

THE INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ON LEARNING AMONG STUDENTS OF BENUE STATE UNIVERSITY, MAKURDI BENUE STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out the influence of school environment on learning among students of Benue State University, Makurdi. 250 participants were selected but only 244 respondents returned their questionnaire. A descriptive survey method was used and two hypotheses were tested using simple regression coefficient for the first hypothesis and independent t-test for the second hypothesis. The result showed that school environment has no significant influence on students' learning. Although statistics has not proven a significant influence of school environment on learning, however, some scholars have substantive works with significant influence the school environment has on learning. Day (Off-campus) students did differ significantly from their boarding (on-campus) counterparts on learning. Finally, the study recommended that provision of facilities like modern

Introduction:

Education is a primary need in this era of globalization. Education not only gives insight, but also grooms the personality, inculcates moral values, adds knowledge and gives skill (Musarat, Sundus, Faqiha, Fozia & Ayesha, 2013). The world is making progress day by day because education is the only key to match the pace of its progress. People are giving preference to higher education. Hence, the quality of students' performance remains a top priority for educators (Musarat, et al, 2013). Some factors have been found to affect learning among students; such include school environment among others

laboratories, functional libraries, and comfortable classrooms are for better learning. In addition to effective maintenance or renovation of old buildings, chairs, desks, recreational equipment, among others, should be part and parcel of the schools system. The Benue state government and largely state governments in Nigeria should pay more attention to education by providing the necessary funds to state own universities to not only provide necessary learning facilities but maintain existing structures.

Key words: *School Environment, Learning, Boarding (on-campus), Day (off-campus)*

(Ajayi, 2001 and Duruji, Azuh, & Oviasogie, 2014).

The school environment refers to a factor within the school that influences the teaching-learning process. The school environment includes classrooms, library, technical workshops, teachers' quality, teaching methods, peers, among others variables that can affect the teaching-learning process (Ajayi 2001). Be that as it may, the extent to which students learn could be enhanced depending on what the school environment provides to the learners and the teacher.

Ayoo (2002) agreed that school environment such as classrooms, desks and books have a direct impact on good performance among the students in developing countries. This is because, for instance, classrooms are places where pupils spend the greatest part of their day. Wabuoba quoted in Chuma (2012) observed that overcrowding in classrooms makes it difficult for pupils to write, and this makes it difficult for teachers also to move freely around the class to assist needy pupils and consequently, this affects the teaching-learning process. The implication of this is that a crowded classroom condition is not only difficult for learners to concentrate but inevitably limits the amount of time teachers can spend on innovative teaching methods such as in cooperative learning and group work. Similarly, Bernstein (2006) noted that in the United States of America, pupils who attend well maintained schools with good classrooms have a higher achievement than those who attend poorly maintained schools with poor classrooms. Schools with adequate facilities stand a better chance of providing education effectively. Based on this, Hines (1996) found that student achievement was as much as 11 percentile points lower in substandard buildings as compared to above standard buildings.

More so, availability of instructional materials is a core determinant in the successful implementation of any curriculum. The head teacher should ensure there is proper selection and procurement of teaching-learning resources. According to Agosiobo (2007), the use of teaching resources is important because they motivate learners to learn as they offer stimulus variation and assist in sustaining learners' attention throughout the lesson. Collin and Rosmiller (1987) assert that even highly competent teachers find it difficult to teach effectively with inadequate facilities or if they are lacking the necessary instructional materials. Ashton (2001) observes that instructional materials are crucial in planning and implementing a successful life skill program. The availability of learning resources is the most influential factor which may explain differing performance levels. It is generally assumed that the use of instructional materials leads to better performance. Kathuri (1986), in his study, found that the presence or absence of resources has an effect on teaching and learning.

Avalos (1991) pointed out that the quality of education the learners receive bears direct relevance to the availability or lack of instructional materials. Schools with adequate facilities such as textbooks and other instructional materials stand a better chance of having better results than poorly equipped ones. Similarly, Asikhia (2010) pointed out that adequately prepared instructional materials determine the amount of learning that can take place in a learning institution. Good quality instructional materials can motivate interest, maintain concentration and make learning more meaningful. One aspect of the school environment that has implications for the physical design of a building and for the kind of education students receive is the class size into which students are grouped. One of the major problems with increasing class size is that, usually it increases spatial and social density. The consequences of high-density promote disruptive behaviours in many situations; the class room is probably no exception. In view of this, Adeyemo (2012), Adepoju & Oluchukwu (2011), Alimi, Ehinola & Alibi (2011), Earthman (2002) and Kamaruddin, Zainal & Aminuddin (2009) argue that the availability and quality of educational facilities such as school buildings, classrooms, chairs, tables, laboratories and the likes have positive impacts on academic performance on students. This means that the school environment determines how much learning and teaching will be possible. However, Sabitu, Babatunde & Oluwole (2012) adds that the availability of the facilities must be mixed with a skilful usage of them so as to aid teaching and learning. Another different argument was put forward by Ajayi (1998) and

Adepoju (2002) that despite the efforts at ensuring educational training facilities available and making students have equal educational opportunities so as to improve their performance in both internal and external examinations, there are evidences of poor performance of students recorded in public examinations like Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) and National Examination Council (NECO) (all cited in Adepoju & Oluchukwu, 2011). That is to say, despite this claim improvement in infrastructural facilities did not positively impact academic performance.

Adetunde and Asare (2009) examined comparative assessment of performance of day and boarding students in senior secondary school certificate mathematics examination in Kassena-Nankana and Asuogyaman districts of Republic of Ghana. An ex-post facto research design was adopted, using a multistage probability proportion to size (MPPS) method to select the samples from the population used in this study. Out of 11 Secondary schools in the two districts, 4 whose results were consistently released for years were selected for the study. Hypothesis was tested while the analyses of data were presented using t-test for differences between sample means. The study revealed that there was a significant difference between a student being a boarding student and day student.

A study by Ellen Hart-Shegos (1999) found that student's academic performance is hampered by their poor cognitive development and by the circumstances of their lack of accommodation, and constant mobility. Numerous findings revealed that, living off campus could negatively affect retention, graduation rates, and general academic performance (Astin, 1973; Riker, 1993 and Thompson, Samiratedu & Rafter, 1993).

Blimling (1989) examined the effect of on-campus versus off-campus living on general student's academic performance; academic progress and retention, and found that living on-campus positively affected academic performance. To buttress the foregoing, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) also affirmed that living on campus can positively impact retention, graduation rates, and general academic performance. Astin (1993) found that when comparing on-campus students with off-campus students, those living on-campus reported more satisfaction with their overall school experience. The author further discussed the direct benefits of living on campus which includes: leadership skills, interpersonal abilities, job skills and cultural awareness. He measured three residency options for students: at home, in the hostel, and in a private room or apartment. The mitigating factor was the distance of the residence from the

university. His findings suggested that the most direct effects on students' academic performance were associated with living at home and the distance from home to the university. The greater distance students had to travel from their residences to the university had a negative effect on attainment of a bachelor's degree, academic satisfaction, and their willingness to continue at the same university. Again, Pascerella, Terenzini, and Blimling (1994), in the same vein, compared on-campus and off-campus students and found that, on-campus students had a significantly higher level of peer support, greater academic success, social experiences, greater satisfaction and commitment on their overall educational experiences.

The influence of school environment on learning among students is very important. There are problems and a lot of doubts as to what effects, the physically built environment of a school can have on the general learning of students in that environment. There is an idea that when the basic needs for security and comfort are not met then there is laxity or dissatisfaction with the learning result. Therefore, the basic problem of this research to study and come up with reliable facts about influence which the school environment have on learning. Also, it is the problem of this study to explore the impact of school environment on learning among students.

Previous studies on learning among university students and school environment as its determinant were either conducted outside Benue state university or are too outdated. Accordingly, the existing studies could not adequately explain the influence of school environment on learning among students of Benue state university, Makurdi. Thus, the issue of school environment and its influence on learning among university students is a virgin area of research in Benue State in general and in Makurdi in particular. Consequently, this study was conducted to fill this knowledge gap by focusing on school environment, the difference in learning between day (off campus) and boarding (on-campus) students among Benue state university students.

Objectives of the study

- i. To examine the influence of school environment on learning
- ii. To determine the difference in learning between Day (off campus) and Boarding (on-campus) students

Research questions

- i. Do school environment have significant influence on learning?

- ii. Do differences exist in learning between Day (off campus) and (on-campus) students?

Research Hypotheses

- i. There is a significant influence of school environment on learning
- ii. There is a significant difference in learning between Day (off campus) and Boarding (on-campus) students.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The study population consisted of undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi. 250 students were randomly selected across the institution. They were drawn from different cluster groups of male and female. The age range of the participants was 18-30 years; one hundred and twenty five (125) were males while also, one hundred and twenty five (125) were female. The researchers distributed 250 copies of the questionnaire among the Undergraduates of Benue State University in Nigeria. They were distributed among male and female. Only 244 copies of the questionnaire were returned and were found usable.

Instruments

The instrument for this study was a questionnaire. It was a set of questions relating to the aims and objectives of the study which respondents were required to respond to by ticking their choice. To elicit genuine responses, the twenty three (23) item questions used an adjusted five-point Likert scale based on Agree, Strongly Agreed, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

Procedures for Data Collection

The researchers personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents at their various lecture halls and departmental resorts (parks).

Method of Data Analysis

The simple regression coefficient and independent t-test were used to analyze the data on this research.

Results

Hypothesis one: school environment will significantly influence learning

Table 1: sample regression coefficients showing the influence of school environment on learning

Variables	β	t	S.E	R ²	F	P	Remark
Constant		20.49	1.12	.01	2.78	.05	NS
School Environment	-.11	-1.67					

Dependent variable: Learning

R=106, R² = .01; F = 2.78, P < .05

The result of the simple regression analysis in table 1 shows that, the independent variable which is school environment does not significantly predict learning ($\beta = -.11$; SE = 1.12; P<.05) and accounted for 10.6% of the variance, in the overall student learning. Therefore, the alternative is rejected.

Hypotheses two states that there is a significant difference on learning between day (off campus) and boarding (on-campus) students. Result of this hypothesis is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Independent t-test showing difference between Day (off campus) and Boarding (on-campus) students on learning

Variable	Students	No.	mean	S.D	t	df	p
Learning	Day (off campus)	198	21.21	2.69	1.37	242	.05
	Boarding (on-campus)	46	21.04	2.62			

The results from table 2 shows that off campus students did differ significantly from their boarding (on-campus) counterpart on learning (t (242) = 1.37, P>.05). Based on this finding, the research hypothesis was accepted. The result further shows that day (off campus) students who responded had a mean and standard deviation scores of (x = 21.21; SD = 2.69) while boarding (on-campus) students had a mean and standard deviation scores of (x =21.04;SD = 2.62).

Discussion

The first hypothesis stated that, there is a significant influence of school environment on learning among students. A simple regression coefficient was

sued in analyzing the data and the independent variable which is school environment did not significantly predict learning among students. This finding is in line with Sabitu, Babatunde & Oluwole (2012) who opined that the availability of the facilities must be mixed with a skilful usage of them so as to aid teaching and learning. This implies that, school environment on its own cannot influence learning; it must be mixed with a skillful usage of the components of the school environment. This finding also support that the argument put forward by Ajayi (1998), Owoeye (2000) and Adepoju (2002) that despite the efforts at ensuring educational training facilities available and making students have equal educational opportunities so as to improve their performance in both internal and external examinations, there are evidences of poor performance of students recorded in public examinations like (SSCE) and NECO (all cited in Adepoju & Oluchukwu, 2011). This implies that, despite this claim improvement in infrastructural facilities did not positively impact academic performance. However, this finding is contrary to the view of other scholars as they emphasize environment as an influential of learning. Such scholars include Earthman (2002) and Kamaruddin, Zainal & Aminuddin (2009) argue that the availability and quality of educational facilities such as school buildings, classrooms, chairs, tables, laboratories and the likes, have positive impacts on the academic performance of students. This means that the school environment determines how much learning and teaching will be possible.

Relating to the second hypothesis raised, there is a significant difference in learning between day (off campus) and boarding (on-campus) students. The findings confirmed that off campus students differ significantly from their boarding (on-campus) counterparts in learning. In line with this finding, learning can be seen in the area of climate. Anderson (1982) chose as an organizing device for reviewing the literature on school climate Tagiuris (1968) taxonomy of climate related terms. Tagiuri defined climate as the total environmental quality within an organization. Accordingly, his dimensions of environment includes its ecology (the physical and material components) its milieu (the social dimension of people), its social system (the patterned relationships in the organization), and its culture (the belief systems, values cognitive structures, and meanings). In essence, the difference in learning between day (off campus) and boarding (on-campus) students might be so much determined by the climate which the students find themselves. The finding of this study align with Pascerella, Terenzini, and Blimling (1994) on-campus students that had a significantly

higher level of peer support, greater academic success, social experiences, greater satisfaction and commitment on their overall educational experience. This finding are consistent with Numerous findings that revealed that living off campus could negatively affect retention, graduation rates, and general academic performance (Astin, 1973, Riker, 1993, Thompson, Samiratedu, and Rafter, 1993). Blimling (1989) living on-campus positively affected academic performance (learning). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) indicated that living on campus can positively impact retention, graduation rates, and general academic performance. According to Astin (1993) reported that those living on-campus reported more satisfaction with their overall school experience. Adetunde and Asare (2009) posit that there is a significant difference between a student being a boarding student and day student.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that learning environment in Benue State University, Makurdi in Nigeria has no predictive impact on learning.

The study found that there was a significant difference in learning among students who stayed on campus and those who stay off campus.

The study finally concluded that there is a significant difference on learning between mixed and single schools or classes.

Recommendations

- i. The study recommends provision of facilities like modern laboratories, functional libraries, and comfortable classrooms for better learning; in addition to effective maintenance or renovation of old buildings, chairs, desks, recreational equipment among others should be part and parcel of the school system. The Benue state government and largely state governments in Nigeria should pay more attention to education by providing the necessary funds to state university to not only provide necessary learning facilities but maintain existing structures.
- ii. The Benue state government and the university management should encourage the hostels masters, to be giving counseling to the boarding (on campus) students so that they may know the reason why they are in boarding school. Parents and guardians should also do likewise.

- iii. Girls and boys see, hear, and experience the world differently. They learn and behave differently because their brains are biologically wired differently (Sax, 2005; Gurian and Henley, 2001). Ignoring these differences results in a “one-size-fits-all” educational mentality that does not benefit either males or females. Therefore, the state government through the State Ministry of Education should be committed to giving communities more choice as to how they go about offering varied learning environments to their students. These will enable parents to send their wards to single-sex schools and classes or mix-sex schools and classes as the case maybe.

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