



---

**LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT: AN ANALYSIS ON THE IMPACT OF PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT ON LEARNING PROCESS**

**HASSAN-SALEH, MUHAMMED YAHAI & SANI MAI-GADAU**

*School of Education Aminu-Saleh College of Education, Azare, Bauchi-State*

---

**Abstract**

*This study was designed to examine the impact of physical and social environment on learning process. Psychologist, for instance, “placed the Centre of gravity” of learning process on the environment. In their opinion, method of education is characterized by the central importance that we attribute to the question of environment, according to the saying of psychologist; they attributed feeble-mindedness to the dullest of the senses which is due to the poor environment. If conducive environment is created, the dullest child can perform as excellently as any other brilliant child, they argued. In order to facilitate understanding, researcher’s discussion will be classified into two broad categories: The impact of physical environment, and the impact of social environment on learning process. Investigation has revealed the strong correlation between physical facilities such as classrooms, sitting-arrangement laboratories, writing-materials and the learning process, quality of education that children receive bears direct relevance to the availability or lack of physical facilities and the overall atmosphere in which learning takes place. This is the major reasons why this write-up is being undertaken to look into and expose the impact of physical/social environment which may have implication for children academic achievement. Based on the finding of this study the following recommendations were made: parents should learn to provide good home environment for their children to study, government on her level should have to provide available facilities for the development of learning in Nigerian schools.*

**Keywords:** *Environment, Academic, Achievement, Analysis, Physical.*

---

**Introduction**

One of the nagging problems confronting the educational sector, these days is the problems of poor academic performance of children in learning institutions in Nigerian society. Most children in the public school have been performing poorly

in most public examinations such as state common entrance/placement examination federal common-entrance, WEAC/NECO. UNICEF (2007) reported situations of assessment and analysis on children's and Women's right in Nigeria, that only 39% of children who had graduated from primary school were literate. In addition to that 61% of the children cannot read and write.

One therefore wonders of the learning environment that has not been adequately provided. Learning environment that does not seem gratifying to the learner tends to inhibit certain desirable responses from occurring. This can create a barrier to effective learning. Looking closely most of our learning institutions facilities and equipment are inadequate.

Odunukwe (2002) agreed that our learning institutions environment is nothing to write home about. It is for those reasons that these studies find-out the issues in physical/social environment and failure in academic achievement of children.

#### **Definition of the related concept**

Human-beings are born into different environmental conditions. Though people may have different hereditary potentials, the environment in which they find themselves may have greater influence on their lives producing what the people may become in future. Omebe (2002) opined that the child is the product of his total environment.

The child's environment influences what he would be able to learn as he grows up. The extent to which the child may reach academically depends largely on the certain environmental conditions. Children born into two different environments may tend to behave differently from each other. Idowu (2002) stated that the child who comes from a remote village will behave differently from another child who comes from a city.

This is because their environment is different from each other. In the same way, a child whose parents are rich may have better living conditions than a child from a poor background, so their behaviors would be different.

#### **About the Environmental Condition**

An environment as defined by Agjabue (2000) is the aspects of the organism surrounding to which it responds to a given time. Maitafsir (2001) reported that surrounding may include what the child sees, hears, taste, touch's, smells or feels. All these have great influence on the child's learning abilities. But Udeozor (2002) stated that in the context of education, a conducive environment is that type of environment which possess favorable or desirable, physical, social, psychological

or emotional dimensions such environment would have a positive influence on the learning.

The home, school socio-cultural environments have an influence on the growing children as they interact, feels smell, see, hear, and touch things within these environment.

### **About the Learning Situation**

Learning is the process of acquiring knowledge from an environment. Learning goes on all the time right from childhood to adulthood and to old-age. The child learns to crawl, walk, talk and manipulate toys and-so on. He uses his senses to learn about his environment. When the child enters school he learns basic academic subjects such as reading, writing and mathematics. He also learns a great deal outside of the classroom as he interacts with his peers.

Agjabue (2000) revealed that learning environment include the school building, school farm and garden, sports-ground, laboratories, libraries, work-shops, water-pool, electricity, communication gadgets, stationaries and desk and so on. All facilities and equipment's must be provided and used by the teacher for learning to take-place.

For effective learning to take-place the quality of teachers, size, shapes, arrangement of seats, positioning of fittings, availability of furniture, quality of learning aids, the classroom temperature and ventilation, the interaction pattern, must be considered.

Maitafsir (2001) opined that classroom which is the major school factory where learning takes place should be equipped as one of the most relevant part of the entire academic environment. He further noted that classroom environment must be conducive for teaching and learning effectiveness. Learning environment that does not seem gratifying to the learner tends to inhibit certain desirable responses from occurring.

This can create a barrier to effective learning. Looking closely, most of our learning institutions facilities and equipment's are inadequate. Odunukwe (2002) agreed that our learning institutions environment is nothing to write home about. It is for these reasons that this study find out the impact of physical and social environment on learning and students achievement. In order to facilitate understanding on this study, the discussion will be classified into two broad categories: The impact of physical environment, and the impact of social environment on learning process.

### **The impact of Physical Environment on learning process**

Various studies by Ajaegbu (1999); Othniel (2012) and Omebe (2002) revealed the strong correlation between physical facilities such as classroom, furniture's, laboratories, writing-materials, and so on, and the learning process. Odum (2002) also found that the quality of education that children receive bears direct relevance to the availability or lack of physical facilities and to the overall atmosphere in which learning takes place. Thus, physical environment constrain the learning process under the following items: Infrastructure, teachers, Learning-Materials and finance.

### **Infrastructure**

It is of the belief that without adequate provision of infrastructure such as conducive classroom buildings, comfortable seats, good chalkboards, laboratories, libraries, desks, chairs, and so on, teaching and learning rendered difficult. In other words, the provision of the above stated facilities is likely to enhance effective learning process.

This is because a sanitized environment is in itself capable of motivating and stimulating learners to be active participants in the teaching /learning process. Dilapidated buildings, overcrowded classroom and libraries, ill-equipped laboratories, smelling hostel, on the other hand, is capable of frustration both learners and teachers. If such happens, it is likely that the three basic elements of learning (readings, motivation and practice) can either be totally absent or seriously weakened thereby having a negative effect on the learning process.

The above situation may be one of the reasons why scholars in Nigeria have attributed the general low performance of students in senior secondary school certificate examination (SSCE) to factors such as: ill-motivated teachers, poor and inadequate facilities and funding among other things.

### **Availability of Learning Materials**

Closely related to the above is the question of learning materials. These include reading materials such as text-books, journals, reviews, writing materials such as exercise-books and pens, laboratory equipment and other instructional materials. These materials are strong determinants of learning outcomes in the sense that their availability helps in motivating the learner as well as in making learning easy. A research reviewed by Udeozu (2002) has confirmed the above statement when it concluded that the reading instruction was likely to be reduced to a listening exercise or omitted altogether due to the dearth of text-books in some schools. In a situation where language laboratories are well equipped, up to-date language text-book and journals are available and necessary, writing

materials are accessible to the learner, for instance, there is every likely-hood that learning would be facilitated.

On the contrary, if the laboratory is absent or strongly deficient, books are not easily available, and when they are at market, they are too expensive for the learners and teachers, there is a tendency to have an impaired learning process. Observation has shown that many students do not go to libraries simply because they are demoralized with the insufficient and irrelevant stock of books they find there.

The above argument is supported by research finding of Saleh (2012) which demonstrated that the provision of writing materials was major factor in the overall variability of learning institution outcomes in Bauchi state.

### **Availability of Teachers**

The National Policy on Education (1981) has rightly affirmed that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. This assertion shows that no matter how excellent an educational programmed is, if the right calibers of teachers are not available in sufficient number, it is doomed to fail. (Ajaegbu 1999).

This is very important because teachers are at the last stage of educational implementation. For learning process to be effective therefore, teachers of both quality and quantity are utmost necessity. A qualified teacher who knows how and what to teach is more likely to motivate learners than his colleague who lacks either the knowledge of the content and the process of teaching. This is because a qualified teacher would determine the best suitable method to use at different stages of learners' cognitive development.

He can also set high expectations for learners and guide them towards realizing them. This is a very important instrument that enhances learning.

### **Fund for financial implications**

The provisions of resources we have been analyzing are dependent on finance. It is the financial implication that results either in overcrowded or ideal classroom, well equipped or ill-equipped laboratories and libraries, sanitized or dilapidated hostels, and so on. It could now be said that finance is the bedrock upon which learning process lies. In the light of what has been said above, schools that are adequately funded stand a better chance of producing desirable goals compared to under-funded schools.

The realization of this might be one of the reasons why well-to-do individuals resorted to enrolling their children in private schools, model schools or federal

schools where there are better materials that enhance teaching and learning. It also is the reason why these categories of schools continue to produce better outcomes compared to students in public schools which lack almost everything that makes learning conducive.

It will not be unfair to compare the performance of the Nigerian graduate today with the financial situations in the universities. The issues of producing 'half-baked' crowded in a class that is meant for 200 students. In these situations, students have to stay outside the hall with little attention to hear of the lecturers. The libraries are virtually empty, laboratories outdated.

All these arise from underfunding the learning-institution of Nigerian society which in turn has negative effect on the teaching and learning process.

### **The impact of Social Environment and Learning process**

In this section attempts would be made to analyzed the impact of social environment such as the school/climate, the family-background, the peer-group, Gender, religion and the society on the learner and the learning process.

### **School Climate**

Both theory and research have agreed that the social conditions which characterized a school organization, the determinant of school climate, have an effect on teaching and learning process (Ajaegbu 1999) that social conditions that represent the school climate include relating with teachers, class-mates, seniors and administrators and so on, are the kind of socialization existing in the school that forms the climate.

If the school climate is harsh, it does not permit free interaction and free inquiry atmosphere among teachers, themselves, teachers and students, and between students themselves, learning process is likely to be jeopardy. In other words, the social relationship between teachers, students and administrators have effects (whether negative or positive) on academic performance of students (Othniel 2012).

Another research ( Maitafsir 2002) confirms the strong positive relationship that exists between the social dynamics and academic achievement among the students. A teacher who is a strict disciplinarian and authoritative in a class that is dominated by adolescents, for instance, may end-up disrupting the learning process. Teachers, therefore, have to apply authority, democracy, and liberalism at appropriate stages other-wise learning will be rendered difficult. They should understand stages of human development for learning to proceed smoothly, efficiently and pleurably (Ajaegbu 1999).

### **The Family background**

Family institution is an important agent of child upbringing in early and subsequent education. As the first group a child contacts, its imprints in the child's mind remain permanently. There is a strong assumption which is supported by various studies (mallum, 2000) state that, the position of one's parents (wealthy, poor, educated, illiterate) has a tremendous impact on one's achievement in school Studies by Udeozor, (2002) Haggai (2000) and Umebe (2002) show that in all countries children of poorer families are less opportune to attend or complete school than children of well-to-do families.

The rich families help the enhancement of their children's learning by paying for the education through direct outlays for school fees, uniforms, reading, and writing-materials, toys, and so on. Poor families on the other hand can only afford to educate some of their children even when education is free. Even the lucky selected child does not find learning an easy task as a result of the parent's inability to pay school fees promptly, lack of adequate learning materials and good food which invariably affect the learning process this shows that parents remain the most important predictor of achievement in school.

The illiterate families on the other hand may not understand their children's need to be alone to study and even expect them to help with domestic work, work on the farm, and hawk in the streets for their survival. They may see education as good, but may not know how to help their children about it.

### **The peer-group influence**

Peers are age-mates, play-mates, school or class-mates. These groups according research findings (Othniel, 2012) are formed based on interests, ethnic identification, geographical background and equality in rank. The influence of peer group on learning cannot be over-emphasized. In most cases, especially at the adolescent stage, the dictate to and determine what their members study, want to study and how to study, when to attend classes, do assignments and even which clubs and associations they should join. Various researches have also revealed that the peer-group, particularly at the teenage stage is often as powerful as the parents, when it comes to the decision about their studies or how to behave (Idowu, 2002). Learning process is likely to be determined by the type of peer-group one identifies himself with. If he is lucky to be with highly inspired and academic conscious peers, there is likelihood that he will be more serious,

attentive and active in the learning process which results in desirable learning outcomes.

If on the other hand, he identified, himself with the less ambitious and less concerned students with academic activities, there is high tendency that his attention would be diverted to something else, like joining clubs and associations, cults, and so on, at the detriment of learning.

### **Gender factor**

Sex is another crucial factor that leads to differential access to retention in schooling in Nigeria, where in most cases the entry, participation and completion rates of girls are less than those of boys. Studies by Haggai (2000) in Adams (1980) found that in Africa, about 40% of primary school age girls and over 60% of girls aged between 15-19 years are out of school. The study further revealed that in Africa, both fathers and mothers prefer education for their sons over their daughters.

This attitude would not augur well for the learning process of the girls. Since attitudes are peculiarity, there is the tendency that the parents may not invest much on the education of their girls compared to the boys which invariably leads to variation in their academic attainment. These negative attitudes towards female education could be cultural in nature. The perception of the women's role in the society is an important factor.

Most families restrict the mobility of their female children which affects access to schooling. The restriction is tighter, when the female reaches puberty age. At this stage, parents are worried about protecting their daughters against unwanted pregnancy; this is capable of discouraging many parents from paying attention to their female daughter education, thereby limiting the chances of their girl-child education.

### **Societal factor**

The society itself is instrumental to learning process. Some societies value achievements, while others value ascription. If a society is inscriptive where little or no recognition is given for social mobility through achievement, the possibility of people being pessimistic on school achievement would be eminent. If on the other hand, a society values achievement and opens opportunities for high achievers, the tendency of motivating learners to actively engage in learning activities with a view to improving their standard of living is likely to be high, through this learning is enhanced.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper efforts have been made to show the impact of two kind of environment on teaching and learning for what the researcher termed as “Learning environment and academic achievement” The main purposes for doing so are, there are differences in the value and things done by people who are nurtured under different cultural and environmental settings. As a result of their cultural and environmental differences, they respond differently in teaching and learning process in their efforts to develop the skills and acquire the knowledge needed to deal with their problems and improve their life style. The study yield understanding on the varying interactional modes, content/pupils, and teacher / pupil teacher/material and pupil/material interactions to make teaching and learning meaningful and effective. Also, the study ensure the adequacy and suitability of the materials provided for teacher and learning. The remediation of the problems pointed out above would not only make teaching and learning easy, but would also make the acquisition of the right type of skills, knowledge, and desirable attitude change possible for the environment and development of the learners, their society, and environment.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the finding of this research the following recommendations were made.

1. Parents should learn to provide good home environment for their children to study
2. Parents should emphasize and provide time for their children to study and at the same time assist them in their take home assignment and other school related activities.
3. Government should provide schools with all necessary infrastructures and equipment for easy teaching and learning.
4. Teachers are to provide good classroom environment for effective teaching and learning.

### **References**

- Ajeagbu, K. J. U (1999) Instructional Unit in Educational Psychology: Monor publishers Jos Plateau state Nigeria
- Haggai, M. P. (2000) Truancy and Delinquency as Adaptation to School Failure: Research project Submitted to the faculty of Education University of Jos
- Idowu, A .I (2001) Overview of Total Environment of the Adolescent and its effects on his/her Total Behavior; Text of a guest lecture delivered at the occasion of a training workshop for Guidance/Counseling and Youth workers at Abeokuta Ogun state

- Maitafsir, M. G (2005) Child Development and Learning in Psychology; Biga (EDs) Srevice No 5 Dangawo Nasarawa Road arkillia Sokoto Nigeria
- Mallum, J. (2000) Childhood Peer rejection and aggression as the Source of behavior disorder A Conference paper for N.A.E.P
- Udeozor, R.K. (2002) Effective Management of the Physical Learning Environment: A challenge of the School administrator, In R.U.N Okonkwo and R. O Okoye (eds) Awka Erudition Publishers
- Odum, A. A. (2002) School Climate and Students academic achievement in Akwa-Ibom State Unpublished M. ed Thesis University of Calabar.
- Omebe, S. E. (2002) Counseling the Parents for effective provision of learning environment for the Nigerian child in R. U. N Okonkwo and R. O. Okoye (eds) Awka; Erudition Publishers
- Othniel, J (2012) Learning Environment and Academic Performance of Primary School Pupils: In General Issues in Nigerian Education System Publishers Jimust Computer Technologies Azare Bauchi state
- Saleh, H (2012) Obstacles to Creativity Programme in primary Education in Nigeria: In General Issues in Nigerian Education System; publishing Jimust Computer Technologies Azare
- UNICEF (2007) Situation Assessment and Analysis on Children and Women Right in Nigeria Renewing the call