Dynamics Influencing Performance in Non-formal Schools- A Review

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on exploring the dynamics that influence performance in the non-formal schools. Some of the factors that were reviewed include instructional materials, physical facilities, human resources, Learners' characteristics and teaching methods. The findings of the study were that these factors affected the performance in non-formal schools however the availability of qualified teachers ranked as the most instrumental.Another finding was that the condition of the school facilities have sometimes been ignored as a lesser factor but just as the environment affects everybody else the condition of the physical facilities affects the attitude of the learners in aimmense way and hence their performance. The recommendation of the study is that it is indisputable that the benefits of non-formal education can significantly compensate for the weaknesses found in the formal education like irrelevance, rigidity, dropout rates, its being very expensive, its inadequate space to accommodate all learners, and for this reason these dynamics that affect performance in non-formal schools should be provided for well.

Key Words: Dynamics; Non formal Education; Instructional materials; Physical facilities;

Introduction

Non-formal education became part of the international discourse on education policy in the late 1960s following an international conference in Williamsburg USA in 1967, where concerns that many countries were finding difficult (politically or economically) to pay for the expansion of formal education to meet the demands of basic education (Coombs, 1968). Additionally, there were complaints that the formal school system was extremely faulty with there being inadequate places for children in formal schools, a lot of wastage and its lack of relevance (Hoppers, 2000).

The concept of non-formal education became more prominent following a major research study done by Coombs for UNICEF in the United States of America in 1971, on how non-formal education could help meet the minimum essential learning needs of millions of educationally deprived children and adolescents and to help accelerate social and economic development in rural areas (Coombs, 1973). Non-Formal education is, taken to refer to the learning and training which takes place outside recognized educational institutions or those "deliberate" educational activities not conducted in the formal system of schooling (Grandstaff, 1974).Generally, non-formal education programmes are normally flexible, versatile, adaptable and have capacity to carry out educational tasks, which the formal schools cannot (Coombs, 1976) (Evans, 1981) and

(Thompson, 1995).Certain factors affect the performance in non-formal schools and they include:

Instructional materials

According to Abdullahi (1982), instructional materials are materials or tools locally made or imported that could make tremendous enhancement of lesson impact if intelligently used.The relevant instructional materials, equipment and resources include text books, teacher's guide, chalk boards, television, and computers for interactive computerized lessons among others. In many countries of the developing world, the text book is the major, if not the only media of instruction (Barasa, 2003). It is the main resource for teachers, setting out the general guidelines of the syllabus in concreteform, providing a guide and foundation to the content, order and pacing of instruction, supplying exercises and assignments for students to practice what they have learned. It is both a source of essential information and the basis for examination and appraisal UNESCO (2005, 2006).

Orodho (2005) stated that student's high performance is influenced by the availability of instructional resources.UNESCO (2007) indicated that availability and use of text books improves the students learning and counteracts socio –economic disadvantages particularly in low income setting. Wanjohi (2004) found out that the teaching resources enhanced retention of what has been learned. Wanjohi's study expressed that other than enhancing communication between teachers and pupils, the resources also facilitate child – centered learning through the discovery method.

Materials and tools are an integral part of learning in non-formal education centers. Barret (1982) asserts that materials combined with technique are the means through which our impulses, feelings, ideas are transmitted and expressed.Materials oscillate between being the medium for expression and the source of that expression. As such, materials are basic and should be availed in schools to provide opportunity for exploration and manipulation. They include; clay, wood, paper, paint, brushes, boards, pencils, pens, dyes and textiles. Gaitskell (1958) adds that, indeed, lack or limited materials in each form of artistic expression and the variety of the same tends to inhibit expression in performance. Availability of such basic materials and tools in schools also contribute directly to learner motivation because they provide a favorable environment for learning. Gakunga(2004) records that, teaching resources make a difference in the studentsachievement across categories of schools. Distribution of resources such as textbooks is also a major factor that accounts for scholastic difference in academic performance among schools. In order to raise the quality of education, its efficiency and productivity, better learning materialsare needed.

Several people have written on the importance of instructional resources to teaching, Oluyori (1986) while stressing the importance of instructional technology commented that if the recently introduced system (6-3-3-4) in accordance with the National Policy on Education is to be a success, then instructional technology has a role to play. Balo (1971) commented that "Audiovisual materials, as integral part of teaching-learning situations help to bring about permanent and meaningful experience. He said that, they provide first-hand experience where possible or of vicarious one where only that is feasible. Instructional resources which are educational inputs are of vital importance to theteaching of any subject in the school curriculum. Wales (1975) was of the opinion that the use of instructional resources would make discovered facts glued firmly to the

memory of students. Savoury (1958) also added that, a well-planned and imaginative use of visual aids in lessons should do much to banish apathy, supplement inadequacy of books as well as arouse students' interest by giving them something practical to see and do, and at the same time helping to train them to think things out themselves. Savoury (1958) suggested a catalogue of useful visual aids that are good for teaching history i.e. pictures, post cards, diagrams, maps, filmstrips and models. He said that selection of materials which are related to the basic contents of a course or a lesson, helps in depth understanding of such a lesson by the students in that they make the lesson attractive to them, thereby arresting their attention and thus, motivating them to learn. He suggested a catalogue of aids which could be used to teach history. He advocated the use of pictures which will help children in grounding their thoughts and feelings. He said that pictures are used as alternatives to real objects where it is impossible to show students the real objects, and they do serve effectively in tan imagined activities.

In order to achieve a just and egalitarian society as spelt out in the Nigerian National Policy of Education (1981), schools should be properly and uniformly equipped to promote sound and effective teaching. Suitable textbooks, qualified teachers, libraries which are adequate should also be provided for schools. Scarcity of these, according to Coombs (1970), will constraint educational system from responding more fully to new demands. Iraki (2014) found out the availability of qualified teachers, adequate instructional materials and physical facilities were very essential in implementing curriculum in non- formal schools in Kenya.

Physical Facilities

Lackney (1999a) argued that school buildings were critical to the teaching and learning process. Lackney also took the viewpoint that "the factors responsible for student achievement were ecological – they acted together as a whole in shaping the context within which learning took place. The physical setting – the school building was an undeniably integral part of the ecological context for learning" (p. 2). The physical factors that had a profound impact on the teaching and learning process were (a) full-spectrum and natural lighting, (b) the reduction and control of noise, (c) the location and sighting of schools, (d) optimal thermal conditions,(e) school size and class size, and (f) the building condition (Lackney, 1999a,). Research had shown that there was an explicit relationship between the physical characteristics of school buildings and educational outcomes (Lyons, 2001, Kaugi, 2015)

School facilities and the classroom must be flexible enough to accommodate changing learning patterns and methods. According to Chan (1996), the learning environment had a direct and an indirect impact on student achievement. Direct impact included: color, lighting, controlled acoustics, and air ventilation (Chan 1996). A good learning environment freed students from physical distress, made it easy for students to concentrate on schoolwork and, induced students in logical thinking. According to Chan, students responded to good and poor learning environments by expressing positive and negative attitudes. With a positive attitude towards their learning environment, students learned with high motivation and undoubtedly were able to demonstrate better performance. When educators disregard the improvement of learning environment, they ignored the physical difficulties of learning (Chan). Frazier (1993) indicated that people were influenced and affected by their environment. Therefore, there were no exceptions to children being exposed to the

environmental conditions in school facilities (Frazier, 1993).

Deferred maintenance on school facilities could cause adverse problems and create an environment that affected the health and morale of the students and the staff of the school (Frazier, 1993).Research studies of Anderson (1998),) Cash (1993), Earthman (1998) and O'Neill (2000) had provided support for research that found that the condition of the school building had a sizeable andmeasurable influence upon the achievement of students. There was a growing research literature that had held the belief that there was a relationship between student achievement and the conditions condition of school buildings (Hunter,2006). The United States Department of Education (2000) found that the environmental conditions in schools, which included the inoperative heating system, inadequate ventilation, and poor lighting, affected the health and learning as well as the morale of students and the staff.

Availability of Human Resource

It is also very vital to have sufficient and adequate human resources in terms of teacher quality for the teaching of all subjects in the school curriculum. Without the teachers as implementing factors, the goals of education can never be achieved. On human resources, various educators for example, Ukeje (1970) and Fafunwa (1969) have written extensively on the prime importance of teachers to the educational development of any nation be it simple, complex, developed or developing. From the writings of these educators, one can infer that whatever facilities are available, whatever content is taught, whichever environment the school is situated and whatever kind of pupils are given to teach, the importantand vital role of the teacher cannot be over-emphasized. Assuming that necessary facilities are adequately provided for, the environment is conducive to learning, the curriculum satisfies the needs of the students and the students themselves have interest in learning, learning cannot take place without the presence of the teacher. Moronfola (1982) carried out a research in Ilorin Local Government Area of Kwara State. She used questionnaires to collect data on the material resourcesavailable for the teaching of some selected subjects in ten secondary schools and related these to students' achievements in each of the selected subjects and to the amount of resources available for the teaching of the subjects. Finding showed a significant effect of material resources on the students' academic performance in these subjects.

Aguilando (2012) argues that the teacher is the developer and implementer of the curriculum. He or she writes curriculum daily through a lesson plan, lesson notes and schemes of work. He then addresses the goals, needs and interests of the pupils by creating experiences from where they can learn. In the process, the teacher designs, enriches and modifies the curriculum to suit the needs of the pupils (Aguilando, 2012). Teachers use their knowledge, experiences and competencies to interpret and execute the curriculum on day-to-day basis (Zeiger, 2014). Salamuddin, Harun & Abdullah (2011) noted that teachers being the main executors of the curriculum should possess sufficient knowledge and skills in order to ensure success of the education.

The school administration also has the responsibility of ensuring there is sufficiency of teachers in the school to teach the students. A teacher is the implementer of the curriculum without which the learning process in school will not be complete. Bennett (1963) acknowledges the significant role of a teacher to the success of the program. He states that;

"there is no other person, no group, no amount of materials, no physical facility, no community, exceeds in importance of the teacher as the single element of greatest potential value in the field school". Prentice (1995) asserts that, when learners are left alone without guidance, facilitation, stimulation and motivation, they slowly drift to boredom and lack of interest education activities.Kaugi(2015) discovered that lack of qualified teachers affected the quality of education in non -formal schools in Kenya.

Learners' characteristics

Learners hold the key to what is actually transmitted and adopted from official curriculum. Since learner factors influence teachers in their selection of learning experiences, there is need to consider their diverse characteristics in curriculum implementation (University of Zimbabwe, 1995). Ross (2000) and Schiro (2008) argue that the purpose of education is to train students' skills and procedures they will need in the workplace.

Findings of a study done by Sharp, George, Sargent, O'Donnell & Heron (2009) as quoted by Igoki 2014 revealed that pupils who are younger in the year group do less well in attainment tests. The findings also indicated that children who are younger in year group are more frequently retained, that is, they have to repeat a year of schooling. The finding further revealed that relatively younger children are more frequently identified as having special needs. According to this study, though there is a smaller relative age difference among older primary children the difference remains educationally significant in primary school (P:1)

The vision of the National Special Needs Education Framework (2009) in Kenya is to have a society in which all persons regardless of their disabilities and special needs achieve

education to realize full potential (MOE,2009). It also advocates an inclusive education where pupils with special needs are integrated in normal education system. As a result of the government commitment towards Universal Primary Education, the demand for services for children with special needs has increased (UNESCO, 2005)

Teaching methods

In order for the teacher to effectively implement the planned curriculum, he/she must use diverse styles to teach the pupils and not just the subject (Chittom, 2012). This is because different pupils require different styles of teaching in order to grasp curriculum content that will in turn lead to effective curriculum implementation. According to Felder and Silverman (1988), when mismatches exist between learning styles and the teaching style of the teacher, the student may get bored and inattentive in class, do poorly in class and get discouraged about the subject. They argue that teachers should strive for a balance of instructional methods. Davidoff (1990) argues that students learn better and more quickly if the teaching methods used match their preferred learning styles. He argues that appropriate teaching methods motivate

Auditory learners learn best through hearing the message and therefore such pupils will respond well to lecture teaching method and verbal instructions. According to NDT Education Centre (2014) auditory learners do well with lecture and classroom discussion. As such, teachers should use memory aids such as acronyms, short songs or rhymes. At the same time, since auditory pupils learn best when they read loudly, flip cards that can be read aloud can be used during class instructions (Chittom, 2012). Visual learners on the other hand process information according to what they see and the

images they create in their minds. This group benefits from learning by observation, following written and drawn instructions and they like to read (NDT Education Centre, 2014). While teaching such pupils, illustrations, diagrams and charts are very helpful as this aid helps them understand the curriculum content better. Kinesthetic or tactile learners learn best through touching, feeling and doing. These pupils learn through experience and physical activity, benefit from demonstration and learn from teaching others what they know. In teaching these pupils, teachers should incorporate role plying, drama, playing games etc (NDT Education Centre, 2014).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The above discussion indicates that various dynamics influence acquisition of non-formal education. These include instructional materials, physical facilities, human resource, students' characteristics and teaching methods. The availability of qualified teachers was found to be very paramount despite the provision of all other necessities. It was also noted that the availability and maintenance of physical facilities is down played sometimes but it significantly affects the attitude of the learners. Non- formal education can significantly compensate for the weaknesses found in the formal system of education and therefore these dynamics need to be considered more seriously so that non formal education can achieve its goals.

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