
**School Culture as Factor in Productive Environment for Students'
Academic Performance in Secondary Schools in Rivers State**

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Abstract

The study explored the impact of school culture on the productive capacity of the school as a medium for the development of knowledge, critical thinking, values and awareness necessary for creating an environment where peace, development, sustainable development and growth, safety, economic and political progress and stability, in doing this, the paper identified and critically examined what constitute school culture, school culture in a changing world and school culture in multi-ethnic society as corollary. The factors constituting production school were also identified, isolated and discussed. Top, the rate of school culture to the development of a productive school were also examined. Suggestions as to how to sustain production school through enthroning effective school culture re-made.

Keywords: School, culture, productive, environment, performance.

Human entities, groups or aggregations such as societies, communities and organizations exist on the basis of learned and shared communities such as knowledge, myths, laws, values, norms, beliefs" customs, language, and even attitudes. To a great extent, these commons, guide and regulate their conducts and behaviours. Often, relationships and interactions amongst individuals found in such entities receive their definitions and characterizations from those commons. Culture of a given group also defines tools, technology and equipment which are peculiar to it.

Thus, culture whether material or non-material, generally sets the tone and pattern for any society. New members of societies, organizations and communities get acculturated through' learning the culture. In other words, meanings given to their

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situations derive directly from collective group interpretations, understandings and contexts. The school, undoubtedly, falls into the category of organisation with aggregate of membership who coexists, interact and interpret events and situation within an orderly pattern. Being goal oriented, schools seek to direct its member's efforts through a common curriculum, set of behaviour, sustainable norms, values, and attitudes acceptable to same society that hitherto had set it up (Hoy, 2019). Every organisation; needing to achieve their goals at a minimal cost, the school defines and pursues its routines via a generally understood and accepted patterns of events, relationships, methodologies and technologies. Similarly (Hoy, 2019) describes organizational culture as containing or their carrier of the group "assumptions, values and artifacts". This means that the total way a school carries out its' functions is fundamentally underlined by deep unconscious and, generally learned, understood and accepted characteristics.

Theoretical Underpinning of School Culture

The Wikipedia sees social system as consisting of "network of relationship existing between individuals, groups and institutions sharing common characteristics which ultimately identify them as homogenous during the period of operational coexistence". Different groups are supposedly marked by their differentiating characteristics which are instrumental to their collective survival and sustainability. The relationship that exist in the social system is characterised by various interactions, roles, expectations, actions amidst differentiated orientations and responses (Bozkus, 2014). Bozkus' idea of social system is that social systems are stable and functional.

The stability and functionality of the social system derives essentially from what Otite and Ogonwo (1985) refer to as consensus loyalty. The system is also perceived as being complex (Elekwa and Okanezi, 2013). Complex systems consist of interdependent units with differing functions but common organisational goal. The complexity also emanates from the ideographic perspective of the individuals who work in the various units (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2012). The existence of institutional requirements (Nomothetic) and individual needs (ideographic) as theorized Getzels and Guba (1957) makes it necessary for an agreed pattern of ways of achieving the goals of the organization. The examination of school culture as prepontry to productive learning environment then can logically form this framework of social as a social system underlined by orderliness as a result of share values, knowledge, norms, customs, mores, history, artifacts, symbols, orientation and dispositions.

What is School Culture?

The school has its goals as well as ways and 'methods of achieving them. The goal of die school is processed by members based on shared understandings, values,

and norms. This means that school culture for every school is distinctively differentiated from all others (Hongboontri and Keawkhong, 2014). Just as every society remains unique and different in their own ways. The uniqueness of a given school clearly makes statement about the following; its vision, mission and goal, values, norms, customs, beliefs, perception, attitudes, relationships, rules and regulation. The scope of school culture includes orderliness in the school, artifacts, celebrations; racial, ethnic, linguistic rituals and cultural diversity. This is seen as a product conscious efforts involving community, school administrators, teachers, students and often shaped by the history of the school over a period of time (Education Reforms in Nigeria, 2012), Hoy and Miskel, 2012).

You, Kim and Lim (2017) identified additional five areas of social culture as condition of facilities, academic climate (teaching, learning and achievement), colleague support, principal leadership and participation in decision making in the school. Their suggestion combines with earlier conceptualization recommends school culture as being immaterial and immaterial in nature. It goes on to completely par school culture as the driving force in processing school goals, teacher effectiveness, students achievement and leadership success. Jenks' (1993) typology as captured in Lumby and Foskett (2016) saw school culture as being a product of cognitive activity of the individual, product of the group, resident in artifacts and knowledge as well as a way of life of a social aggregation such as community or group.

School culture may therefore be defined as a way of life in a given school as characterized by interactions, relationship in job performance, rules, norms, values, perceptions and beliefs that shape coexistence. It also includes school justice, rights, privileges, opportunities, safety measures, collaborative activities, feedback process, psychological measures, welfare issues, legal interpretations, learning communities, processes of change and innovations, use facilities, reverence, history and physical expression of school aesthetics. Lumby and Foskett further pointed to tangible indicators of cultural change though they posit that these indicators may really be existing as a formal process with evident impact.

School culture in Nigeria's Secondary Schools has received the pressure of the enormous social change that the society is witnessing. Anyanwu (2016) in a study, identified language as an area that students held strongly to. They are influenced by the Pidgin English used in the society instead of the Educated English.

It has also been noticed that influences from business, political system and professional organisations can significantly affect a school's curriculum-culture and even climate. The forces have been noted to spread their influence to decision making and religion in the school (The National Academics of Sciences Engineering and Medicine, 2002).

The school as part of the society, has changed recently mainly due to certain introduction such as
✓ Information Communication Technology

- ✓ The Internet E-learning
- ✓ Access to study overseas
- ✓ Weimer, (2017), identified the other factors as
- ✓ Shifting global demographics
- ✓ National internationalization in which curriculum targets to have global outlook
- ✓ Educational Technology
- ✓ Demand for specific skills have also led to more interactions and communication with students and by so doing, breaks down to official barriers between students and teachers
- ✓ Emphasis on individualized attention to students
- ✓ Changing focus and priorities of the school system have seen more attention.

Relevance of School Culture

School culture is critical to its mandate as a platform for knowledge, values, attitude and skills development. Achieving school goals requires that learning takes place in an atmosphere devoid of disorder and chaos. It requires sharing standards and values underlying the collective goals of the school (Elekwa and Okanezi, 2013) to produce learners who have received the same training and are likely to exhibit characteristics akin to skills, knowledge, values and attitudes acquired (Hoy and Miskel, 2012).

The relevance of school culture in providing environment for students' achievement therefore will depend on its ability to serve as

- a) Standard guide for conducts of attitude of members or the school community
- b) A binding force for everyone working towards achieving school goals.
- c) Ensuring stability in task execution in the school.
- d) Engendering collaboration among teachers.
- e) As demanding collective goal setting for school.
- t) Providing platform for professional growth for teachers and which in turn has effects on students learning.

Hongboontri and Keawkhong (2004) who researched on the impact of school, culture in shaping teachers in their practice have identified that it remains influential in ,. developing unique qualities for each school. Their views corroborate the relevance school culture serves in providing settings for the school (Bush, 2018). This is notable in the sense that school leadership and staff commitment towards school vision are strong combination in creating and sustaining most of the school culture.

School Culture and Productive School

Productive school is a product of positive school culture. Productive schools display the following indicators which are embedded in the views of Con field (2016:5)

- ❖ Promote social mixture and interactions amongst learners
- ❖ Promotes creativity, problem solving skills and initiative in learners

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- ❖ Promotes collaborations amongst learners
- ❖ Enliven and creating attractive school environment .
- ❖ Promotes more hands-on-learning. Learners are encouraged to creatively source learning materials and environments to expand their scopes .
- ❖ Promotes the alignment of contemporary pedagogical philosophy with availability of commensurate physical spaces and facilities .
- ❖ Rethinking school environment and other sources to enhance school performance.
- ❖ Promote supportive, encouraging and safe environment for teaching and learning .
- ❖ school must allow students' achievement processes to gradually evolve (Confeld, 2016) .
- ❖ Constant refining of instructional practice of staff in the school (Wagner . 2016) .
- ❖ The establishment of collaborative engagements (Waster. 2016) .
- ❖ Create a common vision known to everyone.
- ❖ Emphasis must be placed on ceremonies that bring students together always .
- ❖ Provident personal learning and social support to students .
- ❖ Affection for students would attract them to staff. This enables them share their peculiar challenges with significant others in the school.

These are factors that school needing to improve their productive environment for students achievements need to develop as culture that runs through the school. Wagner (2016) and Confeld (2016) have maintained that through developing distinct cultures for school improvement, schools especially low- performing ones, can be reinvented. and students' performance improved.

Sustaining Productive School Environment

Sustainable development is a systematic and strategic exploitation and use of existing resources for the needs of the present while consciously making arrangements for foe future. Thus, sustaining productive schools or school environment involves intertwining current school practices with education goals of the future.

Achieving sustainable productive school would require the following:

- a)Developing learning communities of staff who are regularly engaged in updating themselves on pedagogical and student relationship issues.
- b)School leadership plays the most important role in sustaining a productive school through developing the culture of demanding leadership for school vision and goal from everyone.
- c)Goals of school must be collectively defined, understood and shared.
- d)Roles and responsibilities towards achieving school goals, are to be shared to include students, parents, and the community.
- e)Arrangement of physical environment needs to meet international standards,

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- g) School ceremonies are to be respected and attended in colours.
- h) Reinvention of school and setting new goals are very important.
- i) Students' performance must be a challenge for the school
- j) Leadership accountability requires emphasis.

Conclusion

Schools are miniature societies. Just like societies, they have culture which ' defines their existence and sustainability. The relevance of the culture of the school lies in providing, guide, standards and social bonds necessary for such cooperate operations. School culture is identified through the manifest and latent presence of certain important factors which make for productive learning environment.

It is pertinent for school leaders who wish to superintend over progressive schools to boldly develop plans that define school now and in the future.

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