

STRATEGIES FOR CREATING A CONDUCTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ENUGU EDUCATION ZONE, ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

The study examined the strategies for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in the Enugu Education Zone, Enugu State. Three specific purposes and three research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study consisted of 1,075 teachers in all secondary schools in the Enugu Education Zone, while the sample comprised 360 teachers. A valid and reliable questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Data collected in relation to the research questions were analyzed using the mean. The findings revealed that teacher–student relationship strategies were effective for creating a conducive learning environment (2.86), student–student relationship strategies were also effective (3.25), and the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) strategies was effective for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students (3.54). The study highlighted the importance of fostering positive teacher–student relationships, promoting peer interactions among students, and integrating ICT into the teaching and learning process. Consequently, the study recommended the implementation of professional development programmes for teachers to enhance their communication skills and promote positive relationships with students, among other measures.

Keywords: Conducive learning environment; teaching strategies; teacher–student relationship; student–student relationship; information and communication technology

Introduction

Education remains a fundamental instrument for individual development and societal advancement, serving as a catalyst for social, economic, and national development. In Nigeria, education is conceived as a comprehensive process aimed at developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary for meaningful participation in national growth and sustainable development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). This perspective underscores the central role of education in shaping productive citizens capable of contributing effectively to societal progress. The objectives of education in Nigeria include promoting national unity, developing critical and creative thinking, fostering innovation, and preparing individuals for global competitiveness (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Academic performance remains one of the primary measures of educational effectiveness. It reflects students' understanding, application, and mastery of knowledge, serving as a key indicator of whether the educational system meets its objectives (UNESCO, 2015). Despite some improvements in recent years, challenges persist in secondary schools, particularly in Enugu State, where disparities exist among students from different socio-economic backgrounds (Kori, 2018). Issues such as teacher shortages, overcrowded classrooms, and limited instructional resources continue to affect students' learning outcomes (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022).

Learning is the process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, and behaviors through study, experience, and interaction. A supportive learning environment is therefore essential for enhancing engagement, motivation, and academic success (Lee & Hammack, 2014; Fisher & Baird, 2023). The learning environment encompasses physical, social, and psychological dimensions that influence students' ability to focus, participate, and perform academically. Creating a conducive environment requires deliberate strategies that promote effective teaching, collaborative learning, and the well-being of students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2019). One key strategy is fostering positive teacher–student relationships, which have been linked to improved academic outcomes, increased engagement, and enhanced emotional support for students (Dike, 2018; Flook, Repetti, & Ullman, 2023; Adekola, 2019). Teachers who cultivate trust, empathy, and encouragement create classrooms where students feel valued, understood, and motivated to learn. Similarly, positive peer relationships contribute to academic success by encouraging collaboration,

peer tutoring, and shared responsibility for learning (Adenekan & Okorodudu, 2020; Ikoro, 2016; Okeke & Nwosu, 2018; Wentzel, 2019). Peer support not only enhances students' mastery of content but also fosters social skills, confidence, and a sense of belonging within the school community.

Integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into instruction represents another important strategy for creating a conducive learning environment (Adegboye & Adegbilero-Iwari, 2019; Onuoha, 2018; Hew & Brush, 2017; Okorie & Onuoha, 2020). ICT tools allow teachers to deliver personalized instruction, cater to diverse learning styles, and make learning interactive and engaging. The effective use of technology enhances students' motivation, supports self-directed learning, and provides access to a broad range of educational resources (Babalola, 2016). Teachers play a central role in shaping learning environments. Beyond delivering content, they serve as facilitators, mentors, and role models who guide students' cognitive, social, and emotional development (Akande, 2017; Tella, 2017). By implementing strategies that foster supportive teacher–student and student–student interactions, and integrating ICT into classroom practice, teachers can enhance student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement (Adeyemi, 2019; Babalola, 2016). A positive and conducive learning environment also promotes mental health, well-being, and overall student satisfaction, enabling learners to thrive both academically and personally (Adeyemi, 2019). In view of these considerations, it is crucial to examine the strategies adopted by teachers to create conducive learning environments in secondary schools. Consequently, this study focused on examining the strategies for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in the Enugu Education Zone, Enugu State, with particular emphasis on teacher–student relationships, peer interactions, and the integration of ICT.

Statement of the Problem

A conducive learning environment is essential for promoting effective teaching and learning, supporting students' academic growth, and enhancing overall educational outcomes. Ideally, secondary schools should provide well-structured classrooms, adequate infrastructure, sufficient learning resources, effective teaching methods, and meaningful teacher–student interactions. In such environments, students are expected to be motivated, engaged, and capable of achieving their full academic potential, while teachers are able to perform effectively and experience professional satisfaction. However, the current situation in secondary schools within the Enugu Education Zone falls short of this ideal. Many schools face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate facilities, limited access to instructional materials, outdated teaching approaches, and minimal teacher–student engagement. These conditions create a suboptimal learning environment that can hinder students' academic performance, reduce their motivation, and negatively affect their well-being. Teachers operating in such environments may also experience decreased job satisfaction, low morale, and reduced effectiveness, which further impacts the quality of education delivered. The problem, therefore, lies in the persistent gap between the ideal and actual learning conditions in secondary schools within the Enugu Education Zone. Despite efforts to improve infrastructure, provide learning materials, and train teachers, the existing challenges continue to limit students' academic achievement and engagement while affecting teachers' professional effectiveness. This study seeks to address this problem by examining the strategies for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in the Enugu Education Zone, Enugu State.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to examine the strategies for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. find out the extent to which teacher to student relationship strategies are effective for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone
2. ascertain the extent to which student to student relationship strategies are effective for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone
3. determine the extent to which use of ICT strategies are effective for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent are teacher to student relationship strategies effective for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone?
2. To what extent are student to student relationship strategies effective for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone?
3. To what extent is the use of ICT strategies effective for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone?

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was used in order to achieve the purpose of this study. The study was conducted in secondary schools within Enugu Education Zone. The population for the study consisted of 1863 teachers in all public secondary school in Enugu Education Zone. The sample for this study consisted of 373 which represent 20% of the population of teachers. Purposive sampling technique was adopted to sample 10 secondary schools while simple random sampling technique of balloting without replacement was used to determine the teachers that made up the respondents for this study. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The structured questionnaire was validated by three experts from Department of Education Management. The researcher obtained a letter of introduction from the Head of Department Education Management, ESUT in order to have access to the respondents. The researcher administered the questionnaire with the help of three research assistants who are fellow students. However after data collection it was found that 13 copies of the questionnaire was filled incorrectly, therefore only 360 copies of the questionnaire was used for data analysis. Data that was collected on research questions relating to the study were analyzed using mean. The decision rule was that any item with mean of 2.50 and above was regarded as great extent (GE), while mean score below 2.50 was regarded as low extent (LE).

Results

Research Question One: To what extent are teacher to student relationship strategies effective for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone?

Table 1: Mean Scores of the Respondents on teacher to student relationship strategies effective for creating a conducive learning environment

							n = 360
S/N	ITEM	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	$\bar{x}$	DECI
1	Build rapport and establish a positive connection with each student.	260	65	35		03.6	GE
2	Show genuine interest in students' well-being and academic progress.	86	84	20	110	2.07	LE
3	Provide constructive feedback and encourage open communication.	56	30	174	100	2.12	LE
4	Maintain a fair and consistent approach in classroom management.	180	50	115	5	3.07	GE
5	Use inclusive teaching techniques that cater to diverse learning styles.	106	40	114	100	2.59	GE
6	Offer mentorship and guidance to support students' personal and academic growth.	260	80	15	5	3.65	GE
Grand Mean						2.86	GE

Key: GE= Great Extent; LE = Low Extent

Table one revealed that respondents agreed with items 1, 4, 5 and 6 with a mean of 3.63, 3.07, 2.59 and 3.65 respectively. The respondents disagreed with items 2 and 3 with a mean of 2.07 and 2.12 respectively. It can be deduced that teacher to student relationship strategies are effective for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone this was represented by the grand mean of 2.86.

Research Question Two: To what extent are student to student relationship strategies effective for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone?

Table 2: Mean Scores of the Respondents on the extent to which student to student relationship strategies are effective for creating a conducive learning environment

n = 360							
S/N	ITEM	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	$\bar{x}$	DECI
7	Promote a culture of respect and kindness among students.	249	99	8	4	3.00	GE
8	Facilitate group activities that encourage teamwork and collaboration.	195	75	90	0	3.29	GE
9	Foster empathy and understanding through peer support initiatives.	261	79	15	5	3.66	GE
10	Organize peer mentoring programs to help students learn from one another.	95	55	109	101	2.40	LE
11	Implement conflict resolution strategies to address interpersonal issues effectively.	260	65	35	0	3.63	GE
12	Encourage inclusive behaviors and celebrate diversity within the student body.	220	105	30	5	3.50	GE
Grand Mean						3.25	GE

Data in Table 2 show that the respondents agreed with items 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12, which had mean scores of 3.00, 3.29, 3.66, 3.63, and 3.50, respectively. Conversely, the respondents disagreed with item 10, which had a mean score of 2.40. This indicates that student–student relationship strategies were generally effective for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone. The overall effectiveness of these strategies is reflected in the grand mean of 3.25.

Research Question Three: To what extent is the use of ICT strategies effective for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone?

Table 3: Mean Scores of the Respondents on extent is the use of ICT strategies effective for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students n = 360

S/N	ITEM	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	$\bar{x}$	DEC
13	Integrate interactive multimedia resources to enhance student engagement.	206	140	14	0	3.53	GE
14	Utilize online platforms for collaborative projects and virtual discussions.	260	80	15	5	3.65	GE
15	Incorporate educational software and apps to support personalized learning.	260	65	35	0	3.63	GE
16	Implement distance learning tools to facilitate remote education and blended learning approaches.	261	79	15	5	3.66	GE
17	Provide training for teachers and students on effective ICT use in education.	180	55	110	5	3.08	GE
18	Establish digital literacy programs to equip students with essential technological skills.	251	99	6	4	3.66	GE

Grand Mean	3.54	GE
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Data in Table 3 show that the respondents agreed with all the items 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18, which had mean scores of 3.53, 3.65, 3.63, 3.66, 3.08, and 3.66, respectively. This indicates that the use of ICT strategies was effective for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone. The overall effectiveness of these strategies is reflected in the grand mean of 3.54.

Discussion

Findings revealed that teacher to student relationship strategies are effective for creating a conducive learning environment. This finding is in line with Pianta and Hamre (2019), which demonstrated that positive and supportive teacher-student relationships have a significant impact on students' academic achievement, engagement, and overall well-being. In the context of secondary schools in Nigeria, where students face various socio-economic challenges and academic pressures, fostering strong teacher-student relationships can create a safe and nurturing environment conducive to learning. On the other hand, critics like Hamre and Pianta (2019), did not support this finding by arguing that while teacher-student relationships are important, they should not be viewed as a panacea for all challenges in the learning environment. Other factors such as curriculum design, school resources, and parental involvement also play a crucial role in creating a conducive learning environment for secondary school students in Nigeria. The researcher believes that in some cases, too much reliance on teacher support may prevent students from developing resilience and problem-solving abilities necessary for navigating challenges in the academic and real-world settings.

Findings revealed that student to student relationship strategies are effective for creating a conducive learning environment. This finding is in consonant with findings by Okeke and Nwosu (2018), which found that positive peer relationships significantly contributed to increased academic achievement among secondary school students in Nigeria. Students who had supportive relationships with their peers were more motivated and engaged in their learning, leading to improved academic performance. However, Adenekan and Okorodudu (2020), did not support this finding by stating that that negative peer influences, such as peer pressure and distractions, could hinder academic performance and disrupt the learning environment in Nigerian secondary schools. Students may be more focused on social interactions rather than academic pursuits, leading to decreased motivation and achievement. From the forgoing, the researcher believes that while positive student-student relationships can enhance the learning environment among secondary school students in Nigeria, it is essential to address potential challenges and negative influences that may arise from peer interactions.

Findings revealed that use of ICT strategies is effective for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students. This finding is in line with findings by Adegboye and Adegbilero-Iwari (2019), which revealed that the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education can enhance student engagement and improve academic performance. ICT tools such as interactive whiteboards, educational apps, and online resources enable personalized learning experiences and promote a conducive and interactive learning environment. On the other hand Okorie and Onuoha (2020), did not support this finding by stating that despite the potential benefits of ICT in education, the infrastructure and resources necessary for effective ICT implementation may be lacking in many Nigerian secondary schools. Limited access to technology, inadequate training for teachers, and inconsistent power supply can hinder the successful integration of ICT and create disparities in learning opportunities among students. On the general note, the researcher believes that while the use of ICT can be an effective strategy for promoting a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in Nigeria, addressing the challenges and barriers to ICT integration is crucial to ensuring its success. Efforts to improve infrastructure, provide professional development for educators, and enhance digital literacy among students are essential for harnessing the benefits of ICT in education and creating an equitable and engaging learning environment.

Educational Implication of the Study

The findings of this study have significant implications for education in secondary schools within the Enugu Education Zone. Firstly, the effectiveness of teacher–student relationship strategies highlights the need for school administrators and policymakers to prioritize professional development programs that enhance teachers’ communication and interpersonal skills. By fostering positive interactions between teachers and students, schools can improve student motivation, engagement, and academic performance. Secondly, the importance of student–student relationship strategies suggests that schools should create opportunities for collaborative learning, peer tutoring, and group activities. Promoting healthy peer interactions not only supports academic achievement but also cultivates social skills, a sense of responsibility, and a supportive school culture. Thirdly, the demonstrated effectiveness of ICT integration in classrooms indicates that schools should invest in technological resources, training, and infrastructure. Incorporating ICT tools can facilitate personalized learning, engage students with diverse learning styles, and improve overall teaching and learning outcomes. Finally, regular monitoring, assessment, and feedback mechanisms are essential to ensure that the strategies implemented are effective and responsive to students’ needs. By applying these strategies, educational stakeholders can create a more conducive learning environment that supports both students’ academic growth and holistic development, ultimately contributing to improved educational outcomes in the region.

Contribution to Knowledge

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the strategies for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone, Enugu State. First, the study highlights the critical role of teacher–student relationships in enhancing student engagement, motivation, and academic performance, emphasizing the importance of positive interpersonal interactions within the classroom. Second, the research demonstrates that student–student relationship strategies, including collaboration, peers support, and group activities, contribute significantly to fostering a supportive and interactive learning environment. This adds to the understanding of peer influence on academic outcomes in the Nigerian secondary school context. Third, the study underscores the effectiveness of integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the learning process. Hence, by showing that ICT tools enhance student engagement, personalize learning experiences, and improve overall academic performance, the study provides evidence for the adoption of technology-driven strategies in secondary schools. Taken as a whole, this study contributes to the knowledge base by providing empirical evidence on practical strategies those educational stakeholders-teachers, school administrators, and policymakers can adopt to improve learning environments. It also fills a research gap in the Enugu Education Zone, offering a model for creating conducive learning spaces that support students’ academic achievement, well-being, and holistic development.

Conclusion

The study on strategies for creating a conducive learning environment among secondary schools in Agbani Education zone highlights the significance of fostering positive relationships between teachers and students, promoting peer interactions among students, as well as incorporating the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the learning process. These strategies play crucial roles in enhancing the overall learning experience and academic achievement of secondary school students in Enugu Education zone.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

1. Schools should implement professional development programs for teachers to enhance their communication skills and foster positive relationships with students.
2. Schools should encourage collaboration and group activities among students to promote peer interactions and a supportive learning environment.
3. Schools should provide adequate training and resources for integrating ICT tools into the classroom to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.
4. Schools should conduct regular assessments and feedback mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of the strategies implemented and make necessary adjustments.

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