CREATING POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract
This paper analyzed the various concept of learning environment and concept of positive learning environment. In addition, the paper classified and critically analyzed the different types of learning environment that are required for appropriate learning. Student and teachers involvement in creating positive learning environment were fully discussed. The paper was concluded with practical recommendations for both the teachers and children.

Introduction
The rapid expansion or increase in the number of private and public schools has not allowed for adequate attention to the issue of conducive or positive learning environments neither by the proprietors, proprietress nor by the government, either at the state or federal levels. Very often, schools are built in places that are noisy. For instance some schools are built close to market squares, hospital and churches making it almost impossible for the student to concentrate due to distractions from these places.

Learning environment involves everything that influences the student that are not hereditary. This could be as a result of influences from the home and school environments, as well as training from the church, neighborhood, hospital, culture, location and even climate that the students experience. Learning environment is seen as an atmosphere with complex materials such as buildings, classrooms, laboratories, handcraft rooms, assembly halls, examination halls, organization, resource persons, instruments and every other material thing that influence learning (Nwankwo, 1998).

The purpose of this paper is to review the evidence that conducive or positive learning environment is basically required for appropriate teaching and learning to take place. The paper has addressed some of the issue that students and teachers who desire to create conducive learning environment have to face in order to improve teaching learning. Conducive learning environment, which include physical, social, psychological and educational well being of students their teachers are all shaped by education which is the basic for the economy of every nation.

Concept of Learning
Learning is defined as an enduring change in the way an organism responds based on its experience. It is essentially based on predicting the future from past experience, and using the prediction to guide behaviour (Drew, 2002). This implies that learning has to do with adaptation and response to environmental stimuli. Learning has a relatively permanent influence on behaviour, knowledge, and thinking skills, which come from experience (Sandrock, 2011). In every situation, learning is the focus of education. Usually, schools are meant to enable children to learn, and learning has taken place only when there is a change.
Learning according to Donjan (2000 & 2002) is too broad and therefore cannot be easily exhausted. It takes place both in the school environment and outside the school environment. Learning is a process through which experience modifies pre-existing behaviour and understanding may have been present at birth, acquired through maturation, or learnt earlier (Bernstein, Clarke-Stewart, Penner, Roy & Wickens, 2000). Learning plays a major role in human development, from motor skills to language skills, which have to do with communication. Learning is therefore acquired through experience got form within the school and outside the school environment.

Learning is a long lasting or relatively permanent change in behaviour which takes place as a result of experience (Martin & Oshorn, 1993). This implies that learning takes place as a result of experience. One must have to undergo certain experiences before learning can take place. Learning occurs because students are aware of the consequences to their responses. They think about the consequences of their reaction towards an experience (Allen, 2000). Bandura (1999) saw learning

as difficult for human beings if there is little or no awareness of link between behaviour and consequences. Learning was seen as being facilitated by awareness, which gives the basis for anticipation. Students learn by observing models as they perform useful behaviour. Students who observe a model learn the value of the behaviour performed in relation to what they will achieve (Bandura, 1999). Learning involves active processes that take place as students act on their different environments and apply their cognitive development on their already acquired experiences. These processes, which the students undergo, involve changes, which manifest in different activities. This could be through observation, communication and interacting with relations, friends and people around the environment in which one finds himself.

Environment refers to the physical conditions that affect the behaviour and development of people, animals and plants. The environment for learning can be positive or negative. Positive learning environment is the environment that strengthens learning and makes the process of learning easy and pleasant. In every learning situation, students need an interesting, calm and motivating environment. According to Akubue (1991), to create a positive learning environment, the teacher has to survey the students beyond their physical appearance, endeavouring to go beyond gestures, words, expression and behaviours. The teacher interprets the students environment and experiences.

Negative learning environment, on the other hand, refers to the environment that is crowded, dirty, distractive, uncomfortable and noisy. Many teachers have taught in this kind of environment and some have experienced stress as a result of teaching under such environment. This is because the type of environment under which teachers work can determine their productivity, create problems by interfering with academic performance of the students, and can contribute to ineffective teaching and learning between teachers and their students.

An effective way to prevent this kind of situation is by creating appropriate, suitable and positive learning environment. In every learning situation, creating a positive environment is a priority for effective teaching. Every student is unique, and this makes it possible for students to have a wide range of learning aspirations and patterns. This diversity of individual differences must be considered in creating positive learning environment in order to accommodate every student.

Most teachers would agree that the environment of learners usually influences learning. This is because it is impossible to separate learning from environment. For proper learning to take place, there must be interaction between the learner's cognition, which has to do with the brain, and the learners environment.

Concept of Positive Learning Environment

A positive or conducive learning environment is an environment in which all the students involved have an equal opportunity to succeed in their learning. Therefore a positive learning environment is the environment that nurtures the students' feelings by allowing them to explore and expand their knowledge without undue risk and fear (Evertson, Emmer & Worsham, 2003). This implies that a positive environment is free from discrimination, humiliation and intimidation from either the teacher or other students. High academic standard can only be maintained with a positive learning environment, which involves environment that honours the diversity, and integrity of each students, builds self-esteem, and provides productive and purposeful learning activities (Berger, 2001). This implies that a positive learning environment is the environment that cares about students' welfare generally, not only with the students' academic performances but also with their psychological, physical, social and emotional needs.

A positive learning environment is an environment which gives students the opportunity to perform according to their personal functional development and cognitive level. It is an environment whereby students are exposed to the development of sensory awareness. Positive learning environment is more applicable where the teacher encourages the students to explore different types and textures of the teaching materials available within and outside the classroom situations.

Any classroom situation set up in this way will be able to meet the requirement of students at all levels of cognitive development, including students with learning difficulties. A positive learning environment is an atmosphere that has proper directions organized by the teacher that makes learning accessible for the students. It also involves an environment whereby teachers respond to students in more elaborate and friendly ways.

Positive learning environment is the environment that encourages and at the same time fosters desirable behaviours from students and teachers. it is an environment that develops solutions to problems, provides creative thinking, encourages students and teachers relationships and can also be very effective in achieving already stated objective. A positive learning environment is an atmosphere in which students, teachers and parents are made to feel safe it is peaceful and people feel accepted and respected and where learning is the main focus (Domjam, 2002). One can say that environment is positive when students feel accepted, and when self-esteem is regarded. When all these are absent, the environment becomes negative. Without doubt, it is obvious that environment can affect students learning. Environment can determine learning output. It is believed that learning will not succeed in some environmental setting such as noisy, rowdy, frightening and uneasy environment. Environment affects functioning and learning occurs when it is conducive.

From the evidences so far presented, it is not possible to separate man from his environment. This is simply because environment influences man. Whenever the environment is conducive, it encourages and promotes positive learning. Students good perception of positive learning environment is related to their performance in the classroom because this determines or influences their academic achievement. It is therefore necessary to create positive learning environment in terms of teaching and more importantly learning.

Students generally perform better in an environment that is safe and well maintained and where every individual is respected. When positive environment is created, students with learning difficulties are emotionally, physically, and mentally motivated. They feel comfortable to face their academic challenges. Creating positive learning environment tends to energize students' learning activities and also helps to create pleasant teaching environment for teachers.

Classification of Positive Learning Environment: Generally, physical learning environment has to do with things that actually exist and can be touched, felt, and seen. A positive physical classroom environment means property in the classroom location which include the space in the classroom, and the building in which learning takes place. The physical environment of the classroom is seen as being made up of tables, lighting, ventilation, space, chairs, desks and instructional materials (Akubue, 1991). This means that physical environment involves all the required physical property and teaching materials in form of furniture and fittings that are suitable and comfortable for teaching and learning in an educational setting. In addition, teacher's physical appearance including the way they comport themselves also play a significant impact on the students' physical environment.

Physical learning environment involves location and building in which teaching and learning take place. This includes the architectural aspect of the environment, which comprises the shape of the building the room, types and arrangement of furniture, ventilation and temperature of the room. All these can affect the students learning and performance. Architectural designs have effect on the performance of students, their interpersonal relationship with others, attitudes, emotions, and the extent to which they feel comfortable and relaxed (Collins, 2007). This implies that when the environment is not positive or conducive, frustration sets in, and this in effects productivity and creates stress.

Positive physical environment helps cognitive, language, emotional and social developments of the student. The physical environment should be a mini world that calls for curiosity and exploration in different steps such as shelves, placed within the students reach and fitted with materials that will prompt students exploration and initiative (Standley, Greenspan and Wielder, 1998). These will help to motivate the students cognitively within and outside the classroom situations.

Collins, (2007) indicated that mental clarity and physical healing both come from exposure to brighter environment, more especially those that involve natural things.In a study it was found that students living in high-risk apartments had better test scores and greater capacity for paying attention in school, when their windows over looked something or minor as a tiny spot of green grass and one tree (Howard, 2004). These studies show that positive physical environment can change students' academic performance, if tailored appropriately. For instance, insufficient seats can make students to misbehave while struggling for seats. Similarly, lack of pubic address system, when teaching a very large number of the students, can be very frustrating for the teacher and the students. In the same way, overcrowding in a classroom is not only frustrating and stressful for both the teacher and the students but it has serious health implications. These are common problems in many Nigeria schools and they have far-reaching consequences for teaching and learning.

Psychological Environment It is believed that nothing about human behaviour occurs by accident or chance (Allen, 2000). Psychology has to do with wishes and emotions of the individuals. Psychological learning environment involves the emotional and interactive classroom climate in every learning environment (Dewar, 1999). It is the emotional expression and determination of the students in the classroom that build up the psychological learning environment. It is important to note that psychological environment is very necessary in the lives of students to enable them cope with their learning situations as they may arise.

Goleman (1995) suggested five qualities of emotional intelligence (EQ) with reference to psychological environment. These include:

(i)   Self-awareness: This has to do with the ability to recognize feelings as they occur. The students who are fully aware of their feeling have the ability to control these feelings.

(ii)   Mood Control: This involves the ability to be able to change one's bad mood into a good or better mood. Without doubt, it is obvious that the individuals' mood fluctuates depending on the occasion or situation of individuals' mood fluctuates depending on the occasion or situation of things at a particular time. Goleman (1995) emphasized that no individual can deny that he or she does not manifest good and bad moods. Definitely, there is nothing wrong with this. It only becomes a problem when the individual runs out of his or her mood. The emphasis is that students with high emotional intelligence can always control their bad mood to give opportunity for positive psychological environment for learning.

(iii)   Self-maturation: Goleman (1995) sees this as the ability to get oneself heading towards achieving already stated goals or objectives. This means having the motive to continue even in the face of odds and difficulties, and making sure that one does not give up and at the same time does not blame self for not achieving stated objectives but rather persevering to achieve these objectives.

(iv)   Impulse Control: This is a kind of self-regulatory process that encourages or promotes "delay of gratification". This implies that when a student has the ability of self-control, the student ends up becoming high-achiever in future.

(v)   People skills: This refers to the ability to possess a level of empathy sufficient enough to appreciate and respond appropriately to people's others emotions. This implies that both students and teachers should respond empathically I order to maintain a positive or conducive learning environment. Teachers add colours to the classroom learning environment by encouraging students to make use of their imaginations and develop creativity in learning.

In summary for both students and teachers to operate appropriately, they require psychological positive environment, that is having intellectual and mental capabilities which has to do with students and the teachers' emotional expressions.

Social Learning Environment the term social environment as social scientist use it, includes every influence on an organism that is not genetic, but rather from the environmental effect which affect the developing baby. This involves the social relationship cultural values impaction, by the elderly in the environment. (Berger, 2001). This, therefore, means that all human beings experience, from

conception to death, are part of their social environment. For the social scientists, therefore, social environment means everything that is non-genetic which affects students' characteristics.

Positive social learning environment is usually created by the students and teachers, in an atmosphere of warmth and friendly interaction. It is the social environment that determines academic performance of the students. The social positive or conducive classroom environment is specifically the positive relationship that exists between teachers create the tones for social environment. They do this by incorporating both the deviants and unmanageable students. In as much as the teacher is the key determinant of creating positive social environment, the incorporation of the students in the classroom situation under control by teachers creates a positive social atmosphere for teaching and learning. Therefore, it is the ultimate in every teaching and learning environment.

Positive social learning environment involves an environment that encourages students to be active rather than passive, through speaking out, verbal dialogues, dramatization, demonstration and decision-making. Therefore, it is the duty of every responsible teacher to make provision for creating positive social learning environment for his or her students. This is because the teacher's behaviour plays a vital role for positive or conducive learning environment in every classroom situation. Students require proper directives from teachers to make learning accessible to them. Teachers and students behaviours play a very important role in creating positive learning environment.

Generally, students, including those with learning difficulties, have the opportunity to perform better when the environment is physically challenging, cognitively motivated, psychologically supportive and soically encouraging.

Students and teachers involvement in creating positive learning environment in every contact made by every individual, first impression matters a lot. Therefore, as a teacher, the step taken on the first day in class is very necessary in creating positive learning environment. This actually means a lot to the students. It also determines how the students will react to the teacher in future interactions with him or her.

Everston, Emmer, and Worshman (2003), emphasis on learners centered trend, whereby the teacher acts as a counsellor, psychologist, co-ordinator and facilitator of learning. This implies that listening and acknowledging the students ideas are helpful for appropriate and active interaction with the teacher for positive learning environment to take place. This also helps to identify students' strengths and weakness, thereby making provision for solving their needs. It ultimately helps to create positive learning environment, because students will perceive the teacher as caring thereby spreading the same sentiment among their fellow students.

Impressions created by teachers go a very long way in the classroom to create a positive or negative learning environment for the students. Teachers need to be enthusiastic about themselves. Coming into the classroom with confidence and alertness helps to create positive learning environment. The appearance of the teacher as facilitators and as role models affect the attitude of students in every learning situation. This implies that every time is a good time for the teacher. Once the teacher shows appropriate behaviour, than the students also respond by respecting the teacher. Everything depends o how the teacher sets the tone of the classroom environment. If the teachers is the noisy type, the possibility of the classroom being very noisy is their Domjam (2002) conducted a study on whether teacher's stress and self-efficacy would predict the negative teacher and student relationship. The result indicated that teachers approach and behaviour are important and critical in creating a positive for learning environment. Regardless of the teacher's condition, it is very important and appropriate to welcome the students by creating an environment that is conducive or positive to learning (Frieman, 2002).

It is believed that involving students in classroom activities increases the students' commitments and responsibilities. It makes them to have the feeling of belonging, self-confidence and self-

esteem. Participation through discussions, dramas, laboratory activities and other student centered activities control the classroom and create positive learning environment. Once the students are properly engaged, they create their own peaceful classroom environment by interacting with the teacher and other students (Kaufman, 2002, Charles and Senter, 2002). Experts in classroom management have found that sharing responsibility with students in decision-making helps increase the student responsibility (Lewis, 2001). This gives the students satisfaction that they are actually needed in the classroom and makes them behave respectfully.

For classroom environment to be positive or conducive for teaching and learning, there must be rules and regulations, which must be clearly defined to be able identify breaches. These rules create a standard for the students' behaviour in the classroom to enhance positive learning environment. Rules are defined as stated expectation about behaviours (Evertson, Emmer and Worsham, 2003). Therefore, patterns of behaviour that are appropriate for the classroom situations are stated clearly for the students to understand. Generally, teachers often involve the students in setting rules and regulations as a means of encouraging them to participate and to take responsibility for their behaviours.

In addition, the teacher uses non-verbal cues to remind the students about the acceptable rules and regulations, these become an opportunity to create positive environment for academic success. In a positive learning environment the teachers are sensitive to the needs and anxieties of the children. By caring, they create enjoyable activities, good communication skills (Santrock, 2004). These are the important ingredients that are required in creating positive learning environment for students to enable them perform appropriately and actively. This means that students need to be organized in order to get focused on their academic activities.

Recommendations
1.   Positive learning environment facilitates teaching and the performance of children in their academics. Therefore, the government should consider the sites of each school before approval.
2.   It is important that proper analysis should be made as a prerequisite for citing schools to avoid disruptions during teaching and learning.
3.   Teachers and the school authority should create avenue for children's active participation which can be in form of drama, field trip and laboratory activities. This is because when the classroom is basically children centered positive learning environment is automatically created.
4.   Parents and school authority should provide all required teaching and learning materials to enable all the children to be active when teaching is going on.

Conclusion
Learning is a relatively permanent change in behaviour, which can manifest by way of cognitive psychological and social development of an individual. Positive learning environment is an atmosphere that is organized, free from stress, accessible for both students and teachers, encouraging and motivating. These types of positive learning environment were discussed. These include, physical learning environment, which involves the material resources required by the teachers and students that will help the students intellectually. Besides, adequate lighting and ventilation, quiet and clean atmosphere, are required for learning to take place. Psychological learning environment involves an atmosphere that encourages ego-satisfaction through the development of high self-esteem and self-confidence in students. Social learning environment is the learning atmosphere that encourages the students to express their personal ideas, have provision for accepting other students ideas, take up responsibilities such as leadership activities, tolerates and accommodates others as self.

Teacher and students relationships involve encouraging interpersonal relationship between the two parties. This makes provision for learner-centered strategies such as discussion, dramatization, and demonstration which help students to assist cooperatively in and outside the classroom situations. It also helps them to air their views, and share their psychological feelings and thus create a new

dimension of learning for the students because it will help them to evaluate themselves and other students. By doing this they will jointly accept their successes and failures as reasonable students.

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