THE SCHOOL PLANT AS SATISFYING THE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF THE LEARNER IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

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ABSTRACT
This paper tries to define what a school plant is and then assesses the school plant as a controlled environment which facilitates the teaching learning process and needs improvement in order to satisfy the needs of the learner in the 3rd Millennium.

INTRODUCTION.
Society is constantly experiencing change in varying aspects. Vocational and technical education in the 3rd millennium is never left behind. Its role in the development of study aids and the school plant in general therefore comes to focus. It should be realized that, the policy of developing a school building should be a continuous one, as educational conditions and educational needs are constantly changing. These changes should be recognized in the continuing development of the building plan. Many community variables such as changes in relationship between population and wealth of the community tend to affect the school building programme.

Some think education is just the development of physical, mental and spiritual potentialities of man. Such people think education is simply the molding of the whole man (Wholistic view). They also state that education has an aim, i.e. to develop an individual to live efficiently and effectively for the benefit of himself and society in which he lives. It is understandable then why John Dewey cited in Abenga (1995) defined education as:

"A continuous process of growth having its aim at every stage an added capacity for future growth" (p27)

Education therefore needs a controlled environment such as guaranteed by the school plant. Here Vocational and technical education has an essential role to play. This chapter shall therefore consider in a particular way the following:
1. The school plant: What it is.
2. The school as a controlled environment
3. The school plant as a facilitator of the teaching learning process.
4. The school plant as satisfying the needs of the learner.
5. Suggestions for improvement in the 3rd millennium.

We shall then draw a conclusion.
THE SCHOOL PLANT: WHAT IT IS.

Over the years many authors have tried to define the school plant in various ways. A study of such definitions shows a lot of agreement on inclusive factors.

Akpakwu (1998) cites Knezevich (1953) as defining the school plant “as the space interpretation of the school curriculum” (p11) this means that the curriculum finds its physical expression in the construction and arrangement of the school plant.

Akpakwu (1998) defines the school plant “as the ability to judiciously manage the school buildings, equipment, and other relevant school facilities not only for the comfort of the learner but also for the achievement of school objectives” (p12). Yet, Udoh, Akpa, and Gyang, (1990) define the school plant to include “the site, the buildings, equipment and all facilities of a school”. In other words, it is the controlled environment which facilitates the teaching learning process while at the same time protecting the physical well-being of the occupant.

The sum total of the above definition attempts to go a long way in helping us determine and understand what the school plants is all about.

THE SCHOOL AS A CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT.

The study of the school plant is relevant because the size, type and quality of instruction have been in direct bearing with acquisition of knowledge in the school. The school site and the building are part of the broad concept known as the school plant.

The functional concept of the school plant emphasizes the effect of the plant, facilities and educational method employed within it. One may therefore view the school plant as a controlled environment that facilitates the teaching learning process as well as providing adequate physical comfort and security for the occupants. The site and location of a school therefore are of utmost importance and must meet the demands of a controlled environment.

In locating new schools, the geography of the area and population centers should be considered. Pupil residence, zoning patterns, road, underdeveloped areas, existing school facilities and other community characteristics should also be taken into consideration.

In planning new sites to meet the demand of the school as a controlled environment. Contact should be made with landowners, regional or town planners, government surveyors and village or ward heads.
In keeping with the demand of the school as a controlled environment; Udoh, Akpa, and Gyang, (1990) quoted the United States Office of Education as enumerating the following criteria for selecting a controlled environment for sitting of schools:

1) The site should be healthy and safe, this means it should be free from excessive noise, odors, smoke, dust and congested traffic.

2) The site should be suitable, having adequate space for all types of buildings, future expansion, drives, walkways, recreation, and parkways. In the location of school the element of beauty should be taken care of.

3) The economy, which includes site features like construction and maintenance of long access drive, excessive excavation, special footings or pilings, must be taken into consideration (P14).

Over a period of years, a site may change, the enrolment may increase, and the purpose of the school may be altered. A good school site will have enough flexibility to ensure satisfactory utilization of the building as could be if new outdoor activities are required. The location and usable areas of the site should be adequate for all foreseeable contingencies.

THE SCHOOL PLANT AS A FACILITATOR OF THE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS.

School plants in their location and construction should contribute to the aesthetic well being of the community as well as of the pupil. The beauty and architectural design of schools have their influence on the pupils who attend them. Besides, school buildings that are beautifully designed and placed on commodious sites in attractive environments add to the dignity of public education and to civic interest.

As we have noted that environment educates and facilitates learning, it is of great importance to note that good equipment and furnishing have a big part to play in facilitating the teaching learning process.

It is of great importance that there is enough equipment and furnishing and that they are of good quality and proper size. Items of equipment and furnishing for a school building include those that are really parts of the building and those that are not. Such items like the chalkboard are to be installed during construction of the building.
One class of equipment and furnishing items contains movable items that have to be assembled and distributed to various locations. These include chairs, desks, tables, bookcases, and etcetera.

Udoh, Akpa, and Gyang, (1990) cites Mcquade (1958) as reporting that:

*A classroom today, like an efficient office is supposed to be physically pleasant, comfortable, stimulating and adaptable to the work of its tenants. If the children are consistently restless it is no longer assumed that what they need is a stern talking to. Perhaps what they need is furniture that fits them and their work better; perhaps they need a less monotonous atmosphere in general. Perhaps they simply need action (P20).*

When viewed from this angle one sees clearly that the school plant is facilitator of the teaching/learning process.

**THE SCHOOL PLANTS AS SATISFYING THE NEEDS OF THE LEARNER.**

Anyanwu (1985) represents Abraham Maslow's popular hierarchy of needs as consisting of two basic premises. First, people are seen as being motivated by a desire to simultaneously satisfy several types of specific needs. Second, it is postulated that these needs are arranged in a hierarchical form and that people work their way through this hierarchy as their needs are satisfied.

Two kinds of needs are cited: Deficiency needs and growth needs. Deficiency needs are needs that must be satisfied if the individual is to be healthy and secure he has needs for safety, the feeling of belonging, love and respect (from others). To the extent that, if these needs are not met the individual will fall to develop a healthy personality.

Growth needs, on the other hand, refer to those needs that relate to the development and achievement of one's potential. This may be the area of great concern in the consideration of the school plant. To ensure a better understanding, let us classify Maslow's views as follows;

**DEFICIENCY NEEDS.**

1. Physiological Needs: these needs are thought to be the most basic needs and include the needs for food, water and sex.
2. Safety Needs: the second level of needs centers around the needs to provide a safe and secure physical and emotional environment, one that is free from threats to continued existence.

3. Belonging Needs: the third level consists of those needs relating to one's desire to be accepted by one's peers, to have friendships and to be loved.

GROWTH NEEDS.
1. Esteem Needs: These needs focus on one's desire to have a worthy self-image and to receive recognition, and appreciation from others for one's contributions.

2. Self-Actualization Needs: The highest needs category is the need for self-fulfillment. Here the individual is concerned with developing his or her full potential as an individual and becoming all that is possible to become.

The above can be regrouped in varying terms but with same substances. A good understanding of these could ensure a better application to the school plant in order to meet the needs of the learner. If the school plant planning starts and ends with the students/pupils, then the school buildings should be designed in such away as to satisfy the students' physical and emotional needs. The student's physical needs are met, by ensuring a safe structure; adequate sanitary facilities, abundant visual environment and sufficient shelter space for his work and play.

The emotional needs are met by creating pleasant surroundings, a friendly atmosphere and an inspiring environment. Before designing the site and buildings, the educational programs designed for the learners must be first and foremost designed. This is because the kind of spaces to be included in the education plant depends on the school curriculum. In addition, the total areas shape and special design of a classroom are determined by the school academic programme.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT.

As the 3rd millennium rages on, educational planners must take particular care of the school plant that it might meet the needs of the learners. Special care must be placed in the following areas:

1. Renovation of existing structures to meet current taste. This need not necessarily involve very expensive decorative materials. However a confident use of neat local designs that meet current tastes could be sought from our local experienced architects and designers at low cost.

2. Architectural designs of new structures must be moderated to meet current taste. There is no need holding on to the traditional missionary and colonial style of structures. There are however new cost effective designs that could satisfy the
physical and emotional needs of the learner. The school plant can make a learner feel archaic outdated, old fashioned in poor and old architectural designs.

3. Provision must be made for good equipment and furnishings. If the technical departments of our educational institutes are well funded and directed, fabrication and supply of educational equipments and furnishings could be made possible locally. To avoid importation of all educational equipment and furnishings local Industries and factories should be sponsored.

4. Effective and efficient means of communication must be provided. This will go a long way in satisfying the physical and emotional needs of the learner as well as making the teaching and learning process effective and efficient. It must be realized that teaching and learning is all about communication.

5. Accessibility and avoidance of, or minimization of risk of natural and other disasters must be considered. The school plant should be made storm resistant and fire fighting facilities be made easily available. In Nigeria these are the commonest areas of disaster.

6. Adequate funding: Here all stakeholders in the education business must be involved. Fund raising for educational purposes must be carried out on a wide scale. Government, N.G.O’s. Churches, Mission groups, Parent Teachers Association, Old Students Associations, Industries and Funding agencies must be contacted without discrimination by educational authorities and made to play their part in the funding of the school plant to satisfy physical and emotional needs of the learner in the 3rd millennium.

CONCLUSION

Udoh, Akpa, and Gyang, (1990) quotes Knezevich to have found a close relationship between the school curriculum and the school plant. He described the school plant, as the physical expression of the curriculum and that it exists to facilitate instructional program. He concluded that the school plant is a means to an end.

Adara Lagbe (1960) was cited by Udoh, Akpa, and Gyang, (1990) as pointing out that the right type of atmosphere required for effective learning is that consisting of better school buildings, more and better teaching facilities.

On the other hand Coombs (1974) cited in Udoh, Akpa, and Gyang, (1990) was said to have studied the effects of school location on students general learning habits. He discovered that the educational forces around students in rural schools are not sufficient enough to accelerate or reinforce their effort in school.
They also cited Nwegwu (1978) and Adesina (1980) as asserting that the quality of education that our children receive bears direct relevance to the available, or the lack thereof, of physical facilities and overall atmosphere in which this learning takes place. Therefore, the presence of enough teaching facilities is a strong controlling factor for academic achievement.

The school plant therefore could be seen as a controlled environment that facilitates the teaching learning process and satisfies the physical and emotional needs of the learners, with a lot of possibility of enhancement in the 3rd millennium.

REFERENCES: