

**THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL LIFE AND ITS  
INFLUENCE ON THE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES  
TOWARDS SCHOOL IN THREE SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS IN ABUJA, NIGERIA**

**by**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGIS	Abuja Geographical Information System
CA	Continuous Assessment
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FCTSED	Federal Capital Territory Secondary Education Board
FME	Federal Ministry of Education
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
FRN	Federal Republic of Nigeria
GSS	Government Secondary School
HIV/AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HSBC	Health Behaviour in School-aged Children
JAMB	Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board
JSS	Junior Secondary School
JSCE	Junior School Certificate Examination
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
NECO	National Examinations Council
NPC	National Population Commission
NPE	National Policy on Education
NSEC	National Secondary Education Commission
NSCC	Nova Scotia Community College
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PTA	Parents/Teachers Association
QoSL	Quality of School Life
QoL	Quality of Life
S1	School One
S2	School Two
S3	School Three
S1/STU1	School One, Student One
S2/STU1	School Two Student One
S2/STU1	School Three, Student One
S1/TR1	School One, Teacher One
S2/TR2	School Two, Teacher Two



S3/TR3	School Three, Teacher Three
S1/PT1	School One, Parent One
S2/PT1	School Two, Parent one
S3/PT1	School Three, Parent One
S1/P	School One Principal
S2/P	School Two Principal
S3/P	School Three Principal
SSCE	Senior Certificate Examination
SSS	Senior Secondary School
TRCN	Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria
UBEC	Universal Basic Education Commission
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific Children's Organisation
WAEC	West African Examination Council
WASSCE	West African Senior School Certificate Examination

**KUALITI KEHIDUPAN SEKOLAH DAN  
PENGARUHNYA KE ATAS SIKAP PELAJAR  
TERHADAP SEKOLAH DI TIGA BUAH SEKOLAH  
MENENGAH DI ABUJA, NIGERIA**

**ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini meneroka dan menumpukan pada kualiti kehidupan sekolah (*Quality of School Life*) dan pengaruhnya terhadap tingkah laku pelajar sekolah menengah awam di Abuja, sebuah bandaraya di Nigeria. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan dan mengekalkan kualiti kehidupan sekolah yang baik sebagai refleksi kepada tingkahlaku positif di kalangan pelajar-pelajar sekolah. Sebanyak tiga buah psekolah yang terletak di tiga buah persekitaran yang berbeza iaitu kawasan bandar, pinggir bandar dan pedalaman telah dipilih sebagai lokasi bagi kajian ini. Pemilihan ketiga-tiga buah sekolah ini dilakukan memandangkan ketiga-tiga buah sekolah ini memiliki latar belakang sosioekonomi yang berbeza. Kajian ini dilaksanakan dengan menggunakan reka bentuk penyelidikan kajian kes kualitatif yang menggunakan temu bual separa berstruktur dan mendalam, pemerhatian dan dokumen sekolah sebagai instrumen kajian untuk mendapatkan data-data kajian. Di samping itu, pemilihan sampel kajian dilakukan dengan menggunakan persampelan bertujuan (*purposive sampling*) bagi memilih 12 orang pelajar sekolah menengah bersama ibu bapa mereka, 9 orang guru dan 3 orang pengetua sekolah. Kesemua data yang dikumpulkan dianalisis secara manual untuk membolehkan pengkaji mendapatkan tema yang berupaya untuk menjawab keempat-empat persoalan kajian berkaitan penerokaan pelajar terhadap pemahaman dan peningkatan kualiti kehidupan sekolah.

Pembentukan tema bagi kajian ini dilakukan berdasarkan kepada pengalaman peribadi pelajar terhadap kualiti kehidupan sekolah mereka. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa kedua-dua faktor sosiobudaya dan faktor dalaman sekolah mempengaruhi kualiti kehidupan sekolah dan tingkah laku murid di sekolah. Selanjutnya, dapatan kajian juga menemukan bahawa guru perlu mendengar dan peka terhadap pandangan murid bagi memahami dan mengetahui keadaan yang dihadapi oleh mereka di sekolah. Selain itu, dapatan kajian juga mendapati bahawa terdapat segelintir murid yang perlu bekerja sebagai pembantu rumah bagi membantu dan menyara keluarga mereka di samping membiayai yuran persekolahan mereka. Malah, dapatan kajian juga memberikan gambaran bahawa kekurangan interaksi dan kerjasama antara guru dengan ibu bapa pelajar juga mempengaruhi kualiti alam persekolahan pelajar di sekolah. Justeru, perlunya cadangan atau usaha penambahbaikan terhadap kajian pada masa hadapan dilakukan bagi meningkatkan kualiti kehidupan sekolah pelajar di sekolah.

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**ABSTRACT**

This study investigated and focused on the quality of school life (QoSL) and its influence on the attitudes of students towards school in public secondary schools in Abuja the federal capital territory (FCT) of Nigeria; aimed at improving and maintaining a good QoSL to reflect positive attitudes of students towards school. Three schools located in three different environments such as the urban area, semi-urban and remote areas, all with different levels of socio-economic backgrounds were used in the study. This qualitative case study which used semi-structured in-depths interviews, observations and schools documents as its instruments used the purposive sampling technique to select twelve students, their parents, nine teachers and three principals. The data collected were analysed manually using thematic analysis for the four research questions raised which have shown what the students' perceived about understanding and improving their QoSL. Themes were identified based on students' personal experience of their QoSL. Findings demonstrated that both socio-cultural and in-school factors influence the QoSL and attitudes of students towards school. Also revealed in the findings was that teachers need to listen to the voices of the students to understand and know to about their circumstances. The findings also revealed that some students work as house boys/maids so as to assist their families and to pay their school fees. Additionally, the findings demonstrated

lack of interactions and cooperation between parents and schools. Based on the findings, recommendations have been made for improving the QoSL and for future research.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

*Schools are the happiest days,  
The happiest days of your life...  
The Happiest Days?  
How Pupils Cope with School (Woods, 1990).*

### 1.0 Introduction

A careful observation of current trends in Nigeria in terms of the quality of school life (QoSL) and the attitudes of students towards school would reveal a persistent and wide-spread loss of confidence in public secondary schools. As opined by Ajayi (2002), schooling today has faced numerous challenges such as mismanagement of allotted resources, absenteeism of students to school, falling standards of education among others. Other challenges confronting the schooling system include lack of planning and constant lack of investment and maintenance, which have led to an almost collapse of the terrible and dilapidated condition. A visit to any public school in Nigeria shows the amount of decay of such schools (Adebayo, 2009). Educational facilities are in terrible conditions; school environments are littered with dilapidated structures; exhausted equipment (where at all available); rubbish and grounded vehicles; over-populated classrooms; shortage of quality manpower; low teacher morale by reason of poor remuneration and working conditions. With the public educational infrastructure in this condition with little or nothing done to salvage the condition, students' attitudes towards school would definitely be affected to some degree.

Many studies on quality of life (QoL) have been done in school context (for example, Early & Chang 2003; Walsh & Gardner, 2005; Philips et al., 2000; Theofilou, 2013; Cryer et al., 2000; Zellman & Perlma 2008; Goelman et al., 2006; Whitebook et al., 2004; Massam, 2002; Loukas 2007). Many of these researchers asserted that QoSL was an important factor to be considered in educational research (Huebner et al., 2015). Essentially, it can also be established that the studies of students' attitudes towards school are documented in literature, and are absolutely necessary to demand attention. (Van de Gaer et al. 2006).

It has also been established in research that students who have better school life will have stronger intentions to stay in school. Erden (2010) asserted that attitudes towards school affect students' academic performance and influence their overall happiness as well. The thoughts derived from these studies established persuasive evidences for this study to investigate on QoSL and the attitudes of students towards school in Abuja public secondary schools. Due to the potential influence that the school environment may have, the way in which adolescents perceive their school life may have an important influence on their development (DeSantis, 2006). It was necessary to investigate QoSL extensively because it is an important aspect in examining the attitudes of students' affection and judgments, favourable or unfavourable, for the school and school experiences.

Attitude which has been defined as being an individual's behaviours, feelings, expression as regards to schooling constitutes a major part of students' life. Attitudes of students towards school play an important role in school context. It is significant for the motivation that students require to be academically successful (Cigman, 2004;

Ferkany, 2008; Lawrence, 2006). Many scholars state that the attitude of students towards school is related to potential offensive and delinquent behaviour and unstable attitude which leads to hostile and antisocial behaviour (Trzesniewski, (Donellan & Robins; Moffitt & Caspi, 2005; Fergusson & Harwood, 2002; Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2005). While academic attainment might be a common measurable element of academic success, students' attitudes are important elements to be considered in developing a functional nation. Quality can be seen as a factor that influences attitude and achievement. The quality of a school could influence subsequent attitudes and attitudes could influence achievement and achievement could influence attitudes. Consequently, having a quality school with attitude enhancing environment is an equal need of every student.

For QoSL to contribute to the quality of education, school programmes must include a wider definition involving learners, content, processes, environments and outcomes (UNICEF, 2000). Additionally, many educational researchers assert that if the quality of education is to be enhanced, then students' perception of their QoSL should be examined (Kosterelioglu & Kosterelioglu, 2015). The argument holds that inviting students to express their views about learning and school and the factors they perceive as contributing positively and negatively towards their school experiences could guarantee a better understanding or complete description of school life (Jaavall, 2007).

The ultimate aim of this study was to contribute to knowledge development about the phenomenon QoSL of public secondary school students in Abuja and how it influenced on the attitudes of students towards school. The study further



investigated the influence of the students' nearest environment such as parents, teachers and principals to show how they also influenced on the students' school life. The main argument in conducting this study was that knowledge and understanding of the students' lives at school and in their nearest environment is assumed to provide the school with very important information that may enable the school to adapt its educational activities to suit the needs of students and thereby improving the QoSL for the students (Jaavall, 2007) One way of achieving this may be through listening to the voice of the students themselves.

This study paid specific attention to adolescents because they are at the critical stage of social, cognitive and emotional development and their happiness with school life is of utmost significance for their educational experience and adult life. Students' perceptions of school, learning, teaching and the factors that they think affect each of these are of significance to ensure all students are engaged, active and confident in their learning and school experiences (Kosterelioglu & Kosterelioglu 2015; Ainley, 2004; Fullarton, 2002; Martin, 2003; Romanowski, 2004). Even though academic achievement is one of the most important aspects to be considered in an educational system (Gamoran, 2002; Kulik, 2004; Saleh, Lazonder & DeJong, 2005; Smith, 2002, students' psychological well-being and attitudes significantly contribute to their future success (Ferkany, 2008; Abu-Hilal et al., 2013). It was however important to obtain a deeper knowledge on how the attitudes of students towards school is influenced by their QoSL in order to understand how to maintain and improve their attitudes towards school.

By way of introduction to the study, this chapter was structured around the attitudes of students towards school related to QoSL. The chapter described the research background which drove the problem of the study, and presented the specific research objectives and research questions. After discussing the problem statement, the chapter also outlined the significance of this study and a definition of the key terms. The thesis structure was described as well.

## **1.1 Background of the Study**

A school is generalized as an institution which provides the fundamental structure and experience to the adolescents' development on how they integrate into the society in their future (Cheng & Chan 2003). They also see school as being able to provide a source of values and a set of modifiable behaviours for adolescents. Seker (2011) posited that schools are more than generally regarded as places where only educational activities are done. He stressed that academic and non-academic information are imparted by the school to students. In a similar view, Norlin, (2009) states that schools are social systems wherein, two or more individuals work together in a coordinated way to achieve common goals. This definition specifies several important features of schools as consisting ultimately of people; they are goal-directed in nature; they achieve their goals through some form of coordinated effort; and they interact with their external environment.

A good school life should consist of a conducive and friendly environment, where teaching and learning takes place, very dedicated, friendly and approachable teachers, where the health and safety needs of the students are sufficiently provided

and promote excellence and moral character (Oluremi, 2015). Such life consists of shared expectations, values and patterns that define who we are, how we treat or respond to each other and how we do our work. (Charles & David, 2008). Parents, teachers, students and principals are united in the opinion that schools should be places that maximise students' learning and where students feel happy and safe, satisfied with their teachers and enjoy learning (Jaavall 2007). By extending these points of view, this study proposes school as an important agent of socialization that shapes the character of students physically, emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually.

The considerable self-evident instances of these four aspects can be observed through the students' good conducts such as being polite, making rational decisions, being thankful, and showing a good performance in the learning process. One of the most important requirements for students to succeed in school, learn, and develop socially and emotionally, is that they feel secure and enjoy being at school and in the classroom. This idea was supported by Woods (1990) who restated that schools are regarded as a happy place where students feel happy and are taken care of in a very kind and warm school environment. Accordingly, schools should serve past academic function (Hanson, 2010; Scheerens 2000). Consequently, one of the most important tasks for schools will be to create an environment that will ensure a healthy QoSL. Consistent with the opinion of Ghotra et al., (2016) a high quality of schooling should achieve a balanced point that is able to promote and develop students for cognitive as well as non-cognitive results.

### ***1.1.1 Background of Nigerian Secondary Schools***

In Nigeria, Secondary education is provided for students after primary education and before higher education. It is also referred to as post primary education. It is aimed at developing the students better than the primary level, because it is obvious that primary education is not enough for students to acquire literacy, numeracy, and communication skills (Chinelo, 2011; Ige, 2011; Yusuf, 2009; Osho & Osho, 2000). Secondary schools in Nigeria can be owned by federal or state governments, by individuals (private) or community. In Nigeria, secondary education is divided into two phases namely: Junior Secondary School (JSS) and Senior Secondary School (SSS). The 2-tier, 3:3 system entailing 3 years of JSS and SSS respectively, was introduced in 1982 following the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 education system of education (UNESCO, 2006-2016).

### ***1.1.2 Junior Secondary Phase***

This entails the first three years of secondary school. At this phase, the curriculum is pre-vocational and academic in scope. Core, pre-vocational and non-prevocational subjects are included in the curriculum. The core subjects are: English Language, Mathematics, French, and a major Nigerian language different from that of the Environment, Basic Science, Social Studies, Citizenship Education, and Basic Technology. The pre-vocational subjects are Agricultural Science, Business Studies, Home Economics, Local Crafts, Fine Arts, Computer Education and Music while the non-prevocational subjects are Religious Knowledge, Physical and Health Education and Arabic. Certification at the end of this phase depends on how the student performs in the Continuous Assessment (CA). The results of Junior School Certificate Examination (JSCE), is coordinated by either Federal or State Ministries

of Education (depending on ownership). Students with minimum number of passes in subjects in the curriculum including English Language and Mathematics qualify to proceed to the Senior Secondary School (SSS) level which lasts three years. Students that fail the JSCE are encouraged to enrol in a technical college, an out-of-school vocational training centre or an apprenticeship scheme to learn a trade, in line with the 6-3-3-4 system of education (UNESCO, 2006-2015).

### ***1.1.3 Senior Secondary School Phase***

The SSS is the next three years after JSS. It has broader scope than the JSS phase and aims at widening the knowledge and skills of a student beyond the JSS level thereby preparing students for tertiary education. SSS is academic and vocational in scope. Students offer minimum seven and maximum eight subjects, including the six core subjects of English Language, Mathematics, a major Nigerian language, one science, an art, and a vocational subject. One or two other electives are selected from the arts, sciences, technical, social science, and vocational subjects. Certification at the end of this phase depends on the students' performance in the Continuous Assessment (CA) and Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE), which are coordinated by West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO). A student must obtain a minimum of five credits at two sittings including English Language and Mathematics in order to proceed to higher institution. Secondary education in Nigeria aims at preparing students for useful living in the society, and for Higher education (National Policy on Education, 2004). Specifically, it aims among others things to provide primary school leavers with the opportunity for higher education irrespective of sex, social status, religious or ethnic background; inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and

achievement of excellence; raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals, and live as good citizens; and provide technical knowledge and vocational skills, necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial, and economic development (National Policy on Education, 2004).

In spite of the role of secondary school in Nigeria, Ajayi (2002) & Omoregie (2005) stated that it is riddled with crises of various dimensions and magnitude all of which combine to suggest that it is at crossroad. An investigation of secondary schools in Nigeria shows the following challenges that are plaguing it and undermining its quality. These include: insufficient fund; inadequate and deteriorating infrastructural facilities; scarce and low quality teachers; negative attitudes of teachers; students' examination misconducts and students' poor academic performance, wastage, inappropriate curriculum, and the dilemma of displacement of schools among others. This is discussed fully under the section, Abuja as a context of study. According to a UNESCO report, the educational system in Nigeria is dysfunctional facing manifold challenges such as poor and inadequate infrastructure and facilities, ineffective quality control, teacher quality at all levels, and scarcity of equipment, facilities and resources to promote vocational, science and technical education and the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

As Beran (2005) and Thornbery (2010) further noted, regardless of school administrators, teachers, parents and students exerting great efforts to make schools friendlier and safer places, a decline of bullying is not always obvious, as threats of

attacks in schools often leading to breakdown of rules and instructions are often the case in many Nigerian schools. To this category of students, leaving school is like escaping from constrained and unfriendly environments into the free and real world. The struggle can result into either happiness or misery or a combination of both (Fareo, 2015). Students often cope with school demands, teachers, fellow students, school work, new knowledge, changes amid educational stages, their own developing self, and the attacks of others on it and challenges to change or approach it. In this action, they draw on their own substantial resources, both collectively from background; school-made beliefs and individually exercising own choices in their own ways according to their different interests. (Fryxell & Smith, 2000).

Most teenagers understand the importance of receiving an education, but less than half say they enjoy going to school. As a result, they demonstrate significantly less positive attitudes towards attending school. Students dislike school probably because they do not like the way they are treated by the people at school. Some students are less inclined to believe that others perceive them positively in the school environment and demonstrate significantly less positive attitudes toward attending school, teachers, and schoolwork, as well as decrease in agreement in terms of being positively perceived by, and getting along with others in the school environment. For many students, school is not a positive, useful, or even educational experience. This is based on the way they perceive other students, their teachers or just how they perceive themselves in the environment of the school they attend. This is consistent with the Theory of Resistance. Concerning schools, resistance theories attempt to explain the ways through which working class and other side-lined adolescents

struggle against the norms of schools which repeatedly seem to work against their perceived interest.

In educational circles, the introduction of the concept of resistance has created a real success in learning. Theories of resistance have contributed to the body of knowledge in social theory concerning the issues and meanings of opposition and conflict present when downgraded individuals or groups in schools speak or act out concerning their status, treatment, or comparative position in the school (Vinthagen & Johansson 2013). Studies (such as, Ludden 2002; Sivaramakrishnan 2005; Adnan 2007; Holmberg & Ehnander 2007; Huzell 2005). have shown that Theory of resistance in education, on the whole has done a commendable job in exposing the subtle and overt exclusions within schooling processes, and in formulating theoretical explanations for how and why individuals and groups resist oppressive or intimidating situations, structural arrangements, and ideologies.

Considering the purpose of school as developing the student through the acquisition of knowledge so that he or she may become a social being, a student is anticipated to learn how to interact with teachers, fellow students, and others in the school; and live in harmony in the society. The school is expected to be a place whereby, students feel safe and secure and where they can count on being treated with respect (Fajoju, 2009). The truth nevertheless is that a lot of students can hardly harmoniously blend with their school mates without suffering one form of violence or the other in the school. This may influence their attitude towards school. The process of how QoSL influences students' attitudes towards school will be explored in this study.



## **1.2 Focus of the study**

As shown earlier in the introduction of this chapter, the focus of this study is on the issue of QoSL and its influence on the attitudes of students towards school with the aim of improving and maintaining a good QoSL to reflect positive attitudes of students towards school in Abuja, Nigeria. The study limits itself to the investigation of the influence of school quality on the attitudes of students towards school in the context of the study which is referred to as QoSL, which was specifically created with an intention to improve and maintain a good QoSL for the students. The study is aimed at investigating how the QoSL socio-cultural and in-school factors influences on the attitudes of students towards school with a view to improve the quality and the attitudes of students towards school.

Accordingly, in the subsequent sections in this study, the QoSL will be investigated and explained, in connection with its background, objectives and by the research problem. Added, the focus of this study is an important issue regarding the quality of public secondary schools in Abuja. However, it should be noted that issues for study are not randomly chosen but may be linked to and connected to the professional and personal benefits of the researchers, and from the relevance of the issue of QoSL in the educational perspective.

## **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

In the background of the study, I explained that many researchers indicated that QoSL does influence the attitudes of students towards school. While enhancing and

maintaining that healthy attitudes of students towards school are important, knowing the way in which it is affected is necessary in order to gain insightful understanding of such attitudes caused by the QoSL. It has become necessary to examine the interplay between family, school environment and surging students' attitudes to secondary schools, especially in Abuja, the nation's capital where truancy and low educational attainment of students has become the strongest militating force against human development (World Bank, 2010; UNICEF, 2010; UBEC, 2004).

Over the years, research has shown that a positive and sustained school environment promotes students' academic achievement and healthy development (NSCC, 2007). A positive school life has lower levels of crime, less fear among students and fewer behavioural and attitude problems. The observed increase in aggression, truancy, violent behaviours, unhealthy conflicts and indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools coupled with the falling standard in education are indications that all is not well with the school life (Duze & Ogbah, 2013). In spite of the role of secondary education, Ajayi (2002) and Omoregie (2005) stated that it is riddled with crises of various dimensions and magnitude all of which combine to suggest that it is at crossroads.

School life in Nigeria is generally depressing (Ajidahun, 2012, Ige, 2013). Schools' safety, teaching, learning, and institutional environments in most Nigerian Public Secondary Schools paint a picture that is far from rosy (Ajayi (2002) & Omoregie (2005). There is an increasing disaffection with school. Within this perspective of growing disaffection with school, there has been an increase in student support for anti-school behaviour. These trends may reflect and contribute to

negative attitudes on the part of a larger body of students. Many students do not feel safe physically, socially, academically and emotionally in schools; and so they are losing interest in going to school (Steinberg, Allensworth & Johnson, 2011). The effect of that is that such students could be excluded from positive future possibilities that schooling is intended to offer.

Such students could be a menace to the society as well. According to Kpolovie, et al., (2014) most teenagers understand the importance of receiving an education, but less than half say they enjoy going to school. Some students are less inclined to believe that others perceive them positively in the school environment and demonstrate significantly less positive attitudes toward attending school, teachers, and schoolwork, as well as decrease in agreement in terms of being positively perceived by, and getting along with others in the school environment (Paul, 2013). As a result, they demonstrate significantly less positive attitudes towards going to school.

The best way to handle it may be through listening to the voice of the students. Too little or no attention has been paid to students' voice on the matter of their school life. Whatever the reasons for the lack of past research to investigate student voice on their QoSL and how it influences their attitude towards school, I believe it is crucial that the description for such issues should equally include valuable descriptive feedback from student voice so as not to be far too inclined towards expert opinion alone. Toshalis and Nakkula (2012) pointed out the importance of listening to the voice of the students. In educational research quite little attention has been given to the students' own experiences and views about their school life.

Hiebert (2002), also suggested that listening to the needs and wants of young people enables society to provide the appropriate ‘tools’ required for them to survive and succeed. According to Saul (2005), it is students alone who can precisely discern what does and what does not help them to learn. It is only by listening to students’ opinions that the most beneficial and enjoyable teaching and learning strategies will be revealed (Fielding & Bragg 2003; Johnson & O’Brien 2002).

After all, it is only when the school and other factors are actually able to cater to the learning needs of students as outlined by student voice itself, that the attitudes of students towards school will be duly recognised. In support of the aforementioned, and as stated earlier, many researchers are of the view that if the QoSL is to be enhanced, then students' views on their QoSL must be examined (Gordon 2003; Cruddas 2005; Fielding 2001; Holdsworth 2005). There is at this time increasing awareness about the importance of QoSL (Kalkan & Akman, 2009). In different countries around the globe, the awareness about QoSL has gained considerable attention and more so because of its notable influence on the attitudes and future of students. (Anning et al., 2004).

This study intends to investigate the QoSL and its influence on the attitudes of students towards school in Abuja public secondary schools. Basically, among others is the fact that the study intends to provide public secondary school students an opportunity to voice out their experiences of schools and classrooms and their opinions and feelings about them. This is in an attempt to bring to light what it is they want, require, their likes and dislikes about the learning and school experiences they are involved in. Evidence from research (for example, Owen, 2002) has shown

that students' opinions and perceptions have little or not been represented and overlooked when it comes to discussing what students want and need regarding learning and school experiences. Consequently, schools may be required to accommodate a more convincing student voice, greater student agency, and greater level involvement in democratic decision-making processes that influences their lives as the only group whose voice seems strangely absent in this chorus of ideas and counter ideas is that of the students themselves (Owen, (2002). Fullan (1991) asked the question, "What would happen if we treated the student as someone whose opinion mattered?" Fullan's question and many other questions have heard the students' voice grow louder and more powerful recently (Education Evolution, 2005; MacBeath, 2001).

Consequently, this researcher intends to listen to the student voice in Abuja public secondary schools whereby conditions of school, attendance, (whereby many students are not in schools), distance which students trek to school, dilapidated structures, collapsed infrastructure, teacher quality and supply are decreasing, (Gbenu, 2012). From previous research, it has been found out that students have demonstrated in many cases that they have the confidence to take hold of the reins of their learning and school experiences and to navigate towards the direction of empowerment, engagement and success (Osborne & Ireland, 2000; Shaughnessy, 2001). Fielding & Bragg 2003; Johnson & O'Brien 2002) in their findings identified that students' views had the potential to provide new and deeper insights present challenges and opportunities and builds engagement with and in the school as students become more engaged with learning.

Not only will listening to, and incorporating students' views, acknowledge and preserve the active role of students in their learning and school experiences, Shaughnessy (2001) supported the idea that schools, teachers, parents and principals, who are all adults, could learn a lot from the opinions and feelings of students. He asserted that "students have much to say and to offer about changes that must be instituted so our high schools can", MacBeath (2001), Shaughnessy (2001) identify several areas where adults can learn from listening to students' opinions and input, including classroom management, learning and teaching, and school as a social and learning space. Shaughnessy (2001) also stated that these are areas that teachers traditionally address and where students rarely have input, but they do have a distinctive vantage point as learners. Moreover, teachers can gain insight into how to support student engagement and build more positive and collaborative interactions with students and parents too (Fielding & Bragg 2003; Johnson & O'Brien 2002). According to Saul (2005) it is students themselves that can perfectly define what does and does not help them to learn. As a result of the above findings from previous research, I am of the opinion that it is by listening to students' views that the most helpful and satisfying teaching and learning strategies will be revealed which will shape the attitudes of students towards school in Abuja public secondary schools.

Even though studies have investigated the QoSL among students (Tangen R, 1998; Karatzias, Papadioti-Athanasiou, Power, & Swanson, 2001; Majeed, Fraser, & Aldridge, 2002; Mok, & Flynn, 2002; Sari, & Cenkseven, 2008), a lot of similar studies previously done in Nigeria have mainly focused on school effectiveness, areas such as policy, performance, achievement, attitudes towards mathematics, physics, science, falling standards of education, parental involvement, examination

malpractice, leadership and managerial aspects of school life. This study will attempt to fill the void in research area of the school effectiveness by investigating from the perspective of the students in Nigerian context particularly in Abuja. This is because, as earlier stated, Saul (2005) argued that it is students themselves that can perfectly define what does and does not help them to learn. Additionally, and as stated earlier, many researchers such as Fielding & Bragg (2003); Cruddas (2005); Holdsworth (2005) asserted that inviting students to express their views about learning and school and the factors they perceive as contributing positively and negatively towards their school experiences could guarantee a better understanding or complete description of school life. Consequently, there is gap of literature to be filled in terms of knowledge and research in the area of school effectiveness research that focuses on QoSL.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The overarching aim of this research is to provide insightful understanding of the phenomenon of QoSL and its influences on the attitudes of students towards school in the specific context of public secondary schools in Abuja FCT, Nigeria. The study also aims to contribute to knowledge development of the phenomenon by taking the perspective of the students themselves to explore what they feel as positive or/and negative about their school life. Precisely, this study is an investigation of the issues and influences of QoSL on the attitudes of students towards school aimed at improving and maintaining a good QoSL for students to reflect positive attitudes of students towards school in Abuja public secondary schools. The central focus of attention in this research is to investigate and understand the existing issues of the

QoSL with regard to the dimension of students' attitudes towards school. The study is focused on the QoSL influences on the students' attitudes towards school. In line with the over-arching aim of the study, the specific objectives are as follows:

1. To investigate how students in Abuja public secondary schools perceive their QoSL in terms of:
  - Learning environment
  - Students' interactions
  - Safety
  - Facilities
  - Extra-curricular activities
2. To understand how the students' perceived QoSL influences their attitudes towards school.
3. To examine how the socio-cultural (parents) and in-school factors (teachers and principals) may influence on the students' QoSL and attitudes of students towards school.
4. To identify ways to improve and maintain a good QoSL to reflect positive attitudes of students towards school in Abuja public secondary schools.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The main aim of this study as has been indicated, is to provide an insightful understanding of the phenomenon of QoSL and its influences on the attitudes of students towards school in the specific context of public secondary schools in Abuja FCT, Nigeria. Hence, the following specific research questions were formulated to guide the research procedures, together with data collection and analyses. This study



attempts to answer the following research questions which allow the aim and objectives of the study to be achieved effectively.

1. How do the students in Abuja public secondary schools perceive their QoSL in terms of:
  - Learning environment
  - Students' interactions
  - Safety
  - Facilities
  - Extra-curricular activities?
2. How does the perceived QoSL influence the attitudes of students towards school?
3. How do the socio-cultural (parents) and in-school (teachers & principals) factors influence on the QoSL and attitudes of students towards school?
4. How may the QoSL in Abuja public secondary schools be improved and maintained to reflect positive attitudes of students towards school?

Table 1.1 below presents the research foci, objectives and research questions for the study.

Table 1. 1: Research Foci, Research Objectives and Research Questions for the study

<b>Research Foci</b>	<b>Research Objectives</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>
Students' QoSL	1.To investigate how students in Abuja public secondary schools perceive their QoSL in terms of: Learning environment Students' interactions Safety Facilities Co-curricular activities	How do the students in Abuja public secondary schools perceive their QoSL in terms of: Learning environment Students' interactions Safety Facilities Extra-curricular activities?
Students QoSL	2. To understand how the students' perceived QoSL influences their attitudes towards school.	How does the perceived QoSL influence the attitudes of students towards school?
Socio-cultural and in-school factors	3 To examine how the socio-cultural (parents) and in-school factors (teachers & principals) may influence on the QoSL and attitudes of students towards school.	How do the socio-cultural (parents) and in-school factors (teachers & principals) influence on the QoSL and attitudes of students towards school?
Ways to improve QoSL	To identify ways to improve and maintain a good QoSL to reflect positive attitudes of students in Abuja public secondary schools.	How may the QoSL be improved and maintained to reflect positive attitudes of students towards school?

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is intended to contribute a better knowledge and understanding towards the phenomenon of the QoSL and its influence on the attitudes of students towards school through the voice of the students. While academic achievement is considered as an important goal of education, students QoSL plays a significant role to determine their attitudes towards school. Together with academic achievement, QoSL will determine the students' future success (Ferkany, 2008) in terms of the attitudes of students towards school. In view of the fact that a good QoSL is a prerogative right of every educational institution and proposing a modification to such established practice is hardly possible to be done within a short period, it is

worthwhile to obtain more understanding on how the attitudes of students towards school ought to be improved and maintained in a good quality school environment. Additionally, this study is expected to add to literature and fill the existing gap of literature owing to the limited numbers of research in this area by investigating how the students themselves perceive their QoSL. In the view of Creswell (2008), research is necessary in education because it yields new knowledge and provides suggestions for improvements. Consequently, the motivation in this study is to search for perceptions in understanding and improving the QoSL and students' attitudes towards schools in Abuja.

Findings of this study, which will involve an understanding of the connection between the socio-cultural and in-school factors, will contribute to the reviewed theories. Overall, whether the findings confirm or negate the existing theories, they will improve the understanding of QoSL and its influence on the attitudes of students towards school in the Nigerian context. In a more particular way, the knowledge on how QoSL, parents, teachers and principals influence on students' attitudes towards school might lead to the further research and theory development on how to improve the attitudes of students within the context of school life.

Practically, benefit from the acquired knowledge is expected to reduce potential negative influence of parents, teachers and principals (PTP) on the attitudes of students towards school which at the end of the day lessens the rate or intensity of any psychological and disciplinary problems such as truancy, absenteeism, loss of motivation, dropouts and juvenile crimes among others. It is eventually expected that maintaining proper interactions among students, teachers and parents would

potentially improve their attitudes towards school and their academic achievements as well.

The study will provide knowledge to government, non-governmental organizations and to other nations that work globally on the issue of quality of education and students' attitudes towards school. Knowledge of what has been done in the name of QoSL around the globe, and what the outcomes have been, will be useful background information for programme planning. Additionally, the study will apparently be significant by expanding knowledge among the academicians through its contribution to literatures and generation of new framework for further research pertaining to QoSL and students' attitudes towards school. By focusing on factors which influence the attitudes of students towards school, the study might motivate future researchers to identify others factors with a view to establishing the role each plays in the attitudes of students towards school. The findings of the study will also indicate the strength of a good school quality, and its contribution to the welfare of students in the schools. Further, the completion of this study will assist both the policy makers and even private school owners by providing a roadmap in terms of policy that can guide schools in the process of improving and maintaining a positive QoSL and enhanced students' attitudes towards school.

This study will be beneficial in the identification of a leadership style and in-social factors that a school can adopt that will best suit the mission and objectives of schools through the provision of more insight into the role of school leaders in enhancing a positive quality of school life. Findings of this study are expected to improve the principals' morale thereby encouraging greater authenticity, openness,

and develop the appropriate environment for school development and increased performance in secondary schools. This may effectively uphold a positive quality of school life and lead Nigeria into the future.

## **1.7 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

Limitations of the study are those situations of design or methodology which are beyond the control of the study which can influence the interpretations of the findings from a research. Limitations may be considered as restrictions or constraints on generalizability of findings of the study (James & Muman, 2004). Leedy & Ormrod, (2005) stated that delimitations refer to “what the researcher is not going to Delimitations are those features that limit the scope and define the boundaries of a study. (Simon, 2011). This study also has delimitations that should be noted which the researcher has no control over.

### ***1.7.1 Limitations***

The general perceived limitations of this research investigation are selected public Secondary Schools located in Abuja the FCT of Nigeria, herein referred to as the study area. It should however be noted that this research was not meant to alter the existing practices of schools nor any policies around its practices. The study’s limitation also included the possible exaggeration and untruthfulness by the informants. It should be made quite clear here that result may have been twisted owing to different personal factors on the part of the informants. This study did not include the extraneous factors that might be involved, such as students’ physical conditions, gender, religious, ethnic groups, or any other dispositional and situational