

A Comparative Study Of Literacy And Numeracy Between Public And Private Primary Schools In Akwanga Municipal.

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Abstract

It is expected that private schools should look up to government schools for standard that should culminate in better performance. However, parent's preference is positively disposed towards private primary schools. In this study, two private schools and two public schools were randomly selected from Akwanga Township. Pupils in primary six were used for the study. The instrument for data collection was the Primary Literacy And Numeracy Test (PLNT). The instrument was made of 30 questions taken from the national common entrance examinations. 15 questions were in English, while 15 were in mathematics. One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to detect any significant difference between the mean scores of private primary and public primary schools. Results show that the performance of pupils on the PLNT differed significantly in favour of those from the Private Primary Schools.

Keywords: Primary, private, public, performance

1. Introduction

Education in Nigeria is an instrument par "excellence" for effecting national development (FGN, 2004). According to the document, what became the compelling reason for the nation to spell out in clear and unequivocal terms, the philosophy and objective of the educational system were the facts of the interest and the participation of non-government agencies, communities and individuals. This move was made supposedly to set out minimum standards that will not jeopardize the critical element in national development. Investing in education has undoubtedly become a major component of a country's development strategy Bedi & Garg, (2000).

The goals of primary education as stipulated by the national policy on education include the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively FGN (2004). These values should be achievable by the child, if he/she is exposed to six years of schooling in the primary school. In pursuance of this goal, Nigerian government have put in place a lot of measures, one of which is:

Government welcomes the contribution of voluntary agencies, communities and private individuals in the establishment and management of primary schools alongside with those provided by the state and local government as long as they meet the minimum standards laid down by the federal government FGN (2004:12)

With this measure in place, it establishes the fact that the government have the standards, and it also has schools that are established and managed to a large extent by these standards, and that if any organization or individuals would like to establish and manage primary schools, they must strive to meet up with the standards set on the ground not in paper by government schools. This should translate to higher performance in government schools as compared to privately owned schools. However, Adebayo (2009) observed that there is a persistent and widespread less confidence in public educational institutions, as there is a high positive level of academic performance for private schools. This was corroborated by Patrimos, (2006) who posited that the private sector has been shown to run schools more efficiently. Bedi & Garg (2000) in a study of effectiveness of private versus public schools, the case of Indonesia, found that private schools were more efficiently managed and performed better than their counterparts in public schools. The result from Tanzania are however, contrary. Chediell, Sekwao and Kirumba (2000) observed that government secondary schools seem to perform better than non-government secondary schools. Their reasons being that government schools had better infrastructure, better qualified staff than private schools. This study therefore was undertaken to compare the academic performance of private and public primary school in Akwanga municipal.

2. Statement of the Problem.

In view of the fact that the federal government of Nigeria is concerned with the quality of education provided to her citizens at the primary level, and the measures she has put in place especially as it concerns private participation, it is expected that one of the cardinal goals of primary education which is literacy and numeracy will be highly achieved first in the government primary schools, and then the private schools.

However, parent's preference is positively disposed towards private primary schools. One wonders why parents should prefer to educate their children in private primary schools in Nigeria, even though they are more expensive. Could it be that the public schools are not meeting the expectations of parents as touching the matter of literacy and numeracy?

This study was conducted to find out the comparative performance in literacy and numeracy of pupils in private and public schools Akwanga.

3. Research Question

Do pupils in private primary schools perform better in literacy and numeracy skills than their counterparts in public primary schools?

4. Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the means scores on the literacy and numeracy test of public primary school pupils and those in the private schools.

5. Population

All the primary six pupils in public and private schools in Akwanga town form the population for the study.

6. Sample

6.1 Two private schools:

- i. Fatima private school
- ii. Saint peters primary school,

6.2 Two public schools:

- i. Central primary school Akwanga
- ii. Akwanga south primary schools were randomly selected for the study. Twenty five pupils in class 6 from each of the selected primary schools were randomly selected for the study, making the total number of pupils that participated in the study to be 100.

7. Instrument for Data Collection.

Questions were drawn from the state common entrance examination questions papers in both mathematics and English tagged Primary Literacy and Numeracy Test (PLNT). There were 15 questions each from mathematics and English. The questions were obtained from a standardized test and needed no further standardization. All the questions were objective with options A-E.

7. Procedure

Twenty five pupils in primary six (the final year) from the four selected primary schools were randomly selected and were administered with the PLNT. The pupils were expected to respond to the objective questions in the test. The responses were collected and scored.

8. Analysis of Data

The test scores were analyzed using descriptive statistic to determine the mean score of the various groups. An inferential statistic (one way ANOVA) was used to detect any significant difference between the mean scores of the various groups, and are presented in tabular forms.

9. Results

The data collected from the sampled schools are presented as follows:

Table 1: Mean achievement scores and variations of PLNT

Groups	n	Sum	Average	Variance
Fatima	25	448	17.92	7.243333
Akwanga South	25	171	6.84	6.306667
Saint Peter	25	318	12.72	9.876667
Akwanga Central	25	169	6.76	13.27333

Results from table 1 shows that Fatima had the highest mean scores of 17.92(private), followed by Saint Peter 12.72(private), Akwanga south 6.84(public), and Akwanga central 6.76(public).

Table 2: One way Analysis of Variance (Anova) of PLNT Scores.

ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	2152.84	3	717.6133	78.21399	1.11E-25	2.699393
Within Groups	880.8	96	9.175			
Total	3033.64	99				

Significant at 0.050

Table 2 shows that for mean scores of PLNT, the calculated F value of

78.213 is greater than F critical value of 2.699. This implies that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of Private Primary Schools and those of Public Schools. Thereby the null hypothesis is rejected.

10. Discussion.

The study shows that the performance of pupils on the PLNT differed significantly in favour of those from the Private Primary Schools.

This means that the attainment of literacy and numeracy is skills are more likely in Private Primary Schools than in Public Schools. This is consistent with the findings of Garg & Bedi (2000), Patrimos (2006) and Adebayo (2009). However, these findings are at variance with those of Chiedel Sekwao and Kirumba (2000) who, in Tanzania found that performance in government secondary schools were better than those in private primary schools.

11. Recommendations.

It was expected that private schools should look up to government schools for standard that should culminate in better performance. But as it stands, government should investigate the reasons behind the success of private schools and adjust their strategies in order to step up performance in these government schools.

According to Lewin (2007) primary schooling is a universal right and only states can make a reality of the delivery rights to populations. This is truer especially for those stricken by poverty.

12. Conclusion.

With better academic performance in the private primary schools compared with their counterparts in the public schools, it is easy to foresee that in the very near future, public primary schools will lose relevance. This will speak volumes on the level of readiness of the Nigerian government to meet the educational needs of her citizens. It is good to note that not all parents can afford to send their children to these private schools and so, the immediate implication will be a polarization of the society along the 'haves' and the 'have nots: on a larger scales, potentials will be wasted. Who knows if the best engineer the world will ever know is turned a road-side trader or an armed robber due to neglect of the primary sector by government?

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