

ACHIEVING GOOD SCHOOL FACILITY MAINTENANCE IN IMO STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS



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Abstract

This paper examined how instructional facilities and devices in the Imo State secondary schools can be kept functional such that the objectives of the school are attained. The paper specifically did the following: Defined the facilities and listed variables that constitute facilities. Evaluated the steps that could be taken to achieve effective management of facilities. Listed and described types of maintenance schedule which the Imo State Secondary Schools could adopt evaluated the indices that ensure the wellbeing of school facilities. It was therefore recommended amongst, others that there is need for the authorities of Imo State secondary schools to evolve reappraise policies on management and maintenance of school facilities. Specific provisions should include: (i) Statement on depreciation and life span of various equipment, (ii) The responsibility of the PTA, the principals, the teachers and students on maintenance of facilities. (iii) How often the school buildings and quarters are to be repainted etc.

Keyword: Facility, management, school development, development plan, and poor maintenance.

Ehiametalor (2001) defines facilities as those factors that enable workers to achieve the goals of an organization. Facilities are the operational inputs of the instructional programme. The facilities in schools include the following:

- ❖ Human resources
- ❖ Buildings
- ❖ Materials
- ❖ Classrooms
- ❖ Hostels
- ❖ Workshops and laboratories
- ❖ Machinery and equipment
- ❖ The library
- ❖ Recreational facilities
- ❖ Office equipment
- ❖ Learning environment

Onu and Ahukannah (2011) state that facilities and development are related because the quantity and quality of functional facilities determine the size of a class and overall carrying capacity of the school in terms of total school population, and therefore, the quality of education that children receive. Effectiveness of instruction depends on how functional the school plants are. There seems to be a level of awareness that the quality of education can be traced to the quality of facilities available to the school system (Ehiamatalor 2001; Ogonor and Sanni 2001). Curricular and extra-curricular activities of the school have their specific demands on facilities of the school. Future development will depend on the quantity and quality of facilities to support growing enrolment.

The curricula of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme contain some 28 trades core subjects. It is not possible to mount prescribed trade subjects successfully without adequate and functional facilities. Recall that the objectives of the erstwhile 6-3-3-4 system could not be fully achieved due mainly to lack of adequate facilities. It will be embarrassing if the UBE 9-3-4 scheme which replaced the 6-3-3-4 system also dies a natural death due to lack of functional facilities to support it.

Factors that Impinge on Maintenance of School Facilities

Several factors are responsible for lack of maintenance culture in Nigeria's school system. Some of the factors are:

Absence of Effective Policy: Policy ensures commitment and authority to back up actions. Absence of clearly defined policies is perhaps a strong factor to blame for lack of maintenance culture in schools. Policy should define the depreciation rate and life span of various categories of school plan. When the life span is attained the plant are boarded and replace with new ones. This ensures that new products replace the old products. For instance computers which were installed four years ago have obviously

attained their life span and become obsolete and should be replaced, not only because of reduced services and high cost of maintenance, but much more because newer computer systems have emerged. For instance, too, school buses which were purchased ten year ago have become obsolete, with high maintenance costs and therefore need to be boarded and replaced.

Poor Maintenance Culture: This is a child of policy. Many researchers tend to take maintenance culture holistically but do not agree that given availability of spare parts and good technicians that schools should continue to maintain equipment which have attained their life span. Ogonor and Sanni (2001) stress that routine and preventive maintenance is a pragmatic way to ensure that school facilities and equipment are serviced regularly to attain their specified life span.

Inadequate Budgetary Provision: Many school facilities are in a state of disrepair because budgets and estimates did not capture maintenance costs, or if captured, money was not used for the purpose for which it was meant.

No Continuity: Ehiamatalor (2001) and Osagie (2001) lamented that many budget formulators budget for procurement of new school building rather than for the maintenance of existing ones. New projects are preferred to the completion of old projects started by predecessors. Ehiamatalor frowns at school administrators who gettison the commitment of their predecessors just to claim responsibility for new projects.

Breakdown of Social Infrastructure: There is no gainsaying that failure of the defunct National Electricity Power Authority and its reincarnation in the Power Holding Company of Nigeria precipitated the failure of Nigeria's school system. Power fluctuations damaged many school facilities. Remote schools did not have electric power to operate water boreholes, fans and other classroom and office equipment. Without electricity, computers could not be useful and laptops and telephone, handsets could not be recharged. Without power supply e- learning which has become in vogue will not be fully utilized. Without power supply, water boreholes cannot release water to flush the toilets. The school environment becomes dirty and diseases spread

Destructive Tendency of Students: When pupils are left alone they begin to play with school chairs and desks and marks on them. New chairs and desks are suddenly dismembered by irresponsible and careless youth The classroom walls are smeared with nonsensical inscriptions. Fan regulators are yanked out leaving the wires bare. Green Areas of the school are not respected by careless students who create foot paths and set fire on them. How, then, could management foster maintenance of schools facilities?

Ways to Achieve Good Maintenance of School Facilities

Effective management of facilities in schools can be achieved through the following steps:

1. **Keeping Inventory of Facilities:** This will provide management with correct information on the number and location of various items, serviceable or unserviceable, moveable or immovable. It will also provide information on data of purchase, maintenance schedules and depreciation plan. An inventory plate should be hung in the Principal's Office to provide information on school buildings as follows:

School Infrastructure (Building)

Block	No. of Classrooms	Classroom Size	Class	Condition
A	6	40 pupils	JS 1A-JS 1F	Good
B	4	40 pupils	JS 2A-JS 2E	V. Good
C	5	40 pupils	SS1A-SS1D	Good

Source: Author

2. **Regular Maintenance of Equipment:** It is bad Management to continue to use a resource until it is no longer able to function. School vehicles, machines and equipment such as air conditioners, etc. should have regular servicing schedules.

3. **Regular Maintenance of Buildings:** School buildings especially the roofs and walls suffer much abuse. Therefore buildings should be repainted periodically to enhance aesthetics. Learning is easier in a clean environment. Leaking roofs should be repaired. You should not ignore a leaky roof until the ceiling underneath decays and falls off.

4. **Regular maintenance of Classroom Equipment:** It is necessary to inspect classrooms regularly to identify damaged tables, chairs, fans regulators, etc and get the damaged ones repaired before they go beyond repair. Broken fan regulators expose students to electric shock.

5. **Regular Maintenance of School Estate:** Lawns, fields, flowers, etc should be pruned regularly. There should be a schedule for cutting the grass and pruning the flowers.

6. **Regular Maintenance of School Personnel:** Human resources of the school constitute an indispensable facility. We should not forget that just as material resources age and become obsolete, human resources also age and become obsolete. Therefore human resources call for utmost care and attention. If teachers are physically and emotionally healthy and up-to-date, effective teaching and learning will occur. Therefore the school authorities should cater for the teaching and non-teaching personnel as suggested in the next section of this paper.

Types of School Facilities Maintenance

Given what has been suggested in 1-6 above, the authorities of the Imo State Secondary Schools should adopt types of maintenance schedules as enunciated by Candoli (1988) as follows:

- Preventive maintenance, ie regular maintenance to avert a total breakdown of a facility.
- Periodic maintenance, ie quarterly or periodic maintenance as prescribed by the manufacturer or specialist.
- Recurring maintenance, ie greasing of moveable parts and wheels, topping of oil, topping of radiator (for engines that are water-cooled), tightening of nuts, regular cleaning or washing.
- Emergency maintenance, ie when unexpected breakdown occurs, servicing technicians should be called to inspect and repair the facility.

The school authorities should use the checks recommended in this section to evaluate the adequacy and functionality of school facilities. I want to start with teachers as a human resources facility. Therefore how should management maintain the human resources of the Imo State Secondary School? The authorities can do this through:

- Regular payment of salaries and allowances and regular promotion
- Provision of recreational facilities such as massaging and keep-fit rooms so that when students take their own recreation, teachers also take theirs.
- Provision of canteen facilities for tea break and lunch, subsidized.
- Provision of a medical unit where giant teachers and others can check their BP and sugar level, and receive other treatment.
- Provision of baby-care rooms for nursing mothers.
- Continuing education for teachers: In-service training, sponsorship to workshop and conferences, capacity building in ICT and New Technology.
- A good dress code for teachers to ensure corporate appearance, enhance personality and attract students' respect.
- Well furnished offices with air conditioners and fans, fridge, rug;
- Good housing and transports services and car loans.
- Good human relations and spirit de cops among teachers to ensure a congenial work environment devoid of gossips, conflict.

FGN NPE (1981) states that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. That why Amadi (2004) stresses that improving the conditions of teachers is paramount. On staff development for improved school management, Ogundele (2001) found in a study on the erstwhile 6-3-3-4 system that the following conditions were at a low web.

- Working conditions
- Competitive salary levels
- Non-financial job rewards
- Institutional valuing of workforce

- Community valuing of working

Maintaining Good Classroom Environment

This calls for classrooms that are:

- Well ventilated and well lit, with instructional artifacts hung on walls.
- Well arranged sits and gangways, etc
- Spacious (not congested) classrooms

Maintaining Good School Environment

This calls for provision of:

- Recreational facilities that are in top form: well trimmed field for athletics; good lawn tennis and table tennis facilities ; etc
- Adequate toilet facilities for staff and students.
- Discipline, such that old students do not bully, exploit or maltreat their juniors.

Osagie (2001) in a study on facilities and school development, found that the education industry is a peculiar one where the quantity, quality and functionality of facilities determine the number of students to be admitted and accommodated, number of teachers and non-teaching staff to be employed and cost determination for efficient management.

Personnel Responsible for Maintaining School Facilities

Various levels of responsibility for maintenance of facilities in Imo State Secondary Schools rests with the following, as appropriate.

- The proprietors of the School
- School authorities (Principals, Directors)
- The parents-Teachers Association (PTA)
- The Teachers
- The Students
- The community in which the school is situated

Conclusion

The paper focused on deriving good school facility maintenance in secondary school Imo State. Facilities in the schools enable the workers and teachers to achieve the goals of the organization.

The facilities are the operational inputs of the institutional programme without which the school will not retire it efficiency. There should be effective maintenance culture of school facilities. The school should adopt types of maintenance schedules such as preventive maintenance, regular maintenance to avoid a total breakdown of a facility, periodic maintenance, recurring maintenance and emergency maintenance that is when unexpected breakdown occurs, servicing techniques should be called to inspect and repair the facility. Finally, functionality of facilities in school will dictate carrying

capacity and future development of schools in Imo State.

Recommendations

Recommendations have been incorporated in the discussions but are being highlighted as follows.

1. The authorities of Imo State Secondary Schools should evolve reappraise policies on management and maintenance of school facilities. Specific provisions should include:
 - i. Statement on depreciation and life span of various equipment.
 - ii. The responsibility of the PTA, the Principals, the teachers and students on maintenance.
2. The principal should prepare an inventory of school facilities, display the inventory card in the appropriate places and do a periodic audit.
3. Every computer workshop should have a dedicated technologist with office technology qualification to man the workshop and ensure that the computers and UPS are functional all the time.
4. Fire extinguisher should be positioned in strategic places as a predictive measure. The principals should ensure that this is done.
5. Regular talks should be given to students during morning assemble on the necessity to take care of school/classroom/hostel equipment.
6. The teacher, students and cleaners should be taught that touching a painted school wall is an offence. Slapping the wall with foot mat to clear sand deposits on the foot mat is also bad.
7. The authorities of Imo State Secondary Schools should use the indices enunciated in this paper to ensure proper management of school facilities.

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