



Dynamics of Socio-Educational Environment on the Attainment of Students' Educational Aspirations

Dr. ZINKENG Martina¹; MOLESY Anthony N.²

¹ HTTTC, Kumba, University of Buea

² Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Buea

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*Corresponding Author

Zinkeng Martina

E-mail: timchia45@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This article brings out the role of the socio-educational environment on the attainment of students' educational aspirations. The socio – educational environment is of great importance in creating, sustaining and attaining the educational aspiration of students. Every student irrespective of the race, gender, culture or academic level, lives and studies in a particular socio – educational setting. This setting can either stimulate, promote and assist students in their educational ambition or adversely affect and may be completely shatter it. The aim of this article was to highlight the importance of the major social and educational settings that students live in and interact in and how these different settings affect the attainment of students' educational aspirations.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the key to success. Across cultures and civilisations, education has always been considered as important and as such, pursued by many. When asked, everyone will affirm that education is good; yet people acquire it up to different levels and degrees. Some persons go further and achieve more than others. This therefore means that there are some factors which can either motivate or de-motivate educational aspirants from either achieving higher or lower than others. Different scholars have measured and elaborated on educational aspirations through varied plans, such as career and other social aspects.

Some of such scholars include: Bora (2016), who studied educational aspiration with school environment among students. The result indicated that there exists significant relationship between the school environment and the educational aspirations of students. Bashir & Kaur (2017) also studied educational aspiration with school environment among students. The result indicated that rural and urban students differ from each other in school environment but in educational aspiration there is no difference among rural and urban students. Moreover school environment and educational aspiration correlates positively. The study projected that school environment plays a significant role in predicting educational

aspirations. Furthermore, (Hoffer & Coleman, 1987) in Gupta and Bashir (2017) concluded that closeness of social relationship among student's schools and families increase the educational aspiration of students. Bashir et al., (2016) in Gupta and Bashir (2017) examined educational aspiration in relation to parental encouragement. The results indicated that educational aspiration and parental encouragement correlates with each other. It means that if parents support and encourage their children, then aspiration of students towards education should be high. Shahidul et al., (2015). Gupta and Bashir (2017) studied social capital and educational aspiration of students and the role of school social capital and family social capital.

As cited in Stadler-Altmann (2015), among the first studies to discuss the potential influences of the learning environment are those of Moos (1979), Steele (1973) and Bronfenbrenner (1981, 2005). These studies present models of the relationship between environments and students' outcomes, as well as reflect on the importance of the environment to learning. Before looking at the concept of educational aspiration, it is first necessary to look at the socio – educational environment and the role it plays in the attainment of students' educational aspirations.

The Socio – Educational Environment

The socio – educational environment refers to the social and the educational environment of the learner. This means that the concept can be broken into two for easy understanding: the social environment and the educational environment. The social environment includes the interactions in the family, peer groups, the media and other agencies of socialisation like the government and its policies regarding education; the religious bodies and the role they play in enhancing education. The educational environment refers to the school environment including the curricular and co – curricular activities. Each of these environments plays a vital role on the attainment of students' educational aspirations. We shall begin by looking at the social environment and the different components that make up the social environment; we shall after that look at the educational (or school) environment.

The Social Environment

By the social environment, one is referring to the different agencies that are involved in the socialization of learners such as family and peer groups. Socialization is a lifelong process during which we learn about social expectations and how to interact with other people. Socialization helps people learn to function successfully in their social worlds. Social groups often provide the first experiences of socialization. Families, and later peer groups, communicate expectations and reinforce norms. Other agencies of socialization include religious bodies and government. Apart from the school environment, these other agencies of socialization also play a fundamental role in the attainment of students' educational

aspirations. Some of the key agencies of socialization and the role they play in the attainment of students' educational aspirations can be seen below:

The Family

The family is the smallest unit of the society and as such, critical to its development. It is, as stated in Gupta & Bashir (2017) a socio-biological unit that employs the most impact on the progress and maintenance of the person's growth and performance. According to the Florida Institute of Education (2010), the family provides the primary educational environment for children and in doing so it has a tremendous impact on children's future learning and academic success. Patterns of family interactions and the relationships between family members influence children's attitudes toward education and can motivate children to develop more positive attitudes toward education and to be more successful in school. The involvement of the family members may vary from discussions of topics related to their school activities to assisting them with learning basic facts. Based on Henderson (1994) as cited in Bashir & Kaur (2017), the amount of parental involvement in the child's education influences the child's educational aspirations. Macbrayne (1987) asserts that children's own aspirations are influenced by their parent's aspirations or expectations for them. When children perceive their parents to have high educational expectations for them, they are likely to have higher aspirations for themselves and consequently, higher achievements. Bashir & Kaur (2017) therefore concludes that active parental involvement contributes to the overall performance of students in school due to increased aspiration level.

Peer Groups

This is a group made up of people who are similar in age and social status and who share interests. According to Kang (2006) it is a small group of friends which have close relations with each other and they have regular interactions. Socialization is common in peer group and begins in the earliest years of the life of a child. Peer groups provide adolescents' first major socialization experience outside the realm of their families. This socialization continues to school and even influence their choice of school. Such interactions with age mates contribute to their learning over and above the provisions of adult educators. In fact, as Kindermann (2015) indicated, many children appear to go to school or to like school (better), precisely because their peers and friends are there. With such an influence therefore, it is not inconceivable that peer groups play a role in the formation and attainment of students' educational aspirations either positively or negatively, depending on the objectives of the group.

Mass media

Mass media distribute impersonal information to a wide audience, via television, newspapers, radio,

and the Internet. Taking into consideration the wide mass-media spreading over the contemporary society, especially with the growing and mass use of the social media, it is easy to reach the conclusion that this may have a major influence upon the citizens' education, being a potential means of education and modelling for all generations. The ambivalent nature of the effects mass-media has upon the youth should also be given serious consideration, as it can be both positive and/or negative. This is because as Treapăt (2017) said, the youth (students in our case) may be, due to their age, are more easily influenced upon by it; this, as they spend more time on it.

The Government

Government according to Burke (2008), as a political organization comprising the individuals and institutions authorized to formulate public policies and conduct affairs of state. Governments are empowered to establish and regulate socialisation: that is, the interrelationships of the people within their territorial confines, the relations of the people with the community as a whole, and the dealings of the community with other political entities. Governments also ensure and provide education for its citizens. Government's efforts to enhance education can be seen in the signing of conventions like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with goal number two which is to achieve universal primary education. Some governments go further to make secondary and university education tuition free and also award scholarships and grants for academic purposes. Such measures create and promote high educational aspiration among the citizens, as the political environment is enabling and education friendly. It will also aid in the attainment of already existing/acquired educational aspirations. In societies where the government hasn't provided a conducive and affordable educational environment may be due to wars, corruption, etc, there is low attainment of educational aspirations. This can account for why the literacy level is higher in some countries (especially Western countries) than others.

Religious Bodies

Religion is an important avenue of socialization for many people in the community. The society is full of churches, mosques, prayer ministries and cells, as well as similar religious communities where people gather to worship and learn. Like other institutions, these places teach participants how to interact in the society and also influence a lot of norms, cultures and values which people in the society uphold. For some people, important ceremonies related to family structure—like marriage and birth—are connected to religious celebrations. Many religious institutions also uphold gender norms and contribute to their enforcement through socialization. These religious bodies exert much influence on the educational, moral and social life of their followers through their teachings, preaching and laws. Some of them own educational and vocational institutions through which they impart

knowledge and morality. This all play a role in the attainment of the educational aspirations of especially their followers.

The Educational (or School) Environment

The educational (or school) environment which can also be known as the learning environment has been defined by Anderson (1982) as the academic, psychological, and social atmosphere of a school. This is composed of the learner, other students, the teachers and the physical environment. This school environment plays a fundamental role in the attainment of students' educational aspiration. This is because, as Snyder (2006) says "students spend more time in school than they do participating in any other activity and in many cases more than they do in their homes (during waking hours)" It is therefore not surprising that the school environment plays an important role in the general well-being of students. A positive school environment according to Gupta & Bashir (2017) enhances health, and also promotes learning among students.

Different researches have showed that students' academic performance can be influenced both negatively and positively by the school environment.

According to Bashir (2017), a number of literatures have revealed that the school environment is related with students' wellbeing and educational achievement. For instance, (Crump, Simons-Morton, Saylor, & Haynie, 1999) in Bashir (2017) have recommended that an optimistic school environment could improve students' ability to improve a social relationship with their school, which in turn, predicts educational achievement. To fully grasp the concept of the educational (or school) environment, it has been broken into the different components that make up the school environment such as the physical, social, psychological and the actual teaching/learning environment. This is in line with Bashir & Kaur (2017), who postulated that the School environment can be of different types such as: social environment, physical environment, educational environment, and psychological environment. These different components of the school (or educational) environment can be seen below.

The School Social Environment

This has to do with the interactions within the school as well as the available human resources. It includes association among students in different class, in same class, student participation in different school activities, relationship among staff members, the staff with the community, students and parents, relationship of school officers, discipline, school employees, and the general atmosphere during school competitions. A very positive and exciting social environment in school makes students to consider the school as their "other home". This sense of belonging curbs students' alienation from school and also reduces the rate of school dropout cases; thus helping students in the attainment of their educational aspirations.

The School Physical Environment

The Physical environment of the school includes planning, location, staff quarters, facilities in building, site of construction, suitability in terms of accommodation, proper ventilation in classroom, classrooms which can be used in all weathers, provision of toilets, facility for indoor games, provision of hall for co-curricular and other activities, clean drinking water, provision of proper furniture, facilities for library, laboratory, sewage and drains facilities, workshops, provision of pathways, and greenery garden (Bashir & Kaur, 2017). A beautiful physical environment with the availability functional materials for curricular and co – curricular activities creates a sense of pride and belonging to a particular school. This will also make possible the attainment of students' educational aspirations, as the school will be seen as a place to be.

The School Learning Environment

This involves the smooth functioning of the actual teaching and learning activities. It also includes arrangement of teaching – learning material, discipline, arrangement for absent teachers as well as students, timetable, aid and evaluation of teaching learning activities etc. The seriousness and integrity of a school is generally judged from the effectiveness of the teaching – learning process. A school with a good educational environment will lead to good performance by the students, which will be a motivation for them to attain their educational aspirations.

The School Psychological Environment

According to Bashir & Kaur (2017), a good quality psychological environment assists in making the students such that they like to join in different activities, they appear to be internally motivated, show dedication towards their work, they are very active, they participate in curricular and co – curricular activities according to their individual differences. Such a psychologically healthy environment will go a long way to assist students attain their educational aspirations, as they find the school to have a conducive psychological environment.

The Concept of Educational Aspirations

Aspirations refer to an individual's desire to obtain a status, objective or goal such as a particular occupation or level of education (Tefere, 2010). This makes the concept to be vital in any human endeavour; be it in education or career development. In the domain of education, it is referred to as educational aspiration. This is in line with Garg *et al.* (2002) who state that when level of aspiration is centred on the field of education we may refer to it as level of educational aspiration. At present there is no universally accepted description for the term educational aspirations, as different scholars hold different opinions as to what it really is. Tefere (2010) for example, referred to it as the quest to achieve

certain level of education, depending on the circumstances around the particular individual. Watt *et al.* (2012) considers educational aspiration to be the level of self-set academic learning goals. In addition,

Brian & Tamara (2010) referred to it as the educational expectations that an individual has for the self or for others. And Bandura (1991) regarded it to be an individuals' self-appraisal of ability translated into school attainment. However the term is generally used as referring to an individual's plans and aims inside an educational setting (Trebbels, 2015) in Gupta and Bashir (2017). And for the purpose of this study, the term 'Educational Aspiration' is used to refer to the students' academic desires, that is, the number of years they intend to study and, necessarily, the academic level they wish to reach. It can also be seen as the highest educational level a student or learner would like to attain in order to get the job or status he/she desires in the society.

The essence of the idea behind students' aspirations is that desired future events will direct and motivate effort in the present and thereby increase students' chances to succeed in the educational system (Trebbels, 2015). Research by (Domina *et al.* 2011; Rojewski 2005) in Trebbels (2015) has shown that educational aspirations contribute to disparities in educational attainment in a community. One can only achieve as much as he/she aspired in education. This as such, makes educational aspiration a vital component in education. The socio – educational environment in which a student finds himself/herself can directly or indirectly promote a high or low educational aspiration; and also play a vital role in its attainment. High educational aspiration will undoubtedly lead to high educational achievement; and the reverse is true for low educational aspiration. It therefore becomes important for learners to develop high aspirations in education – that is, aspire for high academic level.

CONCLUSION

Education is a process and kind of activity common to human beings. According to Bashir and Kaur (2017), it is a continuous attempt to develop all capacities of the students to control their neighbouring environment and to fulfil their needs. Even though education is seen as part of human life, it cannot help the pursuers unless they have the required amount of educational aspirations. This is because aspirations motivate for better achievements, as people can only achieve what they have aspired. Thus, aspirations are important inputs for achievements. The importance ascribed to student aspirations derives from the acknowledgment that human behaviour is not only regulated by external influences but that it is also extensively motivated by self-influence; though the role played by the surrounding environment cannot be ignored, because every learner lives and interacts in a particular environment. And our direct interactions with social groups, like families and peers, teach us how others expect us to behave. Likewise, a society's formal and informal institutions socialize its population.

Formal institutions like schools and the government as well as other institutions like the media, contribute to socialization by inundating learners with messages about norms and expectations which go to influence the attainment of their educational aspirations.

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