INFLUENCE OF RECESS ON PUPIL'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN AWKA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION AUTHORITY

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Abstract

This study determined the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. Two purpose and two research questions guided the study. The population for the study comprises 927 basic school teachers in 45 basic schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority, in Anambra State. The sample for this study comprised 125 primary school teachers drawn from the sampled 25 basic schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. This represents approximately 13.5 percent of the entire population. Using the simple random sampling technique of balloting with replacement, 5 teachers in public basic schools were selected from each of the sampled basic schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. The instrument for data collection was a 14 item self-structured questionnaire. The instrument was face and content validated by three experts, one in the Department of Educational Foundations and two from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education all from the Faculty of Education in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was established using the Cronbach alpha method and yielded coefficient values of 0.64 and 0.71 for sections A and B. Questionnaires were administered personally by the researcher with the help of two (2) research assistants. Data collected for this study was analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research questions. The findings of the study revealed that the respondents rated strongly agreed to the items raised on the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in Arithmetic in Awka South Local Government Education Authority; the study further reported that the respondents rated agreed to the items raised on the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in reading comprehension in

Awka South Local Government Education Authority. Conclusion was made and it was recommended that State Ministry of Education should ensure that adequate play facilities are provided, before granting approval to schools among others.

Keywords: Recess, basic schools, pupil's, academic, academic performance

Introduction

Most countries of the world have provided various educational programmes for their citizens. This is because education is recognized as the cornerstone for sustainable development. In a developing country such as Nigeria, education is perceived as the bedrock for national and personal development because the socio-economic development of any nation is wholly dependent on the level and quality of education given to its citizens at different levels including the basic education level. Basic education level also known as primary education as stated by Okolocha and Okeke (2018), is a type of education received before the secondary level of education and it has its own goals and objectives as stated in the National Policy on Education. It is important to emphasize that the extent to which these goals and objectives are achieved is dependent on the academic achievement of the pupils. In fact, pupils' academic achievement plays an important role in identifying graduates who will become great leaders and productive manpower for nations' economic and social development. Undoubtedly, the aim of enrolling a child in school is to achieve high in their academics especially at primary schools' level, which is the foundation for career building.

One of such policies is the 2013 edition of the National Policy on Education, which describes primary level of education as the education given to children aged 6-12 years. The objectives of basic education are to, inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively; lay a sound basis for scientific, critical and reflective thinking; promote patriotism, fairness, understanding and national unity; instil social, moral norms and values in the child; develop in the child the ability to adapt to the changing environment; and provide opportunities for the child to develop life manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capability (FRN, 2013). Nevertheless, despite the laid down objectives, and the unarguable fact that education is set up for the pupils to

learn for the sake of their future and the future of the nation, attention has to be drawn to pupil's all-round personal development especially their physical development which could be obtained through recess. Nevertheless, the quality of education rendered to pupils cannot be rated without the overall factors both internal and external that makes up the learning environment. One of such factors could be recess allowed for pupils in the learning environment.

Recess is an essential component of the total educational experience that provides pupils with discretionary time and opportunities to engage in physical activity, which helps to develop healthy bodies and enjoyment of movement (Okuneye and Dansu, 2018). According to the Council on Physical Education for Children, CPEC, cited in Okuneye and Dansu, (2018), recess allows elementary school children to practice life skills such as conflict resolution, cooperation, respect for rules, taking turns, sharing, using language to communicate, and problem solving in real situations. According to Jarret (2016), the most obvious characteristics of recess is that it constitutes a break from the day's routine; and for people of all ages, and in all fields, recess is considered essential for satisfaction and alertness. Specifically, recall is improved when recess is introduced rather than teaching pupils for a long time without break. Jarrett (2016) found that this assertion is comparable with what is known about brain functioning; that attention requires periodic novelty, that the brain needs downtime to recycle chemicals crucial for long-term memory formation.

Recess has been perceived as the only common means that school pupils can use to explore their real environment and learn. Pupils may understand the world better when they are involved in doing something and by interacting with their peers. It is when they are involved in their learning that they take ownership of new information. According to Isenberg and Quisenberry (2017), when pupils are on the playground, they engage themselves through social interaction with their peers, they may be acquiring skills that are transferred to the classroom. Learning requires children to interact with their peers to gain facts and skills and making information one's own. Hurwitz (2016) asserts that the purpose of play is to motivate, stimulate, develop positive attitude, concentration, concepts, skills, language/communication skills and demonstrate awareness of recent learning and skills to consolidate learning.

More importantly, recess provides pupils with the opportunity for movement experiences that helps develop a healthy mind and body that is capable of learning. Inactivity is considered a major risk factor for heart disease and pattern of inactivity may begin at early ages (Okuneye and Dansu, 2018). Based on this, MacPherson (2020) was of the opinion that children must be given as much as possible time to play, especially during recess, as playing outside promotes running around, which helps sustain sound health.

Buttressing further, it has been asserted that it is natural that children should play, because play as well as learning is natural components of children's daily lives (Ikwel, Anyikwa and Enemuo, 2020). Play is truly a universal phenomenon, because it exists in different forms in every society. When you ask children of what they like to do best, the response would be that they like to play. Play is considered to be a practice initiated by pupils, while learning is seen as a result of a practice initiated by adults. In the context of primary school, play and learning are often separated in terms of time and space. Pupils are highly motivated to play, though adults may not understand why they play. Uduchukwu cited in Ikwel, *et al.* (2020) observed that play is both fun and developmentally valuable. Mbachi, Enemuo and Chibgo-Obasi (2020) asserted that play takes different forms for different children. Having choices is important since an action that appeals to one child may be of no interest to another, and the child's interest is likely to change throughout the play period. In the same vein, Egaga and Arikpo (2015) noted that a child who does not play is a sick child. A child who is prevented by his teacher or guardian from playing, which is a form of recess will be sick physically and mentally. Pupil all over the world have engage in recess at the heart of their learning and development, because it keeps them happy.

Play during recess allows pupils to relax and release the pressure from their normal environment. Through imaginative play, children act out roles and experiences that are important to them. They become motivated when taking on a role such as becoming an important member of the family, community or state. Pupils often use different objects to represent something else. Dancy (2016) observed that when children are using their imagination to play, their brains are working in a much healthier way than when they are being made to sit and complete pages from work books. When children organize their own games, they learn respect for rules, self-discipline,

control of aggression, practice leadership, resolve conflict, develop understanding, playing by rules and associate with children of different groups (Blatchford, Baines and Pellegrini, 2019).

Over the past years, schools have been reducing the amount of time pupils have for recess or physical activity during the school day. Research studies reveals that the basic rationale for decreasing recess time was to improve achievement and standardized test scores. By furthering academic accountability standards, the No Child is Left Behind Act was enacted in 2002 (No Child is Left Behind, NCLB, 2002). No Child is Left Behind Act initiated a trend of educational accountability that sparked the discussion of whether recess should remain a part of the elementary school day or not. In addition, statistical data reveals that 40% of public schools either reduced or cut out recess time, and most basic schools do not require a daily recess period.

In a similar note, some studies on recess reveals that, recess became a source of controversy in the late 1980s when people began to question its role in the school curriculum. In United States, about 40% of school districts have eliminated recess or are considering doing so, and a similar trend of eliminating recess was occurring in United Kingdom and Australia (Ikwel, Anyikwa and Enemuo, 2020). Schools have begun to limit or eliminate recess, which makes school pupils currently not to recess. According to Jarrett (2016), recess carried out during recess could vary from structured recess, free play recess, indoor recess, active recess, inclusive recess, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) recess, extended or flexible recess sport-based recess, quiet or restful recess, conflict resolution recess and nature-based recess. In the context of this study, recess will be delimited to free-play recess, structured recess, sport-based recess, quiet or restful recess, conflict resolution recess and nature-based recess.

Evidence has shown that this lack of free and undirected play during recess may be part of what contributes to the rise in childhood obesity, anxiety and depression among primary school pupils in public and private schools. On the other hand, studies report variation in levels of involvement in recess and types of activities engaged in during recess by pupils. While some pupils engage themselves in vigorous physical activities, some are into moderate ones and others participate in less physical activities. Recess time spent in physical activities has been found to be of greater benefits than the less active ones. Thus, it could be deduced that recess influences pupils' performance,

In spite of the importance of primary education, the education sector continues to face many challenges. According to ISSER cited in Pambudi (2022) the performance of many children is failing to meet the minimum learning requirements and to acquire basic skills and competencies. Pupils' academic performance is considered a vital indicator of good schooling, so the poor performance of pupils at basic education level has not only led to public outcry, but also educationists have been increasingly occupied in their attempt to identify factors that is responsible for poor academic performance of pupils and most especially among public primary school pupils in Nigeria.

The academic performance of pupils can cut across different subjects taught at the basic education. In the context of this study, the influence of recess practice on pupils' academic performance focuses on subjects like arithmetic, reading comprehension and grammar taught in basic schools. On the contrary, despite the importance of recess and its clear benefits in a pupils' development, recess seems to be losing its value in the society. The problem may be that some schools are built without playgrounds, while some may have no recess time, because they are only concerned with academic activities at the expense of recess and this breeds negative attitude towards recess. Even those schools that observe recess seem to have reduced the time for recess. This worrisome scenario prompted the researcher to conduct the present study which seeks to determine the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in Awka South local government education authority.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to examine the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in Awka South Local Government Education Authority Education Authority. Specifically, this study examined;

1. the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in Arithmetic in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.
2. the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in reading comprehension in Awka South Local Government Education Authority Education Authority.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What is the influence of recess on pupils' academic performance in Arithmetic in Awka South Education Authority?
2. What is the influence of recess on pupils' academic performance in reading comprehension in Awka South Education Authority?

Methods

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The area of this study is Awka South Local Government Education Authority (LGEA). The population for the study comprises 927 basic school teachers in 45 basic schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority, in Anambra State. The sample for this study comprised 125 primary school teachers drawn from the sampled 25 basic schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. This represents approximately 13.5 percent of the entire population. Using the simple random sampling technique of balloting with replacement, 5 teachers in public basic schools were selected from each of the sampled basic schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire from a pool of literature titled "Influence of Recess on Academic Performance of Pupils Questionnaires (IRAPPQ)", which comprises 14-items. The instrument is divided into two (2) Parts 1 and 2. Part 1 contains information on the demographic data of the respondents. Part 2 is sub-divided into sections A and B. Section A contains 7 item statements on the influence of recess on academic performance of pupils in Arithmetic, section B contains 7 item statements on the influence of recess on academic performance of pupils in reading comprehension. The items have fixed response options thus, Strongly Agree (SA)– 4 Points, Agree (A) – 3 Points, Disagree (D) – 2 Points and Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1 point. The instrument for data collection was face and content validated by three experts, one in Educational Measurement and Evaluation from the Department of Educational Foundations and two from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education all in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, These experts were required to scrutinize the instrument in relation to its appropriateness to the response categories, content wording, clarity and suitability of the item statements and correctness of instructions. Data

collected for this study relating to research questions was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The decision was based on the cluster mean scores in relation to the real limits of numbers on a 4-point scale as follows:

Response option	**Points**	**Real limits**
Strongly Agree	4	3.50 – 4.00
Agree	3	2.50 – 3.49
Disagree	2	1.50 – 2.49
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00 – 1.49

Results

Research Question 1: What is the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in Arithmetic in Awka South Local Government Education Authority?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in Arithmetic in Awka Local Government Education Authority.

s/n	**Item statements**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Remarks**
1	Recess builds self-confidence in pupils to solve arithmetic problems	3.77	1.29	Strongly agree
2	Recess makes arithmetic lessons less redundant	3.11	1.34	Agree
3	The mathematical concepts should be explained using playground equipment	3.68	1.32	Strongly agree
4	Recess helps pupils develop interest in arithmetic calculations	3.59	1.21	Strongly agree
5	During recess, most pupils try out difficult arithmetic concepts with peers	3.16	1.37	Agree
6	Recess influences pupil's psychomotor skill development	3.81	1.07	Strongly agree
7	During recess, pupils partake in extracurricular activities relating to understanding arithmetic concepts	3.87	1.20	Strongly agree
	Cluster mean	**3.57**		**Strongly agree**

The analysis presented in table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation result of teacher on the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in Arithmetic in Awka south Local Government Education Authority. The respondents rated strongly agree to items 1,3,4,6,7, also they agreed with items 2 and 5. The cluster mean score of 3.57 implies that, the respondents were in strong agreement with the items raised on the influence of recess on pupil's academic

performance in Arithmetic in Awka South local Government Education Authority. The standard deviation scores are high and indicates heterogeneity in the respondents rating.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in reading comprehension in Awka South Local Government Education Authority?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in reading comprehension in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

s/n	Item statements	Mean	SD	Remarks
8	During recess, pupils practice reading with peers	3.57	1.23	Strongly agree
9	Recess creates avenue for pupils to discuss their reading challenges with their peers	3.09	.97	Agree
10	During recess, pupils develop their reading habits through reciting passages taught in class	3.29	.78	Agree
11	Recess and engaging with some play equipment enable pupils develop reading skill	3.08	.90	Agree
12	The recess process enables pupils improve their cognitive ability	3.07	1.03	Agree
13	During recess, learners read writ-ups on the playground	3.13	.96	Agree
14	Recess allows pupils discuss reading patterns with peers	3.08	.88	Agree
	Cluster mean	**3.19**		**Agree**

The results presented in table 2 indicates the mean and standard deviation results of teachers on the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in reading comprehension in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. The respondents rated strongly agree to item 8, while they rated agreed on items 9-14. The cluster mean score of 3.19 implies that, the respondents were in agreement with the items raised on the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in reading comprehension in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. The standard deviation scores are moderate and indicates homogeneity in the respondents rating.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that the respondents were in strong agreement with the items raised on the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in Arithmetic in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. This result conforms with the result of Özkal (2020), who found that recess enables pupils to effectively participate in lessons cognitively, affectively, and behaviourally and that academic learning continued during recess. Cognitive development of an

individual corroborates with different learning, including arithmetic skill development. In addition, it is stated that recess has social effects such as forming friendships, learning about self, social skills and life. The participants stated that recess helps pupils to feel happy and relieve their tensions. Participants stated that recess can have positive effects on health since it provides pupils with the opportunity to move physically and it can decrease undesired behaviours. Participants also stated that pupils can also experience negative emotions such as feelings of exclusion and loneliness during recess.

The finding of this study reveals that the respondents were in strong agreement with the items raised on the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in reading comprehension in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. This finding is in agreement with Sanni, Offiong, Quadri and Rasaki (2020), who reported that while 3.4% of the schools allotted three periods a week for physical activities/ health education, 72.6% assigned two periods per week for this. All the schools surveyed observed break periods/ recess, as 36.8% private schools, compared with 82.5% public schools, had sports fields. Within the preceding year of the study, 80.1% of the schools staged drama as a form of periodic extracurricular activity. Inter-house sports were organized by 55.0% public and 17.9% private schools. Furthermore, the study of Ikwel, Anyikwa and Enemuo (2020) found that primary schools in Cross River State lack recess, play facilities were not available in primary schools, inadequate time for play during recess and poor recess supervision of play during recess were identified. This was observed despite the agreed influence of recess on academic performance of pupils in basic schools as reported in the present study, however, this could be based on difference in location.

Conclusion

The study concludes that, the respondents were in strong agreement with the influence of recess on pupil's academic performance in arithmetic and reading comprehension in basic schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. Hence, teachers and school administrators should allow proper and adequate recess time to pupils in basic schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority in Anambra state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made;

1. Teachers should not deny children recess activities which enhances their learning outcome. Teacher should be mobilized for further training and retraining, better welfare package for teachers, workshops and seminars on the current approach to recess and academic performance
2. School administrators should inspect basic schools to ensure availability of recess facilities and its usage among pupils in the school.
3. The State Ministry of Education should ensure that adequate play facilities are provided, before granting approval to schools.

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