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INFLUENCE OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NSUKKA EDUCATION ZONE OF ENUGU STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of learning environment on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. Two research questions guided the study while two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study consisted of 1,896 respondents which include 648 male and 1248 female teachers. The sample for the study was 190 respondents which comprised 65 male and 125 female teachers. The researcher used stratified, proportionate random sampling techniques to obtain its sample size. The instrument for data collection was a researcher structured questionnaire titled: "Influence of Learning Environment on Academic Performance of Students Questionnaire (ILEAPSQ)". The instrument was validated by three experts. Two of them were from Department of Educational Management while the other one was from Measurement and Evaluation unit of Department of Mathematics and Computer Education all from Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, the researcher carried out a reliability test on 20 respondents (8 male and 12 female teachers) from public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. To ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, Cronbach alpha statistic was used and the computation yielded 0.81 for cluster 1 and 0.79 for cluster 2. The instrument had an overall reliability index of 0.80 which implies that the instrument is reliable. The research questions were answered using mean with standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistic. The findings of the study indicated that assessment centred learning environment and community centred learning environment influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Enugu State to a great extent. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others that teachers should understand and appreciate the diverse learning environment of their students in order to foster and improved their academic performance.

KEYWORDS: Influence, Learning Environment, Students, Academic Performance, Secondary Schools.

Introduction

Education has long been accepted as a veritable instrument per excellence for effective family, community and national development. Anbalangan (2017) defined education as a dynamic process, which involves imparting knowledge, generating interests and curiosity, inculcating desirable attitudes and values and developing essential skills required for independent study. According to Ugwuanyi (2013), education is the process by which people develop their

intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical powers so as to become functional and productive members of the community. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013), there are various levels of education which include: pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. But for the purpose of this study, the researcher will focus on the secondary school level of education.

Secondary education in Nigeria is that level of education after the primary education. According to (Federal Republic of Nigeria, (FRN), 2013), secondary school is the education received by the young ones after the primary education and before the tertiary stage. It occupies a very unique position in the educational system in Nigeria, because it is that level that determines the academic and professional career of students (Ogunbiyi, 2018). The secondary school education curriculum is run through the teachers.

A teacher is a person who impact knowledge, skills and attitudes to someone in a school. Amaele in Ayoro & Onyeike (2020), defined a teacher as a person trained in knowledge, skills, attitude and values, in a formal training institution, to teach or impart same to the learners in the most acceptable way. A teacher is a person who attempts to help someone acquire or change some skills, attitude, knowledge and ideas (Aghenta in Oragwu & Nwabueze, 2016). Teachers are critical in the actualization of students' academic performance because they are the curriculum implementers.

Academic performance simply means the actualization of proficiency in an academic work based on teachers' evaluation by standardized test or combination of both. According to Maganga, (2016), academic performance refers to achievement in standardized tests or examinations shown by a student. Komba, Hizza & Jonathan (2013), defined academic performance as the accomplishment of a given task that is measured against predetermined standards of accuracy, completeness, cost and speed. Bossaert, Doumen, Buyse & Verschueren (2013) defined academic performance as students' success in meeting short or long term goals in education in the big picture. Students' academic performance is largely identified by a range of statistical indicators, which can be said to be the level of attainment of a student in an examination that is, how a student is able to demonstrate his or her abilities in an examination and in real practical life situations or work environment (Omemu, 2018).

Learning environment is referred to as the different physical, cultural, or social settings used to provide learning opportunities to students. Kitonyi (2013) defined learning environment as the social, physical, psychological and pedagogical context in which learning occurs and which affects student's achievement and attitude. Learning environment encompasses how students interact with and treat one another in the pedagogical setting (Dhanapala, 2021). The learning environment dramatically affects the learning outcomes of students. Schools' open space and noise, inappropriate temperature, insufficient light, overcrowded classes, misplaced boards and inappropriate classroom layout, all make up factors that could be confounding variables distracting students in class (Gilavand, 2016). The researcher however considered learning environment, not from the school plant perspective, but from psycho-social components because of its importance in secondary education. These components, according to Alfieri (2011) are the combinations of learner centred, knowledge centred, assessment centred and community centred learning environments. However, the present study examined assessment centred and community centred learning environment.

Assessment centred learning environment is based on developing students' abilities to take some measures, over time, of what they have learned and what they are struggling with. It also involves learning to recognize and differentiate between the strategies that are working well for their own problem-solving and those that are not as effective (Bransford, Vye & Bateman, 2020). According to Gearhart (2020), assessment centred learning is learning that prioritise study design and redesigns based on outcome of systematic examination of student learning progress towards identified learning goals over time. The feedback from formative assessments can also help instructors by suggesting ways they might improve their instruction and by identifying where and how specific learners need further help (Heick, 2021). An environment of formative assessment is one designed to provide continual feedback about preconceptions and performances to both learners and instructors (Pellegrino, 2021).

Furthermore, community centred learning as a teaching strategy that combines student learning and real-world practice. Community-centred learning refers to a wide variety of instructional methods and programs that educators use to connect what is being taught in schools to their surrounding communities, including local institutions, history, literature, cultural heritage, and natural environments. According to Swarthmore (2014), community centred learning is a pedagogical approach that is based on the premise that the most profound learning often comes from experience that is supported by guidance, context-providing, foundational knowledge, and intellectual analysis. It encourages critical inquiry and collaboration thereby enhancing comprehension (Vaill, 2021).

In this study, gender is a critical variable because the teachers in different schools comprise male and female. Gender is an important variable in this study. Gender is referred to as a socially constructed roles and learned behaviours and expectations associated with males and females. World Health Organization (WHO) (2016), noted that the word gender is used to describe the characteristics, roles and responsibilities of women and men, boys and girls which are socially constructed.

The researcher observed that the issue of learning environment has some peculiar problems in Enugu State. The poor academic performance of students in both internal and external examinations is an indication that there are deficiencies with respect to learning environment in Enugu State. According to Anbalangan (2017), about 45% of students failed Mathematics and English Language in 2015 while in 2017, about 60% of students failed. The poor performance of students has, therefore, led the researcher to ask whether learning environment can influence the academic performance of students in secondary schools. It appears that in secondary schools, the principals, teachers, students and even the governments are not living up to expectations in discharging their obligations.

It was observed by the researcher that students in secondary schools in Enugu State are riddled with various problems such as overcrowding and indiscipline in the learning environment. It is imperative that a more holistic approach be undertaken to positively address the recurrent poor academic performance of students. To contribute to this onerous task, the researcher deemed it vital to also look into afore highlighted four dimensional learning environmental factors as feasible approaches to improving students' academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of poor academic performance of students in Nigeria has been of much concern to education stakeholders. The problem is so much that it has led to the widely acclaimed fallen standard of education in Nigeria at large and particularly Nsukka Education zone of Enugu State. Public secondary schools in Nsukka Education zone of Enugu State are continually faced with unsatisfactory learning environment which have degenerated to poor academic performance of students in both internal and external examinations. It was observed by the researcher that secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State are faced with different problems such as dilapidated infrastructure, low productivity of teachers, overcrowding, and indiscipline in the classrooms to physical discomfort for the students which may influence their academic performance. The teachers have argued that they should not be blamed for the situation because the absence of teaching facilities have adversely affected their teaching responsibilities which by extension have led to the poor quality of secondary school products in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. These arguments have motivated the researcher to investigate the influence of learning environment with particular reference to assessment centred and community centred learning environment on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. The problem of this study, therefore, put in a question form is, "To what extent do learning environment influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone Enugu State?"

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to determine the influence of learning environment on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Nsukka Education zone of Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the extent to which assessment centred learning environment influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools;
2. investigate the extent to which community centred learning environment influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do assessment centred learning environment influence on academic performance of students in public secondary schools?
2. To what extent do community centred learning environment influence on academic performance of students in public secondary schools?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance at an appropriate degree of freedom:

H_{O1}: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the extent to which assessment centred learning environment influence on academic performance of students in public secondary schools.

H_{O2}: Significant difference does not exist between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the extent to which community centred learning environment influence on academic performance of students in public secondary schools.

Research Method

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Nworgu (2015) defined descriptive survey research design as one which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from a few people or items regarded as being representative of the entire group. The population for the study consisted of 1,896 respondents which include 648 male and 1248 female teachers. The sample for the study was 190 respondents which comprised 65 male and 125 female teachers. The researcher used stratified, proportionate random sampling techniques to obtain its sample size. The instrument for data collection was a researcher structured questionnaire titled: "Influence of Learning Environment on Academic Performance of Students Questionnaire (ILEAPSQ)". The instrument was validated by three experts. Two of them were from Department of Educational Management while the other one was from Measurement and Evaluation unit of Department of Mathematics and Computer Education all from Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu.

To ensure the reliability of the instrument, the researcher carried out a reliability test on 20 respondents (8 male and 12 female teachers) from public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. To ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, Cronbach alpha statistic was used and the computation yielded 0.81 for cluster 1 and 0.79 for cluster 2. The instrument had an overall reliability index of 0.80 which implies that the instrument is reliable. However, out of the 190 copies of questionnaire administered, the researcher with his research assistant retrieved 187 copies of the questionnaire from (63 male and 124 female teachers) making it 98.42% return rate which were all used for analysis. The researcher used mean scores, cluster mean and standard deviation in answering the four research questions. In rating the mean, each response option had a numerical value based on real limit of numbers: VGE = 3.50-4.00; GE= 2.50-3.49; LE = 1.50-2.49; VLE = 0.00-1.49. t-test statistic was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significant. The interpretation of the test of hypotheses was based on the significance (sig.) values from the SPSS output. The null hypothesis was not rejected when the probability values were greater than 0.05, but rejected when the probability values were less than 0.05.

Data Analysis and Results Presentation

Research Question 1: To what extent does assessment centred learning environment influence academic performance of students in secondary schools?

Table 1: Mean scores and standard deviation of male and female teachers on the extent to which assessment centred learning environment influence academic performance of students in secondary schools

	ITEMS	Male Teachers n = 63			Female Teachers n = 124		
S/N	Extent assessment centred learning environment influences on students' academic performance because it:	$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec	$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec
1	makes their activities to be monitored.	2.65	.89	GE	2.65	.93	GE

2	ensures that their continuous assessments are assessed.	2.67	.97	GE	2.56	.93	GE
3	empowers students to take ownership of their learning.	2.59	.94	GE	2.57	.90	GE
4	measures students academic abilities.	2.50	.86	GE	2.52	.93	GE
5	encourages students to increase their logical reasoning skills.	2.50	.90	GE	2.59	.82	GE
6	improves students problem solving skills.	2.68	.94	GE	2.61	.93	GE
	Cluster Mean/SD	**2.60**	**.92**	**GE**	**2.58**	**.91**	**GE**

Table 1 shows that the male teachers' mean ranged from 2.50 to 2.68, while the female teachers' mean ranged from 2.52 to 2.65. The values of the cluster mean are 2.60 and 2.58 with standard deviations of .92 and .91 for both male and female teachers. The finding of the study indicates that assessment centred learning environment influence academic performance of secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State to a great extent.

Research Question 2: To what extent do community centred learning environment influence academic performance of students in secondary schools?

Table 2: Mean scores and standard deviation of male and female teachers on the extent to which community centred learning environment influence academic performance of students in secondary schools

	ITEMS	**Male Teachers n = 63**			**Female Teachers n = 124**		
S/N	**Extent community centred learning environment influences on students' academic performance because it:**	$\overline{x}$	**SD**	**Dec**	$\overline{x}$	**SD**	**Dec**
7	promotes norms that encourage critical inquiry.	2.41	.92	LE	2.71	.88	GE
8	improves social connectedness in the class.	2.57	.92	GE	2.55	.96	GE
9	makes them to mobilize assets within the communities.	2.55	.92	GE	2.65	.86	GE
10	aligns students' and teachers' course expectations.	2.47	.98	LE	2.50	.82	GE
11	connects students to variety of resources.	2.57	.92	GE	2.57	.90	GE
12	improves their abilities to solve complex problems.	2.46	.93	LE	2.41	.91	LE
	Cluster Mean/SD	**2.51**	**.93**	**GE**	**2.57**	**.89**	**GE**

Table 2 shows that the male teachers' mean ranged from 2.41 to 2.57, while the female teachers' mean ranged from 2.41 to 2.71. The values of the cluster mean are 2.51 and 2.57 with standard deviations of .93 and .89 for both male and female teachers. The finding of the study indicates

that community centred learning environment influences academic performance of secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State to a great extent.

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the extent to which assessment centred learning environment influence on academic performance of students in public secondary schools.

Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis of the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which assessment centred learning environment influence academic performance of students

Group	n	$\overline{x}$	SD	df	p-value	Decision
Male Teachers	63	2.60	.92	185	.101	H_{01} not rejected
Female Teachers	124	2.58	.91			

Data in Table 3 show that at 185 degree of freedom, the p-value was .101 which is greater than .05 level of significance set for this study. This is an indication that the null hypothesis was not rejected and, therefore, there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which assessment centred learning environment influence academic performance of secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State.

H_{02}: Significant difference does not exist between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the extent to which community centred learning environment influence on academic performance of students in public secondary schools.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis of the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which community centred learning environment influence academic performance of students

Group	n	$\overline{x}$	SD	df	p-value	Decision
Male Teachers	63	2.51	.93	185	.089	H_{02} not rejected
Female Teachers	124	2.57	.89			

Data in Table 4 show that at 185 degree of freedom, the p-value was .089 which is greater than .05 level of significance set for this study. This is an indication that the null hypothesis was not rejected and, therefore, there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which community centred learning environment influence academic performance of secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study showed that assessment centred learning environment influence academic performance of secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State to a great extent. Further finding showed that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which assessment centred learning environment influence academic performance of secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. The finding of the study is in agreement with Heick (2021) who posited that assurance centred learning environment influences academic performance of students to a great extent. The finding is in line with Gearhart (2020) who posited that assessment centred learning environment positively influences students' academic performance in secondary schools.

The finding of the study showed that community centred learning environment influences academic performance of secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State to a great extent. Further finding showed that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which community centred learning environment influence academic performance of secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. The finding is in agreement with Vaill (2021) who posited that community centred learning environment influences students' academic performance to a great extent.

Conclusion

The study examined the influence of learning environment on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. The findings of the study showed that assessment centred and community centred learning environment influence secondary school students' academic performance.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers should understand and appreciate the diverse learning environment of their students in order to foster and improved their academic performance.
2. Enugu State government should ensure that there is conducive learning environment in the education sector in order to improve students' academic performance.

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