Assessing the Implementation of one of the Principles of Child Friendly School Model in Public Primary and Secondary Schools in Enugu State.

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Abstract

Child Friendly School Model is an innovative strategy developed in United Nations level to enhance grassroots education for all children irrespective of race, nationality, gender, or physical disabilities. This model was developed to meet the requirements of trendy education practices in schools especially in developing countries including Nigeria. The purpose is to help salvage the salient lapses in some areas in basic educational system, such as poor enrolment and increase in school dropouts in public schools. To meet the objectives of enhancing grassroots education, Child Friendly School Model follows fundamental principles that guide its system and management. One of these principles is that schools must have healthy and health-seeking environments. Unfortunately, many public schools in Enugu State do not implement this principle. Survey design guided this study. The population of this study was the entire teachers and school heads in primary and Secondary Public Schools in Enugu State. 600 respondents were sampled, using stratified random sampling technique. Out of this, 300 respondents each were drawn from both Primary and Secondary Schools. A structured questionnaire containing 14 items was used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using mean scores with standard deviations, derived from a 4-point rating scale. The results revealed that public schools in Enugu State do not have healthy and health-seeking environments. School children do not receive medical attention in the school, there are no adequate first Aid supplies, and sick-bays are not available in the school among other problems.

Key words: Unhealthy environments, Principles, Sickbay, Toilets, Indian hemp, child friendly, Model.

Introduction

School is the only experience that most children all over the world have in common, and the most common means by which all societies prepare their young ones for the future. On daily basis, millions of school children attend classes to learn. Some may be in permanent buildings, others in temporal ones such as in church buildings, residential houses, batchers, uncompleted buildings or under the trees that do not have play grounds, toilets, windows or ceilings, trying to learn. So, schools are not always a positive experience for all children especially in developing countries as these schools do not meet the demands of the contemporary educational practices. It can mean shivering in the cold...
unhealthy building, experiencing hunger and heat, being bitten by mosquitoes and other insects. It can also mean being forced to stay in unfurnished classrooms that do not have adequate age-appropriate desks, safe water for drinking, sick bays, first aid facilities and a lot of health services, or even being threatened by infectious diseases such as diarrhea or craw-craw. (1)

All these unhealthy environments subject-school children to stressful and health threatening conditions, not only in the school, but at home. According to (2), this can impose difficult challenges to children even to attend school regularly, complete their educational cycle or achieve expected academic output.

It is due to these educational lapses among others that Child-Friendly school model was developed at United Nation level, to help grassroots education for all children. Child-Friendly School according to (3) is any school that is child focused and child centered. This definition suggests that the school should focus all its attention on the overall well being of the child, and also act on the best interest of the child. (4) States that a school is considered child-friendly when it provides among other things a safe, clean, healthy and health-seeking environment that is protective for all children. Child-Friendly school is a school that offers healthy, health-seeking, and protective learning environment for all children irrespective of race, gender and abilities, and develops these children’s potentials to the nearest maximum.

Child-Friendly schools aim at developing a learning environment in which children are motivated and able to learn. Child-Friendly schools follow a fundamental principles.

The Principles include:
- **Child Rights and Inclusive Education**, which says that schools should address and respond to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion within the frame work of educational system.
- **Effective teaching and learning Environment**, which has to do with making the classroom environment attractive and pleasant for learners so as to enhance teaching and learning, and improve teacher productivity.
- **Safe, Supportive and protective learning environment**, where a school nurtures sense of security, safety, support and sense of belonging among students to enhance learning.
- **Healthy and health seeking learning environment**, in which children are able to function well physically mentally, socially and spiritually in order to express the full range of their unique potentials within the learning environment.
- **Gender sensitive learning Environment**, which is the ability to recognize gender issues, and eliminate gender disparity.
- **Democratic Participation and Partnership Building**: This fosters ownership, helps build cohesive communities and cultivates students and community members including family who are productive members of the society.

Historically, in the mid 1990s, UNICEF’s International Child Development Centre in Florence Italy now called the Innocent Research Centre organized a workshop that gave birth to what we know now as Child-Friendly School. Then an informal one-page document containing 13 characteristics of a child-based school began to circulate. One of these characteristics is that schools must promote mental and physical health of the child. Following the outcome of the meeting in Florence Italy also was the emergence of five basic Child-Friendly school principles. (5)

In the same 1990s, child-Friendly school Initiative in Nigeria was developed as a partnership between the Ministry of Education, UNICEF and other national and international organizations in response to the dire state of education in Nigeria, (6). It was agreed that all social systems and agencies which affect children should be based on the principles of the convention on the right of the child. A healthy environment therefore becomes a human right (7). One of the principles or dimensions of the Child-Friendly school model is that Child-Friendly School must have healthy and health-seeking environment (5).

Every child according to (8) has the right to live and learn, and play on healthy places. A healthy
environment can save millions of lives, reduce diseases and provide safer, and healthier world for children's future. The biggest threats to children’s health lurk in the very places that should be safest-home, school and community. Dangers such as polluted air, lack of basic sanitations, contaminated water, disease bearing insects and poor ventilation to mention but a few, present health risks that disproportionately affect children and cause a huge and unnecessary toll of diseases and death, WHO laments that millions of children are deprived of proper education due to unhealthy school environment. No wonder Child-Friendly School model emphasizes that quality education takes into consideration the fact that the health and well-being of children to attend schools is ensured.

Healthy and health-seeking environment stresses that schools have healthy and protective classrooms. It ensures a healthy, hygienic and safe learning environment with adequate clean water, adequate sanitary facilities, healthy classrooms, healthy policies and practices. The principle of healthy and health-seeking learning environment is characterized by:
- a healthy and health-seeking learning environment that provides children with a place that is fun, healthy and engaging, a place where children can play, be protected from diseases, express their views and participate actively in the learning process.
- an environment where children can receive medical services when necessary.
- a healthy, hygienic and clean classroom with healthy policies and practices.
- a provision of health services.
- an environment that provides adequate and appropriate school resources such as sanitary facilities, good toilets and urinaries.
- a supply of age-appropriate furniture for proper physical development, effective learning and appropriate sitting posture.
- a provision of life skilled based health education
- a learning environment devoid of dangerous weapons and items.
- a learning environment with spacious and well ventilated classrooms. (9) and (5).

It is important to note that Nigerian nation as a partner in Child-Friendly school has made a substantial progress towards embracing Child-Friendly school programme. According to UNICEF evaluation in 2009, Nigeria has made provisions of schools that are Child-Friendly, especially in Schools' efforts to reach out to enroll all children in all the states irrespective of tribe, gender and abilities, and there seemed to be a positive attitude toward the provision of education for all. However, according to the report, many children still attend schools with health issues, inadequate nutrition, and many schools had few or no resources available for medical intervention. The reports also revealed poor hygienic practices in Nigerian schools.

In Enugu state, educational system in Primary & Secondary schools attaches much importance on academic productivity which necessitates teachers' and students’ regular attendance to school. However, less importance is given to children’s health in the school which warrants that the learning environments must be healthy if the children will have high positive health status, for the attainment of health and education related millennium goals.

Public schools in Enugu state may not have good healthy environments as majority do not have health facilities such as sick bays, and health personnel or trained first aider in case of emergency. Many schools according to observations do not have good drinking water in classrooms, good toilets and urinaries for both gender, wash hand basins with soap and hand towels to enable children keep themselves clean and healthy. In some schools, there are spoil and dilapidated toilets where children defecate around the entrance and use papers and leaves to wrap their feaces. In many other schools, children dump and burn their refuse in open environment, and inhale unhealthy smokes and toxins.

In Enugu state today, primary and secondary schools harbour children who smoke Indian Hemp and indulge in other hard drugs. Students fight their fellow children with guns and other dangerous weapons while teachers keep quiet to save their lives.
All these unhealthy behaviours can cause a lot of health problems among the students.

Statement of Problem

Children as an adage says are the leaders of tomorrow. In all nations of the world, children are usually prepared for this leadership in the home and especially at school. Schools are therefore established for learning where these children develop their potentials. For children to learn and develop, they must be healthy and for them to be healthy, the environment in which they learn must be healthy and health-seeking. But if the environment is not healthy, the teaching and learning processes will not be effective may lead to children performing poorly in academic activities, dropping out of school and decline in school enrolment.

There has been reports that Nigerian schools are not friendly partially due to poor implementation of some of the principles or dimensions of child-friendly school especially the principle that stresses on healthy and health-seeking environment. (11) opines that Nigerian learning environment is unhealthy. The health of a child is the beginning of readiness to learn because even sick cows do not eat grass. It is against this background that this work tries to assess the implementation of the principle of child-friendly school which emphasizes that school must have healthy and health-seeking learning environment.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to assess whether Child-Friendly school Principle which stresses on school having healthy and health seeking-learning environment is being implemented in public schools in Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to;
1. find out whether public schools in Enugu State have healthy and health-seeking learning environment.
2. find out the areas in which public schools in Enugu State have healthy and health-seeking learning environment.

Research Questions

The following Research questions guided the study:

1. What the status of public schools in Enugu State in terms of healthiness and health seeking learning environment?
2. In which areas do public schools in Enugu state have healthy and health-seeking learning environments?

Method:

The study employed survey research design. The focus was to assess the implementation of one of the principles of Child-Friendly school model in Public Schools in Enugu State. The study was carried out in some public primary and secondary schools in Enugu state. The population of the study was all the teachers and school heads in public schools in Enugu state. 600 respondents were drawn using stratified random sampling technique. Out of this number, 300 respondents each were sampled from both primary and secondary schools.

A structured questionnaire titled Assessing the Implementation of Principle of Child-Friendly School "AIPOCS" was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section I contained respondents’ personal bio-data, while sections II & III sought information to answer research questions 1x2. The data collected were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviations, derived from a four-point rating scale. In using mean score to answer the research questions, any item with mean score of 2.50 or above was accepted while any mean score less than 2.50 was rejected. The value of 2.50 was therefore considered as the bench mark for decision making.

Results:

Research Question I:

What the status of public schools in Enugu State in terms of healthiness and health seeking learning environment?

Table I: Mean scores and standard deviations of the respondents on whether Enugu state public schools have healthy and health-seeking environments:-
The data in table one revealed that the respondents rated 7 items out of 9 items negative since those items do not have mean scores up to 2.50. That implies that there are no laws or school rules and regulations that guide students and staff against making the school unhealthy and not health-seeking learning environments. In the other way round, it means that students are not prohibited by laws from keeping the learning environment unhealthy.

Research question II:
In what ways are the learning environment in public schools in Enugu state healthy and health-seeking?

Table II: Means scores and standard deviations of the respondents on the ways in which learning environments in the public schools in Enugu state are healthy and health-seeking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The use of drugs not prescribed by qualified doctors</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bringing guns inside the school premises</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bullying fellow students</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Going outside the school gate before dismissal without permission</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Smoking inside the school</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bringing daggers and or jack-knives in the school</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The sale and or taking of alcohol</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Corporal punishment</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>School is void of broken bottles and sharp objects</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data in table two indicated that the respondents rated only 3 items out of 14 are the areas in which the school learning environments are healthy. However, II items indicated areas where the learning environments are not healthy. The 3 healthy practices or areas scored 2.50 and above and are therefore accepted while the II areas are below 2.50 indicating rejection.

**Discussions**

The results in table one revealed that public schools in Enugu state do not have healthy and health seeking environment. In other words, there is no written down rules and regulations given to students in most of the schools that prohibit children from abusing or misusing drugs; bringing guns or dangerous weapons in the school, smoking, corporal punishment and keeping or overlooking the presence of broken bottles or sharp objects in the school premises. The findings are in line with the findings of (12) which after assessing the effectiveness of Child-Friendly School programme in Nigeria, reported that Nigerian school children had health issues. The report also stated that most schools in Nigeria lacked resources for intervention in the areas of children attending schools with ill-Health. The findings are also in agreement with (13) findings that most Nigerian schools are not Child-Friendly in terms of health. This does not mean that there may not be some teachers or other school staff who may advise students against some unhealthy behaviours such as smoking, or that school heads do not frown at such behaviours. But such pieces of advice may be on personal observations and may not be strictly followed which may not have strong influence and restrictions on the children or students. There are no hand books in many schools for children to guide them against such unhealthy behaviours.

The findings in table two showed that majority of public schools in Enugu state do not measure up in areas that indicate healthy and health-seeking environments. The findings revealed that in most schools, children do not receive medical attention when necessary. There are no adequate first aid facilities, good toilets, and or, urinary in most schools. The findings in this work support the reports by 14 that 64.6 per cent of public primary schools in Enugu State had no toilet facilities at all, and that 35.4 percent had only one toilet for both staff and students.
pupils irrespective of their gender. In primary schools, pupil to toilet ratio is 152 pupils to one toilet. In secondary school according to the reports, 155 students are to one toilet. However, the reports did not comment on the functionality and cleanliness of the toilets. The findings are in agreement with report conducted on schools in Nigeria by Federal Ministry of Health, and Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with (14) which revealed that school children in Nigeria have several health issues due to lack of health and sanitation facilities (9).

The findings of this study also revealed that the few available toilets and urinary are not washed with disinfectant regularly. The data in this work also indicated lack of safe drinking water, nutritional supplements. These findings conform to the findings of that Nigerian schools have food and water insecurity, malnutrition and unhygienic surroundings.

The findings are also in support of the state Annual Reports on schools by (14) which revealed that only 3 percent of primary schools and 4.2 percent of secondary schools in Enugu state had access to pipe born water.

The findings in this work also revealed that medical personnel/ specialists and health counselors do not visit Enugu state public schools from time to time for medical check-ups and medical advice. It has also been revealed by this study that there were no provisions of life skill-based health education for school children.

Conclusion
From the foregoing, it is very clear that public schools in Enugu state are not friendly since the environments are not healthy and health-seeking. In other words, most of the schools do not have healthy learning environment for children to learn. In such environments, children cannot develop appropriate skills, knowledge and potentials. This is because human beings especially children are the centre of concerns for future sustainable development, and must be healthy. The unhealthy learning environment in Enugu state is capable enough to make learning impossible as children cannot learn effectively in the classroom under unhealthy conditions.

Monitoring of Learning Achievement MLA according (10) reported that lack of suitable learning environment constitutes major impediments to effective learning at the basic education level. Unhealthy environments on children can result to school dropout, low environment truancy and even death of children. Therefore, for children to learn, the classroom must be healthy, and health-seeking. It must be safe, and supportive. This means all forms of safety, and security while at school. Clean water if thirsty, good convenience, if pressed, medical attention when necessary and medical check-up for physical fitness.

When all the learning environments are enriched adequately, learning becomes effective with healthy children. Although government and UNICEF have been making efforts to create conducive environment for learning by making primary and secondary schools Child-Friendly, the findings in this work revealed that more is required to put all schools in order if children will be healthy to learn and healthy enough to continue to attend school.

Recommendations
The following recommendations were made,
1. For schools and education systems to move progressively towards quality standards, the dimensions of Child-Friendly school model especially the dimension of healthy and health-seeking environment must be taken care of adequately. A healthy and health-seeking environment ensures the health and well-being of the child, while improving the teaching and learning processes.
2. Enugu state education stake-holders should make learning environment to be healthy by providing all it takes to make children healthy and fit for learning. Quality healthy environment should be sought for so as to make it possible for all children to access schools, survive from grade to grade and complete academic cycle in time.

There is therefore urgent need for making Enugu state school environment Child-Friendly.

Reference


