



## SAFETY AND SECURITY IN MANAGING SCHOOL FACILITIES

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### ABSTRACT

*School facility as the name suggests is the material that promotes positively teaching and learning outcomes. It aids teaching and learning effectiveness and as such very critical in the school system. The school management and its appropriate agency supply the school facilities to schools which the school manager distributes to the staff for efficient usage. Unfortunately, the supply of this essential mover of education are not adequate resulting to over and/or under-utilization. When school facilities are over-used as a result of insufficiency, it leads to damages of such facilities. Under-utilization also leads to spoilage of the facilities as they are allowed to waste away thus developing faults. Due to scarcity of fund, some of the necessary school facilities are not adequately provided leading to the act of managing the existing ones irrespective of their dilapidated condition. When the damaged school facilities are put to use, the safety of the users are endangered. There is the possibility that the damaged facilities (broken chairs and desks etc.) could pose danger, threat and injurious to both the teachers and the students. Consequently, distorting achievement of educational objectives as the injured ones could be absent thus missing classes. It is based on this that it becomes very imperative that safety and security be applied in managing school facilities. This could be achieved through the application of safety and security measures in managing school facilities. This is to ensure that school facilities are procured for educational purposes and not as security risks.*

**Keywords:** Safety, Security, Managing and School facilities

### Introduction

School is a structure or structures specifically erected for the sole aim of teaching and learning. Aside the structures, there are other fixtures and ascribed facilities acquired to aid teaching and learning experience. All of these aids to teaching and learning comprised school facilities. These facilities need adequate management to avoid or rather limit the extent of damage which could pose danger to the users. This is what probably prompted Okaforcha and Okeke (2019); Ezeaku



(2014); Ucheagwu-Okoye and Nwadukwe (2021) to affirm that the relevance of school facilities is to minimize educational wastage and total breakdown of educational facilities. Nwakoby and Nwakoby (2022); Ojimba (2020); Ehigiator and Ucheagwu-Okoye (2021) while acknowledging the relevance of school facilities emphasized that proper school facilities management is the panacea for effective and functional quality education. This implies that school facilities cannot just be procured but also economical utilized for attainment of educational objectives.

Safety is the process of being free from any form of threat and danger which could be injurious to human body. It is freedom from hazardous environment. Security is the process of ensuring that safety is gained and maintained. This implies that without security, safety is not guaranteed. As noted by Ilodigwe and Nwakoby (2021); Iloka (2021); Nwakoby (2023), safety is assured when there are adequate security measures put in place to guide insecurity. School facilities are those school materials that eulogize teaching and learning experiences. It provides comfort to the instructor and the learner thus reducing stress in teaching and learning encounter. There are varieties of school facilities which are named according to their usage namely; classroom furniture, sports facilities, instructional facilities among others. These are intended to serve specific purposes which are goal driven.

Classroom furniture is the facilities in the classroom designed to make the classroom comfy, airy and secure which in turn leads to attentiveness and increased class attendance. The classroom furniture include; tables, chairs, desks, doors, windows and ceiling board. According to Ojimba (2021); Okaforcha and Okeke (2018); Ezeaku and Obikeze (2018) instructional resources are those materials formulated to fortify teaching and learning experience which in turn propagates quality teaching/learning outcomes. Similarly Right 2018 lucidly pointed out that school facilities make for educational goal attainment, make abstract terms concrete, captures attention of the students gives room for practical teaching and learning. It is the materials that make teaching and learning participatory thus enticing. The onus of the matter is that school facilities should not just be provided and stored but should also be well utilized. It has to adequately utilize by those who are knowledgeable in its application for a better result.

### **The Concept of Safety and Security**

Safety is the act of staying free from hazardous environment for healthful living. This has to be achieved using various security measures. In the school environment with various physical school facilities there is need to ensure safety of the school for the occupants. As noted by Okaforcha and Okeke (2018); Ezeaku (2019); Nwabashili, Iloka and Ucheagwu-Okoye (2022); Okeke (2022), the factors that made up the physical environment are school building(s) and their surrounding like biological or chemical agents, the weather and other forms of pollution that affect the entire school community. The scholars further enunciated the agents to include; insects, pest and vectors, temperature and humidity, noise and lighting among others.

### **The Concept of School Facilities**

School facilities are those school material resources designed exclusively for formal education



which is goal oriented. School facilities are meant to accelerate both curricula and co-curricula activities in the school system which are intended to accomplished predetermined educational objectives at the long run. It is premised on the above opinion that Okaforcha and Okeke (2020); Ibe and Udeoji (2019) Ucheagwu-Okoye (2019) amplified that school facilities are all those school supplies that directly or indirectly has bearing on the attainment of educational goals when put to use.

In the same vein, Ojimba (2023); Okeke and Okaforcha (2020); Iloka (2022) gave credence to the above claim reaffirmed that school facilities have to do with the whole school plant which include; blocks of classrooms, staff rooms, laboratories, workshops, libraries, tables, water, chairs, electricity, playground and many others. To Ibe (2019); Okoye (2017); Ezeaku (2013); Okoye and Ucheagwu-Okoye (2021) school facilities comprised of academic and non-academic activities. According to the scholar, the academic facilities include the classrooms, instructional aids, etc. while non-academic facilities are sports and games, landscape, farms, pathways, trees etc. On their part, Uwaezuoke (2022): Uwaezuoke and Morah (2019) aptly defined school facilities as the material resources that sustain up teaching and learning effectiveness in the school. Going further, the scholars listed some examples of material resources to include but not limited to laboratories, administrative blocks, grass lawn and workshops.

### **Types of School Facilities**

school facilities are those material resources set aside for educational purposes. School facilities are named in respect of the purpose for which they serve as well as the nature of such facilities. It is based on this discourse that Okaforcha and Okeke (2019); Okoye (2018); Ezeaku (2012); Okoye (2021); Ani, Iloka and Nwakoby, (2021) recognized four types of school facilities namely:

1. Instructional facilities; instructional facilities as identified by Ezeaku (2012); Okeke (2023) is described as the instructional spaces made available for teaching and learning encounter such as classrooms, seminar/conference halls, science laboratories, computer rooms, libraries, sick bay and so on. Instructional facilities go beyond study spaces to include; classroom board, varied teaching aids, classroom furniture etc.
2. Recreational facilities: recreational facilities are those school facilities designed for games and/or sports purposes and they include; the football field, lawn tennis court, balls, discuss, short put, racket among others.
3. Residential facilities: this aspect of school facilities relates to the place of abode. This is expected to have comfortable and spacious rooms, decent toilets and other key things that make a place a home.
4. Health care facilities: this is type of school facilities that promote fitness and wellness of the entire school elements. This includes both health personnel and health materials such as sick bay, first aid box, relevant medicines.
5. General purpose facilities; the general-purpose facilities are those school facilities that could be used for two or more activities such as open field which could be used for football and other sports activities as well as convert it to event arena during graduation ceremony, prize-giving day etc.



### **Management of School Facilities**

Management of school facilities, as noted by Ibe, Nwakoby and Ihediuche (2024), is very crucial in achieving educational goals. Management in this regard involves the strategic planning of the needed school facilities, identifying the available ones and those that require repairs among others. In brief, the following activities amount to school facility management. planning, procurement, storage, distribution, utilization, supervision and maintenance.

- a) Planning; planning is the key to success in any organization such as school. It is the first phase in managerial activities. It is this planning that creates room for determining what should be bought, the quality and quantity. It also takes into consideration the areas of need. This is the reason Nwogu and Nwakoby (2021); Ughamadu, Okaforcha and Okeke (2015) emphasized that the educational needs as well as the needs of the host community should take precedence when buying school facilities. During planning process, the population of the users is also given priority. This is to curb the negative effect of over-utilization and/or under-utilization.
- b) Procurement; procurement is the process of purchasing the school facilities as planned earlier in the first stage. This process calls for qualitative procurement. Standard materials should be bought because they are durable. Substandard school facilities are never good option as they spoil in a short while.
- c) Storage; school facilities should be stored in a spacious room with good roofing to avoid exposing them to rain or sunshine. It should be stored in a secured place to avoid theft or vandals from looting the entire school resources. The storage area should also be airy and under lock and key. The store manager should be a designated staff with impeccable character.
- d) Distribution; this is the time to allocate the school facilities bought to the areas of need. This is should be void of partiality and/or favouritism.
- e) Utilization; this involves using the school facilities bought and allocated for the purpose for which they are bought. Care should be taken to check-mate the over and under-utilization of the facilities. Optimal utilization is the watch word.
- f) Supervision; supervision is of essence in the management of school facilities. Effective supervision curtails manhandling of the school facilities and theft. Supervision leads to optimal utilization of the school facilities.
- g) Maintenance; maintenance elongates the life of the school facilities. This is because the facilities are cleaned occasionally, aired and well stored. It also helps to identify those that needed repairs and/or developing faults for prompt repairs to avoid total damage.

### **Application of Safety and Security in School Facility Management**

School facilities once put to use would eventually get damaged as a result of frequent use. According to Iloka (2023); Nwakoby and Ilodigwe (2022); Ibe (2022), some could be damaged as a result of lack of maintenance culture present in the school. Yet others spoil as a result of neglect from the concerned authority, in most instances these damaged school facilities are allowed to litter the school environment posing great danger to the safety of the students and teachers or even other school human elements. In appreciation of the safety and security in school facility management, Uwaezuoke (2022) asserted that learning under dilapidated classroom such with leaking roof, broken doors, windows and ceiling boards pose health hazards to all the occupants.



In the same vein, Nwokocha and Anyanwu (2012); Nwakoby (2024); Nwakoby and Chukwujekwu (2020) posited that dilapidated school amenities like classroom furniture paralysis teaching and learning outcomes. In other words, none application of safety and security in school facility management not only leads to imminent danger to the school facility users but also impends teaching and learning experiences.

In some schools the floors have craters making it perilous to the staff and students. In some instances, the classroom walls have cracks which could lead to collapse thereby posing great risk to the staff and students. In some of the school compound lies the sewage pit which has broken and left bare. The danger inherent in these hazardous environments could be avoided if the necessary precautionary measures are implemented and on time too. These deadly identified faults when dictated should be swiftly attended to by applying security measures.

Some of the measures for safety and security in school facility management are;

1. Appointment of facility store keeper; the school management should appoint an officer who should solely be in-charge of the school facility. The store-keeper should have records of all the available facilities, those in good condition and those in bad shapes. He makes sure that the facilities given out and/or returned are signed for. This helps to locate school facilities and also regulate manhandling.
2. The school facilities in bad shape have to be assembled in a secured place for onward transmission to the repairer.
3. First aid should readily available in schools in case of accidents emanating from misuse and/or related issues.
4. Students must be guided and supervised while making use of these school facilities.

### **Problems Hampering Effective Management of School Facilities**

According to Chike Okosa, Ibe and Ojimba (2023); Okeke and Okaforcha (2018); Ojimba (2024); Okoye (2017); Okoye (2016); Nwakoby and Nwkoby (2023), management of school facilities is energy sapping and most of the time cumbersome due to certain bottle-necks which include but not limited to:

1. Corrupt contractors; some of the contractors give the erection of school structures often make use of inferior materials leading to sudden cracking of walls and/or eventual collapse. This is a problem to the school management who would be faced with ways of mitigating this menace.
2. Substandard materials; some of the furniture makers make use of substandard wood in a way that they tend to break even as they are being supplied to schools. The school manager finds it difficult to control the damage since the materials are inferior and prone to spoil.
3. Insufficient fund; money allocated to schools for facility provision is never enough thus subjecting the management to engage the services of incompetent personnel. When the money is not enough, the management faces the problem of short-changing superior material to inferior ones.



4. Corruption school officials; some of the school administrators are corrupt that they embezzle the money meant for procuring school facilities only to provide inadequate number and inferior ones too which is a problem to effective management of school facilities.
5. Students' misuse of school facilities; most students feel that that since they paid school fees that they also paid for the facilities thus misuse them. Some even engage in willful damage of the school facilities. For instance, they rip the electrical wires, fans and other appliances. Some climb desks and chairs thereby breaking them to pieces. This also hampers effective management of school facilities.

### **Conclusion**

School facilities when available and in functional state are very vital in achieving educational goals. These facilities could only be put to good use in the face of effective and efficient management. This implies that school facilities should be planned for, procured, stored, distributed and optimally used for maximum benefits. Safety and security of school facilities are forms of school facilities management that takes care of the safety and security of not just the school facilities but also that of the school community members as well. It goes to scrutinize the ways and procedures to safe guide against these facilities imposing threat or danger to the human elements in the school. It is suggested among others that school management should be proactive in the management of school facilities so as to tackle any identified fault in real time.

### **Suggestions**

In view of the problems inhibiting effective management of school facilities, the following suggestions were proffered;

1. Contractors with proven integrity should be awarded contracts in the supply of school facilities to ensure that durable facilities are secured.
2. The school administrators should ensure the quality of the school facilities they plan to buy. They should shun cheap and inferior ones that do not last. They should maintain standard ones that last longer. In the event of cracked walls, the school manager should quickly evacuate students from the classrooms with cracked walls to a safer place for security reasons. The craters when observed should be amended and leveled to avoid students and staff sustaining injuries in the cause of walking on them. The maintenance personnel should take adequate care of this aspect of their duty. Broken windows and doors as well as ceiling board should be neatly picked and stored in a secured place.
3. The school administrators should device alternative sources of fund to supplement the allotted one. The school administrator should prior to this time build in the cost of maintenance into the budget during budgeting so as not to be taking a back in the event of anything to be repaired. Students should be enlightened on how to avoid going close to the shambled areas of the school so as to remain safe and secured.
4. The school managers should be audited from time to time especially when given the money to purchase school facilities. This is to ensure that what they bought tally with the fund allotted both in quality and quantity.



5. Students should be made to pay for any school facilities intentionally damaged so as to deter others.

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