

School Location and Academic Achievement of Secondary School in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study looked at the location of schools as it relates to academic performance of students in Ekiti state of Nigeria between 1990 and 1997. The study population was results of the West African School Certificate Examinations (WASCE) conducted between 1990 and 1997 in 50 secondary schools in both rural and urban areas of the state. One validated instrument “Student Location Questionnaire (SLQ)” was used for data collection. One hypothesis was formulated and answered. Data were analysed using mean and *t* – test. The results showed that there was a significant differences between students’ academic achievement of rural and urban secondary schools in senior school certificate examinations ($t=2.73$, $p<0.05$). The study has proven that students in urban areas had better academic achievement than their rural counterpart. It is recommended that Government should bridge the gap between the rural and urban locations by providing the rural dwellers the social amenities which will enhance better academic performance of students in their final examinations like the SSCE. The community should assist the government by providing taxis and buses to facilitate movement of teachers and students to their school. Adequate incentives should be provided to rural area teachers to encourage them to put in their best to remain in their duty stations.

Keywords: School location, Academic achievement, Secondary school, Ekiti state

1. Introduction

For over four decades, series of studies have suggested the importance of school as social environment of learning. Some of these studies examined locational planning and their attendant consequences on achievement of students in various states of the Federation. The studies were intended to assist education authorities of various states to decide where a particular type of school should be located; the size of a school in each location; whether a new school should be built or otherwise among others (Mbakwe, 1986). The World Bank recommended that the following data were needed for rationalizing and drawing up of both the urban and rural school map. Schools which includes physical aspects, site, type of building, usage, capacity, teachers (numbers, qualification, and age); students which include enrollment in school by age, individual data in age, sex, previous schools, home, location of mode transport, time taken in home/school journey, parental background; Rural and Urban Area Data which include land use administrative map on as large a scale as possible, planning reports, settlement patterns and the likes are required. These school locational planning techniques have been reportedly used by a number of countries to solve their educational problems (World Bank Guidelines 1978).

In applying the school locational planning to study and establishment of secondary level education in a plot study in Ondo State of Nigeria, Omoyemi (1978) discovered that locations of schools was not based on sound principles of distribution of population because of initial community participation. In his observation, Ogunsaju (1984) noted that School sites in the past were arbitrary chosen with little or no consideration for the necessary parameters such as creativity and corporate planning. In another development, Orebiyi (1981) using locational implication of secondary education reform in Oyi Local Government area of Kwara State between 1980 and 1985 purports that unplanned location of secondary schools has limited the spread of secondary education to a

few centers. Madumere (1982) investigated the distribution of secondary schools in Imo State (Ohaozara Local Government area), employing locational planning technique to carry out diagnostic and projection analysis on distribution of facilities in relation to education reforms, discovered among other things, that were imbalances in the relationship between population density and distribution of secondary schools by Local Government Area. In her analysis of the distribution of public primary schools in three selected Nigerian towns, Tanimowo (1995) discovered that the distribution of shows disorder, planlessness and inefficiency. The inefficiency here refers to pupil academic performance. The implication is that while people in some areas enjoy minimum travelling distances to acquire education, some people in other places suffer by having to cover maximum distances to acquire education; some people in other places suffer by having to cover maximum distances to get to their school. In line with the above, Onokerhoraye (1975) emphasized that lack of suitable school location has contributed to the imbalances of Western education from one part of the country to the other.

Writing on the importance of location, Ojoawo (1989) found that it is one of the potent factors that influence the distribution of educational resources. Throwing light on locational influence. Ezike (1997) conceptualized urban environment as those environment as those environment which have high population density containing a high variety and beauty and common place views. He further identified the rural environment as being characterized by low population density containing a low variety and isolated place views. Earlier in his contribution, Lipton (1962) corroborated that “rural community is characterized by low population, subsistence mode of life, monotonous and burdensome “. Citing hotels, recreational centers, markets, banks and good road network as being present in their urban environment. Owolabi (1990) accentuated that our highly qualified teachers prefer to serve therein rather than the rural areas. As a corollary of the above, Kuliman et al (1977) observed that teachers do not accept postings to rural areas because their conditions are not up to the expected standard as their social life in the areas is virtually restricted as a result of inadequate amenities; facilities are deficient, playground are without equipment, libraries are without books while laboratories are glorified ones.

Making a critical analysis of locational factors, Hallak (1977) surmised that provision of education in rural areas is normally fraught with the following difficulties and problems; qualified teachers refuse appointment in isolated villages; villagers refuse to send their children to schools because they are dependent on them for help; parents hesitate to entrust their daughters to male teachers; some villagers have few children for an ordinary primary school; lack of roads or satisfactory means of communication makes it difficult to get books and teaching materials to the school which place difficulties in the way of organizing school transport among others. Writing on the improvisation of science teaching equipment in line with location, Balogun (1982) lamented that unfortunately in Nigeria, where there is a preponderance of poverty among us populace and a wide gap between the rich and the poor ... disparity in the distribution of resources and social amenities on the part of the government, the population has polarized into two –of those who favorably affected and those who are disfavored. These two groups have been forced on economic reasons and levels of education to organize themselves into two different sub geographical locations to a very large extent determine what amenities and or facilities are made available to each.

The above findings were corroborated by Mbakwe (1986) when he affirmed that teachers are differentially distributed to schools. According to him, apart from the tendency of qualified teachers to seek deployment in Army schools located in urban towns, particularly in the state capitals, more school facilities and services tended to be concentrated in urban schools. In the words of Sander (1972), he observed that teachers with the highest training are posted to largest cities, and even more noticeably to the capital. This and more findings abound on the disparity in the quality of teachers in urban schools compared to those in rural areas, which consequently affect student's academic attainment. Ibukun (1988) in his investigation observed that teachers in urban secondary schools in Ondo State tended to be better qualified pointing out that there was no deliberate government policy supporting such lopsided resource allocation. In his conclusion, he said rural schools probably become progressively poorly staffed arising from personal refusal of teachers to serve in remote locations. In such location, their pattern of school lives are characterized by dilapidated buildings, which form extension to old ones thus forming a sort of patchwork, with others growing too old and no longer viable. According to Banford (1973), some of the schools apart from the fact that they are too costly to run, some have been deserted by their pupils..... teachers in the development of a stereotype about rural schools, Boylan (1998) reported that rural schools were inferior and lacking in the range of facilities with high staff turnover and suffered from lack of continuity in their curriculum. He pointed further that they are staffed by young, beginning and often in experienced staff who regrettably, would not conform with socio-cultural ethos and above all, offered a restricted curriculum, especially to secondary school students. They were also staffed by teachers who

accepted their appointment because either; there was no better appointment available, or it was regarded as a quick set up on to promotional ladder.

Writing on locational influence on academic achievement of students. Obe (1984) observed a significant difference in urban-rural performance of 480 primary six school finalist on the aptitude sub-tests of the (Nigeria) National Common Entrance Examination (NCEE) into secondary schools. In his study tagged scholastic aptitude test, he concluded that children from urban schools were superior to their rural counterparts. (Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) have been described as a broad based achievement measure... Vernon (1951), Musgroove (1965), and Obemeata (1976) hold similar view with Obe's findings. According to Kemjika (1989), in his studies on urban and rural differences in general showed that location of the community in which the school is situated has effect on the performance of pupils. Giving credence to the above, Ajayi (1988) found significant difference in academic performance of students in urban and rural areas of his study. He therefore concluded that the achievement must have been borne out of many facilities they were used to which were not available in the rural set up. In his study, Omisade (1985) also observed a significant positive relationship between size and location of school and performances in examination in Oyo State. He concluded that large schools in urban areas tend to perform better in examinations than small schools in rural areas.

In their findings, however, Axtel and Bowers (1972) found that students from the rural areas perform significantly better than their urban counterpart in verbal aptitude, English Language and total score using the National Common Entrance as a base. In another development, a research team at University of Aston recorded that it had received several well-founded reports that secondary schools have found (pupils from small rural schools) not only as well prepared academically as pupils from other schools, but they generally had a better attitude to work. Having been accustomed to working most of the time on their own, they could be given more responsibility for the organization of their work. Size could not exert significant direct effect on pupils' attitude towards science. Similar view was expressed by Gana (1997) when in his study on the effect of using designed visual teaching models on the learning of Mathematics at Junior Secondary level of Niger State, found that there was no significant difference in Mathematics achievement scores of students in urban and rural locations.

From the various review of literature on locational influence on academic are not the same. While some maintain that urban students perform better in examinations than their rural counterparts, other has found that rural students (in spite of all odds) perform better. Some have submitted in their findings and concluded that no particular set up (urban or rural) can claim superiority over the other because their performances are the same. Alokun (2010) found out that students' problems are strongly associated with poor performance and that sex and location do not affect the negative relationship between student problems and academic performance. In another development, Considine and Zappala (2002) studied students in Australia and found out that geographical location do not significantly predict outcomes in school performance. Shield and Dockrell (2008) while looking at the effects of classroom and environmental noise on children's academic performance found out that both chronic and acute exposure to environmental and classroom noise have a detrimental effect upon children's learning and performance. In view of these inconclusive findings, it necessary to carry out further research to confirm or annul the otherwise protracted issue on the effect of interaction of location (urban/rural dichotomy) on academic achievement of Secondary Schools students with particular reference to Ekiti State Nigeria.

2. Method and material

2.1 Research Questions

The study answered the following research hypothesis.

There is no significant difference in the performance of students in rural and urban secondary schools in term of whether they are in small or large classes.

2.2 Research Design

The research design for this study is descriptive survey design of the ex-post facto type. This is because the researchers will not be able to manipulate the variables for the simple reason that they have already occurred.

2.3 Population and Sampling Procedure

The research respondents for this study were final year students of schools in the rural and urban areas in Ekiti state, Nigeria. A total of 50 secondary schools formed the target population comprising 4 Federal Unity schools and 46 public schools. The schools were those that sat for the West African School Certificate examinations (WASCE) between 1990 and 1997.

2.4 Instrument

The research instrument was Student Location Questionnaire (SLQ) designed by the researchers. It has Section A with six items dealing with profile of the respondents such as gender, age, school type (rural/urban), grade among others. Section B has 8 items that measured the number of students in class in rural and urban schools, number of periods taught by teachers among others. The respondents were asked to respond to the questions on a four point Likert Scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

3. Results

The results of the findings are presented using table 1.

Table 1 present information on hypothesis 1 as measured by t-test to determine the significance or otherwise of the difference between the means of students' academic achievement of rural and urban schools. The result shows a mean of 1.7207 and standard deviation of 0.201 from 29 rural schools compared with a mean of 1.9619 and standard deviation of 0.414 from 21 schools in urban location. With 48 degree of freedom (DF) the result shows that the part of the community in which the schools are located has effect on the achievement of students in SSCE ($t = 2.73$, significant at 0.05). The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

4. Discussion

Table 1 showed that there is a significant between academic achievements of students in rural and urban secondary schools as measured by senior school certificate examinations. This is to say that the geographical location of schools has influence on the academic achievement of students. Rural urban dichotomy in terms of academic achievement of students as highlighted in the review literature has been attributed to various cause vis-à-vis, uneven distribution of resources, poor school mapping, facilities, problem of qualified teachers refusing appointment or not willing to perform well in isolated villages, lack of good roads, poor communication, nonchalant attitude of some communities to schooling among others. The above result therefore supports the earlier finding of Beeby (1986) who maintain the socio-economic well-being of students' parents has a strong relationship with students academic performance emphasizing that the urban/rural location of schools appear to outweigh this factor in fixing the language performance of learner, whereas learning in an unconducutive atmosphere cannot produce positive language performance.

The above result also supports the earlier findings of Hallak (1977), Obe (1984), Kemjika (1989), among others that academic achievements of students in rural community differed from those in urban locations. In his own contribution on rural /urban differences, Boylan (1998) reported that rural schools were inferior and lacked in the range of facilities; the researcher agrees with Obe (1984) and Kemjika (1989) that a lot of coaching of urban students is done to prepare students for public examinations thus promoting the spirit of competition and rivalry which may be public examinations thus promoting the spirit of competition and rivalry which may be lacking in the rural pupils, probably owing to limitations in exposure and experience.

The finding also corroborates, Johnson (1998) finding with his conclusion that School Location, relief, drainage, soil vegetation and features as the examined factors of geographical location of schools which he opined may collectively or singularly influence the students' academic performance. The study also conforms to the finding of Ayodele (1988) who found that pupils in urban primary schools excel these in rural school in English language and Arithmetic. He concluded that location of the school has a great effect on pupils' intellectual performance than does the size of the class.

5. Conclusion

In terms of location, the study has proven that students in urban areas had better academic achievement than their rural counterpart. In other words, students in urban locations have a very great advantage by learning in an urban environment, which apparently enriches their academic knowledge, despite the apparent disadvantage, as it were, of having to learn in large classes. It is recommended that the Government should bridge the gap between the rural and urban locations by providing the rural dwellers the social amenities which will enhance better academic performance of students in their final examinations like the SSCE. The community should assist the government by providing taxis and buses to facilitate movement of teachers and students to their school. Adequate incentives should be provided to rural area teachers to encourage them to put in their best to remain in their duty stations.

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Table 1. Comparison of Academic Achievements of Rural and Urban Schools

Variable	N	Mean	SD	DF	T-value	Sig T	P
Rural	29	1.7207	0.201				
				48	2.73	0.009	Sig
Urban	21	1.9619	0.414				

*sig at $p < 0.05$