

Assessment of Quality of School and Library Spaces of the Lagos State Public Schools: A Step for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

This study is an assessment of the quality of school and library spaces among public schools in Lagos state. A multi-stage sampling method was used in which forty-six schools were purposively selected from two districts to participate in the study. A descriptive survey design was adopted and a checklist with a reliability of 0.83 was used to collect data. The findings showed that there were some levels of inadequacies of learning spaces in schools; none of the schools had up to 10 acres and none has the ultimate enrolment of 500 to 900 students, the required standard for establishing a school. This culminating in the least population of 127 students using library dimension of 59.5 sqm while the highest population of 3,020 students using library dimension of 36 sqm. It was therefore recommended that government should ensure that schools have spacious libraries and students' enrolment should be used as a yardstick in providing schools with library services.

Keywords: School spaces; School libraries; Library spaces; Sustainable development; Lagos State; Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of a good school is to build pupils that are mentally sound, alert, and capable of acquiring values and virtues. It is to build pupils that will find pleasure in learning activities which is fundamental to life endeavour. It is also to make pupils pass through the required experiences to bring about corresponding changes in behaviour through critical thinking. Schooling propels children towards extraordinary changes and transformation that will guide them to develop a culture acceptable for human interaction. This accounts for why the quality of school and library spaces concerning learning activities are vital to the quality of education. Education involves teaching and learning. Learning should be learner-centered and the environment where this takes place should be comfortable, flexible, and appropriate to the age and developmental stage of learners. Learning environment should be designed not only for learning but also to build up the required analytical mind in the life of children, thereby making the value of learning to be centred on the good condition of the entire system (Jekayinfa & Kolawole, 2008; Coalson, Dudley & Hurlay, 2011)

The importance of school and library spaces is to bring to realisation the fact that the nature of pupils' learning environment must be carefully planned to support the educational objectives as well as to provide conducive, comfortable, and technologically up-to-date standard, (Asiabaka, 2008 & Imran, 2008). The responsibility of a good school is to be a training centre, conducive for instruction and attract pupils' attention on how to be properly integrated into the society. The availability of quality school and library spaces contributes to effective instruction that would lead to improved academic performance. School and library spaces are major parts of educational needs. Therefore, they ought to be comfortable, proper, flexible, and suitable for pupils' use.

There is the need to keep the learning environment clean and beautiful before meaningful learning could take place, (Obong, Okey, Mans, Okaba, & Aniah, 2010; Huber & Cambridge, 2009) and Dilshad, 2010). A good and clean environment enhances effective teaching and learning and promotes healthy living in schools. Physical structure refers to how building structures are arranged within the natural environment of a school, (Schneider 2002; Kuuskorpi, Finland & González, 2011). The physical environment is also referred to as a physical learning environment which includes a library and a combination of other structures where learning takes place. The stakeholders in the education sector worldwide seem to show a high hyphenate level of concern for education since no nation can exist in isolation. There is bound to be interaction among nations which can bring about collaboration and exchange of programmes.

In the country, the budgetary allocation for education yearly has been very low and far from UNESCO's required standard which is the minimum of 30 per cent of the national budget (Atueyi, 2015). In 2005, the World Bank began an intervention in education; the project was designed to cover four states in Nigeria namely Bauchi, Kano, Lagos, and Nasarawa including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The rationale for this World Bank Project is the need for strong political ownership and commitment to the education sector, which led to the commitment of N12 Billion which was spent between June 2001-2007 (COMPASS 2009; Ezekwesili, OnnoRuhl, Sherburne-Benz & Marito, 2009).

The peculiarity of the nature of Lagos State as the commercial nerve centre of the Nigerian economy and where education thrives most made it necessary for the intervention to be extended to her horizon. The most popular among these interventions is Lagos Eko Secondary Education Project (LESEP) in which Lagos state went into partnership with the World Bank. This project is

of paramount importance to this study because according to Lagos State's 2012 educational report, the partnership was credited with the recent rise in students' high academic performance. This was the manifestation of the primary goal of improving the quality of Junior and Senior Secondary School Education. The project supported more than 500,000 public school students and 7,000 teachers and school administrators in 637 schools in Lagos state (World Bank 2014). Since Lagos State has enjoyed this kind of international support the study intends to examine the extent of improvement which these series of interventions had brought to school facilities in Lagos state among which are schools and library spaces. Before the commencement of World Bank/LESEP interventions in Lagos State, school-based research reports revealed that schools had diverse challenges associated with school facilities (Oladunjoye, 2015). These challenges included among others, poor environmental conditions, a low level of instructional resources available, and inadequate spaces for learning in schools.

Since library and information technology would manifest their usefulness better in the instructional system than any other system because instruction cuts across all categories of training at all levels. The quality of school and library spaces becomes paramount because it is one of the factors that determine the quality of learning that goes on within the school. The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) (2015) spelled out the guidelines on location and space for a school library. These include consideration for a central location, accessibility, and proximity to teaching areas, absence of noise, adequate lighting, adequate room temperature, appropriate design for library users with special needs, provision of space for information and human resources, making provision for different relevant activities and future changes.

Physical space plays an important role in helping schools and the library achieve user-centric missions. In many schools, a significant number of students pass through the library space daily (Choy and Nanyang 2016). The mode of instruction in this modern age dictates how learning spaces should be planned, constructed, and maintained. Classroom capacity varies from nation to nation but the Nigeria National Policy on Education stipulates a population of 40 students per class. The typical building space and dimensions for open plan schools as recommended by UNESCO standard are 3.6sq.m per place and 720sq.m was recommended for 200 places. In the same direction is the typical space and dimensions for open plan schools of Commonwealth Department of Education, (2013), Guidelines for Virginia State in America it was emphasising that this depends on the enrolment per school but 10 acres is recommended for middle school with

the ultimate enrolment is between 500 to 900 students and additional acreage per 100 Pupils in School. It was stated that the Library Dimension for 100 spaces is 176.5sq. ft.

These two standards emphasise that the nature and quality of the environment of schools are relevant in determining the quality of the site, building spaces, and required gadgets because the contribution of the immediate environment where schools exist is highly germane. The economic capability of each country should determine the required standard for establishing a school. The paper reinforced the view that a good library building has to provide a wide variety of spaces, which should not be contradictory to the needs of an individual student. In essence, resourceful libraries in Nigeria Secondary Schools should make students at secondary school levels appreciate and imbibe reading culture.

1.1 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions

- (i) How many sampled schools met the required space benchmark for establishing schools and libraries?
- (ii) How adequate are school and library spaces in Lagos State Public Junior secondary schools?

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was a survey, and it employed a quantitative research design. The population of the study consisted of 174 Junior Secondary Schools in Lagos State Educational Districts. Lagos State was chosen for this study because it would be easy to use the findings of this study to predict the situation of the rest of the country due to the peculiar nature of Lagos State being the former capital and most viable commercial division of the country, it also has the highest population in the country with six Educational Districts, the composition of each district is in zones. A multi-stage sample was used, two Educational Districts (District 1 and District 5) were purposively selected out of the six Educational Districts for this study. Forty-six schools were randomly selected in the two Districts.

The instrument for data collection was a checklist which was used to collect data on the adequacy and availability of school and library spaces. The instrument was developed by the researcher based on the UNESCO training manual and the Commonwealth Department of Education. Inspection of school and library spaces were made with each item of the of school

and library spaces examined and the level of availability and qualities were recorded as required by the instruments, measurements of the sampled schools and library spaces were taken, the dimensions were made known by calculating the area by meter also the enrolment of students in each school was collected. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was found to be 0.83. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistical methods.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The results from the analysis of scores on the observed quality of the adequacy and availability of school and library spaces on school enrolment were presented here in the table. The findings are presented under the following subtitle.

Table1. Adequate and Available Library Spaces on School Enrolment

Schools	School enrolment	Total schools' space/Acre	Library Dim. (m ²)
1	127	7.12	59.5 sqm
2	795	5.88	43 sqm
3	1350	1.98	43.2 sqm
4	3020	0.64	36sqm
5	1984	7.12	52sqm
6	600	0.32	48sqm
7	400	4.80	48sqm
8	1338	3.56	48sqm
9	1538	0.34	96sqm
10	1205	0.50	61sqm
11	846	0.64	35.64sqm
12	3120	2.47	36sqm
13	900	4	39.6sqm
14	3005	2	40sqm
15	950	3	44sqm
16	532	6.23	45.4sqm
17	453	0.33	45.4sqm
18	538	3.55	45.4sqm
19	1405	0.24	45sqm
20	982	3.29	47.05sqm
21	781	5.76	50sqm
22	896	9.79	52sqm
23	296	5.50	52.6sqm
24	920	9.88	53sqm
25	1018	3.56	55sqm
26	986	0.65	0
27	2482	5.34	55sqm
28	915	9.79	57sqm
29	847	2.20	55.4sqm
30	2800	8.60	56sqm
31	1575	0.62	56sqm
32	1132	3.56	56sqm
33	660	3.56	56sqm
34	868	6.23	55.5sqm
35	791	9.61	61sqm
36	1105	0.98	61sqm
37	2212	8.03	65.34sqm
38	1300	0.35	71sqm
39	887	5	89sqm
40	1199	0.33	48.98
41	1205	2.69	72sqm
42	1368	9.79	36sqm
43	1380	10.38	55.4sqm
44	2500	7.76	12sqm
45	1700	3.29	82sqm
46	1800	3.56	10sqm
Average	1276.3	4.23	48.98sq.m

The result in Table 2 reveals the level of adequacy. It reveals that none of the schools had up to 10 acres and none has the ultimate enrolment at 500 to 900 students, the required standard for establishing a school, (Commonwealth Dept. of Education, 2013).

0 in the table above indicates non-availability of the library in the particular sampled school

The result reveals the level of the inadequacy of learning spaces in schools, it reveals that none of the schools had up to 10 acres and none has the ultimate enrolment at 500 to 900 students which is the required space benchmark of establishing school and library within it (Commonwealth Dept. of Education, 2013). Further, the results show that the least population of schools found in this study is 127 with a library dimension of 59.5 sqm while schools with the highest population of 3,020 had a library space of 36 sqm in dimension. Therefore, spaces for libraries in Lagos State Public Junior secondary schools were grossly inadequate.

On school spaces, the result shows that none of the schools had up to 10 acres and none had the ultimate enrolment at 500 to 900 students within those 10 acres which is the required standard for establishing a school as recommended by the Commonwealth Department of Education, (2013). To buttress this point further, Gislason (2009) stressed in his work titled "mapping school design" that educators and architects should engage in the planning process with an understanding of how specific architectural designs can help or hinder different learning program. It should be expressed that conformity should also give creed to community desire so school plants should give regards to the desires of the community; by conforming to the community standard. This will make the result to be appreciated by the people and be useful to its immediate community. This assertion was corroborated by Alabi (2019), who stated that the main objectives of school plant planning are to satisfy educational goals which had been pre-determine by educational planners. It was emphasised that better-planned school plants will enhance better school programmes and the community needs by providing a place for psychological and physical satisfaction for students and teachers which in turn would enhance the quality of instruction. To have adequate spaces that are conducive for school operation. There should be enough pieces of ground to accommodate people and materials.

From the result, the least population of schools in this study is 127 with a library dimension of 59.5 sqm while schools with the highest population of 3,020 had a library with 36 sqm in dimension. Therefore, spaces for a library in Lagos State Junior secondary schools were grossly

inadequate. Many schools have very small school libraries. In this technological era, a library should be a place to obtain and digest information; a library is a place to conceptualise new ideas, produce and share new knowledge. It should be a place in a school for the collection of facts about innovative, imaginative, and successful initiatives (Alabi & Makinde 2019).

If a school library is spacious enough, there is a lot that can be done in it to turn reading into pleasure. Within the school library, good instruction can take place, especially when the teacher is physically present and pupils can be guided on what to do. If the school library has the required library spaces, teachers could determine series of activities that could turn library spaces into a learning centre. In this changing digital world, a library is a place where one inquires about things and works together with other friends to solve problems (Sullivan, 2011b; Bradbeer, 2012 & Yanchus, 2013).

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It could be concluded that the required standard spaces for establishing a school were not met by the schools in Lagos State Public Junior secondary schools. The spaces for Library in Lagos State Public Junior secondary schools were grossly inadequate. In respect to the findings of this study, the following recommendations were put forward:

- (i) Government and other stakeholders should ensure that public schools are not congested and spacious enough for students to learn comfortably.
- (ii) There need for government to use students' enrolment as a yardstick in providing library services in schools.
- (iii) Stakeholders in school operation should see to it that there is conformity to modern trends in providing school spaces.

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