

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ENUGU EDUCATION ZONE

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Abstract

The study focused on school environment and academic performance of secondary school students in Enugu education zone. The population for the study comprised all the 291 Principals (184 Urban 107 Rural) in public secondary school in Enugu education zone. A simple random sampling technique was used in the selection of 58 principals (37 urban and 21 rural) for the study which was about 20% of the total population. The instruments consisted of 13 items used to elicit information relevant to the problem investigated. The data for the study was gathered with a questionnaire titled "School Environment and Academic Performance of Secondary Schools Questionnaire (SEAPSSQ)". The instrument was validated with a reliability co-efficient established at 0.76. A criterion mean of 2.50 was also established to analyze the questionnaire. Thus, responses with mean of 2.50 and above were accepted while those below 2.50 were not accepted. The t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. It was found that students who feel secured in a school environment, students who are supported in school and students with better socio-emotional health contribute to a high extent in the performance of students in school. It was recommended among others that government and proprietors of schools should provide adequate classroom buildings and also ensure that existing dilapidated physical facilities are renovated and maintained.

Keyword: School, Environment, Academic, Performance

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Introduction

Education is an essential factor for effective development of any country like Nigeria. The quality of education not only depends on teachers as reflected in the performance of their duties, but also in the effective coordination of the school environment. Environmental influence before now has not been considered as one of the factors that affect academic performance in secondary schools, hence, it has little or no attention in educational discourse and consideration. However, the school environment remains an important area that should be studied and well managed to enhance students' academic performance. The issue of poor academic performance of students in Nigeria has been of much concern to the government, parents, teachers and even student themselves. Ajao (2011) believes 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.

The government and especially parents are very much concerned with the quality and volume of learning acquired by their children, wards and citizens as this is related to the quality and quantity of the contribution which an individual can make to his immediate family, community and the nation as a whole (Thorndike, 2013). When a school fails to provide the necessary learning facilities and a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning to take place, it will be difficult for optimal achievement of both teachers and students. Tsavga (2011) maintains that a learning environment plays a vital role in determining how students perform or respond to circumstances and situations around them. This implies that no society is void of environmental influences. The learning environment determines to a large extent how a student behaves and interacts, that is to say that the environment in which we find ourselves tend to mould our behaviour so as to meet the demands of life whether negatively or positively.

School environment consist of both material and non-material resources in the school. It includes the teachers, peers, cohesiveness, the subjects and method of teaching. A healthy and attractive school environment makes for conducive learning and promotes students pride in their schools and their interest to stay in school (Mgbodile 2014). Belanger (2006) on writing on the importance of learning environment states that people's educational life histories are influenced not only by environment where they live or learn. The author further states that learning is more than education provision and that the community in which learners live have a profound impact on their aspiration to learn, their curiosity and their desire to develop their own competency. Nwizu (2013) warned that the environment in which the learner acquires knowledge has a great influence on the cognitive achievement of the learner. It has also been generally agreed that the quality of learning is markedly influenced by environmental and organizational factors.

Adediwura and Tayo (2007) opine that academic performance is generally referred to how well a student is accomplishing his or her tasks and studies. However, there are quite a number of factors that determine the level and quality of students' academic performance. Nicholas (2004) notes that the most current information on improving academic performance shows that there are three environmental influences linked to levels of academic performance among school students. Pruet (2010) reveals that academic performance is how students deal with their studies and responsibilities given to them by their teachers. Louis (2012) states that academic performance is the ability of students to obtain high grades and standard test scores in school courses, especially courses that are part of the core academic curriculum.

The influence of school location on the achievement of students of public secondary schools has been the concern of many educationists. Bello (2008) opines that school locations are known to influence students learning through quality of teaching staff, class size and availability of infrastructure. The choice and location of school site have been an indispensable aspect of any effective school planning. This is so because, it is the site that can influence the type of school to be built and the quality and quantity of the buildings. A child's environment that is rural or urban exerts considerable influence on his intellectual development. Okonkwo (2007) points out that school in rural areas are likely to face the problem of poor academic achievement due to the inequality in provision of human and material resources required for positive educational achievement. This in turn will perpetuate inequality of access to education provision of adequate number and quality of teachers, contents and methods of teaching.

An urban child has an edge over the rural ones in terms of "life chances" such as better education and the socialization pattern. There are three social classes that exist - higher, middle and lower social classes (Ajeh, 2009). The urban, higher and middle classes through improved "life chances are exposed to better environment with access to libraries, adequate space, continuation classes and mass media. The rural children are hardly exposed to those facilities because they are mainly from lower social class. As a result, children from this background have low academic achievement. Okeke (2013) contends that in terms of facilities and structures, urban schools are worse because of high enrollment figures. In urban schools, the facilities are grossly inadequate making it necessary to run a sort of shift system especially in primary schools. This has been strongly condemned as it does not make for effective teaching and learning. Ajeh (2009) notes that because of lack of social amenities in remote rural area, teachers sent there do not like to stay even if they agree to work; they prefer to live in towns and shuttle to such areas. Ezema (2006) says that the teacher is one of the most important factors in the child's environment that influences his academic performance. Some experts in the field have agreed that rural secondary schools are poorly staffed, with few professionally qualified teaching personnel. This poor staffing of rural secondary schools must have accounted for better performance of urban secondary schools.

The Problem

The school environment is of paramount importance in shaping and reshaping intellectual ability. However, supportive and favourable school environment enriched with enough learning facilities and favourable climate make students more comfortable, more concentrated on their academic activities that result in high academic performance. The influence of school environment on academic achievement of students has been an issue of concern to all stakeholders in education. The school climate is becoming uninteresting for teaching and learning because instructional material are inadequately provided, infrastructural facilities are in dilapidated conditions, technology such as internet are misused, qualified teachers and facilities that promote teaching and learning are in short fall. The cumulative effect is that some of the students perform poorly in class. Some drop out of school and some engage in examination malpractices because the materials which would have been used for their education are elusive. It is against thus background that this study investigated school environment and academic performance of secondary school students in Enugu education zone.

Research Questions

1. How does school learning environment contribute to students' academic performance in secondary schools in Enugu Education zone?
2. How does school physical facility influence students' academic performance in secondary school in Enugu education zone?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between urban and rural schools on how school learning environment contributes to students' academic performance in secondary schools in Enugu Education zone.
2. There is no significant difference between urban and rural schools on how school physical facility influence students' academic performance in secondary school in Enugu education zone.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population for the study comprised all the 291 Principals (184 Urban 107 Rural) in public secondary school in Enugu education zone. The sample size for the study was 58 which were made up of 37 urban principals and 21 rural principals in the public secondary schools which is about 20% of the total population. A simple random sampling technique was used in the selection of 58 principals (37 urban and 21 rural) in secondary schools in Enugu education zone that was used for the study. The instruments for data collected consisted of 13 items used to elicit relevant information based on the problem investigated. The data for the study was gathered with a questionnaire titled "School Environment and Academic Performance of Secondary Schools Questionnaire (SEAPSSQ)". The instrument was validated and yielded reliability co-efficient at 0.76. A criterion mean of 2.50 was also established to analyze the questionnaire, thus, responses with mean of 2.50 and above were accepted while those below 2.50 were not accepted. The t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the extent school learning environment contributes to students' academic performance in private and public secondary schools in Enugu Education zone?

Table 1: Extent school learning environment contributes to students' academic performance secondary schools

S/N	items	Urban Principals		Rural Principal		mean xixi	Remark
		x	SD	x	SD		
1.	Students who feel secured in a school environment excel in their academics.	3.22	0.65	2.42	0.75	2.82	HE
2.	Students who are supported in school have better academic achievement.	3.18	0.72	2.38	0.66	2.78	HE
3.	Positive interpersonal relationships in a school environment can increase achievement levels of students.	2.12	0.66	2.19	0.81	2.16	LE
4.	Students with better socio-emotional health achieve better in school.	3.11	0.73	3.17	0.73	3.14	HE
5.	Optimal learning opportunities enhance students' academic performance.	2.08	0.81	2.44	0.68	2.26	LE
6.	Students who are cared for in school have better academic achievement.	2.11	0.67	2.32	0.76	2.22	LE
7.	Culturally conscious schools significantly shape the academic achievement of students.	2.28	0.77	2.22	0.68	2.25	LE
Cluster Mean		2.59	0.72	2.45	0.72	2.52	HE

The mean scores on table 1 ranges from 3.14 to 2.16. The mean scores from item 1 to 7 are high extent (HE) except item 3,5,6 and 7 which are low extent (LE). However, the grand mean is 2.53 which is high extent (HE). Therefore item 1, 2 and 4 are extent school learning environment contributes to students' academic performance in secondary schools in Enugu Education zone.

Research Question 2:What is the extent school physical facility influence students' academic performance in private and public secondary school in Enugu education zone?

Table 2: Extent school physical facility influence students’ academic performance secondary schools

S/N	items	Urban Principals		Rural Principal		mean xixi	Remark
		x	SD	x	SD		
8.	Poor physical facilities lead to poor academic achievement of students.	3.35	0.71	3.33	0.65	3.34	HE
9.	Adequate provision of infrastructures makes students learn with ease in class.	3.18	0.77	2.43	0.72	2.81	HE
10.	Students who frequent the library perform well in class.	3.27	0.62	3.12	0.66	3.20	HE
11.	Facilities contribute to academic achievement of students in the class.	2.89	0.65	2.42	0.73	2.66	HE
12.	Overcrowded classroom makes students feel uncomfortable.	3.15	0.72	2.89	0.77	3.02	HE
13.	Unattractive school buildings contribute to poor academic achievement of students.	3.26	0.66	2.46	0.62	2.86	HE
Cluster Mean		3.18	0.68	2.77	0.69	2.98	HE

The mean scores on table 2 ranges from 3.34 to 2.66. The mean scores item 8 to 13 are all high extent (HE) and the grand mean is 2.98 which is high extent (HE). Therefore item 8 to 13 are extent school physical facility influence students’ academic performance in secondary school in Enugu education zone.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the findings on table 1 shows that, students who felt secured in a school environment, students who were supported in school and students with better socio-emotional health contributed to a high extent in the performance of students in school. However, positive interpersonal relationships in a school environment, optimal learning opportunities enhance, students who were cared for in school and culturally conscious schools contribute minimally to the academic performance of students in school.

Chukwuemeka (2013) notes that environment plays major roles in the life of every individual whether a student, teacher, employer or employee. The challenge of education today is to offer experiences that provide students with opportunities to develop the understanding, skills, and attitudes necessary to become lifelong learners, capable of identifying and solving problems and dealing with change. One of the factors that influence academic performance is school location/site of the school. This is so because, in a situation whereby a school is sited in a noisy area like airport or in the

heart of a city where activities disrupt the teaching/learning of the students. Thus, no students in this area will be expected to perform excellent academically.

The result of the findings on table 2 also shows that, poor physical facilities, adequate provision of infrastructures, students frequent visit to the, facilities, overcrowded classroom and unattractive school buildings influence to a high extent the academic achievement of students in schools.

School facilities are the corner stone of education system. They are essential ingredients in the effort to realize effective teaching and learning outcome. Hinum (2009) asserts that the quality of facilities has impact not only on educational outcomes but on the well being of students and teachers. Adeboyeje (2004) and Ayodele (2004) have pointed out that the availability of adequate chairs, desks and other facilities are necessary for the accomplishment of any educational goals and objectives. The researchers revealed that effective management of school facilities brings about development of educational programmes and facilitates educational process. It also results to boosting of the morale of teachers and students and enhances the usefulness in the determination of the worth of a school.

Conclusion

Environment plays major role in the life of every individual whether a students, teachers, employer or employee. However, the issue of poor academic performance of students in Nigeria is becoming much concern to the government, parents, teachers and even student themselves. The government and especially the parents are very much concerned with the quality and volume of learning acquired by their children, wards and citizens as this is related to the quality and quantity of the contribution which the individual can make to his immediate family, community and the nation as a whole. The learning environment determines to a large extent how a student behaves and interacts, that is to say that the environment in which one find himself tend to mould one'sbehaviour so as to meet the demands of life whether negatively or positively. It is believed that a well planned school will gear up expected outcomes of education that will facilitate good social, political and economic emancipation, effective teaching and learning process and academic performance of the students.

Recommendations

1. Government and proprietors of schools should provide adequate classroom buildings.
2. Government and proprietors of schools should ensure that students are not overcrowded in a particular classroom.
3. Government and proprietors of schools should ensure that existing dilapidated physical facilities are renovated and maintained.

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