



# **The Nature of School Environment and Attitude of Neighbourhood Communities Towards Secondary School Development in Rivers State**

**Ereh, Clement Ereh & Dr. Kenneth Amadi\***

**Department of Educational Management  
Rivers State University , Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria  
\*Kristamadi2016@gmail.com**

## **ABSTRACT**

The study investigated the nature of school environment and the attitude of neighbourhood communities towards secondary school development in Rivers State. Two research questions two hypotheses were posed from the purpose of the study, with a population of 245 principals from 245 public secondary schools in Rivers State. 160 principals made up the sample size which was selected using stratified random sampling technique. The operational instruments used were observation and the questionnaire tagged “The nature of school environment and attitude of neighbourhood communities towards secondary school development questionnaire (TNSEAONCQ)”. The instrument was validated and yielded on reliability index of 0.86. mean and standard deviation were used for the analysis of the research questions and Pearson’s product moment of correlation coefficient was used for test of hypothesis. The findings revealed among others the nature of school environment for quality teaching and learning in secondary schools in Rivers State which includes neat and conducive environment for learning, construct risk learning among the students, the use of new technological devices in teaching and learning, the construction of new buildings/classrooms, and validated classrooms to accommodate teaching and learning. Based on the findings, the researcher recommend that there should be a symbiotic relationship between the school, the community and government to ensure better academic performance of the students through quality teaching. The communities where the schools are located should assist the government in providing school facilities that would promote the teaching performance of teachers and academic performance of students.

**Keywords:** neighbourhood communities, school environment, secondary school

## **INTRODUCTION**

A school is set up for the main purpose of bringing students from different families together under one roof-the classroom. Effective teaching and learning cannot take place without the coming together of the teacher and the learners - students. In other to check students' commitment to receiving instruction from the teachers, an administrative record is designed and used on daily basis, i.e. the attendance register. This record is utilized by the form teachers and supervised on weekly basis by the school head. The attendance register is also supervised on term or annual basis by the supervisors from the Ministry of Education and other Professionals particularly in education on unscheduled visits. Parents also use the attendance register to supervise the movement of their children occasionally. The attendance register is mostly concerned with school/class attendance.

It has been observed that adequate attention is now being paid to school plant planning throughout the world's educational systems including Nigeria. Educational facilities such as school plant have been repeatedly found to have positive relationship with standard and quality of educational system (Nwagwu, 1978; Adesina, 1990; Ojedele, 2000). Nigeria as a nation strives to experience real growth and development. This requires a clearly defined development strategy that allows intensive utilization of resources which is endowed. These resources are the various school physical facilities

that are indispensable in the educational process. They include the sitting, the building and physical equipment, recreation places for the achievement of educational objectives.

School plant planning which include instructional spaces planning, administrative places planning, circulation spaces planning, spaces for conveniences planning and accessories planning are essential In teaching-learning process. The extent to which these spaces could enhance teaching and learning depends on their location within the school compound, their structure, and accessories. It is believed that a well-planned school plant 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.

Successfully managing a school environment is a necessary and essential educational investment. Research increasingly shows that there is a clear link between environmental quality of schools and educational performance:

- i. Facility management systems determine environmental quality in schools.
- ii. The quality of the school environment shapes attitudes of students, teachers and staff.
- iii. Attitudes affect teaching and learning behavior
- iv. Behavior affects performance.

v. Educational performance determines future outcomes of individuals and society as a whole.

A high performance school seeks and provides adequate space and opportunities for students and teachers to spread out, reflect, interact, exchange information, examine and test ideas. Academic performance is the scholastic standing of a student at a given moment. This scholastic standing could be explained in terms of the grades obtained in a course or groups of courses. Al-Shorayye (1995) regarded a student's performance in an examination as being depended on his cumulative grade point average. His argument supported Entwistle and<sup>1</sup> Wilson's (1993) assertion that a student's success is generally judged by examination performance while the best criterion of performance is the sum of the student's academic performance in all the subjects taken.

Having a comprehensive approach to partnerships between schools, families, and communities allows schools to build on their strengths. A comprehensive approach fosters positive attitudes about the school and about families and community members because it respects the varying capacities of the school population as a whole. Students, schools, and families will benefit if parents are supported in establishing home environments that foster children's growth and learning. Families whose basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter are not being met have a more difficult time helping their children to do well in school. Schools and community agencies can work together to provide support so that parents can focus on their children's needs.

Community participation in educational service delivery involves far more than the direct delivery of services. A central issue is how different types of participation may contribute to strengthening both the short and long routes of accountability for educational service delivery. Effective forms of community participation in educational service delivery provide both opportunities and incentives for local government officials to respond to community needs.

Unfortunately with the growing awareness of the importance of education and growing demand for schools by many communities, many schools are now being established without meeting the requirement of these school location variables. In many places, schools are now established as community status symbols without considering some vital variables in school location that makes it effective school.

### **Statement of Problem**

The search for a better way of providing education to achieve the desired objectives, in terms of learning outcome is an on-going exercise. However, while provision of school resources, development and motivation of staff are always receiving all the attention, no one is bothered if the school environments are conducive for the achievement of teaching and learning. No matter the level of resources provided in both quantitative and qualitative dimensions, not much can be achieved if the conducive atmosphere in a given school is not guaranteed. A larger part of this conducive atmosphere is seen as the climate and environmental background of the school.

The nature of school security and safety for quality teaching delivery is another issue in the school environment. The aforementioned situation implies that the Secondary School system may not be functioning efficiently as expected when compared with the inputs injected. The above fears are yet to

be confirmed or refuted. This is with regards to the nature of school locations and how they relate to teaching/learning outcomes. These are the issues that call for this study such as the nature of school security and safety for quality teaching/learning delivery, nature of school plant planning for quality of teaching and learning outcomes, nature of the school environment and the attitude of the school neighbourhood communities towards the school development.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to determine the nature of school environment and attitude of neighbourhood communities towards Secondary School Development in Secondary Schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the nature of the school environment for quality teaching and learning in Secondary Schools in Rivers State.
2. Find out the attitude of the school neighbourhood communities towards the school development in Rivers State.

#### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the nature of school environment for quality teaching and learning in secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. What is the attitude of school neighbourhood communities towards the school development in Rivers State?

#### **Hypothesis**

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study at 0.05 level of significance:

- 1) There is no significant relationship between the mean scores of principals in rural area and principals in environment for quality teaching and learning in secondary schools in Rivers State.
- 2) There is no significant relationship between the mean scores of principal in rural areas and principals in urban areas on the attitude of the school neighbourhood communities on the secondary school development in Rivers State.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted the correlational survey design as the most appropriate way of determining opinions that are held and issues that are related. The population of the study comprised 245 principals in 245 secondary schools in Rivers State and the sample size of 165 principals drawn from a population. The researcher designed an instrument "titled" The nature of school environment and attitude of neighbourhood communities towards secondary school development questionnaire (TNSEANCQ)". The instrument was designed to elicit data on the variable points rating ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, positive to negative was employed to gather the required information for data analysis. The study was validated by experts and the reliability was found 0.86 165 copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents and the research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation as the statistical tool, Pearson's product moment correlation co-efficient was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

**RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** *What is the nature of school environment for quality teaching and learning in Secondary schools in Rivers State?*

**Table 1: Mean Ratings of Urban and Rural Principals on the nature of school environment for quality teaching and learning in Secondary schools in Rivers State.**

S/N	The nature of school environment for quality teaching and learning	Urban Principal		Rural Principal		Mean Set	Rank	Decision
		$\bar{X}$	$\alpha$	$\bar{X}$	$\alpha$			
1.	The school environment is neat and conducive for learning	3.59	1.68	2.99	1.47	3.29	1 <sup>st</sup>	Agreed
2	The school environment does not supports constructivist based learning among the students	0.62	0.35	0.75	0.30	0.69	5 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
3	The school environment supports the use of new technological devices in teaching/learning	2.95	1.39	3.29	1.34	3.12	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Agreed
4	The school environment supports the construction of the new building/classrooms	2.67	1.33	2.61	1.31	2.64	4 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
5	The classrooms are ventilated to accommodate teaching and learning	3.03	1.40	3.05	1.40	3.04	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Agreed
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	2.57		2.54		<b>2.56</b>		Agreed

The data from the table three shows the influence of school environment on the quality of teaching and learning in Secondary schools in Rivers State. Urban school principals agreed to items 15, 17, 18, and 19 with mean scores of 3.59, 2.95, 2.67 and 3.03 which: are greater than the criterion mean score of 2.5. They disagreed to I item 16 with mean score of 0.62 which is less than the criterion mean score. Rural school principals agreed to items 15, 17, 18, and 19 with mean scores of 2.99, 3.29, 2.51, and 3.05 which are greater than the criterion mean score of 2.5 respectively. They disagreed to items 16 with mean score of 0.45 which is less than the criterion mean score.

The aggregate mean scores of 2.57 and 2.54 for urban and rural school principals showed that they agreed on the influence of school environment on the quality of teaching and learning in Secondary schools in Rivers State. Therefore, the influence of school environment on the quality of teaching and learning in Secondary schools in Rivers State include: neat and conducive for learning, constructivist based learning among the students, the use of new technological devices in teaching/learning, the construction of new building/classrooms, and ventilated classrooms accommodate teaching and learning.

**Research Question 2**

*What is the attitude of the school neighbourhood communities towards students' learning and the school development in Rivers State?*

**Table 2 Mean Ratings of Urban and Rural Principals on the attitude of the school neighbourhood communities towards students' learning and school development in Rivers State.**

S/N	Attitude of the school neighbourhood communities towards learning and the school development	Urban Principal		Rural Principal		Mean Set	Rank	Decision
		$\bar{X}$	$\epsilon$	$\bar{X}$	$\alpha$			
1.	Existence of good school-community relationships	3.64	1.48	3.67	1.49	3.66	1 <sup>st</sup>	Positive
2	Neighbouring communities help in the procurement of facilities in the school	1.97	1.17	1.47	1.11	1.72	5 <sup>th</sup>	Negative
3	They support the school with funds to maintain the school	1.31	0.97	1.73	0.45	1.12	7 <sup>th</sup>	Negative
4	They give scholarships to students	1.45	1.02	1.31	0.97	1.38	7 <sup>th</sup>	Negative
5	They provide security to the school's staff and students	3.25	1.44	3.41	1.49	3.33	4 <sup>th</sup>	Positive
6	They help in the procurement of land for school development	3.12	1.36	3.27	1.45	3.20	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Positive
7	They support the school towards the achievement of educational goals	3.04	1.32	3.20	1.42	3.12	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Positive
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.24</b>		<b>2.58</b>		<b>2.56</b>		<b>Positive</b>

The data from the table 2 showed the attitude of the school neighbourhood communities towards students' learning and the school development in Rivers State. Urban school principals agreed to items 20, 24, 25, and 26 with mean scores of 3.64, 3.25, 3.12 and 3.04 which are greater than the criterion mean score of 2.5 they disagreed to items 21, 22 and 23 with mean scores of 1.97 1.31 and 1.45, which re less than the criterion mean score. Rural school principals agreed to items 20, 24, 25 and 26 with mean scores of 3.64, 3.25 3.12 and 3.4 which are greater than the criterion mean score of 2.5. They disagreed to items 21, 22 and 23 with mean scores of 1.47, 1.73 and 1.31 which are less than the criterion mean score, provision of security to the school's staff and students,.

The aggregate mean scores of 2.54 and 2.58 for urban and rural school principals showed that the attitude of the school neighbourhood communities towards students' learning and the school development in Rivers State is positive. Therefore, the attitude of the school neighbourhood communities towards students' learning and the school development in Rivers State includes: good school-community relationships, active involvement in the procurement of land for school development, and active support towards the achievement of educational goals.

**Hypothesis 1:**

There is no significant relationship between the mean scores of principals in rural areas and principals in urban areas on the nature of school learning environment and the quality of teaching/learning in Secondary schools in Rivers State,

**Table 1: The relationship between the mean scores of principals in rural urban areas on the school learning environment for quality**

School Location	X	S.D	N	Df	r-Cal	r- value	Decision
Urban schools	2.57	1.23	70	158	±0.41	0.50	Rejected
Rural schools	2.54	1.16	90				

From table 1 above, a significant relationship exist between the mean scores of 2.57 and 2.54 respectively for urban and rural areas. At the degree of freedom 158 at 0.05 level of alpha significance, the r-calculated value of  $\pm 0.41$  is less than the r-value of 0.50, which shows that the null hypothesis is rejected. Based on the analysis above, there is a significant relationship between the mean scores of principals in rural areas and principals in urban areas on the school learning environment and the quality of 'teaching/ learning in Secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Hypothesis 2:**

There is no significant relationship between the mean scores of principals in rural areas and principals in urban areas on the attitude of the school neighbourhood communities towards students learning and the school development in Rivers State.

**Table2: The relationship between the mean scores of principals in rural and urban areas on the attitude of the school neighbourhood communities towards students' learning and the school development in Rivers State.**

School Location I	X	S.D	N	Df	r-Cal	r- value	Decision
Urban schools	2.54	1.25	70	158	$\pm 0.32$	0.50	Rejected
Rural schools	2.58	1.20	90				

From table 2 above, a significant relationship exist between the mean scores of 2.54 and 2.58 respectively for urban and rural area. At the degree of freedom 158 at 0.05 level of alpha significance, the r-calculated value of  $\pm 0.32$  is less than the r-value of 0.50, which shows that the null hypothesis is rejected. Based on the analysis above, there is a significant relationship between the mean scores of principals in rural areas and principals in urban area on the attitude of the school neighbourhood communities towards students learning and the school development in Rivers State.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

**The nature of school environment on the quality of teaching and learning**

The findings of this research also revealed that the nature of school environment for quality teaching and learning in secondary schools in Rivers State include: neat and conducive for learning, constructivist based learning among the students, the use of new technological devices in teaching/ learning, the construction of new buildings/classrooms, and ventilated classrooms accommodate teaching and learning. A positive school environment creates an optimal setting for teaching and learning. In lie with the findings, Epstein (2001) stated that a positive school environment enhances motivation, increase educational aspirations and improves attendance and retention. However, positive school environments not only engage students academically but they are also strongly associated with a range of positive health and behavioral outcomes. An unhealthy school environment, one in which rules are unclear or arbitrary, bullying is accepted if not condoned, and teacher attitudes are indifferent, hostile or unnecessarily punitive is a likely setting for high absenteeism, misbehavior and interpersonal aggression.

The test of hypothesis three showed that there is a significant relationship between the mean scores of principals in rural areas and principals in urban areas on the school learning environment and the quality of teaching/learning in Secondary schools in Rivers State. They all agreed that school learning environment has great | impact on the quality of teaching/learning in secondary schools. A well structured school environment promotes students<sup>7</sup> academic performance to a great extent.

**The Attitude of the School Neighbourhood Communities Towards students' Learning and the School Development**

The findings of this research also revealed that the attitude of the school neighbourhood communities towards students<sup>7</sup> learning and the school development in Rivers State include: good school-community relationships, active involvement in the procurement of land for school development, and active support towards the achievement of educational goals. The school and the community have a symbiotic relationship because the community is a part of the society and education is a counterpart of both the school and the community. Schools serve primarily to achieve national development goals, such as cultivating human resources for economic growth,

modernizing society or instituting cultural change. In line with the findings of this study, Eyben and Ladbury (1992) emphasized that parents and communities must be closely involved in all aspects of the school and must be prepared to support it by shouldering the fair and reasonable costs required to promote quality education. Parents should have a vested interest in what schools offer and in the outcomes of the education process for their children and communities. In turn, schools have an obligation to be sensitive to the communities they serve, to care for and protect the children entrusted to them, and to be accountable to the local community in their governance and management.

There is a significant relationship between the mean scores of principals in rural areas and principals in urban areas on the attitude of the school neighbourhood communities towards students' learning and the school development in Rivers State. Participatory operations in education can achieve many objectives, lading increasing the relevance and quality of education, improving ownership, reaching disadvantaged groups, mobilising additional resources and building institutional capacity. It is Important to keep parents and the communities fully informed about the aims and methods of secondary education. They need to understand what their children will derive from their participation as well as the harm that may be done to the children by lack of parental and community active involvement.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that a positive school environment creates an optimal setting for teaching and learning. Also, the school and the community should have a symbiotic relationship because the community is a part of the society and education is a counterpart of both the school and the community.

### RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made by the researcher.

1. The environment where the schools are located should assist the government in providing school facilities that would promote the teaching performance of teachers and students academic performance.
2. There should be a symbiotic relationship between the school, the community and government to ensure better academic performance of the students through quality teaching.

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