

## **Teachers' Perceptions on Outdoor Instruction and Learning Activities in Primary Schools in Okene Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigated teachers' perceptions on outdoor instruction and learning activities in primary schools in Okene Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. The study samples the opinion of 100 teachers in Okene Local Government Area of Kogi State. The researcher employed the descriptive study method for the study. The population consisted of primary school teachers in Okene Local Government Area of Kogi State. The sample consisted of 100 primary school teachers in Okene Local Government Area of Kogi State. Four research questions were generated to guide the study. Data were collected using a research-designed instrument questionnaire. It consists of two sections: Section A deals with the demographic data while Section B contains item on the teachers' perceptions on outdoor instruction and learning activities. The reliability of the instrument was established by administering it twice after an interval of three weeks to the same 20 primary school teachers in Yagba West Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. who were not part of the sample. Data analysis was done using means and rank order. The findings revealed the teachers' perceptions on outdoor instruction and learning activities in primary schools in urban and rural areas of the case study which has no differences. It also revealed that primary school teachers in Okene have the knowledge of outdoor activities but too much of syllabus and classrooms activities did not allow them to practice it. Based on the findings of the study, conclusions were made and recommendations were proffered.*

**Keywords:** Perception, Outdoor, Teaching, Learning, Teacher, Activities

## **Introduction**

Currently, mainstream education fails to provide enough of the meaningful experiences that Dewey, Maslow and others feel are so critical in developing an educated society of contributing members (Education, 1983). Grounded in the theory of experimental learning and Dewey's pragmatic philosophy of experiences, outdoor education has attempted to provide personal experiences for pupils/students. Outdoor education stresses the wholeness of knowledge and the person with emphasis on social and emotional growth (Knapp, 2005). Many outdoor education programmes have proven to provide meaningful learning experiences yet it is unclear what the common attributes of these programmes are that provide the meaningful experiences.

Presently, many countries have a growing interest and awareness of the outdoor teaching and learning activities as a valuable complement to traditional classroom teaching (Martin, 2010, Riskinson, Dillon, Teamy, Morris, Choi, Sanders & Benefield, 2004). However, outdoor education is a multifaceted field of research and education that includes adventure education, leadership skills, tranquil outdoor life and human nature relationship as well as field work and other school-based learning in different subjects and settings. The aim of this study is to explore teachers experience and the perceptions of primary school teachers on outdoor teaching and learning activity. More specific, the aim is to explore the consequences of regular school-based outdoor teaching and learning in a primary school context. An additional aim was to explore how urban children and pupils experience nature, through teacher's observations.

Ogunsanya (2001) said Education as the social mechanism designed to bring about in person submitted to it, certain skills and attitude that are assumed to be useful and desirable in its society. The education institution as important as it is, relies on certain personnel. These personnel are the teachers who are saddled with the main process through which knowledge and skills are dictated by the school curriculum. This is the reason for most scholars to see the teacher as the most important input educational system. Unfortunately, the teaching profession where teachers belong is the most abused profession. This is because it is a profession where one can see various types of certificate holders, calling themselves teachers. The profession (teaching) is the most abused as most teachers in services see the profession as a stepping stone. The story is so worst that in some cases of ordinary schools, teachers were not respected. Also, in spite of the stipulation that the Nigerian certificate of education was recognized as the least certificate to teach in school, some education board still employ the Grade 11 certificate holders. The reason for this, both the government and people's perceived teaching as first comes job.

Adedeji (2003), defined perception as the process or the capability to attain awareness and understand the environment, surrounding by intercepting, selecting and organizing different types of information. All perception involves stimuli in the central nervous system. These stimuli result from the stimulation of our sense organ

such as auditory stimuli when one hears a sound or a taste when someone eats something.

Perception is not only passive but can be shaped by our learning experience and education. According to Latin words perception means “perception, percipio” means the organization, identification and interpretation of sensory information in order to represents the environment. The concept of outdoor education as a concept, structured learning activities conducted outside the classroom is often confused. (Thorburn and Allison 2010; Zink and Burrow, 2008). Outdoor education is likely the most used concept but out-of-school learning, out-of-classroom learning, and outdoor learning have been used synonymously with different meanings. With its roots in social welfare, camping education and natural history, outdoor education encompasses related fields, such as wilderness, adventure, experimental as well as inter and intra-personal education (Bisson, 1996; Rickinson, Dillon, Teamy, Morris, Choi, Sanders & Benefield; 2004; Nicol, 2002).

A classic definition of outdoor is in, about and for the outdoor (Original emphasis) (cited in Rickinson, Dillon, Teamy, Morris, Choi, Sanders & Benefield, 2004). In many ways, this definition is still valid, but it is somewhat limited. To many educators, activities such as visits to museums and factories fall under the outdoor teaching umbrella even though they are conducted indoors. The rationale is that the experience-based approach and out-of-classroom context which are significant to that outdoor learning is not only learning about the outdoors. Higgins & Nicol, 2002), refers to outdoor education as a cultural construct, something that provided a stimulus for investigating its nature and relationship with human culture and society.

Outdoor education embraces main concept such as first-hand experience, use of the landscape and a process of learning in authentic content: it would be a slip for this approach to be interpreted abstractly and one dimensionally, as these many different aspects are reflected both in its theories and practices. One of very important attribute of outdoor education is the fact that it can be implemented through many different outdoor activities such as field trips, outdoor games

and dramas are only some of the various examples. According to Palm Berg and Kuru (2000), pupils who experience outdoor activities such as hiking, field trips and outdoor games seem to have strong emphatic relationship to nature along with a better social behaviour and higher moral judgment.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Learning ought to be supported by both in class activities and outdoor activities to contributing to structuring knowledge. Outdoor activities allow children to actively participate and to learn by doing, learning requires a lot of work and activities. These activities, which provide primary experiences, help children to change theoretical knowledge or information into practice, record it in the long-term memory and create

solution to problems they encounter in daily life, based on what they have learned. Many of the teachers are aware of these outdoor activities but failed to engage in them when teaching their students. There are many factors that may influence teachers' perceptions, these include: cultural altitude, availability of resources, training and the school environment. Therefore, this study is to investigate the teachers' perceptions on outdoor instruction and learning activities in primary schools in Okene local government area of Kogi State, Nigeria.

As popularly said; children learn more by doing. Therefore, this study is to investigate the perception of primary school teacher on outdoor teaching and learning activities in some selected primary school in Okene Local Government Kogi State Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the perception of primary school teacher on outdoor teaching and learning activities in some selected primary school in Okene Local Government Kogi State, Nigeria and specifically, the study is to:

1. determine the perceptions of teachers in rural and urban on outdoor teaching and learning activities in Okene, Okene Local Government Kogi State Nigeria.
2. determine the problem hindering primary school teachers on outdoor teaching and learning activity in Okene Local Government Kogi State Nigeria.
3. determine the strategies employed to improve on the use of outdoor teaching and learning activities in Okene Local Government Kogi State Nigeria.
4. determine the benefits in practicing outdoor teaching and learning activities in Okene Local Government Kogi State Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were raised and answered in the study.

- 1 What are the perceptions of the teachers in rural and urban on outdoor teaching and learning activities in Okene?
- 2 What are the problem hindering primary school teachers in Okene on outdoor teaching and learning activity?
- 3 What are the strategies employed in Okene to improve on the use of outdoor teaching and learning activities?
- 4 What are the benefits in practicing outdoor teaching and learning activities in Okene?
- 5

### **Methodology**

In this study, the survey method was used. This method made it possible to collect information from teachers about the perceptions of the primary school teachers on outdoor teaching and learning activity. The target population for this study comprised selected public primary school teachers in Okene local government of Kogi State.

Simple random sampling technique was used to select ten (10) class teachers from each of the ten (10) randomly selected schools, given the total of 100 respondents. The instrument used was closed ended questionnaire which contains two sections, section A and section B. Section A contains personal data of the respondents while section B contains relevant questions statements about the issue under consideration in relation to the research questions. The data collected for this study was analysed with respect to the research questions raised. All the responses got from the respondent through the questionnaire were analyzed by using descriptive statistics through simple percentage counts and frequency. The data collected in the first and second instance was correlated to obtain reliability co-efficient of 0.87.

## Results

### Bio-data of the Respondents

**Table 1:** Distribution of Respondents based on Age, Gender and Religion

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>AGE</b>		
30 years and below	45	45.0
31 years - 50 years	35	35.0
51 years and above	20	20.0
<b>Total</b>	100	100.0
<b>GENDER</b>		
Male	63	63.0
Female	37	37.0
<b>Total</b>	100	100.0
<b>RELIGION</b>		
Christianity	55	55.0
Islam	45	45.0
<b>Total</b>	100	100.0

Table 1 reveals that 45 respondents representing 45.0% are age 30 years and below, 35 respondents representing 35.0% are within the ages 31 years and 50 years, while 20 respondents representing 20.0% are within age 51 years and above. Sixty-three respondents representing 63.0% are males while 37 respondents representing 37.0% are females. Furthermore, 55 respondents representing 55.0% are Christians, 45 respondents representing 45.0% are Muslims.

**Research Question 1:** *What is the perception of the teacher in rural and urban on outdoor teaching and learning activities in Okene?*

**Table 2: Mean Responses on the perceptions of the teachers in rural and urban on outdoor teaching and learning activities.**

Item No	Statement	Mean	Rank
1	The teacher believes that the students are motivated.	3.04	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	The teacher uses audio-visual aids to relax the students during lesson.	3.02	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3	The teacher believes that learning is more interactive.	2.94	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	The teacher arouses students' interest and to enable them feel at home and learn better.	2.92	4 <sup>th</sup>
5	Teacher gives opportunities to all students to experience the real world first-hand.	2.92	5 <sup>th</sup>
6	Teacher always kindles imagination of the students.	2.91	5 <sup>th</sup>
7	Teacher endeavours to stimulate the students for active participation.	2.89	7 <sup>th</sup>
8	Teacher makes the students construct their own approaches to solve problems.	2.86	8 <sup>th</sup>
9	The teacher's action activates students' memory and recalls the experiences.	2.83	9 <sup>th</sup>

Table 2 reveals the perception of the teacher in rural and urban on outdoor teaching and learning activities. The highest ranked factor is the factor that says, "The teacher believes that the students are motivated", with a mean score of 3.04. Other factors that rank high on the table include the factors that says, "The teacher uses audio-visual aids to relax the students during, the teacher believes that learning is more interactive, the teacher arouses students' interest and to enable them feel at home and learn better" with mean values 3.02, 2.94 and 2.92 ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respectively. On the other hand, the least ranked statement is item 1 which states that "The teacher's action activates students' memory and recalls the experiences" is ranked 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Research Question 2:** *What are the problems hindering primary school teachers in Okene on outdoor teaching and learning activity?*

**Table 3: Mean Responses on the problems hindering primary school teacher in Okene on outdoor teaching and learning activity.**

Item No	Statement	Mean	Rank
5	Laziness	3.10	1 <sup>st</sup>
3	Concerns regarding meeting curricular deadlines	3.09	2 <sup>nd</sup>
2	Limited time and resources	3.09	3 <sup>rd</sup>
1	Larger class sizes	3.08	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	Diverse and changing curricula.	3.02	5 <sup>th</sup>

Table 3 reveals that item 5 which states that “laziness” is a major problem hindering primary school teacher in Okene on outdoor teaching and learning activity was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> with a mean score of 3.10, while item 4 which states that “diverse and changing curricula” was ranked last with a mean score of 3.02.

**Research Question 3:** *What are the strategies employed in Okene to improve on the use of outdoor teaching and learning activities?*

**Table 4: Mean Responses on the strategies employed in Okene to improve on the use of outdoor teaching and learning activities**

Item No	Statement	Mean	Rank
7	Make the outdoors accessible	3.06	1 <sup>st</sup>
5	Root the learning in place	3.02	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3	Stay flexible and make outdoor experiences relatable	3.00	3 <sup>rd</sup>
10	Start small, and be patient	3.00	3 <sup>rd</sup>
2	Evaluate hazards and plan for emergencies	2.98	5 <sup>th</sup>
6	Allow appropriate risks	2.98	5 <sup>th</sup>
1	Build community and connections	2.96	7 <sup>th</sup>
4	Start small, and be patient	2.96	7 <sup>th</sup>
8	Root the learning in place	2.94	8 <sup>th</sup>
9	Stay flexible and make outdoor experiences relatable	2.90	10 <sup>th</sup>

The results on table 4 indicate the mean and item ranking on the strategies employed in Okene to improve on the use of outdoor teaching and learning activities. The results revealed that item 7 ranked 1<sup>st</sup> with the mean score of 3.06 and it states that “make the outdoors accessible”. Item 5 ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with the mean score of 3.02, it states that “root the learning in place”. While Item 9 ranked 10<sup>th</sup> with the mean score of 2.90 which states that “stay flexible and make outdoor experiences relatable”.

**Research Question 4:** *What are the benefits in practicing outdoor teaching and learning activities in Okene?*

**Table 5: Mean Responses on the benefits in practicing outdoor teaching and learning activities**

Item No	Statement	Mean	Rank
2	Improved academic performance	2.32	1 <sup>st</sup>
1	Increased physical activity	2.31	2 <sup>nd</sup>
4	Enhanced creativity and problem-solving skills	2.26	3 <sup>rd</sup>
5	Improved social skills	2.25	4 <sup>th</sup>
3	Reduced stress and anxiety	2.24	5 <sup>th</sup>

Table 4 shows the means and Rank orders on the benefits in practicing outdoor teaching and learning activities. From the table, item 2 “Improved academic performance” ranked first (1<sup>st</sup>) with a mean score of 2.32. Item 1 “Increased physical activity” ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with a mean score of 2.31, while item 3 “Reduced stress and anxiety” ranked 5<sup>th</sup> with a mean score of 2.24.

### Discussion of Findings

From the above analysis the general discussion was made clarified and gives answers to the research question raised for the study. Table 1 revealed the perceptions of the teacher in rural and urban on outdoor teaching and learning activities. The highest ranked factor is the factor that says, “The teacher believes that the students are motivated”, with a mean score of 3.04. Other factors that rank high on the table include the factors that says, “The teacher uses audio-visual aids to relax the students during, the teacher believes that learning is more interactive, the teacher arouses students’ interest and to enable them feel at home and learn better” with mean values 3.02, 2.94 and 2.92 ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respectively. On the other hand, the least ranked statement is item 1 which states that “The teacher’s action activates students’ memory and recalls the experiences” is ranked 9<sup>th</sup>.

Table 2 reveals that item 5 which states that “laziness” is a major problem hindering primary school teacher in Okene on outdoor teaching and learning activity was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> with a mean score of 3.10, while item 4 which states that “diverse and changing curricula” was ranked last with a mean score of 3.02. The result on table 3 indicates the mean and item ranking on the strategies employed in Okene to improve on the use of outdoor teaching and learning activities. The result reveals that item 7 ranked 1<sup>st</sup> with the mean score of 3.06 and it states that “make the outdoors accessible”. Item 5 ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with the mean score of 3.02, it states that “root the learning in place”.



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## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Outdoor education is an experimental process of learning by doing, which takes place primarily through exposure to the out-of-doors. Since learners learn more by doing teachers and school administrators should base the school setting on outdoor and learning in school ground, urban or natural environment near the school.
2. Nature can be the major focus of learning for subjects such as science, social studies, civic education, religion and national value etc.
3. Perception is the way by which people search meaning experience.
4. Teachers in private schools engage in outdoor teaching and learning activities.
5. The experienced teachers in primary schools have the knowledge of outdoor activities but the class activities do not allow them to practice it.
6. Outdoor teaching and learning activities allow pupils to learn at their own pace.
7. It is not only the pupils that benefit from outdoor activities, both the teachers and pupils benefit from outdoor teaching and learning.
8. Lastly, the game masters and mistresses usually engage in outdoor teaching and learning.
9. Some of the teacher's perceptions are perception of risk, place, barrier and academic.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn in this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Primary school teachers should be seriously encouraged towards the use of outdoor teaching and learning activities.
2. State and local government education authorities should organize workshops and seminar periodically as a means of encouraging the primary school teachers on the use of outdoor activities.
3. Primary school administrators should be responsible for any form of casualties during outdoor activities.
4. Teachers should be given enough facilities and money to carry out their activities.
5. The people (society) should cooperate with teachers positively in their teaching.

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