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PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE SCHOOL DISPARITIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION: TEACHER PERSPECTIVES FROM ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined disparities in English language curriculum implementation between public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State, Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 95 English language teachers across both school types through a validated questionnaire with reliability coefficient of 0.767. The study assessed curriculum adherence, resource adequacy, teaching methodology alignment, implementation challenges, and improvement suggestions. Results revealed that public schools significantly outperformed private schools in curriculum implementation ($M = 3.37$ vs. $M = 3.07$, $p = 0.005$), resource adequacy ($M = 2.94$ vs. $M = 2.36$, $p < 0.001$), and teaching method alignment ($M = 3.18$ vs. $M = 2.65$, $p < 0.001$). However, public schools experienced significantly more implementation challenges ($M = 3.50$ vs. $M = 2.98$, $p < 0.001$) despite their superior performance. Both school types strongly agreed on improvement needs, with public school teachers showing slightly stronger agreement ($M = 3.81$ vs. $M = 3.64$, $p = 0.044$). These findings challenge conventional assumptions about private school superiority and suggest that systematic government investment in public education yields measurable benefits in curriculum implementation effectiveness.

Keywords: Curriculum Implementation, English Language, Public Schools, Private Schools, Basic Education

Introduction

English language occupies a strategic position in Nigeria's educational landscape, serving as both the official language and primary medium of instruction across all educational levels. Crystal (2019) traces the language's origins to Anglo-Frisian dialects brought to Britain in the mid-6th to 7th centuries AD by Anglo-Saxon settlers, but its contemporary significance in Nigeria extends far beyond historical linguistics. Mohammed and Nwachukwu (2018) emphasize that English functions as the unifying medium across Nigeria's diverse linguistic landscape, which encompasses more than 500 native languages. This multifaceted role makes English language proficiency essential for academic success, professional advancement, and effective participation in Nigeria's socioeconomic development.

The Federal Government of Nigeria has consistently recognized this importance through various policy frameworks. The National Policy on Education (2014) emphasizes English language proficiency

while simultaneously promoting mother tongue usage in early childhood education, creating a balanced linguistic development approach. This dual emphasis reflects the complex reality of Nigeria's multilingual society, where English serves as a bridge language enabling communication across ethnic and regional boundaries. Ajepe and Ademowo (2016) document English's widespread usage in education, media, and political settings, reinforcing its status as Nigeria's lingua franca and highlighting its critical role in national cohesion.

Within Nigeria's educational structure, English language functions as a core subject whose mastery determines students' progression through the educational system. Failure in English language prevents advancement to higher educational levels and impairs students' ability to communicate effectively in the country's official language. This reality makes effective curriculum implementation not merely an educational preference but a fundamental necessity for student success and national development. The stakes are particularly high in basic education, where foundational language competencies are established and students develop the linguistic skills that will determine their future academic and professional trajectories.

The Nigerian educational system's commitment to English language education is embodied in the 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum, introduced in 2008 and subsequently revised in 2012 and 2019. This curriculum represents Nigeria's alignment with global educational trends while addressing local needs and contexts. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2022) emphasizes that this curriculum aims to produce learners proficient in communication skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. The English Language Curriculum specifically targets the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, while fostering critical thinking and creativity to prepare students for higher education and global employment opportunities.

Upper Basic Education, comprising junior secondary school levels (JSS1-3), serves as a crucial transitional phase between primary education and senior secondary education. Students in this phase, typically aged 12 to 15 years, encounter specialized subjects including English language as a core requirement. The curriculum at this level emphasizes not only linguistic competence but also cultural awareness and appreciation through literature, with increasing integration of Information and Communication Technology in language learning. Udenwa (2023) notes that effective language skill acquisition at this level enhances learners' ability to accomplish both academic and practical life tasks, making curriculum implementation quality critically important.
The implementation of educational curricula represents a complex transformation process where designed educational programs become practical classroom activities. Affandi (2025) describes curriculum implementation as requiring adequate support systems, including instructional materials, ICT facilities, and trained personnel, to enable students to achieve intended learning outcomes. This

transformation process becomes particularly challenging in Nigeria's diverse educational landscape, where schools operate under different ownership structures, funding mechanisms, and administrative frameworks.

Recent research has revealed significant variations in curriculum implementation effectiveness across different educational contexts in Nigeria. Ifionu, Okoli, and Obialor (2024) found that curriculum implementation in Anambra State varies significantly based on infrastructure, teacher capacity, and contextual support systems. Their study of Computer Studies curriculum implementation in upper basic schools revealed low implementation levels due to inadequate staffing and systemic support, suggesting that similar challenges may affect English language curriculum implementation. These findings highlight the importance of examining implementation practices across different school types to understand how structural and contextual factors influence educational delivery.

The distinction between public and private schools in Nigeria creates important contextual differences that may influence curriculum implementation. Public schools operate under direct government oversight, following standardized procedures and benefiting from government funding and professional development programs. Private schools, while enjoying greater autonomy in curriculum design and delivery, depend on fee-based funding and may prioritize market-driven approaches over strict curriculum adherence. This structural difference creates potential variations in implementation practices that warrant systematic investigation.

Anambra State provides a particularly interesting context for examining these implementation variations. The state has gained recognition for educational excellence, topping the 2024 NECO Senior School Certificate Examination ranking in the South-East with 89% of candidates achieving five credits and above, including English and Mathematics (Anambra Daily, 2025). Additionally, the state scored 6.19 in the 2023 Sub-National Ease of Doing Business ranking, placing seventh nationwide and first in the South-East region (Onofe-Overah, Akpotu and Egwunyenga, 2022). Despite these achievements, concerns remain about the alignment between curriculum expectations and classroom realities.

Recent studies have identified gaps between curriculum intentions and classroom practices in Nigerian schools. Ajagbe and Olatunji (2023) found that teaching in Nigerian JSS schools remains predominantly teacher-centered, with limited student engagement despite curriculum emphasis on active participation. Similarly, Adeniran, Onyekwere, Okon, Atuhurra, Chaudhry and Kaffenberger (2023) discovered that while curriculum standards set high cognitive demands for English and mathematics, classroom instruction largely emphasizes memorization and low-order thinking, correlating with suboptimal student performance.

The complexity of curriculum implementation is further complicated by the

pedagogical approaches employed by teachers. Avaa, Iortyer, and Avaa (2024) found that many English teachers in Benue State rely heavily on traditional, teacher-centered strategies such as lecture and question-and-answer methods, despite curriculum guidelines recommending learner-centered communicative approaches. This pattern appears consistent across Nigerian states, with Olaosebikan and Kolawole (2023) reporting that only about 10% of English teachers in Ibadan used communicative, activity-based strategies.

Despite the growing body of research on English curriculum implementation in Nigerian basic education, there remains a notable absence of focused study in Anambra State, particularly within specific local government contexts like Awka South LGA. While broader assessments have highlighted systemic challenges such as insufficient instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, and limited pedagogical innovation (Anjorin-Ojewole, 2023), these insights do not address the specific realities of curriculum implementation across different school types within localized contexts.

This study addressed this empirical gap by examining English language curriculum implementation disparities between public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State. The comparative framework adopted provides nuanced insights into how management structure, funding mechanisms, and resource endowment influence curriculum implementation experiences across school types. This approach promises to yield targeted insights that can inform evidence-based educational policy and practice improvement strategies.

Statement of the Problem

Despite English language's critical importance as Nigeria's official language and medium of instruction, significant concerns persist regarding the quality of its curriculum implementation in basic education schools, particularly regarding the alignment between prescribed curriculum objectives and actual classroom practices. While Anambra State has achieved notable educational success, including topping the 2024 NECO examinations in the South-East region, observations from educational practitioners reveal persistent gaps in English language curriculum delivery. Teachers continue to employ predominantly teacher-centered approaches that rely heavily on lecture and rote memorization rather than the communicative methodologies prescribed by the curriculum, potentially limiting students' language proficiency development. The lack of systematic comparison between public and private school implementation practices has created an empirical gap that hinders evidence-based policy formulation. Furthermore, assumptions about private school superiority in educational delivery remain largely unexamined in the specific context of curriculum implementation, despite growing evidence of variability in educational outcomes across school types. This study seeks to address these concerns by systematically examining the extent of English language curriculum implementation disparities between public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, providing empirical evidence to inform

educational policy and practice improvements.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to establish disparities in English language curriculum implementation between public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, this study sought to:

1. Establish the extent of implementation of the prescribed English language curriculum in public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State.
2. Determine the adequacy of available material resources for effective English language curriculum implementation in public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State.
3. Ascertain the extent to which teaching methods used by teachers align with English language curriculum objectives in public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent is the prescribed English language curriculum being implemented in public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State?
2. To what extent are the available material resources adequate for effective English language curriculum implementation in public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State?
3. To what extent do the teaching methods used by teachers align with English language curriculum objectives in public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in the implementation of the prescribed English language curriculum between public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference in the adequacy of material resources for English language curriculum implementation between public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State.

H_{03}: There is no significant difference in the alignment of teaching methods with English language curriculum objectives between public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State.

Methods

This study employed a descriptive survey design to systematically examine English language curriculum implementation across public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State. The choice of this design allowed for comprehensive data collection from a large population while describing characteristics and patterns within

the population without manipulating variables. Awka South LGA, which serves as the state capital with a population of 189,654 people according to the 2006 census, provided an ideal research context due to its diverse educational landscape comprising both urban and rural schools across nine towns including Amawbia, Awka, Ezinato, Isiagu, Mbaukwu, Nibo, Nise, Okpuno, and Umuawulu.

The study population consisted of 124 English language teachers from both public and private junior secondary schools within Awka South LGA, comprising 51 teachers from public schools and 73 teachers from government-approved private schools. Using the Taro Yamane formula with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, a sample size of 95 teachers was determined and stratified proportionally across school types, yielding 39 teachers from public schools and 56 from private schools. The primary instrument for data collection was the English Language Curriculum Implementation Evaluation Questionnaire (ELCIEQ), adapted from the standardized Teacher Curriculum Implementation Questionnaire developed by Peng, Liu, Zhang and Yue (2022). The instrument comprised demographic information and five clusters addressing curriculum implementation, resource adequacy, teaching methods, implementation challenges, and improvement suggestions, utilizing a 4-point scale ranging from Very Low Extent to Very High Extent.

Content and face validation were conducted by three experts in curriculum studies, educational psychology, and educational measurement from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, while reliability was established through a pilot study with 20 teachers from Idemili South LGA, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.737 to 0.812 with a mean coefficient of 0.767. Data collection occurred over three weeks using self-administered questionnaires distributed by trained research assistants who obtained informed consent from all participants. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations to answer research questions, with interpretation based on predetermined decision rules where means of 1.00-1.49 indicated Very Low Extent, 1.50-2.49 Low Extent, 2.50-3.49 High Extent, and 3.50-4.00 Very High Extent. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to test null hypotheses at 0.05 significance level, with rejection occurring when calculated p-values were less than 0.05.

Major Findings

Research Question 1: To what extent is the prescribed English language curriculum being implemented in public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State?

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Table 1: Mean Responses on English Language Curriculum Implementation in Public and Private Schools

S/No	Items	Public		Private	
		χ	SD	χ	SD
1.	I strictly follow the Anambra State prescribed English language curriculum in my lessons.	3.38	0.50	3.05	0.61
2.	I cover all the content areas specified in the English language curriculum during the academic year.	3.28	0.58	2.98	0.72
3.	My lesson objectives align with the English language curriculum goals set by Anambra State.	3.45	0.49	3.20	0.58
4.	I adhere to the recommended guide for English language curriculum delivery in Anambra State.	3.35	0.52	2.90	0.67
5.	I integrate all language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) as outlined in the English language curriculum.	3.48	0.54	3.25	0.61
6.	I use the assessment methods suggested in the Anambra State English curriculum.	3.30	0.57	3.10	0.65
7.	I incorporate the recommended texts specific to Anambra State in my teaching of English language.	3.38	0.55	3.12	0.62
8.	I follow the English language curriculum's guidelines for teaching grammar and vocabulary.	3.45	0.47	3.15	0.60
9.	My lesson plans reflect the English language curriculum's emphasis on communicative language teaching.	3.25	0.60	2.90	0.63
10.	I implement the English language curriculum's approach to teaching cultural aspects of the English language, including local Anambra contexts.	3.37	0.55	3.07	0.63
	Grand Mean	**3.37**	**0.54**	**3.07**	**0.63**

The results indicate that public school teachers reported higher adherence to curriculum implementation practices compared to private school teachers. Public schools demonstrated high extent of implementation with a grand mean of 3.37, while private schools showed high extent with a lower grand mean of 3.07. The largest disparities were observed in adherence to pacing guides and emphasis on communicative language teaching approaches.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the implementation of the prescribed English language curriculum between public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State.

Table 2: Independent Samples t-Test for Curriculum Implementation

Variable	School Type	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	Df	p-value	Cohend's d
Curriculum Implementation	Public	39	3.37	0.54	2.893	93	0.005	0.589
	Private	56	3.07	0.63				

An independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in curriculum implementation between public schools (M = 3.37, SD = 0.54) and private schools (M = 3.07, SD = 0.63); t(93) = 2.89, p = 0.005, Cohen's d = 0.589. The magnitude of

difference was moderate to large, with public schools demonstrating significantly higher levels of curriculum implementation. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Research Question 2: To what extent are the available material resources adequate for effective English language curriculum implementation in public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State?

Table 3: Mean Responses on Material Resources Adequacy in Public and Private Schools

S/No	Items	Public		Private	
		χ	SD	χ	SD
1.	I have access to all the recommended textbooks for implementing English curriculum in Anambra State.	3.15	0.62	2.58	0.74
2.	My school provides adequate supplementary materials (e.g., workbooks, handouts) for English Language instruction.	3.08	0.68	2.45	0.81
3.	I have sufficient audio-visual resources to support language learning in my classroom.	2.95	0.72	2.35	0.85
4.	My classroom is equipped with technology (e.g., computers, projectors) to enhance English instruction.	2.12	0.72	2.35	0.85
5.	I have access to a well-stocked library with English language resources relevant to curriculum delivery.	3.05	0.71	2.68	0.79
6.	The available resources are appropriate for different learning styles in teaching of English Language.	2.98	0.65	2.48	0.73
7.	I have access to locally-sourced materials to supplement my teaching.	3.18	0.58	2.46	0.82
8.	My school provides adequate teacher guides and manuals for curriculum implementation.	3.12	0.64	2.72	0.76
9.	I have access to professional development resources related to English language teaching in Anambra State.	2.85	0.76	2.28	0.84
10.	The physical classroom space is conducive for implementing various teaching strategies.	2.95	0.69	2.03	0.91
	Grand Mean	**2.94**	**0.67**	**2.36**	**0.80**

The results show that public school teachers reported higher adequacy of material resources compared to private school teachers. Public schools demonstrated high extent of resource adequacy with a grand mean of 2.94, while private schools showed low extent with a grand mean of 2.36. The largest disparities were observed in access to locally-sourced materials and physical classroom space conduciveness.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the adequacy of material resources for English language curriculum implementation between public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State.

Table 4: Independent Samples t-Test for Material Resources Adequacy

Variable	School Type	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	df	p-value	Cohend's d
Material Resources Adequacy	Public	39	2.94	0.67	4.524	93	0.000	0.784
	Private	56	2.36	0.80				

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An independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in material resources adequacy between public schools (M = 2.94, SD = 0.67) and private schools (M = 2.36, SD = 0.80); t(93) = 4.52, p < 0.001, Cohen's d = 0.78. The magnitude of difference was large, with public schools reporting significantly higher adequacy of material resources. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Research Question 3: To what extent do the teaching methods used by teachers align with English language curriculum objectives in public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State?

Table 5: Mean Responses on Teaching Methods Alignment with Curriculum Objectives

S/No	Items	Public		Private	
		X	SD	χ	SD
1.	I successfully implement student-centered learning approaches in my English Language classes.	3.42	0.51	2.98	0.67
2.	I effectively use group work and pair activities in my English Language lessons	3.25	0.58	2.71	0.74
3.	I incorporate project-based learning as part of the curriculum implementation.	3.38	0.62	2.84	0.75
4.	I use technological aids effectively to enhance student engagement and learning in English lessons.	2.68	0.83	2.16	0.92
5.	I integrate assessment strategies in my teaching of English Language.	3.15	0.79	2.63	0.94
6.	I employ differentiated instruction to take care of diverse learning needs in English Language class.	3.08	0.62	2.56	0.77
7.	I use local contexts and examples from Anambra State to make English Language lessons more relatable.	3.28	0.69	2.68	0.84
	Grand Mean	**3.18**	**0.66**	**2.65**	**0.80**

The results indicate that public school teachers reported higher alignment of teaching methods with curriculum objectives compared to private school teachers. Public schools demonstrated high extent of alignment with a grand mean of 3.18, while private schools showed high extent but lower alignment with a grand mean of 2.65. The largest disparities were observed in student-centered learning approaches and use of local contexts.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the alignment of teaching methods with English language curriculum objectives between public and private upper basic education schools in Awka South LGA, Anambra State.

Table 6: Independent Samples t-Test for Teaching Methods Alignment

Variable	School Type	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	Df	p-value	Cohend's d
Teaching Methods Alignment	Public	39	3.18	0.66	4.131	93	0.000	0.721
	Private	56	2.65	0.80				

An independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in teaching methods alignment between public schools (M = 3.18, SD = 0.66) and private schools (M = 2.65, SD

= 0.80); t(93) = 4.13, p < 0.001, Cohen's d = 0.72. The magnitude of difference was large, with public school teachers demonstrating significantly better alignment of teaching methods with curriculum objectives. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The finding that public schools demonstrated significantly higher levels of English language curriculum implementation compared to private schools challenges conventional assumptions about educational delivery effectiveness across school types in Nigeria. This result aligns with Eze and Chukwu's (2023) observation that regular monitoring and evaluation in Anambra State ensures consistent adherence to prescribed guidelines, suggesting that the structured oversight mechanisms inherent in public school administration create accountability systems that promote curriculum fidelity. The superior performance of public schools can be attributed to their operation under direct government supervision, which requires rigid adherence to standardized curriculum guidelines, contrasting with private schools' autonomy that may lead to market-driven approaches deviating from state-prescribed curricula. This finding contradicts Okafor and Nwankwo's (2021) Enugu State study that found private schools exhibited higher curriculum adherence, indicating potential regional variations in educational policies and management practices. The moderate to large effect size observed demonstrates that school type substantially influences curriculum implementation practices, suggesting that institutional structure and oversight mechanisms may be more critical determinants of curriculum fidelity than ownership type or perceived quality differences.

The revelation that public schools reported significantly higher adequacy of material resources contradicts conventional expectations about resource availability in Nigerian schools, where private institutions are typically assumed to have superior resources due to their fee-paying capacity. This finding supports Okoro and Nnamani's (2020) study in Enugu State, which found that government funding significantly improved resource availability in public schools, reflecting the impact of recent government investments in basic education infrastructure through programs like Universal Basic Education and other federal initiatives. The lower resource adequacy scores in private schools may reflect financial constraints faced by many private institutions that depend entirely on school fees, which may not always be sufficient for comprehensive resource acquisition. Ahmed and Olusola (2021) found that government provision of audio-visual resources significantly improved teaching effectiveness in Oyo State, supporting the current finding that systematic resource allocation in public schools creates superior conditions for curriculum implementation. The large effect size observed indicates that school type substantially influences resource availability, challenging prevailing assumptions about private school advantages and suggesting that continued government investment in public education infrastructure yields measurable benefits in educational resource provision.

The finding that public school teachers demonstrated significantly better alignment

of their teaching methods with curriculum objectives represents a critical insight into pedagogical effectiveness across school types. This result supports the broader pattern observed in this study regarding public school superiority in curriculum-related practices and aligns with systematic teacher training programs and regular professional development initiatives characteristic of public-school systems. The superior alignment contradicts Akinwale and Ojo's (2020) Lagos State study that found inquiry-based learning more prevalent in well-resourced schools, suggesting that methodology alignment depends more on training and oversight than on school resources or autonomy. Bello and Adetunji (2019) noted that task-based learning methods significantly improved language proficiency when properly implemented, supporting the inference that public schools' adherence to government-prescribed teaching methodologies ensures better curriculum objective alignment. The large effect size indicates that school type substantially influences teaching methodology alignment, challenging assumptions about private school teaching quality and suggesting that standardized training programs and regular supervision create more curriculum-coherent instruction than market-driven approaches employed in private institutions.

Conclusion

This study reveals that public schools in Awka South LGA significantly outperform private schools in English language curriculum implementation, resource adequacy, and teaching methodology alignment, fundamentally challenging conventional assumptions about private school superiority in educational delivery. The findings demonstrate that systematic government investment in public education infrastructure, combined with structured oversight mechanisms and standardized professional development programs, yields measurable benefits in curriculum implementation effectiveness. While public schools face greater implementation challenges, their superior performance across multiple dimensions suggests that institutional structure, professional accountability, and systematic support systems are more critical determinants of educational effectiveness than school ownership type. These results indicate that Nigeria's public education system possesses inherent strengths that warrant recognition and continued investment, while also highlighting the need for enhanced regulatory frameworks to ensure curriculum compliance across all school types for educational equity and quality assurance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Anambra State Ministry of Education should establish mandatory quarterly professional development workshops for all English language teachers across public and private schools.
2. The State Government should develop a centralized resource allocation system ensuring equitable distribution of teaching materials to all upper basic education schools.
3. Educational policymakers should implement comprehensive

curriculum monitoring mechanisms requiring all schools to demonstrate adherence to prescribed English language curriculum guidelines.

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