

## **MONITORING STUDENTS' LEARNING BEHAVIOURS IN THE CLASSROOM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA.**

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### **Abstract**

*The main purpose of the study was to empirically find out if teachers in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria monitor their students' learning behaviour. It specifically compared the responses of teachers based on their type of school and location of school. A sample of 214 teachers selected through proportionate stratified random sampling technique were used for the study. One research question and two null hypotheses guided the conduct of study. A structured 31-item questionnaire which was duly validated by three experts was used to collect data. Data collected were analyzed using aggregate scores for the research question and independent t-test statistic for the two hypotheses. The result revealed that teachers in Onitsha education zone do not sufficiently monitor their students' learning behaviour. It further revealed statistically significant differences in the responses of teachers based on their type of school and location of school. It is therefore recommended that school counsellors should help teachers design strategies for assisting students through individual or small group learning sessions among others.*

**Keywords:** Classroom, learning behaviour, monitoring, students.

### **1. Introduction**

Learning has been universally accepted as a relatively permanent change in an individual's potential behaviour as a result of experience and practice. In the school setting, the experience is provided basically in the classroom and its environment. Behaviour is a concern because it is closely related to effective learning from both the students and teachers perspectives. A substantial portion of a student's day is spent in school; and school experience exerts dramatic effects on the students learning behaviors (Idowu, 2004). Thus the type of school a student attends, the company he keeps and the environment in which he grows up bear a lot of influence on his learning behaviour (Idowu, 2001).

Observing students' learning behaviour in their school and community setting can provide useful information as to their ability to successfully cope with the inherent demands placed upon them in the various environments. These settings represent what Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified as primary and secondary development contexts, in which students observe and develop skills under the guidance of a more knowledgeable individual (the teacher) whose interaction with, and active support of the child via appropriate engagement are crucial to healthy learning behaviour. Students' interactions in various setting may differ as a function of setting characteristics revealing situation specificity and highlighting the need for assessing the contribution of the environment on students' learning behaviour (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999). In the school setting, students' learning behaviour whether functional or dysfunctional reflects their response to learning demands, social interactions, adult directives and stimuli present in the environment. It is in view of these assertions that the researchers were interested in finding the influence of school type and school location on students' learning behaviours. This is because they have been effected to exert dramatic influence on students' learning behaviours.

The skills, attitudes and behaviors of teachers that contribute to student's positive learning, behaviours and academic success have been identified as academic enablers (Diperra & Elliot, 2002). Analyzes of academic enablers identified various pathways contributing to students' learning behaviours and suggested that motivation, engagement, study skills and interpersonal skills are worthwhile to consider when monitoring students' learning behaviour. Other researchers Pianta & Howes (2002) have shown that students' learning behaviours and classroom experiences interact to affect academic success. Relevant skills may include students' initiate strategy application and rapport with teachers as well as monitoring time, learning from errors and corrections, attending to instruction and cooperation with peers. In the light of the fact that these learning behaviours are keystone behaviours, school counsellors and teachers can collaborate to develop interventions focused on helping to improve students' maladaptive approaches to learning tasks that, in turn may result in beneficial achievement gains and other concomitant benefits. This is basically the essence of this study and the gap it sought to fill.

Education guidance according to Oraegbunam (2004) is aimed at assisting individual students to acquire planned education through the provision of relevant information to students regarding school and school courses; effective study habits and use of time table; available educational opportunities, course requirements, school subjects and course combinations and improving reading skills among others. As the closest personnel to students, the teacher is in the best position to monitor the learning behaviours of the students in his/her class. Among the teacher's roles are the ability to create a suitable learning environment, collect information about students from parents and modify instructional techniques to suit individual or small group learning sessions with a view to monitor their learning behaviours.

Monitoring students' learning behaviours denotes supervising the studies of students, appraising students' academic performance, counselling the students with study problems, and equipping students with study skills, providing information on academic and education matters, identifying special students for necessary attention among a host of many other activities (Counselling Association of Nigeria 2004). In view of the close link between the teacher and students, creating the opportunity to learn and to develop both academic and learning skills has been implicated as essential to an effective environment. Elton Report in Whendel (1992) expectations for good classroom practice were for the classroom teacher to arrive before the class, deliver well prepared lessons, keep everyone occupied and interested, mark all work promptly, use a fair, clear and positive marking system, have regular home work pattern and monitoring students among others. In essence, the overall purpose of monitoring students' learning behaviours is to aid students in displaying behaviours conducive to learning. The goal of monitoring students' learning behaviours should be to teach and encourage academic/learning behaviours that are appropriate for the classroom situation. The teacher is indispensable in attaining this laudable objective that is geared towards improving students' maladaptive approaches to learning tasks. It is against this background that the researchers conducted this study to find out if teachers really monitor students' learning behaviours in the classroom.

The main purpose of the study was to find out if teachers monitor their students' learning behaviours in the classroom. Specially, the study was aimed at finding out if, monitoring students' learning behaviours is based on type of school or school location.

The study was guided by one research question.

- To what extent do teachers monitor their students' learning behaviours in the classroom?

Two null hypotheses, which were tested at .05 level of significant, were formulated to guide the conduct of the study.

- There is no significant difference between the mean scores of teachers on the monitoring of students' learning behaviours in the classroom due to type of school.
- There is no significant difference between the mean scores of teachers on the monitoring of students' learning behaviours in the classroom due to location of school.

## **2. Method**

A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study was carried out in Onitsha Education Zone. The Zone has both urban and rural based secondary schools. A Federal Government college is also located in Onitsha. The population of the study comprised all the 1667 teachers in all the secondary schools and the Federal Government College in Onitsha Education Zone.

The sample for the study consisted of 214 teachers, selected through proportionate stratified random sampling procedure. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire named 'Monitoring Students' Learning Behaviours' (MSLB). The researcher developed the instrument after a careful review of the background of the problem under investigation. The instrument (MSLB) consisted of two parts (1 and 2). Part 1 collected data on the personal data of the respondents while part 2 contained 31 items, which were raised to find out if teachers actually monitor students' learning behaviour. The respondent were required to indicate their level of agreement to each of the items by choosing any one of the response options – Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

The instrument (MSLB) was subjected to face and content validity. The draft copies of the instrument together with the research topic, purpose, question and hypotheses were given to 3 experts, 2 in guidance and counselling and 1 in test and measurement, all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability coefficient of the validated instrument was established through trial testing involving 20 teachers from State Secondary Schools and 15 teachers from Federal Government Technical Collage both in Awka, Zone. The choice of Awka was to avoid contamination with the main parent population. Their responses were obtained, collated and subjected to Cronbach reliability analysis to check for the internal consistency of the items. A reliability coefficient alpha of 0.74 was realized. This proved the items to be reliable.

Direct approach was adopted in data collection. This was made possible because the researcher employed the services of two research assistants from each of the sample schools. This actually facilitated the process of data collection. Data collated were analyzed using aggregate scores for the research question and t-test statistics for the null hypotheses.

Aggregate score 73.50 – 84 indicate monitoring very well,  
52.50 – 73.49 indicate monitoring moderately  
21.00 – 52.49 indicate not monitoring.

### **3. Results**

The analyses of data on the research question and hypotheses obtained from the instrument were presented as follows.

**3.1 Table 1** reveals that only 31 teachers monitor student learning behaviour very well, 58 teachers monitor moderately and 125 teachers do not monitor students learning behaviour in classroom.

**3.2 In table 2**, the result reveals that at .05 level of significance, the calculated t-value 2.36 is greater than the critical t-value 1.96, the hypothesis is therefore rejected. There is a significant difference in the mean score of teachers due to type of school.

**3.3 In table 3**, the result reveals that at .05 level of significance, the calculated t-value 2.56 is greater than critical t-value 1.96, the hypothesis is therefore rejected. There is significance difference in the mean scores of teachers due to location of school.

### **4. Discussion**

It was discovered in the study that majority of the teachers in Onitsha Education Zone do not monitor students' learning behaviour in the classroom. The poor academic achievement of many students could be attributed to teachers' inability to monitor students' learning behaviour. Since Diperra & Elliot (2002) regarded teachers' behaviour as contributing to students' positive learning behaviour and academic success. Piñata & Howes (2002) have shown that students' learning behaviour and classroom experiences interact to affect academics success. This points to the ardent need for students learning activities to be adequately monitored.

Also, the study found that there was significant difference between the mean scores of teachers from different types of school (State and Federal) on monitoring students' learning behaviour. This finding is in agreement with Idowu, (2001) who asserted that the type of school a student attends has a lot of influence in his learning behaviour. This has been found to influence the teachers' ability to monitor students' learning behaviour in the classroom. Nevertheless, Gutkin and Curtis (1999) asserted that students' interactions in various school settings may differ as a function of setting characteristics revealing situational specificity and highlighting the need for assessing the contribution of environment on students' learning behaviour.

This account for the significant difference on the responses of state and federal school teachers. Though, the difference in schools' characteristics were not studied, it appears that the two types of school studied have different school setting characteristics. A significant difference was also observed in the response of urban and rural teachers. Little wonder, Idowu (2004) observed that the community in which a school is located bears a lot of influence on the overall learning process. Teachers in urban school appear to monitor while rural based teachers seem to engage in local activities than the teaching learning activities.

#### 4.1 Conclusion

It has been established empirically that teachers in Onitsha Education Zone do not sufficiently monitor their students' learning behaviour in the classroom. This trend if not checked promptly could be devastating to the students' learning process which in turn could influence learning outcome. The relevance of teachers monitoring students' learning behaviour to keep them engaged in behaviour necessary for the development of health and successful academic pursuit cannot be over-emphasized.

#### 4.2 Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, the under listed recommendations were proffered.

1. School counsellors and teachers should collaborate to develop intervention strategies focused on helping to improve students' maladaptive approaches to learning tasks.
2. School counsellors should help teachers design strategies for assisting students through individual or small group learning sessions.
3. Classroom should be made conducive and spaced to enable teachers monitor learning.
4. Teachers to adopt adequate group behaviour management strategies such as planned ignoring, providing cues to students, proximity control, use of humour and removal of nuisance items in the class to enhance the learning process.
5. School administrators/management should recognize teachers whose students perform extremely well and reinforce them accordingly to motivate others.
6. Teachers' work load should be minimized to enable them embark on effective monitoring of teaching and learning process.
7. Teachers should device strategies for regular supervision of students' learning process.

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**Table 1: Analysis of Aggregate Score of Teacher’s on Monitoring of Students’ learning behaviours.**

No of Teachers	Aggregate Scores	Description
31	73.50 – 84	Monitoring very well
58	52.50 – 73.49	Monitoring moderately
125	21 – 52.49	Not monitoring.

**Table 2: Summary of independent t-test of type of school on teachers’ monitoring of students’ learning behaviour.**

Source of Difference	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit
State School Teachers	135	55.84	20.01	212	2.36	1.96
Federal School Teachers	79	53.32	19.92			

P = >.05

**Table 3: Summary of independent t-test comparison of location on teachers’ monitoring of students’ learning behaviour.**

Source of Difference	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit
Rural based teachers	75	52.98	18.18	212	2.56	1.96
Urban based Teachers	139	54.62	19.88			

P = >.05