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PERCEIVED IMPACT OF SCHOOL CLIMATE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ONITSHA NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

This study examined impact of school climate on academic performance of secondary school students of Onitsha North Local Government Area. The study assessed school climate factors and the level of psychological impact they have on learners. The population of the study was 25,350. The sample of 208 respondents comprising principals, teachers, and students selected from the population through purposive sampling technique was used for the study. The questionnaire used for data collection was structured on a 4-point response scale with mean scores of 2.50 and above as acceptable level. The questionnaire was validated in face and content by experts in Educational Administration. The reliability of this instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient which yielded a coefficient of 0.924. The data collected were analysed using mean scores for the two research questions raised and One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the two null hypotheses formulated and tested at 0.05 significant level. Results indicate that, school climate can be improved for better academic performance by maintaining a manageable student-teacher ratio in the classroom; fundamental moral values is promoted; prevention of acts of bullying and when students are treated fairly amongst others. The following recommendations were made: the managers of secondary schools should increase school safety by adopting violence-prevention and conflict resolution programmes; school administrator should maintain a manageable student-teacher ratio in the school amongst others.

Keywords: *School Climate, Academic Performance and Secondary School*

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Introduction

Education is generally acknowledged to be means of empowering an individual through the acquisition and utilization of knowledge and skills to enable him/her become useful to himself/herself in the community. Nwadiani (2000) described education as a magic wand for the solution to the problems that plague mankind. Education therefore is the aggregate of all processes by means of which a person develops abilities, attitude and other forms of behaviour of positive value in the society in which he lives. According to The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014), secondary education is the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary level. It stated in specific terms that the broad goal of secondary education shall be to prepare the individual for; (a) useful living within the society and (b) higher education, and in (h) the document stated that secondary education in Nigeria shall raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour and appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals and live as good citizens. Public schools which are owned by government are predominantly occupied by citizens of lower social economic status in Nigeria society are facing challenges of educational sub-standard, lack of adequate resources, leading to poor teaching, student poor academic performance and dropping out.

School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. It has been described as the heart and soul of the school or that essence of a school that leads a child, a teacher, and an administrator to love the school and to look forward to being there each school day (Freinerg, 1999). A positive school climate helps people feel socially, emotionally and physically safe in schools. It includes students', parents' and school personnel's norms, beliefs, relationships, teaching and learning practices, as well as organizational and structural features of the school (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli & Pickeral, 2009). According to the National School Climate Council (2016),a sustainable, positive school climate promotes students' academic and social development. In negative school climate, schools are deterred in their mission and goals by parental and public demands. Negative school climate lack an

effective leader and the teachers are generally unhappy with their jobs and colleagues. In addition, neither teachers nor students are academically motivated in poor schools and academic achievement is not highly valued (Hoy, Tarter & Kottkamp, 2007).The National School Climate Center (2016) defined school climate as the quality of school life experienced by students, caregivers, school personnel, and others interacting with the school environment. A positive school climate, then, is one where the school attends to each of the following: (a) fostering safety; (b) promoting a supportive academic, disciplinary, and physical environment; and (c) encouraging and maintaining respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community. Additionally, organizational structures such as student body socioeconomic status (SES), retention of staff, racial and ethnic diversity of staff and students, and community support may influence climate. School climate can be thought of as the life and character of the school, thus, seeking opportunities to create or sustain a positive school climate is foundational to continuous improvement efforts. Research has shown the relationship of school climate as a factor influencing success or failure of education to teachers and students (Adesina, 2011). Productive school climate needs a good teaching and learning strategies, sufficient instructional materials, richer classroom ecology, pleasant school culture, objective administration and good school physical structures (Carpenter, 2011).Unfortunately, the performance of public secondary schools students in Onitsha North Local Government Area in particular has been very far below expectation. Academic performance is defined by Peddles (2009) as the accomplishment carried out in doing any action. Adewale (2003) defined academic performance as a means of academic progress, not only to indicate readiness for next step but to evaluate students' progress towards educational goals. Alfred in Adewale (2003) defined academic performance as an appraisal to determine whether a student will remain in the same level in the coming year or will be promoted. Examination and test are tools for measuring and determining those who will graduate and those who will not. Anene (2005) defined students' academic performance as an assessment of students learning progress in task that is required of them. They are expected to engage in activities which may include, manipulation of materials, problems

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solving, demonstration of practical skills and participating in theoretical work. Donald (2007) viewed academic performance as an active demonstration that assess students learning, such as; presentation, musical and dramatic performance. When students demonstrate all these, it improves their learning and assimilation. Omoregie (2005) lamented that products of today's secondary system can neither usefully live in the society nor move into higher institution without result forgery or their parents buying admission with huge sum of money. Secondary school students cannot think for themselves or respect the views and feelings of others and that they have no dignity of labour except for things that will give them quick money. They are highly engaged in cultism, drug abuse, examination malpractices, hooliganism, truancy, high drop-out rate, sexual harassment and general break down of law and order of the day. These vices notwithstanding, the teaming population of public secondary schools completers in Onitsha North LGA every year is alarming. This ugly trend is connected with some level of school climate prevailing in the various public secondary schools in the local government. Because of the relevance of school climate to students learning and academic performance, the researcher is interested examining the impact of school climate on the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha North LGA.

Theoretical Framework

Bio-ecological theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bio-ecological framework suggests that human development occurs through the complex, reciprocal interactions that an individual has with others and the surrounding environment. This theory outlines four systems of operations including a micro system, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem, where the self is microsystem and school is part of the mesosystem. It proposes that individuals have ultimate control over their own environments, altering and modifying to their needs, however, this is only possible through self-directed actions that combine biological and environmental attributes. One cannot engage in reconstructing their environment without both of these attributes working together. More depth of this concept can be referenced in the bioecological model. In the context of school climate, individual behaviours are shaped by the school environment, in which each child is embedded. For

example, the structure and condition of the school, the use of specific school practices (e.g., disciplinary), and the interpersonal relationships between students and teachers, all play a role in influencing student development and performance.

Empirical Studies

Authors have suggested that students need collective efficacy to activate the influence of the school climate, in particular for the aspect of academic press, on their achievement. This approach has also been applied in explaining the impact of staff perspectives on student achievement (Reeve, 2012). Caprara et al. (2006) found that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs were significantly related to students' academic achievement. (Reeve, 2012) additionally found that collective teacher efficacy significantly predicted students' reading and mathematics performance. Specifically, the authors found that a "one unit increase in a school's collective teacher efficacy score" was related to increase of more than 40% of a standard deviation in student achievement. Self-determination theory has also been widely applied. Authors have proposed that students and staff need to meet the psychological basic needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy in order for students to achieve (Taylor et al., 2014). Cohen, Pickeral and Mcclosky (2009) used Charles F. Kettering (CFK) school climate profile to measure school climate as respect, trust, high morale, opportunity for input, continuous academic and social growth, cohesiveness, school renewal and learning, safety (rules, norms, physical safety, social and emotional security), teaching and learning (support for learning, social and civic learning), interpersonal relationship (respect for diversity, social support-adults, social support-students) and institutional environment (school connectedness / engagement and physical surroundings) and found relationship to students' academic performance. Variance in achievement beyond individual factors and socio-economic status has consistently been explained by students' school climate ratings. Collins and Parson (2010) conducted a seminal study establishing this student-climate-performance link. The authors tested the effect of students' perceptions of school climate on mean school performance in three samples of racially diverse elementary schools. They found that school climate explained a significant

amount of the between-school variance in mean school performance and that the strength of the relationship was similar to that explained by economic status (SES) and ethnicity. Tschannen-Moran et al. (2006) found that positive school climate was associated with students' academic performance, after controlling for SES. Contrastingly, a negative school climate has been found to reduce student participation in school activities and student learning. This climate-performance relationship appears to be robust for students across different grades, backgrounds, and cultures. It also appears to endure for years which have been further supported by longitudinal studies. Various sub-factors of school climate have been found to exert a powerful impact on academic performance. For example, academic emphasis, academic optimism, and strong teacher-student relationships have been found to be particularly influential (Tschannen-Moran, Parish & DiPaola, 2006). In particular, student-teacher relationships effectively work as a protective factor for school adjustment including academic performance as well as conduct and behavioural problems, especially for adolescents transiting from middle school to high school. However, many of the reviewed studies are limited because of how they measured academic performance. Many have relied on regional or state-wide tests and unstandardized measures (e.g., self-reported performance or grade point average, [GPA]. Although various studies have used standardized literacy and numeracy assessment data though studies that used standardized nation-wide tests are limited (Longobardi, Prino, Marengo & Settanni, 2016). The works of Brockenbrough, Cornell and Loper (2002) shown that aggressive attitudes havelink to disciplinary referral, engagement in high risk behaviours such as weapon carrying, drug and alcohol use, gang involvement, physical violence and low academic performance. Students' who regard aggressive behaviour as an acceptable, even socially desirable and effective way to deal with others, are more likely to bully others or encourage bullying by their peers and this negatively impact on academic performance. Research has also shown that when teachers perceive themselves as efficacious, the school has effective principal leadership, and relationships between students and peers are positive, student standardized test scores, GPA, and grades are higher (Wang & Degol, 2016). There is also a relationship between school resource

allocation and student performance. Several research studies highlight the link between student academic performance and resources such as teacher education and experience, class size, teacher to student ratio, school facilities, classroom materials, and financial expenditures (Wang & Degol, 2016). Structural features of the school, such as the temperature and age of the building, can affect student performance and school attendance. In a study of students' exposure to adverse school building conditions and absenteeism, researchers found that student absenteeism was associated with visible mold and poor ventilation, among other factors (Simons, Hwang, Fitzgerald, Kielb & Lin, 2010). If students are absent from school, academic performance can be affected. Collins and Parson (2010) found that among other factors, empirical evidence has confirmed that school climate is powerful in affecting students' academic performance. The school climate study of Espelage, Polanin and Low (2014) found school climate as a leading predictor of students' emotional and behavioural outcomes that affects students' adaptive psychosocial adjustment, mental health outcomes and also influences students' behavior, such as rates of bullying and aggression, student delinquency, alcohol and drug use. In their research, school climate was also found to affect students' academic achievement. On studying the effect of staff's perceptions of school climate on student outcomes, Johnson and Stevens (2006) found teachers' perceptions of school climate had a positive relationship with fourth graders' scores on standardized tests using structural equation modelling. However, a drawback of their design was their use of aggregated mean scores for staff perceptions and student academic performance by school. This design assumes there is no difference within schools.

Statement of Problem

The observed increase in aggression, violent behaviours, cultism, unhealthy conflicts and indiscipline in Anambra State Public Secondary Schools coupled with the falling standard in education seem to suggest that all is not well with the school climate in Anambra State secondary schools. In many schools students have formed cult groups to harass and intimidate the school personnel and external examiners so that will cheat obtain high scores which have resulted to the cancellation of school

results. If the school environment is not supportive of teaching and learning processes to achieve the set educational goals and objectives, it is expected that school principals, as administrators and leaders, should evaluate the status quo and introduce changes that will improve and maintain positive school climate. Anambra State public secondary school climate is having low operational quality and absence of required facilities to cater for teachers and students, which features: rampant examination malpractice, lack of parental commitment to school activities, cultism, high rate of bullying, dominions, acts of indiscipline, gangsters, illegal substance abuse, lack of proper supervision of students' activities, inbuilt culture of incompetency and a general hopelessness leading to students' failure, truancy and drop out as well, which the society have blindly attributed the fault to the school administrator and classroom teacher(Abinboye, 2011).The problem of this study is therefore, to examine the impact of school climate on the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha North LGA.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed at finding the impact of school climate on academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha North. Also, to find out ways in which the school climate can be improved for better academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha North LGA.

Research Questions

1. What are the school climate factors prevalent in secondary schools in Onitsha North LGA?
2. What are the ways of improving the school climate to enhance the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha North LGA?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the responses of principals, teachers and students on the school climate factors prevalent in secondary schools in Onitsha North LGA.
2. There is no significant difference in the responses of principals, teachers and students on the ways of improving the school climate to enhance the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha North LGA.

Method

Research Design

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Descriptive survey was used for this study. Descriptive survey is suitable for this study because it is based on the views and opinions of the respondents in the area of study.

Area of the Study

The study was carried out in Onitsha North LGA. Onitsha North is under Onitsha education zone. Specifically, the study was done in Onitsha North LGA, which has 16 public secondary schools.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of 16 principals, 769 teachers and 24,565 students totalling 25,350respondents in the public secondary schools in Onitsha North LGA.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample comprised 208 persons selected from the population. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample of the study. The purposive sampling technique was used because the elements satisfy some predetermined criteria of school climate.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was researcher developed questionnaire titled "School Climate and Academic Performance Questionnaire" (CLAPQ). The questionnaire contained items which were structured on a 4 point response scale of Strongly Agree (SA=4); Agree (A=3); Disagree (D=2); and strongly Disagree (SD=1). The questionnaire consisted of three sections A, B and C. Section A was on the bio-data of the respondents; section B contains eight items on the prevailing secondary school climate. Section C, has eight items on the possible solutions to the ways to improve school climate to enhance the secondary school students' academic performance in Onitsha North LGA.

Validation of the Instruments

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by three experts, two from Educational Management and Planning and one from Measurement and Evaluation, all in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus.

Reliability of the Instruments

The Cronbach Alpha method was used to check the reliability of all the scale variables. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the items is 0.924 which is close to 1 and this shows that the items in the instruments are reliable.

Method of Data Analysis

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Mean was used to analyse the questionnaire while ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Mean responses of the school climate factors prevalent in secondary schools in Onitsha North LGA

S/N	Item Description	Principals			Teachers			Students			Weighted Mean
		N	$\overline{x}$	Decision	N	$\overline{x}$	Decision	N	$\overline{X}$	Decision	
1	School environment is not safe, peaceful and welcoming	8	2.6	Agree	80	2.8	Agree	120	2.9	Agree	2.77
2	Students display behavioural problems like fighting, lying, and cheating	8	2.7	Agree	80	3.0	Agree	120	2.9	Agree	2.87
3	Cultism is the order of the day	8	3.5	Agree	80	3.1	Agree	120	3.4	Agree	3.33
4	Teachers are molested and harassed by students.	8	2.6	Agree	80	2.9	Agree	120	3.1	Agree	2.87
5	Inadequate preparation for examination.	8	2.8	Agree	80	3.1	Agree	120	2.6	Agree	2.83
6	There is no Strong teacher-student relationships	8	2.5	Agree	80	3.4	Agree	120	2.8	Agree	2.93
7	Poor study habit and lack of interest in school work by students.	8	2.9	Agree	80	2.7	Agree	120	3.0	Agree	2.87
8	Regular mass transfer of teachers.	8	2.7	Agree	80	2.9	Agree	120	2.6	Agree	2.73

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The relevant data were collated and analysed using the statistical mean to answer this question. The result is presented in Table 2. The result in Table 2 is vivid and self-explanatory. It showed that the school climate factors prevalent in secondary schools in Onitsha North LGA (since the means were above 2.50) are: School environment is not safe, peaceful and welcoming (2.77); Students display behavioural problems like fighting, lying, and cheating (2.87); Cultism is the order of the day (3.30); Teachers are molested and harassed by students (2.87); Inadequate preparation for examination(2.83); There is no Strong teacher-student relationships (2.93); Poor study habit and lack of interest in school work by students (2.87);Regular mass transfer of teachers. (2.73).

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Table 2: Mean responses of principals, teachers and students on the ways of improving the school climate to enhance the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha North LGA.

S/N	Item Description	Principals			Teachers			Students			Weighted
		N	$\bar{x}$	Decision	N	$\bar{x}$	Decision	N	$\bar{x}$	Decision	Mean
1	Maintaining a manageable student teacher ratio in the classroom.	8	2.5	Agree	80	2.8	Agree	120	3.0	Agree	2.76
2	Fundamental moral values are promoted.	8	2.7	Agree	80	3.0	Agree	120	2.9	Agree	2.80
3	Prevention of acts of bullying	8	3.5	Agree	80	3.1	Agree	120	34	Agree	3.33
4	Students are treated fairly, equitably and with respect by the administrators and teachers.	8	2.6	Agree	80	2.9	Agree	120	3.1	Agree	2.87
5	Provide a conducive environment for staff and Student	8	2.8	Agree	80	3.1	Agree	120	2.6	Agree	2.80
6	Maintaining a manageable student teacher ratio in the classroom.	8	2.5	Agree	80	3.4	Agree	120	2.8	Agree	2.90

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7	Providing up-to-date learning materials for students	8	2.9	Agree	80	2.7	Agree	120	3.0	Agree	2.87
8	Honouring most improved students	8	2.7	Agree	80	2.9	Agree	120	26	Agree	2.73

The relevant data were collated and analysed using the statistical mean to answer this question. The result is presented in Table 2. The result in Table 2 is vivid and self-explanatory. It showed that the responses of principals, teachers and students on the ways of improving the school climate to enhance the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha North LGA (since the means were above 2.50) are: Maintaining a manageable student teacher ratio in the classroom (2.76); Fundamental moral values are promoted(2.80); Prevention of acts of bullying (3.33); Students are treated fairly, equitably and with respect by the administrators and teachers (2.87); Provide a conducive environment for staff and student(2.80); Maintaining a manageable student teacher ratio in the classroom (2.90); Providing up-to-date learning materials for students (2.87); Honouring most improved students (2.73). The results of the items on the table indicated that all the items mentioned on the table will help in improving the students' academic performance in the secondary school since all of them have mean score above 2.50 which is the cut-off mean.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals, teachers and students on the school climate factors prevalent in secondary schools in Onitsha North LGA.

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Table 3: Summary Table of ANOVA on the Analysis of the principals, teachers and students responses on the school climate factors prevalent in secondary schools in Onitsha North LGA.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-critical	Decision p≥0.05
Between Groups	-10322.79	2	-5161.40			
Within Groups	31,056,224.14	245	2077.76	-2.48	3.13	Not Significant
Total	31,045,901.35	247	-			

Using analysis of variance (ANOVA), the result in Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference in mean ratings of the principals, teachers and students responses on the school climate factors prevalent in secondary schools in Onitsha North LGA since the calculated F-calculated value of-2.48 is less than the table F-critical value of3.13.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the responses of principals, teachers and students on the ways of improving the school climate to enhance the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha North LGA.

Table 4: Summary Table of ANOVA on the Analysis of the principals, teachers and students on the ways of improving the school climate to enhance the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha North LGA.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-critical	Decision p≥0.05
Between Groups	121.91	2	60.96			
Within Groups	19,594,967.01	245	2741.71	0.02	3.32	Not Significant
Total	19,595,088.92	247	-			

Using analysis of variance (ANOVA), the result in Table 4 shows that there was a significant difference in mean ratings of the principals, teachers and students on the ways of improving the school climate to enhance the academic performance of

secondary school students in Onitsha North LGA since the calculated F-ratios 0.02 is less than the F-critical of 3.32.

Discussion of Findings

In Tables 1 and 3 the principals, teachers and student agreed that school environment which is not safe, peaceful and welcoming; where students display behavioural problems like fighting, lying, and cheating; cultism is the order of the day; teachers are molested and harassed by students; inadequate preparation for examination; poor teacher-student relationships and poor study habit and lack of interest in school work by students portrays a hostile school environment which impact negatively on students' academic performance. Table 1 also revealed that students and staff do not feel physically safe in all areas of the school building; there were cases of students being physically hurt at school always and this has resulted to some of the students being truant and being afraid to attend school; principals, teachers and students being molested and harassed by cultists; there were cases of inadequate preparation for examination since the students know that whether they passed or fail they will force the teachers to pass them; good relationship does not exist between the teachers and students because of the aforementioned factors and these have made the students to develop poor study habits. These findings agree with the works of Brockenbrough, Cornell and Loper (2002) that found that aggressive attitudes have link to disciplinary referral, engagement in high risk behaviours such as weapon carrying, drug and alcohol use, gang involvement, physical violence and low academic performance.

Tables 2 and 4, agreed that secondary school climate in Onitsha North LGA can be improved by maintaining a manageable student teacher ratio in the classroom; fundamental moral values is promoted; prevention of acts of bullying; students are treated fairly, equitably and with respect by the administrators and teachers; provide a conducive environment for staff and student; providing up-to-date learning materials for students; honouring most improved students. Their responses corroborated with the findings of Wang and Degol (2016) who established the link between student academic performance and resources such as teacher education and experience, class size, teacher to student

ratio, school facilities, classroom materials, and financial expenditures, academic emphasis (Goddard et al., 2000), academic optimism (Smith & Hoy, 2007), and strong teacher-student relationships (Crosnoe et al., 2004; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2006).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that school climate is instrumental to the academic performance/non-performance of secondary school students in Onitsha North Local Government Area. It was also observed that the prevalent of fighting, lying, and cheating; cultism is the order of the day; teachers are molested and harassed by students; inadequate preparation for examination; poor teacher-student relationships and poor study habit and lack of interest in school work were found to impact negatively on students' academic performance. But if students are provided with supportive learning environment like manageable student teacher ratio in the classroom; fundamental moral values is promoted; prevention of acts of bullying; students are treated fairly, equitably and with respect by the administrators and teachers; provide a conducive environment for staff and student; providing up-to-date learning materials for students; honouring most improved students which in turn yield healthy development as well as preventing anti-social behaviour. An improved school climate will also yield optimal learning opportunities for students in Onitsha North LGA where happiness and safety of the school personnel and students are guaranteed. This will increase academic performance and reduce anti-social behaviour of students and bring job satisfaction for school personnel.

Recommendation

1. The managers of secondary schools should increase school safety by adopting violence-prevention and conflict resolution programmes.
2. Adequate counsellors should be provided in schools to advice and counsel students on the negative effects of anti-social behaviours. They should ensure that students are treated with care, fairness and consistency.
3. Ministries of Education/Education authority at Federal, State and Local Government level should establish anti-cult / drug abuse

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agencies to checkmate cultism and drug abuse in the secondary schools.

4. School administrators should ensure that school personnel and students feel physically safe in all areas of the building and school compound. They should ensure that the school is physically attractive and the school buildings and facilities kept in good condition.
5. Policy makers and relevant agencies should provide up-to-date learning materials, laboratories and ICT equipment such as computers for student use in the school and also sponsor workshops and seminars for head teachers and teachers on competencies for effective use of the equipment.
6. Ministries of Education and its relevant agencies should enforce the use of school climate as a central characteristic of school accountability, assessment and reporting system
7. School administrators should honour the improved student.
8. School administrators should maintain a manageable student-teacher ratio in the school.
9. School administrators should promote school-family community partnerships.

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