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**QUALITY ASSURANCE IN STAFFING: A COMPARISON OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EKET EDUCATION ZONE, AKWA IBOM STATE.**

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Abstract

The study examined quality assurance in the management of schools with a comparison of private and public secondary schools in Eket Education Zone of Akwa Ibom State. The study was conducted to examine the difference between staff quality in private and public secondary schools. The research question and the null hypothesis which guided the study were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and independent t-test at .05 level of significance and 30 degree of freedom respectively. An ex-post facto research design was used. The population of the study consisted of all teachers in private and public secondary schools in Eket Education zone of with the population size of 1607. The sample size of 161 teachers was selected through stratified random sampling technique from 10 private and 15 public secondary schools in the zone. Data collection was done with the use of the researcher-developed instrument tagged "Quality Assurance in the Management of Private and Public Secondary Schools Questionnaire (QAMPPSSQ)" measured in a 4-point rating scale. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the internal consistency method of reliability and the result gave the reliability value of 0.74. The finding of the study showed significant difference in staff quality between public and private schools. The study concluded that staff quality is better in public schools than in private schools. The study recommended among others that teachers in both public and private secondary schools should university degrees with teaching qualification; Ministry of Education should create a Directorate for private schools; staff recruitment should be strictly based on merit devoid of political colouration and school Boards should be constituted for all private schools to perform personnel functions.

Introduction

Quality has to do with the worth of something. It is an essential and distinguishing attribute of something or someone. Quality can also be perceived as a degree or grade of excellence. Quality examines deviations from defects and deficiencies. The International standard Organization (ISO) (1994) looks at quality as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs". Quality is the attainment of fitness for purpose in a given situation in a systematic and reliable fashion to provide confidence to the client that accurate and reproducible results indicate that the products or services meet or exceed customer expectations (Jegade, 2017). Quality has to

do with the extent to which something is good or bad. In the positive sense, it depicts a high standard. Governments and stakeholders in education the world over show concern over quality because of the essential role it plays in societal development.

Quality assurance is regarded as a process of continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning activities. It is achieved through mechanisms internal and external to the secondary school system. Internal mechanism is used by the school leadership or school boards to effect appropriate control and regulation of school activities and functions. External control is carried out by institutions such as State Secondary Education Board, Ministry of Education, and external examination bodies such as West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO), National Business and Technical Education Board (NABTEB), etc.

Quality assurance describes the totality of the management practices, processes and control measures put in place by institutions to promote and ensure quality in its operations and products. Quality assurance is to ensure that at least the provisions of the minimum academic standards documents are attained, maintained and enhanced. It is also to assure prospective employers and tertiary institutions that admit students for higher studies that secondary school leavers have attained an acceptable level of competence based on knowledge and skill acquisition to be eligible for further studies.

Staffing involves the personnel function of hiring and firing employees in organizations. There are other functions in between hiring and firing such as orientation, training and development, transfer, discipline, compensation and retirement. Recruitment describes all those activities or operations which the school administration or the relevant government body or agency undertakes with a view to securing personnel of the desired quality and quantity to meet the needs of the school (Alabi, 2000, Odunwaiye, 2000, Ogunsaju, 1990)

Effective recruitment and placement processes are prerequisites to the development of an effective teaching workforce. Recruitment usually begins with a preliminary screening (Uyanga, 1995) this normally starts with advertisement which specifies the type of people , their qualifications, experiences, etc that are needed for the job. Those who know they do not have the requisite qualifications would save themselves the time and stress of not applying for the job at all. Only the eligible applicants are shortlisted and invited for interview. This is closely followed by an invitation to interview where final screening is carried out and decision taken as to who should be employed. This follows the pattern of the public school system and is usually carried out by Teaching Service Commission (TSC), sometimes called State Secondary Education Board (SSEB) after approval for recruitment by the state executive council. Public secondary school principals do not have the power to employ any teaching staff or non-teaching staff for government to payroll, except those on part time or contract and paid by the school through internal arrangement such as Parent-Teacher Forum.

However, the case in private secondary schools is different. In most cases, there are no school Boards that carry out personnel functions, except some faith based schools. In some private schools, recruitment is done by the proprietor or the spouse or the principal, sometime alone. In most private schools, qualifications are not the sole basis of recruitment but familial relationship or connection. Sometimes, people with very low qualifications such as SSCE are employed to teach. Often, there is a disregard to teaching qualifications for teachers as even the principal may not have a teaching qualification.

In their study on Parents-Teachers' Association and Quality Assurance in Management of Public and Private Secondary Schools in Kwara State, Nigeria, Abdulkareem and Fasisi's (2010) finding was that Parents-Teachers' Association (PTA) is better organized in private schools than in public schools, adding that this continues to play significant roles in school-based supervision towards quality in the school system, even as the Parents-Teachers' Forum(PTF) also makes sure that that quality teachers are employed to raise the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

In another study on Supervision for Quality Assurance in Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria, Oluremi and Oyewole's findings were that effective supervision, efficient supervisors, adequate learning facilities, and staff quality constitute the plank on which quality education in both public and private schools rest.

However, this study on quality assurance is different because staffing (staff quality) will constitute the variable for investigation.

Statement of the Problem

Public schools are established by government as a social service to cater for the interest of the generality of the people. In doing this, government does not have the interest of any segment of the society at heart, be it the rich or the poor, the elite or ordinary citizens. It is usually funded by the government through budgetary provisions. Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAS) are usually made to oversee the running of such schools in terms of recruitment of staff, compensation, training and development, discipline, transfer and retirement. These functions are usually centralized and carried out by the relevant government MDAs such as State Secondary Education Boards or Teaching Service Commissions. Public schools are said to be associated with lateness to school by staff and students, absenteeism, insubordination, indecent dressing, disorderliness, immorality, examination malpractice, lethargy by teachers, stealing, bullying, poor performance in external examinations among others.

It was this gloomy scenario that provided a welcoming arrival to private schools with the intention of redeeming the battered image of the public school system through effective teaching, funding and learning environment, well equipped libraries, well-furnished classrooms with compliance to teacher-student ratio, engagement of better qualified teachers and good school discipline that will be reflected in the quality of students produced. The fundamental question this study seeks to answer is this: Is staff quality in private schools better than public schools? The problem of the study therefore is to examine quality assurance practices in public and private schools in Eket Education zone, Akwa Ibom state, using staff quality.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate quality assurance practices in private and public secondary schools in Eket Education zone, Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the objective of this study is: To examine the difference between the quality of staff of private and public secondary schools.

Research Question

What is the difference in staff quality between private and public schools?

Null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between staff quality in private and public secondary schools.

Research Methods

The design of this study was the ex-post facto survey design because the researcher had no control over experimental variables. In this type of design, group differentiated in terms of independent variable was compared to a given dependent variable. In this study, quality assurance variable in terms of staffing was compared in terms of its influence on the quality of education. The independent variable in this study had already occurred and was studied retrospectively.

The population of the study consisted of all the 1173 teachers in 63 public secondary schools and all the 429 teachers in 37 private schools in Eket Education Zone of Akwa Ibom State. The population of the was 1607 teachers distributed into (63+37)=100 schools. The sample size from this study was 165 teachers selected from 35 private and public secondary schools in Eket Education Zone. One hundred and seventeen (117) teachers selected from public secondary schools, while 48 teachers were selected from private secondary schools through stratified random sampling technique.

A researcher made instrument, "Quality Assurance in the Management of Private and Public Secondary school Questionnaire (QAMPPSSQ)" was used for data collection. The QAMPPSSQ had two sections, A and B. Section 'A' had five items that gave information about demographic data of the respondents. Section 'B' had four items that measured quality variable on staffing. All the four items were measured in a 4-point rating scale of strongly agree (4 points), agree (3 points), disagree (2 points), strongly disagree (1 point). Face and content validities of QAMPPSSQ were ascertained by experts in test and measurement. Out of 165 copies of the questionnaire used, 161 were correctly filled by the teachers and returned for analysis, thus giving 97.57 percent success.

To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the researcher carried out a reliability testing using 20 teachers who were not part of the research subjects. The instrument was administered once and the data obtained were subjected to the test of internal consistency method of reliability using Cronbach's alpha. The result gave the reliability value of 0.74, which was high enough to justify the use of the instrument.

The researcher went to the selected secondary schools with a research assistant specifically trained for this purpose on different occasions and made contacts, sought the agreement of all the teachers to serve them with the questionnaire. The instruments were retrieved from the teachers each day in the same manner they were distributed. This lasted for 3 days. Out of 165 copies of the questionnaire administered, 161 copies were correctly filled and returned for analysis. The data collected in the study were analyzed using independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance. For each item, the cutoff was 2.5 midpoints between agree and disagree. Therefore, response for each item that was up to 2.5 and above was regarded high while those below 2.5 was regarded low.

Result

The result of the study was presented and discussed based on the research question and the hypothesis that guided the study. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation, while the null hypothesis was tested using independent t-test.

Table 1: Showing mean(x) and standard deviation (SD) of Teachers' response on staff quality between private and public schools.

Variable	Category of school	N	\bar{X}	XX	S
What is the difference in staffing between private and public schools?	Public	113	12.8761	3.2	3.37
	Private	48	11.3750	2.84	0.64

Entries in Table 1 show the mean values of 12.8761 and 11.3750, with mean of means of 3.2 and 2.84 respectively for the difference in quality assurance in staffing between public and private schools. The higher mean value of 12.876 means that quality assurance in staffing in public schools is better than that of the private schools (mean = 11.3750). The mean of means of 3.2 for public schools and 2.84 for private schools are higher than the cutoff point of 2.5. This shows that staff quality in both public and private schools are on the positive side. Also, the standard deviation of 3.37 for public schools shows that opinions of respondents varied regarding staff quality while a standard deviation of 0.64 for private schools shows that opinions regarding staff quality did not vary.

Table 2: Result of independent t-test analysis for the difference in staffing in public and private schools.

Variable	Category of school	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit
Staff quality	Public	113	12.8761	3.36774	3.06*	1.9976
	Private	48	11.3750	.63998		

***significant at .05 alpha level; df=159; N=161**

Table 2 shows that calculated t-value of 3.06 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.976 with 159 degree of freedom at .05 alpha levels. The result is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in quality assurance in staff quality between

private and public schools is rejected. Therefore, the finding here is that public schools have better staff quality than private schools in Eket Education Zone of Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of Findings

The result of data analysis in Table 2 shows that the calculated t-value of 3.06 is greater than the t-critical of 1.976 with 159 degree of freedom at .05 alpha levels. The result is significant and this shows that staff quality in public schools is better than private schools. This finding agrees with that of Ukoha and Oguegbune (2006) who sought to compare the implementation of eight quality indicators in private and public schools in Northern Cross River State. Their finding was that public schools have better quality of teachers than private schools but that private school teachers are more committed to their work than their public school counterparts. Another study by Oguntimehin and Oni (2010) on 'Teachers' Perception of Private Primary Schools' Contribution to Education Development in Ijebu-North Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria agrees with this study that public schools have better qualified teachers than private schools. Oguntimehin and Oni (2010) study revealed that the better performance of private schools students was not as a result of better qualified teachers than public schools but as a result of better supervision from the school heads. Their study claimed that private schools are better supervised than public schools. This may be as a result of the fact that private schools are seen as business ventures that are expected to make profits unlike public schools that render social services to the people. Thus, close monitoring and supervision are essential ingredients of any successful business, even schools. This explains why private schools are closely monitored and controlled by their owners and can fire any staff found wanting without recourse to bureaucratic bottleneck or unnecessary procedural red-tapism inherent in public school systems.

It is instructive to remind ourselves about what Obanya (2011) says about teaching:

*Nigeria is now 'teaching without teachers' the system
Has always aimed at having qualified teacher forgetting
that: A qualified teacher is not necessarily a competent
teacher, a competent teacher is not necessarily an efficient teacher, and an efficient
teacher is not necessarily an effective teacher.*

A qualified teacher is one who meets the basic requirements for qualification for entry into the teaching profession. A competent teacher is the one who has mastered the rules, while an efficient teacher is the one who is capable of applying the rules as learned. The effective teacher, on the other hand, is one who applies creativity, innovation and novelty to teaching and thus maximizes students learning.

Most teachers in both public and private schools do not meet the basic qualification requirements for entry into the teaching profession such as possessing a teaching qualification such as Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), Bachelor in Education (Bed) or any other educationally inclined education qualification. But most times, private schools employ teachers without regard to teaching qualifications even for the principals or vice principals. This, however, is not the case in public schools. The difference lies in the fact that in public schools teachers without teaching qualifications cannot be promoted to the position of the vice principal and beyond. This encourages teachers without teaching qualification to strive to get one. This is so because it is always the dream of every worker to grow to the peak of his/her career. The enthusiasm to acquire teaching qualification is lacking among teachers in private schools basically because of the fact that most of them enter the teaching profession by accident or as

stopgap measure to earn a living. They don't intend making teaching their career. Those in private schools who go ahead to acquire a teaching qualification usually have the intention of switching over to public schools as soon as the opportunity presents itself because conditions of service in public schools are better than private schools.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that staff quality is higher in public schools than private schools. This may be due to the fact that teacher's salaries and emoluments are usually budgeted for by the government throughout the financial year. This is capable of attracting high caliber teachers to public schools as salaries of teachers in private schools depend on the number of students, fees paid by the students, and the proprietor's willingness to pay as at when due. Most private schools pay pitifully poor salary to their teachers. Some private schools usually and deliberately employ low-quality teachers such as SSCE holders, National Diploma (ND) holders so that they can pay them meager salaries and thus maximize more profits. Such is not heard of in public schools.

Besides, some principals of private schools are recruited that from retired Grade 11 teachers, NCE and ND holders. Such positions and in fact employment as a whole are usually given to friends or family members without regard to qualifications. This helps to lower the quality of staff in private schools in Eket Education Zone of Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Qualified teachers in the right number should be recruited and posted to secondary schools across the state. 'Political' recruitment and posting should be deemphasized as it waters down the standard of education.
2. Government should halt the recruitment of teachers without teaching qualifications as this does not augur well for the dignity of the profession.
3. The federal Ministry of Education as well as state Ministries of Education should create a separate Department for private school education in order to monitor these institutions closely to ensure that they don't deviate from their statutory mandates. This department should be saddled with responsibilities such as registration/certification of private schools that comply with the laid down rules and regulations guiding their establishments; maintenance of minimum standards; assessment of staff qualifications; compliance with pupil- teacher ratio and average class size; payment of minimum wages and allowances and the power to derecognize schools and close same down where they fail to meet stipulated government standards.
4. Government should constitute Governing Boards to all private secondary schools in the state. Members of such Boards should be staff of Ministry of Education, Teaching Service Commission or State Secondary Education Board as the case may be. They should perform the functions of recruitment, training, transfer and discipline of private school teachers while staff compensation should be left with the proprietor but monitored by the Board in terms of amount paid and the regularity of such payments.

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QUALITY ASSURANCE IN STAFFING: A COMPARISON OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC

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