



# New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences



Volume 6, Issue 7 (2019) 082-087

Selected Paper of 10th World Conference on Learning, Teaching and Educational Leadership (WCLTA-2019) 01-03 November 2019, Novotel Conference Center Athens – Greece

## Management of learning facilities

**Obasi Veronica Kingsley\***, School of Science Education, Abia State College of Education Technical, Arochukwu, Nigeria

### Suggested Citation:

Kingsley, O. V. (2019). Management of learning facilities. *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences*. [Online]. 6(7), pp 082–087. Available from: [www.prosoc.eu](http://www.prosoc.eu)

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Jesus Garcia Laborda, Alcala University  
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### Abstract

Facilities management is an integral part of the overall management of the school. The actualisation of the goals and objectives of education requires the provision, maximum utilisation and appropriate management of the facilities. The primary purpose of the teaching and learning process is to bring about in the learner desirable change in behaviour through critical thinking. These processes do not take place in a vacuum but rather in an environment structured to facilitate learning. As stated in the conference objective, the match between an individual's characteristics with the learning environment together with the management of those learning environment is also important. Learning facilities management is a process that ensures that buildings and other technical systems support the operation of an organisation. This will improve the quality of teaching and learning facilities. A direct relationship exists between the quality of learning facilities provided and the quality of the products of the school. The physical environment of a school is a major determining factor in the attainment of its objectives. This paper describes the concept, nature, types of learning facilities, the need for learning facilities in the school and facility management methodologist. It recommended among others that school managers and teachers who constantly use learning facilities be given orientation on the maintenance of such facilities.

**Keywords:** Learning, facilities, management and need for learning facilities.

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\* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **Obasi Veronica Kingsley**, School of Science Education, Abia State College of Education Technical, Arochukwu, Nigeria. *E-mail address:* [obasivero12@gmail.com](mailto:obasivero12@gmail.com)

## 1. Introduction

The quality of education delivered by teachers and the academic achievement of students of any school is dependent on several factors of which learning facilities are paramount. One major index for measuring the successful implementation of any education programme is the provision and management of the facilities available for such a programme. It is an essential and good means of measuring the standard and quality of education. The primary purpose of the teaching and learning process is to bring about the learner desirable change in behaviour through critical thinking. This process does not take place in a vacuum but rather in an environment structured to facilitate learning. Education is the basis for the preparation of an individual to take his place in society. This primary objective of preparing an individual to live effectively and contribute to the development of his society can only be attained by exposing the individual to well-planned learning opportunities and experience.

As stated in the conference objective, there is a match between an individual's characteristics with the environment in which learning takes place together with the management of those learning environment. The teaching outcome in all areas of a learner cannot be distinguished from other learning facilities to which we have been exposed to.

Olutola (1988) described that the teacher as well as his students is certainly influenced by their physical environment that includes classrooms, libraries, laboratories, staffrooms, desks, chairs, and tables. According to Peretomode (2006), the quality of student's learning their general character and contribution to individual and national development depends on the learning facilities available to them. Similarly, vein Tawari (1991) and Ukeje, Okorie and Nwagbara (1992) expressed their opinion that if learning facilities are adequately provided and managed in the schools, then the expected outputs can be achieved.

The quantity and quality of learning facilities such as classrooms, libraries, laboratories and staffrooms may enhance or mar the quality of teaching and learning and consequently impact on the academic performance of students. The failure to relate enrolment projections to the provision of classroom and other learning facilities may be responsible for the unconducive teaching-learning environment in secondary schools and consequently for the poor academic performance of students. Onyejemezi (1991) noted that all learners in various levels of the nation's educational systems should be provided with appropriate learning experiences. Systematic integration of a variety of resources in a teaching-learning process or environment produces an appropriate learning experience, which in turn result in an effective and meaningful learning output. Asiabaka (2014) described 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.

These facilities play a pivotal role in the actualisation of the educational goals and objectives by satisfying the physical and emotional needs of the staff and students of the school. In the words of Asiabaka, 'the physical needs are met through provision of safe structure, adequate sanitary facilities, a balanced environment, appropriate thermal environment, and sufficient shelter space for his work and play'. Facilities management is a process that ensures that buildings and other technical systems support the operation of an organisation. The International Facilities Management Association (2002) described facilities management as the practice of coordination of the physical workplace with the people and the work of the organisation; it integrates the principles of business administration, architecture and the behavioural and engineering sciences. This involves, among other things, collective decision making in relation to the selection of a site for the establishment of new schools, design and construction of new school plants including grounds, renovation and modernisation of old plants, provision of equipment for academic and non-academic activities, maintenance of all facilities and review of management practices and process.

## 2. Concept of learning facilities

Education is the basis for the preparation of an individual to take his place in society. These primary objectives of preparing an individual to live effectively and contribute to the development of his society can only be attained by exposing the individual to well-planned learning opportunities and experiences. Olutola (1988) described that the teacher as well as his students is certainly influenced by their physical environment and such physical environment includes classroom, libraries, laboratories, staffroom, desks, chairs and tables.

Onyejemezi (1991) noted that all learners in various levels of the nation's education systems should be provided with appropriate learning experiences. Systematic integration of a variety of resources in a teaching-learning process or environment produces appropriate learning experiences, which in turn result in an effective and meaningful learning output. Education like every other enterprise or organisation has aims and objectives. To achieve the objectives, resources are the basic requirement. Peretomode (1995) described learning facilities as tangible items used for imparting knowledge in order to achieve educational aims and objectives.

Ogbodo (1995) described that learning facilities should be effective teaching and learning in the school. He also refers to learning facilities as school plants which include laboratories, workshops and libraries, teaching aids and devices such as modern educational hardware and their software in the form of magnetic tapes, films and transparencies. Learning facilities include classrooms, laboratories, workshops, and other buildings, playfields, school farms and gardens, electrical fixtures, the school environment, toilet facilities and potable water (Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja, December 1998). These can be regarded as indirect teaching facilities, which have relevance to the teaching-learning process, which might affect the academic performance of students. Other learning facilities include equipment, computers, textbooks, school records, writing materials, chalkboards and other teaching aids. These are the direct teaching facilities, which are used during the teaching process. Learning facilities include raw materials or natural resources, which the organisation (school) controls. Sometimes learning facilities exist before the organisation (school) and are then brought on the control of the organisation. Learning facilities can also be acquired by the organisation through various legal ways available to it.

Ehiamentalor (2001) described that learning facilities are educational inputs, which enable a teacher to achieve some level of instructional efficiency and effectiveness. He noted that the school is like a manufacturing organisation where plants and equipment must be in top operational shape to produce a result, which he further asserted that it is more than anything else in learning achievements. In this era of accelerated technology development, modern learning facilities are not only important but also available in a usable state.

Schools exist for the purpose of teaching and learning. Human and material resources are deployed for this purpose. School facilities can be defined as those things that enable the teacher to do his/her work very well and helping the learners to learn effectively. The chalkboard, for example, facilitates the imparting of information on the learner (Lawanson and Gede, 2011). School facilities are the material resources provided for staff and students to optimise their productivity in the teaching and learning process. Ehiamentalor (2001) described that learning facilities are educational inputs, which enable a teacher to achieve some level of instruction efficiency and effectiveness. He noted that the school is like a manufacturing organisation where plants and equipment must be in top operational shape to produce a result. He further asserted that more than anything else learning facilities are necessary for utmost learning achievement. In this era of accelerated technology and development, modern learning facilities such as magnetic tapes, films and transparencies are not only important but also available in a usable state. The realisation that the transfer of knowledge does not only take place in the four walls of the classroom from the teacher to the students but also takes place in learning through discovery and, exploration, and interaction with the internal and external environments has necessitated the creative and innovative development of teaching and learning facilities that reflect

these changes. Schools exist to serve the socio-economic and political needs of the ever-changing society. Consequently, they are in constant interaction with their external environment. They receive inputs from the external environment in the form of human and material resources, process them and empty the same into the society as finished products and services. The quality of the product bears a direct relationship with the quality of the facilities deployed in the process of production. This demands that state-of-the-art facilities are provided in schools to prepare school leavers for life in the global village. According to Propst (1972, p. 107), useful types of resources to be contacted by the planners and the management team are acoustical design engineering, audiovisual design engineering, behavioural sciences, building system design, community and press relations, ecological studies, electronic data processing of hardware specifications, electronic data processing for programme development; use of facilities training and financial planning. This implies that facilities management is a collective responsibility of the federal, state, and local government authorities, staff and students of the individual schools and the community where the school is located.

Ayeni and Atanda (2004) classified learning facilities into two categories namely direct teaching facilities and non-teaching facilities. The various types of equipment required in a classroom range from desks, chairs, blackboards, cupboards to shelves, dustbins, dusters and wash hand basins are all learning facilities.

### **3. The need for learning facilities in school**

Learning facilities include classrooms, laboratories, workshops, and other buildings, playfields, school farms and gardens, electrical fixtures, the school environment, toilet facilities and potable water (Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja, December 1998).

These learning facilities are used:

1. To illustrate concepts
2. To provide opportunity for first-hand experience
3. For experimentation and demonstration
4. For scientific investigation and discovery
5. To provide a diversity of thoughts
6. For observation and inquiry
7. For the development of scientific attitudes and skills
8. To protect the individual and also provide comfort

The indirect or teaching support facilities such as offices, cafeteria, acoustics, toilets, laundry, movers, residential halls, common rooms, cleaning materials, ground and similar items satisfy the individual's physical and emotional needs. They are used to:

1. Increase instructional effectiveness
2. Reduce the operational cost and life cycle cost of a building
3. Improve the cleanness, orderliness and safety of facilities
4. Extend the useful life of a building
5. Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the staff and students
6. Improve building appearance
7. Use data collection and analyses for decision making

### **4. Management of learning facilities**

Nwankwo (2014) stated that management in the context of education involves the arrangement of the human and material resources and programmes available for education and carefully and systematically using them for achieving educational objectives. Ehiamentalor (2001) stated that

learning facilities are educational inputs, which enable a teacher to achieve some level of instructional efficiency and effectiveness.

The responsibility of the management of facilities requires collective efforts. Management processes that involve planning, organising, decision making, leading, coordinating and controlling are applied in facilities management. Broadened educational goals and objectives as a result of changes in socio-economic development have necessitated the involvement of several minds in the facilities management process. It requires expert input from a wide range of stakeholders. Collaborative efforts bring into facilities management new ideas and perspectives. Adeogun (2001) discovered that teachers who regularly monitor and supervise their student's learning difficulties are likely to have students who exhibit a higher level of achievement.

According to Iheonunekwu (2012), the management of learning facilities involves the utilisation, inspection and maintenance of learning facilities to accomplish the designated objective. He further observed that in the secondary school system, it is the *prima facie* function of the principal who is the chief executive officer; whereas in the primary school system it is the headmaster or the headmistress as the case may be. For management to be effective, it must seek to produce the required or targeted results. Campbell, Briggs and Nystrand (1977) described that management of learning facilities depends on their location, age and easy accessibility. In addition, they argue that these are structures, which are more or less permanent and built for specific programmes. Effective management of learning facilities requires that the principal formulate plans to ensure adequate utilisation, supervision and maintenance of these facilities. These components of management of facilities are discussed below:

## 5. Methodologies for learning facilities management

Asiabaka (2014) identified planning as the first logical step in learning facilities management. A plan for learning facilities management must be an integral part of the overall federal state and local government educational master plan.

A learning facility management plan starts with the educational philosophy that serves the needs of the individual in a dynamic and knowledge-based economy (Asiabaka, 2014).

The educational system should prepare individuals for life in a constantly changing world. Learning facility management plan should therefore give meaning to the educational philosophy.

A second step is the development of board educational goals and specific objectives. These goals and objectives should be comprehensive enough to cover all aspects of the educational programme and also make adequate room for flexibility to allow for a specific individual and group needs.

Brooks and Atkin (2003) outlined the stages in learning facilities management as follows:

*Analysis stage* – assembles all relevant facts about the organisation objectives, needs, policies, a review of resource process, systems and the physical assets themselves, together with their attributes in terms of space, function and utilisation.

*Solution stage* – assembles criteria for judging options, evaluating these against the objectives of the organisation and develops the facility management strategy.

*Implementation stage* – completes the strategy development process through the establishment of an implementable plan that incorporates the key elements of procurement, training and importantly communication.

## 6. Recommendation

The presenter has the following recommendations to make:

1. School managers and teachers who constantly use learning facilities be given orientation on the maintenance of such learning facilities.
2. There should be proper planning on the management of learning facilities so that the objective for which they were meant will be achieved.
3. School managers should ensure that modern learning facilities like magnetic tapes, films and transparencies be included in their selection of facilities.

## 7. Conclusion

Learning facilities give meaning to the teaching and learning process. School managers should carry out a comprehensive assessment of the facilities to determine areas of need. This requires an integrated effort with all aspects of learning facilities. The actualisation of the goals and objectives of education requires the provision and appropriate management of the facilities.

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