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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE USES AND MANAGEMENT OF PHYSICAL FACILITIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN OMUMA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

The availability, utilization and management of physical facilities in schools is a major prerequisite to effective teaching and learning. This study was designed to find out the problems associated with proper utilization of physical facilities, the constraints to facility management and consequences of poor management of facilities in primary schools. Three research questions were designed while two null hypotheses were postulated. A sample of one hundred teachers out of four hundred and fifty-two primary school teachers in Omuma local government area (OMULGA) of Rivers State were used. The findings showed that there is inadequate facilities and low quality of materials supplied in the schools, lack of regard and care for the school facilities and ineffective instructional process which is as a result of non-conducive learning environment among others. Recommendations were finally made, among them was that teachers should be creative so as to improvise certain materials needed for the teaching while the school heads should see themselves as facility managers.

Introduction

The state of public schools in Nigeria in this 21st century is disheartening. The lack of necessary facilities, the dilapidated classroom blocks, mismanagement of school properties and general lack of maintenance culture constitute serious problem to achieving the goals set out for schools.

The availability of physical facilities in the school has been rated high as a major prerequisite in the realization of educational aims and objectives at various levels. Adegbesan, (2007) writing on the adequacy of school facilities in Nigerian Vocational and Technical colleges commented that physical facilities are essential resources that are required for the effective operation and maintenance of standard in schools. He categorized the facilities into building, furniture, equipment, personal resources, laboratories, workshops, and instructional aids. While Etuk (2007) divided facilities into broad categories, namely human resources, environmental resources and instructional materials. Similarly, Enaohwo and Eferekaya (1989) in Ebong (2006) classified facilities into three - Instructional, recreational, and residential. While Instructional facilities comprises of those facilities that have direct bearing to teaching and learning, recreational and residential are non-direct.

It is widely accepted that the effect of teaching and learning cannot be felt if the facilities are not adequately provided. Amasuomo (2001) stated that the learning process is facilitated and made more meaningful when students study in classrooms of suitable size, well ventilated, tidy and adequately equipped with furniture and teaching aids. Commenting on the state of primary schools in Nigeria, Emetaron (2005) pointed out that the situation is deplorable and therefore need urgent attention. The study conducted by UNESCO (1998) also showed that the general school environment in Nigerian primary schools did not encourage quality teaching and learning. According to the study, 77% of the pupils observed, had no textbooks, 36% do not have enough writing materials, 38% of the classroom observed had no ceilings. Out of 47% of the schools sampled, furniture was grossly inadequate, 12% of the pupils sat on the floor or on building blocks, 87% of the classrooms were overcrowded. They also observed a very poor sanitary conditions in the schools, in 58% of the schools, water was obtained from the wells, only 68% had toilet facilities, but half of them were pit latrines, whereas 3% of the schools had no chalkboards.

Resources management on the other hand is central to quality control in any system. It involves determining the type of facilities that are required for the achievement of educational objectives. Akpa (2002) stated that ‘resource management entails maintaining what we have, maximizing the use of what we have, improvise in the provision of needed resources, showing personal commitment in the provision of resources as partners in the growth and development of education enterprise.’ Therefore, Ebong (2006) opined that the effectiveness of resources

can only be realized if the materials available are put to use. The above assertions revealed that the school heads have a laudable role to play in the management of facilities. In this respect Nwogu (2006) observed that many school heads do not realize that they have a duty towards ensuring the maintenance and upkeep of the school plants. Emphasizing on the role of school heads in facility management, Nwogu (1992) and Ani (1997) in Nwogu (1997) pointed out that such roles include:-

Identification of plants that need repairs, establishment of a maintenance workshop, renovation of dilapidated school plants, appointment of teachers to custodial duties, instruction to students on the careful use of the school plants ... replacing damaged parts on time ... supervising school custodian staff, providing working materials for the staff, reporting all major repairs to the government on time, teaching students to treat plants as personal properties instead of government properties.

In performing these roles, the school heads may not necessarily use their money to provide for the needed materials. Rather, they are encouraged to involve parents in the school management by establishing parents programme. Parents programme according to Akpakwu (2005) is a social programme organised by the school whereby parents are involved together with the staff in the planning and organisation. This helps to get parents acquainted with the pupils' behaviour and school needs.

Statement of the problem

In view of the fact that education is meant for the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of material, physical, and social abilities to enable the individual live effectively and contribute to the development of the society, proper utilization and effective management of educational facilities are therefore thoughtful. Previous studies revealed that the learning environment has not been challenging enough, which is as a result of inadequate provision of facilities and poor facility management. This study therefore seeks to find out the problems associated with utilization of physical facilities, constraints to facility management and to examine the consequences of poor facility management in primary school.

Purpose of the study

This study is aimed at finding out:

1. the problems involved in the proper utilization of physical facilities.
2. the constraints to facility management
3. the consequences of poor management of physical facilities in the primary schools.

Significance of the study

The study will be very useful to teachers because of the strategic role they play both in the usage and provision of instructional materials. The pupils as well as the members of the society will benefit through the knowledge that school properties are not just government properties but theirs. The head teachers will also understand that they are facilities managers.

Research questions

1. What are the problems associated with the proper utilization of physical facilities in the primary schools?
2. What are the constraints to facility management?
3. What are the consequences of poor management of physical facilities?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the male and female teachers on their use and management of physical facilities.
2. There is no significant difference between the male and female head teachers on the management of physical facilities.

Methodology

The study was a descriptive survey research analyzed with an inferential statistic. The population comprised of the four hundred and fifty-two primary school teachers in OMULGA in Rivers State while a sample of one hundred teachers representing 22.1% of the population was used. The stratified sampling technique was employed. The local government was divided into three major strata comprising Omuma North, Omuma South and Omuma central, whereas

the respondents were chosen from each strata through simple random sampling.

Instrumentation

The instrument for data collection was ‘Questionnaire on Use and Management of Physical Facilities (QUMPF)’ which was designed by the researcher. While section 1 contain the demographic data, section II was made up of a set of questions which were constructed to take care of the research questions and hypotheses. It has four different options of well accepted, accepted, not accepted, and very unaccepted with rating scales of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

The reliability of the instrument was carried out using a test-retest method. The correlation coefficient of 0.85 was obtained using the Pearson product moment correlation technique. The instrument was validated by a lecturer in the department of educational management.

The researcher made use of one research assistant in administering the questionnaire. A total of 100 copies were administered, ninety-one retrieved while only eighty-six were fully completed and used for analysis. The research questions were answered using percentage and chart while t-test was used to test the hypotheses.

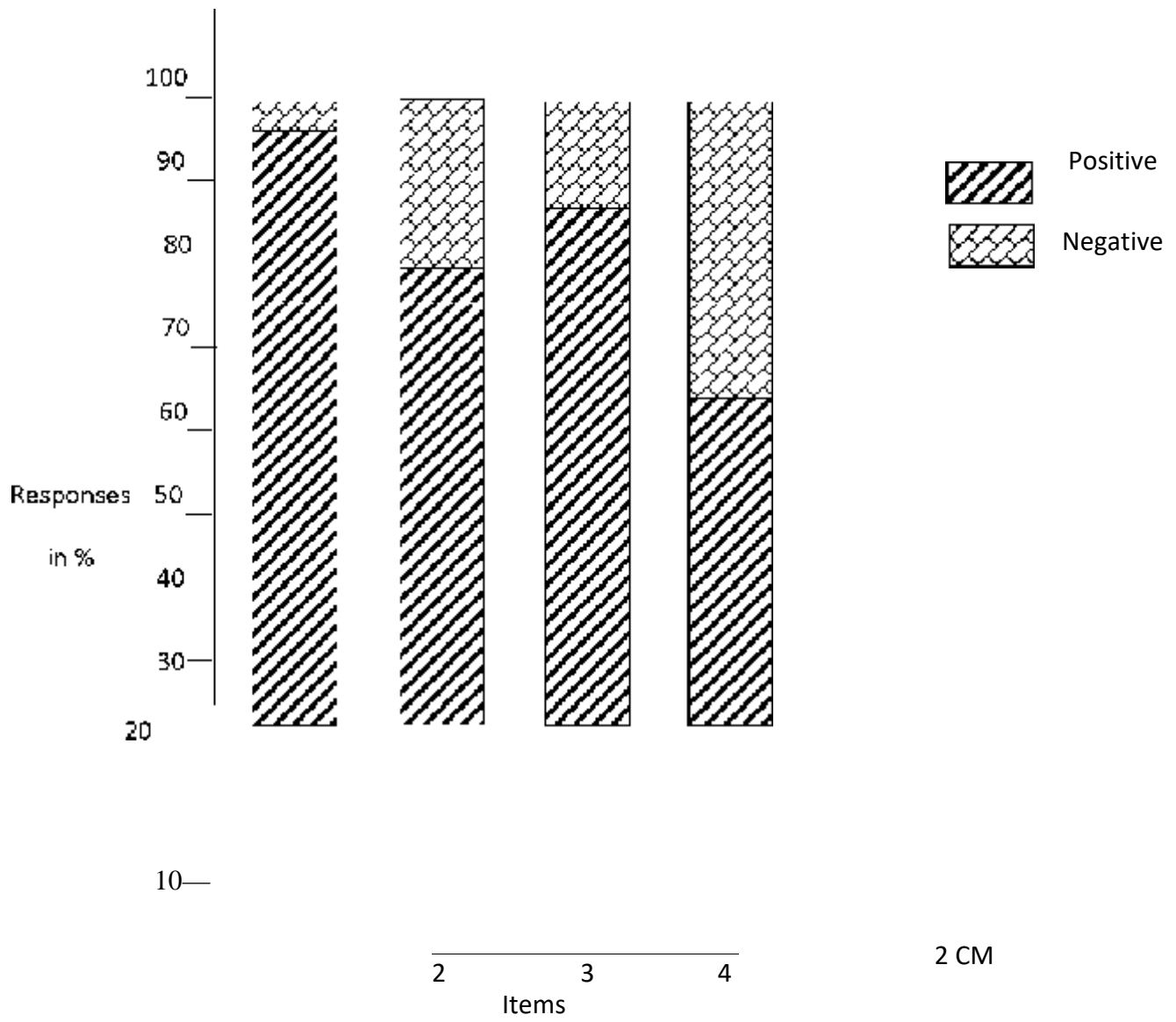
Analysis of data

Research question one: What are the problems associated with proper utilization of physical facilities?

Table 1.00: Problems associated with the proper utilization of physical facilities.

S/No	Statements	Response in %	
		Positive	Negative
1	The pupils do not have recommended	95%	5%
2	Provision of low-quality materials (desks, chairs) etc.	72%	28%
3	Inadequate teaching materials.	83%	17%
4	Less regard for school properties.	51%	49%

The data above is analyzed using the bar chart as shown below:

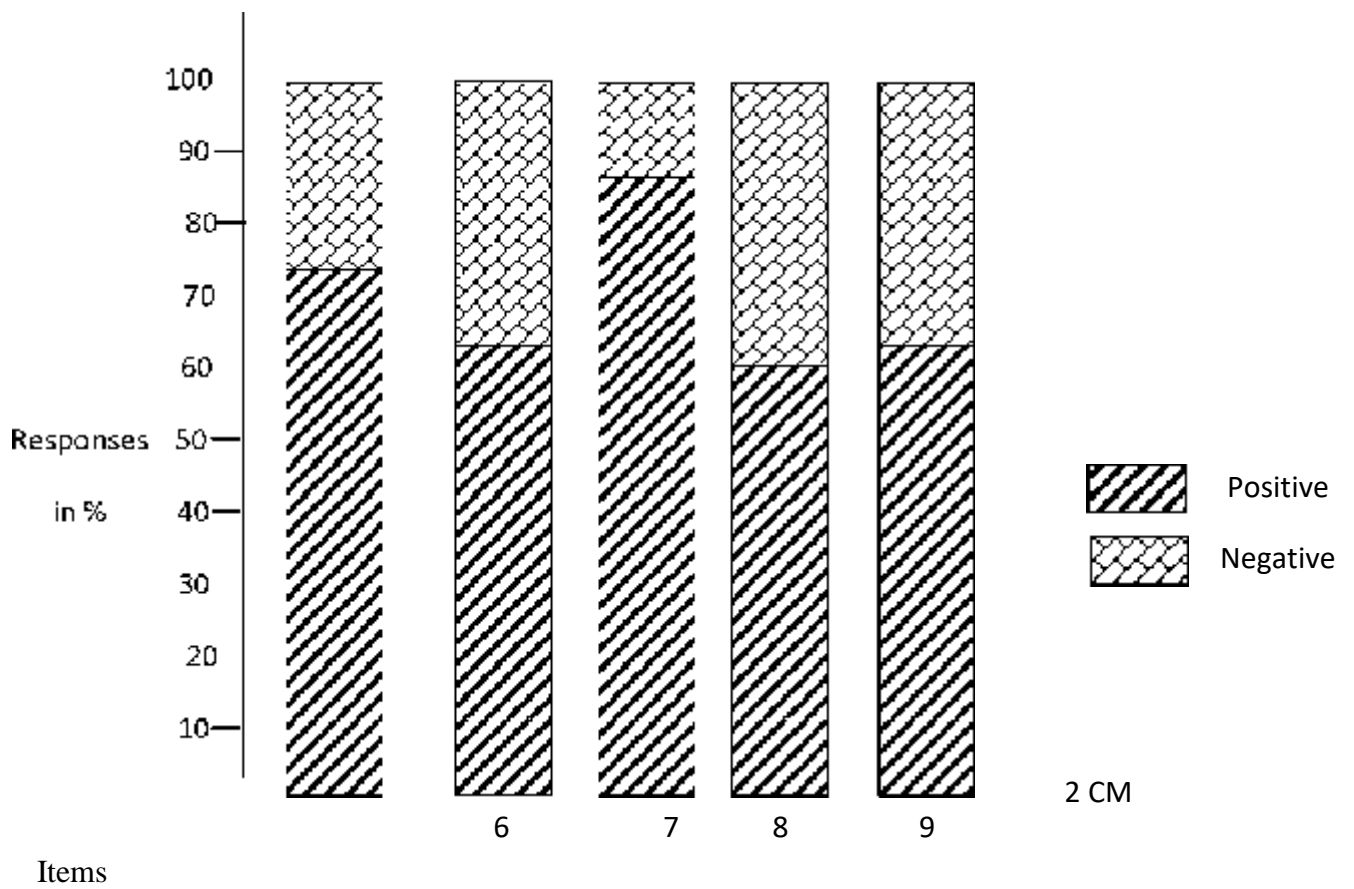


Research question two: What are the constraints to facility management?

Table 1.01: Constraints to facility management

S/no	Statements	Response in %	
		Positive	Negative
5	Irregular maintenance	72%	28%
6	No functional property committee	62%	38%
7	Lack of finance for the upkeep of the facilities.	87%	13%
8	Inability of the school heads to see themselves as facility managers.	60%	40%
9	Irregular visit of inspectors.	62%	38%

The data above is analyzed using the bar chart as shown below:

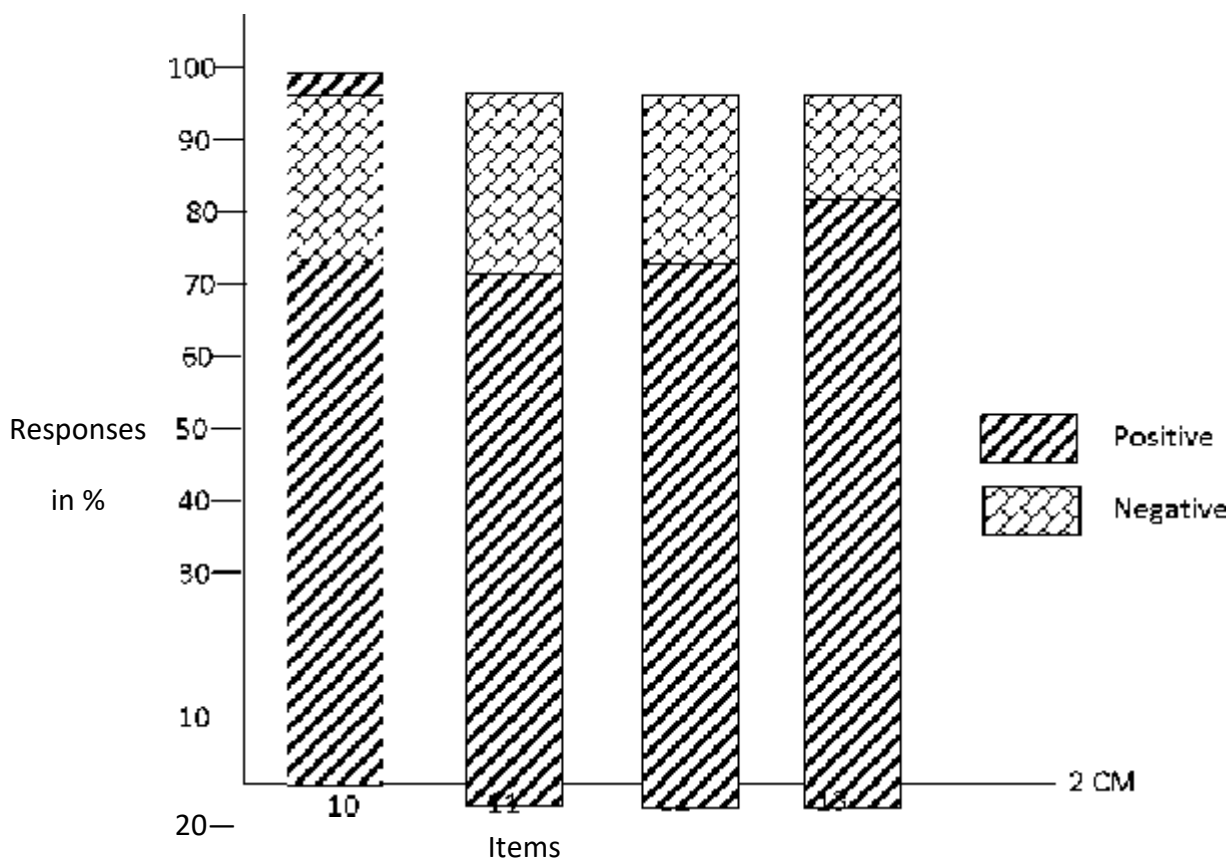


Items
 Research question three: What are the consequences of poor management of physical facilities?

Table 1.02: Consequences of poor management of physical facilities.

S/No	Statements	Responses in %	
		Positive	Negative
10	Ineffective instructional process due to lack of teaching materials.	78%	22%
11	Low performance due to unattractive learning environment.	76%	24%
12	Pupils engage in domestic activities during school periods due to general poor performance of the school.	77%	23%
13	Lack of commitment on the part of teachers due to poor perception of school environment.	87%	13%

The data above is analyzed using the bar chart as shown below:



Testing of hypotheses.

The hypotheses were tested with t-test at a chosen alpha level of 0.05 and at 84 degrees of freedom.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the male and female teachers on the use and management of physical facilities.

Table 03: T-test comparison of the male and female teachers on the use and management of physical facilities.

	N	X	Sd	t-value	df	t _{cri}	Decision
Male teachers	36	6.7	1.6	14.3	84	1.98	Reject
Female teachers	50	5.84	.8				

Table 1.03 shows that the calculated t-value (14.3) is more than the critical value (1.98) at 0.05 level of significance under 84 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference between the female teachers and male teachers on the use and management of physical facilities.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant difference between the female head teachers and male head teachers on the management of physical facilities.

Table 1.04: T-test comparison of the female head Tr and male Tr. On the management of physical facility.

	N	X	Sd	t-value	df	tcrit	Decision
Male teachers	36	6.8	0.3	0.5	84	1.98	Accept
Female teachers	50	5.62	0.86				

Table 1.04 shows that the calculated t-value (0.5) is less than the critical value (1.98) at the 0.05 level of significance under 84 degrees of freedom. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. Showing that there is no significant difference between the female head teachers and male head teachers on the management of physical facilities.

Results and Discussion

The findings from the data analyzed shows that there is gross inadequacy of school facilities which constitute problem to facility utilization. When facilities are not adequate, it implies that the available ones will be over utilized. This supports Ebong's (2006) opinion that the availability of facilities used by the students determines the rate of utilization. It was observed that a good number of people have less regard for the school facilities with the notion that they are government properties. This laissez-faire attitude poses a threat to proper utilization of physical facilities. In most schools' desks and chairs are carried away and turned into firewood by some members of the community, whereas some damaged infrastructures are totally ignored until they are useless just because they are regarded as government properties.

It was also observed that the quality of some facilities are below standard. For instance, some textbooks supplied are not durable and therefore affect the utilization.

It was found out that the irregular visits on the part of the ministry of education constitute a hindrance to facility management. Another hindrance is insufficient and irregular funds from the government for the upkeep of the school. No wonder most schools' plants are outdated, some in a very bad condition, while others have turned out to dangerous gadgets. In addition, there was irregular maintenance of school facilities. This the researcher felt might be as a result of lack of adequate supervision. More so, the inability of the school heads to see themselves as facility managers constitute a hindrance to facility management. This corroborates Nwogu's

(2006) assertion that many school heads do not realize that they have a duty towards ensuring the maintenance and upkeep of the school plants. Poor management of physical facilities can lead to unattractive learning environment. This affects teachers' perception of the school environment which often times cause teachers to develop negative attitude to work. This equally affects the learners who might not take school work serious. From the findings, 77% of the respondents confirmed that most pupils engage in domestic activities during school periods. This affects generally teaching and learning, going by Omoniyi's assertion as pointed out by Amasuomo (2001) that learning process is facilitated and made more meaningful if the classrooms are adequately equipped with furniture and teaching aids. Lastly, poor management cause outsiders to have free access to the school environment - such may encourage looting and stealing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The importance of physical facilities in the primary schools cannot be overemphasized. This is as a result of the position occupied by the primary education in National development. If the other levels of education (Secondary and tertiary) can achieve their aims and objectives as stated in the National Policy on Education, the situation should not be different at the primary school level. Facilities of various kinds should be adequately provided which will ensure effective utilizations. Teachers should be creative so as to improvise certain materials needed for teaching. School heads should also see themselves as facility managers.

State Government should incorporate maintenance of physical facilities in her annual budget. More importantly, it should be noted that management is a continuous process for this ensures proper maintenance of facilities.

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