



Correlates of School Characteristics and Academic Performance of Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This study correlated school characteristics and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State. The correlational research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The population of the study was 5,727 students in Rivers State, while 382 was adopted as the sample size using the Taro Yamene formula. The stratified sampling technique was adopted for the study. In this study, an instrument was used for data collection. It is a structured questionnaire titled “School Characteristics Questionnaire” to measure school characteristics and secondary data (students’ results) gotten from the schools to measure students’ academic performance. Content and face validation of the research instrument was carried out by an expert in measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the research instrument was determined using a test-retest method. The Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to obtain a reliability index of 0.80. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation and inferential statistic of Pearson’s Product Moment Correlational Analysis was used to test the formulated null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The following findings were made, there is a significant relationship between school facilities and academic performance of senior secondary students in Rivers State, there is a significant relationship between learning environment and academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers State, there is a significant relationship between class size and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State. It was therefore, recommended among other things that curriculum developers should include objectives and learning activities that focus on developing students’ academic performance.

Keywords: School Characteristics, Academic Performance, Senior Secondary School Students, Rivers State.

INTRODUCTION

Education generally is considered to be the corner-stone for development. It forms the basis for literacy, skill acquisition, technological advancement and ability to harness human and material resources towards the achievement of societal goals (FRN, 2004). Social, physical, emotional and intellectual abilities are developed in individuals to enable them actualize their potentials and become better than they used to be, going through the various teaching-learning process. Ugwuanyi (2013) stated that the society through education establishes the young people to learn and understand the heritage of the past, participate in the society productively and contribute to the development of the society meaningfully. Kneller (2010) saw education as a process through which any society transmits knowledge, values and skills from one person

to another through schools, colleges, universities and other institutions. The quality of education not only depends on the teachers as reflected in the performance of their duties, but also in the way the various activities within the school are carried out (Ajao, 2011).

School characteristics which include physical environment, principal leadership, classrooms, libraries, technical workshops, laboratories, teacher quality, teaching methods, and other variables that tend to investigate students' academic achievement (Ajayi, 2017; Oluchukwu, 2010). Hence, school characteristics remain an important area that should be studied, evaluated and well managed to enhance students' academic performance. It has also been observed that adequate attention is now being paid to school plant planning throughout the world's educational system including Nigeria. Educational facilities such as school plant have been repeatedly found to have positive relationship with standard and quality of educational system (Ojedde, 2010).

Nigeria as a nation strives to experience real growth and development in its educational system. This requires a clearly defined development strategy that allows intensive utilization of resources to ensure the actualization of stated goals and objectives. These resources are the various school physical facilities that are indispensable in the educational process. They include school location, teaching methods, class size, the building and physical equipment, recreation places for the achievement of educational objectives (Oluchukwu, 2010). It is believed that a well-planned school will gear up expected outcomes of education that will facilitate good social, political and economic emancipation, effective teaching and learning process and academic performance of the students.

A classroom environment that is safe and orderly with functional school facilities relates significantly with the students' academic performance in schools. The school characteristics physically relates with teachers, students and the teaching and learning process in a school. In line with the aforementioned, Lyons (2011) and Ostendorf (2011), opined that poor lighting, poor ventilation, noise, high level of carbon dioxide in classrooms and inconsistent temperatures of the class can make teaching and learning difficult and also lead to frustration among teachers and poor learning attitude among students. A classroom environment that is safe and orderly with functional school facilities relates significantly with student academic performance in school. Beyond the direct relationship that poor facilities have on students' ability to learn, poor facilities, which create an uncomfortable and uninviting workplace for teachers, with frustrating behaviour of students including poor concentration and hyperactivity, lethargy, or apathy, create stressful set of working conditions for teachers. Because stress and job dissatisfaction are common pre-cursors to lowered teacher enthusiasm, it is possible that the aforementioned evaluation of characteristics of school relates with the academic performance of students (Singh, 2016).

School systems have established learning modes that involve groups of students of about the same age interacting with a single individual (the teacher) leading activities in a confined space called the classroom. Since learning is complex, the number of students in a class (class size) will, to a large extent have a positive or negative impact on the academic performance of an individual student. Class size refers to the actual number of learners taught by a teacher at a particular time. The class size can vary, depending on teachers' roles and the amount of time teachers spend in the classroom during the school day.

Ajao (2011) opined that the extent to which students learning could be enhanced depends on their location within the school compound, the structure of their classroom, availability of instructional facilities and accessories. It is believed that a school with adequate learning environment contributes to stir up expected outcomes of learning that will facilitate good academic performance by encouraging effective teaching and learning. The location, structure, resources and social atmosphere of a school often relates with students' academic success. Students who live far from school may not be able to afford costs related to travel which reduces school enrollment rates and attainment (Shabaya & Konadu, 2014).

Decrease in student academic achievement and poor teacher satisfaction are associated with schools characteristics, lower enrollment and attainment. The increased enrollment in schools and interest of students to learn from the best kind of environment has generated much research interest for private individuals, missions, communities and governments to seek an environment that will be stimulating and will enhance academic achievement of students. Every child functions in an environment such as home, the school, the peer group, the classroom. The child's totality is not defined only by the place he lives but

also by the people he comes in contact with. Careful evaluation of learning environment plays an important role in determining how students respond to situations around them. This implies that no society is void of environmental influences unless it is properly evaluated. The learning environment determines, to a large extent, how students interact. That is, the school environment tends to mold the behaviour of students to meet the demands of life whether negatively or positively. Tsauga (2011) further opined that the desire for qualitative and quantitative education has increased the problem of providing an effective and conducive learning environment for teaching and learning.

Learning environment should have good infrastructure, adequate trained teachers, good leadership and adequate instructional materials. All these have positive effects on academic performance of students if properly evaluated. In the same vein, Abenga (2015) stated that an environment with improved condition leads to higher intelligent scores, while poor environmental conditions reduce them. In Rivers State, there is an increase in the number of students' enrollment in public schools with little or no regards to improving the learning environment so as to better their performance.

School location is the environmental condition around a school, which could be urban or rural. The issue of poor academic performance of students in Nigeria has been of much concern to the governments, parents, teachers and even students. The location of the school has been found to be crucial to students' performance. Many researchers (Crandell & Samldino, 2010; Davis, 2011; Johnson 2011) have studied this concept but none of their studies evaluated school characteristics as it relates to students' academic performance in Rivers State thus leaving a gap. It is on this note that the researcher seeks to correlate school characteristics and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Some schools have adequate school structure, good library with suitable textbooks, good administrative building, professionally qualified teachers, good laboratory equipment as well as good location. While in other schools little or none of these exist. In collaborating this, high level of students' academic performance have not been guaranteed as a result of poor instructional space such as classrooms, libraries, technical workshops and laboratories as what we have today in most schools are structurally defective and non-functional.

Furthermore, structural effectiveness, proper ventilation and well sited instructional space which lead to successful teaching and learning process of students in schools are not visible among most secondary schools in Rivers State. School environment plays an important role in academic performance of students. This is so because adequate, functional and sufficient school; facilities help students to learn better, do their home-work, get involved in several school activities, thus leading to good academic achievement. The problem of poor performance is more in ill-equipped schools than those properly equipped; hence it becomes necessary to correlate school characteristics and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State. It is this problem that this study seeks to investigate hence the need to correlate school characteristics and academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to correlate school characteristics and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Investigate the extent to which school facilities relate to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.
2. Determine the extent to which learning environment relates to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.
3. Ascertain the extent to which class size relates to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated as a guide to this study:

1. To what extent does school facilities relate to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does learning environment relates to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

3. To what extent does class size relates to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

1.5 Hypotheses

The following formulated null hypotheses was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between school facilities and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between learning environment and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant relationship between class size and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

METHODS

The study was carried out in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The population of the study was 5,727 students in Rivers State, while 382 was adopted as the sample size using the Taro-Yamene formula. The stratified sampling technique was adopted for the study. In this study, an instrument was used for data collection. It is a structured questionnaire titled “School Characteristics Questionnaire” to measure school characteristics and secondary data (students’ results) gotten from the schools to measure students’ academic performance. Content and face validation of the research instrument was carried out by an expert in measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the research instrument was determined using a test-retest method. The Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to obtain a reliability index of 0.80. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation and inferential statistic of Pearson’s Product Moment Correlational Analysis was used to test the formulated null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: *To what extent does school facilities relate to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?*

Table: 1. Descriptive statistics on the extent to which school facilities relate to academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers State.

Decision $\bar{x} \geq 2.5$ (High Extent)

(N=380)

S/N	Questionnaire Items	\bar{x}	SD	Remarks
1	School facilities relate to students’ academic performance.	3.03	1.03	HE
2	Limited access to reading materials near or around the school affects students.	3.03	1.06	HE
3	Students are often affected by lack of where to buy school (student) needs near the school.	3.04	0.82	HE
4	Students prefer schools in their surroundings with good facilities.	2.89	1.12	HE
5	Improves study habit of students thus enhancing their academic performance.	3.02	0.81	HE
6	Motivates students to be creative thinkers as such modifies their performance.	3.10	1.02	HE
Grand Mean		3.02	0.98	HE

The mean score for items 1-6 of 3.03, 3.03, 3.04, 2.89, 3.02 and 3.10 respectively and a grand mean of 3.02 indicate that school facilities relate to students’ academic performance to a high extent. Also the low values of standard deviation, is an indication that the responses are contiguous and the opinions are homogenous.

Research Question 2: *To what extent does learning environment relates to students' academic performance in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State?*

Table: 2. Descriptive statistics on the extent to which learning environment relates to academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers State.

Decision $\bar{x} \geq 2.5$ (High Extent) (N=380)				
S/N	Questionnaire Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
7	Learning environment relates to students' academic performance.	2.62	1.11	HE
8	The extent school facilities affect academic performance of students.	2.67	1.14	HE
9	School health facilities (school nurse) influences students' success in school.	2.70	1.13	HE
10	Insufficient qualified teachers due to the isolated nature of the school affect student academics.	3.62	1.32	HE
11	It ensures effective evaluation and monitoring.	3.04	0.82	HE
12	Improves effective use of school resources and improve students' academic performance.	2.89	1.12	HE
	Grand Mean	2.92	1.11	HE

The mean score for items 7-12 of 2.62, 2.67, 2.70, 3.62, 3.04 and 2.89 respectively and a grand mean of 2.92 indicate that learning environment relates to students' academic performance to a high extent. The homogeneity of the responses is suggested by the observed low values of the standard deviations. In other words, the respondents have a common opinion that learning environment relates to students' academic performance to a high extent.

Research Question 3: *To what extent does class size relate to academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers State?*

Table: 3. Descriptive statistics on the extent to which class size relates to academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers State

Decision $\bar{x} \geq 2.5$ (High Extent) (N=380)				
S/N	Questionnaire Items	\bar{x}	SD	Remarks
13	Class size relates to students' academic performance.	2.69	1.18	HE
14	Classroom spaces for teaching students enhance their academic performance.	2.68	1.16	HE
15	Insufficient hall for exams affects student academics.	2.62	1.12	HE
16	Students' academic performance is often dictated by their class size.	2.58	1.16	HE
17	Creates a disincentive for teachers to give individual students the individual time and attention needed	3.03	1.03	HE
18	Help teachers to provide sound instruction in English	3.03	1.06	HE
19	Smaller classes play a key role in student success in early college work	2.70	1.13	HE
	Grand Mean	2.76	1.12	HE

The mean score for items 13-19 of 2.69, 2.68, 2.62, 2.58, 3.03, 3.03 and 2.70 respectively and a grand mean of 2.76 implies that class size relates to students' academic performance to a very high extent. Also each of the items analyzed has a low standard deviation which implies that the views of the respondents regarding each of the items are homogeneous. Moreover, the grand (overall) standard deviation of 1.12 also suggest that the respondents have a common opinion that class size relates to academic performance of Senior Secondary School Student in Rivers State.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between school facilities and academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers State.

Table 4: Relationship between school facilities and academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers State.

Variables	N	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	df	r-cal	(t-trans)	t-crit	Dec
School Facilities (X)	380	8934	218538	256325	378	0.86	32.85	1.97	Reject H ₀
Academic Performance (Y)	380	10606	304112						

In Table 4 above, the t-transformed (calculated) value of 32.85 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.97 for 378 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between school facilities and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State is hereby rejected and the alternate is thus accepted. The implication is that there is a positive significant relationship between school facilities and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State to confirm the significance of the relationship a t-transformation of the computed r-value was done and the result is as presented above with t-cal= 32.85 and t-crit = 1.97.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between learning environment and academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers State.

Table 5: Relationship between learning environment and academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers State.

Variables	N	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	Df	r-cal	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Learning Environment (X)	380	8277	187541	236327	378	0.73	20.82	1.96	Reject H ₀
Academic Performance (Y)	380	10606	304112						

In Table 5 above, the analysis from the table above shows that the t-transformed (calculated) value of 20.82 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.97 at 0.05 level of significance and a degree of freedom of 378, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship is hereby rejected and the alternate which states that learning environment significantly relates to students' academic performance in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State is thereby accepted. The significance of the relationship is further confirmed by

the high value of computed t-transform of 20.82 compared to the table value of 1.96. The rejection of the null hypothesis for the alternate is therefore upheld. The implication is that there is significant relationship between learning environment and academic performance of student's in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Both values of r-calculated and computed t-transform are too significant that it cannot be due to sampling error.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between class size and academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers State.

Table 6: Relationship between class size and academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers State.

Variables	N	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	Df	r-cal	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Class Size (X)	380	8970	219470	256107	378	0.76	22.80	1.97	
Academic Performance (Y)	380	10606	304112						Reject H ₀

In Table 6 above, the analysis from the table above shows that the t-transformed (calculated) value of 22.80 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.97 for a degree of freedom of 378 at 0.05 level of significance, it is imperative therefore to reject the null hypothesis, and conclude that class size significantly relates to students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. This follows the fact that the calculated r value is too high that it cannot be attributed to sampling or experimental error. Furthermore, the significance in the computed correlation value (r-cal) was confirmed by transforming it to t as shown in above. The above position of rejecting the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative is accordingly upheld, with the same conclusion that class size significantly relates to student's academic performance.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of the data in research question one, the mean score for items 11-6 of 3.03, 3.03, 3.04, 2.89, 3.02 and 3.10 respectively and a grand mean of 3.02 indicate that school facilities relate to students' academic performance to a high extent. Also the low values of standard deviation, is an indication that the responses are contiguous and the opinions are homogenous. It was found that there is a significant relationship between school facilities and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State. The relationship between school facilities and academic performance of senior secondary school students has been the concern of many educationists. The quality of school building plays a vital role in student's academic achievement. Lewis (2010) tried to identify the independent effects of school building quality in a study of text scores and found out that good facilities had a major impact on learning. Edward (2012) observed that disciplinary incidents increased in schools with better buildings. This may be caused by the strict discipline standards in these schools among other factors. Earthman (2015) supported this when he pointed out that schools with lesser quality of building had fewer disciplinary incidents than schools that are rated higher on the structural components.

School buildings that can adequately provide a good learning environment are essential for student academic success. Old building does not have such features as control of thermal environment, adequate lighting, good roof and adequate space that are necessary for good learning (Edward, 2012). This may be because they are not functioning due to poor maintenance. Older building does not have the main attribute of modern buildings that are associated with a positive physical environment conducive to student learning (Earthman & Lemaster, 2016). Students' performance lags in a shabby or inadequate school building those with no science labs, inadequate ventilation and faulty heating systems (Stricherz, 2010). Clark (2012) quoting Sommer (2019) on his discussion on a school building

designed for learning stated that if the recitation and reproduction of lessons are considered the chief aim of teaching, the traditional equipment of the classroom is perhaps sufficient but if teaching is guiding children to do their own thinking, purposing, planning, executing, and appraising, as recent educational philosophy maintains, then the classroom becomes a workshop, a library, a museum, in short, a learning laboratory. The structure of the building has also been viewed as an important factor in school characteristics which can influence the health, happiness and academic achievement of students.

Also, the library is at the heart of the education enterprise. Library as a platform for sharing knowledge is aimed at rejuvenating Nigerian schools through the provision of current books and journals (FRN, 2004). It is a store house of resources and as such provides many more opportunities to the learner to acquire the knowledge, which facilitates the achievement of greater academic performance. It contributes to the total development of the students and enlarges their knowledge. Edoke (2010) saw library as a resource centre where a collection of books, periodicals, book materials are housed for use by teachers and researchers for learning, study, research, recreational activities and personal interest. It has been observed that there is a strong relationship between school libraries and academic performance. Keith (2010) reported that schools with well-equipped libraries perform higher than schools where libraries are less developed. Libraries provide instructional materials to enrich the curriculum and give unlimited opportunities for students' learning (Aguolu, 2012). An effective school library gives foundation for self-education necessary for facing challenges of higher education.

The role of the library is also reflected in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) which states that libraries constitute one of the most important educational services; proprietors of schools shall provide functional libraries in accordance with the established standard. They shall also provide for training of librarians and library assistants for this service. The quality of school library services makes difference in academic achievement (Library Research Service, 2000). It promotes the growth of knowledge. A well-equipped library is a store house of knowledge. If properly organized and utilized, it encourages students' interest in reading and learning, hence it is said that library is the centre for balanced diet for a learner. Libraries exist only because of books and people's desire to read them. It is in line with this that the National Centre for Education Statistics (2000) reported that the more students read, the higher they will score on almost any measure in any discipline. However, Mazi (2016) contended that the number of books in the library would mean nothing if the books are not used, out of date, unattractive or inappropriate. In the view of Library Research Service (2000), libraries do not make difference in learning if they are merely warehouses of outdated stuff, place to drop students when teachers have their planning periods or when staffed only by paraprofessional or clerical staff members.

It was also found in research question two that the mean score for items 7-12 of 2.62, 2.67, 2.70, 3.62, 3.04 and 2.89 respectively and a grand mean of 2.92 indicate that learning environment relates to students' academic performance to a high extent. The homogeneity of the responses is suggested by the observed low values of the standard deviations. In other words, the respondents have a common opinion that learning environment relates to students' academic performance to a high extent. In hypothesis two, it was found that there is a significant relationship between learning environment and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State. The learning environment refers to the space allocated for classrooms, science labs, open spaces and offices. Learning environment is also defined as the social context which can affect learning, achievement and attitudes of the students. Learning environment and features that are in it play a major roles in improving learning in schools and are identified as major determinants of student learning. Learning environment capable of stimulating students to engage in the learning process and be able to influence the behaviour of students as well as to assist in the development of their skills or cognitive perception.

Two major components of the learning environment are physical component and psychosocial component (Fraser, 2014; Kilgour, 2016). Physical component includes all physical aspects such as classrooms, teaching materials and learning facilities, both inside and outside the classroom, while psychosocial component is related to the interaction that occur between students and students, students with teachers and students with the environment. Both components complement each other in creating and shaping the learning environment and affect the learning processes that occur in it. Most of the

student's time in a year is spent in the classroom learning environment. Therefore, the classroom physical learning environment can have a major influence to the student. Previous studies conducted found the physical aspects of the learning environment can affect psychological and social behaviour (Moos, 2019) and have a significant impact on learning (Chism, 2016).

Weinstein and Mignano (2013) stated that there are six basic functions of the physical environment; for security and protection, as the social context, as a symbolic identifier, as a tool to do the task, having the function of fun and function as a place for student growth. Loughlin and Suina (2012) also consider the physical learning environment as an important teaching tool for teachers. Teachers need to plan the layout and learning space in order to meet the learning goals and provide a comfortable learning environment for students. Accordingly, there is much bad behaviour resulting from weaknesses in existing learning environment.

Meanwhile, Tessmer and Harris (2012) stated that there are three kinds of physical factors of learning environment to develop effective teaching. First, learning facilities including state of the furniture and learning location. The location may be a classroom, a computer lab, a science lab, an office or any place where learning occurs. Important aspects of facilities are in the learning space, a seating area, temperature, sound, lighting and accessibility. Second are the instructional materials related to objects used in the environment by teachers and students. Teaching materials are as attachments, video tapes, computer compact discs and books. Third, the equipment and materials for teaching and learning that are frequently used. An attractive learning environment, the way furniture is arranged, the lighting used, the ability of wall to absorb sound and floor properties have been identified to affect student achievement (Tanner, 2000). In addition, the physical environment can also affect learning, ideas, values, attitudes and culture and if properly planned, positive learning environment will affect the learning process (Sanoff, 2010). According Matai and Matai (2017), the design of the physical environment has a significant effect on the behaviour and in turn, can form a particular social organization.

Finally, it was found in research question three that the mean score for items 13-19 of 2.69, 2.68, 2.62, 2.58, 3.03, 3.03 and 2.70 respectively and a grand mean of 2.76 implies that class size relates to students' academic performance to a very high extent. Also each of the items analyzed has a low standard deviation which implies that the views of the respondents regarding each of the items are homogeneous. Moreover, the grand (overall) standard deviation of 1.18 also suggest that the respondents have a common opinion that class size relates to academic performance of Senior Secondary School Student in Rivers State.

In hypothesis three, it was found that there is a significant relationship between class size and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State. Darling-Hammond (2016) reviewed a large number of studies and found that smaller schools seem to produce favourable student outcomes, such as higher achievement and lower drop-out rates. However, there are alternative interpretations of this relation since the influence of school size on student outcomes and grades may be confounded by other factors such as school organization, and academic and social factors (Lee & Smith, 2017). They opined further that schools 'small by design or 'small by default' may have different implications due to demographic features. Similarly, in some areas such as rural areas, a certain school size may be predominant. Independent schools also tend to be smaller schools. Recent research would appear to suggest that it is not school size per se that improves student outcomes, but rather that school size influences student outcomes indirectly through other factors such as personalization, a shared school mission, a strong academic curriculum, authentic instruction and the development of a professional community (Darling-Hammond, 2016; Ready & Lee, 2016).

In Sweden, Wikström (2015) found that, given the same achievement levels on the SweSAT test, there was a school size effect on grades, such that teachers in small schools (<300 students) award higher grades in comparison to second smallest (300-499 students) and the largest (>1000 students) schools, the second largest schools (500-1000) was used as the reference category. Wikström suggested that this result can be related to variation between schools in grade assignment practices, in combination with pressure for high grading, since grades function as an instrument for selection to the next level in the educational system. The pressure for higher grading on small schools may be due to the current voucher

system in Sweden, which makes smaller schools more vulnerable to the loss of students.

CONCLUSION

School characteristics which include physical environment, principal leadership, classrooms, libraries, technical workshops, laboratories, teacher quality, teaching methods, and others are variables that tend to investigate students' academic achievement. Hence, school characteristics remain an important area that should be studied, evaluated and well managed to enhance students' academic performance. It has also been found that adequate attention is to enhance the effectiveness of school location, learning environment and class size as they decide the magnitude of academic performance among students. From the findings of the study, it was concluded that school facilities, learning environment and class size significantly relate with academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Educational Implications

School systems have established learning modes that involve group of students of about the same age interacting with a single individual (the teacher) leading activities in a confined space called the classroom. The extent to which students learning could be enhanced depends on their location within the school compound, the structure of their classroom, availability of instructional facilities and accessories. It is believed that a school with adequate learning environment contributes to stir up expected outcomes of learning that will facilitate good academic performance by encouraging effective teaching and learning. Careful evaluation of learning environment plays an important role in determining how students respond to situations around them. This implies that no society is void of environmental influences unless it is properly evaluated. That is, the school environment tends to mold the behaviour of students to meet the demands of life whether negatively or positively

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;

- 1) Schools facilities should be improved in other to achieve the objectives of teaching and learning activities that focus on developing students' academic performance.
- 2) School teachers should emphasize the various aspects of the learning environment that will improve the importance of teaching and learning in the schools by students.
- 3) Teachers should give equal opportunities for the students to develop their understanding of the importance of class size in other to enhance their academic performance

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