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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES OF PRINCIPALS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

Ifeanyichukwu Ugwu & Prof. Loyce Onyali
Phone; 08036052742; Phone; 08036772836
E-MAIL: if.ugwu@unizik.edu.ng; E-MAIL: lc.onyali@unizik.edu.ng
Department of Educational Management and Policy
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

ABSTRACT

Consistent improvement in students' academic performance remains the goal which any serious minded school manager much strive to maintain. This prompted the study to comparatively analyze students' academic performance improvement practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra state. One research question guided the study and one hypothesis was tested. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 657 public and private secondary school principals in Anambra state.No sampling was done due to the relatively small size of the population of the study.A i6-item questionnaire titled ''Questionnaire for Students Academic Performance Improvement Practices of Principals' in Public and Private Secondary Schools (QSAPPP)''was the instrument for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts from Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Cronbach alpha method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. Reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained. The researcher together with the help of twelve research assistants collected the data for the study. Mean was used to answer the research question, while t-test was used to test the null. It was found out among others that Private secondary schools principals in Anambra adopt and engage in the students' academic performance improvement practices more than their public secondary schools counterparts. Based on the findings it was recommended that Public secondary school principals should be encouraged to make educational information available to teachers for improved instructional delivery and also advised to see the need to visit the classrooms regularly to observe teachers in action for the purpose of making professional suggestions for improvement.

Introduction

It is no-brainer that no nation can develop beyond the level of development in her education sector. This is unarguably true because the manpower requirement of any economy is dependent largely on the output of the education sector. Accordingly, the role of education in transforming the citizens both in character and in learning such that they become fully equipped to contribute towards the development of the society cannot be over-emphasized.

Education in Nigeria is of three folds namely; tertiary, secondary and primary. Secondary education is so vital in that it provides a child with additional literacy and numeracy knowledge beyond what is offered at primary schools (FRN, 2013). It equally establishes a strong link between primary and tertiary education.

Secondary school principals are responsible for the provision of the needed academic leadership that will help facilitate the implementation of various learning programmes aimed at improving the academic performance of learners and the learning situation. This the principals can do by: making educational information available to teachers for improved instructional delivery, visiting the classrooms regularly to observe teachers in action for the purpose of making professional suggestions for improvement and inspect teachers' lesson notes and makes corrections where necessary to enhance the quality of their instructional delivery among others.

Federal Republic of Nigerian through the inspectorate unit of Ministry of education identified periodic evaluation and monitoring of students' academic performance as one of the cardinal responsibilities of the principals that will help improve the students' academic performance in both public and private schools. This the government insists should be engaged in by principals in public and private secondary schools so that comparability, uniformity and quality assurance can be achieved in practice and operations of secondary schools.

However, in Anambar state, observations made by the researcher as well as views expressed by some pundits suggest that there are some preconceived notions about public and private secondary schools; for instance, Sunil (2021) posits that students in privates schools perform better than those of private schools because better academic leadership is provided in private schools but Orike (2019) subscribes to the opposite and insists that academic progress of students is monitored and evaluated periodically more in public schools. To settle this debate, this study will empirically compare students' academic performance improvement practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anamba state.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary school Principals be they in private or public schools are by virtue of their position as administrative heads responsible for stimulating and controlling the academic activities in the schools, ensuring that the curriculum contents are covered, providing conducive environment for teaching and learning, among others. However, the increasing number of private schools a good number of which operate in shanties and slums and the rush and preference for private schools by parents in Anambra state would seem to suggest that principals in public secondary school are inefficient in providing the needed academic leadership that will help improve students' academic performance. If this trend is not tackled urgently, the future of public education would come under serious threat. Hence, the problem of this study put in question form is how can students' academic performance improvement

practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anamba state compare empirically?

Research Question/Hypothesis

The research question that guided the study is:

What are the students' academic performance improvement practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?

The null hypothesis was tested 0.05 level of significance

There will be no significant difference in the mean ratings of Anambra State public and private secondary school principals on their engagement in academic performance management practices.

Research Method

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive research design aims at collecting data on, describing and assessing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. The design was found appropriate for the study because students' academic performance improvement practices of principals are existing characteristics, features and facts in secondary schools in Anambra state. The population of the study comprised all the 657 public and private secondary school principals in Anambra state. No sampling was done due to the relatively small size of the population of the study. A 14-item questionnaire titled ''Questionnaire Students' Academic Performance Practices of Principals' in Public and Private Secondary Schools (QSAPPP)"was the instrument for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts from Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Cronbach alpha method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. Reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained. The researcher together with the help of twelve research assistants collected the data for the study. The data collected were analyzed using mean while the hypotheses were tested using t-test.

Presentation of Results

Based on data analysis the following results were obtained**.**

Research Question One: What are the academic performance Improvement practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings on the Academic Performance Improvement Practices Of Principals in Public and Private Secondary Schools.

		Public (n=250)			Private (n=382)		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Obtain educational information from literature sources	2.75	.78	Agree	2.96	.70	Agree
2.	Make educational information available to teachers for improved instructional delivery	3.04	.74	Agree	3.10	.58	Agree
3.	Visit the classrooms regularly to observe teachers in action for the purpose of making professional suggestions for improvement	2.95	.71	Agree	3.10	.54	Agree
4.	Inspect teachers' lesson notes and makes corrections where necessary to enhance the quality of their instructional delivery	3.13	.80	Agree	3.20	.64	Agree
5.	Ensure that teaching aids and other instructional materials are readily available for improved teaching and learning	2.99	.74	Agree	3.18	.70	Agree
6.	Offer professional advice to teachers to improve their task performance	2.77	.82	Agree	3.08	.84	Agree
7.	Observe and analyses school records (examination results) for improvement	2.75	.84	Agree	2.91	.73	Agree
8.	Monitor the continuous assessment exercise of the students to encourage their participation in all the school programmes	2.89	.76	Agree	2.92	.79	Agree
9.	Observe the teachers during lesson delivery so as to offer advice where necessary.	2.92	.78	Agree	3.09	.75	Agree
10.	Ensure that the curriculum contents are covered	2.80	.83	Agree	2.89	.88	Agree
11.	Ensures that the environment is conducive for teaching and learning	2.60	.84	Agree	2.92	.82	Agree
12.	Make provision for learners with special needs to bring about all inclusive learning	2.46	.91	Disagree	2.81	.99	Agree
13.	Interact with learners in their language of instruction to find out how they are coping with their language of instruction for the purpose of adjustment if need be	2.62	.69	Agree	2.80	.63	Agree
14.	Get feedback by examining the views of the students about the quality of education they receive for necessary improvement	2.00	.83	Disagree	3.01	.68	Agree

Table 1 shows the academic performance management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State. Public secondary school principals agree to 12 of the 14 listed items as the academic performance management practices they adopt in their schools. Their

mean rating for the 12 items ranged from 2.60 to 3.04. Their counterpart in private schools on the other hand agree to all the 14 listed items as the academic performance management practices they adopt in their schools with their mean rating ranging from 2.80 to 3.20.

Table 2: t-test Comparison of Public and Private Secondary School Principals' Mean Ratings of Their Academic Performance Improvement Practices.

Source of variation	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	*P*-value	Decision
Public	250	2.84	.36	630	4.28	.000	Sig
Private	382	2.99	.44				

Table 2 shows that the mean score for public secondary school principals (*M=2.84, SD=.36*) was significantly less than that of private school principals (*M=2.99, SD=.44*); *t (630) 4.28, p=.000*. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on their engagement in academic performance management practices was therefore rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The result on table one shows that both public and private secondary schools adopt and engage in students' academic performance improvement practices but by inspection, the mean scores for 12 out of the 14 items ranged from 2.60 to 3.04 for public while that of their private school counterpart ranged from 2.80 to 3.20 indicating that private school principals adopt and engage in students academic performance monitoring practices more than their colleagues in public schools. This finding supports the finding of Akinyele (2021) who found out that private secondary school principals in Oyo state, Nigeria practice students performance appraisal more regularly than their counterparts in public schools. Time proximity and same methodology may be responsible for concurrence of the two studies.The study was conducted in 2021 while the present study was conducted in 2022. The two studies adopted descriptive survey design. The finding of the present study equally agrees with the finding of Sunil (2021) whose study showed that compared to public secondary schools, private secondary schools are closely and effectively inspected. Teachers and students are efficiently inspected. According to the study, everything that occurs in a private secondary school is inspected to ensure that it is done exceptionally well. The result on table 2 indicates that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of Anambra State public and private secondary school principals on their level of engagement in students' academic performance monitoring practices. This result contradicts the finding of Muhammad, Zeeshan, Ashiq & Saba (2016) whose study showed that there is no difference in students'

knowledge enhancement between public and private sector educational institutions in Pakistan, this sharp disagreement in findings may be due to difference in location, government policy and level of education where the studies were conducted. However, the result of the present study agrees with the finding of Akinyele(2021) who found out that there was a significant difference between students performance appraisal in public and private secondary schools in Oyo state. This implies that private secondary school principals visit the classrooms regularly to observe teachers in action for the purpose of making professional suggestions for improvement, observe the teachers during lesson delivery so as to offer advice where necessary, inspect teachers' lesson notes and makes corrections where necessary to enhance the quality of their instructional delivery among others more than their colleagues in public schools. The finding of this study also agrees with finding of Olga(2014) whose study showed that private primary school principals performed better than their colleagues in public schools on students' performance monitoring and improvement indices such: reminding the teachers of the goals, aims, and objectives of the program at the very beginning of the academic year and discuss same with them, ask the teachers to identify the missing competences of the at-risk students and observe the students during lessons among others. The study equally revealed that there was a significant difference between the public and private primary school principals' behaviors on curriculum management and performance monitoring. Similarity in research design probably accounts for the agreement in the results of the two studies.

Conclusion

Based on the finding, it was concluded that Private secondary schools principals in Anambra adopt and engage in students' academic performance improvement practices more than their public secondary schools counterparts.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of this study, it was recommended that:

Public secondary school principals should be encouraged to make educational information available to teachers for improved instructional delivery and also advised to see the need to visit the classrooms regularly to observe teachers in action for the purpose of making professional suggestions for improvement.

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