



Investigating The Status of Local Government Education Authority in Providing Quality Learning Environment in Gombe Local Government Area of Gombe State

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Abstract

This study investigated the status of Local Government Education Authority in providing quality Learning Environment in Gombe Local Government Area; two objectives were used to guide the study. The study adopted survey research design, the population of the study comprised of 2,244 total number of teaching staff and head teachers in which 327 respondents were selected using simple random sampling. A four-point rating scale questionnaire consisting of 14 items were used in collection of data. Data collected were analyzed using mean (X) and Standard deviation (Std.) The findings of the study revealed that the physical learning environment in primary schools is not sufficiently provided which may affect the quality of teaching and learning in primary school education. It's also indicated a disagreement in the opinions of teachers and head teachers in GLEA in providing quality aesthetic learning environment at primary school. The Study among others, recommended that The LGEA should be supported and fully involved in decision making and funding of primary education through collaborative effort among all education stakeholders in providing quality attractive learning environment for children not just a supervisory role.

Keywords: Status, Local Government Education Authority, Quality and Learning Environment

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Introduction

Education at Primary level should be the concern of every nation as its form the foundation laying stage of the education of every citizen. The schools are institutions established to nurture these citizens to be useful to themselves and the nation as a whole. The school is often regarded as an institution created by the society to perform important cultural functions associated with the education of the young ones, in order for the school to achieve this goal, there should be a conducive child friendly environment where teaching and learning will take place. A child friendly school is a school where the staff are friendly to children and the health and safety needs of the children are adequately met. The school is also community based, recognizes and promotes the rights of all children irrespective of gender, religious and ethnic differences, family status,

physical and mental abilities disabilities (UNESCO 2001).

The term school learning environment has been used by some researchers to refer to physical characteristics of the school environment. Manninen *et al.* (2007) define such Environments using five different perspectives, which can be used to contemplate the different elements of the environment: physical spaces, teaching and learning approaches, social and collaborative aspects supporting learning, technologies used, and contextual learning places outside the school. Learning Environment is also defined by using the Pedagogy–Space–Technology framework for designing and evaluating such environments (Radcliffe 2008). This framework highlights connections among different elements of a learning environment, which are useful when



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considering learning environments that are used either for individuals or for groups.

A growing body of research has established that students' learning environment experiences at school contribute to their learning and achievement. In particular, supportive teacher-student interactions have been mentioned as characteristics of a powerful learning environment and have been connected with students' learning and academic engagement from different perspectives (Opdenakker & Minnaert, 2014). Therefore, the importance of physical and aesthetic consideration in planning a learning environment cannot be exaggerated. Most educational theorist concedes that the beauty of the surrounding where education takes place may function instrumentally in furthering and enhancing the goals of the educative process. Physical Learning Environment is a combination of resources used in the learning environment (Choi, Jeroen, Van & Paas, 2014) while Aesthetic Learning Environment are visual elements within the learning environment that contribute to the overall learning experience and imbue meaning to the learning process.

Providing quality learning environment at primary school level is indispensable in the responsibilities of the government of today. In an attempt to effectively managed primary schools in Nigeria, the Federal Government promulgated Decree No. 31 of 1988 which came as a welcome relief of the problems of primary school management in Nigeria. By this decree the Federal Government was to be responsible for 65% of fund of primary education while the States and Local Governments were responsible for 25% and 10% respectively. The decree also established the National Primary Education Management Board (NPEMB), Local Government Education Committee, District and Villages Education Committee and Primary School Management Board at the state level.

The then government under General Badamasi Babangida Promulgated the decree No3 of the 1991 on 1st January 1991 which introduced the third –tier (3-tier) primary education management in Nigeria, thereby returning primary schools to the local government where

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they rightly belong. The decree established Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) under each Local Government of the states of the federation. Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) in the National Policy on Education states that, the Local Education Authority have the responsibilities to finance and manage education within their Local Government Areas. It further highlighted on the function and responsibility of the local government education authority to include the following as contained in (FGN, 2004).

1. The appointment, promotion, discipline and transfer of primary school teachers and nonteaching staff within their areas of jurisdictions.
2. The payment of primary school teachers' salaries and allowances.
3. Payment of pension and gratuities.
4. The retraining of teachers
5. The overall management of their education plans.
6. Supervision and quality control in all primary schools in their areas in conjunction within the federal and state authorities.

However, today educators and administrators are concerned with the problems of quality of learning environment in our primary schools. This study investigated the Status of Local Government Education Authority in Providing Quality Learning Environment in Gombe Local Area of Gombe State.

Statement of the Problem

Most of the Nigerian schools' environments are not conducive enough for the development of appropriate skills, knowledge, interests and attitude in individuals to become responsible citizens (Olaleye, 2021). Researchers such as Ndukwe (2002) and Okpala (2006), highlighted the gloomy state of the Nigeria school environment. Many schools have no adequate games and recreational facilities (Ndukwe, 2002). The situation in Gombe local Government Area of Gombe State is not different. On the other hand, found that many school children in Nigeria learn under the shade of trees while many sit on the floor to learn in their classrooms (Okpala, 2006). However,



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Impartation of knowledge and transformation of society is not through mere education. It is through provision of quality and well learning environment achieved through proper long term planning and maintained by capable and competent hands. A child friendly school ensures quality education and positive learning for the child (UNESCO 2001). This high quality education starts at the primary level of education. The primary school is the pivotal and foundation of all other levels of education. Without it, no other level of education can be achieved. A poor primary learning environment is equivalent to overall failure educational program. It is therefore paramount to provide a high quality primary learning environment which will be managed and controlled by the Local Government Education Authority. The need for quality learning environment in all educational level in Nigeria is crucial which deserve constant investigations towards providing the best possible learning environment.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this Study is to explore the status of Local Government Education Authority in providing quality learning environment in Gombe Local Government through the following specific objectives;

1. To examine the status of LGEA in providing quality physical learning environment at primary school level in Gombe LGEA.
2. To investigate the status of L.G.E.A in providing quality aesthetic learning environment at primary school level in Gombe Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The following questions are answered in the course of this research

1. What is the status of LGEA in providing quality physical learning environment at primary school level in Gombe LGEA?
2. What is status of L.G.E.A in providing quality aesthetic learning environment at primary school level in Gombe Local Government Area?

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Literature Review

The concern for quality has been at the core of the motivating forces for reforms in education. Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) see quality as the total of the features of a process, product or service on its performance, in 'customers' or clients' perception of that performance. It is not just a feature of a finished product or services but involves a focus on internal processes and outputs and includes the reduction of wasted and the improvement or productivity. Taking a cue from the above definition, Fadokun (2005) characterized quality by three interrelated and interdependent strands; Efficiency in the meeting of its goals, Relevance to human and environmental conditions and needs and the exploration of new ideas, pursuit of excellence and encouragement of creativity.

Arikewuyo (2004) views quality in education to be judged by both its ability to enable the students performs well in standard examinations and relevance to the needs of the students, community, and the society as a whole. He finally concluded that quality serves as determination of gradations based on standard of excellence beneath which a mark of inferiority is imposed or adduced and above which grades of superiority are defined.

Improvements in the education system can be achieved by maintaining quality learning environment to raise the efficiency of educational delivery. In education, the effective realization of the aims depends on the quality of the curriculum and on how it is applied (Şahin, 2013).

Nigerian child belongs to several environments such as the home, the school, the community and the large society. All these contribute significantly to the child's right to live, develop and learn. As far as the acquisition of academic knowledge is concerned, it is the school environment which imposes a significant influence on the child (Olaleye, 2021). It has however been observed that many of the schools in Nigeria are still functioning below standard. Most of them are characterized among other things: - Inadequate classroom space, furniture, equipment for teaching and learning, lack of easy access to safe drinking water, hygienic sanitation, and health facilities,

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poorly motivated teachers and use of sub-standard teaching methodologies. Schools that are characterized by the above are not likely to provide quality educational for the children (Olaleye 2011). Choi, Jeroen, Van & Paas (2014) explain that the physical learning environment to be a combination of resources used in the learning environment, where elements such as the physical presence of other people in the classroom and sensory stimuli from the environment that can be perceived by human senses, that is, sound or noise. Finnish schools are designed in such a way that the buildings are clustered, with lots of interior and exterior gathering spaces, with large floor-to-ceiling windows and skylights. As is characteristic of a socio-constructivist approach to teaching and learning (an approach that claims people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences), this kind of environment supports optimal collaboration between teachers and learners and provides ideal spaces for small group activities, as well as quiet spaces for individual learning (Sparks, 2012). When learners need to concentrate on the tasks at hand, while having to contend with elements such as noise from the environment, or ineffective teaching strategies, such as when the teacher cannot render effective support to all learners, these elements impact on the available space in the working memory that controls thinking processes. Shafir (2013) as well as Scarlett (2015), explain that noise, when inadequately controlled, can lead to learners experiencing stress. Stress, in turn, impacts on learners' available working memory space. Muijs and Reynolds (2001) add that even a factor such as noise in corridors can influence optimal learning during lesson presentations. When working memory is negatively affected,

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it hampers the thinking processes, which ultimately decrease optimal learning (Woolner & Hall, 2010), large class sizes also add to the inherent noise of classrooms, which is unavoidable in the case where the teaching strategy of the teacher encourages group discussions and interactions with peers (Goswami et al., 2018).

Methodology

The study employed a survey research design. A total Population of 34 primary schools which comprised of 2,244 total number of teaching staff and head teachers (Planning, Research & Statistics Unit Gombe LGEA, 2020) were considered for this research and sample size of 327 respondents (Krejcie and Morgan 1970) were used in the study using stratified random sampling, the data were collected using questionnaire which was validated by two experts in the field and one expert from measurement and evaluation. The reliability coefficient of the instrument is 0.79. The data was analyzed using mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (Std.). The agreed rate was from 2.5 and above and mean rating that is below 2.5 was considered as disagreed.

Results

Table 1: Revealed that the mean responses of teaching staff and head teachers on the Status of LGEA in providing quality physical learning environment at primary school level in Gombe LGEA are below the agree rate of 2.5 and above, the average mean of 1.70 with standard deviation of 0.56 for teaching staff and mean of 1.75 with 0.54 standard deviation for Head Teachers respectively confess that the physical learning environment in primary schools is not sufficiently provided which may affect the quality of teaching and learning in primary school education.

**Table 1: Providing quality physical learning environment at primary schools of Gombe LEA**

S/N	Items	Teaching Staff			Head Teachers		
		X	Std	Remark	X	Std	Remark
1	Provide normal class size that produce less noise	1.38	0.52	Disagreed	1.51	0.58	Disagreed
2	The indoor air quality of the classes is sufficiently adequate	2.38	0.74	Disagreed	2.10	0.68	Disagreed
3	The schools are located in quite places with less ambient noise.	2.30	0.71	Disagreed	1.82	0.59	Disagreed
4	The schools are accessible for easy location.	2.38	0.74	Disagreed	2.27	0.70	Disagreed
5	The number of pupils in the classes is manageable.	1.00	0.00	Disagreed	1.00	0.00	Disagreed
6	The schools are provided with sufficient lightening.	1.38	0.52	Disagreed	1.37	0.55	Disagreed
7	The schools are Secured for safe learning upkeep.	2.10	0.69	Disagreed	2.20	0.72	Disagreed
Average		1.70	0.56	Disagreed	1.75	0.54	Disagreed

Table 2 revealed that the mean responses of teaching staff and head teachers on the Status of L.G.E.A in providing quality aesthetic learning environment at primary school level in Gombe Local Government Area are below the agree rate of 2.5, the average mean of 1.35 with standard deviation of 0.35 for teaching staff and

mean of 1.55 with 0.23 standard deviation for Head Teachers respectively indicated disagreement in providing quality aesthetic learning environment at primary school level in Gombe Local Government Area, therefore create a gap in realizing quality in teaching and learning at primary education.

Table 2: Status of L.G.E.A in providing quality aesthetic learning environment at primary school level in Gombe Local Government Area

S/N	Items	Teaching Staff			Head Teachers		
		X	Std	Remark	X	Std	Remark
1	Suitability of the structure for its use	2.10	0.69	Disagreed	2.30	0.71	Disagreed
2	Adaptability of the school structures to changing human needs	1.00	0.00	Disagreed	1.00	0.00	Disagreed
3	Effectiveness in the use of space	1.00	0.00	Disagreed	1.00	0.00	Disagreed
4	Appropriateness of color and texture of the school to the environment	1.00	0.00	Disagreed	1.00	0.00	Disagreed
5	Availability of Sport facilities to your school	1.38	0.52	Disagreed	2.30	0.47	Disagreed
6	Compatibility school with the character of the natural environment	1.00	0.00	Disagreed	1.00	0.00	Disagreed
7	Attractiveness of the school to natural landscape	2.00	0.57	Disagreed	2.30	0.47	Disagreed
Average		1.35	0.25	Disagreed	1.55	0.23	Disagreed

Summary of Findings

1. The physical learning environment in primary schools is not sufficiently provided which may affect the quality of teaching and learning in primary school education.
2. There is disagreement in the opinions of teachers and head teachers in GLEA in providing quality aesthetic learning environment at primary school, therefore create a gap in realizing quality in teaching and learning at primary education.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that, the physical learning environment in primary schools is not sufficiently provided which may affect the quality of teaching and learning in primary school education. Learners need to concentrate on the tasks at hand during lessons and if they are having disturbances from elements such as noise from the environment, or overcrowd as a result of densely populated class where the teacher cannot render effective support to all learners, these elements have serious impact on the available space in the working memory that controls thinking processes and this is in agreement with the assertions of Muijs & Reynolds (2001), Woolner & Hall (2010), Shafir (2013), Scarlett (2015) and Goswami et al., (2018).

The findings of this study also indicated disagreement in the opinions of teachers and head teachers in GLEA in providing quality aesthetic learning environment at primary school, therefore create a gap in realizing quality in teaching and learning at primary education. All teaching staff and head teachers accepted the fact that quality aesthetic learning environment is lacking at primary level. This will negatively affect the quality of teaching and learning which may in turn affects the goals of primary education. This is in tandem with the opinion of Pinciotti, Gorton & Brown (2011), there is presently a need to move our society towards an aesthetically oriented value structure that is capable of providing positive goals and guidelines for the development of a quality environment.



Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher has drawn the following recommendations:

1. The LGEA should be supported and fully involved in decision making and funding of primary education through collaborative effort among all education stakeholders in providing quality attractive learning environment for children not just a supervisory role.
2. Head Teachers should be trained on the on how to create quality learning environment to enhance better teaching and learning activities. In view of the fact that school environment is significantly related to children learning.
3. Head Teachers should improvise in running and management of primary schools particularly in supporting the aesthetic nature of the school environment using the little resource available.

Conclusion

Due to the fact that great emphasis is placed on quality education worldwide and primary school forms the basis of education of every citizen, provision of quality education at that stage is therefore indispensable. The physical and aesthetic learning environment in primary schools is not sufficiently provided in Gombe Local Government Area of Gombe state which may affect the quality of teaching and learning in primary school education. It's the duty of all stake holders to explore all available opportunities in the quest for a provision of quality learning environment at primary education.

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