

Evaluation of the Effect of Learning Environment on Student's Academic Performance in Nigeria.

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Abstract

Stakeholders in Nigeria have raised concerns over the trend of poor academic performance of students in all categories of schools Nigeria. Foremost concern has hitherto been narrowed on the quality of teachers, teaching process, school administrative efficacy and the apathetic attitude of students to their studies due to distractions that impede learning progress. Learning environment as a variable that contributes either positively or negatively to the academic achievements of student has attracted only little attention in the struggle of finding a lasting solution to the persistent lackluster result by students from the education system in the country. Since the learning environment has recently come to limelight as an essential area that should be considered and well managed to enhance students' academic performance. The aim of the paper is to evaluate the effect of learning environment on academic performance of student's in Nigeria using a secondary research approach. This paper therefore examines the concept of learning environment and its relationship with students' performance in Nigeria. The findings revealed that learning environment plays a significant student academic performance in Nigeria. Based on the findings, recommendation on the modalities to make the learning environment productive and competitive like adequate funding of the education sector, proper supervision of school activities and regular training/re-training of staff are suggested.

Keywords: Academic Performance ,Evaluation, Learning Environment, Student,Nigeria.

1.0 Introduction

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO,2012) observed that in today's world, education systems must constantly evolve in order to effectively respond to the rapidly changing demands of the societies they serve. To reach a common understanding of how both the physical and social dimensions of learning environments affect the quality of learning processes, an exploration of the relationship between place and process is needed. The teaching-learning process cannot take place in a vacuum in formal education settings. It occurs as a result of interaction among components of the learning environment. In learning environment, elements of teaching-learning process include: teacher, students, content, learning process and learning situation (Arul Laurence, 2012).

Students and teachers work well in a school culture where academic success and the motivation to learn, is expected, respected and rewarded. Such an atmosphere where students learn to love learning for learning's sake, results in better academic achievement. The school is a special social space where education, training and personality development of children who are a community's future assets are founded and run by proper training methods, appropriate physical space and favorable psychological environment (Raccoon gang, 2018).Students in the process of socialization require a healthy environment and models so as to increase their performance. Hence, a clean, quiet and comfortable environments are important components of learning environment (Gilavand, 2016). Furthermore, creating an ideal learning environment ought to be a priority of every concerned educationalist because being comfortable should be a combination of several factors which include temperature, lighting, and noise control etc (Murugan & Rajoo, 2013).

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 (Duruji et'al,2014)

2. Concept of Learning Environment

According to (Study.com,2018) learning environment encompasses learning resources and technology, means of teaching, modes of learning, and connections to societal and global contexts. The term also includes human behavioral and cultural dimensions, including the vital role of emotion in learning. The learning environment is a composite of human practices and material systems, much as an ecology is the combination of living things and physical environment (Balog,2018).Contemporary learners deserve learning spaces that meet their individual and collective needs. To meet this challenge, educational leaders must provide physical and cultural environments that are empowering and engaging (Orlu,2013).

Learning environments vary from classroom to classroom and context to context each with unique elements. According to study.com (2018) learning environments can be learner-centered; knowledge - centered; assessment - centered; and community - centered. Learner-centred environments are designed for the active construction of knowledge by and for learners (Federation University, 2018). Knowledge-centred learning environments are those which support students' deep investigations of big ideas through generative learning activities. Assessment-centred learning environments provide frequent, ongoing, and varying opportunities for assessment, including opportunities for revision and self and peer assessment (Alvaro, 2010). Community-centred environments value collaboration, negotiation of meaning, respect for multiple perspectives around which knowledge is constructed, and connections to the local community and culture (Raccoon gang (2018).

Learning environment is composed of some components that influence the student's learning curve. These components according to Balog (2018) include; people; teaching materials, technical tools, and learning resources; curriculum, training, and instruction, and physical

environment/learning space. The people are the individuals that affect the student directly or indirectly through connection or relationship which can contribute to students' growth and success in their career aspect. The teaching materials, technical tools, and learning resources are the teaching materials, highly advanced tools or others instructional resources that are aligned with the curriculum as a part of student learning support. The curriculum, training, and instruction are the core foundations of the learning process; they influence one another and play vital roles to facilitate the flow of knowledge and delivery of instructional content/curriculum. The physical environment/learning space refers to the physical setting of the learner's environment which should evoke positive responses and hold the interests of those who inhabit it (Balog,2018).

Mondal (2012) identified some important factors that may affect learning process to include Intellectual factor which refers to the individual mental level. Learning factors are factors owing to faulty methods of work or study, and narrowness of experimental background which may affect the learning process. Physical factors include health, physical development, nutrition, visual and physical defects, and glandular abnormality. Mental factors are attitudes like interest, cheerfulness, and open mindedness etc that are important in the development of personality. Personal factors, such as instincts and emotions, and social factors, such as cooperation and rivalry, are directly related to a complex psychology of motivation.

The teacher as an individual personality is an important factor in the learning environment. They are key factors that create a favorable teaching-learning milieu that will make the instructional process easy, enthusiastically adaptable and useful (Usman, 2016). The way in which his personality interacts with the personalities of the pupils helps to determine the kind of behavior which emerges from the learning situation (Brown,2015).Environmental factors like classrooms, textbooks, equipment, school supplies, and other instructional materials etc. are the physical conditions needed for learning (Mondal, 2012).

Waldman (2016) observed that before students can succeed academically, they must feel safe, both physically and mentally, and to have a safe learning environment, students must feel welcomed, supported, and respected. Personalizing learning helps students develop skills including thinking critically, using knowledge and information to solve complex problems, working collaboratively, communicating effectively, learning how to learn, and developing academic mindsets that would greatly increase students engagement (Raccoon gang ,2018).More so, students must feel connected to teachers, staff, and other students. Schools can nurture these connections by focusing on students' social and emotional learning (SEL).Students must also feel supported by all those connected to their learning experience like teachers, classmates, administrators, family, and community members for a higher academic feat (Waldman, 2016)

Productive learning environments are crucial to students' academic, emotional and social success in school. A conducive learning environment doesn't just happen on their own or by chance. They should be created through conscious procedures like interacting with students in a positive manner, exhibiting positive behaviors etc that would promote learning activities in the learning environment (Becton, 2017).

3.0 Studies on Effect of Learning Environment on Student's Academic Performance.

There is no misgiving that student's high-quality academic performance and outcomes is connected to the nature of learning environment and the available useful facilities. Various experiential studies have established that learning environment is a critical necessity for student's academic achievement in Nigeria. The educational process of development occurs in physical, social, cultural and psychological environment which implies that a proper and adequate environment is very much necessary for a fruitful learning (Mudassir and Norsuhaily, 2015).High academic achieving learners are likely to have been exposed to curriculum content under an ideal learning environment. Hence the affirmation of the opinion of Shamaki,(2015) that "educational attainment/achievement is likely to be determined by the idealness of the learning environment".

Shamaki, (2015) conducted a study to determine the influence of learning environment on students' academic achievement at senior secondary school level in Yobe state, Nigeria and found a significant difference between the mean performance of students taught in an ideal learning environment and that of students taught in a dull learning environment. Adamu (2015) examined the impact of learning environment on the Performance of Students in public secondary schools in Taraba State, Nigeria and the findings revealed a significant difference in the performances of the two groups (Experimental and Control) implying that a classroom building; class with adequate furniture; class with small class population and the use of instructional materials has positive impact on the performance of students in junior Secondary schools.

In a related development, Mudassir and Norsuhaily, (2015) conducted a study to examine how school environment influence students' academic performance in selected secondary schools within Kuala Terengganu. The result of the study indicated that students from a school with adequate facilities, good teachers and favorable environment perform better than those from schools with fewer facilities, unqualified teachers and less enabling environment. In another research by Duruji, Azuh and Oviasogie, (2014), which examines the impact of learning environment on students' performance in external examination in secondary schools in Ota, Nigeria considering factors such as school facilities, class size, school location and school plant planning, aesthetics, maintenance culture, sanitation, conveniences. The study established that "the state of learning environment and quality of infrastructure, together with the extent to which they are being maintained has a strong bearing to academic performance among students".

Further more, Ezike, (2018) investigated classroom environment and students' academic interest as correlates of achievement in Senior Secondary Chemistry students in selected Public Secondary Schools in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The result showed significant relationships between classroom environment and academic achievement, while combined contribution of classroom environment and academic interest was equally significant. Gilavand (2016) in a study whose aim is to investigate the impact of environmental factors (schools' open space, noise,

lighting and paintings in educational institutions) on learning and academic achievement of elementary students, found that environmental factors (appropriate coloring, lighting of educational environment and schools' open space) has impact on learning and academic achievement of elementary school students.

Eimuhi and Ogedegbe (2016) in a research titled the effect of environmental factors in teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools in Edo state of Nigeria examined environmental factors to determine the outcome of teaching and learning at all times and in all places and concludes that the more enriched the learning environments is, the greater and more widespread are the benefits for academic performance and other student outcomes. Similarly, Odeh, Oguche, and Ivagher, (2015) conducted a research whose main thrust is to investigate the influence of school environment on academic achievement of students in secondary schools. The results of the study indicate that school climate, discipline and physical facilities have significant influence on academic achievement of secondary school students in Benue State, Nigeria. This implies that schools that fail to provide the necessary learning facilities and create a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning may hardly put in the best in their students especially in the area of academic achievement.

4.0 Summary of findings.

1. Student educational attainment is determined by the idealness of the learning environment (Shamaki,2015).
2. Classroom building with adequate furniture, small class population and the use of instructional materials has positive impact on the performance (Adamu, 2015)
3. Students of a school with adequate facilities, good teachers and favorable environment perform better than those from schools with fewer facilities, unqualified teachers and unfavorable environment (Mudassir and Norsuhaily, 2015)

4. The state of learning environment and quality of infrastructure, together with the extent to which they are being maintained has a strong bearing to academic performance among students (Duruji et'al, 2014).
5. The more enriched the learning environments is, the greater and more widespread are the benefits for academic performance and other student outcomes (Eimuhi and Ogedegbe,2016)
6. School climate, discipline and physical facilities have significant influence on academic achievement of students (Odeh et'al, 2015)
7. Environmental factors (appropriate coloring, lighting of educational environment and schools' open space) has impact on learning and academic achievement of students (Gilavand, 2016).
8. Schools with adequate learning environment contributes to stir up expected outcomes of learning that facilitate good academic performance, by encouraging effective teaching and learning (Duruji et'al,2014)

5.0. Conclusion.

The studies reviewed all revealed a noteworthy correlation between the learning environment and student's academic achievement in the education system in Nigeria and elsewhere. It is believed that a learning environment with accessible and utilizable facilities will guarantee effective teaching and learning process as well as academic achievements of students. Consequently, there is the ardent need for the government and relevant stakeholders in the education sector to intensify efforts towards creating friendly environments that are learner; knowledge; assessment and community-centered where all the fundamental component of a model learning environment would be mobilized to ensure that learners perform optimally in their academic pursuit in Nigeria.

6.0. Recommendations.

Based on the findings, the following are recommended

- i. Regular monitoring, supervision and evaluation of school activities should be carried out to assess participation, involvement, and understanding of the students and offer support to those teachers who lack competencies required to improve the learning situation and environment.
- ii. The education sector should be appropriately funded to enable the sector acquire the necessary facilities to make the learning environment very adaptable, useful and viable to meet the educational goals of Nigeria.
- iii. Seasoned educationist and administrators with good reputation and experience should be appointed as administrators of schools. This will enable them to articulate policies and govern the learning institutions in a way that meets globally acceptable standards.
- iv. The teachers who are the link between knowledge and learning in our educational system should be availed opportunities for regular training and re-training to enable them have a good grasp of the principles and philosophies of education. This will help to regularize the teaching and learning environment thus ensuring quality assurance in the education system in Nigeria.
- v. Community participation in the administration of schools should be encouraged so as to promote a harmonious school-community relationship that will enhance the security of staff, learners and learning facilities.
- vi. Good remuneration and welfare system that rewards hard work and reassure future prospect should be instituted for teachers so that they will be accorded the status of trained workforce rather than the seeming present day low-priced labour.
- vii. Outdated school structures and learning facilities should be replace with modern ones that are line with the present students need and societal expectations

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Evaluation of the Effect of Learning Environment on Student's Academic Performance in Nigeria. 2019

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