

## EVALUATION OF FACTORS AFFECTING LEARNING IN SECONDARY SCHOOL IN OTUKPO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA.

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### ABSTRACT

Difficulties in learning abound and are associated with various factors. This study evaluated some factors affecting learning in secondary school. Secondary schools in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State were used as case study. A structured and close ended questionnaire was developed and systematically administered in order to elicit responses from the respondents. A total of 200 respondents provided responses that were used for analysis. Data analysis was achieved using frequency count, total weighted value and mean. Respondents agreed that unprofessional teaching practice adversely affect students' learning (mean =3.53), the use of professional teachers as principals, administrators, form teachers and counselor improve students' academic performance and cover up loop holes (mean = 3.50), a teacher who is sound in his subject area is capable of arousing students interest to learn (mean = 3.71), provision of students primary needs enable them to learn better (mean = 3.59), students from well- to – do parents have advantage of completing the curriculum (mean = 3.50), observing of siesta, when a student is tired, enhances learning (mean =3.50), practice of personal hygiene helps to eliminate health risk factors and good state of mind for learning (mean = 3.48), proximity and accessibility of a school, encourage learning (mean = 3.54), strike actions disrupt learning activity (mean = 3.48), inconsistent and irregular payment of teachers salary hampers teaching and learning (mean = 3.61), occasional giving of reward stimulate other students to learn (mean = 3.64), development of positive self concept by a student helps in brilliant academic

performance (mean = 3.53) and students with health challenges find it difficult to learn (mean = 3.52). In line with this finding, it is imperative to state that learning, which is the sole of all academic activity, can be achieved at any level, if the above are carefully considered.

**Keywords:** Academic performance; Teachers; Teaching; Curriculum.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Ricarda et al., [1] see academic performance as an achievement or outcome that indicates the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environment, such as school, college and university. It is therefore, evidence that learning has taken place. Learning begins immediately a person is born. The individual life's process becomes a function of learning. It entails the acquisition of experiences, knowledge, behaviors, new skills and habits. Learning extends to the generality of the individual's polished ways of approaching issues as different situations present themselves. An individual cannot be said to have been learned if there is no transparent, obvious progressive and relatively permanent change in the person as to the way he will usually react to issues when prompted. When learning has been effected, it makes the learner adjust and adopt new strategies to meet up with demands, bringing about efficiency and productivity in the learners pursuits of life [2]. The outcome of learning cuts across the cognitive, psychomotor and affective learning process [3].

The school is the formal institution set aside by the society for the purpose of learning. However, as society gets more complex, the home, which has the parents as the first teachers, can no longer cope with the learning process of the child [4]. Lassa, [4] attest that formal education cannot be provided by just anybody, it requires a teacher who plans and delivers the lessons or instructions in such a way that objectives can be achieved. There is no teaching without a learner, just as learning cannot be effective without a teacher and the curriculum. Dowden, [5] affirms

the harmonious importance of the learner, the teacher and the curriculum, implemented in a conducive environment.

Wasagu, [6] sees curriculum as a course of study which embraces the total spectrums of content, resources, materials and methods of teaching through which the purposes of education are achieved.

A factor is a circumstance, fact or an element that contributes to a result. Gardner, [7] ; Suzanne and Penelope, [8] assert that learners in our secondary schools are faced with a mirage of challenges that they have to overcome, ranging from puberty and adolescent associated issues, peer group influence, family background and environmental influences, social and economic advantages or disadvantages, individual differences and to psychological and emotional changes.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study was aimed at evaluation of factors affecting learning in secondary schools in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

Specifically, the study considered the following factors;

- 1) The effects of practice and professionalism on learning
- 2) Impact of socio – economic status on learning
- 3) Possible effects of environmental and aesthetic factors on learning
- 4) The implication of Governance and politics on learning
- 5) Influence of psycho – social factors on learning
- 6) The effects of genetic and biological factors on learning.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study focused on evaluation of factors affecting learning in secondary school in Otukpo L.G.A. of Benue State. It particularly looked at the effects of practice and professionalism on learning, impact of socio – economic status on learning, possible effects of environmental and aesthetic factors on learning, the implication of Governance and politics on learning, influence of psycho – social factors on learning, and the effects of genetic and biological factors on learning.

## **Research Questions**

In order for the investigation to be guided, the following research questions were put forward.

- 1) What are the effects of practice and professionalism on learning?
- 2) How can socio economic factors affect learning?
- 3) What are the possible effects of environmental and aesthetic factors on learning?
- 4) How does the involvement of governance and politics in education affect learning?
- 5) To what extent can psycho – social factors influence learning?
- 6) Do genetic and biological factors have any influence on students learning?

## **Materials and Method**

### **Research Design**

The research design for the study was a survey method. This was chosen with the sole aim of sample surveys to be used to obtain a sample that is representative of the population so that precise inferences can be made.

### **Area of Study**

The study was carried out in secondary schools in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State. Otukpo Local Government Area is one of the twenty three local government areas in Benue State, in north – central Nigeria. The local government is predominantly urban alongside some rural communities.

### **Population of Study**

The target population comprised of secondary schools teachers and students in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State. The population of the students and teachers was approximately; Teachers = 150 and Students =5000.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample for this study was two hundred (200), by random sampling technique using four schools which are Saint William Comprehensive

Secondary school, Government Day Secondary School, Methodist High School and Government modern secondary school, all in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State, to reflect the opinions of secondary school teachers and students.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The structured questionnaire type was used as the major instrument for data collection. This was divided into two parts; A and B. Part A contained personal data of the respondents and part B consisted of the research questions and was divided into six subsections to obtain information on the various research questions posed by this investigation. A four point rating scale was adopted and is shown as follows:

Strongly Agree (SA) = (4points)

Agree (A) = (3 points)

Disagree (D) = (2 points)

Strongly Disagree (AD) = (1 point)

### **Reliability of Instrument**

In order to ensure and ascertain the reliability of the instrument, it was trial – tested and administered on ten teachers drawn from OSISATECH Boys' Secondary School, Emene, Enugu State. The trial was conducted twice on the same set of randomly selected Teachers and students from the school, with a two – week gap between the test and retest. The Pearson's product moment method was used to obtain a reliability coefficient to indicate the reliability of the instrument.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The printed copies of the questionnaire were sent to the respondents by visitation to their various locations and offices during recess. The questions were completed on the spot and returned to the researcher immediately.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed using frequency count, total weighted value and mean. A suitable mean cut off mark was set at 3.45, such that any item which attained a mean score of 3.45 and above were accepted while items that scored below were rejected.

## RESULTS

Data collected during this investigation were analyzed and are presented in tables according to research questions. The appropriate numbers of responses were used to get the mean.

### RQ1: What are the effects of practice and professionalism in learning?

**Table 1: Mean Responses on the effects of practice & Professionalism in learning.**

S/N	Items weighted	SA(4)	A(3)	D (2)	SD(1)	Mean	Decision
1	Learning can be adversely affected when a teacher who specializes in mathematics finds himself teaching Literature in English	150	29	8	13	3.53	Agreed
2	To foster learning and cover up loop-holes, it is advisable and recommendable to have professional teachers as management staff and form teachers, who can serve as counselors to the students.	124	58	12	6	3.50	Agreed
3	When continuous testing is used as a disciplinary status to check noise making or absenteeism, learning has not been evaluated.	59	84	54	3	2.99	Disagreed
4	The students' interest to learn can be aroused by an articulating, sound and balanced teacher who is able to carry the whole class along as he/she teaches.	154	36	7	3	3.71	Agreed

Table 1 revealed that the idiosyncrasy of teachers with respect to practice and professionalism have adverse effect on learning when a

teacher who specializes in mathematics, teaches literature in English (mean score 3.53) and mostly, the interest of students to want to learn can be aroused by an articulating sound and balanced teacher who is able to carry the whole class along as he teaches (mean score 3.71). However, to cover up loop-holes and to foster learning, it is advisable and recommendable to have professional teachers as management staff and form teachers, who can serve as counselors to students (mean score 3.50). The use of continuous testing as a disciplinary status to check noise making or absenteeism does not affect evaluation (mean score 2.99).

**RQ2: How can social economic factors affect learning?**

**Table 2: Mean Response of the effects of Socio-economic factors on learning.**

S/N	Items weighted	SA(4)	A(3)	D (2)	SD(1)	Mean	Decision
1	When a student has his primary needs provided (such as food, clothing, school fees, transportation etc), he is likely to learn better.	145	35	12	8	3.59	Agreed
2	The social economic status of the parents is proportional to the academic and social lifestyle of a student.	92	103	3	2	3.43	Disagreed
3	Learning is enhanced when well-to-do parents are able to pay for extra lessons for their wards in order to complete the curriculum	113	75	10	2	3.50	Agreed

Table 2 showed result of the effects of socio-economic factors on learning. That when a student has his/her primary needs provided (such as food, clothing, School fees etc), he/she learns better (mean score: 3.59) and learning is enhanced when well-to-do parents pay for extra lessons for their wards in order to complete the curriculum (mean score 3.50). However, the socio-economic status of the parent is not proportional to the academic and social lifestyle of a student (mean score: 3.43)

**RQ3: How can environmental and aesthetic factors affect learning?****Table 3: Mean Responses of the possible effects of aesthetic and environmental factors on learning.**

S/N	Items weighted	SA(4)	A(3)	D (2)	SD(1)	Mean	Decision
1	When assimilation and comprehension are hindered owing to tiredness, it is only wise to take a good rest (siesta) in order to enhance learning.	115	71	12	2	3.50	Agreed
2	The practice of personal hygiene and cleanliness is a considerable factor that eliminates other health risk.	120	63	10	7	3.48	Agreed
3	The proximity, accessibility and conducive environment of a school, can encourage learning.	113	83	2	2	3.54	Agreed

In table 3, the respondents have a congruent opinion that proximity, accessibility and conducive environment of a school encourage learning (means score 3:54) and that when learning/assimilation is hindered due to tiredness, it is only wise to take a good rest (siesta), to enhance learning (mean score 3.50) while the practice of personal hygiene and cleanliness are necessary factors that will eliminate other health risk factors for better learning (mean score 3.48).



**RQ4: what are the Effects of Government and politics on learning?**

**Table 4: Mean Responses of the effects of Government and Politics on learning.**

S/N	Items weighted	SA(4)	A(3)	D (2)	SD(1)	Mean	Decision
1	Strike actions of any kind disrupt students' interest in academic works.	131	45	13	11	3.48	Agreed
2	Inconsistent and irregular payment of salary by employers/government to the academic staff discourages them and thus hampers teaching and learning.	149	30	18	3	3.61	Agreed
3	When salary payment is unnecessarily delayed, teachers tend to compromise their integrity by accepting tokens from students to pass them, which will definitely affect proper assessment of the students.	92	100	6	2	3.41	Disagreed

Table 4 shows mean responses of the effects of Government and Politics on learning. It revealed that strike actions of any kind disrupt students' interest in academic work (mean score 3.48) and teaching and learning activities can be disrupted by inconsistent and irregular payment of salary by governmental/ employer (mean score 3.61) but does not seriously affect students assessment.

## RQ5: To what extent can psycho-social factors influence learning?

**Table 5: mean, Responses of the influence of psycho-social factors on learning.**

S/N	Items weighted	SA(4)	A(3)	D (2)	SD(1)	Mean	Decision
1	Giving of gift occasionally to a student for his academic performance by the teachers or/and school authority, can serve as encouragement for others to pick up with the challenge to learn.	135	57	8	-	3.64	Agreed
2	The best measure to effect learning by correction is to invite the offenders to the counselor's or principal office to give warning and advice.	99	89	10	2	3.41	Disagreed
3	Learning is encouraged when students see a friendly relationship between them and their teachers and between teachers.	113	70	13	4	3.46	Agreed
4	Learning will proceed smoothly and enthusiastically when the student realizes himself and goes on with a positive self concept.	127	64	9	-	3.53	Agreed

Table 5 shows the mean responses on the influence of psycho-social factors on students learning. Occasional giving of gift by the teacher or school authority to a student for his academic performance is an encouragement for others to pick up with the challenge to learn (mean score 3.64). Similarly when students see friendly relationship between teachers and between them and teachers (mean score 3.46) and also when they realize themselves and put on positive self concept (mean score 3.53) respectively, they are encouraged to learn better. Meanwhile, respondents' opinion does not support inviting an offender to the principal or counselor's office to effect learning by correction (mean score 3.41).

## RQ6: what are the Effects of genetics and biological factors on student's learning?

**Table 6: Mean Responses of genetic and biological factors affecting students learning.**

S/N	Items weighted	SA(4)	A(3)	D (2)	SD(1)	Mean	Decision
1	There is difficulty in learning among people who are suffering from congenital disorders, hereditary disabilities, feeble mindedness, albinism, blindness, epilepsy, sickle cell anemia and physical deformities.	124	61	11	4	3.52	Agreed
2	Intellectual ability can be transferred from parents to their children through inheritance of genes carrying intellectual ability.	101	63	14	8	3.20	Disagreed

Table 6 shows that there is difficulty in learning among people who are suffering from congenital disorders, heredity disabilities, feeble mindedness, albinism, blindness, epilepsy, sickle cell anemia and physical deformities (mean 3.52) and that intellectual ability cannot be transferred from parents to their children through inheritance of genes carrying intellectual ability (mean score 3.20)

## DISCUSSION

### Effects of Practice and Professionalism in Learning

Owing to the result revealed by the survey, Learning can be adversely affected when a teacher who specializes in mathematics finds himself teaching Literature in English. A trained teacher is equipped with the necessary specific tools with a specific aim to impart on the learners. However, when in subject allocation and subject distribution, there is misappropriation; the educational and professional aim is defeated [9]. To this end, Akiri, [10] assert that teachers need to realize that teaching ought to be purposeful, meaningful, developmental and learner centered and as such should approach their profession by emphasizing the need

of teaching their area of specialization to their employers in order to promote effective teaching and learning activities, pointing that without this actual act of practice, the teacher will not be proficient enough and learners are bound to suffer intellectually.

To foster learning and cover up loop – holes, it is advisable and recommendable to have professional teachers as management staff and form teachers, who can serve as counselors to the student. School administration requires professionals such as principals and vice principals, who have strong backgrounds in teaching, strong leadership skills, a deep understanding of the school structure and ability to handle challenges head on. This assertion was emphasized by the CPE, [11] which opined that, by logical selection, the best candidates for school administrators must have previously held positions as class teachers. The school counselors are expected to be trained teachers, who can combine counseling with teaching, in order to create a good rapport with the students for effective functions. Hanna, [12] stressed that teachers' guidance and ability to drive home, his topic to the comprehension of the student, also affects the student performance, alongside with guidance from the parents and the teachers indirectly affect the performance of the students.

### **Effects of socio – economic factors on students' learning**

When a student has his primary needs provided (such as food, clothing, school fees, transportation etc), he is likely to learn better. The Guardian, [13] opined that in Nigerian, free school feeding program by the Government, would enable poor children to go to school by providing them with at least one nutritious meal a day. The food will act as an incentive and catalyst for the children to go to school despite poverty and hunger at home.

A well to do parent has what it takes to comfortably take his child to the best of schools, where syllabi and curricula contents are adequately covered through effective teaching, which is not available for the child who is from a poor family background. Thus, an upgraded socio

economic status of parents is surely an advantage and privilege to learn better, since it provides exposure to the learner [14, 15].

### **Environmental and aesthetic factors on students' learning**

When assimilation and comprehension are hindered owing to tiredness, it is only wise to take a good rest (siesta) in order to enhance learning. The place of adequate sleep in academic performance is very vital among secondary students. With the increase in the use of technological gadgets, students tend to consume their time in these gadgets, unfortunately, misusing their time without discipline [16].

Poor sanitation and hygiene is injurious to infant and children, particularly of school age. Bouya et al., [17] in an article, explain the impact of good hygiene on students' educational performance. That illness caused by bad hygiene practices of students, such as not washing before eating, not washing oneself properly after the use of toilet and not washing one's undies regularly, may negatively affect students' cognition and performance at school.

The proximity, accessibility and conducive environment of a school, can encourage learning. Kenzo, [18] assert that some researchers have studied the mechanisms by which school accessibility could affect test scores and found a positive correlation.

UNESCO, [19] posit that the Nigerian child belongs to several environments such as the home, the school, the community and the large society. All these contribute significantly to the child's right to live, develop and learn. As far as the acquisition of academic knowledge is concerned, it is the school environment which imposes a significant influence on the child. The term school learning environment has been used by some researchers to refer to physical characteristics of the school environment.

### **Effects of Government and politics on learning**

Strike actions of any kind disrupt students' interest in academic works. Several reasons abound, depending on the peculiarity of the country as

the causes of strike action. However, Addae – Korankye, [20] examined job dissatisfaction/ satisfaction to be the main factor, as often time, teachers in secondary schools are owed and thus find it difficult to meet up with their civic and social responsibility.

Imo, [21] stressed that the success or failure of any educational system depends mainly on the teachers. Inconsistent and irregular payment of salary by employers/government to the academic staff discourages them and thus hampers teaching and learning. Van den Bergh and Roos, [22] maintained that professional development of teachers can be effective and sustainable, if certain conditions are met [23]. Besides, the analysis of Van den Bergh and Roos, [22] suggested that the implementation of educational reforms, including reforms associated with technology integration and literacy education, is often dependent upon teachers' skills, values, and cultural models. Teachers are expected to earn both intrinsic and extrinsic reward from work. It is believed that if teachers are paid regularly, improved working conditions and their fringe benefits given are judged to be good by the teachers, they will put in more effort at work [24]. While hiring of qualified teachers is encouraged for improvement of academic performance, theories from the study of Firestone [24], caution that policies to remove ineffective teachers should not reduce autonomy or trust among effective teachers and that evaluation should provide teachers with useful feedback and policy makers with information on the conditions that facilitate good teaching and management.

### **Influence of psycho – social factors on students' learning**

Respondents agreed that giving of gifts occasionally to a student for his academic performance by the teachers or/and school authority, can serve as encouragement for others to pick up with the challenge to learn. Lori, [25] stressed that the presence of intrinsic motivation produces many behaviors that result in school success like sustained interest in tasks, risk taking, and the conquering of new challenges.

## **Genetics and Biological factors' influence on students' learning**

The agreement among the respondents shows that there is difficulty in learning among people who are suffering from congenital disorders, hereditary disabilities, feeble mindedness, albinism, blindness, epilepsy, sickle cell anemia and physical deformities. MacLellan et al., [26]; Dunkle and Nash, [27] supported that healthy students are better learners. Springs and Halpern, [28] assert that health-related factors such as hunger, physical and emotional abuse, and chronic illness can lead to poor school performance. Health-risk behaviors such as early sexual initiation, violence, and physical inactivity are consistently linked to poor grades and test scores and lower educational attainment [29].

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