

An Appraisal of Parental Background and Students Academic Performance in Nigeria

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Abstract: *The paper discussed parental background and students' academic performance in Nigeria, and the effect of parental background on students' academic performance such as material and financial requirement. The paper also looked into the challenges of parental background and students' academic performance such as genuine lack of understanding of the importance of education by the parents. It also recommended some possible solutions among which was that, parents should be sensitized, mobilized to see the value and relevance of education. This will enable the parents to have positive view of their children education.*

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I. Introduction

The Parental background impact negatively or positively on the gross performance of the child. Family financial resources, which are associated with parents' occupation and educational attainment, often imply increased learning opportunities both at home and in school. Better educated parents can contribute to their children's learning through their day to day interactions with their children and involving themselves in their children's school work (Asikhia, 2010).

In Nigeria, most families are poor and cannot adequately afford 3-square meals not to talk of meeting the educational needs of their children Smith (2000). This indeed has serious implications on the learning and performance of less privileged students in school. Students from such families are forced to miss classes, unable to do their assignments and most seriously are driven from school due to non payment of school fees. Indeed, family background in terms of family type, size, socio-economic status occupation and educational background play important role in children's educational attainment and social integration (Osunloye 2008; Ushie , Onongha, Owolabi, and Emeka, 2012).

The socio-economic status of the parent is a significant variable or factor that affects the educational life chances of a child. This therefore, means, that the higher the socio-economic status of the child's family, the higher his educational life chances. The parents' economic position in addition to their attitude to education may, to a large extent, determine the child's chances of having access to schooling. Children from lower socio-economic status homes are likely to encounter problems of inequality in educational opportunities more especially in relation to access to or enrolment, retention and completion (Mahuta, 2007).

Parents occupational level influence learning performance of their children. To Caro (2009), occupational level of the parents have important relationship with English language achievement of students. Furthermore, father's occupation in terms of professional, semi-professional and the manual group have similar academic influence in the performance of their children. In addition, he also stated, this is because of job mobility and child rearing practice. It should be clear that, the performance of students with parents from professional groups is not related to the semi-professional and the manual group. This is as a result of the former having positive need for the achievement of the students, while students of parents from semi-professional and manuals have similar academic performance in English language, on the other hand, parents level of education is important to schooling as the parents want their children to maintain the status quo:

Academic performance according to the Cambridge University Reporter (2003) is frequently defined in terms of examination performance. Academic performance refers to what the students have learned or what skills the student have learned and is usually measured though assessments like standardized tests. Performance assessments and portfolio assessments (Chang, 2004). The descriptive assessment information will usually be translated through grading system such as Grade Point Average (GPA). And course grade. This study will make use of the Cumulated Grade Point Average (CGPA) since it provides information of the students' academic performance across time.

Parental background and students academic performance in Nigeria.

The family provides the base upon which formal education is given to the child. It is first formal setting for the socialization of every individual. Consequently, the family could be considered as the societal institution that provides the required environment for both the personality and socialization of individuals to be a reality. This suggests that the family prepares the individual for his development and effective participation in society. As a result the contributions of the family, with regards to the social and economic support, will no doubt, contribute effectively in the individual for his responsibilities in society. However, the extent to which the family contributes will provide a yardstick for the extent to which the individual is prepared.

In Nigeria, abject poverty in a family is disadvantageous to educational success. The children are usually undernourished, in poor health conditions and some times, with retarded mental development. In school, children of poor family background are rarely provided with materials for class work they most often develop inferiority complex as a result of these.

If a bright child is brought up in a poor home, losses his brightness, as opined by Eweniyi (2005), and a dull child brought up in an enriched home, often becomes bright. Besides, the attitude of the parents of poor income status and value orientation may not make for high aspiration to academic achievement as well as higher ambitions in the children. This also affects their learning in school.

There are many evidences on the influence of family background on children's academic performance. For example, Musgrave, Crombach, Dubey et al, and Blackmore and Cooksey, in Mahuta (2007) are in agreement and noted the following in the light of the influence of the family on children's performance in school that:

- i. The most important factor of academic performance in school associated with the family is socio-economic status of parents
- ii. The higher the socio-economic status of the child's family the higher we expect his academic performance to be.
- iii. Family size: children from lower socio-economic status, where the family is large, they are likely to face educational disadvantages such as limited access to education, inadequate school facilities and low level of motivation and encouragement

Effects of parental background on students' academic performance

The following will provide some information on the effect of family background on educational achievement (Partrick, 2012):

- i. Parents socio-economic status
- ii. Materials and financial requirement
- iii. Parental intent and encouragement
- iv. Social environment

Parent's socio-economic status: Is based on parental occupation and income. Scholars unanimously agree that there is a significant relationship between one's income and one's type of work, house of abode and home environment. Patrick (2012) agrees with the choice of occupation as the main focus of socio-economic status. He also considers it "the most widely used" factor of home background in studies relating to educational achievement. Similarly, Akpan, Ojinnaka and Ekanem (2010), in their work on 'social class differences and Nigerian children's entry behaviour in geography', considers parents income and occupation as the main determinants of a child's social class.

School/academic achievement, is considered to be an individual's performance in class tests as well as the level of education ultimately attained. Generally speaking, there is a strong belief that parent's socio-economic status is related to children's academic performance. Osunloye (2008) notes that in developed countries, researchers have shown that school variables such as the physical characteristics of teachers could march the strength of influence of pupils' socio-economic status on school achievement.

Material and financial requirement: The differences in socio-economic status of parents also creates differences at the rate parents meet both material and financial requirements of their children's academic success in school. Wealthy parents are likely to be more willing to provide books, stationeries, uniforms, enough toiletries and other material requirements than less wealthy parents. Similarly, wealthy parents will not mind organizing paid extra lessons at home teachers for their children after the official school hours.

Parental interest and encouragement: aspects of parental interest and encouragement being referred to include the number of visits parents make to school to discuss their children's progress with either the class teachers or the head master; parents' pieces of advice to their children as well as extra tutorial class the child receives at home. The manifestation of these characteristics in the parents will not doubt make the child to feel secured and confident to get his mind settled in tackling the problems encountered in school. Consequently, he

is highly motivated and aspires to achieve more in order to please the parents who are equally eager to see him succeed in his academic work (Osunloye 2008).

There is no gainsaying that parents reaction to their children's education will affect the children's academic work positive attitude and high aspiration manifested by the parents towards their children's schooling will make the former to have unlimited support and encouragement towards their children's education. This has been significantly confirmed by the studies of Krueger and Lindahi (2001), in their respective studies in different parts of the world. Other examples of similar findings include those of Lee and Burkham (2002).

On the other hand, Osunlaye (2008), working class or semi-skilled parents are financially handicapped with regard to regular payment of school fees, provision of equipment and arranging for continued academic work at home. It is therefore, most likely that those who are interested and highly motivated to see to the academic progress of their children would express their own support and encouragement mostly inform of advice to their children or regular visits to school. Sometimes, it could be regular attendance of parents-teachers association (PTA) meetings, to discuss the general progress of both children and the school. However, scholars are yet to find out the percentage of parents in this group in order to establish a point of reference. It would then follow that children are likely to develop non-chalet attitude to class work and schooling in general if their parents do not show any interest in their academic work. On the part of the children, there is no fear of being scolded by their parents for not doing well in school Truancy is likely to be an aspect of the behavior of such children. With such a negative attitude, the children's work at school suffers.

An in-depth study by Okapala, Okapala, and Smith (2001), has shown that children whose parents are the most interested in their education usually obtain the highest average scores in tests. On the other hand, the lower marks are from those children whose parents are the least interested. Smith (2000), in his research, has it that parental interest and achievement when compared with family size and standard of home, specifically, He goes further to indicate that "59% of the working class children are suitable for grammar school if their parents are interested and only 15% if they are uninterested". In his own separate but similar study in England, Scotland and Wales. OSulaye (2008), also found a positive relationship between parental interest/encouragement and children's academic achievement.

Social environment: The possession of universal understanding among family members regularizes the coordination of different social relations in their home. In the family, scholars believe that different socio economic families possess their respective ways of interacting. Consequently, this will result to differences in children up-bringing.

Among other things, the importance of language as a means of communication and exchange of ideas and knowledge is recognized in the study of the relationship between different family backgrounds and children's educational achievement. For example, Christine (2007) focuses his own investigation on the verbal development of children in different socio-economic families and related it to their respective academic achievement. He found that verbal development of children in large families (that is a common feature of working class or semi-skilled and unskilled families) does not enhance academic achievement.

There is the need to expatiate briefly on the effect of family socio-economic status on academic performance of pupils.

In Nigeria as in most countries, parental background determines life opportunities and educational achievement of more than 80% of children in the society. Recent studies confirm the correlation between family socio-economic status and academic performance of students (Yetunji 2012 and Yusuf 2008). Educational achievement of children are hampered by the parents socio-economic status in the following ways:

- a) Children of higher socio-economic status enjoy higher standard of living and are motivated to higher aspirations in both educational and other career pursuits.
- b) More often, children of wealthy families are exposed to places of learning early in life, from pre-primary education level to the tertiary level.
- c) Selection of the best schools is their pride. They are sent to the prestigious educational institutions such as gifted-children's colleges, special nursery/primary schools, federal government colleges, and universities where the best and well paid teachers are sent to teach. When children of the lower class citizens are relegated to attend common state and community schools.
- d) Apart from attending special schools, children of the rich enjoy better convenience such as going to school on family cars, making use of modern facilities; radio, television set, video and computer to learn at homes, living in boarding schools, extra-moral classes and so on, while their colleagues from lower class families battle with public transport and late coming to school, and the related consequences of poverty.
- e) Pupils from higher social class are well fed and nourished, a necessity for understanding academic works. Most parents in poverty stricken families rarely feed, with one full meal a day. Most of these pupils come to school without breakfast.

- f) They have at their disposal all materials essential for their schooling, such as books, clothes, pens and pocket money while their counterparts from poor families come to school empty handed.
- g) They are sponsored to undertake extra curricular activities like sports, football and so on. Which a poor student may find difficult to finance.

However, children of poorer social status are never completely disadvantaged as far as educational achievement is concerned. Exceptions obtain on both sides of membership of the social strata. Sometimes, pupils from rich families perform very poorly, and vice versa. It has also been found that the influence of parental status on students academic performance is drastically reduced at tertiary level of education (Tenibraje, 2009). History of mankind has it that many genius have been from Ignoble socio-economic families.

Challenges of parental background and student's academic performance

According to Osunlaye (2008,) the best way to school to achieve its task is when the family and teachers share and appreciate the importance of education and also when the relationship between the two groups is more cordial. He further maintains that parent-teacher relationship can be difficult when parental apathy or open hostility may impede the teacher in his duty/role for the pupils progress. Some of these challenges from the part of parents are as follows:

- i. A general lack of interest in the welfare of their children
- ii. A genuine lack of understanding of the importance of education
- iii. A jaundiced or biased view of the relevance of education when immediate financial reward can be gained from highly paid unskilled work
- iv. A general lack of encouragement from the schools themselves to the parents.

However, it is relevant to mention that the parents attitude towards the education of their children could be determined by many factors and some of them are as follows;

- i. The socio-economic status of parents
- ii. Poor condition of living of parents as a result of failure of the government to provide for its citizens social amenities. For example, portable drinking water, good roads, fertilizer and medical services. Lack of these amenities may expose families to naked hardships.
- iii. Parents are not properly and adequately sensitized and mobilized as to conceptualised the need and relevance of formal schooling for modern times.
- iv. High rates of unemployment in the country, thereby contributing to jobless school leavers. This causes social problems in society, in addition to creating negative attitude among parents for schoolings
- v. Parents' lack of commitment for the education of their children
- vi. The general factors that characterize most developing countries, are poverty, hunger, diseases, famine, illiteracy and corruption

Academic attainment is an important parameter in measuring success in students. Observations and reports have shown that success or higher academic achievement has become herculean task to be accomplished by students in recent times. Poor academic performance was recorded both at the secondary and tertiary levels of education in Nigeria (Teibraje, 2009). The performance of students at all levels in educational institution in Nigeria has attracted much criticisms from all and sundry from time immemorial. The decline in the academic performance of students in Nigerian universities had been observed by Soyinka (1999), when he observed that university system in Nigeria needed restructuring. He went further to say that academic standard had fallen drastically and the quality of graduates being produced by the nation's universities is questionable and subject to re examination. Poor academic performance of students has been of great concern to educationists, guidance and counselors in particular. Despite, all guidance programmes and counseling strategies mounted in schools to improve students academic performances yet poor performance are recorded yearly.

Family background is the foundation for children's development, as such family background in terms of family structure, size, socio- economic status and educational background play important role in student's educational attainment and social integration (Osuniloye, 2008). However, reviewed literature induced that there is an awareness of the importance of the home environment or family on children's academic performance. The home has great influence on the child's psychological, emotional, social and economic state. In the view of Ajjila and Olutola (2000), the state of the home affects the individual since the parents are the first socializing gents in an individual's life. This is because the family background and context of a child affect his reaction to life situations and his level of performance. Family structure in terms of single and two parent families has been noted in the literature to have significant influence on student's performance and mental development (Tenibiaje, 2009; Eweniyi, 2005). This is because providing a supportive learning environment at home requires parents time as much as financial resources.

II. Conclusion

In conclusion therefore, parents are usually considered the primary agents of socialization because their influence begins so early in life. Although the family is supposed to care for, socialize and optimize the potential of children. It sometimes falls short of these goals. Various aspects of the family economic, social and cultural conditions have been found to have consistent impact on the academic performance of students. Students whose parents have better jobs and higher levels of educational attainment and who are exposed to more educational and cultural resources at home tend to have higher levels of academic performance. It is worthy of note that academic performance is affected when parents give positive reinforcement and the child is more likely to achieve higher educational standard than the child who does not receive any reinforcement from parents.

III. Suggestions

1. It is suggested that parents should be sensitized, mobilized to see the value and relevance of education. This will enable the parents to have positive view of their children education.
2. It is suggested that job creation and awareness should be given more priority, and also the standard of civil servants salary should adjusted in order to meet up with the present challenges of economic demands. This will assist the parents to support good academic performance.
3. It is suggested that the individual parent should belong to an organization such as community development or any initiated programme which will poster social security like access to job and skills acquisition, such as national poverty eradication programme (NAPEP), family support programme, agricultural loan scheme and so on, that will provide financial support and job security.

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