

Prevalence of Acceleration among Male and Female Pupils in Selected Private Primary Schools in Sokoto Metropolis and its Implication on the Academic Performance of the Girl-child

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Abstract

Acceleration of children particularly at primary and secondary schools has become a common and acceptable practice to many parents and teachers. This research focused on ascertaining the prevalence of acceleration among male and female pupils in private primary schools in Sokoto metropolis. A total of two hundred and thirty-six (236) pupils comprising of 141 males and 95 females were involved in the research. A simple questionnaire to identify pupils who skipped class and an academic performance test in English language and Mathematics were used for data collection. Frequency and percentages were used to ascertain the prevalence of skipping class among the male and female pupils while the mean, standard deviation and t-test were used to compare the performance of males who skipped class and females who skipped class. It was noted that males who skipped class performance better than females who skipped class though the general performance of females was better than that of males. This indicates that the criteria for accelerating the females were not strictly academic excellence. It was recommended that acceleration of pupils should be strictly based on academic performance and girls should not be accelerated for any other reasons.

Introduction

Acceleration of learners at various stages of education in Nigeria occurs mainly in grade skipping or reduction in number of years that would have been ideal for a programme of study. This is very much common in private primary schools where it is now seen as a yardstick for assessing the performance of schools. This practice has become a welcome idea to many parents in Nigeria and particularly in Sokoto state where parents would wish to fast forward the girls so that they can finish school early and marry. Acceleration of learners is not a bad practice but it should be done with caution to make sure that only the fit and gifted children are accelerated since it could have academic and social implication on the child. This study therefore aims at ascertaining the prevalence of acceleration among private primary school male and female pupils in Sokoto metropolis and to identify its implication on the academic performance of the girl-child.

Statement of the Problem

Women in nearly every generation and nationality have suffered untold deprivation and segregation not the fault of theirs but only because they are women. This condition has attracted the attention of many individuals and groups who are launching campaigns and awareness to stop this ugly trend. This deprivation cuts across education and other areas of social life. The Federal Republic of Nigeria in a bid to give women a sense of belonging stated in its 1981 National Policy on Education that there should be equal opportunity for education to all Nigerians children, irrespective of sex, tribe, disabilities etc. With the effort of governmental and non-governmental organizations in campaign for the education of the girl-child, there has been positive changes and improvement in the enrollment of girls in schools particularly in the Northern part of Nigeria. This improvement in the enrollment of the girl child is not without any further challenge. The parents who are now compelled to send their daughters to school do everything to make them finish earlier than the boys in order to go and marry. Most of them tend to accelerate the girls in schools irrespective of their academic ability.

This development warranted the researcher to venture into ascertaining the prevalence of acceleration of male and female pupils in private primary schools in Sokoto metropolis and to assess the implication on the academic performance of the girl-child.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study is to ascertain the prevalence of acceleration among male and female pupils in private primary schools in Sokoto metropolis.

(ii) Find out if there is significant difference in the performance of accelerated male and female pupils in private primary schools in Sokoto metropolis.

Research Questions

The following questions serve as a guide to this research.

(i). What is the prevalence of acceleration among male and female pupils in private primary schools in Sokoto metropolis?

(ii). Is there any significant difference in the performance of accelerated male and female pupils in private

primary schools in Sokoto state?

Research Hypotheses

- (i) Males and females are equally accelerated in private primary school in Sokoto metropolis.
- (ii) There is no significant difference in the performance of accelerated male and female pupils in private primary schools in Sokoto metropolis.

Significance Of The Study

This research will be useful to the school heads who may wish to advice parents on the implication of acceleration on the academic performance of their children.

Scope/Limitation Of The Study

This study is limited to the private primary schools in Sokoto metropolis. It is basically on prevalence of acceleration of pupils and its implications on the academic performance of the girl-child in particular.

Review of Related Literature

The concept of acceleration and its debate has been part of academic environment for many decades. Thomas and Bauer (1994) defined it as moving through the curriculum rapidly. Siek (1988) described it as early school entrance, fast paced classes, extra course work, upgraded classes or summary programme. He argued that acceleration is appropriate for most learners who are gifted and talented because they are usually advanced in overall development and successful when accelerated. Acceleration is a type of intervention to advance students at faster rates or at younger ages than is topical through an educational programme (Colangelo, Assouline and Gress 2003). In another view, Van Tassel Baska (2000) defined it as “a set of administrative strategies that enable educators to cater efficiently and effectively for the diversity of cognitive development needs and competencies of gifted and talented children. It is a process of bringing up talented children to the level of instruction commensurate with their achievement level and richness so that they are properly challenged to learn any given material. Though acceleration has been recommended by many researchers like Schiever and Maker (2003) who noted that the practice has the potential to enhance students learning, motivation, accomplishment and self esteem, it’s application should be with proper understanding of the learner. Van Tassel Baska (1992) noted that many parents and educators have an incorrect understanding of accelerations. Most of acceleration is only aimed at speeding up the children and forcing them to graduate from various levels of schooling earlier than required. Acceleration has gained notable approval by researcher yet Southern and Jones (1991) warns that it should be carried out with caution since it may have consequences such as educational frustration, lower achievement and productivity, apathy for formal schooling, lower academic expectations and difficulties adjusting to peers who do not share the same interest and concern.

Academic achievement as a concept refers to the extent or degree to which individuals attain school success. Researchers like Belvins (1983) and Diaz (2004) have surveyed personal, family and academic factors affecting achievement of children in schools. Their results, made clear the direct influence of variables such as parents academic level, gender, age, motivation and relationship with peers on academic achievement of children. Children at earlier age tend to be more playful and extroverted but at later years maturity brings in more calmness and higher concentration which help them to carry out more complex mental activities that the age demands. Age and maturation contribute positively to the readiness of children to learn. Maintaining a progressive academic achievement demands that children be allowed to go at their own rate and be supported with good learning environment.

Research Methodology:

Research Design.

The design adopted for this research is case study. Case study is a research approach in which the researcher deliberately studies a group, an individual or a situation to arrive at meaningful conclusion about the group, individual or situation. This research aims at establishing the prevalence of acceleration among male and female primary school pupils in selected private schools in Sokoto metropolis. It also identified the implication of this practice on the girl child in particular. A case study is good for this study since the researcher cannot cover all the private primary schools in Sokoto metropolis.

Population of the Study

This study covered 4 selected private primary schools in Sokoto metropolis. A total of 236 pupils were involved. Four (4) leading private primary schools in Sokoto metropolis were purposively selected for this study. Purposive sampling was preferred since the researcher aimed at a case study of the schools. Purposive sampling is good in reaching the target population. Primary six pupils were also selected since it is the terminal class for primary education. The prevalence of acceleration and its implication will be better appreciated among this class. The selected schools are Federal Government College, Staff School (89), Federal Staff Schools (23), Alheri Schools (29) and Blue Crescent Primary School (95). The entire population of primary 6 pupils in these schools were involved in the research due to the limited number of primary six pupils in private primary schools nowadays. This is also in keeping with the opinion of researchers like Shaughnessy, Zechmeister and Zechmersiter (2000) who believed that the best research is one which carries along the entire population

pointing out that sampling is only necessary where the researcher cannot cover the entire population.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used for this research namely; A questionnaire that identified pupils who skipped class and those who did not.

ii. Academic performance test in English language and Mathematics.

The questionnaire that distinguished those who skipped class from those who did not is a simple one with 2 sections. Section A captured the personal data of the pupils while section B contained simple and direct questions that elicited straight forward and honest answers e.g. have you skipped any class since you started school? If yes which class or classes did you skip” etc. The Academic Performance Test (APT) was adopted from Njoku (2009). It was originally developed for a Ph.D research using primary 6 pupils in Sokoto, kebbi and zamfara states of Nigeria. The tests have very high content validity and a reliability of 0.88 for English language and 0.86 for Mathematics.

Administration and Scoring of the Instruments:

The two instruments were administered one after another. Starting with the questionnaire that identified those who skipped class or classes. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to all the pupils going school by school. With proper instruction and guidance the pupils accurately answered the questions. It was retrieved from them. The academic performance test was also seemingly administered, timed appropriately like any primary school external examination. The answer booklets were retrieved and carefully marked. Each subject had a maximum score of 100%

Results

Table 1: Prevalence of acceleration among male and female pupils

Sex	Total No	No of those who skipped class	No of those who did not skip class	% of those who skipped class
Male	141	51	90	36.17%
Female	95	60	35	63.15

Table 2- Average age of male and female primary 6 pupils

Sex	Total Number	Average Age
Male	141	12yrs 3month
Female	95	11yrs

Table 3 – Average age of male and female pupils who skipped class

Sex	Total number	Average Age
Male	51	11yrs 3 months
Female	60	10yrs 7months

Table 4: Academic performance of male and female pupils who skipped class.

	N	Mean	Std	df	t-cal	t-crit
Males who skipped class	51	49.37	11.8	50	5.77	2.00
females who skipped class	60	46.75	12.0			

Table 4 shows a significant difference in the performance of males who skipped class and females who skipped class since the t-calculated (5.77) is greater than the critical value (2.0). This difference is in favour of males.

Table 5- T-test of academic performance of all male and female pupils.

Variables	N	Mean	Std	df	t-cal	t-crit
Males	141	40.58	13.62	95	1.852	.067
Females	95	45.57	13.31			

Table 5 shows a significant difference in the performance of male and female pupils in favour of females. The mean score of females is higher than that of boys and the t-call (1.852) is also higher than t-crit (.067).

Summary of Findings

- i. Acceleration of primary school pupils is more prevalent among females.
- ii. Average age of males in primary school is higher than that of females
- iii. Average age of males who skipped class is also higher than that of females who skipped class
- iv. Males who skipped class performed better than females who skipped class.

Discussion of Findings

Acceleration which is mostly evident in grade skipping in this part of the world and Sokoto state in particular has been found to be a popular practice in schools. This research found out that it is more common with female

pupils than males. There is no doubt in this because female education in this society is still perceived as a way of delaying girls from marrying. Many parents who have reluctantly sent here female children to school want them to finish as early as possible so that they can marry. Female education has still not received the kind of encouragement it deserves. Acceleration according to advocates like Vantasel – Baska (2003) and Schieves and Maker (2003) is an intervention for gifted and talented children. It was not intended to make children finish school at younger age whether they are good academically or not. But this practice has been abused by parents and teachers who want to move children faster than some of them can go particularly the girls. Over sixty three percent (63%) of female pupils involved in this research have skipped one class or the other while about thirty six percent (36%) of their male counterparts only stripped class. It was also noted that the average age at which the female finish primary school is also low than that of males. This means that boys are allowed to mature and be ready for school than girls. Acceleration of pupils should be strictly on the bases of performance but it appears it is not so by the result of this research particularly for girls. When the academic performance of males who skipped class and females who skipped class was compared, it favoured the males who skipped. Males who skipped class performed better than females who skipped class since they are more matured and the reason for accelerating them was more genuine than that of the females. One hundred and forty one males were involved in this research but only 51 were accelerated while ninety five females were involved but 60 were accelerated representing 36% and 63% respectively. If children are accelerated just because their parents want them to move faster in school it will affect the academic performance of such children.

For the males who were accelerated to perform better than the females who were accelerated it means they were carefully picked based on their performance because when the performance of all the boys and girls were compared, girls performed better than the boys. Many researchers like Wikeley & Jamieson (2013) have proved girls to be more hardworking in schools and do better than boys nowadays, Croxford (2000) had the same opinion in his paper “Gender and National curricular; shifting agendas in the UK and Europe, he found that the average level of attainment for boys is lower than that of girls.

Here in Nigeria Yoloye (1983) in his work “The evaluation of teaching” had the same opinion. For girls to perform generally better than the boys and the accelerated boys performed better than the accelerated girls it means that the reason and approach of accelerating girls is faulty. No wonder Van Tassel – Baska (1992) noted that many parents and teachers have an incorrect understanding of acceleration. Abubakar and Adegboyega (2012) confirmed that age is a better predictor of academic performance than gender. This being the case boys and girls should be allowed to mature for any level of academic pursuit they engage in. Acceleration on its part is good when the reasons for it is academic excellence.

Conclusion

Acceleration is an intervention given to gifted and talented children to make them go at faster rate than their peers in school. It has attracted a lot of support from researchers and educationists. It is noted here that acceleration is more prevalent in girls than in boys. The accelerated boys performed better than the accelerated girls though the general performance of the girls (accelerated and non accelerated) is better than the boys. This indicates that the acceleration of the girls may not have seen strictly based on their academic performance like the boys. This proves that there are some other irrational reasons for accelerating the girls. Age has been found to be a major predictor of academic performance so when children are moved faster than their age can carry it will have negative implication on their academic performance.

Recommendation

Acceleration of children at every level of education should be strictly based on their academic performance.

Girls should not be moved faster than they can go just because their parents want them to finish school early and marry.

Teachers should pay very good attention to accelerated children to help them keep their pace.

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