

**IMPACT OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT ON STUDENTS'
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SOME
SELECTED JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SHONGOM
LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF GOMBE STATE.**

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of learning environment on students' academic performance in English Language in some selected junior secondary schools in Shongom Local Government Area of Gombe State. Four specific purposes and four corresponding research questions were formulated to guide the study. Population of the study comprised 250 students from five public secondary schools in Shongom local Government of Gombe State. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. A total of (150) questionnaire was distributed to the respondents and all were filled and returned. Data collected were analyzed by the use of frequency and percentages. The findings of the study revealed that a classroom building; classroom with adequate furniture; class with small class population and the use of instructional materials were found to have positive impact on the performance of students' performance in English Language in junior secondary schools in Shongom local Government of Gombe State. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that conducive learning environment is very essential for effective teaching and learning. Recommendations were made based on the findings of the study which include among others, that government and other education stakeholders should make concerted efforts to build more classrooms in secondary schools that would help to reduce problem of overcrowding and create enabling teaching and learning environment; that adequate furniture should be provided and students should be oriented on how to maintain these facilities because most a times students destroy these facilities by themselves.

Keywords: Impact, Learning, Environment, Academic Performance

Introduction

Education is the most important component of human resources development and is accorded a pride of place in many countries' developmental activities. There is no doubt that the importance of education

cannot be underscored because there is no country that has succeeded without educating her citizens. Education according to Bayo (2019) helps to improve security, health, prosperity and ecological balance in the world. It encourages social, economic and cultural progress, tolerance, national and international cooperation. Samuel (2017) describes education as a single most effective means of curbing population growth, reducing child mortality, eradicating poverty and ensuring democracy, peace and sustainable development.

Education is an instrument for the acquisition of appropriate skills, ability and competence both mental and physical, also as equipment for individual to live and contribute to the development of his/her society (Mado, 2018). Based on the above perspective on education, the researcher may define education as a process by which an individual acquires physical and social capabilities demanded by the society in which himself/herself is born into in order to be useful to him/her and contribute to the development of the society at large. The primary purpose of teaching and learning process is to bring about in the learner desirable changes in behaviour through critical thinking. This process however, does not take place in vacuum but in an environment structured to facilitate learning. Haruna (2009) defined learning environment as a physical space that supports multiple and diverse teaching and learning programmes including current technologies, one that demonstrates optimal, promotes effective performance and operation over time; and one that encourages social participation, provide a healthy, comfortable, secure and stimulating setting for its occupants. The learning environment has also been emphasized as an essential requirement for the teaching and learning process to take place smoothly (Bruce, 2018). This is because students' study habits are to a large extent tied to it. A good learning environment presents learning as a lifelong enterprise and enables students to discover appropriate value systems that can be their compass for self-awareness and national consciousness. Aliyu (2016) has revealed that teaching through technology based learning environment enhances the achievement level of the students. However, the societal expectation of quality outputs from training institutions makes students the primary focus of attention in any instructional programme, and the better the learning environment (school) the better it can meet the goals of education and the society in general (Coleman, 2018). There is a general believe that the condition of school learning environment including infrastructure has an important impact on teachers' effectiveness and students' academic performance. The facilities that are needed to facilitate effective teaching and learning in an educational institution include the classrooms, offices, laboratories, conveniences and other buildings as well as furniture items and sporting equipment. Comfortable classroom

temperature and smaller classes enhance teachers' effectiveness and provide opportunities for students to receive more individual attention, ask more questions, participate more fully in discussions, reduce discipline problems and perform better than students in schools with substandard buildings by several percentage points. According to Maka (2019), the environment in which one study can have a big effect on how efficient his study time is. Mitchell identified noise, interruptions, lighting, temperature, neatness, comfort, instructional materials, facilities such buildings and equipment to have potential effect on study habits.

However, to determine performance of students in any of the subjects offered in junior secondary schools, a performance test is to be conducted. Dayo (2011) mentioned that performance test is the type of test which throws light on the ability to deal with things rather than symbols. Academic performance of students can be regarded as the observable and measurable behaviour of students in a particular situation. For example, the academic performance of a student in English Language includes observable and measurable behaviour of student at any point in time during a course. Danjuma (2019) described academic performance as the observable and measureable behaviour of a person a particular situation usually experimental situation. According to Gani (2015), academic performance measures the aspect of behaviour that can be observed at a specific period. This can be obtained with the use of either teacher-made test or standardized achievement test developed for school subjects in primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) described secondary education as the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage; the broad goals of secondary education shall be to prepare the individual for: a useful living within the society, and for a higher education. However, the policy went further to state in specific terms that,

- Secondary education shall provide all primary leavers with the opportunity for education of higher level irrespective of sex, social status, religious or ethnic background
- Offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunity and further roles
- Provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades
- Develop and promote Nigerian languages, arts and cultural heritage
- Inspire its students with a desire for self- improvement and achievement of excellence
- Foster national unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity and

- Raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals and live as good citizens and provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, industrial, commercial and economic development.

Finally, secondary education prepares individuals for useful living within the society and prepares the individuals for higher education. Therefore, the researcher has been motivated to conduct a research on the impact of learning environment on academic performance because of what is considered as deplorable conditions of the learning environment especially the physical aspects in spite of its unquantifiable roles in facilitating teachers' instructional delivery and students' academic performance; hence, for the purpose of this study, only the physical learning environment will be considered. Thus, this study examined the impact of learning environment on students' performances in English language in Junior Secondary Schools in Shongom local government area of Gombe State.

Statement of the Problem

In Gombe State, it has been observed in the recent past that secondary schools are not living up to expectation in delivering quality education expected of the system. According to the relevant stakeholders of Secondary Education, a lot of problems seem to be bedeviling the secondary school system in the area of the study ranging from inadequate facilities, old and dilapidated structures, inadequate instructional materials and unqualified teachers thereby making the system ineffective. It has also, been observed by the relevant stakeholders that there is persistent poor performance of students in both internal and external examinations in both junior and senior secondary schools and also teachers, students and parents performance have decreased probably due the environmental influences. Personal experience has shown that there is a high rate of indiscipline in secondary schools. It has also 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, destruction of school furniture and a host of others, are daily happenings in secondary schools in Gombe State. All these environmental factors tend to make the schools ineffective. It is against this background that the researcher has a felt the need to investigate the impact of learning environment on students' performance in English Language in junior secondary schools in Shongom Local Government Area of Gombe State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the impact of learning environment on students' performance in English language in junior secondary schools in Gombe State. Specifically, the study seeks to;

1. Determine the impact of classroom building on students' performance in English language in junior secondary schools.
2. Determine the impact of adequate classroom furniture on students' performance in junior secondary schools
3. Ascertain the impact of small classroom population on students' performance in junior secondary schools.
4. Ascertain the impact of instructional materials on students' performance in junior secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the impact of classroom building on students' performance in English Language in junior secondary schools?
2. What is the impact of the provision of adequate classroom furniture on students' performance in English Language in junior secondary schools?
3. What is the impact of small classroom population on of students' performance in English Language in junior secondary schools?
4. What is the impact of the use of instructional materials on students' performance in English Language in junior secondary schools?

Methodology

This study adopted an expost-facto research design. The target population for this study consisted of 50 teachers and 200 students in some selected five junior public secondary schools in Gombe State. The sample size consisted of 100 students and 50 teachers giving the total as 150 which were drawn from some selected teachers and students of the above mentioned secondary schools under the population of the study. The teachers and the students were randomly selected and ten (10) teachers and 20 students were drawn from each of the five junior secondary schools. The instrument for this study was questionnaire titled 'Learning Environment and Students' Performance in English Language Questionnaire' (LESPELQ). The questionnaire comprised 15 structured items with response options of strongly

Agree (SA) =4, Agree (A) =3, Disagree (D) =2 and strongly Disagree (SD) =1. The instrument was face validated by two experts in Educational Administration and Planning from the state university in Gombe. The experts' suggestions and comments were effected and used to produce the final copy of the instrument. To determine the reliability of the instrument, the researcher tests its consistency through a pilot test using split-half method and each half administered separately to a group of respondents. The split-half reliability coefficient then is determined by correlating the scores. The respondent and their responses form the basis of the analysis process. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the fifty (50) teachers and one hundred (100) students in the selected schools. The data collected were quantitatively analysed using tables, frequency distribution and percentage (Descriptive statistics).

Results

Research Question 1: What is the impact of classroom building students' performance in English Language in Junior Secondary Schools?

Table 1: Frequency and percentage rating of the impact of classroom building on students' performance in English Language in Junior Secondary Schools

Items and Response	Frequency	Percentage
Classroom building (SA)	74	49.3%
Classroom building (A)	61	40.7%
Classroom building (D)	11	7.3%
Classroom building (SD)	4	2.7%
Total	150	100%

Table 1 shows that 74 (49.3%) and 61 (40.7%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that impact of classroom buildings is the root of students' academic performance, while 11 (7.3%) disagree and 4 (2.7%) strongly disagree. This means that impact of classroom buildings is the root of student's performance in public junior secondary schools.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of the provision of adequate classroom furniture on students' performance in English Language in junior secondary schools?

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of the impact of the provision of adequate classroom furniture on students' performance in English Language in junior secondary schools

Items and Response	Frequency	Percentage
Classroom furniture (SA)	87	58%
Classroom furniture (A)	53	35.3%
Classroom furniture (D)	4	2.7%
Classroom furniture (SD)	6	4%
Total	150	100%

Table 2 Shows that 87 (58%) and 53 (35.3%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that adequate class furniture makes students seat comfortable and copy note in the board while 4 (2.7%) and 6 (4%) disagree and strongly disagree respectively.

Research Question 3: What is the impact of small classroom population on students' performance in English Language in Junior Secondary Schools?

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of the impact of small classroom population on students' performance in English Language in Junior Secondary Schools.

Items and Response	Frequency	Percentage
Small classroom population (SA)	80	53.3%
Small classroom population (A)	49	32.7
Small classroom population (D)	11	7.3%
Small classroom population (SD)	10	6.7%
Total	150	100%

Table 3 shows that a small classroom population impact positive performance on students in pubic secondary school. While 11 (7.3%) disagree and 10 (6.7%) strongly disagree. It means that a small class population and libraries impact positive performance on students in public secondary school.

Research Question 4: What is the impact of the use of instructional materials on students' performance in English Language in junior secondary schools?

Table 4: Frequency and percentage of the impact of the use of instructional materials on students' performance in English Language in junior secondary schools

Items and Response	Frequency	Percentage
Use of instructional materials (SA)	67	44.7%
Use of instructional materials (A)	56	37.3%
Use of instructional materials (D)	14	9.3%
Use of instructional materials (SD)	13	8.7%
Total	150	100%

Table 4 shows that 67 (44.7%) and 56 (37.3%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that instructional materials are needed to make the best use of information explosion and possibilities presented by technological development, table shows that 14 (9.3%) while 13 (8.7%) disagree and strongly disagree respectively.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the present study showed that major and very high percent of students in the selected junior secondary schools revealed that good classroom buildings, good adequate classroom furniture, small classroom population and effective use of instructional materials enhance students learning and impact positively on students' academic performance in English Language in junior secondary schools in Gombe State. The findings of this study are in agreement with the findings of Bruce (2018), Aliyu (2016) and Coleman (2018). According to Bruce (2018), learning environment is seen as an essential requirement for the teaching and learning process to take place smoothly because students' study habits are to a large extent tied to it. The findings are also in support of Aliyu (2016) study which reported that a good learning environment presents learning as a lifelong enterprise and enables students to discover appropriate value systems that can be their compass for self-awareness and national consciousness. The author further revealed that teaching through technology based learning environment enhances the achievement level of the students.

The findings of the present study are in line with the study of Coleman (2018) which stated that the societal expectation of quality outputs from training institutions makes students the primary focus of attention in any instructional programme, and the better the learning environment (school) the better it can meet the goals of education and the society in general. The findings of this study are in agreement with Maka (2019) which reported that the environment in which one study can have a big effect on how efficient his

study time is. There is a general believe that the condition of school learning environment including infrastructure has a positive impact on teachers' effectiveness and students' academic performance. The facilities that are needed to facilitate effective teaching and learning in an educational institution include the classrooms, offices, laboratories, conveniences and other buildings as well as furniture items and sporting equipment. Comfortable classroom temperature and smaller classes enhance teachers' effectiveness and provide opportunities for students to receive more individual attention, ask more questions, participate more fully in discussions, reduce discipline problems and perform better than students in schools with substandard buildings by several percentage points

Conclusion

The findings of this study has shown positive and significant impact of the physical characteristics of the school such as classroom buildings, furniture, instructional facilities on students' academic performance in English Language in junior secondary schools in Shongom local government area of Gombe State. This is an indication that these facilities in secondary schools should be a prime concern of the education stakeholders in the state and the nation in general. However, the extent to which students' learning could be enhanced depends on the structure of their classroom, availability of the classrooms, instructional facilities and accessories. It is believed that conducive learning environment with available school facilities will gear up expected outcomes of education that will facilitate effective teaching and learning process, academic achievements of students as well as good social, political and economic emancipation of student in future. Hence it has been established that facilities are potent to greater academic achievement of students. Therefore, it requires prompt attention on the part of the education stakeholders in Shongom local government area of Gombe State and the nation in order to improve the poor condition of learning environment and academic situation of secondary schools from its present state. Moreover, there are some facilities that can be improvised by the teachers in order to facilitate teaching and learning; hence such facilities should be improvised by the teachers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government and other education stakeholders should make concerted efforts to provide adequate classroom building and renovate the existing

dilapidated structures in public secondary schools. This would help to reduce the problem of school overcrowding and it would go a long way to create enabling teaching and learning environment.

2. Education stakeholders should endeavour to provide adequate class furniture (chairs and lockers or desk) in public secondary schools and students should be oriented on how to maintain these facilities because most times students destroy these facilities by themselves
3. Small class population should be maintained in public secondary schools and the population of students admitted into public schools should depend on the available space and facilities because there is need to make the number of students to be taught in the class to be moderate, so that the teacher would be able to manage the class effectively and give individual attention to students where necessary.
4. Adequate instructional materials should be made available in public secondary schools and teachers should be encouraged to be using instructional materials in the course of presenting their lessons and they should be made to update their knowledge and skills in improvisation of instructional materials through seminars, workshops and conferences organized by government and professional bodies.

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