

Impact of Learning Environment on Academic Performances

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ABSTRACT

Education remains the bedrock of development but in Nigeria, however, there is consensus about the falling educational standards. Learning environment which include classroom spaces planning, administrative places planning, circulation spaces planning, spaces for conveniences planning, general infrastructure planning, the teachers as well as the students themselves are essential in teaching-learning process. The extent to which students' learning could be enhanced depends on their location within the school compound, the structure of their classroom, availability of instructional facilities and accessories. This paper looked at the impact of learning environment on academic performances. It maintained that a school with adequate learning environment contributes to stir up expected outcomes of learning that will facilitate good academic performance, by encouraging effective teaching and learning. A school, as a learning institution and as a second home for learners, has a strong relationship with students' academic performance. The administrators and the teachers through their specific roles either have negative or positive influence on students' academic performance. Therefore, the school authorities and the teachers should endeavour to provide a conducive learning environment in which the learners will be free to consult them when in need, provide adequate learning facilities and arouse interest in the learners to work hard.

Keywords: Education, Learning Environment, Performances, Student, Impact

INTRODUCTION

Children need safe, healthy and stimulating environment in which to grow and learn. During the school year, children can spend 6 to 8 hours at the school where the environment plays a significant/critical role in child development. More of the time is spent in the school yard or travelling to and from school. This condition requires careful planning and designing to optimize experiences that support education, health and stewardship [1, 2]. Therefore, the school environment is of paramount importance in shaping and reshaping intellectual ability. However, supportive and favorable school environment enriched with enough learning facilities, and favorable climate makes students more comfortable, more concentrated on their academic activities that result in high academic performance. The educational process of development occurs in physical, social, cultural and psychological environment. A proper and adequate environment is very much necessary for a fruitful learning of the child. The favorable school environment provides the necessary stimulus for learning experiences. The children spend most of their time in school, and this school environment exerts influence on performance through curricular, teaching technique and relationship [3, 4]. However, educational institutions are intimately linked with society as a whole. They are the temple of knowledge and agent of social change and transformation. The general condition of our schools, colleges and universities are a matter of great concern to the nation. It plays a significant role in the development of the personality of the students. As the students spend most of their life at school, the school environment is highly responsible for the inculcating of high values into them. Therefore, student being a backbone of every nation need a healthy school environment that support them to perform well. The student's achievement is more heavily influenced by teacher quality than by students' race, class, prior academic record or school a student attend. This effect is particularly strong among students from low-income families and African-American students. The benefit being taught by good teachers are cumulative. Research indicated that the achievement gap widens each year between students with most effective teachers and those with less effective teachers. It suggests that the most significant gains in student achievement will likely be realized when students

receive instruction from good teachers over consecutive years. Poor and minority students are the least likely group to be taught by teachers with experience, knowledge and credentials. The elements of teacher quality that the researcher demonstrates are strongly associated with high students' achievement. Research also showed that these students produce most gains when assigned to competent teachers. Indeed, this finding leads to many researchers and analysts to assert that the lack of good teachers is the major contributor to the achievement gap. A Californian study suggested that schools hit a "tipping point" when approximately 20% of the school faculty is comprised of unqualified teachers who do not meet minimum state requirements. After this point, schools begin to lose their ability to improve students' achievement. The best strategy for closing achievement gaps is to make sure that a school serving poor and minority students has their fair share of qualified teachers. The school environment has broad influence on students' learning and growth, including a significant aspect of their social, emotional and ethical development. When students find their school environment supportive and caring, they are less likely to become involved in substance abuse, violence and other problem behavior. The research indicated that supportive schools foster these positive outcomes by promoting students sense of connectedness, belongingness or community. These terms are used interchangeably here to refer to students' sense of being in a close, respectful relationship with peers and adult at school. Therefore, building in a school community is a means of fostering academic success. Students who experience their school as a caring community become more motivated, ambitious and engage in their learning. In particular, students' active connection with teachers and their perceptions that teachers care about them are what stimulate their effort and engagement [5]. The geographical location of schools has a significant influence on the academic achievement of students. The uneven distribution of resources, poor school mapping, facilities, problem of qualified teachers refusing appointment or not willing to perform well in isolated villages, lack of good road, poor communication, and nonchalant attitude of some communities to school among others are some of the factors contributed to a wide gap between rural and urban secondary schools. Schools located in rural areas lack qualified teachers. It is because, they do not want going to rural areas that lack social amenities. They prefer to stay in urban schools. It is also observed that a lot of coaching of urban students is done to prepare them for public examinations, thus promoting the spirit of competition and rivalry that may be lacking in the rural pupils, probably, owing to limitations in exposure and experience. Also, the study has proven that students in urban areas had better academic achievement than their rural counterpart. In other word, students in urban locations have a very advantage of favorable learning environment that apparently enhance their academic performance [6]. The result of a study indicated that there is no significant difference in the school environment of standard six students in term of gender, medium of instruction. But there is an important difference in the school environment of standard six students in term of locality of school. The urban students have better school environment than the rural students. The urban students are having a stressful environment in their day life very much because they are living in the mechanical and hurry burry life. So, they feel school environment is not very convenient for their studies. Therefore, school environment enriched with modern facilities makes the student feel comfortable in their studies that result to high academic performance [3]. The physical school environment has some influences on students' academic achievement in senior secondary school physics. The physical facilities, human resources, and the relationship among them determine the physical environment of the school. The result indicated that students with adequate laboratory facilities in physics perform better than those in school with less or without facilities, this simply because laboratory forms part of enrich the physical school environment. It was also discovered that poor facilities and inadequate space, as well as the arrangement of items including seats in the classroom, library and laboratory, would affect the organization of learning environment.

Favorable school climate gives room for students to work hard and enhance their academic achievement. The school environment has a significant influence on academic performance. The location of the school affects students' performance. For example, when a school is sited in a noisy area like an airport or in the heart of a city where activities disrupt the teaching-learning of the student. One will not expect such students in this area to be doing well academically. Noise in anything interferes with teaching/learning process. However, the physical structure of the school building and the interactions between teachers and students are also influence students' performance. School climate can be a positive influence on the health of the learning environment or a significant barrier to learning. The school environment can affect many areas and people within schools. For example, a positive school climate has been associated with fewer behavioral and emotional problems for students. Therefore, it is believed that positive interpersonal relationship, as well as positive student teacher relationship brings about a positive and supportive school climate for students for smooth running of academic activities which results in good academic performance. This paper therefore examined the impact of learning environment on academic performances.

Concept of Learning Environment

Many scholars have argued that learning environment are variables that can affect students' academic achievement, including performance in examinations [7]. The importance of learning environment to educational

development was so upheld by the authorities and regulatory institutions that school inspectors were parts and parcel of the school system before the advent of military regime in the country. The neglect this aspect has received due to poor funding by the successive regimes of government in the country also reflected in paucity of studies that focuses on this issue. As such learning environment remains an important area that should be studied and well managed to enhance students' academic performance. The recent poor academic performance of secondary school students in Nigeria has been of much concern to the government, parents, teachers and even student themselves. But the quality of education not only depends on the teachers performing their duties, but also in the effective coordination of the school's learning environment.

Learning environment which include Classroom spaces planning, administrative places planning, circulation spaces planning, spaces for conveniences planning, general infrastructure planning, the teachers as well as the students themselves are essential in teaching-learning process. The extent to which students' learning could be enhanced depends on their location within the school compound, the structure of their classroom, availability of instructional facilities and accessories. It is believed that a school with adequate learning environment contributes to stir up expected outcomes of learning that will facilitate good academic performance, by encouraging effective teaching and learning.

Academic Performances

Academic performance refers to the degree of a student's accomplishment his or her tasks and studies. The most well-known indicator of measuring academic performance is grades which reflect the student's "score" for their subjects and overall tenure. Success is measured by academic performance in most educational institutions. In this case, how well a student meets standards set out by an institution itself or an external examination body either set up by the government or an independent outfit signifies success or good performance. Before standardization, teachers' observations made up the bulk of the assessment. Grading system that came into existence in the late Victorian period and were highly subjectivity as different teachers valued different aspects of learning more highly than others. However, standardization function which is fulfilled by establishments outside the schools helped in putting this in check considerably.

Academic Environment

A student outcome and academic success is greatly influenced by the type of school they attend. School factors include school structure, school composition and school climate. The school one attends is the institutional environment that sets the parameters of a students' learning experience. As schools are faced with more public accountability for student academic performance, school level characteristics are being studied to discover methods of improving achievement for all students. Considerable research has been conducted on teaching skills, climate, socio-economic conditions, and student achievement [8]. Depending on the environment, school can either open or close the doors that lead to academic performance [9]. [10] suggest that school sector (public or private) and class size are two important structural components of the school. Private schools tend to have both better funding and smaller sizes than public schools. The additional funding for private schools leads to a better academic performance and more access to resources such as computers, which have been shown to enhance academic achievement [11]. The skill level of teachers is another indicator of student academic performance. Students who attend schools with a higher number of full credential teachers perform better [12]. School climate is closely linked to the interpersonal relations between students and teachers. According to [10], school climate is the general atmosphere of school. Trust between students and teachers increases if the school encourages teamwork. Research shows that students who trust their teachers are more motivated and as a result perform better in school [11]. School policies and programmes often dictate the school climate. To add to that, if a school is able to accomplish a feeling of safety, students can have success despite their family or neighborhood backgrounds [10]. According to [13], teachers do influence students' academic performance. School variables that affect students' academic performance include the kind of treatment which teachers accord the students. [14] contends that there is a growing demand from the Kenya government and the public for teacher accountability. Schools are commonly evaluated using students' achievement data [15]. Teachers cannot be dissociated from the schools they teach and academic results of schools. It would therefore be logical to use standardized students' assessment results as the basis for judging the performance of teachers.

Teachers celebrate and are rewarded when their schools and teaching subjects are highly ranked. In Chile, for instance, teachers are rewarded collectively when they work in schools which are identified as high-performing by the National Performance Evaluation System of Subsidized Schools [16]. In Kenya, teachers who excel in their teaching subjects are rewarded during open education days held annually in every district. While appreciating the value of rewarding teachers who produce better results, teachers should also not escape a portion of blame when students perform poorly. It has been proved that teachers have an important influence on students' academic achievement. They play a crucial role in educational attainment because the teacher is ultimately responsible for translating policy into action and principles based on practice during interaction with the students [17]. In their study, [18] conclude that the most important factor influencing student learning is the teacher. Teachers stand in

the interface of the transmission of knowledge, values and skills in the learning process. If the teacher is ineffective, students under the teacher's tutelage will achieve inadequate progress academically. This is regardless of how similar or different the students are in terms of individual potential in academic achievement. According to [19], there has never been consensus on the specific teacher factors that influence students' academic achievement. Researchers have examined the influence of teacher characteristics such as gender, educational qualifications and teaching experience on students' academic achievement with varied findings. [20] have found that there is a significant relationship between teachers' gender and students' academic achievement. This is contrary to what Dee [20] says. [21, 22] have found that teachers' experience and educational qualifications are the prime predictors of students' academic achievement. However, [23] have found that teachers' teaching experience and educational qualifications are not significantly related to students' achievement. [24] study in Ghana found that the teacher factors that significantly contribute to low academic achievement are incidences of lateness to school, incidences of absenteeism, and inability to complete the syllabi. [25] conclude that teacher management of homework and assignments given to students have an impact on student achievement, especially when it is well explained, motivational, corrected and reviewed during class time and used as an occasion for feedback to students. [26] indicates that teacher's attitude contributes significantly to student attention in classrooms whereas [27] illustrate that student attitude was related to teacher characteristics. This therefore meant that teacher's attitude directly affected students' attitude. On teacher personality, [28] contend that teachers' characteristics are strong determinants of students' performance in secondary schools. Scholars and researchers generally are in agreement that the school variables, which include teacher administration, perform a critical role in educational achievement than other variables [29].

The important role of the teachers in learning is unquestionable. Teachers have a lot of influence on their classroom practices. Teachers should have and apply specific abilities without which their influence may not be reflected in their students' performance in the subject. For students to be able to make connection between what is taught in school and its application in problem solving in real life, the teacher has to be effective in their teaching. On contrary, there has been no consensus on the importance of specific teacher factors, leading to the common conclusion that the existing empirical evidence does not find a strong role for teachers in the determination of academic achievement.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A school, as a learning institution and as a second home for learners, has a strong relationship with students' academic performance. The administrators and the teachers through their specific roles either have negative or positive influence on students' academic performance. Therefore, the school authorities and the teachers should endeavour to provide a conducive learning environment in which the learners will be free to consult them when in need, provide adequate learning facilities and arouse interest in the learners to work hard.

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