
**MAINTENANCE OF SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR
PRODUCTIVITY
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Abstract

Not many schools are aware of the interdependence and contributions that maintenance of school infrastructure could make to the improvement of academic activities in the school. This paper therefore attempts to explain some ways in which maintenance of school infrastructure could contribute to higher productivity on the part of teachers and thereby lead to the realisation of the major educational objectives in schools.

Introduction

One of the objectives of educational institutions in Nigeria is to produce required manpower for all the sectors of the economy. Also, the school is to prepare the individuals for useful living in the society as well as produce the inputs in form of graduates from one level of education for the next level. At the secondary school level for instance, one of the objectives is to prepare the individuals for the third level of education. The National Policy on Education has stated that the government will continue to use education as a tool to achieve its national objectives. And that the two broad aims of secondary education within the overall national objective will be for preparing students for useful living within the society and preparing them for higher education.

It is from this premise that the school is looked upon as a production unit since education itself is an industry. The school therefore requires a factory model system which receives on a continuous basis the major inputs in form of students and infrastructure for the production of needed output. Hence, the resources earmarked for schools are assumed to be related to educational setting in order to achieve the necessary academic output.

Since academic achievement is a measure of school output, it becomes necessary therefore to see to the improvement of academic achievement of students. One way of making this possible is to advance means of proper maintenance of a measure of school inputs which can be classified as school facilities in form of infrastructure. Putting the school in a factory model therefore, the school facilities make up for the factors of production while the finished product becomes the academic achievement on the part of students. Thus, the assumption is that, since anything being utilized must depreciate in value with time, and they still continue to function as expected if well maintained, there should be a linear relationship between the 'cause' in form of school infrastructure and effect' in form of scholastic performance (Adesma. 1980).

As important as provision of school infrastructure is, of equal importance is their maintenance. It has been suggested that buildings, equipment and other organisational variables have great influence on students' academic achievement. Olutola (1988) maintained that the teacher as well as his students is certainly influenced by their physical environment, and such physical environment includes the buildings, desks and tables.

Adesina (1980) also remarked that variation in students' academic performance can be related to availability or otherwise of physical facilities such as furniture and other related materials in the school. Of equal importance is the fact that whatever impacts that are made in the provision of furniture and buildings for the purpose of teaching students will equally affect the attitude of teachers in their teaching exercise. No doubt their attitude is capable of affecting the output in the school system in terms of students' academic performance. A school that is well equipped with furniture has the capacity of encouraging students to engage in a self-studying process, hence, it is assumed that school infrastructure such as buildings and furniture have the capacity of affecting scholastic achievement of students.

Since the principal is also involved in supervision at the secondary school level, his role is to supervise school buildings and furniture in order to identify areas which need to be repaired. Eden (1982) and Odei (1991) remarked as follows:

The responsibilities of making appropriate material resources available to the secondary schools may devolve on the government. Certainly, to maintain and use them effectively for the accomplishment of the educational purpose rests with the school principal.

The principal, therefore, occupies a very important position in the secondary school system as a processor of available inputs in order to ensure students' maximum academic achievement. An integral part of school input processing is the maintenance of school building and furniture.

School Infrastructure Maintenance Services

The maintenance of school facilities generally begins with building and fixing firmly the idea of high regard for school facilities and discouraging wilful destruction of school properties. And once respect for school property has been internalised, then the first and major battle of school infrastructure maintenance is won (Oyedepi, 1998). The maintenance of school building and furniture is unique as it requires the competent hands of specially trained and skilled personnel like plumbers, electricians, bricklayers, painters and carpenters. However, due to the complexity and wide range nature of school infrastructure maintenance, a custodian is often employed to be in charge of maintenance and to oversee the maintenance crew. In primary and secondary schools, where lesser amount is needed for maintenance, permanent staff may not be needed, instead, they contract for their maintenance jobs.

The school head and custodian makes it a point of duty to periodically move from one building to another inspecting the buildings and the furniture items. A

checklist should be prepared whereby all the buildings and furniture items for inspection are listed. This becomes necessary in order not to leave any stone unturned during the inspection. A form should be designed by the school head for all members of staff to fill when an area of repairs is discovered. Therefore, every member of staff should be made to identify and report areas of maintenance to the school head who in turn will collate such reports; the head must take note of those that require immediate attention, like leaking roof and electrical repairs. Also, broken chairs and tables should be repaired without wasting time. It should be noted that some areas of maintenance need daily attention, others weekly, monthly or annually. Those that need daily attention include: floors, lavatories and tables. Mopping and scrubbing of floors may be done weekly. Cleaning of windows and light fixtures may be done monthly and annually respectively.

In higher institutions, maintenance areas are usually divided into departments or sections like carpentry section, plumbing departments, electrical departments, bricklaying section, and so on. It should be noted that each of these sections is to carry out specific and different maintenance jobs under the supervision of the school custodian. The school head as the overall supervisor of the school is to supervise on a regular basis, the maintenance officer or school custodian. AbdulKareem (1985) asserted that the school head must see that the maintenance officer has necessary equipment and supplies to keep the school facilities in good condition.

The maintenance officer or school custodian has some minor maintenance responsibilities to attend to and these include: the repairing of furniture, hardware equipment, plumbing, replacing window, door and cabinet glass, applying seals and varnishes to floors, resurfacing blackboards, replacing light bulbs, switches and fuses, and caring for school grounds through the removal of fallen trees and clearing of bush. This is behind the idea that school custodian will normally be able to perform such simple maintenance activities more economically and efficiently than regular maintenance personnel.

Oyedemi (1988) pointed out the two main types of maintenance. According to him the first one is the individual building maintenance. This type of maintenance is carried out by the school head. Here, the head must see to the maintenance of such areas of school building like the broken windows, inadequate light fixture, defective wiring, leakage and dilapidated buildings. The second type of maintenance is known as district-wide maintenance which is common in higher institutions.

Maintenance of School Infrastructure for Productivity

Effective teaching-learning encounter in an educational institution is the joy of an educational administrator. Effectiveness in academic performance of students or pupils cannot be achieved in an educational institution where buildings and furniture items are rendered to a state of

dysfunctional use due to lack of maintenance. The proper maintenance of school infrastructure therefore enhances effective academic performance in educational institutions in the sense that the students find it difficult, if not impossible, to learn effectively in a classroom where the roofs are leaking or where a considerable or every part of the roof has been blown off. In the same vein, students cannot learn well during evening preparations in classrooms where light fixtures are defective and nonfunctional due to lack of maintenance. This type of environment cannot promote effective academic growth. In a survey on Stones (1983) discovered that backward children were greatest numbers in poor environments, as they were closely with school attainment and measured intelligence.

If education is to be considered as investment as stated in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 1981) then, there, is a very need to satisfy the ambition of learners, in order to achieve the objective of effective teaching-learning situation. This objective cannot be achieved in a situation where students' seats are broken or office furniture are damaged without being repaired. Adeyinka (1992), while discussing the problems of educational development in Nigeria, said:

in most cases, the chairs and desks are not enough, you see them (students) sharing chairs, standing up, or sitting on windows or broken desks ... a situation that generally militates against effective teaching and development of the children (p. 8).

This assertion is in support of the fact that effective maintenance of school furniture ensures effective teaching and intellectual development of the child. Adesina (1980) also believed that children will receive high quality of education if infrastructures are well maintained in schools.

The well-maintained halls can serve as venues of meeting for social and educational activities organised by the school community. For instance, the school may organise inter-school debate or quiz which develop the intellectual capacity of the children while the community may organise adult education programme or any other educative programme. The community in turn pays back through involvement in the education process of their children (Ojedble 1998)

A well maintained school infrastructure provides avenue for student to psychologically settle down for academic work instead of embarking on unrest due to poorly maintained infrastructure. Taiwo (1998) discovered that one major reason why students embark on unrest is because of inadequate school infrastructure maintenance. Also, students do not perform well academically when they embark on an incessant unrest.

The proper maintenance of school infrastructure makes learning to become real to students and also serves as great assistance to the

teacher in the school. For instance, well maintained blackboards- makes teachers writing to be clear to students and explanations made on the blackboard also become understandable, while the teacher finds joy in a classroom 'with well-maintained teacher's-table and chair. Abifarin (1995) observed that well-maintained media increase learning effectiveness and also serve as great assistance to the teacher.

A well-maintained school library, no doubt, corroborates classroom activities, and adds to the academic achievement of students. In support of this, Arikewuyo (1997) said that the library provides a positive and progressive academic programme which is meant to integrate library resources into the classroom activities thereby adding to the educational opportunity of every child in the school. Hardly will one see a school without a library, no matter how small, but the academic programme which the school library is designed to provide can only be effective where library seats and book shelves are in good condition.

Another important area is the maintenance of school gymnasium and school common room. These, if properly maintained, provide learners with the needed physical and health activities, relaxation and other extra-curricular activities. Such activities, apart from enhancing pure practical curricular experience for some sets of students, also help foster intellectual and social development of students. Ojedele (1998) believed that common rooms in schools promote social relaxation and assist the intellectual, social and emotional development of the child.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The current poor economic condition of the country has created the problem of poor school infrastructure maintenance. Durosaro (1998) observed that the existing school plants cannot be adequately maintained due to lack of funds and to worsen the situation, school population continue to increase yearly. There is need, therefore, to intensify efforts on school infrastructure maintenance. This becomes necessary in order to increase the life span of school infrastructure and to achieve the objective of academic improvement in schools.

The school building should be planned in order to meet the educational demand of subjects here, professional planners as well as practitioners who execute the plans should be involved.

The various arms of government concerned should make sure that enough fund is given to schools for maintenance of infrastructure. Without fund, little or nothing can be done on maintenance of infrastructure as no organization can perform well without enough funds.

Maintenance activities on school infrastructure should not be left in the hands of school heads and maintenance staff alone. Everybody in the school including students should be involved in the maintenance activities. Even, this should extend to the community in general, organisations and individual philanthropists in particular, since everybody benefits directly or indirectly from proper maintenance of school infrastructure.

As part 'maintenance services, school heads should pay attention to prevention of fire hazards. It is suggested that fire extinguishers be provided in every school building. In order to achieve the broad educational objectives in our schools by improving scholastic performance of students, the school infrastructure should be maintained.

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