

## Environment and Its Impact on Students Learning in Primary Schools in District Peshawar

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### Abstract

The study was descriptive in nature. The study was an attempt to find out effective Learning environment and its impact on Students Learning in primary schools in District Peshawar Pakistan. The objectives of the study were: 1. To find out the elements of effective learning environment. 2. To find out the impact of effective learning environment on the students learning. 3. To suggests the measures of creating effective learning environment.

The research questions were: What are the elements of effective learning environment? How the effective learning environment has impact on the students learning? What are those measures which create effective learning environment? 20 out of public primary schools were selected as Sample in district Peshawar, 10 principals from female primary schools & 10 principals from male primary schools were selected randomly. The tools of the study were: the questionnaire from the principals. The collected data was analyzed using the predetermined tools mean and standard deviation. The recommendations made were that School should create learning environment through providing physical facilities so that students feel easy to come to school. School safety measures should be taken to create fearless learning environment. School policies and management should be strong enough to develop conducive learning environment. Proper furniture and seating arrangement along with proper space and ventilation should be provided by the school to make learning effective. It should be focused on the professional qualification of the teachers. It is the dire need to create Collaborative and encouraging environment so that students show interest in learning. School and staff discipline should be

maintained that is quite essential to make students disciplined. Collegiality and team work should be promoted among the teaching staff and the principal because it enhances conducive learning environment. Motivated staff can arouse motivation among the learners which helps to show good results. Parents as well as community involvement is required for healthy learning environment.

**Key Words:** environment, academic performance, primary education.

## **Introduction**

Children and adolescents spend many crucial years of their lives at school. During the school year, children can spend 6 to 8 hours at the school where the environment plays a significant/critical role in child development. More of the time is spent in the school yard or travelling to and from school. This condition requires careful planning and designing to optimize experiences that support education and health. Therefore, the school environment is of paramount importance in shaping and reshaping intellectual ability, fosters motivation, collaboration, creativity, positive learning experiences, achievement levels, and a positive psychosocial development for everyone. Byoung-suk, K. (2012) stated that children need safe, healthy and stimulating environment in which to grow and learn. However, supportive and favorable school environment enriched with enough learning facilities, and favorable climate makes students more comfortable, more concentrated on their academic activities that resulted in high academic performance.

The forces of the environment begin to influence growth and development of the individual right from the womb of his mother. The educational process of development occurs in physical, social, cultural and psychological environment. A proper and adequate environment is very much necessary for a fruitful learning of the child. The favorable school environment provides the necessary stimulus for learning experiences. The children spend most of their time in school, and this school environment is exerting influence on performance through curricular, teaching technique and relationship (Arul Lawrence A.S. 2012).

A large amount of a child's time is spent sitting in a school classroom. This place is where they learn the various skills deemed necessary and proper for them to achieve success in the global society. The classroom is where they will gain an understanding of their place in the

world and the gifts that they have to offer it. It is where the student develops what they want their future to look like, as well as knowledge of the skills needed to reach that goal.

With the classroom being such an important place in the growth of a child it is important to understand the ways in which to affect this environment in order to receive maximum effectiveness in instruction and students achievements. If schools really do play a large role in teaching the next generation how to be successful members of society then every precaution should be taken to make sure that the learning environment is one that helps students thrive.

Classroom learning environment is defined as the type of environment that is created for students by the school, teachers, and peers. Teachers are continually looking to create a "positive" classroom climate in which student learning is maximized. It is having an environment where students feel safe, nurtured, and intellectually stimulated. This type of positive classroom climate allows for students to meet their basic needs of physical and mental health. While there is no specific definition of what creates a negative classroom climate, it is considered to be one in which students feel uncomfortable, whether physically, emotionally, or academically, for any reason. (<http://wik.ed.uiuc.edu/index.php/Classroom>)

Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe. People are engaged and respected. Students, families and educators work together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision. Educators' model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning each person contributes to the operations of the school as well as the care of the physical environment.

A classroom climate refers to a composite of variables working together to promote learning in a comfortable environment in a classroom. Every classroom is unique because there is a wide range of variables that have an impact on the learning environment in a classroom. However, a number of elements are required for the establishment of a successful learning environment. The most important thing for a classroom is to create an atmosphere promoting learning. In order to achieve this atmosphere, every item in the classroom should emphasize learning in some way. (<http://www.questia.com/library/education>)

There are many things that can affect this environment. There are physical elements such as wall art, arrangement of desks, or resources. Also, there are intangible elements such as the energy of the classroom, the rules, or the sounds within the room. Each of these can impact a student's focus and achievement in the class. They can also affect a teacher's attitude in the class. Included in each of these elements of the classroom is the emotional environment. The way in which a teacher organizes their class, or how they control it, will yield positive or negative consequences for their students.

Earthman (2004) rates temperature, heating and air quality as the most important individual elements for student achievement. Two studies (Young et al, 2003; Buckley et al, 2004) mention the importance of these issues in reports which address the needs of particular US states' schools, while Fisher (2001) and Schneider (2002) similarly rate these factors as likely to affect student behaviour and outcomes. It is notable that air conditioning, ventilation and heating systems are found to contribute quite distinctly to the level of classroom noise (Shield & Dockrell, 2004).

Buckley et al. (2004) found that their 'overall compliance rating', which evaluates how well schools comply with health and safety requirements, such as organising fire safety, security, maintenance, etc., did contribute to the prediction of school averages on standardised achievement tests. The importance of the general school style and ethos is suggested by Tanner's (2000) observation that 'overall impression' was one of only four elements of his school design scale which on their own correlated significantly with academic achievement.

A more reliable finding is that chronic noise exposure impairs cognitive functioning and a number of studies have discovered noise-related reading problems (Haines et al, 2001b; Evans & Maxwell, 1997), deficiencies in pre-reading skills (Maxwell & Evans, 2000) and more general cognitive deficits (Lercher et al, 2003). As a result, reviews of the consequences of aspects of the physical environment tend to conclude that acoustics and noise are important factors in a school environment (Fisher, 2001; Schneider, 2002; Earthman, 2004).

Classroom management is another critical part of effective learning environment. Effective classroom management, which begins with efficient lesson planning preparation, helps teacher to teach and students to learn. Students thrive in a positive class climate and an environment in which they feel safe, cared for and involved. From a student perspective, effective classroom management provides students with opportunities to socialize while learning interesting content. From a teacher perspective, effective classroom management involves preventive discipline and interesting instruction. Similarly, Classroom Management is important for the students.

A notion about the management climate is projected by (Robbinns,2008) that the organizational climate is the first thing resolute by the management, who determined the association with his/her subordinates The study focused by insertion an emphasis that the in general climate resulted to motivation for achievement attainment, influence, and affection (Goodith, 2006).This study was consistent with a point of view that the organizational climate led to satisfaction, motivation, and attainments of an organization. They documented that the organization climate was the product of making understanding and creating good approach in the association. It reflected the authority of accepting the achievement of the organization (Sint, 2006).

Individual perceptions are also likely to be influenced by individual characteristics as well as the actual environment. It is considered to be important that teachers are able to communicate effectively with pupils, staff and parents. Effective communication is part of involving users and extending schools into the community Good communication within a school seems to be part of creating an environment that is conducive to success. Schools as communicators in the community have dual, not necessarily compatible roles: presenting themselves positively and promoting links with, and understanding among, with parents. A study of disruptive behaviour in a particular school found that both pupils and teachers often explained problem behaviour in terms of failures of communication, with teachers advocating more discussion and improved relationships as ways to improve the situation. Teachers' effective communication has profound impact on students' behavior as well as learning. Such interactions, and communication, will be influential in ratings using classroom environment evaluation, since

they are important components of the ‘involvement’. A final sort of communication within schools is that between members of the complete school staff, and its importance is suggested by the findings of Buckley et al (2004).

A document prepared by policy studies association (PSA) reviewed in 2014 in Washington D.C. indicated that students achievement is more heavily influenced by teacher quality than by students’ race, class, prior academic record or school a student attend. This effect is particularly strong among students from low-income families and African-American students. The benefit being taught by good teachers are cumulative. Research indicated that the achievement gap widens each year between students with most effective teachers and those with less effective teachers. It suggests that the most significant gains in student achievement will likely be realized when students receive instruction from good teachers over consecutive years.

The systematic study of school climate has led to a growing body of research that attests to its importance in a variety of overlapping ways, including social, emotional, intellectual and physical safety development; mental health, and healthy relationships. This is the need of the time to explore the suitable and fruitful school learning environment for the comprehension of its effects in different types. Administrators in the field of education in past focused the rigid behavior dimension which was closely related to close climate or task oriented climate while in the same sense some administrators focused the flexible or improved climate. Way of administration by heads of institutions was highlighted as friendly or open climate, task-oriented or individual-oriented, authority-oriented or community oriented climate.

School Climate has a significant impact on a school’s passing percentage. Gains in school climate are associated with positive gains for all subject areas school environment influences the students’ attendance, disciplinary incidents, learning behavior and attitude etc. Staff morale is a crucial aspect of the learning environment.

The subject of effective learning environment has engendered a host of conversations that occur at the intersection of the design of physical spaces, the appropriate technology with which to populate newly configured spaces and the impact such spaces have on how faculty teach and

students learn in them. Given the nascent character of this field of study, scholars and practitioners have been engaged in a concerted effort to develop theoretical models, to formulate a common terminology, to encourage rethinking pedagogical approaches and to develop effective assessment and evaluation tools related to learning spaces. For all that has been written on the subject however, there is a dearth of systematic, empirical research being conducted on the impact of effective learning environment on teaching and learning outcomes.

## **Literature Review**

There are several aspects of organizations that play significant role in its smooth functioning and success. Beside temporary incentives, educational level, social recognition, good administration and experienced and qualified staff of a school, its climate and learning environment are also very imperative factors for its successful functioning.

According to Greenberg et al. (2003), plentiful aspects of a school's social and physical environment include its climate. Solitary organization accredited the subsequent eight areas: 1. Manifestation. 2. Associations of faculty. 3. Student interactions. 4. Decision making/ headship. 5. Intimately proscribed environment. 6. Learning milieu. 7. Culture and Attitude. 8. Relations with School community.

An educator, Richard Reginald Green, if we have any chance to guarantee a positive bridge to the 21st century, it is how we educate the children in the classroom today.” John F. Kennedy said, “Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in required for the establishment of a successful learning environment. The most important thing for a classroom is to create an atmosphere promoting learning. In order to achieve this atmosphere, every item in the classroom should emphasize learning in some way.

(<http://www.questia.com/library/education/classroom-management/classroom-climate> )

According to Miller and Fredericks (2010), the school climate is the consciousness of members in a school about the work arrangement, uniqueness of each person in the school

supports dependability, ingenuousness, equality, remuneration, eradication of danger, disagreement, and harmony of people in the school.

Eric, S. (2005) in an article the role of the supportive school environment in promoting academic success postulates that the school environment has broad influence on students' learning and growth, including a significant aspect of their social, emotional and ethical development. When students find their school environment supportive and caring, they are less likely to become involved in substance abuse, violence and other problem behaviour. The research indicated that supportive schools foster these positive outcomes by promoting students sense of connectedness, belongingness or community. These terms are used interchangeably here to refer to students' sense of being in a close, respectful relationship with peers and adult at school. Therefore, building in a school community is a means of fostering academic success. Students who experience their school as a caring community become more motivated, ambitious and engage in their learning. In particular, students' active connection with teachers and their perceptions that teachers care about them are what stimulate their effort and engagement.

Another research by Oworye, J.S. (2011) showed that there is a significant difference between the academic achievement of students in rural and urban secondary schools as measured by senior school certificate examinations. To him, the geographical location of schools has a significant influence on the academic achievement of students. Also he pointed out that uneven distribution of resources, poor school mapping, facilities, problem of qualified teachers refusing appointment or not willing to perform well in isolated villages, lack of good road, poor communication, and nonchalant attitude of some communities to school among others are some of the factors contributed to a wide gap between rural and urban secondary schools. Schools located in rural areas lack qualified teachers. It is because, they do not want going to rural areas that lack social amenities. They prefer to stay in urban schools. It is also observed that a lot of coaching of urban students is done to prepare them for public examinations, thus promoting the spirit of competition and rivalry that may be lacking in the rural pupils, probably, owing to limitations in exposure and experience. Also, the study has proven that students in urban areas had better academic achievement than their rural counterpart. In other word, students in urban



locations have a very advantage of favourable learning environment that apparently enhance their academic performance.

A research by Sunday, A.A. (2012) revealed that there is a significant relationship between physical school environment and students' academic performance in senior secondary school physics. To him, the physical school environment has some influences on students' academic achievement in senior secondary school physics. The physical facilities, human resources, and the relationship among them determine the physical environment of the school. The result indicated that students with adequate laboratory facilities in physics perform better than those in school with less or without facilities, this simply because laboratory forms part of enrich the physical school environment. It was also discovered that poor facilities and inadequate space, as well as the arrangement of items including seats in the classroom, library and laboratory, would affect the organisation of learning environment. Favourable school climate gives room for students to work hard and enhance their academic achievement.

Numerous researches have explored positive effect on the achievement of students with teacher's collaboration under the open climate vision of heads. Heads of institutions affect directly organizational and academic performance of teachers which resulted to affect students' achievement. The educators as well as administrators in social organizations also affect the outcomes of the learners. Though, it is understandable from many researches that direct affect of heads on students' achievement looks beyond the reality in learning process.

The classroom still remains to be the main learning environment in the schools although learning can take place in other venues. On this premise, it is imperative that educators strive to make the classroom the best venue for students to attain their full potential in academic performance.

According to Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullon, "It is what teachers think, what teachers do and what teachers are at the level of the classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people get." On the impact of the classroom atmosphere, Haim Ginott said, "I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a

teacher, I possess tremendous power to make a student's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a student humanized or de-humanized.” So, classroom climate is so much influenced by the teacher’s daily mood and is so much affecting the student’s academic standing in the classroom. Much have been written about the educational phenomenon that it becomes an issue of concern among educators.

Other writers have argued that teachers’ beliefs and perceptions are crucial (Deemer, 2004) and that many effects of the environment are likely to be mediated through morale within the school (Schneider, 2003; Clark, 2002). Cooper asked primary school teachers about their school buildings and argues that ‘whether physical environments are themselves capable of disabling education, teachers’ belief in their capacity to do so could prove self-fulfilling. For it could act to lower their morale and motivation, so eroding their commitment to teaching’ (1985, p.267-8).

PricewaterhouseCoopers (2000) consider staff morale to be of key importance while Berry (2002) found there were improvements in attitude among all users after a school was physically improved. Such improvements can be seen as resulting from the physical changes to the environment which then contribute to the overall learning environment experienced by everybody.

It is possible to consider the fundamental aspects of the physical environment, such as heating, lighting and acoustics, as well as the overall design of the school, which will encompass these aspects. Since some of these physical ‘basics’ have been researched in isolation, it seems reasonable to look at them first in this manner. Many reviews of the effect of the physical school environment on learning (eg, Fisher, 2001; Earthman, 2004; Schneider, 2002; Clark, 2002; Weinstein, 1979; Gump, 1987) consider previous research in a similar way and point out that some of the more definite conclusions within this area can be drawn about the effects of these underlying physical characteristics (Schneider, 2002). However, it is important to remember that all these features contribute to the educational environment

## **Objectives of the Study**

1. To find out the elements of effective learning environment
2. To find out the impact of effective learning environment on the students learning.
3. To suggest the measures of creating effective learning environment.

## **Research Questions of the Study**

1. What are the elements of effective learning environment?
2. How the effective learning environment has impact on the students learning?
3. What are those measures which create effective learning environment?

## **Methodology**

The research design for this study is descriptive survey research design. The data were collected through questionnaires from twenty secondary schools principals of district Peshawar including ten male and ten female secondary schools principals. The questionnaires were administered and data were collected in person by the researcher.

## **Population & Sample**

The population of study was all primary schools both male and female of district Peshawar. The sample was selected randomly and total 20 primary schools were selected, i-e 10 male and 10 female primary schools.

## **Research Instrument**

A questionnaire was developed and pilot tested for validation before its administration for data collection from the sampled principals.

## Data Analysis

Sr N o	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Score
1	School climate provides base for effective learning.	15 75	4 16	1 3	0 0	0 0	4.7
2	Professional qualification can enhance school best environment.	10 50	7 28	1 3	1 2	1 1	4.2
3	School facilities can improve best school discipline.	19 95	1 4	0 0	0 0	0 0	4.95
4	Effective school environment can improve good school results.	19 95	1 4	0 0	0 0	0 0	4.95
5	School physical facilities affect students learning.	20 100	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	5
6	Teachers' use of various teaching techniques in class improves students learning.	10 50	4 16	2 6	2 4	2 2	3.9
7	Disciplined environment in a school has great impact on students' behavior.	15 75	4 16	1 3	0 0	0 0	4.7
8	Classroom management affects students learning behavior.	15 75	4 16	0 0	1 2	0 0	4.65
9	Collegiality between staff and principal creates favorable schools' climate and	15	5	0	0	0	4.75

	their activities help& motivate students.	75	20	0	0	0	
10	Association of parents, school principal, teachers and other members from community promotes healthy learning environment.	17 85	3 12	0 0	0 0	0 0	4.85
11	Supportive and motivational school environment enables students to concentrates on academic performance.	19 95	1 4	0 0	0 0	0 0	4.95
12	Teachers'encouragementaffect their results.	20 100	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	5
13	Friendly school environment motivates students towards learning.	18 90	2 8	0 0	0 0	0 0	4.9
14	Teachers' team work creates healthy learning environment.	18 90	2 8	0 0	0 0	0 0	4.9
15	Effective management and policies of school enhance school success.	19 95	1 4	0 0	0 0	0 0	4.95

## Discussions

Data analysis based on the Likert type questionnaire, the principals' responses to the items were scored as follows: strongly agree-5, agree-4, undecided-3, and disagree-2, strongly disagree-1, for positive items and reversed for negative ones. The analysis of the data was done into Mean score values. The means scores show that majority of the respondent agreed with the statement that School climate provides base for effective learning hence mean score is 4.7. This

statement that Professional qualification can enhance school best environment is agreed by many respondents as mean score is 4.2. Similarly majority of the respondent are agreed with the statement that School facilities can improve best school discipline which affects students' learning, as mean score is 4.95. Mean value of 4.95 shows that mostly principals are agreed that effective school environment can improve good school results. Mean score of 5 reveals that principals are strongly agreed that School physical facilities affect students learning. The means scores of 3.9 shows that the respondent agreed with the statement that Teachers' use of various teaching techniques in class improves students learning. Mean value of 4.7 expresses that majority of the respondent agreed with the statement that Disciplined environment in a school has great impact on students' behavior. 4.65 Mean value of the statement of Classroom management affects students learning behavior clearly shows the principals' agreement of the statement. Most of the respondents agreed upon this that Collegiality between staff and principal creates favorable schools' climate and their activities help & motivate students which is shown by 4.75 score. The given data result which is 4.85 shows that Association of parents, school principal, teachers and other members from community promotes healthy learning environment in school. The given data result of 4.95 Mean value shows agreement of the principals about that the Supportive and motivational school environment enables students to concentrates on academic performance. Mean score of 5 shows that most of the principals are strongly agreed that Teachers' encouragement affect the learners' results. Friendly school environment motivates students towards learning is another statement Effective management and policies of school enhance school success. Principals are agreed that Teachers' team work creates healthy learning environment. The given data result of 4.95 Mean value shows agreement of the principals about that the Effective management and policies of school enhance school success.

## **Recommendations**

The following Recommendations are advanced:

1. Teachers should create learning environment through applying modern teaching techniques in classroom so that it may meet the needs of the learning of the students.
2. School should create learning environment through providing physical facilities so that students feel easy to come to school.

3. School safety measures should be taken to create fearless learning environment for teachers and learners.
4. School policies and management should be strong enough to develop conducive learning environment.
5. Proper furniture and seating arrangement along with proper space and ventilation should be provided by the school to make learning effective.
6. School climate should be focused on the professional qualification of the teachers, so that teaching at primary level.
7. It is the dire need to create Collaborative and encouraging environment so that students show interest in learning at primary schools level.
8. School and staff discipline should be maintained that is quite essential to make students disciplined.
9. Collegiality and team work should be promoted among the teaching staff and the principal because it enhances conducive learning environment.
10. Motivated staff can arouse motivation among the learners which helps to show good results.
11. Parents as well as community involvement is required for healthy learning environment. Educators and faculties, which are compelled to keep up with all the advances in the related fields, to develop new learning curricula, environments and reasoning strategies.

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