

# INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL ASSESSMENT CULTURE ON PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH AND SOCIAL STUDIES IN BENUE STATE – NIGERIA

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## Abstract

*There is increasing need for parents' active participation in the assessment of their children at home. This study investigated the influence of parental assessment culture on primary school pupils' academic performance in English and Social Studies in Benue State. Three research questions were developed for the study, which is a survey and correlation study. A sample of 200 primary six pupils from six schools was randomly selected using the hat and draw procedure. The six primary schools were also selected using random sampling technique. Rating scale and English and Social Studies achievement tests were used for data collection. Descriptive statistics and Pearson moment correlation were used as statistical tools for data analysis. The findings revealed that parents have low level of assessment culture in evaluating academic works of their primary school children. There was low positive correlation between parental assessment culture and pupils' academic performance in English Studies ( $r = .042, p = .556$ ), whereas, parents assessment culture was positively related to pupils' performance in Social Studies ( $r = .780, p = .010$ ). It is recommended, among others, that parents should cultivate the culture of assessing their children academic activities at home, and provide feedback to the school on children's academic behaviours at home.*

**Key-words:** Parents, Pupils, Assessment, Achievement, English Studies, Social Studies

## Introduction

Parents and relations play significant roles in determining how a child acquires sound moral, cultural, social and educational success right from the operational stage of human growth to the primary school age. At the primary school level, children are yet to be separated from their parents or family members who play various roles at different stages to ensure proper child-upbringing or child-nurturing in the family. It is generally believed that

children who lack proper parenting or family care suffer educational and emotional setbacks. It therefore means that the role of parents in the education of a child is not only to pay their school fees and meet material needs, but to also provide moral and emotional guidance or support as this is very germane for the educational success of pupils.

Ayua, (2015) commenting on the roles of parents in the education of a child, states that parents influence the lives of their children in every aspect of traditional and western education. He further observes that children have great mental potentials and brilliant educational attainments when parents take active part in their education. He further states that apart from financial obligation of parents in child education, the practical mental and social involvement of parents/family members in the education of a child facilitates effective achievement of primary school education objectives. This would, in turn, lead to the inculcation of permanent literacy/numeracy and the capacity to communicate effectively, ensuring sound basis for scientific thinking, character and citizenship training, among others.

Traditionally, it is a common practice for schools to assess pupils and issue periodic reports to parents. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the need for collaborative support for education of children requires parents/guardians involvement in the continuous assessment of children's teaching and learning process. This is with the belief that the combined efforts of the school and home environment will enhance effective academic performance of the learners at primary school level in Nigeria (National Councils for Curriculum and Assessment, 2004).

According to Adewumi, Ojolo and Falemu (2012), parents involvement in education of their children requires regular communication with the child's classroom teacher(s), ensuring that the child completes his or her homework as expected, restriction of the time the child is allowed to spend watching the television as well as the channels the child is allowed to watch, and assisting the child with his or her homework. Communicating with the child every day about school values and future careers (the learnt classroom activities and other motivating events, and so on) is also important. Identification and appreciation of the child's academic achievements, moral and social encouragements, among other practices might encourage academic excellence in the school. Adewumi, Ojolo and Falemu (2012) also submit that parental involvement in a child's school related issues enhance pupils' academic performance.

Parents need to cultivate the habit of teaching and assessing their primary school children in order to enhance their academic performance. This is because children at concrete operations (7 – 12 years) of human growth and development carry out mental operations and think rationally. They understand and respect rules and regulations and accept adult (parents) authority (Akinbote, Oduolumi and Lawal, 2001). This means that the involvement of parents in the practical teaching and learning of primary school children outside the school will influence pupils' general academic performance.

However, the increasing political and economic needs of the family seem to have taken away time and attention of many parents from the assessment of their children learning activities. It is expected that parents/guardians should periodically cross check academic performance of children, supervise and guide them on how to do home assignments, observe their study behaviour and provide feedback to the school for better educational growth and development. It has been observed that many parents in the recent past prefer to pay for extra lessons where children spend time with classroom teachers/tutors in the school or at home. Such parents hardly find out the learning challenges faced by their children in school and at home. The quest to meet economic and social needs of the family impels some parents not to cultivate a culture of assessing their children academic activities for diagnosis and remediation of learning difficulties for better academic performance.

Eva-Essa (1999) asserts that parents' involvement in education of their children motivates and enhances cognitive development of individual children in the present world. He further states that children at the early school age benefit from having parents interact or participate in their learning activities. It gives children a sense of security as they work or discuss with their parents for more insightful learning within and outside the school environment. This enables children at an early stage of growth and development to master basic concepts and skill in theory and practice for excellent academic performance.

The assessment of learning outcome serves formative, summative, diagnostic and placement purposes at all levels of education in the society. Ugodulunwa (2008) views the concept 'assessment' as the process of gathering information for the purpose of decision making, which involves data collection about a learner's knowledge, skills, attitudes, judgment, interpretation and using the data to take relevant decisions concerning an individual learner, instructional material and process, and programme. According to "Choice" (2013) in Ayua (2015), cultivating effective parenting assessment culture goes beyond parents/guardians providing the money and material school needs of the child while the teacher is paid to do it all. It is believed that the assessment of children learning abilities or challenges by parents at home or during a visit to the school can inform pupils' excellent academic performance across different subjects.

English and Social Studies are part of the core subjects at primary school level where the efforts to enhance academic excellence in these subjects cannot be left only in the hands of classroom teachers. Pupils at primary school level need a proper foundation in English Studies as a subject of instruction, lingua franca and language of trade in Nigeria. Obadare (2011) assert that every second language (L2) learner goes through what can be described as a harrowing experience in the acquisition of second language (L2) spoken and written skills. This is because the learner tends to see the L2 in terms of

the first language (L1). He observes that the grammatical apparatus already programmed into the mind of learners of English Language as (L2) through their L1 interferes with the effective acquisition of the L2. Nigerian children who normally acquire the rudiments of indigenous languages as L1 often face the challenge of these rudiments interfering with the spoken aspects of L2, thereby, performing poorly in English Language. This implies that the involvement of parents in assessment of children out of school will probably help pupils to practice and acquire the basic skills in spoken and written language and perform better in academics.

The need to ensure corporative assessment of learners' ability or proficiency in social studies as a subject that integrates content from social sciences, arts and humanities disciplines cannot be over emphasized. Social studies as a “problem solving” discipline is one of the major subjects at primary and basic school levels that learners are expected to have a sound foundation in before the secondary school level. Utulu, Ode and Okwori (2003), commenting on the importance of social studies as a discipline, state that the knowledge and skills acquired through this subject is significant for individual wellbeing and societal development. They maintain that the subject inculcates desired societal norms, values and attitudes that enable an individual to explore favourably his physical, social, political, economic and psychological environment for personal and national growth and development. Learners at primary school level are said to have achieved these objectives only through cultivation of good teaching and assessment culture both by teachers and parents/guardians.

Abulo (2011) states that children who enjoy proper parental assessment of academic activities at home such as guiding the child's study habit, providing school needs, assisting in take-home assignment, reporting the identified learning challenges to school among others, stand to perform better in academics. He further observes that educational qualification of parents/guardians has a great influence on their children's academic performance at the early school age. Parents who have intermediary and bachelor's degrees are more involved in assessing and monitoring learning activities of their children than those with secondary school higher degree qualifications.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is an increasing need for a holistic and continuous assessment of learners' change in behaviour both by teachers and parents/guidance to enhance pupils' general academic performance in Nigeria. Every parent in the present world is looking forward to enhance academic performance of their wards at all levels of education. However, many parents, due to increasing political and economic commitments, seem to find it difficult to cultivate the good culture of assessing their children's academic work (checking their school work, guiding children on how to do take-home assignment, and provision of feedback to school on children study behaviour) at home particularly in English Studies and Social Studies. It is also doubtful whether parents' culture of assessing children academic activities is influenced by their educational qualification. It is based on this premise that the study investigated the influence of

cultivating parental assessment culture on pupils' academic performance in English and Social Studies in Benue State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were developed and answered for the study:

1. What is the level of parental assessment culture in the assessment of pupils' academic work in Benue State?
2. What is the relationship between parental assessment culture in the assessment of their children academic work and pupils' performance in:
  - a. English Studies?
  - b. Social Studies?

### **Methodology**

The study is a combination of survey and correlation research designs. It adopts survey design because data were collected from a large sample of parents and pupils and the variables were studied without manipulation. It is also a correlation study because pupils' achievement scores were correlated with assessment culture of their individual parents.

The target population for the study consists of all the primary school pupils and parents/guardians from Government approved primary schools in Benue State.

The study sample consist of 200 primary Six (6) pupils randomly selected from six (6) primary schools (two schools from each senatorial district) in Benue State. Using simple random sampling by hat and draw procedure, the researchers raffled the names of respondents in a container for fair selection of the participants. The primary six students were selected using purposive sampling technique because they were considered cognitively mature enough to provide the necessary information needed for the study. The selection of primary schools and the respondents from each senatorial district using random sampling technique gives equal opportunity to all the primary schools in Benue State for fair representation of the Senatorial districts.

The instruments used for data collection were self developed Rating Scales titled: Parental Assessment Culture and Pupils' Academic Performance Rating Scale (PACPAPRS), English Studies Achievement Test (ESAT) and Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT). The PACPAPRS contains two sections: section A elicits information on educational qualification of parents and section B gathers information on parental assessment culture of children academic work. PAPANRS also contains three point scale (Always = 3, Sometimes= 2 and Never =1). It was pilot tested, using

Cronbach Alpha, and it yielded correlation coefficient value  $r = .824$  at 0.05 level of significance.

Both ESAT and SSAT contained 60 multiple choice (A – D) and five Essay items each were constructed and validated. Pupils were to answer all the 60 multiple choice items and any three essay questions from each of the subjects. A correct response for multiple choice item was scored '1' and incorrect response was '0' while the essay part was marked 40%. Pupils' scores in English and Social Studies were in correlation with parents' assessment culture.

The researchers collected data for the study through the assistance of primary six (6) class teachers from the various sampled schools. In the process, copies of the questionnaire were given to primary six class teachers who administered the instrument to primary six pupils. Numbers were given to each respondent to enable the researcher identify individual pupil's response from the rating scale and their scores in English Studies and Social studies respectively.

Data for the study were analyzed using, descriptive statistics (frequency count and percentages) and Pearson moment product correlation as statistical tools.

### Result.

**Research Question one:** What is the level of Parental assessment culture in the assessment of pupils' academic work in Benue State?

**Table 1:** Showing Analysis on the Level of Parental Assessment Culture in the Assessment of Pupils' Academic Work

S/ No	Statement	Always	%	Some Times	%	Never	%
1	Ask questions about what you learnt from school.	20	10	100	50	80	40
2	Check your books/performance in the class/assignment.	40	20	62	31	92	46
3	Remind you to read your books at home.	110	55	50	25	40	20
4	Guide you to do difficult home-work.	25	12.5	45	22.5	130	65
5	Praise or punish you for your performance in school.	5	2.5	60	30	135	67.5
6	Visit the school and check your school work during open days.	30	15	78	39	92	46
7	Visit your class teacher to talk about your behaviour at home.	25	12.5	52	26	123	61.5
8	They wait until you are sent out of school before paying your school fees or learning materials.	58	29	105	52.5	37	18.5

The above table 1 shows that 20(10%) of the parents always ask their children questions about what they learnt from school, 100(50%) of the parents sometimes ask their children what they learnt from school and 80(40%) never ask any questions. Furthermore, in item 2, 40(20%) of the parents developed a culture of always checking their children's books or performance after school, 62(31%) check sometimes, while 92(46) majority of the parents never bother to check their children books or performance after school. In item 3, 110(55%) of the parents always remind children to read books at home, while 40(20%) of the parents never do so. More so, in item 4, 25(12.5%) always guide their children to do difficult home work, 45(22.5%) some times guide their children and 135(67.5%) majority of the parents never do so. In item 5, only 5(2.5%) of the parents praise or punish their children because of their performance in school, while 60(30%) of the parents sometimes do so, and 135(67.5%) majority of the parents never praise or punish their children for good or poor performance in the school. In addition, 30(15%) of the parents visit and check their children school work during open days, 78(39%) of the parents sometimes do so, while 92(46%) of the parents never visit their children to do so during open days. 58(29%) of the parents always wait until their children are sent away from school before paying their school fees and other materials, 105(52.5%) of them sometimes do it while only 35(18.5%) of the parents never wait for their children to get sent away from school for fees before paying their fees. This implies that parents in the area have low assessment culture concerning the learning activities of their children.

**Research Question Two:** What is the relationship between parental assessment culture in the assessment of their children academic work and pupils' performance in:

- a. English Studies?
- b. Social Studies?

**Table 2a:** Showing Correlation between Parental Assessment Culture in the Assessment\ of Children work and Pupils’ Academic Performance in English Studies

		Parental_Assessment Culture	English Studies Scores
Parental_Assessment	Pearson Correlation	1	.042
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.556
	N	200	200
English Studies Scores	Pearson Correlation	.042	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.556	
	N	200	200

The above Table 2a shows that statistically, there is very low correlation between parental assessment culture and pupils' academic performance in English Studies ( $r = 0.042$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) in Benue State, and the relationship is not significant. This implies that students' academic performance in English studies is not related to parental assessment culture in Benue State.

**Table 2b:** Showing Correlation between Parental Assessment and Pupils' Achievement in Social Studies.

		Parental_Assessment Culture	Social_Studies_Scores
Parental Assessment Culture	Pearson Correlation	1	.780*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010
	N	200	200
Social_Studies_Achievement_Scores	Pearson Correlation	.780*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	
	N	200	200

The above Table 2b shows that there is a high correlation between parental assessment culture and pupils' academic performance in Social Studies ( $r = 0.780$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and the relationship is significant. This implies that parents' assessment culture in the evaluation of their children's academic work is related to pupils' academic performance in Social studies. It also implies that if parents cultivate a good culture of assessing their children academic work, pupils will perform better in Social Studies.

## Discussion

The study's findings on research question one revealed that parents of primary school pupils have low assessment culture in assessing their children for better academic performance in Benue State. The researchers further discovered that few parents cultivate the culture of always asking their children questions about what they learnt from school, while majority of the parents never bother to ask their children questions about what they learnt from school. This is because most parents are preoccupied with the demands of their job/business. In addition, majority of parents sometimes or never bother to check their children's books or performance after school when they return home. Additionally, the study findings revealed that majority of parents do not have the culture of directing or guiding their children on how to do home work at home. The parents also do not cultivate the practice of visiting their children and classroom teachers in school to provide or obtain feedback on academic progress of their wards. Most parents never pay their children school fee as at when due until they are sent away from school. However, it was found that majority of the parents always remind their children to read books or study at home. This behaviour



has affected pupils' academic performance, particularly in Social Studies. This finding agrees with Abulo (2011) who asserts that parental involvement in assessment of children academic work at home has significant influence on primary school child academic success. However, the finding disputes Nyom's (2006) discovery that children's academic success is determined by the quality of school attended and personal study habit, because children who have no parents or relations to assess their academic work at home still record excellent performance in schools.

Findings on research question two revealed that there is statistically very low correlation between parental assessment culture and pupils' academic performance in English Studies in Benue State, and the relationship was not significant. This implies that the level to which parents assess their children's academic work within and outside the school has no significant relationship or influence on primary school pupils' performance in English Studies. It also implies that the pupils' knowledge and performance in English Studies is influenced by interaction with their English Studies classroom teachers and other sources such as; watching children channels on television and interaction with the peers, and not necessarily the level of assessment by their parents/guardians. This is possibly because some pupils who are from non-English speaking parents still performed better in English Studies as a school subject. This finding is in support of Utulu (2005) who states that between the ages 5 – 12 years, children learn better through their peer influence in a well organized social environment. It is on the basis of this influence that children are motivated to learn in school under the auspice of a teacher rather than learning at home with family members.

On the other hand, the study discovered that there is high correlation between parental assessment and pupils' academic performance in Social Studies, and the relationship is significant. This implies that parental assessment culture is significantly related to pupils' academic performance in Social studies. It means that the children of parents who ask questions about what their children learnt from school, always check their books or performance in school, remind them to read at home and visit their schools to give or obtain feedback on their study behaviour, performed better in Social Studies. This finding agrees with Ityav (2009) who states that parental involvement in child teaching and learning activities after school has great impact on learners' academic performance particularly at the operational stage of human growth and development. He maintains that at this stage, an individual needs constant instruction from a therapeutic environment to build a sound foundation for excellent academic performance.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the study findings, it is concluded that there is low level of assessment culture among parents to enhance pupils' academic performance in Benue State. Furthermore, while parents' assessment culture has no significant relationship with pupils' academic

performance in English Studies, it is significantly related to pupils' academic performance in Social Studies. In order to enhance primary school pupils' academic performance, parents are to cultivate appropriate culture of assessing their children academic works in Benue State.

### Recommendations

Based on the study findings, it is recommended that:

Parents/guardians should cultivate a culture of frequently assessing their children's academic activities to enhance their academic performance. Parents should not devote all their time to the economic and social needs of the family without assessing their children's school work.

Parents should also make out time to teach and guide learning activities of their children particularly in Social Studies as a subject. Teaching and guiding learners to acculturate Nigerian societal norms and values will help pupils to perform better in Social Studies. The Nigerian multicultural setting requires children to acquire social studies' knowledge and skills to grow, integrate and function as patriotic members of a democratic society.

In addition, parents should cultivate the culture of assessing their children's academic work within and outside the school to enhance their performance at primary school level. The assessment of children's academic work outside the school by parents or guardians complements the classroom teacher's effort to lay a sound educational foundation for effective learning outcome.

Parents should visit classroom teachers of their children from time to time to give and obtain feedback on general learning progress or challenges of their children. The interaction between classroom teachers and parents will create opportunity for both stakeholders to identify, monitor and guide general behaviour of pupils at primary school for future academic development.

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