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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS PRINCIPALS' ADMISSION AND ORIENTATION PRACTICES IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

Admission and orientation of new students are so germane especially so because they occur at the early stage of a learner's academic life. The widespread signs and symptoms of poor students' admission and orientation practices cutting across public and private secondary schools such as increased dropout rate, lack of focus and sense of direction among students in Anambra state is worrisome and requires urgent attention. This prompted the study to comparatively analyze the admission and orientation practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra state. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were 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 Admission and Orientation Practices of Principals' in Public and Private Secondary Schools (QAOPP)"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. The overall coefficient of 0.90 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 questions, while z-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study among others revealed that Private secondary schools principals in Anambra state adopt and engage in the prescribed admission practices more than their public secondary schools counterparts. Based on the findings it was recommended among others that Anambra state government should put in place, policies that will make it mandatory for principals in public secondary schools to adopt and engage in all the prescribed admission practices before admitting students into public secondary schools.

Keywords: Comparative Analysis; Public; Private; Secondary Schools; Admission Practice; Orientation Practice

Introduction

There is consensus opinion among scholars that only quality and functional education can guarantee meaningful and sustainable growth and development of any nation. Annan (2018) argued that education is a human right with immense power to transform, and that on its foundation rests the cornerstones of freedom, democracy and sustainable human capital development. The type of education that brings about freedom, democracy and sustainable human capital development comes not only from tertiary education but from secondary education as well.

Secondary education in Nigeria establishes a critical link between primary and tertiary education and as such prepares the learners for higher studies. Secondary education equally provides opportunities for a child to acquire additional knowledge, skills and traits beyond the primary level. A major factor that necessitates the acquisition of secondary education in Nigeria is that the education being provided at the primary level seems to be insufficient for a child to acquire permanent literacy, communicative and numeracy skills expected of him/her at the end of the training. Secondary schools in Nigeria are categorized as either public or private. Public secondary schools are post-primary institutions of learning established, controlled and financed by the government. They rely on government funding for their operation, whereas private secondary schools are post-primary institutions of learning established, controlled and financed by individuals, group of persons, organizations or mission bodies. Private secondary schools are completely run through fees paid by the students of the institution. Despite these differences, the common objective of secondary education whether it is public or private is to augment the deficiency of primary education and prepare a child for higher studies

Accordingly, the policy expectations of secondary school whether it is owned, financed and managed by the government or private individuals or conglomerates are the same. Hence, the need for consistency and uniformity in activities, operations, practices and procedures of both public and private secondary schools. For the purpose of this uniformity, comparability and quality assurance, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) introduced a policy guideline that mandates public and private secondary schools to adopt the same procedure in admission and orientation of new students.

Secondary schools are headed by Principals whose responsibility it is to comply with government's directive on secondary schools which include but not limited to; ensuring that the best crop of students are admitted into schools and getting the admitted students acquainted with their learning environment.

Ugwu (2017) posited that one of the key indicators of internal efficiency and quality assurance in education system is the admission or enrollment rate which is the percentage or ratio of the newly admitted students to the total population expected to be enrolled in a given class level at a particular year. The researcher further contend that admission involves all the processes starting from short listing of successful candidates after a common entrance examination

through interview, selection to placement of the admitted students in the class. However, not every candidate standing at school gate and willing to be admitted will secure a place in Nigerian schools today because of the limited carrying capacities of our schools. Gudo and Olel (2017) observed that individual schools need to device effective mechanisms through which the certificates presented by potential students are authenticated and that one of such mechanisms is entrance examinations. They further contend that through entrance examination, interviews and certificate verification, the best crop of students are selected and wastage in education system is reduced to the barest minimum. Admission process is not complete unless and until the successful candidates are shortlisted, registered and enrolled into their respective classes and orientation exercise conducted to prepare them for easy and quick adjustment to the new environment.

Orientation is one the students' personnel management activities in which the schools introduce the newly admitted students to their new environment (the school) and get them acquainted with staff personnel, school infrastructure, rules and regulations, as well as the mission and vision of the school. Heaney and Fisher (2011) posited that newly admitted students feel less self-reliant in their ability to succeed in academic setting and need additional help for favourable academic success. Orientation programme is therefore organized in secondary schools to facilitate academic and social interactions, increase students' involvement and enhance students' sense of belonging to the learning community. All the states in Nigeria including Anambra state are expected to have domesticated this policy on Admission and orientation.

Meanwhile, observation made by the researcher in the area of the study as well documentary research evidence confirm that there are several preconceived notions regarding private and public schools; for instance, NCES (2017) confirms that in a number of policy areas such admission and orientation, private schools principals were more likely than public school principals to enjoy great deal of influence on the other hand, Public secondary schools principals unlike their private secondary schools counterparts share authority for many policy decisions with school boards, district personnel, and States' Departments of Education. The report went further to state that Private schools appear to be environmentally friendlier and safer health-wise and a better bet for admission to good universities whereas Public schools on the other hand are often thought of as shoddy, less disciplined and very strict with admission procedures. All these observations and views would require empirical interrogation. Therefore, this study will empirically compare admission and orientation practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Principals of secondary schools whether in private or public are by virtue of their position as administrative heads responsible for regulating and influencing the crop of

students to be admitted, stimulating and controlling the academic activities in the school and ensuring that learners are psychologically adjusted with their learning environment among others. However, the surge in number of private secondary schools in Anambra state some of which are yet to secure approval from government and the seeming preference and scramble for space in private schools by parents and guardians seems to suggest that principals in public schools are not operating optimally. More so, the prevalence of several indicators of poor admission and orientation practices cutting across public and private schools such as increased drop out, absenteeism, and lack of sense of direction among students is altogether worrisome. If this trend is not mitigated urgently, sooner or later, the realization of secondary education goals such as preparing the learners for higher studies, provision of required manpower, skills and competences needed for sustainable growth and development of the state may become a mirage. Hence, the problem of this study is to empirically analyse the admission and orientation practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra state.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the admission practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What are the Orientation practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested 0.05 level of significance:

1. There will be no significant difference in the mean ratings of Anambra State public and private secondary school principals on their engagement in admission practices.
2. There will be no significant difference in the mean ratings of Anambra State public and private secondary school principals on their engagement in Orientation 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 principals' admission and orientation practices 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-i6-item questionnaire titled ''Questionnaire for Admission and Orientation Practices of Principals' in Public and Private Secondary Schools (QAOPP)"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. The overall coefficient of 0.90 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 admission management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings on the admission management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools.

		Public (n=250)			Private (n=382)		
		Mean	**SD**	**Remark**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Remark**
1.	Constitute Admission committee to ensure that other stakeholders are involved in admission process	2.49	.96	Disagree	3.28	.82	Agree
2.	Work with admission committee to verify the authenticity of the entrance examination results	2.46	.88	Disagree	3.14	.82	Agree
3.	Conduct oral interview for candidates before admission	2.40	.81	Disagree	3.24	.79	Agree
4.	Verify the First School Leaving Certificates of the Students to avoid admitting candidates with forged results	2.88	.83	Agree	3.30	.64	Agree
5.	Give consideration to state of origin and geographical spread of the applicants before admission	2.86	.81	Agree	3.16	.73	Agree
6.	Consider the age and maturity level of the candidates to avoid admitting under-aged applicants	2.72	.80	Agree	2.85	.80	Agree
7.	Request the students to present certificate of good health from a recognized health facility before registration to avoid admitting students who may not complete their education on account of ill health	2.73	.83	Agree	3.00	.79	Agree
8.	Ensures that the number of students in a class does not exceed 45 to ensure adequate attention is given to all the students	2.70	.79	Agree	2.90	.66	Agree
9.	Consider students' intelligence quotient before placement in the class to enhance healthy academic competition.	2.72	.84	Agree	2.75	.80	Agree

The result in Table 1 shows the admission management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State. Principals of public secondary schools agree to six (items, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9) of the nine listed items as the admission management practices they adopt in their schools. The mean rating for the six items ranged from 2.70 to 2.88. They however disagree with the remaining three items (1, 2 and 3) as being part of their admission management practices. On the other hand, principals of private secondary schools agree they adopt all the nine listed admission management practices with their mean ranging from 2.76 to 3.30.

Research Question Two: What are the orientation management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: Mean Ratings on the Orientation Management Practices Of Principals in Public and Private Secondary Schools.

	Public (n=250)			Private (n=382)		
	Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
10. Conduct orientation exercise for the admitted students for proper adjustment with the new environment	3.03	.66	Agree	2.88	.78	Agree
11. Ensure that new students are provided with school rules and regulations	3.04	.70	Agree	2.89	.82	Agree
12. Students are introduced to important places and personalities in the school	3.01	.65	Agree	2.92	.82	Agree
13. Academic and non-academic programmes are equally introduced to student in booklet form	2.32	.66	Disagree	3.14	.80	Agree
14. Introduces the students to their form teachers	3.38	.66	Agree	3.11	.77	Agree
15. Take the students around the entire school for them to know all the entry and exit points of the school	3.28	.62	Agree	3.00	.73	Agree
16. Academic and non-academic programmes are equally introduced to student	3.20	.65	Agree	2.92	.70	Agree

Table 2 shows the orientation management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State. Public secondary school principals agree to six (item, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16) of the seven listed items as the orientation management practices they adopt in their schools. Their mean rating for the six items ranged from 3.01 to 3.38. Their counterpart in private schools on the other hand agree to all the seven listed items as the orientation management practices they adopt in their schools with their mean for the seven items ranging from 2.88 to 3.14

Hypotheses one: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Anambra State public and private secondary school principals on their level of engagement in admission management practices.

Table 3: t-test Comparison of Public and Private Secondary School Principals' Mean Ratings of Their Admission Management Practices.

Source of variation	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	*P*-value	Decision
Public	250	2.78	.32	630	7.63	.000	Sig
Private	382	3.06	.51				

Table 3 indicates that the mean score for public secondary school principals (*M=2.78, SD=.32*) was significantly less than that of private school principals (*M=3.06, SD=.51*); *t (630) 7.63, p=.000*. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on their engagement in admission management practices was therefore rejected.

Hypotheses two: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Anambra State public and private secondary school principals on their level of engagement in orientation management practices.

Table 4: t-test Comparison of Public and Private Secondary School Principals' Mean Ratings of Their Orientation Management Practices.

Source of variation	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	*P*-value	Decision
Public	250	3.19	.47	630	4.53	.000	Sig
Private	382	2.97	.64				

Table 4 shows that the mean score for public secondary school principals (*M=3.19, SD=.47*) was significantly greater than that of private school principals (*M=2.97, SD=.64*); *t (630) 4.53, p=.000*. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on their engagement in orientation management practices was therefore rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Discussion was done based on the findings of the two research question and hypotheses. The result on table one shows that both public and private schools adopt students' admission management practices, however, looking at the mean scores of the nine items which range from 2.76 to 3.30 for private and 2.40 to 2.88 for public. It is evident that Private secondary schools principals in Anambra state adopt and engage in the prescribed admission management practices more than their public secondary schools counterparts. This finding is in contrast with the finding of Nwanga, Amaikwu & Ugwo

(2021) whose study showed homogeneous responses by public and private secondary school principals on students admission management practices, indicating that in their study, public and private secondary principals' levels of involvement in students' admission management practices are at parity. Differences in: location, government policy and sample size could be responsible for the variations in the findings of the two studies. Whereas the study was conducted in Ebonyi state with a sample size of 209, the present study was conducted in Anambra state with a sample size of 632. The finding of this study is in agreement with the finding of Muhammad et al (2018) whose study showed that private secondary schools principals are more involved in determining the quality and quantity of students to be admitted unlike their counterparts in public schools who are constrained by the decisions of Education Board and centrally organized entrance examination. The result on table 3 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 admission management practices. This implies among others that admission management practices such as constituting Admission committee, conducting oral interview for candidates before admission, requesting the students to present certificate of good health from a recognized health facility before registration to avoid admitting students who may not complete their education on account of ill health are practiced more by principals in private secondary schools. This finding is supported by the study of Littlecot and Murphy (2018) whose finding showed a significant difference in entrance examination and admission procedures of public and private secondary schools. Their finding showed further showed that whereas Private schools have an application process that include, the application itself, academic assessment, and interview and that admissions can be selective with certain criteria based on educational philosophy, student conduct, or academic appetite, Public schools provide education to all students regardless of academic profile, religious creed or developmental level.

The result on table two shows that both public and private secondary schools adopt and engage in students' orientation management practices. However, the mean scores for the 7 items which ranged from 3.01 to 3.38 for public and 2.88 to 3.14 for private indicates that public secondary schools principals in Anambra state adopt and engage in orientation management practices more than their colleagues in private secondary schools. This finding agrees with the finding of Ogbiji, Eyo and Oko (2018) whose study showed that public secondary schools are more regular in their orientation programme than their private school counterparts. This implies that the two studies are in agreement that public secondary school principals unlike their private school counterparts, practice and engage more in orientation exercise for the admitted students for proper adjustment with the new environment; ensure that new students are provided with school rules and regulations and take the students around the entire school for them to know all the entry and exit points of the school among others. Similarity in method and sample size

could have accounted for the agreement of the two studies. The sample size for the study was 672 while the present study used 632. Both studies adopted descriptive survey design. The result on table 4 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 orientation management practices. Again, this finding corroborates the finding of Ogbiji, Eyo and Oko (2011) whose study showed that there is a significant difference between public and private secondary schools in Cross River State on the regularity of orientation programme. Their study further revealed that public schools have more experienced principals and as such their experiences are brought to bear during orientation exercise.

Conclusion

Based on the findings it can be concluded that whereas private school principals engage in admission practices more than their counterparts in public schools, on the other hand public secondary school principals engage in orientation practices more than their colleagues in private schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Anambra state government should put policy in place that will make it mandatory for principals in public secondary schools to adopt and engage in all the prescribed admission management practices before admitting students into public secondary schools.
2. Private secondary schools should be encouraged through workshops and seminars to emulate public secondary schools in terms of effective engagement in orientation management practices. This will help introduce the students to the school rules and regulations early enough and acclimatize with their new environment

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