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## **School Plant Planning: An Indispensable Tool in Educational Goal Attainment in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

There are so many factors that can lead to the actualization of educational goal ranging from human, materials, physical and financial resources. The concern of this paper is on the place of school plant planning in the educational goal attainment. The paper adopted literature review design considering the concept of school plant, factors to be considered while designing this school plant and constraints to effective school plant planning implementation. The paper concluded that instructional process can be exciting with the needs and aspirations of students and teachers met, if the school plant are adequately planned, provided and maintained. The following recommendations were made among others: that educational needs should be prioritized, resources are to be properly budgeted for and evenly distributed, school plant planners are to be well equipped for greater effectiveness and a functional maintenance program to be upheld.

**Keywords:** school plant, planning, educational goal, implementation

### **Introduction**

Education is key to individual and national development. Okochi (2019) states, it is universally accepted as a form of investment in humanity which ultimately contributes to a nation's wealth and development. Another important aspect according to Anbalangan (2017) is that education is a dynamic process, which involves the imparting of knowledge, generating interests and curiosity, inculcating desirable attitudes and values and developing essential skills required for independent study.

A school is one of the institutions that is responsible for the development and training of the mind and skills of people. Oredein (2016) defined school as a social and learning agent that provides the environment upon which a child may be formally educated in order to attain educational goals. School is a formal organization which serves as a transitional stage in life between family and society (Gumus, 2018). Based on the role primary schools play in the development of skills and morals, every community aspires to have one where children could be trained. In the same vein, every government aspires to build

primary schools in communities where children's behaviour could be positively shaped.

The school comprises the site, buildings, play grounds, health clinics and all forms of school equipment and all other facilities (Asiabaka, 2015). School plant planning takes cognizance of plan, erection and arrangement of all facilities to ensure that educational goals are attained. The school plant is also known as the controlled environment which facilitates teaching and learning process as well as the well-being of the occupants. Oyesola (2007) states that the school plant availability is to satisfy educational goals which have been predetermined by educational planners. A good school plant enhances better school programmers and the community needs by providing a place for psychological and physical safety for pupils/teachers which enhance the quality and quantity of instructions. Asiyai (2012) pointed out that School plant availability and utilization include school location, instructional space, administrative space, classroom facilities, recreational facilities which are relevant in the teaching and learning process in the educational system. The rate at which these spaces may enhance proper teaching and learning depends on the location of structure and facilities within the school environment. A proper school plant in terms of location, structure and facilities would encourage effective teaching and learning and enhance better learning environment.

However, Akpakwu (2012) states that school plant should start and end with the students and staff. This means that school facilities should be designed to satisfy the needs of both staff and students. In view of the foregoing, a well-developed curriculum would not succeed if it is not supported with adequate physical facilities that are adequately organized and also a well-trained teacher who can improvise materials not provided for effective teaching/learning activities. Indeed, teaching and learning and other sporting activities of the school can only successfully take place in a conducive environment that is planned and organized. The school plant therefore has to create favorable environments for teachers to use their creativity and knowledge in teaching and for the students to learn properly (Elujekwute, 2015).

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **Concept of Education and Educational Goal Attainment**

Education is broadly a process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary for individual and national development. As a purposeful activity, it transcends mere transmission of knowledge; but also nurtures critical thinking, socialization, and moral values essential for meaningful participation in societal life (UNESCO, 2015). Education serves both individual and collective ends by expanding human potential and preparing learners to engage effectively with the complexities of modern society.

In the Nigerian context, education is perceived as a vehicle for national development, aimed to produce individuals who are not only literate and employable but also capable of fostering social cohesion, equity, and economic growth (FRN, 2013). Nigeria's philosophy of education emphasizes the inclusion of knowledge with cultural and societal values to promote self-reliant individuals who can contribute positively to the nation's progress (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013)

Furthermore, education is considered a significant yardstick to human existence in this modern world and the means of developing human capital and national improvement (Ayeni and Adepoju, 2012). According to Okochi (2019) education has become the contemporary creed and about the surest root for a country wishing to attain economic growth and development. Akinsolu (2012) noted that education is an indispensable means of transmitting skills and knowledge that are required by individuals to fully participate and contribute to the development of economic, social and political activities of any country. There are different levels of education in Nigeria which include: pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013).

The concept of education in the National; Policy of Education aligns with outcome-centered theories, where the educational process is structured around clearly defined goals or outcomes that learners are expected to demonstrate upon completion of a programme or course of study.

Educational goals refer to the desired outcomes that an education system seeks to achieve, reflecting both national aspirations and specific developmental imperatives. These goals include: the cognitive (knowledge acquisition), affective (attitude and value formation), and psychomotor (skills development) domains of learning. In Nigeria, the goals as expressed in the NPE comprise producing well-rounded individuals capable of contributing to the economic life, fostering national unity, nurturing ethical values, and ensuring lifelong learning opportunities for all (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013).

Educational goal attainment is the process through which these targeted outcomes are realized. It involves the systematic mobilization and integration of human, material, and financial resources to translate educational plans and objectives into observable and measurable accomplishments. The achievement of educational goal is both an evaluative and procedural paradigm. Evaluative is assessing the degree to which intended learning outcomes have been achieved, and procedural entails the implementation of reasonable strategies, policies, and structures that support effective teaching and learning (Oxford Index, 2018 as cited in search results).

In the Nigerian setting, the attainment of educational goals is intricately linked to the quality of school plant planning and the educational environment. Effective planning ensures that inputs such as curriculum design, instructional materials, teacher competencies, and physical infrastructure are associated with desired outcomes. Yakubu and Sowunmi, (2025) observed that school plant planning includes adequate buildings, laboratories, classrooms, and other

infrastructural facilities that plays a vital role in creating conducive environments that facilitate the teaching/learning process and thereby enhance the likelihood of achieving educational goals. Physical facilities not only support instructional delivery but also influence learners' motivation, safety, and overall academic performance, all of which are essential to goal attainment.

Furthermore, educational goal attainment must be understood as a dynamic process influenced by policy implementation, effective management practices, and continuous evaluation. Strategic planning involving the articulation of clear objectives, resource allocation, and monitoring is critical to ensuring that educational systems remain responsive to societal needs and capable of achieving established goals at various levels of education.

The achievement of the overall goals and objectives of education revolves around the ability of the learners to utilize the various opportunities offered by the educational institution and its environment.

### **Concept of School Plant**

School plant focuses on planning and organization of the facilities inside the school. According to Nwokocha (2008) School plant is identifying, selecting and acquiring a suitable site of the school to be located, erecting appropriate physical structure that will assist in achieving the educational goals. According to Yakubu (2017) school plant is usually defined to include the site, the building, equipment and all facilities of a school or the controlled environment which facilitates the teaching and learning process while at the same time take care well-being of the users. Akubue (2009) defines school plant to embrace permanent and semi-permanent structures as well as machines laboratory equipment, workshop tools, the chalkboards among others. The planning process involves siting, construction and provision of recreation spaces for the achievement of educational objectives. School plant is a comprehensive process in which a suitable site is chosen and adequate buildings are designed with the aim of satisfying the educational needs of the pupils and teachers. According to Elujekwute (2015), essentially, school buildings are designed to meet the educational programmers' requirement and satisfy the students and teachers physical and emotional needs.

The physical needs of staff and students can only be met by ensuring safe structures, adequate sanitary facilities, balanced visual environment, an appropriate thermal environment and sufficient accommodation of their work and relaxation. The emotional needs of both staff and pupils can be met by creating conducive and pleasant surroundings, a friendly environment and an inspiring school environment that is capable of increasing students' academic performance.

The quality of instruction in the school depends on the type of school structures/buildings and the learning environment. This is the reason why it emphasized that the school building should be adequately considered, planned effectively and executed thoroughly to allow for effective teaching and learning. It is in the light of this, that the pupils are considered very important in the school

plant planning. The whole environment should be that which satisfy all the overall developmental, cognitive, social and emotional needs of the pupils. It includes the procurement and maintenance of the school physical facilities for effective and efficient teaching and learning.

In school plant, there are five major spaces necessary on the school site to enable it carry on the effective activities of teaching and learning. These major spaces are:

- i. instructional spaces that are set aside for pupils to receive instructions and include classrooms, auditorium, gymnasium, library, laboratory, workshops, art room, music room, multipurpose rooms and all other rooms set aside for pupils to receive learning instructions.
- ii. Administrative space is any major spaces on the school site, set aside for administrative offices of the school administrators, and other staff member offices.
- iii. Circulation spaces are meant to occur in corridors, lobby, staircases and other spaces where students can recreate.
- iv. Convenience space are designed for toilets, bathrooms cafeteria, kitchen, dormitories, custodian sheds, and stores among others.
- v. Accessories spaces are spaces meant for car parks, relaxation and football, tennis field volleyball court, etc.

The availability of these facilities according to Elujekwute (2015), determines the quality of instructions and students' performance in the schools internally and externally conducted examinations. Akpan (2013) opines that school plant embraces both permanent and semi-permanent structures on the school premises as well as means of transport; and teaching equipment that are the non-consumable materials in the schools for the promotion of teaching and learning activities. School plant is considered as the entire scope of physical infrastructural facilities provided in the school for the purpose of educating the child (Nte, 2009). Further, Nte (2009) added that open spaces are useful part of school structure. This space might be undeveloped facilities which may not seem to be useful but can serve as a forest or game reserves for educational purposes as well as wind breaks and air filters for the school premises. School plant consist of the basic systems and structures which a viable school or institution needs in order to function effectively and to fulfil the purpose for which it was established (Olagboye, 1998). Similarly, Arowojolu, Yinusa, Ameh, &Arowoloju (2019) citing Dimmock (2004) and Adegoke (2005) stated that school plant includes the site, the environment, the building, facilities and equipment and this includes the permanent structures such as workshops, libraries, classrooms, laboratories and semi-permanent structures like the educational system itself. For this paper, school plant is seen as both the physical environment, structures and facilities as well as the system engaged within the school for the purpose of promoting teaching and learning

School plant is necessary ingredients towards the achievement of effective teaching and learning activities. Uko (2015) observes that inspectors' reports over the years have indicated that there is abundant evidence of catalogue of inadequacies in the provision and judicious utilization of school buildings and instructional materials. Uko further states that the proportion of increase in pupil population in Nigeria primary schools is much higher than the proportion of increase in the provision of school plant. This is worrisome that government has not considered the need to expand or put in place new school plant in the same proportion to student population growth. This has led to over-utilization of the existing school plant because of the pressure on them. Therefore, management of school is the process of planning to meet the needs of the school in term of physical facilities, maintaining and keeping such facilities in good condition at all times so that the facilities can be used as at when needed for teaching and learning activities.

School plant or school physical facilities are essential aspect of educational management. Effective and efficient teaching and learning may not be achieved if schools are wrongly located or sited and if classrooms are not well constructed or if equipment available are over-utilized, under-utilized or are not well maintained. Ogundele and Moronfoye (2013) posit that effective management of school plant is a must to make the school pleasant, save and comfortable place for the activities of the community.

One of the important duties of the school administrators is the maintenance of school plant. According to Elujekwute (2015) maintenance of school plant is an important aspect of school management. These are the activities embarked upon by educational administrator to ensure that educational institutions remain in the same good state. These activities include repairs, servicing, painting, greasing among others. Elujekwute further maintains that maintenance can be those activities put in place to keep and restore the original condition of an item, when activities such as repairs, servicing, painting among others are put in place to keep or restore the original condition of an item is being maintained. The aim of maintenance of school plant is to ensure that it remains in the best condition for educational instruction at all times. Emetarom (2003) observes that construction of a new block of classroom and other building alteration to the existing building are not the whole housing effort, it also involves the continuing operation and maintenance of the school plant. It is therefore necessary for educational administrators to have the knowledge of operating and maintaining school plant. School plant maintenance requires maximum cooperation and hard work from the officers of Ministry of Education, the school administrators, the school staff (academic and non-academic) the pupils and the community where the educational institution is located. According to Akpakwu (2012), the types of school plant maintenance include:

- a. preventive and predictive maintenance,
- b. corrective and emergency maintenance,

- c. breakdown maintenance,
- d. running maintenance, and
- e. shutdown maintenance.

It is not just imperative that educational institution should have a functional school plant, it is equally very important that each school plant be well managed.

### **Factors for School Plant Design**

The functional and effective school plant involves a combination of variety of factors, which as important as all of them might be, yet their order of priority should not be neglected. Nte (2009) points out extensively that there is a primary focus for every school plant, hence it should not be toyed with else the achievement of the educational goals and objectives will be a mirage even where other factors seem to be present. The foremost factor to be considered in a school plant design is for whom the school is primarily meant for.

Schools are established for learners; therefore, school plant design should consider the learners first. Pupils are in school in order to derive mental/intellectual, physical and social development (Nte, 2009). Further Nte stated that physical plant planners should learn to integrate various elements into the school environment to ensure a comprehensive school plant that project the aforementioned development (intellectual, physical and social). The neglect of this auspicious factor contributes to the decay witnessed in most of our schools.

The overall development of the learner is a critical factor so as to produce less of half-baked graduates both at the basic, secondary and tertiary levels. Discussing on the essential characteristics of school plant in India, Khan (n.d) stressed on the attractive and serene nature of the school which is primarily meant to be aesthetically pleasing to promote conducive atmosphere for learning. Amanchukwu and Ololube (2015) citing Nwagwu (1978) and Ogusanju (1980) maintained that the quality of education that children receive bears direct relevance to the availability or lack of physical facilities and overall atmosphere in which learning takes place.

Another issue is the teacher-factor. Teachers are regarded as the main operators of the school system. This means that for learning to be meaningful and rewarding, the teachers concern should be a major concern in school plant. The teachers' space which includes office, convenience, common room, teaching facilities and materials should be adequately catered for.

In addition to learners and teachers' consideration, the community in which the school is sited is of great importance. The community should be the immediate and direct beneficiary of the education. This implies that the facilities offered by the school plant must be comprehensive to meet the needs of the community. Stressing on this, Nte (2009) stated that engaging the instrument of school mapping would go a long way to actually meet the needs. Systematically school mapping is based on the geographical differentiation of the entire district for the purpose of locating suitable school sites on the basis of nearer neighbor

analysis, based on the minimization of the distance to school. By implication, school mapping is contingent on a combination of various factors, which include population rate, fertility trends, morbidity ratios and migration patterns, in order to determine who needs what in terms of school facilities in a particular environment. It is not justifiable to site more primary schools in a community that already had two, rather another type of institution, either the post basic or vocational school should be an option.

Furthermore, the climate and landscape of the immediate environment where the school is to be located is greatly considered. The climate determines the nature of construction materials and type of building to be sited. In the rain forest area for example the external coating of the house and roofing pattern should be such that can withstand heavy rainfall.

### **Constraints to Effective School Plant Planning Implementation in Nigeria**

Policy implementation has constituted a major problem not only in Nigeria but in most nations of the world. It has been observed by many scholars that the foremost reason why Nigeria in particular is continually enlisted among the developing nations irrespective of the abundant human and material resources is due to poor policy implementation (Nte, 2009; Masau, 2016; Bashar & Sambo, 2019). Due to the hasty practice of implementers, very little or nothing is achieved. This is a challenge in school plant planning implementation.

Sometimes, the students' educational needs are undermined and other vital factors in order to complete the project in a record time. It was due to the myriads of challenges experienced in plan implementation that Hogwood and Gunn (n.d, p.184) pointed out that the probability of a successful implementation would be high if careful attention is given to potential problems of implementation. The following propositions to be considered by policy makers to ensure that:

- Circumstances, external to the implementing agency do not impose crippling constraints;
- Adequate time and sufficient resources are made available;
- There are no restrictions in terms of overall resources, and even at each stage in the implementation process;
- Policy to be implemented based upon a valid theory of cause and effect;
- Relationship between cause and effect is direct and are few,
- There is a single implementing agency that need not depend on other agencies for success;
- There is complete understanding of, and agreement upon the objectives to be achieved, and that these conditions persist throughout implementation process
- There is perfect communication and coordination among all the various elements involved; and
- Those in authority can demand and obtain perfect obedience.

Some of the challenges militating against the effective implementation of school plant planning are as follows but not limited to:

1. the challenge of inaccurate statistical data which undermines the effort of making proper planning for whom the facilities planned for. The inaccurate data is dependent on many factors ranging from politics, insufficient funding, inadequate qualified personnel, and mediocrity.
2. the administrative challenge, which according to Allagoa (2017) is the tussle between the technocrats and bureaucrats. Each claim superiority over the other, whereas they complement each other for the proper implementation of the school plant planning.
3. the manpower challenge which is expressed in the appointment of unqualified or quack personnel as school plant planners. Invariably, not much would be achieved in a situation where square pegs are placed in a round hole.
4. the funding challenge, the insignificant budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria is getting worse as the years go by. The budgetary allocation to education as approved by the United Nations as the minimum for the educational system is yet to be a reality.
5. the problem associated with the implementation of educational budget. One of the major reasons for budget is for allocation of resources for judicious purposes. Educational budget and budgeting is concerned specifically with the business of education at all levels. While educational budget is a blue print which is meant to guide actions towards educational goal attainment.

Apparently, educational budgeting is specifically designed to achieve a number of objectives in education industry owing to the fact that education is a large and complex industry that its demands are difficult to satisfy especially in the less developed countries. This is due to the multiplication of the educational objectives which Agabi (2002) affirms that most educational programs have multiple objectives which pursues economic, political, social and cultural objectives.

Further Agabi states that these objectives are not just multiple but intertwined. In other words, it is not very easy to separate the pursuit of one from the other. This poses a problem when an approval of a plan is made, the fund ends up servicing more issues which invariably results to shortage. In another vein, there is the problem of role duplications between establishments and departments performing similar functions and tasks. Agabi (2002), notes that the confusion of who has the responsibility of performing a given task is common. This escalates education budget, as funds are not properly channeled to where they are actually needed.

6. corruption which has become a perennial problem in Nigeria. This manifests in misappropriation and underutilization of funds set aside for the procurement of facilities. It is worrisome that the system is underfunded, yet the little fund approved are embezzled and diverted to personal purse (Basha & Sambo, 2019).
7. the ineffective maintenance culture. School plant maintenance is keeping records of the facilities, supervising the facilities, planning for the facilities, motivating students and teachers to participate in facilities maintenance and evaluating the available facilities (Asiyai, 2012).

Most school plants do not stand the test of time due to carelessness and nonchalant attitude exhibited by the school management who see such facilities as ‘government properties’.

### **Conclusion**

School plant planning is one of the pathways to achieving educational goals. School plant generally determines the state of the school, how prepared the school is to engage in the business of teaching and learning, how the needs and aspirations of the pupils are catered for and met, how the teachers and other staff needs, welfare and comfort are considered, and how the available facilities are managed and maintained. If these indices are vigorously pursued, learning environment will be more conducive, teaching and learning facilitated and educational objectives achieved. However, several challenges have made this a mere wish, therefore the following recommendations are made:

- i. Considering the scarce resources, planners and school managers/administrators and those on whose shoulders lie the implementation of school should prioritize adequate school plant.
- ii. School managers/administrators should develop a patriotic lifestyle towards school facilities and structures and as well transmit same to the students.
- iii. School plant planners should be adequately equipped by the government so as to do thorough jobs.
- iv. Efficient and functional maintenance program should be outlined and duties specified.

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