

Teachers' Satisfaction with Physical Working Environment: Imperative for Effective Service Delivery

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Abstract

School physical environment has significant bearing on teaching and learning. Poor physical environment makes it more difficult for teachers to deliver adequate knowledge to students. This research examined teachers' satisfaction with physical working environment as an imperative for effective service delivery in secondary schools in AkwaIbom State, Nigeria. Survey design was utilized in conducting the study. One research question and one hypothesis were evolved for the study. A sample of 533 respondents, derived from a population of 5,339 teachers, were involved in the study. Two researcher-developed instruments titled "Physical Working Environment Assessment Questionnaire" and "Teachers' Service Delivery Questionnaire" duly validated by experts in Educational Administration and Planning with reliability index of 0.88 and 0.85 respectively were used to elicit relevant data for the study. Data gathered were analyzed using frequency counts, simple percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance. Findings indicated that majority of the teachers were not satisfied with 11 out of 14 aspects of their schools' physical working environment. The facilities were library books, office accommodation, office chairs and tables, teaching aids, shelves for book storage, office space, toilet facilities, electrical facilities, classroom space, science laboratories and computer facilities. The findings also showed that there was a strong relationship between school physical environment and teachers' service delivery. The study recommended that adequate facilities such as laboratories, library books, tables and chairs should be made available for teachers' use in order to enhance their service delivery.

Keywords: Physical working environment, Teachers' satisfaction, Teachers, Service delivery.

Introduction

The two fundamental goals of secondary education as stated in the National policy of Education, Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) are to prepare students for higher education and to become useful citizens for themselves and the society. To achieve these laudable goals, teachers' contribution is very significant. Teachers constitute a major component in the organizational structure of the secondary school system. They play prominent role in the success or otherwise of any school because they are responsible for dispensing knowledge. Adesina (as cited in Afolabi, Oyomesi and Ajayi, 2008) asserted that teachers constitute the "heart of Nigerian educational system ... the teacher is and would continue to be both the major indicator, as well as, the major determinant of quality education". Service delivery in this study signifies the various ways and manners in which teachers perform their assigned responsibilities. The services rendered by teachers in the school system to train students in order for the goals to be achieved, among others, include instructional duties, management of students' discipline, keeping of records, preparation of lesson plan and lesson notes, administration of examination, classroom management, and other responsibilities assigned to them.

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For teachers to work in the school system and maximize their performance in service delivery, they need an enabling physical working environment with adequate facilities. Physical working environment constitutes the physical setting in which teachers perform their duties and in the context of the present study, it refers to school facilities. These include such things as, office accommodation, instructional materials, lighting, temperature conditions, workshop equipment, library resources, classroom space, information and communication technology (ICT) facilities among others. The physical working environment and the availability of resources to support teaching are necessary platforms for teachers' service delivery. The role of the physical setting is to allow job activities to be carried out comfortably, effectively and with dignity.

According to Asiabaka (2008), teachers require office space, conference rooms for team planning and facilities for preparing instructional presentation. These facilities, when they are available, play pivotal role in the actualization of the educational goals and objectives by satisfying the physical and emotional needs of staff and students. Bassey and Bassey (2008) observed that when teachers perceive a high level of resource availability and utilization in school, they will also tend to perceive a high level of teacher-job-efficiency in all aspects of school life, including actual teaching, classroom management, motivational ability, pupils' assessment and preparedness in subject matter field.

The Akwa Ibom State Government in 2009 introduced free and compulsory education to the senior secondary level. Apparently, this was intended to wipe out poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, diseases and other societal ills that plagued the state. Between 2009 and 2011, Akwa Ibom State government's investment in education significantly increased, with budgetary allocation rising from 3.8% in 2009, to 6.4% in 2010, and then to 10.07% in 2011. During this period also, the government did much in remodeling and renovating the classroom blocks, with almost every school having a fair share of government's benevolence. However, one of the multi-faceted problem confronting the present secondary school system in Akwa Ibom State is the issue of physical facilities. The free secondary education introduced by the state government has paved the way for increased school enrolment, which has further compounded the problem. One way of sustaining free qualitative education is by providing an enabling physical working environment for teachers to function and deliver effective service as professionals. Afolabi et al. (2008) pointed out that one way of sustaining qualitative education is the provision of physical resources such as, spacious and well ventilated classrooms, well equipped laboratories, fully stocked libraries, health centres, counselling rooms, staff offices and urinary.

It is generally observed that physical facilities such as books, library facilities, classroom furniture, laboratories, and workshops are grossly inadequate in most Nigerian schools. For instance, Adegbesan (2007) observed that, unfortunately, school facilities are not adequate and some are not available in the school system, while the ones available are poorly maintained because government is not providing enough funds to maintain the available ones and meet the challenges of education. Despite the role teachers play toward attaining educational goals, provision of physical facilities has remained a serious problem and teaching variables are neither sufficient nor adequate for positive teaching and learning outcomes. The teachers at times had to work under the most unsafe and unhealthy conditions like dilapidated physical buildings, outdated libraries, stinking abandoned classroom and broken furniture (Bukola & Alonge, 2011).

Teachers' satisfaction has to do with how happy or contented a teacher is towards the job. A teacher with high level of satisfaction holds positive feeling about the job, while a teacher who is dissatisfied holds a negative feeling. Teachers' satisfaction with physical working environment implies that they are happy with the facilities that are provided and that the available facilities are adequate for their service delivery. Emah (as cited in Ekpoh, 2003) discovered that 59% of teachers expressed dissatisfaction with their working conditions because of under-funding and lack of adequate teaching facilities which affected their job satisfaction, job performance and productivity. Owuamanam (2005) pointed out that inadequacy of necessary infrastructure has been a major problem facing Nigerian educational system in the past two decades. This is noticeable in the gross inadequacy of teaching materials, office and lecture spaces, lack of current books in the libraries, lack of ICT facilities and poorly equipped laboratories.

In a study by Ahmed (2003) it was found that in most secondary schools in Nigeria, teaching and learning take place under a most non-conducive environment, lacking basic amenities and thus hindered the fulfillment of educational objectives. Availability of enabling physical environment is important in the development of an efficient and effective educational programme in all sectors of the educational system. Thus, a well-planned and maintained physical working environment will not only enhance good teaching process but also facilitate learning.

The implication of insufficient state of physical facility is that teachers' service delivery would be severely affected. As observed by Leung, Chan and Wang (2006), working in an environment with insufficient physical facility can cause teachers to be in bad mood and thus, decrease their enthusiasm and work efficiency. Similarly, Uchendu, Nnaji and Nwafor (2016:16) noted that,

where the problems with working condition are serious enough to impinge on the work of teachers, they result in higher absenteeism, reduced level of effort, lower effectiveness in the classroom, low morale, and reduced job satisfaction; and where working conditions are good, they result in enthusiasm, high morale, cooperation and acceptance of responsibility.

Also, the authors found in their study that there was a significant relationship between physical working environment in terms of library facilities, classroom space and academic staff productivity in universities.

Observations by stakeholders in the education sector point to the fact that teachers are not putting in their best in the delivery of their statutory functions. Some of them show low commitment to duties and display laxity in discharging their responsibilities, some are truants, while some do not steady in school during official hours. When teachers fail in their responsibilities, students are affected negatively. It is very pathetic that most secondary school leavers have become “regular customers” to Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), a body that conducts matriculation examination (Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination, UTME) into universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria, on account of poor performance. On annual basis, students keep writing matriculation examination without being able to pass the examination into tertiary institutions. Likewise, some students who do not intend to further their education are not gainfully employed. Nevertheless, a number of factors such as, professional abilities, motivation, inter-personal relationship, school climate, work load, security, among others, can clearly affect teachers' service delivery. The present study is specifically carried out to document teachers' satisfaction with their physical working environment and also examine how the facilities available in their environment affect their ability to effectively deliver services in Akwalbom State secondary school system.

Statement of the Problem

Following the introduction of free compulsory education by government in Akwalbom State in 2009, there has been an unprecedented upsurge in the population of both teachers and students in the secondary school system. This has added much pressure on existing available physical facilities in the school system. The Akwalbom state government during the period 2009-2016 did much to remodel and renovate the existing school buildings. However, not much was done to improve the facilities which teachers use to teach, despite the significant increase in the enrolment. In some cases, existing facilities are as old as the school itself.

Government policy in Akwalbom State has mainly focused on such factors as teacher quality, commitment, curricular reforms, students' performance, accountability and other issues. However, conspicuously absent from the list is the concern for the school infrastructure that support teaching and learning. Teachers are expected to use the facilities to plan and prepare their lesson notes, mark students' exercise books, use the library facilities to prepare lessons, execute administrative responsibilities, and take decisions and also perform many other duties. The extent to which they deliver these services depends on the facilities provided for their use. Services rendered by teachers have been under attack by stakeholders in educational sector. Teachers are said to be truant, some come late to school, some undertake irregular and unauthorized movement from school, some use the official hours for their private businesses, some do not exhibit zeal in performing assigned responsibilities, while some show low level of commitment to school activities. Arising from the foregoing, therefore, this study examines teachers' satisfaction with their physical working environment and how it relates with their service delivery in terms of instructional responsibilities, management of students' discipline, administration of examination and record keeping in secondary schools in Akwalbom State.

Research Question

1. To what extent are teachers satisfied with their physical working environment?

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between teachers' satisfaction with physical working environment and their service delivery.

Methods

The research employed survey design. The area of study is AkwaIbom State, located in South-South region of Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 5,339 teachers in public secondary schools in AkwaIbom State. Stratified sampling technique and simple random sampling technique were used to draw 533 respondents, being 10 percent of the population for the study. Two researcher-developed instruments titled “Physical Working Environment Assessment Questionnaire (PWEAQ)” and “Teachers Service Delivery Questionnaire (TSDQ)” were used to elicit relevant information from the respondents for the study. PWEAQ had two sections, A and B. Section A sought demographic information from the respondents, while in section B, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their satisfaction with the identified facilities in the school physical working environment. TSDQ contained items that measured teachers’ service delivery in the school system. The TSDQ was for students to assess teachers’ effectiveness in service delivery. The two research instruments were given to colleagues in the Department of Educational Administration and Planning, University of Calabar for scrutiny. Their comments and suggestions were used to make adjustments in the instruments. The instruments were trail-tested using teachers and students who were not part of the study. The reliability co-efficient using Cronbach Alpha reliability method was 0.88 for PWEQ and 0.85 for TSDQ. These were adjudged adequate to enable the utilization of the instruments for data collection. The questionnaires were administered on the respondents in their respective schools by the researcher, assisted by three trained research assistants. Frequency counts, percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics were employed to analyze the data collected from the respondents. The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question one

1. To what extent are teachers satisfied with their physical working environment?

To answer this research question, fourteen components of school physical working environment were identified. Teachers were asked to indicate the extent of their satisfaction with the facilities available in their schools. Frequency counts and percentages were utilized to analyze the data collected. The result is as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of frequency (percentages) of responses of teachers on the extent of their satisfaction with the physical environment provided in their schools (N = 533)

School physical environment	Level of satisfaction		
	Very satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Not satisfied (%)
Office accommodation	67(12.57)	160(30.02)	306(57.41)
The size of library	293(54.97)	133(24.95)	107(20.08)
Stock of books available in the library	107(20.08)	163(30.58)	263(49.34)
Office chairs and tables provided	93(17.45)	120(22.51)	320(60.04)
Availability of teaching aids	80(15.01)	107(20.08)	345(64.72)
Available classroom space	147(27.58)	133(24.95)	253(47.47)
Shelves to store books	134(25.14)	107(20.08)	292(54.78)
Office space	80(15.01)	120(22.51)	333(62.48)
Toilet facilities for staff	99(18.57)	147(27.58)	287(53.85)
Sitting arrangement in the classroom	280(52.53)	160(30.02)	93(17.45)
Quality of classroom chalkboard	334(62.66)	107(20.08)	92(17.26)
Electrical/electronic facilities	0(0.00)	93(17.45)	440(82.55)
Computer facilities	0(0.00)	27(5.07)	506(94.93)
Science laboratory	13(2.44)	147(27.58)	373(69.98)
Aggregate (%)	130(24.47)	124(23.24)	279(52.29)

Results in Table 1 indicate the responses by the teachers based on the extent of their satisfaction with different aspects of school physical working environment provided in their schools. Data in Table 1 indicate that majority of the respondents were not satisfied with 11 out of 14 aspects of school physical environment assessed. However, majority of the respondents indicated “very satisfied” in three out of 14 aspects of school physical environment.

Most respondents were very satisfied with the size of library (54.97%), sitting arrangement in the classroom (52.53%) and quality of chalk board (62.66%). On the other hand, a greater proportion of the respondents were “not satisfied” in the following aspects of school physical environment: office accommodation (57.41%), stocks of books in the library (49.34%), office chairs and tables provided (60.04%); availability of teaching aids, (64.72%); available classroom spaces, (47.47%); shelves to store books (54.78%); office space (62.48%); toilet facilities for staff (53.85%); electrical/electronic facilities (82.55%); computer facilities (94.93%); science laboratory (69.98%).

The aggregate percentage in Table 1 shows that 24.47% of the respondents were very satisfied with the overall school physical environment provided, 23.24% were satisfied, while 52.29%, which forms the majority, were not satisfied with the overall school physical environment.

Hypothesis one

1. There is no significant relationship between teachers’ satisfaction with physical working environment and their service delivery. Using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis, the relationship between the two variables were established. Summary of the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between teachers’ satisfaction with school physical environment and their service delivery (N = 533)

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	rx _y	P-value
Satisfaction with school physical environment (X)	18.08	1.90		
Instructional responsibility (y1)	17.76	1.78	0.61*	.000
Management of students' discipline (y2)	16.87	2.73	0.31*	.000
Administration of examination (y3)	17.52	1.94	0.54*	.000
Record keeping (y4)	17.81	1.86	0.56*	.000
Overall service delivery (Y)	17.49	1.54	0.65*	.000

* $p < .05$; $df = 531$; critical $r = .088$

Table 2 shows that at .05 level of significance and 531 degrees of freedom, the critical r-value is .088. The calculated r-value obtained in establishing the relationship between teachers’ satisfaction with school physical environment and four aspects of their service delivery were obtained as follows: instructional responsibility, $r = 0.61^*$ ($p < .05$); management of students’ discipline, $r = 0.31^*$ ($p < .05$); administration of examination, $r = 0.54^*$ ($p < .05$); record keeping, $r = 0.56^*$ ($p < .05$). The calculated r-value for the overall service delivery is 0.65^* ($p < .05$). The calculated r-values were seen to be greater than the critical r-value and their obtained p-values less than .05 level of significance used in the study. With these results, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between teachers’ satisfaction with school physical environment and their service delivery was rejected. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between teachers’ satisfaction with school physical environment and their service delivery in terms of instructional responsibility, management of students’ discipline, administration of examination, and record keeping was accepted. However, their satisfaction with school physical environment was significantly correlated with the overall measure of their service delivery. The obtained r-values were positively significant, indicating positive correlation between teachers’ satisfaction with school physical environment and their service delivery. The implication of this result is that, when there is increase in teachers satisfaction with school physical environment, their overall service delivery in the aspects of instructional responsibility, management of students’ discipline, administration of examination and record keeping will also improve.

Discussion of Findings

It emerged from the analysis of research question one that teachers were not satisfied with majority of the facilities available in their physical working environment. Of the 14 identified components of the school physical environment, 11 were sources of dissatisfaction, while majority of the teachers were satisfied with only three components of their physical working environment. The components of dissatisfaction in the physical working environment were; library books, office accommodation, office chairs and tables, teaching aids, shelves for book storage, office space, classroom space, toilet facilities, electrical facilities, science laboratory and computer facilities. The overall aggregate showed that 24.47% were very satisfied, 23.24% were satisfied and 52.92% (a greater majority) were not satisfied. This is a clear indication that these facilities are not provided in adequate quantity.

It is generally observed that, often little or nothing is done about teachers' physical working environment. In cases where facilities are provided, they are always inadequate. School physical environment has a direct bearing with teaching and learning processes. Where the facilities are inadequate, teachers will not be satisfied and this will adversely affect their service delivery in the school system. Hence the students stand to suffer as they will be given inadequate education. The findings of this study corroborate an earlier observation by Bukola and Alonge (2011), that teachers' working environment in terms of the provision of physical facilities remain a serious problem in the sense that, often teaching facilities provided for teachers are either not sufficient nor adequate to enhance effective service delivery.

The findings of hypothesis one shows a significant relationship between physical working environment and teachers' service delivery. This finding is not surprising because provision of adequate physical working environment is a vital input in educational process that can facilitate effective service delivery. On the other hand, when working conditions are undesirable, employees tend to focus their attention on the short-coming to the detriment of their service delivery. In essence, both teachers and students cannot work effectively without adequate physical facilities. Availability of enabling physical working environment is important in the development of an efficient and effective educational programme at the secondary level of education. The result is in line with Ekpoh (2003) who found that physical working environment has a significant relationship with teachers' work performance. The result is in agreement with previous research by Uchendu, Nnaji and Nwafor (2016), who found that a significant relationship exists between physical work environment and academic staff productivity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated teachers' satisfaction with school physical working environment as an imperative for service delivery in AkwaIbom State Secondary Schools. On the whole, the study revealed that teachers were not satisfied with the school facilities available for them to work with. Also, findings indicated that there was a strong correlation between teachers' satisfaction with physical working environment and their service delivery. Thus, in view of the need to sustain the current free and qualitative secondary education in AkwaIbom State, the government needs to give priority attention to the provision of school facilities so as to enhance the performance of school teachers in service delivery. Apparently, managers of secondary education must know that teaching is labour intensive and the success of the school system requires a satisfied workforce that must be provided with standardized tools and good working environment to discharge their responsibilities effectively. Hence, it is important that government establishes appropriate channels of communication through which information about the level of satisfaction with the various aspects of teachers' working environment could be made known, since effective service delivery is a critical factor in the attainment of educational goals. The input of teachers should be sought in the provision of facilities.

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