

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES AND SAFETY OF STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Nnenna F. Nnodi^{*} *Enobong F. Ekpo*, *Idongesit Idongesit Ekere*^{**}
& *M. Nseobot Willie*^{**}

^{*}*National Open University of Nigeria, Uyo Study Centre, Uyo, 08033166957*

^{**}*Dept. of Curriculum Studies, Educational Management and Planning
University of Uyo, Uyo*

Abstract

The primary purpose of the teaching and learning process is to bring about in the learner desirable change in behaviour. This process does not take place in a vacuum but rather in an environment structured to facilitate learning. Educational facilities constitute the major components of both direct and indirect action elements in the environment of learning. This therefore calls for the need for it to be properly managed to ensure effective teaching and learning. Unfortunately, observations made by the researchers revealed that facilities are not properly managed in most secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State as there are dilapidated buildings, broken chairs, desks and tables, broken windows and leaking roofs, cracked walls, blown off roofs, bushy surroundings, fallen fences are common phenomena in most secondary schools in the State. These points to the fact that, in most schools, the safety of lives and property of students and staff are not guaranteed, as most of the students receive lectures under hazardous environments. Hence, there is the need for educational facilities to be properly managed to ensure safety of lives and property in schools. It was in the light of the foregoing that this position paper examined educational facilities: appropriate strategy for public school safety management in Nigeria school system.

Introduction

The primary purpose of the teaching and learning process is to bring about in the learner desirable change in behaviour. This process does not take place in a vacuum but rather in an environment structured to facilitate learning. School facilities constitute the major components of both direct and indirect action elements in the environment of learning. Asiabaka (2008) maintained that the quality of education that children receive bears direct relevance to the availability or lack thereof of physical facilities and overall atmosphere in which learning takes place. The school facilities consist of all types of buildings for academic and non-academic activities, equipment for academic and non-academic activities, areas for sports and games, landscape, farms and gardens including trees, roads and paths. Others include furniture and toilet facilities, lighting, acoustics, storage facilities and packing lot, security, transportation, ICT, cleaning materials, food services, and special facilities for the physically challenged persons. These facilities play pivotal role in the actualization of the

educational goals and objectives by satisfying the physical and emotional needs of the staff and students of the school.

In spite of the pivotal role educational facilities play in the actualisation of the educational goals and objectives, a close observation of most secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State by the researchers revealed that most educational facilities are not in good working conditions. Dilapidated buildings, broken chairs, desks and tables, broken windows and leaking roofs, cracked walls, blown off roofs, bushy surroundings, and fallen fences are common phenomena in most secondary schools in the State. Some imported machines are found lying waste and beaten by sun and rain where they are dumped outside for years. This in effect has left most colleges in bad shape which in turn has hampered effective teaching and learning.

According to Odigwe and Eluwa (2013), a number of school systems, particularly those in urban and high-poverty areas, are plagued by decaying buildings which threaten the health, safety, and learning opportunities of students. Good learning facilities are an important precondition for students' learning and safety. This therefore calls for the need for educational facilities to be appropriately managed to ensure safety of lives and property in secondary schools.

The Concept of Educational Facilities

Educational facilities consist of all types of buildings for academic and non-academic activities, equipment for academic and non-academic activities, areas for sports and games, landscape, farms and gardens including trees, roads and paths. Others include furniture and toilet facilities, lighting, acoustics, storage facilities and parking lot, security, transportation, ICT, cleaning materials, food services, and special facilities for the physically challenged persons (Asiabaka, 2008). According to Amanchukwu and Ololube (2015), educational facilities are described as the site, the buildings, the equipment and all the essential structures, permanent and semi-permanent as well as such machines and laboratory equipment, the blackboard/chalkboard needed for effective teaching and learning. Ojelede (1998) cited in Amanchukwu and Ololube, stated that school plant comprises the school site and all the structures that have been put in place to aid effective teaching and learning in the school system.

Educational facilities are made up of the indispensable system and structures required by any educational institution to function effectively and achieve the objectives for which it was established (Alimi, Ehinola and Alabi, 2012). It means the school building, all materials, furniture and equipment attached and unattached to the building; all structures and features on the school site, including paths, roads, parking lots, playgrounds, open grounds, trees, flowers and other objects used for implementing or supporting the

implementation of an educational programme (National Open University of Nigeria(NOUN), 2014).

Ajayi (2007) and Yusuf (2008) maintained that educational facilities comprise the machinery which in turn includes machines and tools used in the workshop, in addition to duplicating machines. They also pointed out that school site, which is the landscape on which the school's permanent and non-permanent structures are built, are part of school plant. They also included buildings, equipment, furniture, vehicles of various types, electrical fittings, books, water supply infrastructure, and accessories like playgrounds, lawns, parks and farm, as part of educational facilities. It is all embracing in the fact that it comprises every single item starting from the gate of the school to the walls covering the school compound. Absence of school plant makes teaching ineffective and desired learning will not take place. It becomes necessary to ensure that such plant is properly managed to facilitate the effectiveness of school system.

The Concept of Management of Educational Facilities

Achinine (1998) pointed out that one of the most important functions of secondary school administration in Nigeria is efficient management of school plant. In other words, the achievement of set goals and objectives depends on the ability of the school manager to make use of and maintain the physical facilities in the school. Management, according to Peretomode (2001), is the social or interactional process involving planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling or leading in order to use available resources to achieve a desired outcome in the fastest and most efficient way. Management of educational facilities, according to Onwurah (2004) includes procurement and maintenance of school facilities for effective teaching and learning. The responsibility of effective management of educational facilities in secondary schools rests on the principals

The principal is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that school buildings, facilities and the total school environment is properly managed and maintained to ensure effective teaching and learning in the school. The principal is not only concerned with planning and supervision of the school facilities but also with its maintenance. The management of school facilities rests mainly on the principal who is both the administrative and instructional head of the school. Duties cover the procurement, maintenance, utilisation and safety of the school facilities so as to achieve the goals and objectives of the educational system. For the effective management of educational facilities in secondary schools, the school administrator needs to ensure that the facilities are properly maintained and utilised for the actualisation of the educational goals.

According to Idoko (2005), the principal is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the necessary facilities or materials needed for effective and efficient teaching and learning are provided and maintained as this will prevent a

repeat occurrence of infrastructural decay. The school administrator also makes sure that, the general appearance of the surrounding and condition of facilities in the school are well kept for this serves as an indicator for judgment about the quality of academic activities that go on in the school. Emenalor (2007) argued that, the construction of new buildings, and additions to existing ones are not the management of school facilities, rather it involves the continuing operation and maintenance of the school facilities. Therefore, it is the duty of the school administrator to harness all it takes to maintain the school facilities as this will contribute a lot to its lasting effect. School facilities maintenance means safeguarding and regular repair and supervision of school facilities. It implies maintaining the environment to make sure that it is clean, beautiful and safe for the activities that go on in the school. It is therefore a major and sensitive aspect of school administration.

The Stages of Management of Educational Facilities

In managing educational facilities, there are certain stages involved. These according to Uko (2015) include:

a) Provision of Educational Programmes

Execution of educational programmes demands that facilities are provided if success is to be achieved. Government, school proprietors, parents and other stakeholders are expected to provide for their schools and be involved in every aspect of school management facilitated by the principal. Olagboye (2004), observed that this aspect is the most neglected in school management and has led to disparity in provision of facilities from one school to another.

b) Utilisation of Educational Facilities

The degree to which an item is used determines its sustainability or degenerative consequences on the expertise of the school head (Adeboyeje, 1984). In managing facilities, and for them to meet the objectives, caution must be taken in the usage, that is, facilities must not be underutilised nor over-utilised, but optimally used. That is, maximum utilisation occurs when facilities are put into effective use in line with the primary objectives – otherwise, it would be counter-productive.

c) Maintenance of Educational Facilities

A major problem facing schools today is that facilities are not properly managed and maintained. The physical appearance of most schools proves and speaks volumes. Isaach and Musibau (2010) asserted that poorly maintained buildings, untidy walls, leaking roofs, over grown compounds may suggest that education within the buildings follow the same pattern. Facilities tend to depreciate, wear and tear as soon as they are put into use. Hence, there is need for maintenance

through repairs and servicing of the components and sustaining their working conditions and capacity. According to Adeboyeje (1984), maintenance enhances performance and durability; prevents wastage, corrects breakdown and shutdown services. Here, the principal's responsibility is to regularly check and recheck the available facilities and take necessary measures to prevent mal-functioning or non-functioning of a particular facility. Uko (2001); Ngoka (2003); Eze (2006), Ihuoma (2008) and Agenyi (2012), had identified six types of maintenance of school facilities, namely preventive; corrective, routine; emergency; structural and predictive. Preventive maintenance includes regular inspection of the buildings and immediate repair of minor damages and deterioration (Uko, 2001). This is done to avoid breakdown and to ensure optimal performance of plants and equipment and saves cost and time (Ngoka, 2003).

Corrective maintenance includes remodeling, renovating and updating of existing facilities, avoiding obsolescence and making the facilities adaptable to current educational needs (Uko, 2001). Routine maintenance requires periodic servicing of machines and equipments – monthly, quarterly, yearly as per the requirements provided in the manufacturer's guide (Agenyi, 2012). Emergency maintenance may take place due to unforeseen occurrences which may be as a result of lack of maintenance culture (Ihuoma, 2008). Structural maintenance is carried out due to the structural needs of some plants and equipment such as refurbishing, refabricating or reshaping due to current requirements or new designs (Agenyi, 2012). Predictive maintenance is seen to be the most vital and relevant as it involves the use of modern day computer softwares to predict equipment age, manufacturing fault, user demands, quality control and performance indices (Agenyi, 2012).

d) Improvement of Educational Facilities

Apart from depreciation, facilities tend to be outdated because of changing needs of the society, which necessitates changes in school curricula. In this respect, facilities need to be improved upon from time to time. In other words, facilities improvement is the alteration or modification of facilities to suit a new demand, new situation or new programmes. Wherever there are changes in any part of the education system, the existing facilities need modification, improvement or change. Improvement of educational facilities helps to meet the needs of specific individuals and groups within the school system. This calls for availability of accurate information collected through facilities audit.

e) Facilities Audit

According to the Planning Guide for Maintaining School Facilities (2003), facilities audit is a comprehensive inventory of a school's facilities that provides a standard method for establishing baseline information about the components,

policies and procedures of a new or existing facility. It provides information on the status of school facilities. It is carried out by assessing buildings, grounds and equipment, documenting the findings and recommending appropriate service options to increase efficiency, reduce waste, and save money. According to the guide, facilities audits are important to the educational system because they:

1. Help educational planners, managers and staff to know available facilities, their conditions, service history, maintenance needs, cost involvement and locations.
2. Provide facts, action plans for maintenance and improvement of school facilities.
3. Establish a baseline for measuring facilities maintenance progress.
4. Allow for in-depth analysis of product lifecycles to occur on a routine basis, that is, measuring actual life versus expected life.

Problems of Poor Management of Educational Facilities

Michael (2002) observed that, a successful management of school facilities is a necessary and essential investment that would increase quality of schools and educational performance and future outcomes. An academically successful school must radiate a sense of well-being of its facilities which in turn generate information for positive results. This will lead to effective restoration achieved through good design that addresses educational needs of the students. Apart from the grossly inadequate facilities in most secondary schools in Nigeria, the classrooms are usually overcrowded with up to sixty or more students in classrooms designed for only thirty or forty students, the chairs and desks are not enough, students therefore engage in sharing chairs, standing up, or sitting on windows or broken desks, a situation that generally stalls the teaching-learning process, disrupts the students mental activity, and militates against the intellectual development of the children (Akomolafe, 2013).

There are serious negative consequences to students when school facilities are not properly managed. First in the ranking is poor academic performance. There is a *nexus* between learning and facilities, as availability and good condition will exude academic excellence (Danesty, 2004). Oftentimes, in Nigeria, parents' preference of schools for their wards is informed by the quality of facilities. Schools run the risk of losing students to other well-equipped institutions when their schools lack the required facilities or available facilities are not properly managed (Dike, 2005). Also, if facilities are poorly maintained, this could lead to health and sanitary condition problems. For instance, if the toilets are broken down and students defecate indiscriminately, epidemics and other contagious diseases may occur to endanger not only the lives of the students, but also of the staff, the immediate neighbourhood and the nation at

large (Oladipo and Oni, 2010). Also, when the perimeter fencing in schools are not available, hoodlums can enter the school to attack either the students or the teachers. This therefore makes the school unsafe for effective teaching and learning. Hence, the need for educational facilities to be properly managed to ensure safety of lives and property within the school.

Appropriate Strategies for Managing Educational Facilities for Public School Safety

Educational facilities determine the ability of a school to cope with its curricular and extracurricular tasks, control behaviours and initiate serenity in the academic environment. The promotion of positive secured academic environment hinges on availability of safe educational facilities. Good educational facilities motivate teaching and learning appropriately than in unsafe conditions of damaged, lack or nonexistent educational facilities. Poor facilities are initiating structures for primary hazard sources affecting educational activities (Ugwulashi, 2017).

Provision of school facilities is imperative, but maintenance of these facilities is an important condition to improving good academic environment. These facilities contribute to school safety, quality teaching and learning, high staff and student academic performances, and behavioral changes towards school activities. Good educational facilities stimulate active staff and students' involvement in teaching and learning processes. They avail opportunity of easy recreational and safe extracurricular performances. A well-equipped school with educational facilities is a good structure for quality education service delivery. It encourages studiousness in pursuit of the curriculum; eliminates behavioural hazards (truancy) on staff and learners thus, promote joy in the academic environment (Ugwulashi, 2017).

Educational facilities to be a strategy for school safety management must adhere to the four stage approach proposed by Abdulkareem and Fasasi (2012) which includes provision, utilisation, maintenance and improvement of educational facilities. These conditions are necessary to accomplishing school safety management since good educational facilities support hazard free school environment. This clear evidence of poor educational facilities prompted Okorie (2002) in (Agabi and Okorie, 2002) to assert that the classroom, and indeed the entire school environment is pervaded with potential hazards and dangers, which are often over looked by teachers and other school personnel. It becomes questionable whether school administrators and managers know the importance of safety to the school and what remedial actions have been to contain it. The worries today in the school system are these numerous unsafe conditions posed by the deteriorating infrastructure and instructional facilities. In reality most schools have not met the minimum safety standard that will amply ensure

sustainable safe setting for proper academic activities as enunciated in the National School Health Policy (FME, 2006).

Thus, to ensure educational facilities are appropriately managed for school safety, the following strategies were suggested by Amanchukwu and Ololube (2015):

1. Principals of schools should be thinking of the best interest of the learners under their care and one way of showing this interest is maintaining the school facilities. The minds of staff and students should be prepared by making them understand that they are one family and that the structures in the school premises belong to them and it is their duty to keep them in good condition after each use.
2. Principals should not give out any part of the school facility for commercial use since the users are likely to cause some damages which will take a lot to repair.
3. The school managers should form committee to take care of school facilities on a regular basis and present a written report to the school principal. The community stakeholders, if approached, would participate in maintaining the school facilities.
4. The Parent-Teachers-Association also is a very powerful organ to use to ensure that school facilities are maintained regularly by making funds available. Lack of funds causes delay of any project and when funds are provided, skilled men/women should be employed to swing into action for results to be achieved.
5. Principals should make it known to school staff that no school property should be converted to private property. This will surely prolong the life span of the property. If the school vehicle is used to carry out official duty it will last for a long time, coupled with regular servicing.
6. There should be periodic inspection and repairs of school facilities so as to make teaching and learning worthwhile.

Conclusion

The paper therefore concludes that educational facilities could be utilised as appropriate strategy for public school safety management in secondary schools, not only in Akwa Ibom State, but in Nigeria. Hence, for school principals to ensure safety of lives and property in schools, they should effectively manage educational facilities at their disposal.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. This paper recommends proper funding of education, even in the face of dwindling economy as it is the hub of any society and only instrument for national development and growth.

2. Principals and teachers should be exposed to periodic workshops on procurement, management and maintenance of school facilities.
3. School administrators should be able to provide records on school facilities and school managers provide checklists for appropriate maintenance.
4. The state ministries of education should provide perimeter fence in every school to offer protection. This will checkmate entrances into the school premises that may result to facility damage.
5. Government should also ensure that all facilities are put in place before any private school is established.
6. Finally, there should be collaboration amongst all education stakeholders to ensuring safe school environment through provision and maintenance of school facilities.

References

- Abdulkareem, A.Y. & Fasasi, Y.A. (2012). *Management of educational facilities in Nigerian secondary school. The role of administrators and inspectors*. Available at [http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/publications/abdulkareemay/management facilities in Nigerian secondary schools](http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/publications/abdulkareemay/management%20facilities%20in%20Nigerian%20secondary%20schools)
- Adeboyeje, R. A. (1984). Management of school physical facilities in Ondo State, Nigeria: a case study of Ikale and Ondo Local Government Area. An unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.
- Agabi, O.G. & Okorie, N.C. (2002). *Introduction to management of change in education: A book of readings (Eds)*. Choba: Pam Unique Publishers and Mbu Press Limited.
- Agenyi, E. (2012). The role of school administrators in the maintenance of school plants and national transformation. Makurdi, Nigeria Association for Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP).
- Ajayi, P. O. (2007). Evaluation of the implementation of senior secondary school physics curriculum in south west Nigeria. Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.
- Alimi, O.S., Ehinola, G.B., & Alabi, F.O.(2012). School types, facilities and academic performance of students in senior secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. *International Education Studies*, 5 (3): 44-48.
- Akomalafe, C. O (2013). Students' academic performance in secondary schools in Nigeria. In S. Oni (Ed.). *Challenges and prospects in African education systems*. USA: Trafford Publishers.
- Amanchukwu, R.N. & Ololube, N. P. (2015). .Managing school plant for effective service delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria. *Human Resource Management Research*, 5(4): 95-102.
- Asiabaka, I. P. (2008).The need for effective facility management in schools in Nigeria. *New York Science Journal*. 1(2):10-21.

- Danestry, A.A (2004). Psychosocial determinants of academic performance and vocational learning of students with disabilities in Oyo State. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Ibadan.
- Dike, V. (2005). The state of education in Nigeria and the health of the nation. Africa economic analysis.
- Emenalo, F.C. (2007). School plant maintenance – An implication for school administrators in the Implementation of the UBE. *Journal of Women in Academics (JOWACS)*, 4 (1):125-129.
- Eze, U. (2006). Falling standard in education. News watch Magazine. A 5-point strategy. Ibadan: Wisdom Publishers.
- Federal Ministry of Education (FME, 2006). *Implementation Guidelines on National School*. Retrieved 17/04/16 from *School Health Policy National Health Programme*. Available at http://www.unicef.org/nigeria/school_health_policy.pdf
- Idoko, A.A. (2005). *Understanding School management*. Makurdi: Ugo Printing Press.
- Isaach, A. A. & Musibau, A. Y. (2010). *School plants planning and students learning outcomes in Nigeria secondary schools*. Ado Ekiti: Kamala Raj.
- Ihuoma, P. A. (2008). The need for effective facilities management in schools in Nigeria. *New York Science Journal*. Available at <http://www.science.pub.org>.
- Michael, A. (2002). Healthy environment and enhanced educational performance: the case of Charles Young elementary school, Washington DC.
- Ngoka, G. N. (2003). *Concepts and issues in advanced educational administration*. Nsukka: University Press.
- Oladipo, A. A & Oni, A (2010). *Quality assurance and sustainable university education in Nigeria*. Faculty of Education, University of Lagos.
- Olagboye, A. (2004). *Introduction to educational management in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Daily Graphics Ltd.
- Onwurah, C. (2004). School plant management. In T.O. Mgbodile (Ed). *Fundamentals in educational administration and planning*. Enugu: Magnet Computer Services.
- Onyenachi, N. I. (2014). Effective practices in the management of school plant in secondary schools in south-east Nigeria. A thesis submitted to the Department of Educational Foundations. University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Odigwe, F. N. & Eluwa, I. O. (2013). Appraising the state of maintenance and management of available secondary school facilities on students' academic performance in Cross River State, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4(24):101-106.
- Peretomode, V. F. (2001). *Educational administration: Applied concepts and theoretical perspectives for students and practitioners*. Lagos: Jaja Press Ltd.
- Uko, E. S. (2001). Effective management of school facilities in Nigerian secondary schools. *Education for today. Journal of Faculty of Education, Calabar*.
- Uko, E. S. (2015). Principals' and effective management of facilities in secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Research and Reflection*, 3(1):64-76

- Ugwulashi, C.H. (2017). Educational facilities in public schools as strategy for school safety management in Rivers State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 6(2): 11-19.
- Yusuf, M.A. (2008). *School plant planning and secondary school students' learning outcome in south-west Nigeria*. Ph.D Dissertation, University of Ado- Ekiti.