





## **An Overview of the Physical Environment of Primary Schools in Nigeria**

**C. J. Obunadike**

*Department of Primary Education Studies, Nwafor Orizu College of  
Education, Nsugbe - Nigeria  
Dikejoy@Yahoo.Com*

### **ABSTRACT**

This study was an investigation into the status of facilities in the physical environment of primary schools in Nigeria. Empirical studies that covered several States in Nigeria were reviewed. Then the study went ahead to analyse the physical environment in primary schools in Anambra State. The study, which was based on five research questions, was a survey. Forty eight primary schools were randomly selected as sample while seven hundred and teachers were sampled from these schools as respondents. A 37-item researcher developed questionnaire was used to collect data. Mean scores were used in answering the research questions. Findings indicated inadequate provision of classrooms, toilets, recreation, learning facilities and furniture. Among the recommendations was that government should provide grants-in-aids to help the management of primary schools provide adequate physical facilities in the schools.

### **INTRODUCTION**

An investigation of the physical environment of primary schools in Nigeria is quite necessary, especially now that Nigeria, a member of the United Nation (UN) is engaged in various activities to meet the demands of the UN 21<sup>st</sup> century millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to which the country has formally asserted. The reason is that no matter how one looks at the eight major concerns and the eighteen specific targets of the MDGs (Van de Sand, 2005) the place of an efficient and effective educational system in the attainment of the goals by the ultimate target year, 2015, can hardly be overlooked. Educational system, in the context of this paper refers to formal institutions, agencies, and organizations of any country which transmit knowledge and cultural heritage, and which influence the social and intellectual growth of the individual. Such agencies, as Eheazu (2007) insisted, have a great role to play (if properly focused and maintained) in for

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instance, eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, improvement of maternal health, promotion of gender equality, empowerment of women and assurance of environmental sustainability which constitute the key concerns of the MDGs. To illustrate, one way whereby an educational system could assist in the eradication of extreme poverty would be by introducing functional literacy/education which could develop in target groups, positive attitudes and skills that are germane to adoption of new ways of production that would enhance personal income, improve standard of living, improve surroundings and sustainability of not only the working environment but also of the development process.

All educational system have got physical environment. This physical environment consists of classrooms, toilets, recreational facilities, laboratories/workshops and furniture (Obundike, 2007). Ehezue (2007) also cited the physical environment to include school buildings/plant, the surrounding landscape, library, laboratory, equipments for sports and games and so on. The importance of the physical environment in the education enterprise can hardly be ignored. On school buildings for instance, Ogunsaju (1984: 244) observed that "the school building represents a learning environment which has a tremendous impact on the comfort, safety and performances of the child".

Ogunsaju therefore seriously advocated good physical plant planning in the development of effective educational programmes. According to Nwufe (2004), the provision of physical facilities such as buildings, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, playfields and so on should be of appropriate quantity, size and quality, in order to meet the requirements of primary education and position primary education to contribute meaningfully towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. It is based on this background information on the nature and importance of physical facilities in primary education, that this paper investigates the status of physical facilities in Nigerian secondary schools.

#### **Empirical Studies on:**

The status of physical facilities in Nigerian secondary schools. Several studies have been conducted on the provision of physical facilities in Nigerian secondary schools. One of such studies was by Egbuka (1993) who conducted a field study on the availability of infrastructural and learning facilities in primary schools in Abia State of Nigeria. A sample of one hundred primary school teachers was chosen from ten schools in Obioma Ngwa Local Government Area in Abia State. The study revealed inadequacies in the provision of libraries, rain gauge, wind vane, pupils desks, teachers tables and sports equipment among other physical facilities. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended among other things.

(a) Concerted efforts, of Federal, State and Local Governments in providing the necessary but lacking physical environmental facilities; and

(b) Provision of running costs for school heads to ensure the purchase and maintenance of the needed facilities.

Osasona (1995) did a survey of material resources available in primary schools in Delta State of Nigeria. One hundred and three (103) primary schools were covered in that study, and 860 teachers responded to the questionnaire. He found that only textbooks, workbooks and chalk were available in acceptable quantitative. Audiovisual resources, classrooms and furniture were highly insufficient.

In a related study, Bawa (1998) evaluated the status of materials and infrastructure in selected secondary schools in Oyo State. A randomly selected sample 654 teachers in 30 primary schools in that state, participated in that study. A questionnaire was used to collect data. The following results emerged from the study.

1. Lack of buildings, libraries, and electricity prevailed in all the schools studied, and

2. Textbooks, workbooks and supplementary readers were available in little quantities,

As a further illustration to the status of physical environment of primary education in Nigeria, Nwufo (2004) appraised policy provisions and institutional arrangements for the equalization of access to educational opportunities at primary and secondary levels of Education in Nigeria. That comprehensive study utilized the stratified sample technique. Two states were selected from each of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. This gave a total of 12 states and these were Adamawa and Bornu (from the North-East geo-political Zone); Kaduna and Kano (from the North West Zone); Benue and Kwara (from North-Central Zone); Enugu and Imo (from South-East Zone); Cross River and Edo (from South-South Zone), And Ogun and Osun (from South West Zone). The sample for the primary schools involved 25 primary schools from each state, making it altogether 300 primary schools. Data, collected through a questionnaire revealed among other things that in terms of policy provisions and institutional arrangements for facilities.

1. They were laudable and very forward looking policy in the National Policy on Education (that clearly spelt out the importance physical resources in primary education;

2. Furniture for both pupils and teachers in 47% of the sampled schools were grossly inadequate; 70% of the schools had no portable water and 22% had no toilet facilities.

3. 73 %(9) of the states surveyed did not have libraries in their primary school. This ranged from O (Bornu to 211 (Imo).

4. 41% of the primary schools visited in the 12 states surveyed had no instructional materials in terms of chalk, chalkboards, charts, pictures, and stationeries.

5. There were shortages of classrooms in all the states visited in both rural and urban schools.

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6. None of the states surveyed provided electricity in all of the primary schools sampled, and

7. No primary school in all the 12 states had a school bus,

Based on the numerous findings, the researcher made several recommendations which included that existing facilities in primary schools should be improved upon if the erstwhile war against poor performance and other vices plaguing the schools are properly tackled. This improvement in the provision of facilities can be achieved with schools working in concert with their Parents Teachers Association, as government alone cannot do everything.

This renews of empirical studies shows the deplorable and unsavory status of the physical environment in primary schools across Nigeria. This implies that sufficient number of classrooms, libraries, furniture, electricity and learning resources have not been provided in several states in Nigeria. Given the fact that Anambra State was not covered in any of the studies, and having seen the status of physical facilities in different states in Nigeria, the next thrust of the present paper is to investigate the situation in Anambra state primary schools.

#### **Research Questions**

Five research questions were formulated to guide the study, these are:

1. To what extent are adequate classrooms provided in primary schools?
2. To what extent are adequate toilets provided in primary schools in Anambra State?
3. To, what extent are adequate recreational facilities provided in primary school?
4. To what extent are adequate learning facilities provided in primary schools?
5. To what extent are adequate furniture provided in primary schools in the state?

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The design of this study was descriptive survey. The population was made up of all primary school teachers in Anambra State; simple random sampling technique was used to select 48 primary schools, while proportionate sampling technique was used in selecting 720 teachers from the 48 sampled schools.

A 37 item, researcher made questionnaire titled Physical Environment Survey (PES) was used for data collection and a 4 point response format of very adequate, adequate, not adequate, and very inadequate available and not enough were used. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity by two experts. The experts made some corrections which led to the

modification of the questionnaire items. To test for reliability, it was subjected to a test retest reliability analysis, within an interval of two weeks, on 30 teachers who are not part of the main study. Pearson product moment coefficient was used to analyze the data and a reliability coefficient of 0.70 was obtained, which was considered satisfactory for the study.

Copies of the PES were delivered to the schools by the researcher through the assistance of 6 trained education officers who work in the education authorities where the schools are located. After two days only 711 copies of the completed questionnaire were returned nine copies were lost.

Mean scores were used in analyzing the data for the research questions. The midpoint for the scale is 2.50. Only mean scores of 2.50 and above were accepted as an indication of adequacy of the item while mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as an indication of inadequacy of the item of research.

## PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** To what extent are adequate classrooms available in the primary schools?

**Table 1:** Mean ratings of classrooms available in the schools.

CLASSROOMS	X	DECISION
1. Many classrooms are available	2.55	Adequate
2. The classrooms are spacious enough	2.23	Not adequate
3. The classrooms are well ventilated	2.20	Not adequate
4. The classrooms have emergency exits	2.20	Not adequate
5. The classrooms have smooth floors	2.00	Not adequate
6. The classrooms are painted	2.05	Not adequate
7. There is availability of electricity in the classroom	1.00	Very

**Table 1** reveals that out of the 7 items, only item 1 got mean rating of above 2.50. This means that the teachers identified this item to be adequate in Anambra State primary schools once many classrooms are available. The remaining items got mean ratings below 2.50 showing that in many Anambra State Primary schools the classroom facilities are not adequate.

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**Research Question 2:** To what extent are adequate toilets provided in primary schools?

**Table 2:** Mean ratings of toilets provided for the pupils.

ITEMS ON TOILETS	X	DECISION
1 Water for keeping the toilets clean	2.49	Not adequate
2 Pit latrines	2.41	Not adequate
3 Water Closet	1.50	Not adequate
4 Disinfectants	2.07	Not adequate
5 Toilets are enough for the number of pupils	2.20	Not adequate
6 There are toilets exclusively for girls	2.05	Not adequate
7 There are toilets exclusively for boys	2.28	Not adequate

In table 2, the entire seven items got mean scores below 2.50. This indicates that adequate toilet facilities have not been provided for primary schools in Anambra State.

**Research Question 3;** To what extent are adequate recreational facilities available.

**Table 3:** Mean ratings of teachers on recreational facilities provided to pupils.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES	X	DECISION
1 Open play ground area	2.76	Adequate
2 Athletics field	2.64	Adequate
3 Football field	2.88	Adequate
4 Volley ball facilities	2.05	Not adequate
5 Hand ball facilities	2.00	Not adequate
6 Skipping ropes	1.00	Not adequate
7 Basket ball facilities	1.25	Not adequate
8 Swings	1.03	Not adequate
9 Merry go round	1.83	Not adequate

Analysis in table 3 reveals that volley ball, hand ball, swings and basket ball had. mean ratings below acceptable mean of 2.50. Open play ground area,

Athletic field and football field had mean ratings that are above acceptable means. Other facilities namely skipping ropes, swings and merry go round are not adequate. This show that the respondents agree that volley ball, hand ball, swings, basket ball, and other facilities which suppose to help the pupils grow strongly were not adequately provided for them.

**Research Question 4;** To what extent are adequate learning facilities available?

**Table 4:** Mean ratings of learning facilities.

	<b>LEARNING FACILITIES</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>DECISION</b>
24	Current textbooks	2.18	Not adequate
25	Nature's corner	2.50	Adequate
26.	Home Economics equipment	2.40	Not adequate
27	Fine Art Room	2.30	Not adequate
28	Music Room	1.50	Not adequate
29	Pictures, wall charts and maps	2.76	Adequate
30	Models, skeleton, skulls	1.83	Not adequate

In table 4, only items 25 and 29 scored up to 2.50 in their mean values. The rest of the items scored below 2.50. This indicates that apart from nature corner and pictures, wall charts and maps, other learning facilities are not adequately provided in primary schools in Anambra State.

**Research Question 5:** To what extent are adequate furniture available?

**Table 5:** Mean ratings furniture available to pupils to enhance their learning.

	<b>FURNITURE</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>DECISION</b>
1	Chalk board in the classrooms	2.50	Adequate
2	Chairs for pupils	2.43	Not adequate
3	Racks/shelves for pupils bags	2.30	Not adequate
4	Repair of desks, chairs and other furniture in schools	2.50	Adequate
5	Classrooms furniture available for physically challenged pupils.	1.03	Not adequate
6	Library shelves and seats	2.40	Not adequate
7	Enough desks for the pupils	2.25	Not adequate

Table 5 above reveals that out of 7 items, only (2) items got mean ratings above 2.50. These items are 26 and 29, This means that the teachers identified these 2 items to be adequately provided in Anambra State Primary



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Schools. The remaining items got mean ratings below 2.50 showing that Anambra State Primary schools do not have adequately.

#### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

One of the findings of this study is that in many primary schools in Anambra State, classrooms are available in adequate numbers but the facilities in these classrooms are not adequate. The available classrooms are not spacious and well ventilated. In addition, the classrooms lacked emergency exits, smooth floors, electricity and they are not well painted. In essence, the status of the classrooms are unfriendly. This finding goes contrary to Udofot (2004) who stipulated that primary schools should have facilities such as adequate space, ventilation, smooth floors and electricity to make them child friendly. This situation is worrisome because under rain or harmattan conditions for instance, without electricity these classrooms might become dingy and dark thereby making teaching and learning almost impossible. In the absence of smooth floors, there is the possibility of prevalence of ticks, warts and jiggers which have adverse impact on the health of the pupils.

It was also found that toilet facilities are inadequate across the primary schools. This finding confirms Obunadike (2007) who found that in primary schools in Anambra State where there are toilets, there is no water of keeping it clean. Disinfectants are equally inadequately as revealed in the present study. This is likely to expose students to infections and diseases as a result of dirty toilets.

Further, recreational facilities are inadequate. Though it was found that open play ground area, athletics and football fields are adequate, other essential facilities such as volley, hand, and basket ball facilities on the one hand, and skipping ropes, swings and merry go round, are grossly inadequate. This finding is in line with that of Nwufu (2004) who reported inadequate provision of recreational facilities in several primary schools spread across twelve states in Nigeria. In the absence of these facilities, the overall physical and psycho-social development of pupils cannot be maximally promoted because Anyanwu (1999) noted that recreational facilities are useful for physical education and overall mental agility of pupils.

The study also indicated that learning facilities are inadequately provided in the schools. Specifically, it was found that current textbooks, home economic equipment, fine art room, music room, models, skeleton and skulls were not adequately provide. This finding agrees with Osasona (1995) who reported inadequacy of material resources in primary schools in Delta State. This issue of inadequate learning resources is unfortunate for pupils learning because as Aghenta (2000) stressed, learning resources in whatever form they exist, are of immense importance in teaching and learning and must be adequately provided for pupils. Inadequate resource provision could as Eheazu (2007) noted, be as a result of inadequate allocation of funds by the government. It could also be as a result of embezzlement of the allocated funds reported by Ikoya (2000) and Nwufu (2004). When funds are

inadequately provided and where the little provided are either embezzled or diverted, such resources are never provided.

Finally, it was found that only two items of furnitures were adequately provided in the schools. These items are chalk board and repair of furniture. Other furniture like pupil's chairs and desks; library shelves and seats; classroom racks/shelves for pupils bags, and furniture for physically challenged pupils were not adequate. Egbuka (1993) similarly observed that furniture for primary education was lacking in Abia State and than posed a great threat to primary education in Nigeria.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Government should give special grants in aid to the primary education sector to ensure adequate provision of physical facilities. Such grants-in-aid could be drawn from the education Tax Fund (ETF) and the National Science and Technology Funds (NSTF).
2. Headteachers should be trained to become more resourceful in mobilizing funds for the provision of physical facilities through the private sector.
3. Government should provide more physical facilities as well as maintain existing facilities in primary schools.
4. Existing educational resource centre in educational institutions should be well-funded and empowered to produce relevant learning resources for distribution to primary schools.
5. There is need for the enforcement of the policy for the provision of adequate toilets in all primary schools. In addition more toilets and water should be made available in schools by the government.
6. Primary Schools should be provided with adequate recreational facilities, for all work and not play makes jack a dull boy. The Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A.) should assist schools in this respect.
7. Adequate and well-furnished laboratories/workshops should be installed in primary schools by the government.
8. The head teachers should source for alternative sources of fund to complement governmental efforts in resource provision.

### **CONCLUSION**

It was found out that classrooms were available but they were not spacious and well ventilated. Also, no emergency exits were provided, Toilets were

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provided, but they were not sufficient. Also in recreational facilities, only bare fields were provided; but other sporting fields of pits were not provided and where they were found, they were in pitiable situation.

In the area of learning facilities, only the nature's corner received a good attention. This means that every other items were wanting. A school can not get on well without facilities like Home Economics laboratory. Music rooms, etc.

The teachers as well as pupils furniture for their studies. In the light of these findings, there is need for government adequate provision of these aspects of physical environment for quality delivery in primary schools in Anambra State. Until, these facilities are adequately provided, primary education cannot contribute meaningfully to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

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