

Learning Environment and Secondary School Effectiveness in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT This study examined the relationship between learning environment and effectiveness of secondary schools in Nigeria. The descriptive research design of the survey type was used for the study. The population consisted of all the teachers and principals in the public secondary schools in south-west Nigeria. The sample comprised 1200 teachers and 60 principals from 60 secondary schools. Multi-stage, simple and stratified random sampling techniques were used to select the states, schools and teachers used for the study. Two sets of instrument were used to collect the data for the study. The data were analysed using frequency counts, percentage scores and Pearson product moment correlation. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that the learning environment in secondary schools was very conducive and the secondary schools were effective in the affective and the psychomotor domains of learning but not all that effective in the cognitive domain. The study further showed a significant relationship between learning environment and effectiveness of secondary schools. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the school administrators and other stakeholders in the secondary education sector should strive hard to sustain the tempo of the conducive environment for learning. It was also recommended that schools should sustain the tempo of achievements of the students in the affective and the psychomotor domains of learning. Efforts should also be made at improving upon the level of cognitive achievement of the learners, as this will enhance the improvement on the general level of school effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the bedrock of the development of any nation. This is the reason that a government invests heavily in the education of her citizens. Secondary education, a sub-set of the education level, is very necessary in human capital formation. It is the supply base from which tertiary institutions draw their major clientele (students) for admission into their different programmes. It, therefore, presupposes that the provision of qualitative education is the sine qua non for the attainment of the goals of secondary education.

It has been observed in the recent past that secondary schools in Nigeria are not living up to expectation in delivering quality products expected of the system. A lot of problems seem to be bedeviling the secondary school system there by making the system ineffective. Schools need to be effective so as to be able to deliver the good tidings expected of them at every point in time.

School effectiveness in this context refers to the extent to which schools are able to accomplish their pre-determined objectives. School effective-

ness transcends beyond students passing final examinations. It also encompasses students' attainment in other domains of learning (the affective and the psychomotor domains). According to Bandele (2002), these other domains, apart from having influence on the cognitive achievement, also make the beneficiary of the education system live a fulfilled life and contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. The author argued that any deviation from these goals is a deviation from government's policy on education.

It has, indeed, been observed today that there is persistent poor performance of students in both internal and external examinations. Researchers, Dada (1987), Ajayi (1997), Yusuf (2002), Adeyemi (2008) have all shown in their various studies the extent of the poor performance of students in public examinations. The mass failure of students in public examinations has no doubt made parents lost confidence in the ability of the public schools to produce good products.

Experience has also shown that there is a high rate of indiscipline in the secondary schools. It has been observed that lateness to school, absence from school, noise-making, quarrelling,

rudeness to school authority, deliberate physical harm to others, forgery, cheating in examination and a host of others are daily happenings in the schools. All these tend to make the schools ineffective.

According to Oladele (2003), the evidence of students' moral paucity are more conspicuously seen in the high crime in the society and that of higher institutions. The author posited that the root cause of these moral laxities translating in higher crime waves is traceable to the non-teaching of ethics, when the students were at the secondary schools.

The perceived ineffectiveness of the secondary schools in the country could be attributed to several factors but this study was restricted to the learning environment as a potent factor in school effectiveness. A number of schools around the country are still languishing in the old architectural designs, with crumbling walls and limited resources. It appears that many secondary schools in the twenty-first century have to shoehorn modern-day learning and up-to-date resources into the nineteenth century surroundings.

A cursory look at the learning environment in the secondary schools shows that many of the classrooms, laboratories, examination halls, libraries and office furniture are in a terrible state in need of repairs. Most windows have no louvre blades thereby causing hazards to life. Mutiu (1994) and Ahmed (2003) lamented that in most of the nation's secondary schools, teaching and learning take place under a non-conducive environment. Besides, the psychosocial environment, which has to do with interpersonal relationships among students and between students and their teachers appear to be non-conducive. All these tend to put teaching and learning in jeopardy.

According to Teachernet (2008), the surroundings in which children learn can greatly influence the academic performance and well-being in school. The architecture, layout, and facilities of the school play a vital role in shaping the learning environment. Lezotte (1991), Creemers (1994) posited that a safe and orderly environment is the one that is free from threat of personal harm and conducive to teaching and learning. Ijeoma (2007) also argued that the learning environment can serve as a tool for influencing behaviour and as an aid to the teacher in the management of tasks. Ijeoma submitted that students learn better in a well-managed classroom environment.

Rutter et al. (1979), Rutter (1983), Scheerens and Creemers (1989), Adewuyi (2002) submitted in their various studies that conducive learning environment can have effect on both the attitudes and achievement of students. The authors submitted that a positive learning environment was found to be a very important factor of school effectiveness.

The literature reviewed so far has clearly shown that learning environment could influence school effectiveness. It was against this backdrop that the present study found out the relationship between learning environment and secondary school effectiveness in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to find out the relationship between learning environment and the effectiveness of secondary schools in Nigeria. The study investigated the extent of learning environment in secondary schools and the extent of secondary school effectiveness in the three domains of learning (affective, psychomotor and the cognitive domains). Based on the findings, recommendations were made on how to improve the effectiveness of the secondary schools.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research design of the survey type was used in this study. The population of the study consisted of all the teachers and principals in public secondary schools in south-west Nigeria. The sample of the study was made up of 1200 teachers and 60 principals selected from 60 secondary schools.

Multi-stage, simple and stratified random sampling techniques were used to select the sample. The first stage involved the use of simple random sampling technique to select three states out of the six states in the south-west Nigeria. The states selected were Ekiti, Ondo and Osun States. The second stage involved the use of proportional stratified random sampling technique to select the number of schools per state and the last stage; a simple random sampling technique was used to select 20 teachers per school. All the principals of the selected schools were included in the sample.

Two sets of instruments were used for this study. The first instrument was a questionnaire tagged "Secondary School Effectiveness Ques-

tionnaire (SSEQ)" and the second instrument was a proforma designed to collect students' results in the senior school certificate examination for 3 years (2005 – 2007) from the schools. SSEQ had three sections, section A sought the background information of the school as well as bio-data information of the respondents, section B contained 10 items designed to elicit information on learning environment and section C contained 17 items designed to collect information on school effectiveness. The SSEQ and the proforma were administered on the teachers and principals respectively.

The instrument was validated by research experts in the areas of educational planning and tests and measurement both within and outside the University of Ado-Ekiti. The test re-test method of reliability was adopted for SSEQ while Pearson product moment correlation was used to determine the reliability coefficient, which stood at 0.87.

The data collected for the study were analysed using frequency count, percentage scores and Pearson product moment correlation. The hypothesis formulated was tested at 0.05 alpha level.

RESULTS

The results of the study were presented as follows:

Extent of Conduciveness of the Learning Environment in Secondary Schools As Perceived By the Teachers: In order to determine the extent of conduciveness of the learning environment, frequency counts and percentage scores were used to analyse the responses on items 1-10 of section B of SSEQ. The result was presented in table 1.

Results in table 1 shows that 91.2% of the respondents agreed that students relate very well with one another. While 89.9% of the respondents agreed that there is cordial relationship between the teachers and the students, 87.5% of them agreed that rules concerning cleanliness in the school are consistently applied.

Of the respondents, 84.5% agreed that there is cordial relationship among the teachers, 78.7% agreed that the school environment provides an atmosphere conducive to learning. The table also showed that 75.3% of the respondents agreed that school facilities are well maintained, while 75.3% of them agreed that the schools are free from external threat. Again of the respondents, 58.6% agreed that the schools have enough classrooms.

However, it is seen from the table that 42.5% of the respondents agreed that toilet facilities in the school are adequate 32.8% of them also said that the school has enough recreational facilities.

On the average, 71.6% of the respondents agreed that the learning environment in the secondary schools is conducive. This means that the learning environment is conducive to a very large extent.

Extent of Secondary School of Effectiveness: In analyzing the extent of secondary school effectiveness in the three domains of learning (cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains), section C of SSEQ and the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) results were used. Frequency counts, percentage scores and bar chart were used to analyse the responses on items 1-17 of section C of SSEQ in addition to the SSCE results. To determine whether the schools were effective or not effective, the mean responses were scored and tabulated. Whereas for cognitive domain (academic performance) the average

Table 1: Learning environment of secondary schools

S. No.	Items	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1.	The school has enough classrooms.	699	58.6	494	41.4
2.	The toilet facilities in the school are adequate.	507	42.5	686	57.5
3.	The school has enough recreational facilities.	392	32.8	701	67.1
4.	The school facilities are well maintained.	899	75.3	294	24.7
5.	There is cordial relationship among the teachers.	1008	84.5	185	15.5
6.	There is cordial relationship between the teachers and students.	1072	89.9	121	10.1
7.	Students relate very well with one another.	1088	91.2	105	8.8
8.	The school is free from external threat.	899	75.3	294	24.7
9.	Rules concerning cleanliness are consistently applied in the school.	1044	87.5	149	12.5
10.	The school environment provides an atmosphere conducive to learning.	939	78.7	254	21.3
Means			71.6		28.4

Table 2: Extent of effectiveness of secondary schools in Nigeria

Variables	Effective (%)	Not effective (%)	Total (%)
Cognitive	22.1	77.9	100
Affective	74.3	25.7	100
Psychomotor	60.3	39.7	100
Mean	52.2	47.8	100

score for the three years were scored and tabulated. The result is shown in table 2.

Table 2 shows the extent of effectiveness of secondary schools in the area covered. The result showed that the schools were effective in the affective (74.3%) and the psychomotor domains (60.3%) but not effective in the cognitive domain (22.1%). Figure 1 shows the graphical presentation of the result.

Relationship Between Learning Environment and Secondary School Effectiveness: The relationship was examined using items 1-10 of section B of SSEQ and items 1-17 of the same SSEQ in addition to the SSCE results. The result was presented in table 3.

Table 3 revealed the relationship between the learning environment and secondary school effectiveness. The result obtained from the analysis showed that the value of r-calculated (0.596) is greater than the value of r table (0.250) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the

Table 3: Test of relationship between learning environment and secondary school effectiveness

Variables	N	r-cal	r-tab
Learning environment	60	0.596	0.250
School effectiveness	60		

P < 0.05

hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is significant relationship between the learning environment and secondary school effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that to a very a large extent, the learning environment in the secondary schools was conducive. The psychosocial environment, which involves the relationship among the students, between students and teachers and among the teachers was very conducive. The physical environment was also found out to be conducive to the teaching-learning activities. This finding however is contrary to Mutiu (1994) and Ahmed (2003) who at different times submitted that in most of the nation's secondary schools that teaching learning takes place under a non-conductive environment.

The study also revealed that secondary schools in south-west Nigeria were to a large extent effective in the affective and the psycho-

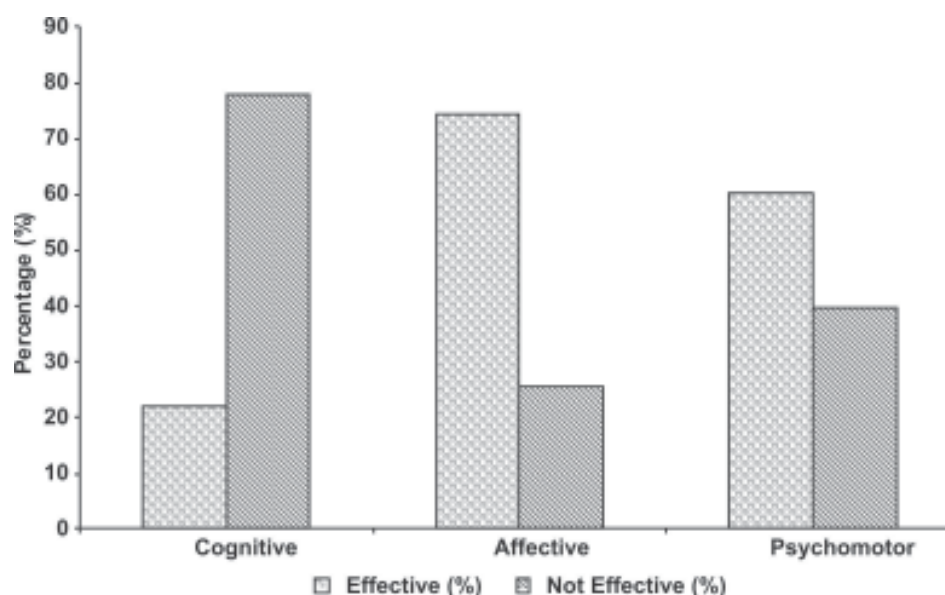


Fig. 1. Extent of secondary school effectiveness in Nigeria

motor domains but not effective in the cognitive domain. The result showed that students displayed good moral and good manipulative skills. The implication is that the future is bright for the society and the students alike. This submission is, however, contrary to the position of Oladele (2003) who submitted that secondary schools are no longer effective.

The result further showed that the schools were not effective in the cognitive domain. The analysis of the result showed that for the three years, in the sample schools, only 22.1% of the students that sat for SSCE had 5 credits and above including Mathematics and English, (which guarantee them university admission) while 77.9 had less than 5 credits. This implies that the students did not perform well in their academics. This submission confirmed the apprehension of members of the public, and the government alike as expressed in the dailies, journals and periodicals over the poor performance of students in SSCE. The implication of this is that with the poor performance in Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE), few students will be opportune to have access to university education. This does not augur well for a society that believes in human capital as a requisite for economic growth and development. A very good performance in the three domains of learning (cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains) is what the schools must strive to achieve.

It was revealed in the study that there was a significant relationship between learning environment and school effectiveness. This means that conducive environment for learning will enhance better teaching-learning activities and consequently enhance the effectiveness of the schools. Working in a friendly and conducive environment may encourage hard work, diligence and experimentation among students. A learning environment characterized by cordial relationship among the teachers, between teachers and students, good maintenance of facilities and an environment that provides an atmosphere conducive to learning will enhance the effectiveness of the school. The finding is in line with Rutter et al. (1979), Scheerens and Creemers (1989) and Adewuyi (2002).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the learning environment in

secondary schools in Nigeria was to a very large extent conducive for teaching and learning. It was also concluded in the study that secondary schools in Nigeria were effective in the affective and the psychomotor domains but not all that effective in the cognitive domain.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It was recommended that school administrators should sustain the conducive environment for learning in the schools in order to enhance better teaching-learning activities. It was also recommended that the government as well as other stakeholders in the secondary education sector should not relent in sustaining the tempo of the affective and the psychomotor domain. Moreover, efforts should be made at improving upon the level of cognitive achievement. This will enhance improvement on the general level of school effectiveness.

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