

Proliferation of Private Nursery Schools and Quality Assurance in Gboko Metropolis of Benue State

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Abstract

This paper focused on the proliferation of nursery schools in Gboko Metropolis of Benue State. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. Three research questions were posed; three hypotheses formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The sampled population for the study comprised 196 teachers in 85 nursery schools in Gboko Metropolis of Benue State. The instrument that was used for data collection was titled "proliferation of private nursery schools and quality assurance questionnaire" (PPNSQAQ). Data collected was analysed using mean scores and standard deviations to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using the chi-square test of goodness of fit at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that; proliferation of nursery schools does not significantly impact on the school environment and provision of teachers however, proliferation of nursery schools significantly impact on its leadership. Based on the findings, the study recommended that; Ministry of Education should ensure strict adherence to set standards before licences are granted to nursery schools to operate, regular supervision should be conducted on the existing nursery schools to ensure that competent and qualified teachers are recruited. Workshops and seminars should be regularly organised for head teachers by Ministry of Education to help improve on its leadership.

Keywords: proliferation, Quality Assurance, Private nursery schools

Introduction

Education is perceived as an instrument for effecting national development. This is why all countries and governments over the world commit huge sums of money to the sector. However, providing education to meet its desired quality continue to be a herculean task for many governments. In Nigeria, the story has not been different since government has made the financing of education is joint responsibility of the federal, state and local governments and the private sector (FRN, 2004). In this connection, individuals have the moral right to provide education to cope with the efforts of the government thus private participation in establishing private nursery schools. The zeal to cope with this call has led to indiscriminate establishment of private nursery schools in their mass exodus thus proliferation of private nursery schools.

The worry here is that will the astronomical increase of these private nursery schools day by day match the set standards of providing the needed facilities that create the enabling environment for teaching and learning, qualified teachers and better leadership done to meet the desired quality or mere quantitative growth?

Statement of the Problem

The increase in nursery schools in Nigeria is almost becoming a serious menace that must be looked into. The arbitrary nature of their establishment gives way for them to be even run in parlours of their owners. Giwa (2011) observed that the schools which are substandard spring up on a daily basis especially in remote areas. Oftentimes, these schools are sited in unhygienic environment that is not conducive for learning. Owing to this ugly trend the Ondo State government for instance took a decisive action over the activities of mushroom private schools. Till date, no fewer than 30 substandard nursery and primary schools have been shut down (Giwa; 2011).

These trends have therefore prompted the researchers to embark on a study of this kind to investigate the impact of proliferation of private nursery schools on the quality of education provided by them. The problem for the study therefore is to investigate the impact of proliferation private nursery schools and quality assurance in Gboko Metropolis of Benue State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of proliferation private nursery schools and quality

assurance in Gboko Metropolis of Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. assess the impact of proliferation of private nursery schools on its environment in Gboko Metropolis of Benue State.
2. determine the impact of proliferation of private nursery schools on quality of teachers provided.
3. assess impact of proliferation of private nursery schools on its leadership.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed for the study.

1. How does proliferation of private nursery schools impact on the school environment in Gboko Metropolis of Benue State?
2. How does proliferation of private nursery schools impact on quality of teachers provided?
3. In what ways does proliferation of private nursery schools impact on the quality of its leadership?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to be tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Proliferation of private nursery schools does not significantly impact on the school environment in Gboko Metropolis of Benue State.
2. Proliferation of private nursery schools does not significantly impact on quality of teachers provided.
3. Proliferation of private nursery schools does not significantly impact on the quality of its leadership.

Review of Related Literature

Concept of Proliferation of Private Nursery Schools

Nwagwu in Oguntimehin and Oni (2011) contended that the development of private primary schools in Nigeria dates back to the introduction of western education by the Christian Missionaries in 1843. The first institution of learning named Nursery of the Infant Church was founded by Mr. and Mrs. De Graft at Badagry in 1843. Oguntimehin and Oni (2011) however noted that after independence, there was further indigenous participation in private educational enterprise as a result of social pressure and demand for knowledge. Kalama, Etebu, Charles and John (2011) observed that the privatization of education that took place between 1980 and 1990 through the granting of private licenses to individuals was done indiscriminately without proper supervision and monitoring. They affirmed that unregulated privatization of education in Nigeria led to the proliferation of all types of schools, colleges and tertiary institutions throughout country.

Why Proliferation of Private Nursery Schools?

This plausible question is not farfetched. Many are of the opinion that after independence there was a clarion call for increased quality manpower to fill the existing vacancies at the exit of the Europeans. The step to achieving this pressure was only found through increased participation of the private sector to augment the efforts of the government. Oguntimehin and Oni (2011) however noted that after independence, there was further indigenous participation in private educational enterprise as a result of social pressure and demand for knowledge. Inordinate zeal to surmount this pressure leaves nothing than proliferation of the sub-system.

The fall in standards of our public primary schools as a result of poor funding also warranted that the call for private participation in the provision of nursery education. This assertion is supported by the views of Adeniji in Kalama, Etebu, Charles and John (2011) that the initial zeal towards private primary school was to seek for a change necessitated by the failure of public primary schools. Adeniji in Akpa, Udoh and Fagbamiye (2005) are of the view that the deplorable nature of public primary schools has led to mass movement to the private schools and this is the genesis of proliferation of private schools.

Concept of Quality Assurance

Quality education is not an easy concept to qualify (Grima; 2008). This is because; the concept can be looked at from different stand points. The Dakar World Declaration on Education for All in Education for All Monitoring Report (2005) defined quality in education as the desirable characteristics of learners (healthy, motivated pupils), processes (competent teachers using active pedagogies), content (relevant curricula) and systems (good governance and equitable resource allocation).

For quality assurance to be maintained in nursery schools, the main indices that would be considered are the school environment, the quality of teachers provided and the type of leadership to take home the goods. Since the nursery school is meant to effect a smooth transition from the home to the school, an ideal environment must be fostered. Acar in Okwoche (2010) sees the nursery school environment as the stage on which children play out the themes of childhood, their interests, triumphs, problems and concerns. Ogbonnaya (2010) submitted that a nursery school environment should house physical facilities like swings slides, merry-go-round, sand boxes, tunnels, balance, beams, and other toys of different shapes and sizes. These help the teacher to develop the children physical abilities and skills. A nursery school environment that is conducive for learning should not be seen to be at the middle of a motor park, a rail station, a market or an industrial area with both noise and waste

pollution.

To enhance quality education, the FGN (2004) stated that she will make provision in teacher education programmes for specialization in early childhood education. Children at this level must be given all round development-cognitively, affectively, emotionally and psychomotor wise. Ogbonnaya (2010) averred that majority of teachers found in our pre-primary schools are drop-outs or those who are preparing for their ordinary level General Certificate of Education Examinations. He further opined that without the services of well-trained and seasoned teachers, pre-primary schools would be a curse than a blessing.

Leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers (Berkowitz, 2002). Acar in Okwoche (2010) sees the nursery school environment as the stage on which children play out the themes of childhood, their interests, triumphs, problems and concerns. Effective leadership in the nursery school will amount to that which sees that instruction is given as prescribed.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population for the study comprised 196 teachers in 85 nursery schools in Gboko Metropolis of Benue State (Area Education Office, 2014). The simple random sampling technique was used to sample 82 teachers in 34 nursery schools. The instrument that was used for data collection was entitled “proliferation of private nursery schools and quality assurance questionnaire” (PPNSQAQ). The questionnaire was validated by research experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, Benue State University, Makurdi. The Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and it yielded correlation coefficient of 0.97 which showed that the instrument was highly reliable to elicit information for the study. Data collected was analysed using mean scores and standard deviations to answer the research questions such that if an item scored more than 2.50 cut-off point, proliferation has impact but where it scored less, proliferation had no impact. The hypotheses were tested using the chi-square at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Analysis of Research Questions

The three research questions posed for the study were analysed as follows:

Research Question One

How does proliferation of private nursery schools impact on the school environment in Gboko Metropolis of Benue State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Respondents on Proliferation of Private Nursery Schools and School Environment

Item No.	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision
2.	Playgrounds enhance quality of schools.	49	21	5	5	3.43	0.87	Accepted
3.	Our school have physical facilities like swings, slides, merry-go-round and toys of different shapes and sizes.	35	14	21	10	2.93	1.10	Accepted
4.	Our school is in a noisy area.	10	7	14	49	1.73	1.07	Rejected
5.	Schools located in industrial areas cannot be said to be of quality.	10	44	16	10	2.68	0.85	Accepted
Cluster Mean/Standard Deviation						2.69	0.97	

Table 1 showed that items 2, 3, and 5 have mean ratings of 3.43, 2.93 and 2.68 with standard deviations of 0.87, 1.10 and 0.85; all are greater than the cut-off point of 2.50 which implied that playgrounds enhance quality of schools, schools in the area have physical facilities like swings, slides, merry-go-round and toys of different shapes and sizes as well, schools located in industrial areas cannot be said to be of quality. However, item 3 had a mean score of 1.73 and standard deviation of 1.07 which is less than the cut-off point of 2.50. This implied that schools in the area not in noisy places. The cluster mean of 2.69 and standard deviation of 0.97 which is greater than the cut-off point of 2.50 implied that proliferation of private nursery schools impact on the school environment in Gboko Metropolis of Benue State

Research Question Two

How does proliferation of private nursery schools impact on quality of teachers provided?

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Respondents on Proliferation of Private Nursery Schools and Provision of Teachers

tem No.	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision	
6.	Secondary school leavers form majority of teachers in our school.			8	14	14	44	1.83 1.05	Rejected
7.	Greater percentages of our teachers are NCE holders.	49	21	5	5	3.43	0.87	Accepted	
8.	Greater percentages of our teachers are graduates.	10	28	35	7	2.39	0.96	Rejected	
9.	Our school have secondary school drop outs as teachers.	10	10	10	50	2.39	0.96	Accepted	
Cluster Mean/Standard Deviation						2.51	0.96		

Table 2 showed that item 7 has mean rating of 3.43 with standard deviation of 0.87 which is greater than the cut-off point of 2.50; this implied that greater percentages of teachers in the private nursery schools are NCE holders. However, items 6, 8 and 9 have mean ratings of 1.83, 2.39 and 2.39 with standard deviations of 1.05, 0.96 and 0.96. This implied that secondary schools do not form the majority of teachers in the nursery schools, greater percentages of the teachers are not graduates and that the schools do not have greater percentages of their teachers as secondary school leavers. The cluster mean of 2.51 and standard deviation of 0.96 implied that proliferation of private nursery schools impact on quality of teachers provided.

Research Question Three

In what ways does proliferation of private nursery schools impact on the quality of its leadership?

Table 3: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Respondents on Proliferation of Private Nursery Schools and its leadership

tem No.	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision
10.	Leadership that provide the needed facilities brings quality.	56	14	5	5	1.75	1.10	Rejected
11.	Strict supervision of school programmes warrants quality.	28	44	4	4	3.51	0.87	Accepted
12.	Effective teaching and learning makes a school to be of quality.	70	4	3	3	3.76	0.70	Accepted
13.	Leadership that promote cognitive, affective and psychomotor dimension of the learner enhances quality.	28	28	14	10	2.93	1.02	Accepted
Cluster Mean/Standard Deviation						2.99	0.92	

Table 3 showed that items 11, 12 and 13 have mean ratings of 3.51, 3.76 and 2.93 with corresponding standard deviations of 0.87, 0.70 and 1.02 which is greater than the cut-off point of 2.50; this implied that strict

supervision of school programmes warrant quality. Effective teaching and learning makes a school to be of quality. Leadership that promotes cognitive, affective and psychomotor dimension of the learner enhances quality. Item 10 however has a mean rating of 1.75 with corresponding standard deviation of 1.10 which is less than 2.50 cut-off point. This implied that leadership that provide the needed facilities does not necessitate quality. The cluster mean of 2.99 and standard deviation of 0.92 which is greater than the cut-off point of 2.50 implied that proliferation of private nursery schools impact on the quality of its leadership.

Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses formulated for the study were tested using the chi-square test at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One:

Proliferation of private nursery schools does not significantly impact on the school environment in Gboko Metropolis of Benue State.

Table 4: Chi-square (χ^2) Analysis of Proliferation of Private Nursery Schools and School Environment

Responses	Observed freq.	Expected freq.	df	Sig.	Cal. χ^2	Crit. χ^2	Decision
Disagree	32	40	1	0.07	3.20	3.84	Rejected
Agree	48	40					

$P=0.07 > 0.05$; $df=1$; Critical $\chi^2=3.84$

Table 4 showed that chi-square (χ^2) calculated value of 3.20 is less than the critical chi-square (χ^2) value of 3.84 checked at 0.05 level of significance and at 1 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis is accepted. The implication is that proliferation of private nursery schools does not significantly impact on the school environment.

Hypothesis Two:

Proliferation of private nursery schools does not significantly impact on provision of teachers.

Table 5: Chi-square (χ^2) Analysis of Proliferation of Private Nursery Schools and Provision of Teachers

Responses	Observed freq.	Expected freq.	df	Sig.	Cal. χ^2	Crit. χ^2	Decision
Disagree	43	40	1	0.50	0.45	3.84	Accepted
Agree	37	40					

$P=0.50 > 0.05$; $df=1$; Critical $\chi^2=3.84$

Table 5 showed that chi-square (χ^2) calculated value of 0.45 is less than the critical chi-square (χ^2) value of 3.84 checked at 0.05 level of significance and at 1 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis is accepted. The implication is that proliferation of private nursery schools does not significantly impact on the provision of teachers.

Hypothesis Three:

Proliferation of private nursery schools does not significantly impact on its leadership.

Table 6: Chi-square (χ^2) Analysis of Proliferation of Private Nursery Schools and its Leadership

Responses	Observed freq.	Expected freq.	df	Sig.	Cal. χ^2	Crit. χ^2	Decision
Disagree	12	40	1	0.00	39.20	3.84	Rejected
Agree	68	40					

$P=0.00 < 0.05$; $df=1$; Critical $\chi^2=3.84$

Table 6 showed that chi-square (χ^2) calculated value of 39.20 is greater than the critical chi-square (χ^2) value of 3.84 checked at 0.05 level of significance and at 1 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis is rejected. The implication is that proliferation of private nursery schools significantly impact on its leadership.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of the study revealed that proliferation of nursery schools does not significantly impact on the school environment. This finding is in line with the views of Giwa (2011) who observed that the schools which are substandard spring up on a daily basis especially in remote areas. Oftentimes, these schools are sited in unhygienic environment that is not conducive for learning.

The second finding of the study revealed that proliferation of nursery schools does not significantly impact on the provision of teachers. This finding corroborates the views of Ogbonnaya (2010) who averred that majority of teachers found in our pre-primary schools are drop-outs or those who are preparing for their ordinary level General Certificate of Education Examinations.

The third finding of the study revealed that proliferation of nursery schools significantly impact on its leadership. This finding is in agreement of Adeniji in Kalama, Etebu, Charles and John (2011) who opined that the initial zeal towards private primary school was to seek for a change necessitated by the failure of public primary schools. Such a quest has necessitated an effective monitoring to ensure that things are done the way they should thus effective leadership.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Proliferation of nursery schools does not significantly impact on its environment. The quest to maximise profit is sacrificed for huge financial investment which would have yielded that desired quality in terms of providing basic facilities.
2. Proliferation of nursery schools does not significantly impact on the quality of its teachers. The desire to maximise profit also necessitate hiring quacks normally untrained teachers so that meagre amount of money could be paid to them. This also mars the preached quality.
3. Proliferation of nursery schools significantly impact on its leadership. Since the schools are established for profit maximization, serious attention is not given to its leadership since the owners mostly head them or their relations.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Ministry of Education should ensure strict adherence to set standards before licences are granted to nursery schools to operate so that minimum requirements of the school environment is maintained.
2. Regular supervision should be conducted on the existing nursery schools to ensure that competent and qualified teachers are recruited and where they are not provided, licences of such schools should be revoked.
3. Workshops and seminars should be regularly organised for head teachers by Ministry of Education to help improve on its leadership.

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