

Teachers' Perception of Private Primary Schools' Contribution to Educational Development in Ijebu-North L.G.A., Nigeria

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Abstract: The descriptive study which investigated the perception of teachers of private and public primary schools on the contribution of private primary schools to educational development was carried out in Ijebu-North Local Government Area, Ogun State, Nigeria. About 24 approved private primary schools, having 24 head teachers and 385 teachers and 101 public primary schools with 101 head teachers and 1,100 teachers made up the population. The sample, using stratified random sampling technique, comprised 24 (100%) approved private primary schools and their 24 (100%) head teachers and 310 (80.5%) teachers; as well as (44.6%) public primary schools and their 45 (44.6%) head teachers and 550 (50%) teachers. A research question was drawn and two null hypotheses were formulated. A questionnaire entitled: Private Primary Schools' Contribution to Educational Development Questionnaire (PPSCEDQ) was used in collecting information. The analysis of data revealed among others that private primary schools were contributing significantly to educational development in the local government area. The performance could, however be further enhanced if they are adequately monitored and supervised by the government.

Key words: Private primary school, educational development, population, questionnaire, manipulation skill, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The success of any nation is greatly dependent on the effectiveness and efficiency of her educational system. Education is an instrument per excellence for effecting national growth and development. The aims and objectives of Nigerian education system include: the inculcation of national consciousness and unity; inculcation of the right type of values and attitude for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society; the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and the acquisition of the appropriate skills, abilities and competence both mental and physical for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). These aims and objectives are guided by the principal national objectives which established Nigeria firmly as: a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; a just and egalitarian society; a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens and a free and democratic society.

Primary education in Nigeria as in other countries of the world is regarded as the foundation of the formal education structure. The main objectives of this level as

contained in the National Policy on Education are: inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively; the laying of sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking; citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society; character and moral training and development of sound attitudes; developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment; giving the child the opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity and providing basic tool for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Primary education is the bedrock upon which the rest of the education system is built. It stands to reason, therefore that if the foundation is weak the whole system, i.e., primary, secondary and tertiary will collapse.

The development of private primary schools in Nigeria dates back to the introduction of western education by the Christian Missionaries in 1843. (Nwagwu, 1998). The first institution of learning named Nursery of the Infant Church was founded by Mr. and Mrs. De Graft at Badagry in 1843. It could be conveniently

agreed that what has grown to be the Nigerian education system began as private venture, funded and managed by people from outside the country. The colonial government made the earliest attempt at assisting schools in and around Lagos between 1870 and 1876. According to Fafunwa (1974): up to 1882, about four decades from the establishment date of the Badagry school the colonial government in Nigeria paid little or no attention to the educational needs of the people and the field was left entirely to the missions. This period can, therefore, be justifiably termed the era of exclusive missionary education in Southern Nigeria.

As at 1912, government had established 51 public primary schools. The mission schools receiving grants or financial aid from government were 91. Between 1950 and 1960, there was a sudden growth in the establishment of private nursery and primary schools even by the indigenes. After independence, there was further indigenous participation in private educational enterprise as a result of social pressure and demand for knowledge. Ironi noted that many of these schools were not structured to follow strict government regulations regarding the running of educational institution and standard became questionable.

As a result of questionable educational standard and quality, government decided to restrict the establishment of private schools. After the end of civil war in 1970, directives were given as to the process of establishment and management of schools. This led to the closure or take-over of private schools or mission schools by the government. East central state was in the forefront followed by other states.

The period of Second Republic between 1979 and 1983, witnessed a renewed wave in private participation in educational enterprise. The re-emergence of private schools was the aftermath of the public worries over the level of corruption and indiscipline that pervaded almost all sectors of the Nigerian society including the education sector. In a military coup d'état on December 31st 1983, the civilian government was sacked. Just as some sanity was being brought into government and public activities, there was another coup d'état in 1985 (Nwagwu, 1998). It was during this period that Nigerian education system suffered unprecedented collapse. In the spirit of free enterprise under the Structural Adjustment Programme and the public yearnings for qualitative education, private individuals were allowed to establish and operate private schools.

Adeniji observed that the initial zeal towards private primary school was to seek for a change necessitated by the failure of public primary schools. The areas of failure in public primary schools are: politicization of the entire

educational system with successive governments using education as a veritable weapon to catch votes from the electorate; instability in school calendar, occasioned by incessant strike action embarked upon by teachers; inadequacy of funding, classrooms, infrastructures and facilities and staff training programmers.

Statement of the problem: In every city or town in Nigeria, one noticeable trend is the proliferation of private primary schools. In 1980's, there were only 02 private primary schools in the whole of Ijebu-North Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. Presently, the local government has 24 registered private primary schools in addition to others that are yet to be approved which are much more than those that were already given approval. Given the high rate of increase in the number of private primary schools can one conclude that these schools are making significant contribution to the educational development? Or is their existence or increase counterproductive? These important questions would be given consideration in this study.

Research question: Have private primary schools any significant contribution to educational development?

Research hypothesis:

- Ho₁: There will be no significant difference between the perception of teachers of private and public primary schools on the private primary schools' contribution to educational development
- Ho₂: There will be no significant difference between the perception of head teachers of private and public primary schools on the private schools' contribution to educational development

The subjects' perception of the private primary schools' contribution to educational development was the main focus. The study was meant to sensitize the government about the trend at primary school level so as to take proactive steps in improving academic standard.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The descriptive study employed ex-post facto survey design. Twenty-four approved private primary schools having 24 head teachers and 385 teachers; 101 public primary schools having 101 head teachers and 1,100 teachers made up the population.

The sample using stratified random sampling technique, comprised 24 (or 100%) head teachers and 310 (or 80.5%) teachers in the approved private primary

schools; 45 (or 44.6%) head teachers and 550 (or 50%) teachers in the public primary schools. A research question was stated and two null hypothesis were formulated. A questionnaire entitled: Private Primary Schools' Contribution to Educational Development Questionnaire (PPSCEDQ) was constructed and validated to gather information. In addition the demographic data inventory was designed to collect necessary information on personal characteristics of each respondent.

The face and content necessary information validity of the questionnaire were ensured by giving it to colleagues for their suggestions and modification. Two private primary schools with 02 head teachers and 24 teachers in the Obafemi-Owode Local Government Area, Ogun state, Nigeria were used for the pilot study. A test-retest reliability of 2 weeks interval on the questionnaire

yielded a correlational-coefficient of 0.73. The data collected were analyzed using frequency, percentages and student t-test.

RESULTS

Research question: Have private primary schools any significant contribution to educational development? The results in Table 1 revealed that a greater percentage of private primary school teachers 93.9% agreed that if not for the private schools the primary school level of education system would have collapsed while the greater percentage 52% respondents of the public schools disagreed. Both the public 91.9% and private 64.0% school teachers agreed that academic performance of private primary schools is much better than the public

Table 1: Frequency, percentages and descriptive statistics of the responses of teachers to the items of the questionnaire on the comparison between private and public schools

Responses	Private teachers (n = 310)			Public teachers (n = 550)		
	Agree F (%)	Disagree F (%)	Mean	Agree F (%)	Disagree F (%)	Mean
If not for the private primary schools, primary school level would have collapsed	291 (93.9%)	19 (6.1%)	1.9387	262 (47.6%)	288 (52.4%)	1.4764
Pupils' academic performance of private primary schools is better than that of public primary schools	285 (91.9%)	25 (8.1%)	1.9194	353 (64.0%)	198 (36.0%)	1.6400
Sending my child/ward to public primary schools is an avenue to wasting resources	154 (49.7%)	156 (50.3%)	1.4968	233 (42.4%)	317 (57.6%)	1.4236
Private primary schools have adequate infrastructures	227 (73.2%)	83 (26.8%)	1.7323	399 (72.5%)	151 (27.5%)	1.7255
Supervision of teachers by the head teacher is more thorough in private primary schools than in the public primary schools	218 (70.3%)	92 (29.7%)	1.7032	427 (77.6%)	123 (22.4%)	1.7764
Private primary school teachers are more qualified than their counterparts in the public primary schools	113 (36.5%)	197 (63.5%)	1.3645	206 (37.5%)	344 (62.5%)	1.3745
The attention given by private primary school teachers to their pupils is more than that of public primary school teachers to their pupils	252 (81.3%)	58 (18.7%)	1.8129	459 (83.5%)	91 (16.5%)	1.8345
The emergence of private primary schools brought decency to teaching/learning activities	244 (78.7%)	66 (21.3%)	1.7871	339 (61.6%)	211 (38.4%)	1.6164
The level of commitment to work by public primary school teachers is low	255 (72.6%)	85 (27.4%)	1.7258	244 (44.4%)	306 (55.6%)	1.4436
The emergence of private primary schools had made the government to be more responsive to their duties	205 (66.1%)	105 (33.9%)	1.6613	264 (48.0%)	286 (52.0%)	1.4800
Private primary school pupils usually perform better than their counterparts in public primary schools during academic competition	239 (77.1%)	71 (22.9%)	1.7710	360 (65.5%)	190 (34.5%)	1.6545
Individuals should be encouraged to establish private primary schools	210 (67.7%)	100 (32.3%)	1.6774	332 (60.4%)	218 (39.6%)	1.6036

primary school counterparts. The better performance of private primary schools pupils could also be as a result of better supervision being exercised by the private primary school head teachers as revealed in item 5. This revelation is believed to be as a result of the private primary school head teacher supervisory roles and of course the care of class teachers to their pupils. The responses are similar in both private (81.3%) and public schools (83.5%) teachers.

They agreed that the attention being given by private primary schools teachers to their pupils is more than that of public primary school teachers to their pupils. About 66.1% of private school teachers agreed that the emergence of private primary schools had made the government to be more responsive to their duties whereas only 48.0% of the public primary school teachers agreed.

Both the public (60.4%) and private (67.7%) school teachers agreed that individuals should be encouraged to

establish more private primary schools. According to the results in Table 2, the total number of head teachers in both the private and public primary schools agreed that if not for the private primary schools, primary school level would have collapsed. Similar responses of private schools pupils being better than the public schools' pupils in the academic performance of were also recorded. Almost the same responses private (65%), public (66%) were recorded in item 7 which states that attention given by private primary school teachers to their pupils is more than that of public primary school teachers to their pupils. All the head teachers (100%) in private primary schools agreed that emergence of private primary schools brought decency to teaching/learning activities while 33 (66%) of the public head teachers agreed. Both the public primary schools head teachers (66%) and private primary schools head teachers (65%) agreed that individuals should be encouraged to establish private primary school.

Table 2: Frequency, percentages and descriptive statistics of the responses of head teachers to the items of the questionnaire on the comparison between private and public schools

Responses	Private head teachers (n = 24)			Public head teachers (n = 45)		
	Agree F (%)	Disagree F (%)	Mean	Agree F (%)	Disagree F (%)	Mean
If not for the private primary schools, primary school level would have collapsed	24 (100.0%)	-	2.00000	45 (100.0%)	-	1.0000
Academic performance of private primary schools is much better than that of public primary schools	24 (100.0%)	-	2.00000	45 (100.0%)	-	2.0000
Sending my child/ward to public primary schools is an avenue to wasting resources	16 (66.7%)	8 (33.3%)	1.66670	30 (60.0%)	-	1.0000
Private primary schools have adequate infrastructures	21 (88.3%)	3 (11.7%)	1.88330	16 (32.0%)	34 (68.0%)	1.3200
Supervision of teachers by the head teacher is more thorough in private primary schools in the public primary schools	16 (65.6%)	8 (34.4%)	1.65000	45 (100.0%)	-	2.0000
Private primary school teachers are more qualified than their counterparts in the public primary schools	13 (55.0%)	11 (45.0%)	1.55000	-	50 (100.0%)	1.0000
The attention given by private primary school teachers to their pupils is more than that of public primary school teachers to their pupils	16 (65.0%)	8 (35.0%)	1.65000	33 (66.0%)	17 (34.0%)	1.6600
The emergence of private primary schools brought decency to teaching/learning activities	24 (100.0%)	-	2.00000	33 (66.0%)	17 (34.0%)	1.6600
The level of commitment to work by public primary school teachers is low	22 (91.66%)	2 (8.33%)	1.90000	34 (68.0%)	16 (32.0%)	1.6800
The emergence of private schools had made the primary government to be more responsive to their duties	16 (65.0%)	8 (35.0%)	1.65000	16 (32.0%)	34 (68.0%)	1.3200
Private primary school pupils usually perform better than their counterparts in public primary schools during academic competition	19 (78.3%)	5 (21.7%)	1.78330	33 (66.0%)	17 (34.0%)	1.6600
Individuals should be encouraged to establish private primary schools	16 (65.0%)	8 (35.0%)	1.65000	33 (66.0%)	17 (34.0%)	1.6600

Table 3: Perceived contribution of private primary schools between private and public primary school teachers

Status	No.	Mean	SD	Mean difference	df	^t Cal	^t Ctl	p-value
Teachers (private)	310	35.3288	3.87555	2.51861	858	7.9209	1.960	<0.05
Teachers (public)	550	32.8102	4.23490	-	-	-	-	-

Table 4: Perceived contribution of private primary schools between head teachers of private and public primary schools

Status	No.	Mean	SD	Mean difference	df	^t Cal	^t Ctl	p-value
Head teachers private	24	36.2833	3.53717	6.36333	67	10.123	1.960	<0.05
Head teachers public	45	29.9200	2.94743	-	-	-	-	-

Ho₁: There will be no significant difference between the perception of teachers of private and public primary schools on the private schools' contribution to educational development

The results in Table 3 revealed that there is a significant difference in teachers' perception of the contribution of private primary schools to educational development. The calculated value of 7.9209 was found to be significantly higher than the critical value of 1.960 at 0.05 level of significance. Hypothesis 1 was therefore, rejected.

Ho₂: There will be no significant difference between the perception of head teachers of private and public primary schools on the private schools' contribution to educational developme

The results in Table 4 indicated that there is a significant difference between head teachers of private primary schools and their counterparts in public primary schools as regards their perception of the contribution of private primary schools to educational development. The calculated t-value of 10.123 was found to be higher than the table value of 1.960 at 0.05 level of significance. Hypothesis 2 was therefore, rejected.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that the private primary schools are contributing significantly to educational development. Item 1, Table 1 and 2 refer 553 (64.3%) out of 860 respondents agreed that if not for the private primary schools, primary education system would have collapsed.

Similarly, 637 (74.1%) agreed that academic performance of private schools is much better than that of public primary schools. That private schools have an edge over public primary schools could be attributed to the incessant strike actions usually embarked upon by the public primary school teachers. Strike action by staff is completely strange to private primary schools. The finding is complementary to that of Afolabi (2005). His study revealed that students who attended private primary schools performed better in Mathematics and English language (at the junior secondary school) than

those who attended public primary schools. He went further to conclude that his findings seemed to discredit the standard of education in public primary schools, since their products could not compete favourably with the products of the private primary schools. Babayomi (1999) and Adeogun (2001) in their separate studies explained that better academic performance by pupils in private schools was as a result of availability and usage of instructional materials by the private primary schools teachers.

This study also revealed that the better performance of the private school pupils was not as a result of more qualified teachers in the private schools as reflected in item 6 in Table 1 but as a result of better supervision from the school heads. Adequate and thorough supervision cannot be compromised in any privately-owned organization. In Nigeria, a private primary school is not only an educational or social venture but in addition it is a profit-making venture. Understandably, the head teacher pays serious attention at supervision.

Results of this study also showed that the null hypothesis which stated that there will be no significant difference between the perception of teachers of private and public primary schools on the private primary schools' contribution to educational development was rejected. This implied that private schools' teachers perceived the contribution of private schools to educational development differently from their public schools' colleagues. The private school teachers perceived that private primary schools contribute to educational development higher than how the public school teachers perceived it. Similar perception was recorded for the head teachers of private and public primary schools. This study has clearly showed that private primary schools are contributing significantly to educational development in Nigeria as perceived by the school teachers and head teachers.

CONCLUSION

Private schools have been playing prominent role in the development of Nigerian education industry. As a result, they should be protected by law so that no government will decide in future to seize privately-owned

schools as it happened in the early 1970's. Ironi observed that European countries have similar educational environment that protects private and independent schools. In France, the state provides financial aid to many private schools. Also in places like United Kingdom, Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Ireland, Spain and Denmark private schools are in partnership with public schools to achieve collective objective of engineering economic, political and social growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Admittedly, every private enterprise aims at making profit, financial gain should not be the ultimate goal of education industry. This is because education is a public good that has to be enjoyed by every citizen in a nation. There is need therefore, for closer monitoring and supervision by the government agencies. The Federal Ministry of Education as well as the State Ministry of Education should have a separate department for private education in order to monitor these private institutions. The department should be saddled with the responsibilities such as registration/certification of those that comply with the laid down regulations for the establishment of schools; maintenance of minimum standard, pupil-teacher ratio and average class size and payment of minimum wages, allowances, etc.

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