

TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON THE INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENT ON PUPILS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The study investigated teachers' perception on the influence of environment on academic achievement of pupils in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State. It adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 377 teachers in the 42 public primary schools in the area. A sample of 194 teachers derived through multistage sampling technique was used in the study. Five specific purposes and five research questions guided the study. A researcher-made structured questionnaire was developed, validated by experts and used to elicit information from respondents. Data were analysed using the mean. Results showed, among others, that: all the variables of environment explored, namely teacher quality, school location, physical facilities, instructional materials and teacher-pupil relationships influenced pupils' academic performance in primary schools in the area. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others, that Government should intensify efforts in retraining teachers as a measure of quality assurance in the primary schools; and Government should ensure that schools

are located in the residential areas where pupils can access them easily. This will minimize the incidence of late-coming and missing classes.

Introduction

Education has been considered a cornerstone for development particularly in Nigeria. It forms the means for literacy, skill acquisition, technological advancement and harnessing of human and material resources towards the achievement of national goals (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013). Primary education, a sub-set of the basic education is a necessary foundation for human capital formation. It is the supply base from which secondary schools draw their major clientele (students) for admission. It, therefore, presupposes that the provision of qualitative education at this level is the sine qua non for the attainment of national goals.

Recently, however there has been much concern about the quality of education pupils receive. It is argued that the quality of education, measured by the achievement of primary school leavers is comparably low (Kanno, 2018). Gone are the days when a primary school leaver could write a readable letter that conveys the intent of the writer. This problem of poor quality has been attributed to the environment where learning takes place (Onyeme, 2018). Environment can be defined as a system within which living organisms interacts with the physical element. Agusiegbe (2004) sees environments as consisting of all elements existing around man and which exert some influence on him. These include physical, biological and social attributes. Environment can also be seen as aggregate of all the external condition and influence affecting the life and development of an organism. Education environment is a learning place where the learner learns and interacts with learning facilities in order to be socialized and face the challenges in the society. Environment includes all the external condition and influences in the school that affect the academic achievement of the student such as laboratory equipment, library facilities, qualified teachers, furniture, school building, good administrative management, teacher pupil relationship and school location among others. Environment for the purpose of this work refers to the school environment.

School environment is the thread that connects the multitude of activities in the school. Dudek (2010) opined that it could be said to be the external influences in the school that can influence academic achievement of students irrespective of their intelligent quotient. School environment can also be considered as the second teacher since space has the power to organize and promote pleasant relationships between people of different ages, to provide changes, to promote choices and activities and for its potential for sparking different types of social and affective learning (Okeke 2011).

The environmental differences and the differences in the quality of instruction from one school to another can create differences in the level of academic achievement of the pupils. This shows that the learning facilities children are exposed to can affect their academic achievement. Academic achievement refers to the amount of learning that has taken place relative to the set objectives. In educational institutions including the primary schools, success is measured by academic achievement, or how well a learner meets standards set out by education authorities and the institutions. According to Nwadinigu and Azuka-Obieke (2012), poor academic achievement is an achievement that is adjudged by the examiners as falling below an expected standard. It is when a student's performance is below the expectation.

Several studies have been carried out on the influence of environmental variables on academic achievement of learners. Nsa et al (2014) assessed the relationship between school environmental variables and students' academic performance in Agricultural Science and the findings indicated that there was significant relationship between availability of laboratory facilities and students' performance in Agricultural Science. There was also significant relationship between availability of farming facilities and academic performance of students. Odeh, Oguche and Ivagher (2015) investigated the influence of school environment on academic achievement of students in secondary schools in Zone "A" Senatorial District of Benue State, Nigeria and found that school climate, discipline and physical facilities has significant influence on academic achievement of

secondary school students in Zone ‘A’ Senatorial District of Benue State. The limitations of these studies were that they were carried out in secondary schools outside Anambra State and did not explore environmental variables such as teacher quality and relationship with pupils.

A conducive environment however is necessary for good academic achievement of a child. A stimulating school environment could spur up a potential mediocre into an intellectual giant while an inhibiting environment could turn a genius child into a mediocre (Alokan, Osakinle & Onijigbin, 2013). The teacher is an examiner at the classroom level and in a position to account for the influence of environment on the pupils’ academic achievement. In other words, teachers’ perception is important in gaining understanding of the influence of environment on academic achievement of pupils. Perception is one’s ability to understand the difference. Romanov (2011) stated that it is also the way in which something is regarded, understood or interpreted. Therefore, perception is the way in which individuals view and interpret phenomena. In this context, it is the way which teachers view and interpret the environmental influence on academic achievement at the primary school level. The perception of teachers on the influence of environment on pupils’ academic achievement in primary schools is what the study seeks to determine.

Statement of the Problem

Academic achievement at the primary school level is of utmost concern to all stakeholders in education because this is the foundation for subsequent educational advancement. In recent times however, there has been public outcry over the state of primary schools in terms of poor facilities and subsequent poor output. It is suspected that there is relationship between the sorry state of the primary school environment and pupils’ poor academic achievement.

Environment is an important component of learning; the school environment refers to laboratory equipment, library facilities, qualified teachers, furniture, school building, good administrative management, teacher-pupil relationship and school location among others which facilitates effective teaching and learning. Where these are lacking, it may have adverse effect on pupils’

academic achievement. Could it be that this poor environmental condition has any influence on pupils' academic achievement? This question therefore is what are the teachers' perception on the influence of environment on pupils' academic achievement in primary schools in Orumba South Local Government Area?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to find out teachers' perception on the influence of environment on pupils' academic achievement in primary schools in Orumba South Local Government Area, Anambra State. Specifically, the study seeks to find out:

1. The extent quality of teachers influences the academic achievement of pupils in primary schools as perceived by teachers;
2. The extent physical facilities influence the academic achievement of pupils in primary schools as perceived by teachers;
3. The extent instructional materials/library services influence the academic achievement of pupils in primary schools as perceived by teachers;
4. The extent teacher-pupils' relationship influences the academic achievement of pupils in primary schools as perceived by teachers.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. To what extent does quality of teachers influence academic achievement of pupils in primary schools as perceived by teachers?
2. To what extent do physical facilities influence academic achievement of pupils in primary schools as perceived by teachers?
3. To what extent do instructional materials/library services influence academic achievement of pupils in primary schools as perceived by teachers?

4. To what extent do teacher-pupils' relationship influence academic achievement of pupils in primary schools as perceived by teachers?

Methodology

The design for this study was descriptive survey. The population for the study comprised all the 377 teachers in the 42 public primary schools in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra state. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 21 primary schools across the area, and 194 teachers from the selected primary schools. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire titled "Influence of Environment on the Academic Achievement of Primary Schools Questionnaire" (IEAAPSPQ). This is a structured question with four options measuring extents ranging from very great to very low. Instrument was validated by experts. Mean was used to answer the five research questions posed for the study.

Results

Table 1: Mean Ratings on Extent Quality of Teachers Influence Academic Achievement of Pupils in Primary Schools

S/ N	Quality of Teachers	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	N	X	Remark
1	Teachers who possess at least NCE make meaningful impact on pupils' achievement.	87	99	5	3	194	3.39	Agreed
2	Teachers with requisite professional training influence pupils' academic achievement.	127	66	1	-	194	3.65	Agreed

3	Teachers who update their knowledge regularly through researches, seminars and workshops make impact on pupils' achievement.	145	43	3	3	194	3.70	Agreed
4	Teacher who have experience on the job perform better in the classroom	151	40	3	-	194	3.76	Agreed
5	Teacher who employs child-centred teaching methods influence pupils' achievement.	142	32	11	9	194	3.58	Agreed
Cluster Mean							3.61	Agreed

Table 1 shows the mean ratings of respondents on extent to which teacher quality influences academic achievement of pupils in primary schools. All the items were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. They were rated from 3.39 to 3.76. This indicates that teacher quality influences pupils' academic achievement to a very great extent. The cluster mean of 3.61 indicates that quality of teachers influence the academic achievement of pupils to a very great extent.

Table 2: Mean Ratings on Extent Physical Facilities Influence Academic Achievement of Pupils in Primary Schools

S/N	Physical Facilities	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	N	$\bar{X}$	Remark
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12	There is enough classroom and office space for teaching and learning.	143	33	9	9	194	3.60	Agreed
13	There are good toilet facilities and water for pupils to use.	122	32	21	19	194	3.32	Agreed
14	There are structures in the school.	65	44	52	33	194	2.73	Agreed
15	There are enough sports facilities in the school.	98	21	33	42	194	2.90	Agreed
16	There are enough playgrounds where pupils can exercise themselves in the school.	176	11	4	3	194	3.86	Agreed
17	The school has clinic with sick beds.	11	12	65	106	194	1.63	Disagreed
Cluster Mean							3.00	Agreed

Table 2 shows the mean ratings of respondents on extent to which physical facilities influence academic achievement of pupils in primary schools. Five of the items were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. Items 13, 14 and 15 were rated 3.32, 2.73 and 2.90 respectively. These indicate that they influence academic achievement of pupils to a great extent. Items 12 and 16 were rated 3.60 and 3.86 respectively which are within the range of very great extent. Item 17 however was rated 1.63 which is below the cut-off point of 2.50, which indicate low extent of influence. The cluster mean of 3.00 indicates that physical facilities influence pupils' academic achievement to a great extent.

Table 3: Mean Ratings on Extent Instructional Materials Influence Academic Achievement of Pupils in Primary Schools

S/N	Instructional Materials/Library Services	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	N	$\bar{X}$	Remark
18	There are varieties and adequate instructional materials for teaching various subject heads.	165	22	4	3	194	3.80	Agreed
19	There are good chalkboards for all the classes in the school.	143	22	19	10	194	3.54	Agreed

20	The school has good library with enough materials/books for pupils.	54	43	54	43	194	2.56	Agreed
21	There are enough chairs and tables for use in the library.	122	43	12	17	194	3.39	Agreed
22	The school provides a library assistant that helps and guide pupils in the library.	98	32	43	21	194	3.07	Agreed
Cluster Mean							3.27	Agreed

Table 3 shows the mean ratings of respondents on extent to which instructional materials/library services influence academic achievement of pupils in primary schools. All the items were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. They were rated from 2.56 to 3.80. Items 20, 21 and 22 were rated 2.56, 3.39 and 3.07 respectively. These indicate that they influence pupils' academic achievement to a great extent. Items 18 and 19 with mean ratings of 3.80 and 3.54 respectively indicate that the items influence pupils' academic achievement to a very great extent. The cluster mean of 3.27 indicate that instructional materials/library services influence academic achievement of pupils to a great extent.

Table 4: Mean Ratings on Extent Teacher-Pupils Relationship Influence Academic Achievement of Pupils in Primary Schools

S/N	Teacher-Pupils Relationships	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	N	X	Remark
23	Teachers who engage pupils actively in the class influences pupils' positively.	187	4	1	2	194	3.94	Agreed
24	Teachers allow pupils to ask questions and that helps pupils to achieve highly.	87	102	5	-	194	3.42	Agreed
25	Teachers engage pupils in classroom discussion which makes pupils to achieve highly.	122	33	12	27	194	3.29	Agreed
26	Knowing pupils by names helps the teachers to draw the attention of pupils.	188	3	3	-	194	3.95	Agreed
27	Teacher assists pupils in solving difficult questions.	165	22	7	-	194	3.81	Agreed

28	Teachers who show concern on pupils' academic development make pupils to have interest in the academic work.	166	12	6	10	194	3.72	Agreed
Cluster Mean							3.68	Agreed

Table 4 shows the mean ratings of respondents on extent to which teacher-pupil relationship influence academic achievement of pupils in primary schools. All the items were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. They were rated from 3.29 to 3.95. Items 23, 26, 27 and 28 were rated 3.94, 3.95, 3.81 and 3.72 respectively. These indicate that they influence pupils' academic achievement to a very great extent. Items 24 and 25 with mean ratings of 3.42 and 3.29 respectively indicate that the items influence pupils' academic achievement to a great extent. The cluster mean of 3.68 however indicate that teacher-pupil relationship influenced academic achievement of pupils to a very great extent.

Discussion of Findings

The study investigated teachers' perception on the influence of environment on academic achievement of primary school pupils in Orumba South Local Government Area. Specifically, the study addressed five key areas of the environment, namely teacher quality, school location, physical facilities, instructional materials and teacher-pupil relationship.

On the influence of teacher quality on primary school pupils' academic achievement, the study found that teachers perceived that the quality of teachers influences academic achievement of pupils in the primary schools. Possession of at least NCE is the minimum requirements for teaching

in Nigeria. This is because the teacher requires professional training since teaching has become a profession. Apart from the basic training in teaching, the teacher needs to update his/her knowledge regularly through researches, seminars and workshops. Likewise, experience on the job has always been considered an important indicator of quality. With requisite professional training and experience the teacher will be able to make effective employment of child-centred teaching methods.

The findings of the study are consistent with the position of earlier works on the importance of teacher quality. For instance, Umeasiegbu (2011) argued that the level of performance in any school is intimately related to the quality of its teachers while the quality of any school system is a function of the aggregate quality of teachers who operate it. This contention supported the argument that the level of a teacher's subject matter competence is a prime predictor of pupils' learning. Likewise, the length of teaching experience of a teacher as an indicator of teacher quality has been observed by Akinleye (2011) and Commeyras (2013).

Physical facilities also influence the academic achievement of pupils in primary schools. These facilities include: enough classroom space for teaching and learning; good toilet facilities and water for pupils to use; health facilities in the school; enough sports facilities; and playgrounds where pupils can exercise themselves in the school. The findings of the study agreed with the position of earlier writers. Commenting on why high academic attainment is not in vogue in Nigeria, Adesina (2011) identified poor and inadequate physical facilities, obsolete teaching technique, overcrowded classrooms among others, as factors. Throwing more light on school facilities and moral guiding provision, Fabunmi (2017) asserted that school facilities when provided will aid teaching learning programme and consequently improve academic achievement of students.

In a similar study, Eze (2010) investigate the influence of school environment on academic achievement of students in Enugu State public secondary schools and found that staff office, classroom spaces for teaching students and staff common room represented the major areas that to a great extent affect the academic achievement of students in public schools, with regard to buildings. It was also revealed that desks, current books and presence of library assistants constituted the areas of influence to the academic achievement of the students with regard to library services in the public secondary schools.

On the influence of instructional materials on pupils' academic achievement, the study found that instructional materials influence the academic achievement of pupils in primary schools. There are good instructional materials for teaching various subject heads; good chalkboards for all the classes; good library with enough materials/books for pupils; enough chairs and tables for use in the library; and a library assistant to help and guide pupils in the library.

The findings are in agreement with Nsa et al (2014) who assessed the relationship between school environmental variables and students' academic performance in Agricultural Science and found that there was significant relationship between availability of laboratory facilities and students' performance in Agricultural Science. There was also significant relationship between availability of farming facilities and academic performance of students. It may be inferred therefore that instructional materials are an important indicator of academic achievement.

Finally, the study investigated whether teacher-pupils relationship influence the academic achievement of pupils in primary schools. It was found that teacher-pupils relationships influence the academic achievement of pupils in primary schools. Teachers need to engage pupils actively in the class. Also, they should allow pupils to ask questions; engage pupils in discussion on matters of personal interest; know pupils by names; and assist pupils in solving difficult questions. They should show concern for pupils' academic development. These make pupils to have interest in the academic work.

The quality of relationship between teacher and pupils has been shown to influence learning. Based on an informal survey conducted with BCIT (2010) Trades and Technology students, the top five qualities students want in an instructor include willingness to take extra time to answer questions and solve problems; well organized presentations and lessons; real world experience ;respect for students; and a sense of humour. From the findings, good relationship appears to dominate.

From the findings, it may be inferred that environmental variables such as teacher quality, school location, physical facilities, instructional materials and teacher-pupils relationship influence pupils academic achievement. It is therefore important that these factors are firmly put in place in order to improve the academic achievement of pupils in primary schools.

Recommendations

In view of the findings and implications of the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

1. Government should intensify efforts in retraining teachers as a measure of quality assurance in the primary schools. Such training should include subject matter, pedagogical skills and good relations with pupils;
2. Funds should be provided by government for the procurement of consumable instructional materials by schools. A special fund should be provided to address poor infrastructural facilities that characterize the government-owned primary schools;
3. Recruitment of teachers in the primary schools should consider alongside teaching qualifications, the personality of the applicant to ensure that only those with the right flair for teaching the children are found in the teaching profession at that level.
4. Teachers should relate well with their pupils in order to engender an environment conducive for effective teaching and learning in the primary schools.

Conclusion

Environmental factors like the teacher quality, school location, physical facilities, instructional materials and teacher-pupils relationship can influence the academic achievement of primary school pupils. Pupils need teachers who are well qualified in both subject competence and pedagogical skills. They also need schools located within their proximity as well as good physical facilities to make teaching and learning conducive. Instructional materials and the way teachers and pupils relate are also important considerations for improved learning.

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