance to really take a look at one's own teaching in a structured manner. While the focus of action research is usually the students, educators can also investigate what effects their teaching is having on their students, how they could work better with other teachers, or ways of changing for the better. The total number of pupils in the school was made up of one hundred and forty-four (144). This was made up of seventy (70) males while females are seventy-four (74). Pupils in the class meant for the study were forty - two; made up of twenty - two girls and twenty boys. The primary four pupils were chosen purposively for the study.

The research instrument used for the study was test items. A test or an examination is an assessment intended to measure a test taker's knowledge, skills, aptitude, physical fitness or classification in many other topics [24]. Test is administered and scored in a consistent manner to ensure legal defensibility. In general, teachers use classroom test to diagnose student's strengths and weakness, monitor each student's progress, assign grades and determines the teacher's own instructional effectiveness (htt://www.WestEd.org/online pubs/kn-o1-03.pdf). Tests are used to rank schools, place students at various levels, and decide who will graduate from school (http://www.edsource-org).

Pre-intervention, intervention and post-intervention were used for the data collection. During the pre-intervention collection procedure pre-test was conducted by the researchers to identify the pupils' strength and weakness. The test contained three (3) test items which required correct answers to be supplied by pupils. It was based on the skills for sustaining good inter-personal relationships among pupils. The first questions attracted two (2) marks each and the question attracted six marks, making a total of ten (10) marks. Thirty (30) minutes was used for the test and was invigilated by the researchers, the class teacher and the two mentees in the school. The researchers observed these problems after marking the test. Pupils had difficulty in demonstrating skills for sustaining good inter-personal relationships among themselves. The pre-test was used for the post-test.

The intervention took one week. Teaching learning materials used include pictures depicting people living together happily and film titled "Hotel Rwanda" which depicts effects of war. During the week, the pupils were taken through the meaning and explanation of good inter-personal relationship. Some of the Citizenship Education periods within the week were used for the intervention process. The pupils were made to watch Hotel Rwanda and guided to comment it. The last period of the week was used to guide pupils to simulate skills for sustaining good inter-personal relationships among themselves.

During the post-intervention, the researcher conducts post-test to determine whether the pupils' performance has improved. During the pre-intervention, the researchers conducted a pre-

test. After applying the intervention, the researcher conducted a post test. The results of both pre-test and post-test were discussed using simple percentages. Frequencies were converted into percentages, presented into tables.

4. Findings and Discussions

This section presents findings of the study on using simulation technique of teaching to demonstrate skills for sustaining good inter-personal relationships among pupils of Nyankomam R/C Primary four in the Aowin municipality of Western Region.

Pre-Test on Sustaining Good Inter-Personal Relationships

Table 1. Pre-Test.

Number of pupils	Marks	Percentage (%)
15	3	37.5
13	5	32.5
12	6	30
Total 40	14	100

As shown in table 1, 15 of the pupils in class had 3 marks in the pre-test presenting 37.5%, 13 of the pupils in the same class had 5 marks representing 32.5% whiles 12 of the pupils scored 6 marks indicating 30%. The results obtained by the pupils indicated that few of the pupils have idea on the topic, whilst most do have less knowledge on how to simulate skills for sustaining good inter-personal relationships. It could also indicate that pupils did not learn the concepts when they were taught by their class teacher or they were not serious in class.

Post-Test on Sustaining Good Inter-Personal Relationships

Table 2. Post-Test.

Pupils	Marks	Percentage (%)
14	6	35
19	8	47.5
2	9	5
5	10	12.5
Total 40	33	100

As shown in table 2, 14 (35%) of the pupils scored 6 marks in the post-test, 19 (47.5%) had 8 marks, 2 (5%), whilst 5 (12.5%) scored 10 marks. The result in table 2 implies that the pupils understood the concept after the intervention process. Few were also within the average pupils group. In general, the performance was better after the intervention. This goes to attests what [4] mentioned that simulation makes the classroom more dynamic through various verbal and nonverbal acts of the students in addition to their cognitive process that is required to understand, interpret and analyse the meanings of the role play. Dealing with pupils requires unique skills, role playing offers the opportunity to develop and enhance communication, interviewing, assessment and intervention skills and boost critical thinking ability rather than the traditional teaching methods [4]. This really indicates that it can be used by teachers to teach inter-personal relationship as a topic in Citizenship Education. This proves that simulation technique when used well has enormous advantages.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

It could be concluded that there was an improvement in pupils' performance as a result of the intervention process. It could also be seen that most of pupils had high marks in the post-test as a result of the simulation technique used to demonstrate skills for sustaining good inter-personal relationships among pupils.

It is recommended that, there should be school-based in-service training for teachers on the use of simulation technique. It is also recommended that teachers must do everything in their capacity to engage pupils in simulation during Citizenship Education lessons since it will create interest in pupils to study the subject. Also the needed teaching and learning materials should be used in Citizenship Education lessons.

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