

School Culture and Students' Attitude towards Learning: A Case Study of Vocational Education, University of Uyo, Nigeria

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Abstract

The main focus of this study was on school culture and students' attitude towards learning in the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. To achieve this objective, two specific objectives, two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Survey research design was used for the study. The population for the study consisted of 130 Business Education students in the Department of Vocational Education, University of Uyo, purposive sampling technique was used to adopt all 130 respondents. A structured questionnaire titled: School Culture and Students Attitude to Learning Questionnaire (SCSALQ) was used for data collection. Validation was done by three experts in the Department of Vocational Education, University of Uyo, while reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha and a coefficient of 0.87 was obtained. Pearson"Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to answer research questions and test all the null hypotheses. The result indicates a statistical significant relationship between school culture and students' attitude towards learning in the Universities. It was recommended that adequate relationship between the Universities and the community should be established by the University Management to enhance effective discipline among students.

Keywords: School Culture, Student, Attitude and Learning.

Introduction

The world of Universities has for centuries been a force for globalization. The experiences of students having studied abroad, and of faculty having worked at Universities in other countries, point to considerable differences in teaching and learning styles between countries. There is an overwhelming amount of anecdotal information about striking differences and entertaining misunderstandings, told and retold at academic meetings, but also a growing empirical and analytical literature providing evidence of those differences. Nordhaug, (2001) have commented on the different approaches to teaching while Hofstede (2001), illustrated his famous 4 dimensions drawing on personal teaching experiences from a number of Universities and the differences have been addressed from the strategic-institutional perspective of educational establishments encountering globalization and privatization. Together, there is strong evidence as asserted by Jarvis (2001) that attitudes to professorial authority, degrees of student participation in teaching and learning, and approaches to knowledge at Universities vary widely across nations.

It is often assumed that the globalization of higher education may lead to a convergence of values and norms in line with Levitt's prediction (Levitt,2005), that the world, due to increased international communication would move towards a common, global set of preferences. In an analysis of 1300 foreign students at the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, Gooderham and Nordhaug (2001) thus found strong similarities between the values of students coming from 11 European countries, concluding that a significant convergence of values is taking place across Europe.

However, while the institutions display large differences from country to country, the surveyed students do not. The students have relatively similar preferences independently of their country of origin and are more egalitarian and participation oriented than the international average of Universities. The students do not seem to be influenced by neither the culture of their home University, nor the exchange University where they have studied for a semester or two (Nordhaug 2001). School culture is the set of norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the 'persona' of the school. School culture generally refers to the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions, but the term also encompasses more concrete issues such as the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, or the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural diversity. School culture has become a central concept in many efforts to change how schools operate and improve educational results. Nordhaug (2001) noted that school culture is heavily influenced by its institutional history. Culture also shapes social patterns, habits, and dynamics that influence future behaviors, which could become an obstacle to reform and improvement

School culture results from both conscious and unconscious perspectives, values, interactions, and practices, and it is heavily shaped by a school's particular institutional history. Students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other staff members all contribute to their school's culture, as do other influences such as the community in which the school is located, the policies that govern how it operates, or the principles upon which the school was founded. School cultures can be divided into two basic forms: positive cultures *and* negativecultures. Numerous researchers, educators, and writers have attempted to define the major features of positive and negative school cultures. Broadly defined, positive school cultures are conducive to professional satisfaction, morale, and effectiveness, as well as to student learning, fulfillment, and well-being. The following list is a representative selection of a few characteristics commonly associated with positive school cultures: (Thurstone, 2008)

- The individual successes of teachers and students are recognized and celebrated.
- Relationships and interactions are characterized by openness, trust, respect, and appreciation.

- Staff relationships are collegial, collaborative, and productive, and all staff members are held to high professional standards.
- Students and staff members feel emotionally and physical safe, and the school's policies and facilities promote student safety.
- School leaders, teachers, and staff members model positive, healthy behaviors for students.
- Mistakes are not punished as failures, but they are seen as opportunities to learn and grow for both students and educators.
- Students are consistently held to high academic expectations, and a majority of students meet or exceed those expectations.
- Important leadership decisions are made collaboratively with input from staff members, students, and parents.
- Criticism, when voiced, is constructive and well-intentioned, not antagonistic or self-serving.
- Educational resources and learning opportunities are equitably distributed, and all students, including minorities and students with disabilities.
- All students have access to the academic support and services they may need to succeed. According to Fullan (2007) school culture is defined as the guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates. 'School culture' can be used to encompass all the attitudes, expected behaviors and values that impact how the school operates.(Thurstone, 2008).

It is imperative that we clarify meaning of the term attitude. As a concept, attitude is an elusive term that is not tangible, but has to be inferred from the world or experience This implies that attitude is an index of an individual's thoughts and feelings about people, objects and issues in the environment (Ajzen, 2008). Thus, attitudes are crucial in understanding the way people perceive the world around them, as they determine what a person will see and hear and think and do, thus making them central to life (Jahoda and Warren, 2006). In this context attitude formation and change is an important part of identifying and explaining an individual's attitude to an object or issue

The literature on school culture makes it clear that effective schools that is, schools that demonstrate high standards of achievement in academics, have a culture characterized by a well-defined set of goals that all members of the school administration, faculty, and students value and promote. School Administrators are positioned to establish and clearly communicate goals that define the expectations of the school with regard to academic achievement, and also the Vice Chancellors rally the constituency of lecturers and students to support those goals, as the motivation to achieve the goals is likely to follow. Most reviews of the effective school literature point to the consensus that school culture and climate are

central to academic success (Mackenzie 2003). Typical of the findings is the summary of Purkey and Smith (2003), who in their review of the literature on effective schools found a close correlation between positive school culture and academic quality. The literature indicates that a student's chance for success in learning cognitive skills is heavily influenced by the climate of the school. A school-level culture press in the direction of academic achievement helps shape the environment and climate in which the student learns. An academically effective school would be likely to have clear goals related to student achievement, lecturers and parents with high expectations, and a structure designed to maximize opportunities for students to learn. A press for academic success among gender is more likely to be realized the goal than a climate that emphasizes affective growth or social development.

As socially constructed concept gender is all around us (Gauld.& Hukins, 2000). Gender is actually from the moment a child is born. Gender expectations and messages bombard female and male constantly through upbringing, culture, peers, community, media, and religion, which influence the shape of our understanding of this, core aspect of identity. Gendered interaction between parent and child begin as soon as the sex of the baby is known by helping the female or male child appreciate her/his sex. Like other social constructs, gender is closely monitored by society. Practically everything in the society is assigned a gender role. Toys, colours, clothes and behaviours are some of the more obvious examples. As a result of a combination of social conditioning and personal preference, most children prefer activities and exhibit behaviors typically associated with their sex, accepted social gender roles and expectations are so entrenched in Nigerian culture that most people cannot imagine any other way. Accordingly, individuals fitting neatly into these expectations rarely question what gender really means. Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relationship between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable. It determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. It has been observed that in Nigeria post and level of appointment is disproportionate and in favour of men. A negative attitude is self-defeating and will cause many problems in life. A negative attitude is caused by limiting beliefs and negative thinking. It is a frame of mind whereby a person is unhappy and sees that everything is unfair and is working against ones overall happiness. Ebel, (2008) ascertain that development of a negative attitude will naturally inhibit the development of scientific attitudes in learners.

Discipline as a school culture is one of the most effective factors in learning process. In the modern educational plans, the main purpose of discipline is to create the educational environment and opportunities for learning process. Indeed, discipline is an instrument for

realizing the high educational goals that leads to the students' growth and progress in every dimension. In order to attain to this, the student acquires a level of self-discipline and self-control (Golkar 2008). The positive discipline is one of the modern discipline approaches. The positive discipline is a plan that was designed for educating younger individual so that they become a mannerly, technician, and responsible ones in their societies. The encouragement and mutual respect among students and adults (including lecturers, parents, and coaches) are the most important social skills that are learned in this approach (Mcvitte, 2007). The lecturer encourages his/her students for expressing their believes and also they are permitted to select their interests in the classrooms with positive discipline approaches. In such conditions, it will be possible to solve the group problems and conditions of the classroom will became to the partnership, collaboration, and mutual respect climate.

Statement of the Problem

It is obvious that successful transformation of education sector depends on the roles and decisions taken by the leaders. Hence school culture is needed to help direct student toward effective learning in the school. It has been observed that student learning has slowed down in the schools due to some external interference. It is therefore necessary to examine school culture and students attitude towards learning in the Department of Vocational Education, University of Uyo.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between school culture and students attitude towards learning in University of Uyo. Specifically the study sought to:

1. Determine the relationships between school discipline and students attitude towards learning in the Department of Vocational Education, University of Uyo.
2. Determine the relationships between gender and students attitude towards learning in the Department of Vocational Education, University of Uyo.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between school discipline and students attitude towards learning in the Department of Vocational Education, University of Uyo.?
2. What is the relationship between gender and students attitude towards learning in the Department of Vocational Education, University of Uyo.?

Null Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between school discipline and students attitude towards learning in the Department of Vocational Education, University of Uyo.
2. There is no significant relationship between gender and students attitude towards learning in the Department of Vocational Education, University of Uyo.

Methodology

This study designed was descriptive survey. The study population comprised all the Business Education students from the Department of Vocational Education University of Uyo. There

were 130 students. A purposive sampling technique was used for all the year three students for the study.

The instrument used to collect data was questionnaire, tagged “School Culture and Student Attitude towards Learning Questionnaire” (SCSALQ). It was a self-administered questionnaire that consists of ten (10) items. The items are individually measured on 5 point Likert Scale, of 5,4,3,2 and 1. Section A of the questionnaire was on personal variables section B sought information on school culture, while section C sought information on attitude towards learning. Face validity of the instrument were certified by three validates from the Department of Vocational Education. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha which yielded .87 coefficients. Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (PPMC) was used to answer research questions and null hypotheses. When $P < .05$ reject the null hypothesis and retained when $P > .05$.

Decision rule

($\pm .00$ to $+.20$ = Very low), ($\pm .20$ to $+.40$ = Low), ($\pm .40$ to $+.60$ = Moderate)
($\pm .60$ to $+.1.00$ = Very high)

Results

Research Question 1

1. What is the relationship between school discipline and students attitude towards learning in the Department of Vocational Education, University of Uyo.?

Table 1: Relationship between school discipline and students attitude towards learning in the Department of Vocational Education, University of Uyo.

Variables	Y	X ²	XY	r
Discipline (X)	396	1584		
Students' attitudes (Y)	352	1298	1408	.59

Table 1 indicated a calculated correlation coefficient (r) of .59 which shows a moderate relationship between school discipline and students attitude towards learning in the department of vocational Education University of Uyo. This high level of relationship implies that the greater the school discipline the greater positive students' attitudes towards learning.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between gender and students attitude towards learning in the Department of Vocational Education, University of Uyo

Table 2: The relationship between gender and students attitude towards learning in the Department of Vocational Education in terms of gender

Variables	Y	X ²	XY	r
Gender (X)	384	1524		
Students' attitudes (Y)	352	1255	1359	-.60

Table 2 indicated a calculated correlation coefficient (r) of -.60 which shows a negative moderate relationship between gender and students attitude towards learning in the Department of Vocational Education University of Uyo. This implies that when there is restriction/emphasis as a result of gender role of Vocational Education students, the negative students' attitudes towards learning is achieved.

Testing of Null Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between school discipline and students attitude towards learning in the Department of Vocational Education, University of Uyo.

Table 3: Analysis of the Relationship of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of school discipline and students' attitude towards learning.

Variables	Y	X ²	XY	r	Sig.
Discipline (X)	396	1584			
Students' attitudes (Y)	352	1298	1408	.59	.002

The summary of data analysis in Table 3 indicated an r- value of .59 with a *df* 2, 128. The significant value of the (r) is .002. Since the significant value (r) .002 is less than the .05 alpha level, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between school discipline and students attitude towards learning is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between school discipline and students' attitude towards learning.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between gender and students attitude towards learning in the universities.

Table 4: Analysis of the Relationship of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of gender and students attitude towards Learning

Variables	Y	X ²	XY	r	Sig.
Gender (X)	384	1524			
Students' attitudes (Y)	352	1255	1359	-.60	.006

Students' attitudes (Y)	352	1255
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The summary of data analysis in Table 4 indicated an r -value of $-.60$ with a df of 128 . The significant value of the (r) is $.006$. Since the significant value (r) $.006$ is less than the $.05$ alpha level. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between gender and students attitude towards learning is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between gender and students' attitude towards learning.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of null hypothesis one of the study indicates a significant relationship between school discipline and students' attitude towards learning. The result is in line with the typical of the findings of Purkey and Smith (2003), who found a close correlation between positive school culture and academic quality. The literature indicates that a student's chance for success in learning cognitive skills is heavily influenced by the climate of the school. A school-level culture press in the direction of academic achievement helps shape the environment and climate in which the student learns. This implies that imbuing discipline in the school as a culture is paramount in enhancing learning.

Furthermore, the finding of null hypothesis two of the study indicates a significant relationship between gender and students' attitude towards learning. This implies that the greater school culture the greater the attitude of male and female students towards learning. These findings are in line with the finding of (Nordhaug, 2001) who noted that school culture are beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions. In line with the findings the researchers asserted that school culture encompasses more concrete issues such as the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, as such the University administrator should embrace and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural diversity. School culture has become a central concept in many efforts to change how schools operate and improve educational results. While a school culture is heavily influenced by its institutional history, culture also shapes social patterns, habits, and dynamics that influence future behaviors, which could become an obstacle to reform and improvement.

Conclusion

School culture is an indicator for academic success. Keeping expectations high for students and lecturers is fundamental to achieving academic success. Students tend to excel in cultures where they are supported, nurtured, and valued as key stakeholders. The findings of the research suggest that school Administrators must maintain an awareness of the importance of school culture to the students' on teaching and learning.

Recommendations

1. Adequate relationship between the University and the community should be established by the University Management to enhance effective discipline among students.
2. Male and female students in the Department of Vocational Education should be given re-orientation for proper adherence to the norms of the University in order for foster attitude towards good academic success.

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