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14



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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
OF PRODUCTS OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOLS IN LAGOS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study is an ex-post-facto which investigated the academic performance of products of private and public primary schools. The subjects (314 products of private primary schools and 276 products of public primary schools) were randomly selected from eight secondary schools in Ojo Local Education District of Lagos State. The instrument used was designed and validated by the researchers. t-test was used in the data analysis. The results revealed that students who attended private primary schools tend to perform better in English Language than their counterparts who attended public primary schools. The implications of the findings for teaching and learning in both private and public schools were discussed.

Introduction

The word proprietorship as defined in Collin Gem English Dictionary (1963) and the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (1986) is synonymous with ownership. In other words, school proprietorship means school ownership.

The concern of this paper is the association between ownership of schools and academic excellence of the students. Schools generally in Nigeria are owned by different categories of people and on the basis of school ownership, the school can be subdivided into private and public schools. These two types of schools as reported by Adenrele (1991), Bolarin (2004) and Akinbote, Oduolowu and Lawal (2001) differ with respect to their governance and finance, educational goals, formal structures, openness to change, quality of teaching staff and social relationship within them.

The privately owned schools are those schools that are run and financed by private individuals. Sometimes they are owned by companies, churches, mosques, foreign embassies, and the universities. They are autonomous and are solely responsible for the day to day running of the school affairs such as recruiting or laying off of staff, planning of the school time table, promotion of staff, taking of disciplinary actions against erring members of staff and students, planning and conducting of the school examination and admission of students.

Historically, the first group of schools in Nigeria were opened and run by various Christian missions for the children of the converts. These mission schools were fully financed by the various Christian Mission Organizations until when the colonial government stepped into the control of education through the introduction of the 1882 and 1887 education ordinances. School governance then became dual in nature with both the government and the missions contributing to the financial running and upkeep of the schools. This situation remained so until 1960 when Nigeria gained her political independence from Britain. For many years up to 1960, Christian missions played a vital role in the control of education in Nigeria for example the Christian missions controlled well over 79 percent of primary schools, over 80 percent of secondary schools and over 76 percent of teacher training colleges all over Nigeria (Adesina, 1984).

After independence, various groups of people got interested in the ownership of schools all over the country, each group claiming to want to provide the best type of education possible for the Nigerian children. This was the general pattern all over the country until the state take-over mania of the 1970s.

The 1970s marked a different era in the growth of both primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. Soon after the Nigerian civil war, many states in the federation began to clamour for complete take-over of schools by the government. At the forefront of this agitation were the then Eastern states that were ravaged by the civil war and whose inhabitants were unhappy with the role played by some missionary organizations during the civil war. The east Central State was at the forefront, thus soon after the Nigerian Civil War on January 12, 1970, the Administrator of the East Central State, promulgated an Edict (Public Education Edict, 1970) which vested in the government the sole authority to open and run schools.

In line with the development in the Eastern States were some educators in the Western states who agitated for government take-over of schools. Amongst these agitators was Solarin who in 1977; in a lecture titled "Educational Apartheid in Nigeria" called on the Federal Government of Nigeria to ban the Army Children Schools and Federal Government Colleges so as to ensure that Nigerian children go through the same type of school experience. About a decade before, Solarin's pronouncement, Ifafunwa (1967) had argued in favour of public education by stating that socially a true democracy is promoted if all children irrespective of their geographical location, the economic limitations and social climate are made to attend the same type of school.

Having given the general background information, henceforth, Lagos State will be used as a reference point for further discussion of this study. Lagos State, which was created in 1967, was not left out of the scene as far as state take-over of schools was concerned. Between 1970 and 1985, secondary schools enrolment rose from 89,584 in 1970 to 271,506 in 1984. The number of secondary schools also increased from 64 in 1979 to 346 in 1984. The teaching force also rose from 2,695 in 1979 to 10,423 in 1984 (Samuel, 1986) and many reasons were given for the schools' take-over by the Lagos State Government. Amongst the reasons given were:

1. That education has become a major mobilization force for achieving planned growth, its planning and development should not be left to chance or haphazardness...the government has a legitimate duty to educate, to determine what should be taught, when and how.
2. Democratization: The Lagos State Government believed strongly that educational opportunities must be evenly distributed in the state.
3. Checking Exploitation and Maintaining Uniform Standard: Some school proprietors were found to be shylocks and exploiters and to check their atrocious and unpatriotic activities, schools had to be brought directly under the control of the State Government.
4. Constitutional Provises: A major source of power for government decision according to Samuel (1986) was the 1979 Constitutional Provises which placed education under concurrent legislative list. According to the provise, as contained in Chapter 2, that is Directive Principles of State Policy, both the centre and states can participate in the development of education within their spheres of influence.

At the secondary schools level, the state take-over was a complete exercise in Lagos State. It was during the period of the second Republic that a complete government control over schools in Lagos was achieved. At the primary school level, most proprietors were allowed to continue with the running of their schools side by side with public primary schools without any interference by the Lagos State Government. Of recent, the number of privately owned secondary schools is increasing as the Lagos State Government through the Lagos State Education Policy of 1988 has stated that the main goal of education in the state is: "The pursuit of excellence". The Lagos State Government after about a decade of complete state control of education realized its inadequacy in financing education for achieving this goal. At present there are both private and public primary and secondary schools. For the purpose of this study, some comparison has been made between products of private primary schools and public primary schools that have been brought together in the state secondary schools for secondary education.

Literature comparing the performance of private and public school students in Nigeria is scarce. However, based on European studies, the claim is that products of private schools have higher achievement test score on average than children who attend public schools. Thus many studies such as those carried out by Baker (2001), Council for American Private Education (2002), and Gallagher (2003), have reported that the type of schools attended by children do not only influence their mode of learning, but also how they behave and think of themselves. Gajar (1997) and Lawrence (2004) reported that the type of school attended by an individual plays a great role in influencing and stimulating the drive in pupils to learn. The exact position is not known in Nigeria and this paper is out to fill the gap. Thus the academic performance of secondary school students in public secondary schools who attended private schools was compared with that of their counterparts who attended public primary schools.

Research Questions:

The study was designed to investigate if there is any difference in the academic performance of products of private and public primary schools in Lagos State.

The questions the study seeks answers to are:

1. Is there any difference in Mathematics achievement between students who attended private primary schools and those who did not?
2. Is there any difference in English Language achievement between students who attended private primary schools and those who did not?
3. Is there any difference in the secondary school academic performance (based on Mathematics and English) of product of private schools and public primary schools?

METHODOLOGY

The Sample

Eight schools were randomly selected from Ojo Local Education District of Lagos State. From each school, two arms of JSS 3 were randomly picked and all the students who are members of the selected arms were involved in the study. Subjects were five hundred and ninety (590) secondary school students (314 Boys and 276 Girls). The ages of the students ranged from thirteen and half ($13\frac{1}{2}$) to seventeen (17) years. Out of five hundred and ninety students, three hundred and fourteen (314) were products of private primary schools while the remaining two hundred and seventy-six (276) were products of public primary schools.

The Instrument

A questionnaire (consisting of section A and B) developed by the researchers was used to elicit information from the subjects. In section A, the respondents were asked to supply information on the following

BOLARIN, T. A. AND PEMEDE, O.

variables: name, sex, age, attendance at Nursery/Kindergarten schools, attendance at fee paying primary schools or public primary schools, length of time if respondents attended fee-paying primary schools and whether or not respondents have repeated any class(es). In Section B, the subjects were to give information on their family background, occupation of their parents, and the highest educational attainment of each of the parents.

Development and Validation of the Instrument

The development of the questionnaire used for this study was based on the discussion held with a colleague on what and what should go into the development of the body of this paper. There was a pre-testing using 30 secondary school students (all from JSS III) in one of the secondary schools in Mile II, Lagos.

A re-test after two weeks using the same students showed that only very few of them had changed their responses. A test reliability value of .82 was obtained. It was therefore concluded that the questionnaire could be distributed to the students for the purpose of gathering reliable data for the study.

Procedure of the Study

The researchers employed sixteen research assistants who carried out the administration of the instruments. Two research assistants (teachers) from each of the selected schools were employed to collect data in their respective schools. On the whole, a total of 74 questionnaires were administered by the two research assistants of each school. The administration of the instruments lasted four weeks. The researchers also visited each of the schools to monitor effective administration of the instruments.

Scoring and Analysis

Mean and standard deviation were used. The data obtained from this study were statistically analyzed using the t-test for independent sample. A level of significance of 0.05 was determined between:

- i. Type of primary school attended and performance in English language.
- ii. Type of primary schools attended and performance in Mathematics.
- iii. Type of primary schools attended and performance in both English Language and Mathematics.

For academic performance, scores of the respondents during the last three examinations taken in the schools were used. Only English and Mathematics scores were used. Each subject carried 100% and 50% is the minimum pass mark.

RESULTS

1. Type of Primary Schools Attended and Performance in English Language.

In Table 1, the t-test administered to data yielded by the responses of the subjects on the subject of investigation proved significant as the obtained value is 20.54. This value is higher than the critical value which is 1.96. The table also reveals that products of private primary schools performed better in English Language than their counterparts who attended public primary schools.

TABLE 1

Performance of the Products of Private and Public schools in English Language

Type of School	N	X	S.D	Obtained t	Remark
Private	314	62.50	2.78	20.54	Result is significant
Public	276	53.54	6.66		

Critical t = 1.96

df = 588

2. Type of Primary Schools Attended and Performance in Mathematics

In Table 2, the t-test administered to data yielded by the responses of the subjects on the subject of investigation proved significant as the obtained value is 21.5. This value is higher than the critical value which is 1.96. The table reveals that the products of public primary schools performed better in Mathematics than their counterparts who attended private primary schools.

TABLE 2

Performance of the Products of Private and Public schools in Mathematics

Type of School	N	X	S.D	Obtained t	Remark
Private	314	49.65	3.79	21.5	Result is significant
Public	276		55.46	1.62	

Critical t = 1.96

df = 588

3. **Type of Primary Schools Attended and Performance in English Language and Mathematics.**

The analysis of the data gathered showed that the obtained t-test is 15.82 which is by far higher than the critical value which is 1.96. The analysis reveals a significant difference in the performance of the two groups of students in the two key subjects offered in the secondary schools.

DISCUSSION

The results show that overall the group of students who attended private primary schools appeared to be having an edge over their counterparts who attended public primary schools. However when Tables 1 and 2 are closely studied one would observe that while the products of private primary schools performed better in English Language than their counterparts who attended public primary schools, they were found to be deficient in Mathematics.

Many reasons can be suggested for these findings. The better performance displayed by products of private primary schools in English Language is not surprising as English language is used as the medium of expression in most private primary schools. Apart from the usage in the private primary schools, most of the children who attended private primary schools are likely to be communicating in English in their homes. The opposite is true of products of most public primary schools in the state.

As for the better performance in Mathematics displayed by products of public primary schools, the only reason that one may suggest is that most of the children who attend the public primary schools come from homes where they are always sent on errands by their parents (such as requesting the children to buy cooked food from food vendors and even hawking of things like ice-water, sweets and so on). Such activities where they involve monetary transactions must be assisting in sharpening the children's ability as far as numeracy is concerned.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

This study suggests that attendance at both private and public primary schools have some deficiencies, while the products of the public primary schools are deficient in English Language which is the language of expression in secondary schools, their private school counterparts too are deficient in Mathematics, the knowledge of which is important for good performance in the sciences. However, the overall performance shows that the products of private primary schools do perform better than the products of public primary schools.

The implication of this finding is that concerted effort must be made by teachers to assist the different groups according to their needs.

CONCLUSION

This study sets out to discuss/investigate the issue of school proprietorship and academic excellence in Nigeria using Lagos State as a case study. While an attempt has been made to discuss the situation as it exists, it has been a little difficult to really pin-point which of the proprietors (government or private individuals) identified in this study is performing better than the other. There is therefore the need for more exercise of this nature in future to enable us reach valid conclusion.

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