SCHOOL VARIABLES AND STUDENTS' ACQUISITION OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CALABAR METROPOLIS, CROSS RIVER STATE

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated the composite and relative effect of some school variables on students' acquisition of employability skills in secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. One research question was posed and one null hypothesis formulated to guide the study. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample of four hundred (400) from population of three thousand, three hundred and seventy nine (3,379) senior secondary (SS3) students schooling intwenty-two public secondary schools in the study area. Data was collected using researchers' designed 30-item research instrument titled "School Variables and Employability Skill Acquisition Questionnaire" (SVESAQ). The obtained data were analyzed using multiple regression. Results obtained revealed the composite effect of some school variables studied; provision of physical facilities, teachers attitude to work, teaching effectiveness of teachers, teachers-students interpersonal relationship, classroom climate and curriculum implementation strategies to be significant on students' employability skill acquisition. Each of the variables also showed relative significant effect on students' employability skills acquisition. Based on the findings, it was recommended that government and other stakeholders in education should employ possible strategies in ensuring that school variables that enhance students' employability skills acquisition are provided and effectively maintained, to ensure academic programme effectiveness that will foster students' acquisition of employability skills, which will serve to benefit them and society at large. More so, the work will provide empirical evidence for researchers and the reading communities on the relevance of adequacy of school related variables on acquisition of employability skills by the students. Hence, the need for more investment in education for unemployment and poverty alleviation from the society by imparting job creation skills in the school leavers.

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KEYWORDS: School Variables, Students, Employability, Acquisition of Employability Skills.

INTRODUCTION
Education has been embraced by many countries of the world as agent of social and economic transformation. On this note, they strive to provide qualitative education to the citizens to ensure that the needed skills for societal development is acquired. This is the reason why the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2004) stated that education in Nigeria is an instrument "par excellence" for effecting national development. Secondary education according to the policy, has two broad goals, which are to prepare the individual for useful living within the society and for entrance into higher education. However, higher education being level of education for human capital development will enable the individual to major in a specific profession or field for employability and self - reliance.

Having identified the vital role of this level of education, it is required that it should be provided qualitatively, taking into cognizance the improvement in standard of overall school related affairs that enhance academic programme effectiveness that will facilitate students' employability skill acquisition, which will enable them to achieve livelihood and contribute meaningfully to the society. School-variables are characteristics of the school district, school building, classroom, and teacher that appear to influence learning and that can be definite, assessed, improved upon after their weaknesses are detected. Eight categories of school variables are identified to include the following; time, instructional articulation, teacher characteristics, instructional integration, instructional organization, teacher/student interactions, classroom control, and instructional materials (Connolly &McGrail, 1978).

Employability skills according to Robinson (2000) are those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job. These are the skills, attitudes and actions that enable workers to get along with their fellow workers and supervisors and to make

sound and critical decisions in the work place. As cited by University of Kent (2014), employability skills are set of attributes, skills and knowledge that all labour market participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace, to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the wider economy. They highlighted the following as the range of skills in graduate applicants that employees expect, which are common to a number of career areas, thus; communication, team-working, leadership, initiative, problem-solving, flexibility and enthusiasm. Employability skills can also be seen as those abilities required of an employee that will enhance his effective contribution in organizational goal attainment. It will involve Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills, good language expression, critical reasoning, team work, zeal, and innovativeness, which will facilitate job effectiveness. In order for students to acquire those skills from educational institutions, standardization of educational programmes must be assured by ensuring that those school factors that enhance learning are adequately maintained in good standard to enhance teaching-learning effectiveness.

This work has been directed to study some of the school variables that will facilitate learning if adequately addressed and maintained in terms of; provision of school facilities, teachers' attitude to work, teachers' teaching effectiveness, teachers/students interpersonal relationship, classroom climate, curriculum implementation strategies, to determine if they are related to students' acquisition of employability skills. However, it is expected that standardized school system will facilitate teaching-learning and bring about stimulating learning environment for students. This will serve to enhance their employability skill acquisition from secondary education which will enable them to secure or create jobs. This will serve to improve their well-being and that of the society at large.

Effective functioning of school organization is largely dependent on the degree of attention that is given to enhance adequacy in some crucial school necessities that are prior to academic programme enrichment for effective outcomes. Research as reported by Bliss, Firestone and Richards (1991), identified many variables which are connected to students acquisition of skills. While there are variations on the variables conditional to the researcher, there are agreement on a core group of variables which are; orderly climate, leadership, expectations, frequent monitoring of instruction or assessment, parent and community involvement, and instruction. Other variables which researchers mention as important for students acquisition of skills, based on its influence on academic programme effectiveness are; site-based management, staff stability, staff development, collaboration, time-on-

task, and sense of mission. Nwangwu (2007) posits that the greatest weapon against poverty is education of the youths, which he maintained that any form of education that does not equip its beneficiaries with skills to be self-reliant is a faulty system of education. Kaegon (2009) believes that education must be ready to offer their recipients skills that will enhance them to contribute meaning to the economic development of the country. Uchendu, Akuegwu and Odigwe (2013) in their investigation discovered that there is need to invest in human resource development for entrepreneurship education.

Udofia, Ekpo, Nsa and Akpan (2012) studied some instructional variables and students' acquisition of employability skills in vocational education. They collected data from 120 students as the study sample. The interpretation from the analysis revealed that there is significant relationship between; teacher's quality, teachers teaching method and students acquisition of employable skills. Studies of Oyetola, Kayode, Sunday and Okunuga (2012) on provision and utilization of school facilities for students skill acquisition reveal that, from the provision of facilities, students were able to acquire entrepreneurial skills moderately; also that the more the students utilize provided facilities, the more they acquire entrepreneurial skills and finally, that as the facilities are provided so are they utilized by the students.

Amadi (2012) studied strategies for implementation of Agricultural Science curriculum and its imperatives for occupational skill acquisition by students. Sample of two hundred (200) teachers of Agriculture were randomly selected from two hundred and ninety eight (298) secondary schools across three educational zones of Imo State. The obtained data were subjected to statistical analysis of which Findings of the study indicated that some teacher-related factors are necessary for effective implementation of the curriculum among which are teacher's moral disposition, commitment, and teaching styles were indicated. Use of modular teaching methods, establishment of good school–community relationships and combined use of performance–based test and written test used for the purpose of occupation skills acquisition. Bulach, Malone and Castleman (1995) investigated a study on relationship of selected variables on students' achievement. They collected data from 27 schools in California. The analysis of the data found a significant positive correlation between school climate, socio-economic status of the students, involvement of parents and community and students achievement which determine the degree of skills they have acquired from various teaching and learning. However, since many school related variables are seen to be determinants of effective students learning and skills acquisition, it is pertinent that administrators of institutions pay reasonable

attention to maintaining them adequately to ensure quality outputs from secondary education.

The strategies adopted by secondary school teachers for knowledge impartation on specific subjects of study to a large extent determines the level of skills to be acquired by the learners. Alachua County Public Schools Gainesville Florida Learning Strategies Curriculum Guide (2008:5) provides the responsibilities of the Learning Strategies teacher to involve five major tasks which are to be performed by the support service teacher orlearning specialist viz; Teach specific strategies to students using a specified instructional methodology, Create a strategic environment that promotes independent thinking by the student, Facilitate individual functioning and generalization by the learner, Take responsibility for the cooperative planning process with the content area teachers, Keep accurate and complete student progress records or charts for each strategy taught.

Emphasizing on the relevance of class room climate on students' learning, Snow, Burns, and Griffin cited in Bulach et al (1995) maintained that the literacy rich environment underscores the importance of speaking, reading, and writing in the learning of all students. This involves the selection of materials that will facilitate language and literacy opportunities; reflection and thought regarding classroom design; and intentional instruction and facilitation by teachers and staff. Literacy-rich environments can be individualized to meet student's needs when teachers are able to create both independent and directed activities to enhance students understanding. As observed by Pianta, Hamre and Allen (2012), the relationship between the student and the teacher and the relationships of students with one another enhance emotional and psychological support for students learning. They are instrumental are fundamental supports to the value of students experience in the classroom setting for furthering development. However, ensuring that school environment is teaching-learning friendly by adequately maintaining various school factors that facilitate learning, will ensure that knowledge are imparted qualitatively on the learners. This will foster their development of employability skills of effective communication, ICT skills, problem solving skills and creativity.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Education being the major tool for societal development has been adopted by many countries in addressing diverse socio-economic challenges. Following this overwhelming relevance of education, they strive to ensure that the educational system is standardized to yield the expected outcome. Nigerian secondary education over the years has not been able to produce graduates that have the ability commensurate with the broad aim of secondary

education as stipulated in the National Policy on Education. It is expected that at the completion of that level of education, the individual will be able to be useful to himself and to the society in terms of self-reliance. However instead of acquiring those skills that will enable the goal accomplishment, it is seen the other way round. The reasons have been attributed to factors like inadequacy of school facilities for effective teaching and learning, non-strategic curriculum implementation, teaching effectiveness of the teachers, teachers/students interpersonal relationship, classroom climate and overall attitude of teachers in their job execution.

The situation has been worrisome irrespective of government and institutional interventions in shaping the school environment to be stimulating for learning, by provision of some needed facilities and adopting certain innovative ways of knowledge impartation, the problem still exist. It is evidently seen that most of secondary school outputs are less skilled and can neither secure employment nor be innovative to create one, rather form clusters of yearly Universal Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) candidates, who are less likely to also succeed in University education.

This study focused to determine whether there was any significant relationship between the independent variables such as; provision of school physical facilities, teachers' attitude to work, teaching effectiveness of the teachers, teachers/students interpersonal relationship, classroom climate, curriculum implementation strategies and students acquisition of employability skills. However, the problem of this study is modelled thus, how do the above listed six school variables relate with students' acquisition of employability skills in secondary schools?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine the combined and individual effects of six school variables - provision of school physical facilities, teachers' attitude to work, teaching effectiveness of the teachers, teachers'-students' interpersonal relationship, classroom climate and school curriculum implementation strategies – to students' skill acquisition in secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the composite and relative contributions of provision of school physical facilities, teachers' attitude to work, teaching effectiveness of the teachers, teachers'-students' interpersonal relationship, classroom climate and school curriculum implementation strategies as predictors for students' acquisition of employability skills in secondary schools.

HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant composite and relative contributions of the six independent variables (provision of school physical facilities, teachers' attitude to work, teaching effectiveness of the teachers, teachers-students interpersonal relationship, classroom climate and school curriculum implementation strategies) onstudents' employability skills acquisition in secondary schools.

SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Geographically, the study is delimited to secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis Cross River State which comprised of two local government areas, Calabar Municipality and Calabar South. This is to enhance adequate accessibility of the areas to the researchers. The study variables were delineated to the following school variables as the independent variables: provision of school physical facilities, teachers' attitude to work, teaching effectiveness of the teachers, teachers-students interpersonal relationship, classroom climate and school curriculum implementation strategies. The effects of the six independent variables were determined on students' acquisition of employability skills which is the dependent variable.

The findings of this study may be of relevance to educational policy makers, school administrators, teachers, parents and other education stake holders. The recommendations emanating from the findings may serve to provide a benchmark for education policy makers to enact favourable policies that will serve to provide necessities in school to foster teaching and learning that will help impart employability skills in the students. The work may provide information for school administrators and teachers on how to improve on their day to day running of the school to ensure that the factors established to effect acquisition of employability skills by the students are effectively handled for better outcomes. Parents and other education stakeholders may through the work see the need for maximum support through donations to schools for proper running of the school to ensure that school goals which aimed at producing well-skilled outputs are actualized.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

One of the limitation encountered in the study was inability of the researchers to ascertain exaggerations and the degree of candour on the response options of the respondents since the data collection was solely on the use of questionnaire.

RESEARCH METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Ex-post facto design was adopted for the study since the incidence of the study had occurred and the researcher did not manipulate the independent variables to determine their effect on the dependent variable. The study was carried out in Cross River State which is located at South-South geo political zone of Nigeria. Specifically, two out of eighteen (18) local governments in the state, which are Calabar South and Calabar Municipality was used for the study.

The population of the study comprised three thousand, three hundred and seventy nine (3,379) senior secondary (SS3) students schooling at twenty-two public secondary schools, seven in Calabar South and fifteen in Calabar Municipality. Stratified random sampling was used to select four hundred students as the study sample, two hundred from each of the local government for equal representation of the study population.

The instrument used for data collection was 30-item research questionnaire titled "School Variables and Employability Skill Acquisition Questionnaire" (SVESAQ). The instrument contained two sections, A and B. Section A contained demographic data of the respondents, while section B contained thirty items that measured the variables studied. The instrument was validated by experts in Measurement and Evaluation and was further subjected to statistical validation, of which Cronbach Alpha Coefficient ranging from 0.75 to 0.86 was obtained for each of the variables. This made the instrument to be considered reliable for the study.

Copies of the instrument were self-administered by the researchers and the respondents were properly guided on the mode of completion. Four hundred copies were administered and were all retrieved. The responses were properly coded for analysis on 4-point Likert Scale.

RESULTS

Data were analyzed using Multiple Regression. Results are shown below

Research Hypothesis: There is no significant composite and relative contribution of the six independent variables (provision of school physical facilities, teachers' attitude to work, teaching effectiveness of the teachers, teachers'-students' interpersonal relationship, classroom climate and school curriculum implementation strategies) as predictors for students' employability skill acquisition in secondary schools.

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TABLE 1.1. Summary of Multiple Regression analysis of school variables as a predictor of students' employability skill acquisition

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	52.442	6	8.740	94.53	.000[b]
Residual	36.336	393	.092		
Total	88.778	399			

*P<.05; $df_{6,393}$; critical F = 2.12

a. Dependent Variable: Employability skill acquisition
b. Predictors: (Constant), Provision of physical facilities, Teachers' attitude to work, Teaching effectiveness of teachers, Teachers-Students interpersonal relationship, Classroom climate, Curriculum implementation strategies

TABLE 1.2
Summary of Regression coefficients

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	40.275	1.463		27.534	.000
Provision of physical facilities	.385	.022	.610	17.479	.000
Teachers attitude to work	.255	.022	.459	11.488	.000
Teaching effectiveness of teachers	.341	.045	.307	7.620	.000
Teachers-Students interpersonal relationship	.079	.032	.011	2.475	.014
Classroom climate	.171	.028	.232	6.020	.000
Curriculum implementation strategies	.101	.049	.106	2.040	.042

*P<.05

TABLE 1.3. Summary of the Model

Multiple R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.769[a]	.591	.584	.30407

a. Predictors: (Constant) Provision of physical facilities, Teachers' attitude to work, Teaching effectiveness of teachers, Teachers-Students interpersonal relationship, Classroom climate Curriculum implementation strategies.

The above tables show computational output of school variables as a predictor of students' skills acquisition in secondary schools. It is observed that at .05 level of significance, under degrees of freedom 6 and 393, the critical F-ratio is 2.12 and is less than the calculated F-ratio of 94.53. The significance level obtained is .000 and is less than .05 significance level used in the study, p<.05. With these results, it shows that the six school variables; Provision of physical facilities, teachers attitude to work, teaching effectiveness of teachers, teachers-Students interpersonal relationship, classroom climate and curriculum implementation strategies have composite effect as predictors of students skills acquisition in secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis. The table further shows the multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .769 and coefficient of determination of (R^2) of .591. These values show a positive relationship between the six independent variables and students' skill acquisition, which means that the higher positive change in the independent variables, the better prediction of the dependent variable, which is students acquisition of employability skills.

The relative effect of the independent variables on the dependent were further seen from the table. The six independent variables; Provision of physical facilities, teachers attitude to work, teaching effectiveness of teachers, teachers-Students interpersonal relationship, classroom climate and curriculum implementation strategies, has p-values of; .000, .000, .000, .000, .014, .000, and .042 respectively and are all less than .05 level of significance (p<.05). This means that each of the variable has a significant effect on students' acquisition of employability skills. To summarize these individual effects of the predictor variables, it could be said that each of the variable ; provision of school physical facilities, teachers attitude to work, teaching effectiveness of teachers, teacher-students interpersonal relationship, classroom and curriculum implementation strategy significantly relates with students acquisition of employability skills.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
The finding of this study generally revealed that the six school variables studied; Provision of physical

facilities, teachers attitude to work, teaching effectiveness of teachers, teachers-Students interpersonal relationship, classroom climate and curriculum implementation strategies, have a significant combined effect as predictor of students employability skills acquisition in secondary schools. The variables showed combined effects in predicting students' employability skills acquisition. The predictor variables are all individually related to the dependent variables. To this effect, the six predictor variables provision of physical facilities, teachers' attitude to work, teaching effectiveness of the teachers, teachers/students interpersonal relationship, and curriculum implementation strategies, are all significantly related to students' acquisition of employability skills.

A plausible explanation for these finding is that employability skill does not exist on its own, there are things that cause it to happen. In effect, provision of school facilities is essential in students' acquisition of employability skills. For example, buildings are required to house (accommodate) students and teachers for teaching/learning, house laboratory equipment, library, and so on. Also facilities like ICT equipment are needed for teaching students' skills and techniques of manipulating them to achieve the desired result of present age ICT compliant work skills acquisition when out of school. In essence, students cannot acquire employability skills where there is no building to serve as classrooms; where there are no ICT facilities to teach and impact the requisite skills practically which they can showcase outside the school. Closely related to this is where teachers' attitude to work is not favourable, teachers will not have the zeal to perform their classroom functions. Teachers and students also must have favourable relationship for effective teaching/learning situation to evolve. That is, there must be an atmosphere of cordiality which breeds trust on teachers by students. It is only when these situations exist that students can acquire employability skills through interactions with other teachers in and outside the classrooms. The classroom climate must also be conducive to engender result-oriented teaching and learning. With regards to curriculum implementation strategies, there is a necessity that strategies adopted by the teachers must be in consonance with the students' interest, learning ability and suit their personal idiosyncrasies. The curriculum implementation strategies must be one that will arouse the students' interest and sustain it so as to create the desire to learn and qualitative knowledge impartation for students' acquisition of desired employability skills.

With these conditions, students acquisition of employability skills is likely to be a mirage and by extension an exercise in futility. The findings of this study which reveal six school variables studied (Provision of physical facilities, teachers attitude to

work, teaching effectiveness of teachers, teachers-students interpersonal relationship, classroom climate, and curriculum implementation strategies) to have significant relationship with students acquisition of employability skills are in line with the study of Udofia et al (2012) who found that there is significant relationship between; teacher's quality, teachers teaching method and students acquisition of employable skills. The findings also support the study of Oyetola et al (2012) who established that provision and utilization of school facilities is significantly related with students' skill acquisition.

CONCLUSION
Arising from the findings, it was concluded that school variables in terms of provision of physical facilities, teachers attitude to work, teaching effectiveness of teachers, student/teachers interpersonal relation, classroom climate and curriculum implementation strategies have significant relationship with students acquisition of employability skill.

RECOMMENDATION
It was therefore recommended that; government and other stakeholders in education should employ possible strategies in ensuring that school variables that enhance students' employability skills acquisition are provided and effectively maintained, to ensure academic programme effectiveness that will foster students' acquisition of employability skills, which will serve to benefit them and society at large.

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