

Assessment Of Facility Needs Of Government Primary Schools In Imo State, Nigeria: Some Neglected Areas

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the facility needs of government primary schools in Imo State of Nigeria. All the twenty -seven Local Government Councils in the State participated in the study. Five schools from each local government area were selected and this gave a sample size of one hundred and twenty five schools. Findings revealed that there is dearth of instructional facilities in most of the schools. There were no laboratories, and libraries. Few of the schools had science resource corners. Rain harvesting was the major source of water supply. Toilet facilities were not available in virtually all the schools. Although the communities benefited from rural electrification, the primary schools were not supplied with electricity. Furthermore, findings showed that only football fields were the sporting facility available in the schools. There was no school transport system in any of the primary schools. The primary schools were dilapidated and floors needed re-plastering. It was also found that most of these schools still had mud walls, without doors and windows. The study concluded that there were inadequate facilities in the primary schools in the State. It therefore, recommended that the State Universal Basic Education Commission should carry out facility up-date in all the primary schools in the State. This will ensure effective teaching and learning. The study further recommended that the host communities should assist in the provision of facilities in the primary schools located in their communities. [New York Science Journal. 2008;1(2):22-29]. (ISSN: 1554-0200).

INTRODUCTION

There are growing concerns among stakeholders and educational practitioners about the quality of education given to children. Educational practitioners and stakeholders are also lamenting the fall in the standard of education in the country. There are also calls for the need to re-vamp the educational sector to address the concerns of the citizenry and comply with millennium development goals (MDGs). These calls, gave impetus to the

current educational reforms of the Federal Government. The primary school is the foundation of the formal educational system. However, this very important level of the educational system has been neglected. There are several blind spots at the primary schools that if addressed would improve the delivery system and the quality of teaching and learning. Both students and teachers need facilities such as libraries, science resource corners, good drinking water, toilets, laboratories and security for teaching and learning. The current emphasis all over the world among educational practitioners is on learner-friendly school environment with learner-friendly instructional delivery system. Modern school environment put emphasis on the provision of facilities such as adequate and spacious classrooms, workshops/laboratories, computers, good water source/supply, toilets facilities, functional libraries, transportation, and communication systems among others. All these facilities are required in appropriate quantity and quality (Ajayi, 2001).

The learner is the centre-point of learner-friendly education, which starts at the primary school level. Primary school is the fulcrum for all other levels of education. It is therefore important that care should be taken in organizing, coordinating and managing educational activities at the primary school level. Ndu (1991) observed that no nation could produce the kind of citizens that would think creatively and help solve problems facing humanity without sound primary education. Thus primary education occupies a critical position in the education system and its importance in the overall national and individual development cannot be overstressed.

Writing about the physical conditions, equipment and facilities in schools, Mbakwem and Asiabaka (2007) lamented the unhealthy nature of the buildings: uncompleted, old and antiquated, sometimes dilapidated buildings, overcrowded and un-conducive classrooms, unsightly and unhygienic toilets, inadequate laboratories and workshops. The pupils start learning in already deprived and disadvantaged school environment. In several primary and secondary schools in most parts of the country, the buildings were either half completed or dilapidated. Population explosion, insufficient desks, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate learning materials, preponderance of unqualified teachers, poorly educated and ill-motivated teachers characterize the entire system (Ajayi, 2001). A good

number of studies have focused mainly on infrastructural facilities such as buildings, classrooms, chairs, tables etc but neglected other school facilities as well as the school environment. It is important that appropriate, adequate, desirable and acceptable learning environment as well as learning experiences be provided the learners.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to assess the over looked facility-needs of government primary schools in Imo State.

The specific objectives were as follows:

1. To determine the availability of science resource corners, recreational facilities, toilet facilities, source of water supply, first aid, communication and transportation facilities in the primary schools
2. To assess the sanitary condition and the mode of refuse disposal in the schools.
3. To ascertain the nature of security facilities available in the schools
4. To asses the nature of landscape in the schools

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Are there science resource corners, recreational facilities, functional toilets, source of water supply, communication and transportation facilities in each school visited?
2. What are the sanitary condition and mode of refuse disposal available in the schools?
3. To what extent are security facilities available in the schools?
4. Were the schools landscaped?

METHODOLOGY

The survey method was used for the study. Data for the research work was collected with the use of a checklist, which was completed by the researchers during the visit to the primary schools. The researchers in the company of a school staff observed the facilities in each school visited. The checklist solicited for information on the availability of

science resource corner, recreational, toilet, communication, first aid and transport facilities. Furthermore, information was collected on the source of water supply, school sanitation and the nature of landscape in the schools. The population of the study comprised of all the primary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. The systematic random sampling technique was used to select five primary schools in each Local Government Area in the State. There are twenty-seven Local Government Councils in Imo State. This gave a total of one hundred and thirty five schools. Since this study was descriptive in nature, simple percentages were used in data analysis.

RESULTS

Findings are summarized in Table 1.

In the schools visited, the use of science resource corner for teaching and learning was left to the discretion of the class teachers, consequently few classrooms had science corners while several others had none. Results showed that all the 135 primary schools visited have football fields which also serve as play ground. Only one school had facilities for handball. All other recreational facilities such as volleyball, basketball, table tennis, swimming pool, lawn tennis were not available in any of the schools.

All the 135 primary schools had no computer and communication facilities.

Only five out of the one hundred and thirty schools had regular and good source of water supply all others had none. Only two schools had functional libraries

Two schools had functional toilet facilities. However only one school located in the urban area had forty eight V.I.P latrines with a population of 1470 pupils. This is in line with the Federal Government stipulation of one toilet to not more than twenty five pupils.

Only one school located in the urban area had no farm/garden as a result of lack of space. All others had both farm and vegetable gardens. Seven schools had facilities for music while only two schools had facilities for arts. No government primary school had transportation facilities. Results show that all the schools visited had fairly adequate first-aid boxes except six schools. Four schools located in the urban area had block walls. Only one school had two paid security men. One school had well managed landscape. All others had flowers in the school compound but they were not well planned. Findings indicated that all the schools visited were clean and well kept however burning was the only means of refuse disposal

Table 1: Facilities Available in Primary Schools in Imo State
(N=135)

Facility	Number Available %
Computers	None
Library	2 (1.48%)
Laboratory	1 (.7%)
Music	7 (5.2%)
Fine Arts	1 (.7%)
Water	4 (2.96%)
Communication e.g. telephones	None
Science resource corner	uncoordinated
Electricity	3 (2.2%)
Transportation	None
Sanitation	135 (100%)
Refuse Disposal	None
Toilet	2 (1.48%)
First Aid	118 (87.4%)
Recreation- Football (only)	135 (100%)*

Source: Survey Data, 2007.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Eddie (2000) and Obasi (2000) have lamented that lack of facilities is the major problem in Nigeria's educational system, whereas Hallack (1990) saw these facilities as major determinants of academic achievements in the school system. Anukam (2006) and Mbakwem and Asiabaka (2007) stated that the cumulative effect of poor facilities is poor motivation and low morale of teachers, which result in low quality work output. Ajayi (1995) also observed that the education system has failed to inculcate the spirit of self-

reliance in the recipients because there were no equipment in schools and where they existed, they were not being utilized.

Apart from this, the main educational issue in Nigeria is erosion of quality. Many schools have no clean water supply within 500 meters of the school as stipulated in the UBE Strategic Plan (2001). There are no toilet facilities for children's conveniences, no functional libraries for training in reading culture and research (catch-them young); no transportation systems for conveying the young learners to places of educational interests and other outings. These are blind spots that are not yet addressed yet they are critical need areas of the schools and their pupils. When pupils are exposed to disadvantaged conditions of learning, learning would be slow (Mbakwem and Asiabaka, 2007a)

It has been aptly pointed out that the "hands on experience" acquired through interactive and practice-oriented programmes are completely lost when learners are denied the opportunity to handle or manipulate laboratory equipment, agricultural tools and other machines (Obanya, 2001). Hallack (1990) stressed that while available adequate and relevant facilities promote academic achievements, unattractive school buildings, cracked classroom walls and floors, lack of or inadequate playgrounds and surroundings inhibit academic achievement. Learners are not passive objects, they are active and inquisitive persons. Knowledge acquisition is a constructive or generative process and each pupil's knowledge is personal and unique.

Education liberates human beings from the shackles of ignorance, deprivation and misery. It must also lead to a non-violent and non-exploitative social system. Young girls and boys are to be empowered through proper education to increase their capability. Paradigm shifts are therefore necessary to support a curriculum that values the development of intrinsic values and the interaction of the process and the content. Besides, the development of intrinsic values and the emotional intelligence is crucial. A primary school child should be groomed on the proper use of toilet facilities, refuse disposal and sanitation, the importance of games and sports as well as science resource corner among others. "Train a child the way he should go and when he grows up, he will

not depart from it” (proverb 22:6). If the necessary facilities that will facilitate the training of a child are not available, the teaching learning process cannot be successful. How children witness the environment, live in it and interact with it are all crucial to their life long experience. They should be made to see, observe and experience positive values and imbibe them (<http://www.ncert.nic.onkf chap2.htm>).

Understanding of the environment (school, church, community) in its totality both natural and social, and their interactive processes, the environmental problems, and the ways and means to preserve the environment starts with learning in the school environment itself. This fact has to be realized in all seriousness by the curriculum designers, school heads, administrators and classroom teachers.

Conclusion, Recommendations and Policy Implications

The findings of this study indicated a serious level of inadequacy of facilities in all the primary schools in Imo State. From these findings, it can be concluded that government is paying lip service to this very important level of the educational system. The quest for education for all as stipulated in MDGs will not be actualized in a setting of inadequacy of facilities.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

1. There is need for facility inventory and update in the State primary schools.
2. There is also a need to renovate all the schools in the state since all of them are dilapidated and seeking renovation.
3. Communities and other stakeholders should partner with the Ministry of Education in running of primary schools.
4. Churches and other religious organizations should be allowed to run schools, more especially, those primary schools originally owned by them.

The findings of this study has implication for educational policy. Educational managers and policy makers should pay attention to these blind spots in the educational system. There is the need to look at the external environment of teaching and learning. This is pertinent because it impacts on the teaching-learning process and consequently affect teacher effectiveness.

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4/8/2008