

The environmental influence on Nigeria distance learners' academic performance :An analysis of a counsellor

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Keywords

Distance Learning, Self-Learning, Low achievement rate, Low performance, 'Noise'.

Abstract

This study was designed to find out the environmental influence on Nigeria distance learners' academic performance and the role of counseling. The research questions that were formulated to guide the study are:

- 1. Does the learning environment influence the academic achievement of distance learners?*
- 2. Does the home environment interfere with their academic achievement?*
- 3. Does the surrounding 'noise' have effect on the academic achievement of these self-learners?*
- 4. Does peer group/ friends have influence on their academic achievement?*
- 5. Does parental background and education have influence on the academic achievement of these students?*

The result reveals that only parental background or education does not have significant influence on the distance learner's achievement. Counselling has concerned itself with assisting the student that is experiencing low achievement rate. Recommendations are highlighted to assist students with low achievement rate to enhance adjustment and improvement. A questionnaire was used as the major instrument to collect data for the research. ...

Introduction

Background of Study

Today's modern society expects everyone/students to be a high achiever. And the key criteria to judge one's true potentials and capabilities are perhaps academic achievement/performance which has become an index of a child/the students' future as well as upward mobility. Opportunities to learn therefore has taken more forms and distance learning or self-learning is a very good diversity in learning. Self-learning or Self-directed learning or distance learning is an independent form or mode of learning. Distance learners are responsible for the management of their own learning process. This concept of learning involves self-regulating, self-monitoring, also the self-evaluation of cognition, context and resources. Self-motivation and volition are so vital in initiating and maintaining learners' efforts. As a result, there is a great pressure on the minds an energy and time of these learners. Their parents, wives, husbands and the children as the case may be are not left out in this 'cumbersome' process for the need for achievement and attaining societal expectations are involved.

The educational institution that is charged with the responsibility of impacting teaching and learning processes do not exist in a vacuum either. Since it has been discovered that the student's academic achievement is a function of various factors based on the learning environment which comprises of all the students that it is attending to, both within and without the school, that can facilitate or inhibit learning.

Hence this study is geared towards examining the conditions and possible influences of supportive environment in the home, school, and a neighborhood devoid of 'noise', peer group, availability of Counseling facilities and access plus other environmental factors that could enhance the academic achievement of Nigeria distance learners.

Poor academic performance of self-learners have led to some challenges of implementation, facilities, instructional materials, infrastructures, management, and facilitation or teaching processes. In view all these the researcher got prompted to do some analysis on the influences on the academic performance of the self-directed learners. Bandura (1991, 2001) added voice to self-learning as a fundamental component of whatever learning or academic endeavor to be initiated. To him social cognitive theory or the human behavior is ever motivated and regulated by self-influence and forethought. Hereby, goals are set, planning course of actions that can produced desired outcomes are achieved. Fraser (1981) found that students generally learn through interactions with their environment, people, and peers teachers. Also most of the observable variances in students' performance including self-learners are attributed to human behavior, characteristics and the. Environment of learning. McRobie, Roth and Lucys (1997) asserted that the nature of instructional materials or resources and learning environment can have a direct or indirect impact, not only on their achievements but also on their socio-personal dispositions.

Schareider (2003) posited that the learning environment's deficient condition to effective teaching and learning can be found liable. More and Lackney (1994) wrote that educational facilities like physical infrastructure, lack of modern learning materials as instructional audio and visual aids, computers physical or virtual libraries could adversely affect academic achievement. They could also affect both direct and mediated efforts on social and achievement outcomes.

Statement of Problem

The nation, Nigeria, is in hurry to join the league of developed and industrialized nations of the world. To be able to attain this lofty goal, education of the citizenry had been identified as the panacea. The question that comes to mind therefore is "Can the environment under which learning is taking place in our schools lead to the attainment of the goals of education? More specifically, does school environment influence academic achievements? Does the surrounding 'noise', peer group/friends and parental education influence academic achievement of distance learners?

Research Questions

To find answers to the problem of this study, the following research questions were raised:

1. Does the learning environment influence the academic achievement of distance learners?
2. Does the home environment interfere with their academic achievement?
3. Does the surrounding 'noise' have effect on the academic achievement of these self-learners?
4. Does peer group/ friends have influence on their academic achievement?
5. Does parental background and education have influence on the academic achievement of these distance learners?

II Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to determine empirically the components of learning environment that influence academic performance of Nigeria distance learners. The knowledge and adequate analysis of the components of the learning environment that influence academic performance, is with the intent of giving helpful recommendations on how these factors and components could be utilised to enhance higher and better academic performance.

Determinants of Adequate Learning Environment.

Does the learning environment influence the academic achievement of distance learners?

Does the home environment interfere with their academic achievement?

Does the surrounding 'noise' have effect on the academic achievement of these self-learners?

Does peer group/ friends have influence on their academic achievement?

Does parental background and education have influence on the academic achievement of these students?

Significance of Study

The findings of this study will be of immense benefit to all stake holders in the education industry. To all educational institutions administrators and managers, especially those of distance learning mode. They will be able to take the right and calculated moves to salvaging the future of many Nigeria students and create enabling environments and conducive atmosphere that will enhance the academic achievement of self-regulated learners. The parents as the case may be, will be able to observe the influences their home environment and the surrounding distractions could have on their wards' academic achievement. To the teachers, facilitators and instructors, they would be part of that positive bid to create a suitable an enabling environment for learning will assist in the high performance rate of these unique learners.

Scope of Study

It is a statement of fact, from research findings, that, numerous factors could be contributory to students' academic achievement. This study concerns itself with only the learning environment. This is a study that spans through the Universities that are employing the distance learning mode in the south west of the country, Nigeria.

Definition of Terms

1. **School or Learning Environment:** This includes the presence or lack of facilities, learning or instructional materials that should exist and available for study. It also involves the serene atmosphere as well as the conducive tone of the learning situation that may enhance or inhibit learning.
2. **Home Environment:** This is the availability or non-availability of vital facilities in the home that could enhance or inhibit learning.
3. **Parental Education:** This is the extent of parent's educational attainments with its associated social, economic and financial capabilities to enhance or inhibit learning.
4. **Surrounding Noise/Neighborhood:** This is the immediate community that the student lives and relates with.
5. **Academic achievement:** The mean performance of the students in relation to the available courses or subjects to him.
6. **Distance learning/ Self Learning/ Self-Regulated Learning** are going to be used interchangeably in the study. These refer to a collaborative process of learning that requires the students' initiative to learn the material, with the teacher or facilitator, providing support and resources for learning.

III. Literature Review

The philosophy of Education, in the item 9 in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 4th edition, 2004 p.3 stated that "In order to realise fully the potentials of the contributions of education. To the achievement of these goals and values all other agencies will operate in concert. With education". In this wise government is expected to take various measures like structuring the education system to develop the practice of distance learning. Government to this end shall continue to practice to encourage the establishment of readers groups in campuses. The government of Nigeria placed so much importance on self-learning in order to

achieve the goals set out in the National Policy on Education in Nigeria. There are different ways describing distance learning. They include independent learning, self-directed learning, and self-regulated learning. A distance learner or independent learner accepts responsibility for their own learning process. These ones are willing and able to take responsibility for and have control on their learning. They are proactive, self-motivated and resourceful (Salami, (2014).

i. In the distance learning process the role of the learning environment cannot be underestimated. There should be the availability of instructional materials and the instructors or teachers or the facilitators.

ii. **Role of the teachers:** The important task of the teachers is to raise the awareness of the distance learner through the assigned or relevant study materials. The learner should be allowed to further on their learning interest area. Teachers or facilitators should tolerate uncertainty and encourage risk taking. Real life problems should be brought to the classroom to be worked on. Deadlines and other regulations should be determined. Learning strategies should be taught and how to apply them. The learners should be taught the value of revision and critical appraisal in their work.

iii. **Role of The Counselor:** Learners strong points should be emphasized through the counseling experts. Learners should be guided to explore ideas through peer discussions. Independent and positive attitude should be encouraged in the average learner. Learners' needs and interests should be investigated and Counselors should also support them. The self-esteem of the distance learners should be boosted. The Self-confidence of the learner is highly necessary because it will help in determining the acquisition of self-learning skills. Stress management is also core to learning. The Counselor should work hard at managing the stress of the distance learners because their success or failure depends on their relaxed minds. The sense of belongingness of the self-learner should be aroused through the creation of study groups. To this background the **researcher** will be able to access knowledge in these areas and consequently be able to guide her study as it will be relevant and contribute to knowledge in solving the problem earlier identified. This will be done under the following headings:

School Environment

Home Environment

Noise/Home Surrounding

Peer Group Influence

Parental Educational Background

A). School Environment

Denek, in his definition of environment, described it as a situation where a learner who is ready and able to learn will assimilate conveniently and effectively. Thus, for learning to take place and the performance of students be enhanced, the learning environment must be stimulating and encouraging. The learning environment must be inviting or welcoming, conducive and accommodating for adequate and effective learning to take place. According to Grant (1985), infrastructure of any learning environment should be a suitable, adequately furnished and well equipped for learning. Inadequate infrastructure may affect keen mental stimulation.

It has been proved that students that are taught in stimulating environment with adequate and relevant instructional aids, will go a long way to enhance assimilation.

Alban (1971) believes that small learning groups should be created to assist learners in group study and discussions.

Bowers and Burkett (1987) found that improper or inadequate instructional materials can lead to low academic performance of students. This can lead to misinterpretation of written words.

In other words, teaching and learning should be done under an organized, planned and appropriate environment with teach instructional aides to stimulate students' sense of conception, perception and concentration in order to facilitate systematic understanding and retention of knowledge in them.

Dunn (1985) also, insisted that the illumination of a learning environment should be considered worthwhile element of the total educational environment. He found that good lighting will at all times contribute significantly to the aesthetics and psychological presentation of the learning space, while inappropriate or lack of illumination can cause damage to the human eyes. Invariably unprecedented physiological consequences may result causing low academic performance. According to Boekaert (1993) who indicated that a supportive/aesthetic academic setting is a necessary consideration for learning. It reduces anxiety and negative effect on high academic achievement rate. Bandura (1997) supporting believes that good aesthetic environment will definitely. Foster psychological growth that contributes to the quality of personality of an individual and his functioning beyond the vocational periphery. Scientists have proved it beyond reasonable doubt that prolonged exposure to high intensity noise in a learning atmosphere or environment is often detrimental to the health, thereby affecting the behavioral pattern of learners which invariably hinders the acquisition of learning. This can be a major factor in low academic performance.

Evans and Martin (1991) in their research findings pointed out that there is a significant increase in the blood pressure of learners exposed to excessive noise in the learning environment. Such learning environments are those situated near noisy urban streets, markets and around airports. Students in such noisy environment are often distracted. They are also associated with mental and attention deficits. They oftentimes find it difficult to resolve tasks especially during examinations. In effect, the location of learning environments should be seriously considered putting in mind the fore mentioned factors. Sprint hall (1987), also noted that market places and garages located near any learning environment could have adverse effect on learners. Therefore, for an effective learning and high academic performance, schools in both rural and sub-urban and urban areas should be located off high density areas characterized by smoke and gas pollution.

In addition, learning centers should be easily accessible. Long treks, especially, where means of transportation are not feasible, can affect learners' interest, health and finances. This can also affect learning and relationship with other learners.

B). Home Environment

The home environment constitutes either a domestic bliss or the crisis of it. It is an indisputable fact that the home environment or background generates considerable influence on the development and achievement of academic excellence. It is the home that sets the pattern for the child's attitude towards people and society. It further aids intellectual growth in the child and creates support for his aspirations and achievement. A child's home environment affects his or her degree of achievement academically. According to Morrison (1975), many of the distinctive characteristics of a child's home can be related to his experience in the learning environment. This may be seen as influencing his academic achievement. Students from literate backgrounds for an instance, homes where books, magazines, newspapers, periodicals and other reading materials are read do perform more academically than the rest of his or her study group mates who may not have the same exposure.

Oladele (1981) supported this view by submitting that the home should provide the enabling environment and the opportunity for the child to actualise his potentials and ability by exposing him or her an intellectually stimulating environment. Heredity is another factor that

can influence the learner's academic achievement. The quality of genes transferred to the child contributes greatly to the learning ability and capacity of an individual. Psycho-motor skills can also be developed effectively due to the kind of exposure a learner has through games, sports and other various exercises. Home environment influences academic and educational success of students and learning while their socio-economic status reinforces the activities and functioning of their teachers or instructors.

From the above, it is revealed that the quality of parents and home environment of a student has a way of predicting the quality and regularity of the satisfaction and provision of a child's functional survival and academic needs. Poor parental care with gross deprivation of social and economic needs of a child, usually yield poor academic performance of the students. According to United States Department of Education (2000) found that poverty is an important factor accounting for the differences in performance and achievement of students across rural, sub-urban and urban districts. Johnson (1996) opined that poverty of parents has elastic effects on their children's academic work as they lack enough resources and funds to sponsor their education and good school, good housing facilities and medical care and social welfare services. Mba (1991) lamented that poverty of the parents has made education and learning impossible for children in the rural areas including the disabled children.

C). Noise/Home Surrounding

The basic position is that children's behavior including their response to the experience of schooling is substantially conditioned by influences emanating from the home, the school and the peer group in the immediate locality. How students spend their time in their immediate community or environment can have a significant impact on their academic performance. Also, enhancing social skills leading to the development of self-confidence contribute immensely to better behaviours and high academic performance of learners. Coleman (1980) opined that a mentoring attitude of adults to younger ones go a long way to mold them and position them for great achievements. Coleman asserted that home assignments provide learners with useful skills to study on their own and attributes of self-independence. It also instills a sense of responsibility and motivating learners' sense of self efficacy.

In a nutshell an average learner should have the understanding of time management that will assist a lot in a learner programming his or her learning activities to initiate high achievement rate. The presence of the surrounding creates the awareness that noise is part of existence and its proper control or none could have a great influence on the learner's academic achievement.

A numerous other factors contribute to learning and high academic performance. Some of them are stable and supportive families, adequate financial resources and intelligence. Some learners though, do not possess these or enjoy related facilities. No doubt, there are several challenges that could compete with the learner's high academic performance hence the essence of the Counselors.

D). Friends/Peer Group Influence

Friends and peer group plays an important role in the academic achievement of learners. The peer group is the first socializing unit outside the home and friends could come from different age groups, social backgrounds and family background of varied interests. Suffice to say this then that the type of friends or peer group a learner associates with is likely going to shape out or dictate how long and well he achieves academically. Sarason (1963) goes ahead to describe the part emotion as a personality trait plays in academic achievement. He pointed it out that, learners with personality deficiencies like lack of confidence or maternal deprivation do not perform well academically. They are timid and possess inferiority complex. That hinder them socializing. A learner that fails to socialize cannot relate with peers from who he can benefit

from. In terms of knowledge or mental maturity gain. They are naturally full of anxiety and low intelligence. McReynolds (1961) also reported that the attribute of curiosity, another personality trait enables a learner to seek and find information that increase their knowledge and aid learning.

Gough (1963), discovered that the major achievement in academics dwells with the potential and skill of creativity or innovation. This is much related to the ability to learn and acquire knowledge that are the main contributors to academic achievement. Furthermore, the peer group can be better constituted into study groups which learners can work with, to attain high academic performance. This group can also enhance the learner's personality traits and since academic achievement stems from well-organized qualities such as interest, commitment, motivation or enthusiasm then a positive influence is been generated. Academic achievement can invariably be attained by the learners involved. Distance learners actually benefit from this peer interaction and study groups because of the distance to their learning environments and their facilitators or teachers.

E). Parental Educational Background

Educated parental background plays a very important role in laying the foundation for learners' academic achievement. For Rasinski and Fredericks (1988), the literacy development of individuals, parents play a crucial role as they support their children's continued growth as learners. When children are surrounded by caring, able and capable parents who can nurture appropriately under competitive kinship relationships, thereby the right foundation for literacy is laid. Researchers like Binkley (1988), displayed a contrary opinion, he felt that learning proper begins in schools, while the skill to read can only be acquired at home, for parents naturally are their children's first teacher. The literate ones among them can actually assist in developing reading skill and habit before formally attending school. Some children are fortunate to have homes where learning materials are provided. This presents them for a good head start for learning. However, not all the children are opportune, hence their achievement rate in school is likely going to vary.

A stimulating environment, encouragement from parents and teachers with an appropriate learning resources will go a long way in assisting the performance rate of the child. Dexterity and spoken language skills can also be aided. The manner and commitment of parents in helping their children with their books at home before school age, can assist for direct information about the printed words can be introduced to them according to Cohn (1981). Counseling researchers have found out that literate parents do understand the intricacies involved in child development and are in better positions to help positively in the learning processes of their children. Most educated parents do. Wish above all, to get their children have formal education. Thus they endeavor to create stimulated and encouraged environment for these children that are potential learners. Re mediation, where necessary is also provided via extra lessons which invariably improves clarity and understanding of learning materials. These go ahead to increase academic achievement rate.

Lovell (1970), a learning researcher stated learners will ever find it difficult to learn or achieve academically under any condition that is not favorable be it home or school. Hence, the distance learner that is exposed to such may find it extremely difficult to achieve much, academically. With Douglas (1964), an affirmation is made that children who were exposed to a literate parental background and endowed with parents who are always interested in their take home assignments and other school activities do excel academically. Those with contrary backgrounds tend to get disinterested in learning and may not achieve academically. Hence, a child's capacity for academic attainment depends to a large extent, the quality of home

background with reference to the educational status of parents. Poor educational attainment of parents can contribute to students' poor performance in school because they are not essentially properly equipped for high academic performance in near or the future like those from educated home backgrounds.

Thus, Farhat (1970) threw his support behind the above view when he posited that there is a high and positive correlation between the variables - parental educational level and academic achievement of learners. He also said there should be a positive relationship between the parents' economic status because education may not be cheap after all. This is saying that distance learning may not be without a cost though could be highly subsidized. Acquisition of learning materials would depend on the economic status of the learner or of the parents as the case may be. In his correlation, the academic level of children showed that the higher the level of parent's education, the better was the academic achievement of their children that are learners. Douglas and Ross (1971) supported the fact that the economic status of the learners and their sponsors' interest in education will further strengthen their academic performance rate and their fortitude to achieve well in academics.

According to Morrison (1975), many of the distinctive characteristics of the learner's learning environment may be seen to influence his academic performance. Johnson (1996) observed with a lot of reservations that the poor economic situation or financial condition may create stress in them that may dwindle their levels of concentration, participation and attention during learning activities. Shittu (2004) mentioned it that good parenting supported with strong economic status will go a long way in enhancing strong academic performance of the learners. In addition, the academic performance of the learner's may also be strongly dependent on how often he or she talks to the Counselor. Where proper, adequate and timely counseling is given in the areas of choice of courses, programmes or vocations and these tally with learners' abilities, interests and capabilities, then, academic achievement will not be too difficult to attain.

Iv. Research Methodology

Specifically, the researcher describes the population sampling techniques and the data gathering instruments used, also is discussed.

1. Research Design

This research was designed to evaluate the environmental influence on distance learners' academic performance among the University students going through the distance learning mode of study in the South West part of the country. The research design used in this study therefore is a descriptive survey. According to Ofo (1994), "descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypothesis and answer the research questions raised in a study. This type of research attempts to report things as they seem. The data are collected through questionnaires, interviews and direct observations.

2. Population

The population of the study is made up of all the distance learners in National Open University (Osogbo, Lagos and Ibadan Study Centers), University of Ibadan and th the Obafemi Awolowo University. These are all in the Southwest States of Nigeria.

3. Sample Size and Sampling Technique.

A sample of 300 distance learners was selected using the simple random sampling technique. One hundred learners were picked from each of the Universities.

4. Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection is a questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire was designed in such a way to enable the researcher obtain the required information on environmental influence on academic performance of these distance learners. The questionnaire is meant to be completed by the distance learners.

6. The Validity of the Instrument

In order to ensure the validity of the instrument a pre-test and re-test were carried out on 90 distance learners that were randomly chosen from the three Universities adopted for the study.

7. Administration of Instrument

The questionnaires for this study were administered personally by the researcher.

V. Method of Data Analysis

The responses to the questionnaires were analyzed, one sample t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

VI. Discussion of Findings

I. Introduction

In this chapter, results obtained from data collected and analyzed are presented in tables. Also, the findings and the hypotheses tested are discussed.

ii. Presentation of Results

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	157	54.3
Female	143	45.7
Total	300	100.0

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by gender with the male gender 54.3% and the female gender 45.7%. Thereby showing both genders as been adequately represented in the sample.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Universities.

Universities	Frequency	Percent
Male learners	100	33.33
Female learners	100	33.33
Mixture	100	33.33
Total	300	100.00

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents by Learners' University with all the Universities, equally represented.

iii. HYPOTHESES TESTING

Hypothesis One

Learning environment does not significantly influence academic achievement of learners

Table 3: One sample t-test analysis of learning environment on learners' academic performance:

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	t-test value	P. value Significant (2-tailed)
Learning environment	300	12.73	1.80	10.0	29.30	.000

$$\alpha = .05, p < .05$$

Table 3 shows a mean of 12.73, a test mean of 10.0, a calculated t of 29.30. Testing at an alpha level of .05 the p value is less than the alpha level. So, the null hypothesis which states that learning environment does not significantly influence the academic achievement of students is rejected. Consequently, learners' academic achievement is significantly influenced by learning environment.

Hypothesis Two

Home environment does not significantly influence academic achievement of learners.

Table 4: One sample t-test analysis of home environment on learners' academic achievement.

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	t-test value	P. value Significant (2-tailed)
Home environment	300	10.19	1.87	10.0	1.73	.085

$$\alpha = .05, \quad p < .05$$

Table 4 shows a mean of 10.19, a test mean of 10.0 and a calculated t of 1.73. Testing of an alpha level of 0.5, the p-value is greater than the alpha level. So, the null hypothesis which states that home environment does not significantly influence academic achievement of learners is accepted. Consequently, the home environment of learners does not significantly influence learners' academic performance.

Hypothesis Three

House surroundings does not significantly influence academic achievement of learners.

Table 5: A sample t-test analysis of the influence of noise or home surrounding on learners' academic achievement.

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	t-test value	P. value Significant (2-tailed)
Noise or Home Surrounding	300	11.71	1.80	10.0	16.53	.000

$$\alpha = .05, \quad p < .05$$

Table 5 shows a mean of 11.71, a test mean of 10.0, a calculated t of 16.53. Testing at an alpha level of .05 the p-value is less than the alpha level. So, the null hypothesis which states that noise or home surrounding does not significantly influence academic achievement of students is rejected. Therefore, students' academic achievement is significantly influenced by noise or home surrounding.

Hypothesis Four

Friends / Peer Group does not significantly influence academic achievement of students.

Table 6: A sample t-test analysis of friends / Peer Group on learners' academic achievement:

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	t-test Value	P. value Significant (2-tailed)
Friends/Peer Group	300	10.80	1.86	10.0	7.44	.000

$$\alpha = .05, \quad p < .05$$

Table 6 shows a mean of 10.80, a test mean of 10.0, a calculated t of 7.44. Testing at an alpha level of .05, the p value is less than the alpha level. So, the null hypothesis which states

that friends/ peer group does not significantly influence academic achievement of learners is rejected. Consequently, friends /peer group significantly influence the academic performance of students.

Hypothesis Five

Table 7: A sample t-test analysis of parental education on learners' academic performance.

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	t-test value	P. value Significant (2-tailed)
Parental Education	300	11.12	2.51	10.0	7.72	.000

$$\alpha = .05, \quad p < .05$$

Table 7 shows a mean of 11.12, a test mean of 10.0, a calculated t of 7.72. Testing at an alpha level of .05, the p-value is less than the alpha level. So, the null hypothesis which states that parental education does not significantly influence academic achievement of learners is rejected. Consequently, learners' academic achievement is significantly influenced by parental education.

Discussion of Results

The research was aimed at finding out the environmental influence on distance learners' performance in some south west states of Nigeria. The testing of hypothesis one which states that learning environment does not significantly influence the academic performance of learners was proved in the contrary as learning environment plays a significant role in enhancing learners' effectiveness in performing well. This was an assertion made by Denek. In summary Denek believes that learning can only take place if the learning environment can be a stimulating and conducive one. The situation of learner's home environment and its effects on their performance was found out to be important and core to learning and academic achievement. However an observation that most learners that are successful, great achievers and properly adjusted personalities are from literate and well-adjusted families with kinship relationships. In another vein, it was discovered that practically it may not always be so. Often times, most notable icons in various fields of human endeavors may not have come from background or homes of this description.

Besides the above mentioned findings, it was also discovered that the noise / home surrounding played a major role in enhancing learners' performance as they are exposed to role models and practical experiences that serve as learning resources. Also friends' relationship /peer group which represent immediate socialization unit outside the home has a positive influence that reveals the creative abilities in learners (McReynolds.P) The personality traits in the learner are strongly enhanced since academic capabilities take their roots from robust personality. Sadly though friends can also be initiators or 'encouragers' of bad ideas and habits.

A good factor that influences academic achievement in the learner could be parental educational background though learners without this opportunity may excel in academics among other factors.

Vii. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

The summary of the data collected and investigation done with the numerous conclusions reached, are presented here with some recommendations.

Summary

The aim of this research, is to find out the influence of the environment on the academic achievement of distance learners in the Nigeria Universities adopting the distance learning mode in some of the South West states of the country.

To achieve this, five research questions were raised.

Does the learning environment influence the academic achievement of distance learners?

Does home environment have influence on the academic achievement of these self-learners?

Does noise /home surrounding have influence on the academic achievement of distance learners?

Does friends/peer group have influence on the academic achievement of distance learners?

Does parental education have influence on the academic achievement of distance learners?

The research depended on the data gathered from three South West Universities adopting the distance learning mode using a set of questionnaires designed by the researcher, In the analysis of the data collected, descriptive method of research was adapted on the population. Three hundred (300) students were randomly selected from three different Universities in the South West of Nigeria.

The questionnaires were personally administered by the researcher to the various Universities.

Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data collected. It consists of the summation table using one sample t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The analysis of data revealed among other observations that a learning environment, the noise or the home surrounding, friends/peer group and parental educational background significantly affect distance learners' academic achievement.

The results also showed that the parental background of the learners does not, in isolated terms, significantly affect the academic achievement.

Conclusion

This research has been carried out successfully. With the findings that were generated from the study, the following conclusion was derived:

Very clearly, it was discovered that there is a relationship between learners' academic achievement when they have the right home background, encouragement motivation, good guidance from literate parents and a non-distracting home surrounding. Learners exposed to these quality characteristics and facilities will usually perform highly academically when they also interact meaningfully with the right and positive friends.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations were made for positive change and improvement in the execution of distance learning as a mode of learning and the Nigeria educational system as a whole if they are strictly adhered to. It is pertinent for all. Stake holders to be aware of the essence of distance Learning and why it will be very beneficial if it is well administered and properly managed and provided for.

Advantages of distance Learning.

1. Self-learning or distance learning gives opportunity to interested individuals to demonstrate greater awareness of their responsibility in making learning very meaningful.
2. It enables these unique learners to use their curiosity instinct to venture into novel things and areas. They will be able to view challenges in more positive ways and desire change by prof erring solutions, thus enjoying learning as it should be (Taylor, 1955). These

learning grow to be self-motivated, independent, persistent, enduring, self-disciplined, goal-oriented and self-confident.

3. This mode of learning gives room for effective learning and make learners become better social beings.
4. The learners are open to developing their research ability. The mode requires of them to search for information in multiple texts and make use of several different strategies to achieve their set goals. (Guthrie, Solomon & Rinehart, 1996).
5. It is cost effective.
6. In self learning personal time schedule is allowed.
7. Privacy can be enjoyed by the distance learner has no fear of criticism. There are of course two sides to the coin. Self-learning has it's a disadvantages but if these are properly noted and learners are adequately guided especially by their Counselors they could be put through them.

Disadvantages of Self or Distance Learning

1. To understand the learning materials may be difficult if there is no facilitator, teacher or mentor.
2. It could amount to a waste of time if care is not taken or learner is not well counseled on time management.
3. The quality of delivery and course materials may be poor if there is no monitored quality assurance system put in place.

Another recommendation is to all stake holders. The relevant roles of these ones should be spelt out and we'll regulated.

Roles of Teachers/Facilitators

1. A cooperative and conducive learning environment should be built and maintained.
2. Learners' initiative for learning should be facilitated.
3. Facilitator should always be available for consultation during learning activities.
4. Should be more of an adviser than an instructor.

The Counselors Role.

1. The Counselor should provide guidance to the distance learner.
2. Workshops and Seminars should be organized regularly on areas that can give information and educate learners.
3. Counseling clinics should be mounted to proffer solutions to individual problems that could range from educational to personal to psycho-social and any other areas that would benefit and reduce the stress of the learner.
- 4) Personal time-tables should be prepared with the learner to assist them in studying and passing their examinations.
- 5) The Counselor is in the position to aid the learner achieve academically and should always counsel the management on this should be attained from time to time.

In addition to these, learning rooms and environment should be equipped to enhance learning. Learning rooms should be equipped also with modern furniture that will make the learners write with ease. The school system should encourage learners to learn and motivate them to study and should be conducive for effective teaching, facilitation and learning process.

Apart from equipping the learning environment with good furniture and lightings, they should also be equipped with learning materials like books/good library, teaching aids and science / laboratory equipment as the case may be. There is need also for Nigerians to develop a good facility maintenance culture in our learning environments. More Distance learning Universities should be established. Parents should endeavor to provide study materials and

adequate finance for their wards where applicable. They should monitor their wards to know the kind of friends they keep, the type and the kind of films they watch also. Proper guidance should also be given them.

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