

Teachers' Perceived Influence of Educational Research on Improvement of Primary School Learning Environment in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The school environment plays key roles in influencing effective learning among students of all educational levels. To this effect, abundant educational innovations and ideas released through research findings are meant to promote positive and learners' friendly school environment. This paper investigated the influence of educational research on improvement of primary school learning environments in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. This study employs descriptive survey design. Schools were randomly stratified into public and private groups for selection purpose. From the entire 193 schools (130 public and 63 private) selection of 6 public schools and 3 private others was done using simple random sampling method. Sample consists of 162 (94 Male, 68 Female) teachers randomly selected from 6 public and 3 private primary school teachers in Moro Local Government Area respectively. Overall, 16 teachers selected from each school to make a total of 162 study participants in the study. A self-structured instrument titled "Teachers Perception of Educational Research Influence on Improvement of Primary School Learning Environment Questionnaire" (TPERIISL EQ) of Four Point Likert Scale Format, an adapted version of School Learning Environment Questionnaire (SLEQ) was used for data collection while inferential statistics of mean, standard deviation, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics were used for data analysis. The study answered one (1) research question. Two (2) null hypotheses were tested, and results obtained determined at 0.05 level of significance. Result shows descriptive overview of noticeable improvement in renovated classrooms buildings and erection of new ones. Results also reveal significant differences in perceived improvement of school learning environment as influenced by educational research based on gender, school type and religion. Recommendations include among others the need to reduce congestion in the classroom in line with student-teacher ratio of 25 to 1.

Keywords: Educational Research, Teachers' Perception, Improvement, Primary School Learning Environment.

1. Introduction

Institutions of learning all are expected to perform the roles of making education a tool for nurturing, mobilising and improving natural resources development. Though achieving the lofty feat is a times beset with challenges, given certain inhibiting factors of school learning environments, research aptly provides support to make the expected happen. Research searchlight is from time to time directed towards educational institutions as evaluative measures of existing infrastructures, resources and facilities in order to influence schools' success in its roles performance. As a result, deficits in the system of education that are uncovered in the course of their search are meant to receive positive changes and improvements.

Educational research is a priority for vital roles played in the overall development of pedagogy, learning programme and policy formulation [1]. The search and application of knowledge for development and improved services have emerged to occupy the main center stages in the activities of Western Universities [2], [3]. Utilising research findings to solve specific problems through their principles and theories provide better insights into pressing issues and readily aids improvement of school learning environments.

Concept of Educational Research

Research is a systematic search and investigation for increasing the sum of knowledge [2]. Research is a curiously driven activity that has the purpose of discovery, advancement of knowledge and systematic investigation including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to contribute to general knowledge or understanding of the subject studied. Educational research is systematic investigation that applies empirical methods to

solving challenges in education being the pivot on which educational activities revolve [4], [5]. Educational research is the activity that is directed towards the development of a science of behaviour in educational situation [5], [6].

The primary purpose of educational research is to expand the existing body of knowledge by providing solution to different problems in pedagogy while also improving teaching and learning practices, learner motivation, development in classroom management and so on [4]. Educational research is thus a useful tool for practical school problem solving, specifically, those pertaining to school learning environment.

2. School Learning Environment

In any school location are to be found elements of the school environment including buildings, classrooms, infrastructures, facilities, library, playgrounds, halls of assembly or auditorium, laboratory, dining hall, sport or playground, textbooks, instructional materials, and a lot more. Teachers that perform learning experiences and other school staff that are to pay attention to students' physical, psychological and instructional atmosphere form part of the learning environment [7].

The term learning environment is a composite of human practices and material systems much as ecology is the combination of living things [8]. Learning environment refers to the divers physical location contexts and cultures in which students learn [9], the set of relationship that occur among members of a school community that are determined by structural, personnel and functional factors of educational institution which provide distinctiveness to school [10].

Environment as a psychological concept refers to all influences that affect the development of living things in different physical and social contexts experienced [11]. At the height of environmental psychology of teaching and learning is the effect of physical characteristics of learning environment on learner's cognitive and behavioural consequences. An educational environment is composed of three components of the physical environment as well as the emotional and intellectual climates. The educational climate is the physical set contexts and values from which students receive education which affect positively the motivation, happiness, achievement and satisfaction of students [12].

Environment, an object of learning is an educator as learning is influenced by attention to specific targets [9], [13]. Fundamentally, learning takes place in a physical environment with quantifiable and perceptible physical characteristics. Learner's information selection and processing through automatic and controlled processes is influenced by learners' attention to specific targets in the classroom like armchair, teacups and their continuous

monitoring of ambient like warmth and smell. Learning is influenced by attention to specific targets hence the adverse effects of environmental variables as inadequate light, extreme temperature and noise on learning. Distracting noises slow reaction time and degrade performances [14].

Psychology places strong emphasis on comfortable learning environment for its influence on positive emotional state of the learner. Due to learner's emotional reactions to environmental stimuli, comfortable learning environment that is favoured by quality of its physical characteristics to produce positive climates facilitates learning and develops place attachment [13], [14]. On the contrary, learning environments' physical characteristics like architecturally substandard facilities that cause discomfort can be expected to interfere with effective learning and affect learners emotionally with important cognitive and behavioural consequences. Such climate of social disorder may incapacitate teachers' ability to demonstrate enthusiasm for their jobs and create conducive learning environment for learners. The conditions can evoke fear among students and erode a school sense of collective efficacy [13].

On the issue of safety, researchers consider as very paramount school safer learning environment that favours students' physical, mental, emotional and psychological security worldwide and more specifically in societies experiencing banditry and terrorism challenges. Safer learning environment entails that students feel welcomed, supported, and respected not only by teachers but by all connected to their learning experiences; teachers, classmates, administrators, family and community members for a higher academic feat [15], [27].

2.1. Physical Environment

Studies have confirmed that the classroom learning environment is vital to students' learning outcomes and also impacts students in many ways. A conducive physical environment is considered an agent of intellectual stimulation [16]. The modern learner space has a positive impact on learners' achievement. It facilitates attractive, accessible and enable meaningful learning experiences [10], [13]. A growing body of research has connected the quality of school facilities, equipment and instructional material to ;students' learning outcome, academic achievement, safety, teachers' attitude, motivation and teacher pupil ration [10], [17], [18], [19], [20], [21]. Specific classroom building feature, and conditions, indoor air quality [8] effects of noise on learning results, Quality of illumination [14] student perception of comfort in the classroom and arrangement of classroom space [10], [18].

2.2. Improvement of School Learning Environment

The increased clamour for improvement in the learning environment of schools by educational researchers results from several considerations. First is the potential for improved learning environment to increase teachers' and students' enthusiasm, higher performance, teaching efficiency, enhanced productivity and mental set. Second is the vast inspiring innovations and better solutions ideas found by researchers to the traditional classroom set up requiring application by institutions for optimum performance and efficiency in line with world best practices. An improved learning environment has tendency to increase focus and attention of students. It promotes meaningful performance and motivates higher-levels critical learning skills [2], [12] hence the need for periodic improvement.

Everyone is affected by his environment every day. Classroom learning environment is vital to student's wellbeing. It impacts students and teachers in so many ways by the quality of facilities, infrastructures and materials [22]. A negative setting that adversely affect student's learning for example can affect the teacher also resulting in low student achievement, poor behaviour, student anxiety and depression thus in dire need of improvement [10], [20], [23]. Available solutions to problems of school learning environment through research results await implementations. Appropriately adopted and applied educational research results have tendency to promote standard physical, emotional, and psychological learning environment, boosts students' enthusiasm to learn, teachers' social support and efficiency. Previous studies on learning environment have for decades focused on qualities of school facilities to learning outcomes, academic achievement and motivation, the quality of classroom facilities and students' perception of comfort, arrangement of classroom space and relaxation. Studies on the influence of educational research on improvement of school learning environment however is very rare. This study aims at filling the gap.

2.3. Statement of the Problem

Researchers and well-meaning Nigerians consistently register their disappointment over the prevailing poor quality learning environments of Nigerian primary schools [2], [20]. Noticeable undoubtedly in some primary schools in urban areas of Kwara State of recent are attractive buildings of quality physical characteristics that are suggestive of some improvement in evidence of educational research on school learning environments. However, a number of such schools, being privately owned and expensive are unaffordable to children of the poor.

Typical of many Kwara State primary school learning environments of which Moro Local Government Area is domiciled, are dilapidated, unrepaired blown off roofs, and architecturally substandard classrooms of physical disorder state that put at risk the life of teachers and pupils at risk and promote falling standard of education. The case of a collapsed architecturally substandard building, killing eight primary pupils during teaching-learning session in a Northern Nigerian community few weeks back is an unfortunate example. Dirty and bushy school surrounding is an eye sore. Such climate of physical and social disorder within school invoke fear among students and erode a school's sense of collective efficiency [20].

Public primary school classrooms' congestion still inhibit teacher's free movement, evaluation of students' classroom activities, student motivation and active participation. With inadequate chairs and desks for pupils' use, the unhealthy alternative sitting arrangement on dirty bare floor or cement blocks that remains unaddressed is worrisome to educationists. The prevailing poor classroom space typical of public primary school learning environment in Nigeria generally reflect low improvement efforts from educational policy makers and school providers and thereby deprive pupils of much needed comfort, relaxation, and quality learning outcome. Equally emerging in distracting environments are numerous private primary schools lacking basic physical facilities despite that monitoring team members from education offices of local government and the Ministry of Education respectively are aware of the unhealthy developments but yet do not effect required changes. Equally of concern to researchers of this study are reasons for seemingly unfavourable disposition of Kwara State Ministry of Education towards effecting required changes to primary schools' poor learning environment if and when reports from monitoring exercises are submitted accordingly. Consequent upon the insignificant application of research results by policy makers and education providers the existing gap between the development of useful findings and their utilisation by whose duty it is to apply the research finding reported by [23], [24] may likely still constitute a serious impediment to improved school learning environment. This study investigates the influence of educational research on improvement of primary school learning environment in Moro Local government rural Area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

3. Methods

This study employs descriptive survey design to investigate primary school teachers' perception of educational research influence on improvement of primary school leaning environment. The target population of the study comprises all primary school

teachers in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. Schools were randomly stratified according to public and private categories for selection purpose from the entire 193 schools (130 public and 63 private) selection of 6 public schools and 3 private others respectively was done using simple random sampling method. Overall, 16 teachers were selected from each school to make a total of 162 respondents that participated in the study.

3.1. Instrument

A self-structured instrument titled “ Teachers Perception of Educational Research Influence on Improvement of Primary School Learning Environment Questionnaire” (TPERIISLEQ) of four-point Likert Scale Format with response mode ranging from Strongly Agree (SD) =4; Agree (A) = 3; Disagree(D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 respectively was used for data collection. The instrument has two sections, A and B. Section A presents the demographic characteristics of respondents while section B consists of 25 items on teachers’ perception of the influence of educational research on learning environment of primary school in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. TPERIISLEQ’s validity was ascertained by two experts in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria while a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.74 affirms the instruments’ reliability.

The instrument was self-administered to 162 respondents in their various schools, retrieved immediately after completion with the help of two research assistants and used for this study. In interpreting the results on respondents’ perceived influence of educational research on improvement of primary school learning environment, a mean score of 2.5 and above of the participants who disagree with a positive item is regarded as indicator of perceived uninfluenced learning environment by research .Where the same mean score disagreed with a negative statement about school learning environment, it is regarded as school learning improvement indicator. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics of mean scores, standard deviation, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics. Results of the study are presented below following, the demographic characteristic description of respondents.

4. Results and Discussion

The Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents by gender, religion and school type. It indicates that 94 (58%) of the respondents were male while 68 (42%) were female. The table also shows the religion of the respondents, where 95 (58.6%) of the

respondents were Christians, 56(71.7%) Muslims, and 11(6.8) respondents claim to belong to other religions. As per school type, the distribution indicates that 108 (66.7) respondents were from public schools and 54 (33.3) from private schools.

4.1. Research Question

What are respondents perceived improved areas of school learning environments in Moro Local Government Area as influenced by educational research?

Results on Table 2 reveal respondents’ perceived improvement of research influenced learning environments of their schools. Results show descriptive overview of the noticeable improved school learning environment as influenced by the educational research .Result reveals improvement in their school learning as follow:

- Cleanliness and tidiness of school surrounding against poisonous insects and snakes.
- Renovation of dilapidated classroom and other school buildings.
- Increased number of classrooms in required number so teaching no longer takes place under tree shade.
- Neat classroom with colourful wall pictures.
- Good classroom ventilation.
- Better classroom chairs and desks arrangement patterns that enable teacher’ interaction with pupils during teaching.
- Available chairs and desks for allocation to pupils in classroom.
- Adequate security consciousness education of pupils.
- Fixed classroom doors and windows that are conveniently opened and closed at will.
- Teacher created psychological environment of constant clear rules and role modelling patterns that promote positive feeling of classroom engagement and attendance.

Respondents’ descriptive overview on Table 2 above also reveal unnoticeable improvement of educational research influence in some areas of school learning environments including:

- Absence of toilet and water facilities provision.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Gender		
	Male	94	58.0
	Female	68	42.0
	Total	162	100.0
2.	Religion		
	Christianity	95	58.6
	Islam	56	34.6
	Others	11	6.8
	Total	162	100.0
3.	School Type		
	Public	108	66.7
4.	Private	54	33.3
	Total	162	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2022

- Damaged toilet facilities.
- Unobserved teacher –student ratio in pupil classroom accommodation arrangement.
- Difficulty of arranging classroom chairs and desks in patterns that promote teacher social support due to class congestion.
- Difficulty in arranging sitting arrangement of pupils in cluster order to promote their class activities.
- Inadequate classroom desks and chairs involving the use of dirty bare floor and cement block as alternative classroom sitting arrangement of pupils.
- Absence of libraries in many schools.
- Lack of relevant learning materials including textbooks, notebooks pens, pencils, erasers, and many more by students.

4.2. Research Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant difference in male and female respondents' perceived influence of educational research on improvement of school learning environment

Result on Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value of 5.19 is greater than the critical table value of 2.51 at 0.05 level of significance. This confirms that male respondents have more proportional significance than female respondents as confirmed by the demographic report. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected since

P- value < 0.05. It is therefore concluded that significant difference exists in male and female respondents' perceived influence of educational research on improvement of school learning environment in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in respondents' perceived influence of educational research on improvement of school learning environment based on school type

The result on Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value 4.26 is greater than the t table value of 0.014 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the P-value < 0.05, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected. The alternative hypothesis is considered worthwhile, which means there is significant difference in respondents' perceived influence of educational research on improvement of school learning environment based on type of school

Ho3: There is no significant difference in respondents' perceived influence of educational research on improvement of school learning environment based on religion.

Results in Table 5 above reveal F-value of 55.01 with a p-value of 0.000 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the P- value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected. This implies that significant difference exists in respondents' perceived influence of educational research on improvement of school learning environment based on religion type. (F (1,161))=55.01, p<0.05.

5. Discussion

The results of this study reveal statistical differences in primary school teachers' perceived influence of educational research on improvements of primary school learning environment in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria based on gender, school type and religion. The result supports the popular opinion that educational research's ideals and innovations are more prominently identified with learning environment of specific schools at the expense of others. For example, a few renovated school buildings and newly erected others that are currently noticeable in urban than rural areas of Kwara State do not support drastic improvement of quality primary school learning environment in rural areas of which Moro Local Government Area is part.

The result corroborates Bako's findings [2] that development is very slow in Nigerian schools. Notwithstanding that educational research is a useful tool for practical problem solving and also a creative work to increase knowledge application, drastic improvement of quality learning outcomes at primary schools can only be visible if education providers pay considerable attention to productive methods of education practices [5] and evenly apply research results across schools to solve challenges of learning environment accordingly [2], [3], [24]. When two elephants fight, the grass people say suffer. Quality basic education at primary school level, being the foundation upon which other higher educational institutions stand [25] is currently endangered by poor learning environment. Same attitude of neglect and inattention to educational needs of tertiary institutions is being acclaimed; a causal factor of the ongoing industrial dispute of academic staff of universities (ASUU) which have been incessant for decades.

The difference in private primary school teachers' perception of their school learning environment in relation to their counterparts in public schools is evidence of remarkable improvement that abound in their schools. Teachers from private schools perceived attractive and inviting buildings, renovated damaged classrooms, presence of architecturally substandard classroom building, adequate and comfortable desk and tables in required numbers, good classroom ventilation, available library stocked with required textual materials and magazines, appropriately spaced classrooms that support student' active participation, teacher monitoring and evaluation. Result of significant improvement in learning environment at private primary schools in contrast to that of public schools in Moro Local government area of Kwara State readily accounts for possible differences in pupils' learning outcome in agreement with [21], [26]. that adequate school facility provides positive educational climate suitable for learning while flexible seating increases collaboration, motivation and engagement [12]. The

result reports adequate attention being paid to security education in both public and private schools which is a welcome development considering the high rate of security challenges across Nigeria localities currently. The positive efforts towards physical, social, emotional, and psychological security environment sustenance across schools public and private is a welcome development.

6. Conclusion

Educational research has influenced cleanliness and tidiness of school surrounding, renovation of dilapidated classroom and other school buildings, increased classrooms, neatness and beauty of classroom, good classroom ventilation, better classroom arrangement of chairs and desks that enables teacher' interaction with pupils during teaching, increased chairs and desks allocation to pupils in classroom, sufficient security consciousness education, Fixed classroom doors and windows that are conveniently opened and closed at will and teacher created psychological environment of constant clear rules and role modelling patterns that promote positive feeling of classroom engagement and attendance . Improvement rate in schools learning environment differ on the ground of type of schools.

7. Recommendations

Life is not static. Only change is the constant variable that influences development in all sectors of human endeavours. As such:

- It is time due attention is given to drastic changes of public primary school's learning environment through implementation of educational research innovations and ideas so that schools will be capacitated to efficiently carry out its role of knowledge provision in line with world's best practices.
- Dilapidated and architecturally substandard school buildings, blown off school buildings roofs, either in rural or urban areas should be renovated henceforth and furnished with appropriate physical elements and materials required for effective teaching and learning activities.
- More classrooms should be built to reduce overcrowding so that teachers could regulate classroom space for teaching efficiency and be more able to put into use their skills for student motivation.
- Standard sitting arrangement should henceforth be put in place across primary schools. An end should

come to sitting arrangement of pupils on bare floor or cement blocks. Comfortable chairs, and desk in required numbers should be made available to all pupils in public primary schools in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State.

- Functional toilet facilities and running water system should be made available for the use of pupils.
- School surrounding should be kept neat, and the grass trimmed very low

8. References

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Acknowledgements

My profound appreciation to the management of Kwara State Ministry of Education Ilorin for the list of primary schools in Moro Local Government Area released as well as permission granted to conduct this study in the schools. To primary school heads for access permission granted to their schools.

Table 2: Showing perceived improvement areas of primary school learning environment in Moro Local Government Area as influenced by educational research

Items	X	SD
Surrounding of my school is kept neat and tidy more than previous years	2.6	.72
Keeping school surrounding and playground neat and tidy is ensured for safety against poisonous insects and snakes	2.8	.70
Toilet and water facilities are not provided in my school	2.4	.78
Available toilet facilities are damaged and not functioning	2.4	.86
Buildings		
School buildings are attractive and inviting to teachers and students	2.5	.58
Dilapidated and damaged classrooms are being renovated and put to use.	2.6	.62
Only few classrooms are still in state of despair and neglect	2.5	.55
There are still a number of architecturally substandard classroom buildings that inhibit teachers enthusiastic and motivation to willingly support learning	2.8	.59
Available classrooms adequately accommodate pupils in relation to the specified 1-25 teacher-pupil ratio	2.0	.90
Teaching and learning no longer take place under tree shades due to sufficient classrooms in my school	2.9	.61
My classroom is presently kept neat with colourful wall pictures.	2.7	.56
My classroom has good ventilation.	2.6	.60
Classroom roof leakage whenever it rains disturb teaching from time to time.	2.3	.61
Social support		
Classroom arrangement pattern presently support pupil's active participation in class discussion and initiate questions.	2.5	.66
Classroom arranged desks and chairs pattern provide better space, enables teachers' free passage and pupil interaction for teaching improvement	2.4	.65
Pupils' sitting arrangement is presently in cluster order to promote better interaction and evaluation of pupils' class activities.	2.3	.68
Present classroom arrangement supports teacher's free movement and interaction with individual and groups of students.	2.1	.66
Furniture		
Classroom desks and chairs allocated to each pupil comfortably enable individual or groups work.	2.5	.66
Due to insufficient number of classroom chairs some pupils have to bring chairs from home or alternatively sit on bare dirty floor and cement blocks.	2.4	.65

Library

Library is now available and kept neat with relevant book materials and magazines 2.0 .87

Security

Students receive sufficient education to be security conscious and report strangers to the right authority 3.4 .70

Classrooms have doors and windows that are conveniently closed and opened at will. 3.4 .54

Psychological environment

Teacher's consistent and clear rules presently motivate pupils' positive feeling of their classroom environment. 3.4 .56

Teachers' modeling roles as good examples setters presently motivates pupils' positive feeling of classroom, engagement and attendance. 3.3 .61

Learning material

Many more pupils have relevant textbooks, notebooks, pens, pencils, erasers and many more for use in the class. 1.9 .84

Table 3. Test of difference on male and female respondents' perceived influence of educational research on improvement of school learning environment

Variables	N	X	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Critical t-value	Sig.	Decision
Male	162	3.45	54.4	161	5.19	2.51	0.00	Ho ₁ Rejected
Female	162	3.15	35.8					

Significant P < 0.05

Table 4. Test of difference on perceived improvement of school learning environment as influenced by educational research based on School type

Variables	N	X	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Critical t-value	Sig.	Decision
Public	162	1.48	30.2	142	4.6	2.51	0.00	Ho ₂ Rejected
Private	162	2.34	43.8					

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 5. ANOVA summary of differences on respondents' perceived influence of educational research on improvement of school learning environment based on religion

Variables	Sum of Squares	Df	Means Square	F	Sig	Remark
Between Groups	89.100	1	9.21	55.01	.000 ^b	Rejected Ho ₂
Within Groups	26.900	160	.167			
Total	116.000	161				

Significant P < 0.05