

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NSUKKA EDUCATION ZONE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

In recent times, many parents seem to be confused as to the better type of school (public or private secondary school) to send their children/wards. This study investigated and compared the personnel management practices of both public and private secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. A 20-item questionnaire was constructed and administered to 330 respondents comprising 300 teachers and 30 principals. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting 20 public and 10 private secondary schools, while simple random sampling was used to select the teachers and principals from the sampled schools. The mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics were used for the analysis of data. Among the major findings was that recruitment of teachers was based on qualification in public schools more than in private schools. Respondents from both school types agreed that practices to be adopted for student personnel management practices included demonstrating ability to enforce disciplined learning among students. It was recommended, among others, that the State Government should improve on its efforts to encourage and organize seminars, workshops

and conferences for staff of both public and private secondary schools. The Ministry of Education should strictly inspect schools to ensure that only educationally qualified and experienced persons are appointed principals in private schools.

Introduction

The Universal Primary Education (UPE) Act of 1976 and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act of 1999 led to the problem of increased school enrolment and infrastructural and other demands which the Federal government has been contending with. A rather extensive moral decay seems to have gripped many of the nation's educational institutions. This is characterized by indiscipline, immorality, violence, drug abuse, cult activities, and various forms of examination malpractices. These pose serious problems for the school management. The poor state of education in the country has given rise to lack of confidence in public schools and the springing up of private schools to compete with them. In addition, the need to establish private schools arose as a result of the national set target of providing education for all by the year 2015 (Okafor, 1997). The private schools, as referred to in this study, are Voluntary Agency schools and those owned by individuals and communities for profit making.

According to Obi (2004), management involves planning activities, which aim at the fulfillment of the goals of the organization. Such activities include description of tasks to be performed, assigning the tasks to be performed to the personnel, motivating the personnel to perform well, co-ordinating the personnel efforts and evaluating their performance. Ezeocha (1990) believed that appropriate staff should be employed, for secondary schools. By staff, he meant certificated personnel, like teachers, guidance counsellors, administrators; and also non-certificated personnel, like drivers, gatemen, cooks, matrons, labourers and cleaners.

Mgbodile (2004) discussed student personnel administration as that process of activities which involves decision making, forecasting, planning and organizing students and other resources, such as

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manpower, capital equipment and financial resources, and conditions in secondary schools. According to him, the student personnel administration of any good secondary school should be founded on democratic principles involving participation and partnership between the principal, the staff and student representatives. These principles encourage co-operation, consultation, unity of purpose and unity of command, which are key to educational progress in a secondary school.

In Nsukka Education Zone, records showed that there were sixty-eight (68) public secondary schools and fifteen (15) private secondary schools (State Education Commission, Nsukka Zone, 2006). Some of them (private and public) lacked adequate facilities in number and quality. Some of the private schools seemed to have been set up as huge profit-making enterprises. It is therefore obvious that since such schools are neither subsidized nor dependent on the authority of the State Ministry of Education, the managerial ability of the proprietors will determine the standard of the schools.

Some comparative studies have been carried out on public and private secondary schools. Omoregie (2004) undertook a comparative study on teachers' adequacy in quantity and quality in both public and private secondary schools. The findings showed that teacher-student ratio was lower for private than for public secondary schools. As regards teachers' quality, public secondary schools had the right calibre as against the private secondary schools.

Madu (2004), in comparing the academic performance of students in Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations, discovered that students in private secondary schools, perform better in Mathematics and English Language than their counterparts in Public Secondary Schools. Doyle (1980) highlighted the mutual understanding or relationship that exists in private secondary schools when he opined that private schools can offer academic and non-academic standards of accomplishment, professional integrity and independence for the staff, a decent and physically safe environment for students and teachers, manageable size in terms of system, a substantive programme that

satisfied the interests of staff, students, and parents, moral instruction or value-centered education and mutually satisfactory peer-group contacts. According to him the Behavioural Science theory may work only for private schools, where the proprietors would want to gain the support of their clients. It is purely business-like. Therefore, the ideas and contributions of the staff are highly encouraged.

Parents, these days, seem confused as to which type of school is preferable for their children/wards. The present trend is that some people seem to prefer private secondary schools, even when the schools charge the full cost of education. Standards of education in public secondary schools tend to be rated low despite the high calibre of teachers they have. At times, the incessant strikes in public schools, due to delayed or non-payment of salaries and other entitlements, contribute to the low standard of their teachers' performance. On the other hand, there is apparent stability in private secondary schools, since their teachers hardly go on strike. Furthermore, it is also alleged that teachers in private secondary schools work harder than their counterparts in public secondary schools. Therefore, private secondary schools appear to be rated high.

There is, therefore, the need to investigate and compare the staff personnel and student personnel management practices of public and private secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the staff personnel management practices of principals of public and private secondary schools?
2. What are the student personnel management practices of principals of public and private secondary schools?

Null Hypothesis: This was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

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There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals of public and private secondary schools with regard to staff personnel management.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey design aimed at comparing the personnel management practices of public and private secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. The Education Zone comprised 5 Local Government Areas with 68 public and 15 government-approved private secondary schools. Through proportionate stratified random sampling technique, 20 public and 10 private secondary schools were selected. Through simple random sampling technique, 10 teachers from each of the 30 secondary schools were selected, giving 300 teachers. All the 30 principals were also part of the samples for the study.

A twenty (20) item instrument was structured on a four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) rated 4, 3, 2 and 1 point(s) respectively. It was intended to elicit information from the respondents on management of public and private secondary schools in the Zone. A trial test was carried out in another Zone (Obollo Afor). Consequently, the Cronbach alpha and reliability coefficient calculated were 0.74 and 0.61, for sections A (staff personnel management) and B (student personnel management) respectively, indicating their reliability. Services of some Research Assistants were employed in collecting data.

Data Analysis and Results

Data collected were analyzed, using mean values. The t-test statistics were employed to ascertain the null hypothesis formulated for the study. The results are presented in Tables 2.1 to 2.3, according to research questions and hypothesis that guided the study.

Research Question one

What are the staff personnel management practices of principals of public and private secondary schools?

Table 2.1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Teachers' and Principals' Responses to the Staff Personnel Management Practices of Principals of Public and Private Secondary Schools

S/N	Items	Staff Personnel Management Practices								
		Private (N=110)			Public (N=220)			Overall (N=330)		
		X	SD	Decision	X	SD	Decision	X	SD	Decision
1	Recruitment and selection of staff is based on qualification	3.61	0.51	A	3.84	0.58	A	3.63	0.55	A
2	Principal is not involved in the recruitment and selection of staff	2.00	0.94	D	2.35	0.93	D	2.23	0.95	D
3	Orientation on the job is given to newly recruited staff	3.27	0.75	A	3.09	0.67	A	3.15	0.70	A
4	Principal motivates the staff by providing incentives.	2.28	0.90	A	2.93	0.73	A	2.91	0.79	A
5	He encourages full and active staff participation in extra curricular activities	3.13	0.69	A	3.31	0.67	A	3.25	0.68	A
6	He encourages staff professional growth through workshops and seminars	3.31	0.69	A	2.62	0.82	A	2.85	0.68	A
7	He strives to enhance the promotion of his staff	2.93	0.81	A	3.18	0.66	A	3.10	0.87	A
8	He encourages free contributions of ideas and suggestions from teachers through regular staff meetings	3.22	0.74	A	3.4	0.65	A	3.34	0.70	A
9	He is competent in ways of ensuring discipline among staff	3.19	0.76	A	3.35	0.69	A	3.30	0.69	A
10	He exercises patience with staff whose low productivity is due to differences in aptitude and abilities	2.68	0.77	A	3.01	0.70	A	2.90	0.74	A
11	He regards his staff as equal participants in the administrative process	2.65	0.90	A	2.50	0.83	A	2.55	0.86	A
12	He encourages teachers to be creative in the delivery of their lessons	3.50	0.57	A	3.31	0.71	A	3.37	0.67	A

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From Table 2.1, each of Items 1 and 3 to 12 has a mean greater than 2.5 implying that they are acceptable to the respondents, while Item 2 is not, because it has a mean less than 2.50. Principal is not involved in the recruitment and selection of staff.

Research Question Two

What are the student personnel management practices of principals of public and private secondary schools?

Table 2.2: *Mean and Standard Deviation of Teachers' and Principals' responses to the Student Personnel Management Practices of School Principals of Public and Private Secondary Schools*

S/N	Items	Private (N=110)			Public (N=220)			Overall (N=330)		
		X	SD	Decision	X	SD	Decision	X	SD	Decision
13	Principal demonstrates ability to enforce disciplined learning among students	3.55	0.53	A	3.57	0.58	A	3.56	0.56	A
14	He encourages full and active student participation in extra curricular activities	3.39	0.59	A	3.59	0.54	A	3.52	0.56	A
15	He motivates the students to learn by setting goals	3.27	0.59	A	3.30	0.77	A	3.29	0.71	A
16	He gives fatherly advice to erring students	3.56	0.55	A	3.55	0.58	A	3.55	0.71	A
17	He ensures that there is periodic report on students' welfare and shows concern on any sick or vereaved student	3.27	0.72	A	3.25	0.60	A	3.26	0.64	A
18	He visits the students in their classes to ensure adequate teaching and learning	3.57	0.50	A	3.43	0.55	A	3.48	0.54	A
19	He ensures that there is adequate provision of catering services to students	2.96	0.90	A	3.01	0.68	A	3.00	0.76	A
20	He assigns limited supervisory role to student leaders.	3.13	0.61	A	3.17	0.57	A	3.16	0.58	A

From Table 2.2, all the items are acceptable to the respondents as the student personnel management practices by the school principals, since they have means greater than 2.50.

Null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers of public and private secondary schools with regard to staff personnel management.

Table 2.3: *T-test of the mean rating of responses of principals and teachers of public and private secondary schools on staff personnel management*

Items	School type	N	Mean	SD	df	T	Sig. (2-tail)	Decision
1	Private	110	3.61	0.51				
	Public	220	3.84	0.58	328	-0.49	0.623	Not significant
2	Private	110	2.00	0.94				
	Public	220	3.09	0.67	328	2.23	0.26	Significant
3	Private	110	2.87	0.90				
	Public	220	3.09	0.67	328	2.23	0.26	Significant
4	Private	110	2.87	0.90				
	Public	220	2.93	0.73	328	-0.64	0.524	Not significant
5	Private	110	3.13	0.69				
	Public	220	3.31	0.67	328	-2.31	0.22	Significant
6	Private	110	3.31	0.81				
	Public	220	2.62	0.82	328	-1.22	0.000	Significant
7	Private	110	2.93	0.74	328	-3.16	0.002	Significant
	Public	220	3.18	0.66				
8	Private	110	3.22	0.76				
	Public	220	3.40	0.65	328	-2.26	0.24	Significant
9	Private	110	3.19	0.67				
	Public	220	3.35	0.69	328	-1.99	0.047	Significant
10	Private	110	2.68	0.77				
	Public	220	3.01	0.70	328	-3.94	0.000	Significant
11	Private	110	2.65	0.90				
	Public	220	2.50	0.83	328	1.41	0.59	Not significant
12	Private	110	3.50	0.57				
	Public	220	3.31	0.71	328	2.39	0.018	Significant

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Table 2.3 shows that there were differences between the mean responses of public and private secondary schools principals and teachers on Items 2,3,5 to 10 and 12, since their 2-tail values are less than 0.05, while Items 1, 4 and 11 did not vary significantly, since their 2-tail figures were greater than 0.05.

Discussion

The principals and staff of both public and private secondary schools are in agreement that the practices to be adopted in staff personnel management include the following: Recruitment and selection of staff based on academic qualification; giving on-the-job orientation to newly recruited staff; encouraging staff motivation by providing incentives; encouraging staff professional growth through workshops and seminars; enhancing staff promotion; encouraging free contribution of ideas and suggestions from teachers through regular staff meetings; exercising patience with staff whose low productivity is due to differences in aptitude and abilities; regarding staff as equal participants in the administrative process; and encouraging teachers to be creative in the delivery of their lessons.

The findings correspond to the assertion of Mgbodile (2004) that teachers of all grades should be exposed to regular on-the-job training so as to improve their performance. However, data analysis pointed out differences in staff personnel management practices between public and private secondary schools in the Education Zone studied. Although principals of both types of schools generally are not involved in the recruitment and selection of staff, those in public secondary schools recommend non-teaching staff for selection and recruitment.

It is no surprise that the private secondary school principals rated highly the following: organizing orientation on the job for newly recruited staff, encouraging staff professional growth through workshops and seminars, regarding their staff as equal participants in the administrative process and encouraging teachers to be creative in

the delivery of their lessons. These findings agree with Doyle (1980) who highlighted the mutual relationships that exist in private schools.

The proprietors and invariably the principals too would want to gain the co-operation of their staff whose ideas and contributions are highly encouraged. Staff development will also enhance both staff and students' performance and invariably satisfy their clients, including parents. It is purely business-like, which partly explains the recent preference of some parents for private schools.

It is significant to note that recruitment and selection of staff based on qualification are applied more in public than in private secondary schools. This agrees with Omoregie (2004), who stated that public secondary schools had the right calibre of staff recruited by the State Government, as against private secondary schools. This ought to promote the standard of performance of both staff and students. How come then that private secondary schools generally out-perform public secondary schools? This suggests an inadequacy of basing recruitment of staff on paper qualification alone. Some other measures must be sought to elicit teachers' performance ability.

In case of student personnel management practices, principals of both school types are in agreement that practices to be adopted include demonstrating ability to enforce disciplined learning among students, encouraging their full and active participation in extra-curricular activities and motivating them to learn by setting goals. Provision of catering and welfare services for students and weekly supervision of teaching and learning should be upheld. Obi (2004) stated that through this process the problems of teaching are identified and how to solve them are discussed between the principals and teachers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite similarities in the staff and student personnel management of public and private secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone, significant differences exist between them in the recruitment of staff. Different individuals and organizations own private secondary schools

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and recruit their staff in their own ways. Hence, some low calibre teachers are recruited by proprietors of private secondary schools. This has serious implications for the Inspectorate Division of the State Ministry of Education. Also, there is close supervision of instruction by principals of private schools – a very crucial aspect of student personnel management.

The following recommendations were proposed to improve standard of education in the Education Zone irrespective of school types:

- School proprietors, including State Government, should reconsider basing recruitment solely on paper qualification. Some other measures should be adopted that would enhance staff performance ability.
- State Government should improve on its efforts in grant-aiding both public and private secondary schools, promoting staff development through workshops and seminars, and providing essential services to the schools. This will help in the maintenance of standards.
- The State Government should emulate President Barack Obama's proposal to fund schools in Mexico in order to reduce dropout rate. Obama (2009) proposed strict monitoring of secondary schools to help principals of struggling schools find a solution. Among other things, his government will foster better alternative high schools and transfer schools, where students who have dropped out and who are at the risk of dropping out, can return to the classroom and earn their diploma.
- The State Ministry of Education should embark on proper inspection of both public and private secondary schools to maintain adequate standards in education. Currently, they seem to lack funds, equipment and facilities for inspection duties. School inspectors should be properly equipped with vehicles and other needed facilities for the work. The same thing applies to the school supervisors in the various education zones.

In addition, produced inspection/supervision reports should receive proper attention at the headquarters.

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