

Classroom Environment and Learning Process of Primary School Pupils in Nyabushozi County, Kiruhura district

Kyakuwadde Jacklean¹, Dr. Denis Kintu (PhD), Ronald Bahat (PhD), Dr Enock Barigye (PhD)

^{1,2,3} (Faculty of Education, Arts and Media Studies, Bishop Stuart University, Mbarara Uganda)

Corresponding author: Kyakuwadde Jacklean

ABSTRACT: This study investigated the influence of classroom environment on the learning process of primary school pupils in Nyabushozi County, Kiruhura District. The study utilized a descriptive survey research design where both qualitative and quantitative data was collected. Data was collected on a sample of 210 respondents using both the questionnaire survey and interview methods. From the study, it was found that Inactive learners tend to sit at the back of the class. This affects their learning process in that they do not concentrate as they are far from the teacher's sight especially when the class is big. Pupils are positioned where they can read and copy from the chalkboard to assist them in their learning process in class. The researcher recommends that schools need to identify the factors responsible for affecting classroom environment such as classroom facilities, teacher-pupil ratio, classroom seats, sitting arrangements, thereby help to regulate them accordingly to improve the learning process of learners and the consequent academic performance. Secondly, in line with how learning process takes place in classrooms, the researcher recommends that school administrators should put in extra efforts to improve the teachers' weak areas, through availing effective instructional materials, ensuring time management among teachers by regular sensitization on time usage. Finally on the effect of Classroom environment on the Learning Process of Primary School Pupils, the researcher recommends that teamwork should be maintained for the education system to move on smoothly since it helps teachers to accomplish their tasks in time and hence the learner will get what they are supposed to learn which brings about a better performance in the long run.

Keywords: Classroom Environment, Learning Process, Teaching

I. INTRODUCTION

In the year 1966, the Commissioner of the United States Department of Education and Welfare conducted a survey and found that classroom environment was determined by race, color, religion, or national origin in public educational institutions at all levels in the United States (Coleman *et al.*, 2017). Over the past 95 Years in England, The study of classroom environment was one way of understanding what happens in classroom during the learning process, (Lee, 2017). In study conducted in Egypt, Farooq further showed that classroom environment develops the knowledge, interest, ideals, attitudes, habits, skills and powers, whereby learners find it a right place in the social order and use that position to shape themselves and the society both towards the higher and vital ends (Farooq, 2018).

In Kenya, Dadzie, (2018) conducted a study in public primary schools in Manga Division and revealed that classroom environment consists of many factors such as learning aids for instance textbooks, charts and is linked to better learning process through sharing of resources in schools. More so, in Uganda, Today, classroom is considered among the most factors that influence learning process of learners at all levels since it leads to educational goals and encompasses new ideas such as liberation of learners, critical thinking about presented information, skills needed for the modern society, empathy and complex vocational skills (Wasanga and Somerset 2018). Katabaro, and Sumra, (2017) in their study conducted in western Uganda of which Kiruhura is part, revealed that effective learning process is attributed to conducive classroom environment or layout which encourages learners' emotional needs and teachers to protect the coherence of their lessons with conducive environment and provision of enough instructional teaching learning aids.

The pressures on the primary school system in Kiruhura district come from the introduction of the classroom environment itself, where more children are now eligible to go to the next class because of the government's policy of automatic promotion that affects teacher-pupil ratio, sitting arrangement, nature of the classroom (Kasibante, 2012). Observations from the recent studies reveal that there has been an increasing poor performance of pupils in Nyabushozi County- Kiruhura district (UNEB, 2019). Pupils in many schools have a lasting record of poor performance which is evident in pupils' results in UNEB examinations for the recent years (UNEB portal 2017-2021). Most primary schools in Kiruhura especially government-aided have poor structures and because of this teachers and learners experienced poor learning process environment with no enough seats and high teacher-pupil ratio (District Inspector of schools report, 2019).

Report by the New Vision of 16th July 2018 presented pupils from Kiruhura studying under the tree and others in semi-finished classrooms. This leaves learners with unfavorable environment to concentrate on their studies that may lead to poor learning process. This study investigated the extent to which classroom environment affects the learning process in primary schools of Nyabushozi County, Kiruhura district and give amicable solutions to this problem.

This study was guided by the following objectives and research questions:

- i. To examine the factors influencing classroom environment in primary schools of Nyabushozi County, Kiruhura District.
- ii. To establish how learning process takes place in classrooms of primary schools in Nyabushozi County, Kiruhura District.
- iii. To establish the relationship between classroom environment and learning process in primary schools of Nyabushozi County, Kiruhura District.

Research Questions

- i. What are the factors influencing classroom environment in primary schools of Nyabushozi County, Kiruhura District?
- ii. How does learning process take place in classrooms of primary schools in Nyabushozi County, Kiruhura District?

Research Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between classroom environment and learning process in primary schools of Nyabushozi County, Kiruhura District.

Significances of the study

It is hoped that the findings of this study would assist the Ministry of Education on setting guidelines to improve classroom environment that has a direct influence on learning process in primary schools.

The findings of this study may help head teachers and School Management Committees to evaluate the classroom environment into which learning process is being implemented.

The study findings may help teachers' understanding of some issues with classroom environment and how they undermine quality of education.

The study findings will also provide related literature to other researchers for further studies on classroom environment and learning process in the education sector and other related sectors.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Underpinnings

The study was based on Humanistic learning theory by Abraham Maslow (which prioritizes human needs and interests (Rogers, 1959). The key proponents of this learning theory are Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Malcolm Knowles. The theory focuses on the necessities of an individual that grow and develop over the lifespan (Edword, 2019; Huitt, 2019). Further, Humanist Learning Theory strives to address the learner's personal development. Learning is "...from the perspective of the human potential for growth." (Learning in Adulthood, 2007). Abraham Maslow is a humanistic theorist and explained that every person is born with a set of basic needs as; biological and physiological, safety, belongingness or love, self-esteem, and self-actualization needs. He believed that when lower needs are fulfilled, the higher level needs emerge (Madsen and Wilson, 2017). Schools following this theory should provide these needs of pupils. Environment firstly should provide the biological and physiological needs like clean air, comfort, temperature, good lighting and class buildings. Besides, it should be safe enough for pupils to feel emotionally secured.

The humanistic learning theory develops and harnesses the idea that if learners are upset, sad, or distressed, they're less likely to be able to focus on learning. This encourages teachers to create a classroom environment that helps pupils feel comfortable and safe so they can focus on their learning. The theory further encourages self-esteem that requires classroom learning process to be equal for all learners; so that the learner believes that every pupil has the same rights at school and he/she feels being respected by others and classroom learning process must offer choices of spaces which can reveal pupils' potential and help them to do what they aimed (Madsen and Wilson, 2017).

The factors influencing Classroom Environment in Primary Schools

The classroom environment is an important determinant of teaching and pupil learning in primary schools (Fraser, 2019). Fraser, further asserts that a classroom environment that is conducive and suits the needs of the teachers and pupils, as well as complements the classroom activities can help improve the learning outcomes. Wong (2018) also revealed that sitting arrangement is a crucial factor that influences the classroom design that leads to proper attention of learners because teachers would interact and influence the learning process comfort level, which in turn would affect learning effectiveness. This is due to the fact that the learning process in primary schools is not just a physical space, but classroom sitting arrangement is important (Wong, 2018).

As the classroom sitting environment deteriorates, supervision and concentration of learners weakens, triggering in the teacher what has been referred to as a burnout cascade (Jennings & Greenberg, 2019) under these conditions, teachers' response to learners' behavior may become hostile and disciplinary reactions that may disrupt pupils' motivation and contribute to a self-sustaining cycle of classroom disruption. Over time high levels of distress may lead to burnout (Grawitch & Barber, 2018) and a downward spiral of deteriorating learning process behavior and achievement (Osher *et al.*, 2017).

Peng *et al* (2018) stated that Learners tended to perform better academically, demonstrated greater levels of effort and persistence in classrooms, and exhibited superior fluency, flexibility, and creativity in classrooms where teachers were perceived to emphasize learning and improving.

Suleman and Hussain (2017) reported that studies on the classroom environment revealed that physical environment plays a vital role in the teaching-learning process. It can affect the performance of both teachers and learners. The classroom environment includes many different facets. The environment can include the placement of tables and chairs, lighting and temperature, classroom management, discipline techniques, and engaging lesson plans.

How learning process takes place in classrooms of primary schools

According to Arend (2017), revealed that the learning process cannot take place without putting classroom size, teaching methods and time management. In formal education settings, it occurs as a result of interaction among members of the classroom. In classroom settings, elements of learning process aids include: chalk boards, charts, pictures, graphs and museums. The learning process means the conditions in which learning take place. Each classroom has unique teaching - learning conditions.

While innovation of technology as an instructional aid provides a significant relief for oversaturated classrooms, it does not automatically fix the problem (Sang, 2017). Even if 35 pupils are equipped with personal devices in order to learn at their own pace, often a lone teacher bears the responsibility of ensuring everyone is on track and engaged. Sang, (2017) further revealed that when a teacher is able to check in with individual pupil, he or she usually will not have the bandwidth to stay very long. Where classroom technology can shine, however, is making a teacher's time more malleable.

Personalized learning tools such as Chrome books or online learning modules are well positioned to make productive use of pupil's time, allowing teachers to utilize their time for meetings with small groups and individuals. Online tools can foster mastery of basic skills; for instance, a refresher lesson in algebra. More complex issues, such as a pupil's lack of confidence in their learning ability, are better suited to face-to-face interactions with a teacher, (Sang, 2017).

The relationship between classroom environment and learning process in primary schools

Teacher-pupil ratio, primary in Nigeria was 36.03 as of 2010. Its highest value over the past 40 years was 46.09 in 2007, while its lowest value was 33.88 in 1975. Primary school teacher-pupil ratio is the number of pupils enrolled in primary school divided by the number of primary school teachers (regardless of their teaching assignment).

Classes with too many pupils are often disrupting to education. Also, too many pupils in a class result in a diverse field of pupil, with varying degrees of learning ability. Consequently, the class will spend time for less academic pupil to assimilate the information, when that time could be better spent progressing through the curriculum. In this way, teacher-pupil ratios are compelling arguments for advanced or honors classes. Numerous sources argue that lower pupil to teacher ratios are better at teaching pupil complex subjects such as physics, mathematics and chemistry, than those with a higher ratio of pupil to teachers. Commonly the schools with lower pupil to teacher ratios are more exclusive, have a higher attendance of whites, and are in non-inner urban areas and/or fee-paying (non-government) institutions.

The teacher-pupil ratio in most developing countries is in a worrying state. UNESCO (2017), estimated that over 84 per cent of classrooms had over 40 pupils per teacher. Majority of the countries that have teacher-pupil ratio exceeding 40:1 are in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. Sub Saharan Africa has the largest teacher-pupil ratio with Congo having a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:54, Mali 1:55, Mozambique 1:67, Rwanda 1:65, Ethiopia and Malawi hovering around 1:70, South Asian countries such as Afghanistan with 1:83, Cambodia 1:50, and Bangladesh 1:50. (UNESCO, Institute of statistics, 2018).

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study was based on the descriptive and correlational research design. This was because the design helped to determine the presence and degree of a relationship among the study variables. With the correlational research design, the main interest was to determine whether the study variables correlated and if so, to establish the direction, magnitude, and form of the observed relationships (Ellis & Levy, 2009). Using the correlation design, the researcher was able to determine whether a significant association existed between classroom environment and learning process of primary school pupils in Nyabushozi County, Kiruhura district.

The study was carried out in Nyabushozi county, Kiruhura district, and Western Uganda. Kiruhura district is bordered by Lyantonde district to the East, Rakai district to the South-East, Isingiro district to the South, Mbarara district to the South-West and Mbarara City to the South-West. The district headquarters are approximately 65 Kilometres (40 miles), by road, North-East of Mbarara, the largest town in the Ankole sub-region.

Population and Sampling Procedures

The sample comprised 285 respondents selected using the Table for determining sample size for a population of a given size by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The sample was selected using stratified random sampling. Stratified random sampling involved dividing the sample into different subgroups. Thereafter, the respondents were selected proportionally from the different subgroup.

Table 1: Target Population and Sample Procedures

Category	Population	Sample size	Sampling
DEO	01	01	Purposive sampling
DIS	01	01	Purposive sampling
Head teachers	50	44	Simple random sampling
Eng. Teachers	50	44	Simple random sampling
P.6 Pupils	1000	195	Simple random sampling
Total	1102	285	

Validity and Reliability

To ensure data quality, validity and reliability tests were carried out. The validity test involved calculating of content validity index to determine the validity of the instrument.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Data management involved processing of the data by coding, entering them into the computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 24.0), summarizing them using frequency tables to identify errors and editing them to remove errors. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involved the means while inferential statistics included Pearson Linear correlation and regression analysis.

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