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Factors Influencing Junior Secondary School Students' Performance in English Language in Egor, Edo State, Nigeria

Stephen O. Oboh
Department of Education, Faculty Arts and Education,
Benson Idahosa University, Nigeria.
Andrew B. Ayala
Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Faculty of Education,
University of Benin, Benin City.

Abstract

Several kinds of research showing the relationship between the built learning environment and students' performance in the English language is underway to improve the mass failure experienced in Nigeria every year. Not much is known about the structure of the correlation that exists, especially when considering students' perspectives. This study seeks to look at the scheme that Junior Secondary school students associate the nature and condition of the built learning environment with their poor performance. A total of 100 students comprised the sample for the study, from which 20 students were selected from each of the five secondary schools used for the research. A four-point Likert scale questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire. The reliability with SPSS stood at 0.855 (r), which indicates a high correlation coefficient of the instrument. The research questions were answered using the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient. The analysis revealed that Junior Secondary school students in Egor, Edo State, consider building structures, indoor environment quality, and learning facilities as a major influence on their performance in the English language. Also, the availability of libraries in Junior Secondary school was negative and accounted for low performance in the English language. Lastly, students associated a link between the neatness and cleanliness of their classrooms to their performance in the English language. While the failure rate in the English language increases every year, the government and stakeholders in the education sector are constantly striving towards finding lasting solutions to the problem.

Key Words: English language, building structure, school climate, indoor environment quality, learning facilities, teaching, and learning

Introduction

Research over several decades has established the importance of communication in human existence.

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Language as a medium of communication has become so embedded in our lives that we can almost do nothing without it. In Nigeria, the English language is rated high as a medium of instruction in schools. The English language plays a key role in both internal and external examinations and stands as a prerequisite for admission into Tertiary institutions (Fakeye, 2010). The English language as a major means of communication has evolved in various facets over the years. A major concern bordering on this issue is students' performance in the English language as a subject. There is no doubt that there is a large amount of literature on the subject of students' performance in the English language. While educators and researchers for many years have debated on the factors which affect students' performance in The English language, it is noted that in recent years, there has been an increase in the rate at which students fail the subject in Nigeria.

Some research has it that "schools bring little influence to bear upon a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context" (Coleman et al., 1966, p. 325; Jencks et al., 1972 as cited in Cynthia and Megan, 2008). Other pieces of evidence lay claim to the fact that factors such as teacher factors (Oboh, S. & Ayala, A., 2020), school size, class size (Glass et al., 1982; Mosteller, 1995; Haller, 1993; as cited in Cynthia and Megan, 2008) and other school variables may be considered as core to the students learning experience. Irrespective of the widespread belief that school involvement or inputs account for an insignificant difference in students learning, emergent concerns propose that schools can make a difference, and a greater portion of that difference can be linked to teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Within the Nigerian context, better student performance or output is seen as a function of an effective school system (Philias & Wanjobi, 2011). Hence, much emphasis is laid on students' exceptional performance, especially in final examinations, since it determines the output quality of the school. This has become a standard adopted to ascertain the effectiveness of a school system. Cynthia and Megan, (2008) affirmed this in their study which showed a solid and explicit correlation between the quality of school facilities and students' performance in Mathematics and the English language. While it is the general belief in Nigeria that private schools are better equipped than public schools, concerning both human and physical facilities; and that a greater number of students who get admitted into higher institutions of learning including Universities, Polytechnics, etc., are students of private schools, there has been a successive decline in students' performance in the English language in both private and public schools across the country.

Statistics obtained from the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), revealed a poor percentage performance in The English language between the years 2005 and 2009. As noted by Okpala, (2010) the percentage of candidates who had credit in the English language within these years, was 27.53% in the year 2005, 15.56% in 2006, 22.54% in 2007, 13.78% in 2008, and 24.94% in 2009. He as well showed that candidates who obtained credit passes in five subjects and above with Mathematics and English

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language inclusive between 2005 and 2009 were 8.53% in the year 2005, 13.32% in 2006, 27.74% in 2007, 10.53% in 2008, and 1.80% in 2009. Students' poor performance in the English language in Nigeria year in year out has aroused the interest of researchers, educators, school administrators, and other stakeholders in the education sector, to seek an understanding of the myth surrounding students the English language performance. While several factors have been considered over the years, this research is focused on the relationship that exists between the built learning environment, and students' performance in The English language.

According to Bandele, (2003) the importance of physical facilities like classrooms, modern laboratories, and libraries cannot be downgraded. It is believed that the availability of these facilities and resources creates an enabling environment for the teacher to deliver lessons appropriately (Adesola, 2005). However, the state of building facilities and other resources in Nigerian secondary schools is a far cry from the standard normal. Educational psychologists argue that one of the needed conditions for adequate learning is a conducive environment (Egbochuku, 2012). By implication, infrastructural facilities ought to be regularly put in shape to ensure a seamless flow in the teaching and learning process. Alimi, (2007) therefore recommends a renovation of old buildings, chairs, desks, cabinets, and the acquisition of modern classrooms Thus, Akinfolarin (2008) identified facilities as a major factor contributing to academic performance in the school system. This is further confirmed by the study of both Ayodele (2000) and Vandiver (2011), that a positive correlation exists between the availability of facilities and student academic performances.

Scholars have demonstrated that buildings perform several functions; apart from shielding out external influences of weather, they also create hospitable space for human activities. A major concern with buildings in the school system is the nature and quality of the internal climate with which students are constantly in contact. The quality and nature of internal environments created by buildings are a function of their design and use. McGuffey (1982) as cited in Cynthia and Megan, (2008), established a foundation for the relationship between a school's physical environment and student achievement, integrating findings across several studies that showed a relationship between student achievement and improved lighting, building quality, indoor air quality, thermal comfort, and newer buildings, as well as specific building features such as science laboratories and libraries. Berner, (1993) concluded in research, that the physical state of a school was a forecaster of student performance. It has also been found that student performance scores were higher in schools that were well kept, that was swept and mopped more frequently, where lockers were kept in good repair and classroom furniture was of higher quality, the achievement was said to have improved (Cash, 1993; Earthman, 2004; Hines, 1996; Lanham, 1999). This was confirmed by Buckley, et al., (2004,) who suggested: "that school buildings in poor shape lead to reduced learning ...[and] poorly managed schools lead to poor achievement".

A growing body of research has evidenced that specific building features related to human comfort have been shown to be related to student performance. These include building age, climate control, indoor air quality, lighting, acoustical control, design classifications, and overall impression (Cynthia and Megan,

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2008). According to Chan, (1996), several old buildings become outdated, with insufficient capacity to cater to innovations in content development, curriculum development and instructional strategies, which in turn hinders students' performance. This is particularly true of schools in Nigeria, especially in rural areas which lack access to basic amenities. Researchers have also found that students in non-modernized buildings scored lower on basic skills assessments and a range of standardized tests than those students in modernized or new buildings (O'Neill, 2000; Plumley, 1978; Chan, 1979; Phillips, 1997; McGuffey and Brown, 1978; Earthman and Lemasters, 1996). However, Earthman, (2004), opined that the two most important individual building elements found to affect student achievement were temperature control and air quality. He demonstrated that climate control (including the presence of air conditioning) had a significant impact on student learning outcomes (Earthman, 2004; Lanham, 1999; Hines, 1996; Cash, 1993). As a matter of fact, Lanham, (1999) as cited in Cynthia and Megan, (2008), reported that air conditioning accounted for 1.6 percent of the total variance in 3rd Grade the English, 2.8 percent for 5th Grade The English, and 4.8 percent for 5th Grade technology.

Going by the extensive review of studies and research on the issues of students' performance in the English language as well as the correlation that exist between students' performance and infrastructural facilities, it cannot be overemphasized that buildings cater to a great deal of human activities and learning as a whole. All human activities are predominantly carried out within and around buildings, hence the nature and condition of the internal climate of a building at any point in time may have considerable influence on the human occupants, especially within the school system. Despite the fact that the extent to which students psychological makeup relates to school climate is yet to be ascertained (Cynthia and Megan, 2008), it must be said that the case for nature and the extent to which students consider the quality and condition of infrastructural facilities as an influence on their performance in the English Language, is a case of feedback towards meeting the target of assistance that students require from stakeholders in the school setting – educators, school administrators, construction engineers, education policymakers, etc.

Statement of the Problem

Over the years, there has been a recurrent case of students' failure and low performance in the English language in Nigerian secondary schools. Several studies have sort to address the issue of students' failure by considering several factors thought to influence the teaching and learning process. However, as every bit of research enlightens stakeholders on possible solutions to students' failure in the English language, there seems to be a nonstop decline in students' poor performance. According to the analysis of the National Examination Council (NECO) and West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), there was a huge failure across the 36 states of the country in 2009. In 2010, WAEC recorded a 75 percent failure in Mathematics and the English language. It was further revealed that 24.95 percent

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of the candidates who wrote the examination, had five credits, including Mathematics and parde the English Language, representing 337,071 from a total of 1,278,843 candidates. This shows that problems are requiring further attention, especially relating to the cognitive process or conditions necessary to enhance the learning experience.

While factors such as teachers' factors, language factors, availability of instructional materials, etc have been studied, a growing body of research suggests that there exists a relationship between the school building and students achievement. Despite the fact that this may be true, it has been observed that the state of school buildings and structures in Nigeria is nothing to write home about. School structures in Nigeria especially in public schools are mismanaged and ill catered to. Most school buildings are dilapidated with leaking roofs and classrooms have no windows, doors and enough tables and chairs for students to sit. Research findings on the influences of infrastructural facilities on Junior secondary school students' academic performance have to a large extent been one-sided. Much attention has been given to the consideration of school influences and external factors on students. While this is necessary, it is as well important that students' opinions and perspectives on nature and the extent to which infrastructural facilities influence their performance to be given a fair hearing. To the best knowledge of the authors, no previous study has been conducted on nature and extent to which students' perspective is considered on the influence of infrastructural facilities on their performance.

It was therefore the aim of this study to investigate students' perspectives on the nature and influence of the Built Learning Environment on their performance in the English language, to find out if there are any differences between the perspectives they have on the issue in question. While this study is genuinely exploratory in the Nigerian context, it is expected to contribute to our better understanding of the issue by confirming or rejecting the findings of other researchers in other parts of the world.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to investigate students' perspectives of the influence of the built Environment on their performance in The English language in Egor, Edo State. The research specifically sought to:

1. Investigate students' perspectives on the influence of the built Learning Environment on their English language performance in Egor, Edo State.
2. Investigate the extent to which students rate the Built Learning Environment as an influence on their English language performance in Egor, Edo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the research:

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1. What perspective do students hold on the influence of the Built Learning Environment on their English language performance in Egor, Edo State?
2. To what extent do students rate the Built Learning Environment as an influence on their English language performance in Egor, Edo State?

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was used in this study. The survey research was primarily a non – experimental quantitative design in which a questionnaire was administered simply to describe their attitude, opinions, experiences, or characteristics. The participant comprised 20 students from each of the five secondary schools used, giving a sample size of 100.

The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire, titled: "Students' perspective of the Built Learning Environment as an influence on their the English language performance in Egor, Edo State".

The instrument 4 points Likert-type questionnaire ranged from 4 (MLM) – More LikeMe, to 3 (LM)– Like Me, to 2 (PLM) – Partially Like Me, to 1 (ULM) Unlike Me. respectively. The instrument reliability with SPSS stood at 0.855 (r), which indicates a high correlation coefficient of the instrument.

Demographic Data

Table 1: Sex distribution of respondents

Sex	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	50	50
Female	50	50
Total	100	100

Table 1 shows the sex distribution of respondents used for the study. 50 male and 50 female students, giving a 50% ratio for both sexes. This indicates that there was no sex bias in the distribution of the questionnaires.

Table 2: Age of respondents

Age	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
10-13	20	20
14-15	30	30
16-18	50	50
Total	100	100

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Table 2 shows the age distribution of the respondents used for the study. A total of 20 students aged 10-13 years, 30 students aged 14-15 years, and 50 students aged 16-18 years responded to the questionnaire, giving a percentage of 20, 30, and 50 for each of the respective age groups. 16-18 age group comprised the highest number of respondents, while 10-13 comprised the least number of respondents.

Table 3: Class status of respondents

Class Status	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
J. S. S. 1	20	20
J. S.S. 2	30	30
J. S.S. 3	50	50
Total	100	100

Table 3 shows the class distribution of the respondents used for this study. The students in J. S.S. 3 comprised the most respondents with 30 students, while the students in J. S.S. 1 comprised the least number of respondents with 20 students.

Table 4 shows the class distribution of the respondents used for this study. The students in J. S.S. 3 comprised the most respondents with 30 students, while the students in J. S.S. 1 comprised the least number of respondents with 20 students.

Results

Research Question 1:

What perspective do students hold on the influence of the Built Learning Environment on their English language performance in Egor, Edo State?

The analysis of data in respect of Research Question 1 is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation between the Item Score and total Score in response to the perspectives Junior Secondary School students hold on the influence of the Built Learning Environment on their English language performance in Egor, Edo State.

S. No.	School Factors	Item – Total Score Corr.
1.	My school has a fully equipped library	0.2753
2.	I am always allowed into the school library to read	0.1704

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3.	I always use the school library to read	0.3162
4.	I like participating in the English language inter-class debate/quiz	0.9947
5.	My class is very neat and conducive for learning	0.4557
6.	I like the English laboratory in my school	0.2346
7.	We have more than two (2) English teachers in our school	0.2771
8.	I am very comfortable in my classroom	0.4000
9.	My school is located in a very noisy environment	0.9356

The data in Table 4 showed that 9 items, with serial numbers ranging from 1 – 9 had the item-total score correlation that ranged from 0.1704 to 0.9356. The item-total score correlation implies that Junior Secondary School students in Egor, Edo State, hold great perspectives on the consideration of the Built Learning Environment as an influence on their English language performance. It also implies that there is a consistent and close relationship in the responses of Junior Secondary School students concerning their perspective on the influence of the Built Learning Environment on their English language performance.

Research Question 2:

To what extent do students rate the Built Learning Environment as an influence on their English language performance in Egor, Edo State?

The analysis of data in respect of Research Question 2 is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation between the Item Score and total Score in response to the extent to which Junior Secondary School students rate the Built Learning Environment as an influence on their English language performance in Egor, Edo State.

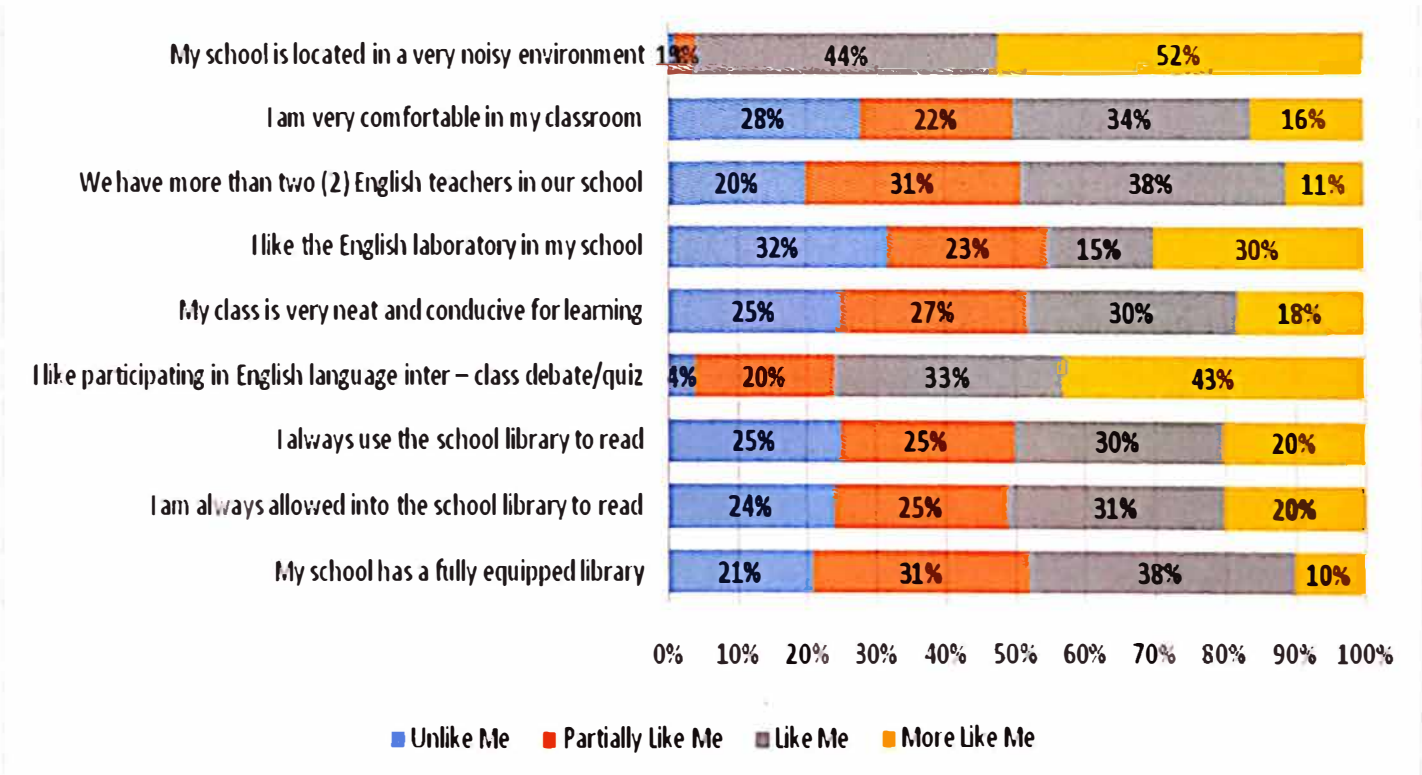
S. No.	School Factors	Item – Total Score Corr.	Coefficient Det.	Remark
1.	My school has a fully equipped library	0.2753	7.5%	Low
2.	I am always allowed into the school library to read	0.1704	2.9%	Low

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3.	I always use the school library to read	0.3162	9.9%	Moderate
4.	I like participating in English language inter – class debate/quiz	0.9947	98.8%	Very high
5.	My class is very neat and conducive for learning	0.4557	20.0%	Moderate
6.	I like the English laboratory in my school	0.2346	5.5%	Low
7.	We have more than two (2) English teachers in our school	0.2771	7.6%	Low
8.	I am very comfortable in my classroom	0.4000	16%	Moderate
9.	My school is located in a very noisy environment	0.9356	87.5%	High

The data in Table 5 showed that 9 items, with serial numbers ranging from 1 – 9 had the coefficient determinant that ranged from 2.9% to 98.8%, and the corresponding remarks ranged for low to very high. The coefficient determinant and remarks imply that Junior Secondary School students in Egor, Edo State, rate the Built Learning Environment as an influence on their The English language performance to a large extent.

Fig. 1: Students' Responses to Questionnaire Items



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The diverging stacked bar chart above shows the distribution of students' responses to the questionnaire items. The various item scores have been colour coded and the percentage representing each item have been indicated. The information derived from the chart implies that there is a relationship between the responses of students with regards to the questionnaire items.

Discussion of Results

This research provides both a confirmation of previous work as well as new contributions to the research on students' perspective of the influence of the Built Learning Environment on their performance in the English language in Junior Secondary schools. First, consistent with the lineage of studies on the influence of school building and learning facilities on student learning (O'Neill, 2000; Plumley, 1978; Chan, 1979; Phillips, 1997; McGuffey and Brown, 1978; Earthman and Lemasters, 1996), we found empirical evidence from students' perspective that building structures and learning facilities influences student learning directly.

A major contribution of this research is the strong and significant impacts of the availability of libraries and other learning facilities on students' learning and performance in the English language. It was observed that while the responses to the questionnaire item on the availability of school libraries had a low response, there were no libraries in all five schools where this research was conducted. The second-order latent factor of the school environment and indoor quality had a significant impact on students' performance. This provides some of the first empirical evidence of students' perspective on the influence of building structures, indoor environment quality, and learning facilities on the English language performance of Junior Secondary School students. This also supports some of the key contentions in the literature on the interplay of quality facilities, school climate, and student achievement (Cynthia Uline and Megan Tschannen-Moran, 2008).

Based on the results of the above analysis, it is clear that students associate high-quality facilities with their performance in The English language, and poor-quality facilities as been detrimental to their achievement. Our results also revealed that students tend to lose focus and motivation when learning takes place in un-modernized facilities. This sheds more light on the proposition that there is some form of relationship between the learning environment and students' performance. According to Jarman et al., (2004), the aesthetic features of a school can foster a strong sense of belonging that, in turn, can generate an enthusiasm for learning. Hence, school buildings that are dilapidated discourage the municipal relations that students and teachers develop in a school setting. Teachers may lose enthusiasm to support students learning and perform their duties adequately.

From our findings, it was observed that students attached great importance to the neatness and cleanliness of a building to the effect it has on their performance in the English language. An indicator of this is the response of students to the questionnaire items "My class is very neat and conducive for

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learning" and "I am very comfortable in my classroom", which had low percentage scores respectively. This further confirms the assertions that the overall impression of the learning environment is a reflection of the personality of a place and that "an overall positive impression ...implies the presence of friendly student and teacher learning environments" (Tanner, 2000, p. 327).

Implications

The findings of this study accentuate the magnitude and role of the Built Learning Environment in nurturing an environment that is supportive of student learning. It becomes necessary to establish that school design features that encourage healthy and motivating environments produce a sense of belonging in students and teachers, and builds a mutual relationship and interaction where the school environment becomes a prime motivator to students learning.

From the onset, school building design and maintenance should be taken seriously. Since schools predominantly exist to cater to learners' needs, it, therefore, suggests that the design and maintenance and every other feature that makes up the building should be appropriately mastered to meet the physiological and psychological needs of learners. The perspective of students should be taken into consideration at all points of the design and construction process of any school facility.

It is also pertinent to highlight that while failure rates are constantly on the increase in The English language in Nigerian secondary schools, stakeholders in the education sector should by way of a conscious effort, carry out renovation exercises across the country, and uplift the standard of educational infrastructures right from the grass-root level. This is necessary because, when students fail to attain solid foundations in The English language at the grass-root level, the effect is seen in students' performances in examinations, being that examination is the most used method of student evaluation in Nigeria.

Conclusion

By and large, the experience of learning is in everyone's narrative. As research continues to show more evidence into the concept of teaching and learning, and the intricacies that exist in meeting learners' needs, we are constantly fed with the requirements for solving age-long problems. However, in every way and standard, the feedback gotten from students ought to be taken seriously, especially in the context of an emerging educational system in a dynamic society. Concerning the extent to which the Built Learning Environment affect students learning, it is necessary to point that credence should be given to regular evaluation and assessment of learning facilities and the influence which they bequeath on Junior Secondary School students performance in the English language in Nigeria.

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