

## **Managing Students' Lateness in Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State: The Administrators' Headache and Solutions**

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### **Abstract**

Learners' late-coming attitude has constituted a major problem in our educational system nationwide. It is in a bid to proffering viable remedies to the abysmal menace that this study critically examined the following: The meaning of learners late-coming, the negative effect of learners late-coming, reasons why learners come late to school and some practical and realistic measures to manage the phenomenon. The researcher concluded the study with some viable and practical recommendations is that could serve as a panacea to the ravaging malady if teachers and school administrators strictly adhere to them. Among the recommended measures are: provision of guidance and counseling services to students in all schools, parents/guardians should be sensitized and re-oriented via town hall meeting to instill in them the knowledge to release and encourage their children /wards to come to school on time and also educate them on the negative effects of learners late-coming, mobilization and adequate motivation of teachers to enable them dispense their duties efficiently, provision of conducive and sufficient infrastructures and educational facilities in all secondary schools, modern instructional materials should be made available, compulsorily boarding for all students, and provisions of transport allowances / means of transportation to all students.

### **Introduction**

Education in Nigeria is an instrument "par excellence" for effecting national development. It has witnessed active participation by non-governmental agencies, communities, and individuals as well as government intervention (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2014) Edition). Education is a means of improving the personality and disposition of the student. Formal learning is normally delivered by trained teachers in a systematic intentional way within a school, academy /college/institute or university. Informal learning typically takes place naturally as part of some other activities, and non-formal learning, which includes everything else, such as sports instruction provided by non-trained educators are also part of teaching. In the formal school system (secondary level) which is the focus of this study, rules and regulations are enacted, and laws are designed to be obeyed by every member of that organization (Kaduna state ministry of Education, 2006). The school, as an educational institution also has its etiquette that governs the mode of operation, one among those laws is punctuality. Punctuality is one of the cardinal business virtues: Always insist on it in your subordinates. It is said punctuality is the soul of business. Since the school is likened to a business environment, it has punctuality as a rule that governs students' attitudes. The law has it that all students must come early to school, attend morning devotion-where information for daily activities is been past, then processed to class for academic activities for each day. Academic activates cannot effectively flourish in an

atmosphere where learners exhibit perpetual habit of coming late to school. Taking a close look at our secondary educational system nation-wide, divulged that the syndrome of late-coming “has almost surface as an acceptable tradition in the educational system Amold & Timothy (2014).

A critical investigation revealed that late-coming is like a plague that is determined to afflict and destroy our schools. Learners’ late-coming attitude is like a deadly ailment in mask to truncate the posterity of our secondary school system and out to rubbish the prestige of our teeming young ones in the nation. This abysmal menace “late-coming’ is conspicuously evident in all spheres of our educational strata especially in the secondary level. Like a poisonous and contagious virus ever ready to spread to and multiply in its pre, the phenomenon has stretched, poured its malicious hands on our learners and bedeviled the secondary education and it has now metamorphosed into a contemporary problem nation-wide.

Teachers and administrators had employed diverse measures to curb or even eradicate the late-coming syndrome but all the methods and efforts exerted appear to have ended in futility. The school teachers and administrators now watch with folded arms pessimistically while the ominous circumstance continuously plunge our secondary educational system into a perpetual abyssal depth of doom. Obviously, it would be difficult to proffer any realistic remedy to the situation except the meaning, causes, and solutions of the problem are clearly identified.

### **Meaning of Students Late-Coming**

“To be late” according to the Chambers 21<sup>st</sup> century Dictionary, is coming, arriving etc after the expected or usual time. The Cambridge Advanced Dictionary 2001 defines the term “late” as “(happening or arriving) after the planned, expected, usual or necessary time. And it sees latecomer as “a person who arrives late. The Dictionary (Combridge Advanced Learner) likened the student to a person who is learning at a college or university, or sometime in a school, while the learner is a person who is still learning at a college or university, or sometime in a school. In this work, the word student and learner shall be used interchangeably. Nakpodia & Dafiaghon (2011) as cited by Jay (2012) “lateness” can be defined as the situation whereby an individual arrives after the proper scheduled or usual time it is an act of students arriving or coming to school, class/lesson after the expected, scheduled or usual time. for one to say a student is late, it means, the student resumed school behind the normal traditional resumption time. for instance. Lateness to school by learners constitutes one of the major observable problems confronting teachers and administrators. It is a menace that is bedeviling the nation’s educational system. Late-coming relates simply to failure to be present at the appropriate time for school activities /lessons leading to certain deficiencies in the attainment of the goals and objectives of the institution.

### **Causes of Learners Late-Coming**

Several factors are responsible for students coming late to school. These factors are grouped under the following heading.

1. Parental factors
2. Students' factors
3. Teachers' factors
4. Environmental factors
5. Governmental factors

### **Parental Factors**

Parents contribute to students' late-coming, either consciously or unconsciously. The following are some ways parents make their children (the students) to come late to school:

1. **Parents Untimely tasks and Commands.** Nakpodia and Dafiaghor (2011) identified parents' untimely tasks and commands as one of the reasons why students come late to school, some parents assign enormous domestic chores for their children/ wards to accomplish before going to school every day. And after the students might have exhausted the whole time and energy doing these chores, they would not be given money for transport, these students have to trek to school, by the time the students would walk to the school, they are already late.
2. **Poverty:** This is the state of being in want, inadequacy and deficiency etc. Many parents are poor i.e. they do not have sufficient money or means to live comfortably in the society not to talk of providing daily transport for their children. Because of parental low socio-economic status, most students trek long distance to school daily. The end result is that, such students perpetually arrive at school late.
3. **Parents asking the students to take their siblings to their various schools before they (students) trek back to school.** A secondary school student who ought to resume school by 7.45am is being obligated by parents to take his /her younger ones to their respective schools before he/she in turn should go to school without provision for transport fare, must definitely arrive at school late.
4. **Inability of parents to afford their children /wards money for breakfast and lunch in school.** Some parents always compel their children to wait for food before going to school. In some cases where the students cannot wait for too long, they normally go to school with empty stomach. It is obvious that such students will be unavoidably late to school. If parents can sufficiently and adequately provide for their children, late coming could be curbed to an appreciable level.

### **Students Factors**

Students, to a large extent, promote this abysmal culture of late coming in numerous ways. Some of the means by which students advance this act are:

1. Going late to bed and waking up late the next morning (Nakpodia & Dafiahor, 2011). Some students watch films late at night and as a result they also wakeup-late. This is an act that is responsible for students coming late to school.
2. Some latecomers do not perceive the beginning of the school day as important (Gabriel 2009).
3. Some students do not take responsibility for themselves; they submit themselves to be influence by their peer groups.
4. Students' expectations are out of line with the instructors.
5. Ignorance of the consequences of being late. A student coming late to class, according to Nakpodia and Dafiaghor (2011) distracts the rest of the students and disrupts the flow of the teacher's discussion. It is even a burden to the students whom the late student asks for what to catch up with. It also thwarts all the efforts to achieve the educational goals and objectives of the lesson.
6. Physical or logistical reasons why students come to school late. Students have physical or logistical reasons for coming late. For instance a student may find it difficult to make it to class on time because of the physical distance between his/her home and the school, distance between sequential classes also contribute to compounding the problem ([www.brownedu/logisticandfags.com](http://www.brownedu/logisticandfags.com)). Logistical could also include physical items, such as food, materials, animals, equipment and liquid, as well as abstract items, such as time, information, and other particles. When a child (student) lacks the required school materials, such as uniform, hymn book, bible, belt, stockings, sandals, beret, tie, do or cut the appropriate or recommended hair style, such student would always want to avoid assembly devotion and classes.
7. **Emotional or psychological problem:** The home environment of many young people represent a place of instability and emotional upheaval, where security, caring, and nurturing are depleted or non-existent, separations, divorce, death, or abandonment, removes one or both parents from the family, the lack of attention and affection that may accompany such change, adversely impacts on children. Substance abuse, domestic violence, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and mental illness plague some families at an alarming rate.  
Young people enter higher education with dysfunctional family backgrounds that evoke stress and trepidation in students. Children of alcoholics parent for example, are exposed to depression, change in appetite or weight, sleep, and psychomotor activity; Decrease energy of thinking, concentrating, or making decisions, or recurrent ideation, makes the students to always come to school late.
8. Students waiting for best friend at home to walk down to school and that make them to come late to school.

### **Teachers/Administrative Factors**

1. Favouritism /Partiality also promotes late coming. A situation where a student is punished for lateness and another is not, for the same offence, may lead to the undermining of the principle of equality in the country.
2. Lack of a firm and consistent policy on punctuality also encourages late-coming. Since there are no consequences attached to lateness, students tend to come late.
3. Inability of teachers/ administrators to come to school on time: Nakpodia and Dafiaghor stated that school administrators must lead by example. They should be punctual in their own meetings and classes to avoid students to think that being late is just alright since even the authoritative persons are doing it.
4. Teachers not integrating the topic (late-coming) in lessons while teaching: students should be properly taught the consequences of lateness.
5. Absence of school gate: A school that has fence and gate where every student must pass through make students not to come late but when the school is without fence/ gate, there would be many entry and exit to school which affect the students habit to late coming.

### **Environmental Factors**

1. The location of the school can also a large extent determined when students would arrive school each day. If the school is situated in a remote area from the community, it will take students more time to get to the school.
2. Scarcity of means of transportation: Inadequate transportation system can also increase the rate of late-coming. Another thing is, traffic jam on the roads which can also delay students on the way.

### **Government Factors**

1. Our political leaders have failed to live up to expectation. During their electioneering campaign. They promise free education, free transportation, donation of buses to schools, payment of bursary and awarding of scholarship to students, free feeding etc. but they fulfill none, which indirectly and directly influence lateness.
2. The government inability to provide students with the required school materials such as text books, uniforms, libraries, laboratories, enough classrooms, adequate desk, to mention but few, constitute students late-coming.
3. Non-Provision of security personnel to protect and monitor students' movement within and around the school premises.

### **Headaches:**

Late-coming is destructive to the efficiency of academic activities. Its devastating effects cannot be measured. Below are some of the consequences of late-coming.

1. Late-coming disrupts class sessions and other academic activities and the general management of the school.
2. The act consumes a good chunk of the teacher's teaching time.
3. Disruption of the flow of lesson or discussion. Late-coming distracts lessons or discussion, it also distracts other students, it impedes learning, and generally will erode class morale.
4. It exposes students to premarital sex when sent back home for coming late, since they have a lot of time for themselves to hang around until they return-home in the afternoon. Because of the fear of going home (after been asked to go home for coming late to school) to be reprimanded for getting to school late, most students go about their personal affairs that may not necessarily relate to class work.
5. It gives negative impression about the latecomer and thwarts academic progress, because a late comer will always miss vital information usually past at the beginning of lesson /class.
6. According to Jay (2012), students who come late, make teaching and learning difficult and boring because the teacher has to repeat abruptly so as to carry the latecomers along.

### **Solutions:**

Teachers/ administrators had employed diverse methods to remedy the situation. The various strategies exerted so far had not yielded the anticipated results.

Among the numerous fruitless measures include

1. Sending the student home with the intention that it will serve as a deterrent to the student and other students as well. Instead of remedying the situation, it ended up promoting deviant behaviour among students.
2. Detaining the Student: Asking the students who come late to stay outside the class /lessons for a period of time so that by next time, the student would have learnt his lesson and would come early to school. Instead of correcting the child's attitude, the methods impede the child academically.
3. Compelling the student to embark upon compulsory labour while other students who come early to school learn in their various classes, students who came late to school are either directed to work in the field, pick round the school premises, or clear bushy areas in the compound, at the end these students end up learning nothing for that day.

4. Asking the students to kneel down, sleep on the ground, etc. for some time, then flog them and allow them to go into their various classes. Since the students know that just some few strokes of cane will exonerate them, they do not border so much.
5. Asking latecomers to pay a little amount as a token of fine for coming late. Since paying a little amount as a fine will exonerate them from the penalty of coming late, students devise all means to raise some money each day to enable them pay fine in school, even if it means stealing, they are ready to engage in the act provided money is raised. So, from the point identified above, it becomes so obvious that none of the methods employed so far actually worked. Therefore, new methods must be devised to serve as a panacea to the rancorous malady.

### **Some Practical and Realistic Measures to Employ in Curbing the Late-Coming Phenomenon in Secondary schools**

1. Provision of school buses to alleviate transportation problem: In order to proffer lasting solution to the devastating condition, buses should be provided to take students to and from school every day there should also be an improved transport system in the environment where schools are situated. In tackling the transportation problem, all hands must be on deck. The school, the community, the government, private individuals/philanthropist and NGOs (Non-government organizations) should be strictly involved. If this is done, late-coming would be reduced to the barest minimum.
2. Boarding school system should be re-introduced to all public schools. If students stay in the school compound /hostels and are properly monitored by teachers, the tendency for them coming late to class /lessons will not be there again. Teachers/administrators' should lead by example. Nakpodia and Dafiaghor stated that school administrator, must lead by example. That they should be punctual in their own meetings and classes to avoid students to think that being late is just alright since even the authoritative persons are doing it.

A situation whereby students get to school early and find no teacher, next time, they would be discouraged to come on time, they would want to wait till when they think the teachers would have arrived before they will start to come to school. teachers/administrators should serve as role models to students by continually exhibiting the attitude of coming early to school /classes.

3. Teachers should as well blend and teach the consequences of late-coming on the society and the individual in particular and let the students know the importance of coming early to school.



4. School heads should develop a firm, consistent and functional policies that will address late students. There must be a defined sanction and penalties for late students.
5. A little token should be paid to every student as an allowance so as to address the issue of poverty which makes students to wait for food before coming to school. at least they can use that monthly allowance to buy food during school hours.
6. The free educational policy should be fully implemented. Government should provide all needed educational materials for the students/ teachers.
7. Provision of adequate and sufficient infrastructural facilities such as conducive school buildings/ classrooms, laboratories, libraries, hostels, assembly halls, well fence compound with gate, adequate supply of school uniforms, books and other required items.
8. Employment/ deployment of efficient and adequate professional teachers to man all the subject areas. And the 40 students per teacher policy should be fully implemented.
9. Awarding of scholarship /payment bursary to deserving students will go along way to motivate and encourage students to be more serious with their school activities.
10. Time management: The cruciality of time management should not be neglected. Teachers/ administrators should always make it as a point of duty to stick to their period and time strictly. It is truism that there is time for everything. Excessive time should not be spent on the devotion or assembly ground. Everything scheduled on the assembly or devotion should be brief so as not to discourage students. Teachers should not stay too long in a class. In a situation where a teacher exhaust good chunk of time in delivering a single topic or message customarily, students may tend to avoid his/her classes by coming late to school every day.
11. Sensitization /awareness campaigns should be organized for the parents and guardians to illuminate their hearts to the consequences of student coming late to school on the students. The parents, and the society at large. And the students must also be engaged in this campaign as well students should speak to their fellow students by educating them on punctuality.
12. The government could also set up special task forces to parade or move round the community to apprehend late comers and take them to the school for appropriate discipline.



13. Guidance and counseling services should also be provided to take care of students' emotional and psychological problems.
14. Provision of adequate social amenities such a good road, electricity, toilet, standard and efficient communication system will go along way in solving the social problems of students.
15. Teachers should be encouraged to use modern pedagogical methods and gadgets. Because if a teaching style is monotonous, discourages students from flowing with the teacher. Some will even prefer to absent themselves from classes.

### **Conclusion**

Late-coming syndrome has inflicted untold pains on our nation's educational system. It has robbed and rubbished our image before the outside world. the menace is now a nation-wide problem. It needs collective effort to tackle the abysmal disease. It is not a disease to be handled by a single person. All hands must be on deck; the students, teachers, administrators, parents, the host community, task forces, and non-government agencies should all be engaged to bring the situation under control.

### **Recommendations:**

In order to bring realistic solution to students' late-coming syndrome, the following measures are hereby recommended:

1. Government should provide adequate means of transportation for the students.
2. Building of Hostels accommodation and making all public schools compulsorily boarding for all students.
3. Employment /deployment of adequate teachers to cover all subject areas.
4. Fixing of roads and provision of sufficient social amenities to all public schools.
5. Constant payment of bursary and awarding of scholarship to students.
6. Making all educational facilities and materials sufficiently available in all public schools.

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