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An Investigation of Unique Factors Affecting Academic Performance of Pupils in Primary Schools: A Survey of Private and Public Schools in Akwanga Municipal Nasarawa State Nigeria

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Abstract:

The study compared the factors that affect pupils' academic performance in public and private primary schools in Akwanga Municipal and to find out why private schools perform better than public schools. Two public primary and two private schools were randomly selected for the study. From each of the sampled schools, the head teacher and four class teachers were sampled, making the total number of respondents 20. Four null hypotheses were postulated for the study. A 16 item Factor Analysis Questionnaire (FAQ), using the Likert Scale format, was developed to collect data from the respondents. The FAQ was designed to get teachers' opinions on their perception of their effectiveness, learning environment, physical infrastructure and teacher/pupil ratio. The data obtained were subjected to the t-test analysis at 0.05 level of significance. Results showed that there were no significant differences in terms of physical infrastructure and teachers' perceived effectiveness. In the area of availability of learning materials, the private schools were better equipped. There were more qualified teachers in the public schools, and received much higher salaries compared to those in private schools. It was concluded that there is not much any teacher can do in the absence of learning materials. It was recommended that government should endeavor to supply learning materials for pupils. The parents should be encouraged to partner with government in this regard.

Keywords: Academic performance, private, pupils, public schools, teacher/pupil ratio, learning materials.

1. Introduction

Education is a basic human need that must be met in order to enhance the quality of human resources (Pongoh 2014). In pursuance of human capital development that should culminate in national development, countries all over the world are doing the best they can to invest in the educational sector. Any deficiency in the educational sector will eventually reflect as anomalies in the life of the society. It becomes a necessity then for the education sector to be monitored and administered very closely to ensure the well-being of the national life.

Nigeria as a nation has taken education par "excellence" for effective national development (FGN 2013). By implication, the nation depends solely on education to carry her to the heights of development. Pongoh (2014) cited Undang-Undang Nomor 20 tahun (2003) suggesting that education is conscious and deliberate effort to create an atmosphere of learning so that learners can develop their potentials and skills that are needed by themselves, society and nation.

The educational system is founded on the primary school education. If anything goes wrong with the primary school sector, the whole educational system will collapse. According to the national policy of education, the cardinal goals of the primary education include the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively, provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality (FGN 2013). Primary school education therefore is the key to the entire educational system. Unfortunately, the primary level of education in Nigeria has suffered much neglect in terms of government attention and research efforts. This paper intends to compare the factors that affect performance of pupils in private and public schools.

2. Statement of the Problem

It is expected that the primary school level of education should produce pupils who are furnished with the basic foundations of literacy and numeracy, after going through the prescribed curriculum fashioned in Nigeria by the federal republic of Nigeria. This is regardless of whether a child schooled in a public or privately owned schools.

However, it has been noted consistently that pupils from privately owned schools out perform their counterparts from publicly owned schools. One wonders why this should be. Could it be that the conditions that operate in these schools such as the availability of qualified teachers, physical facilities and provision of adequate learning materials are not the same?

This paper investigates the factors that affect academic performance, comparing the private and public schools. Factors to be considered include: (a) availability of qualified teachers (b) physical infrastructure (c) availability of learning materials and (d) teacher remuneration.

3. Hypotheses

- i. There is no significant difference in the availability of qualified teachers in public and private schools in Akwanga municipal.
- ii. There is no significant difference in the provision of physical infrastructure in public and private schools in Akwanga municipal.
- iii. There is no significant difference in the availability of learning materials in public and private schools in Akwanga municipal.
- iv. There is no significant difference in the remuneration of teachers in the public and private schools in Akwanga municipal.

4. Population

There are 66 privately owned private primary schools, and 5 publicly owned primary schools in Akwanga municipal. These form the population for this study.

5. Sample

Two private and two public primary schools were randomly selected for the study.

Two private schools:

- i. Saint Peters Nursery and Primary School,
- ii. Glory Academy.

Two public schools:

- i. Akwanga South Primary School,
- ii. Akwanga North Primary School.

The head teacher, and four teachers were randomly selected from each of the sampled schools, bringing the total sample size to 20 respondents.

6. Instrument for Data Collection

One instrument was designed to collect data for this study. A 16 item factor analysis questionnaire (FAQ) was designed for the study. The FAQ utilized the 4 point Likert scale: strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed.

7. Procedure

The head teacher and four teachers in each of the sampled schools were administered the FAQ, two pupils from each of the sampled schools were interviewed. This measure was taken to overcome the difficulty of pupils who could not read and comprehend the contents of the FAQ.

8. Procedure for Data Analysis

The Likert scale FAQ had their responses converted scores as follows:

Strongly agree	(SA)	4
Agreed	(A)	3
Disagreed	(SA)	2
Strongly disagreed	(SD)	1

From the scores obtained, simple means and standard deviations were calculated. The results were also subjected to the t-test to determine the F value.

9. Literature Review

The success or failure of the education system is dependent on the interplay of several factors, ranging from human to material resources. Some of the factors have been attributed to study skills of the pupil (Hattie, Biggs, & Purdie, 1996; Lemberger, Selig, Bowers, & Rogers, 2015; Robbins et al., 2004), others have shown that teacher's effect on academic performance is dominant (Friedrich, Flunger, Nagengast, Jonkmann, & Trautwein, 2015; Sanders, Wright, & Horn, 1997). There must be proper planning, efficient and adequate number of personnel which include academic and nonacademic staff, effective administration and sufficient funding.

9.1. Availability of Qualified Teachers

No education system can rise above the quality of its teachers (NPE 2013). In the Nigerian National Policy on education, the goals of teacher education include the production of highly motivated, contentious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system. This of course, includes the primary school. The need for having qualified teachers cannot be over emphasized. The quality of education that teachers provide to students is highly dependent on how the teachers go about their teaching in the classrooms. The goal of producing successful individuals, tomorrow is highly dependent on what experiences the pupils are expending to, today. This makes it of great importance that the teachers teaching shall be effective (Zakaria and Iksan 2006).

In spite of the need of skilled professional teachers in our schools evidence shows that there is a high rate of teacher attrition. According to Sam, Effah and Osei-Owusu (2014) teacher attrition has grown by 50% over the past fifteen years. To them the problem of teacher attrition is global. This implies that many teachers in our primary schools lack of the necessary professional for their jobs.

9.2. The Learning Environment

The learner's environment is crucial to his/her performance. Embugu (2014) observed that a vast majority across the federation remain dilapidated, with collapsed structures, leaking roofs, inadequate furniture in classrooms/offices. In many schools, pupils are seen taking lessons sitting on bare floors, and others are under trees. This was corroborated by Abdullahi and Garba (2014) who took an inventory of physical facilities in both public and private primary schools and found them to be grossly inadequate. Owodunni, Oriola, and Hasssan (2011) in a study to assess availability of facilities for training found that the 62 respondents that participated in the study pointed to the gross inadequacy of training facilities. Without the necessary facilities, the best of teachers will be handicapped and will not be able to achieve the desired goals. Alabi and Gbadegesin (2011) see a connection between the environment of the child and cognitive development.

Odagboyi, Onche and Abimiku (2014) in their survey of public and private schools noted that the pupils in private schools performed better than their counterparts in the public schools. This agrees with Adebayo (2009) who observed that parents would rather send their children to private schools rather than public schools. This study therefore is an attempt to discover the factors that make the difference in the disparity between private and public schools.

9.3. Remuneration of Teachers

There is a strong argument suggesting that there is a strong correlation between teacher remuneration and effectiveness, which has a consequent effect on the academic achievement of pupils. According to Doggor (2013), the condition of service of teachers is abysmally poor, leaving the teachers to be poorly motivated with the resultant effect on their performance. Concurring, Oyidu (2013) stated that due to the low level teacher motivation has led to an increasing exodus of teachers in search of more lucrative jobs, and an increasing fall in the level of performance in the pupils. It can be conjectured therefore, that the more the teachers are remunerated the better the performance of their pupils.

10. Results

The results are presented as follows:

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	31.3	31.8
Variance	2.9	6.622222
Observations	10	10
Pearson Correlation	-0.11156	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	9	
t Stat	-0.48795	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.318626	
t Critical one-tail	1.833113	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.637252	
t Critical two-tail	2.262157	

Table 1: t-test for teacher effectiveness
Not significant at 0.005 level of significance

Table 1 shows that t-stat. (- 0.48) is less than t-critical (1.83) at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is no significant difference in the perceived teacher effectiveness between public and private schools. The null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference in teachers' perceived effectiveness in public and private schools is hereby not rejected.

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	8.1	9.9
Variance	12.1	2.544444
Observations	10	10
Pearson Correlation	0.122151	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	9	
t Stat	-1.56145	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.076426	
t Critical one-tail	1.833113	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.152852	
t Critical two-tail	2.262157	

Table 2: t-test Comparing infrastructure between private and public schools

Not significant at 0.005 level of significance

Table 2 shows that t-stat. (- 1.56) is less than t- cri. (1.83) at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is no significant difference in the availability of physical infrastructure. Thereby, the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference in the availability of physical infrastructure between public and private schools is hereby, not rejected.

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	7.3	10.5
Variance	1.566666667	1.166667
Observations	10	10
Pearson Correlation	0.369835255	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	9	
t Stat	-7.686151383	
P(T<=t) one-tail	1.52153E-05	
t Critical one-tail	1.833112933	
P(T<=t) two-tail	3.04305E-05	
t Critical two-tail	2.262157163	

Table 3: t-test comparing availability of Learning materials between public and private schools.

Significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 3 shows that t- stat. (7.68) is greater than t- cri. (1.83) at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is a significant difference in the availability of learning materials between public and private schools. Thereby, the null hypothesis that stated that there is a significant difference in the availability of learning materials between public and private schools is hereby, rejected.

School	graduates	National Certificate of Education (NCE)	Grade II	total	No. of pupils	Teacher/pupil ratio
Public 1	3	47		50	757	1:15
Public 2	11	40	5	66	957	1:14
Private 1	--	14		14	300	1:21
Private2	--	17		17	489	1:28

Table 4: A comparison of the availability of qualified teachers in private and public primary schools.

Source: from the office of the head teachers.

Table 4 shows in the sampled public schools, there are 50 qualified teachers, made up of 3 graduates, and 47 with NCE; with the pupil population of 757, and 66 qualified teachers made up of 11 graduates, 41 with NCE, and 5 with teacher grade II certificate, with a pupil population of 957. The private schools have 14 qualified teachers with a pupil population of 300, and 17, with a pupil population of 498 respectively. In the sampled public schools, the teacher /pupil ratio are; 1:15, and 1:14, while those of private schools are 1:21, and 1:28. Therefore, the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference in the availability of trained teachers between public and private primary schools is hereby, rejected.

School	Graduate	NCE
Private 1	15,000	12,000
Private 2	15,000	11,000
Public schools	About 120,000	From 25,000

Table 5: A Comparison of Teachers' Salaries in Public and Private Schools (Naira)

Source: office of the head teachers.

Table 5 shows that while private schools pay graduates 15,000 naira monthly, their counterparts in public schools are paid up to 120,000 naira monthly. Those with National Certificate in Education in the private schools are paid 11,000 - 12,000 naira, while those in public schools are paid from 25,000 naira, depending on their years of experience. Therefore, the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference in the remuneration of teachers in the public and private primary schools is hereby, rejected.

11. Discussion

The objective of this study is to find out why the academic performance of private primary schools differed significantly from those of public schools (odagboyi et al 2014). In table 1, teachers in both public and private primary schools perceived themselves to be doing the best they could in the discharge of their duties. If that were to be taken seriously, one would expect that the performance of pupils should not differ significantly in the two categories of schools.

Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference in the availability of structural infrastructure between public and private primary schools sampled. This implies that it is not due to superior quality of structural infrastructure that is responsible for the higher performance in the private primary schools compared with the public primary schools.

In table 3, a comparison of the availability of learning materials between public and private primary schools. Results showed that there was a significant difference in the availability of learning materials. Pupils in the private primary schools had adequate learning materials, while those in the public primary schools do not have enough. This could be one reason among others that could be responsible for the difference in performance between public and private primary schools. This study did not investigate the role of management in enhancing academic performance, however it is worthy of note that the best of managers with good policies can become stranded if faced with lack of adequate materials to work with.

Table 4 showed that there more qualified teachers in the public primary schools compared with those in private primary schools. In both the public primary schools sampled, one had eleven graduates in the teaching profession, while the other had six. This was not the case in the private primary schools. The teacher/pupil ratio is better in the public schools (1:14 and 1:15) compared with those in the private primary schools (1:2 and 1:28). With this ratio, one would expect that the pupils in the public primary schools should do better. This could be attributed to lack of learning materials, without which the best of teachers could be handicapped.

Table 5 shows that salaries of teachers in the public primary schools are much better than those in the private primary schools. While a graduate is paid up to 120,000.00 naira, his/her colleague in the private primary school is paid 15,000.00 naira per month. If it depended very much on salaries, one would expect that the more the pay, the better the output. Hence, motivation of teachers, provision of infrastructure and any other thing that can be done, cannot succeed without adequate learning materials.

12. Conclusion

The findings of this study shows that of the factors examined, the provision of adequate learning materials and lack of it is responsible for the difference in performance between public and private primary schools. As the case is, government is spending heavily on primary education but the effort is not yielding the desired results. Much of the money goes to maintain the teachers and build structures, leaving the learner with negligible care. While it is necessary to pay the teachers and build good structures, it must be realized that the goal of the primary school education in the learner. The learners' needs must be attended to if the primary school section of the educational system will be of any societal benefit.

13. Recommendations

From the results of this study, the following recommendations are made.

- i. Government should ensure that learning materials are provided for primary school pupils.
- ii. Parents should be encouraged to provide learning materials for their children in the event that government fails to do so.

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