

A COMPARISON OF THE QUALITY AND EFFICACY OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IDAH EDUCATION ZONE OF KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study was carried out to compare the quality and efficacy of private and public secondary schools in Idah Education Zone of Kogi State, Nigeria. The study compared the achievement of students in private and public secondary schools in Oral English using games technique as a teaching strategy. One research question and one null-hypothesis guided the study. The quasi-experimental research design involving non-equivalent control group was used for the study. The sample consisted 304 JS III students drawn from eight intact classes in Idah Education Zone of Kogi State, Nigeria. Pre-test and post-test were administered to all the groups (treatment and control). A 60-item Oral English Achievement Test (OEAT) was used for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The finding of the study was that students in private schools achieved higher than their counterparts in public schools. The paper recommends that government should carry out proper monitoring and supervision of teachers in public schools.*

KEYWORDS: Quality and efficacy, Private and public Education, Oral English, Games Technique, Students' Achievement

INTRODUCTION

Education has been recognized as one of the key factors for national development. Necessary economically, politically, and socially skilled people, according to the specific need of the country, can be produced only if the country has an effective and relevant education system. Many developing countries are still struggling to find such effective education system.

Largely, providing education is the task of government as a service to its people in developing countries. In many countries, education is provided through public school system with all or most of the cost paid by the government. But with growing populations, increased costs, and financial strains in other areas of governance, the task of providing public education has not been easy for many governments. In addition to the financial problems, there has been a growing concern about the effectiveness of public education system in many developing countries. Involving the private sector in the provision of education has increasingly been seen as an alternative to addressing part of the problem. But the access and availability of private school has not been free of controversy and its quality and efficacy in Nigeria has been under question. On one hand, they are in high demand and are growing in numbers. On the other hand, in public discourse, their growth is often dubbed the 'mushrooming of teaching shops' (Kingdon, 2016).

In spite of the growing number of private schools, and the public expectation from them, relatively little is known about the quality and efficacy of private schools in Idah Education

Zone of Kogi State, Nigeria. This study sets out to empirically compare the quality and efficacy of private schools with public schools. Its aim is to compare the achievements of junior secondary school students three (JS III) in the two types of school in oral English using games technique as teaching strategy.

Statement of the Problem

The involvement of the private sector in education is a growing trend in many developing countries. Nigeria has experienced a tremendous growth of private school over the last two decades. Certainly the expansion of private education has helped the country by supplying more classroom space to meet the increasing demand of education. But without a systematic examination or an evaluation process, the actual productivity of private schools would be unknown. Thus, the evaluation of the education sector as a whole would be incomplete without a thorough examination of private schools. Although the private schools are considered better than public schools, there is no comparative study in Idah Education Zone of Kogi State, Nigeria examining the differences between the two types of school. This study hopes to fill that gap. This study was carried out to compare the achievement of students in private and public secondary schools in Oral English using games technique as a teaching strategy. The problem of this study, therefore, is: what is the influence of type of school on the achievement of students taught Oral English with games' technique?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out the influence of type of school (private and Private) on students' achievement in Oral English. Specifically, it was conducted to compare the quality and efficacy of the two types of school in Oral English using games technique.

Significance of the study

Private schools in many countries have strong religious ties. Many non-profit religious organizations often control and operate private schools in those countries. Thus, many research studies have been conducted with particular focus on the non-profit nature of the private schools and the religious values they provide (Lines, 2008; James, 2009). But the case of Nigeria is quite different. Private schools in Nigeria are not operating as non-profit organizations. They are mainly established by the owners as business outlets; hence, their quality and efficacy are usually in doubt. This study will add to the knowledge in understanding the quality and efficacy of private schools and the differences that exist between public and private schools.

It is, therefore, hoped that this study would provide information to parents and government agencies involved in policy making, planning and implementation of education programmes. The information so provided could be a basis for parents' decision on the type of school to send their children to. It would also provide a rich source of data to government agencies for policy making decisions.

Scope of the Study

This study was delimited to Junior Secondary School Students three (JS III) in Idah Education Zone of Kogi State, Nigeria. Emphasis was on production, identification and discrimination of vowel and consonant sounds. Specifically, the study focused on the use of games technique

with emphasis on pronunciation games such as sound puzzle game, sound placement game, and sound identification and discrimination games.

Conceptual Framework

Private versus Public School Debate

Private education means different things to different people in different countries. In many countries, private schools have strong religious ties and are run strictly by various types of churches, which create another set of controversies such as domination of one religious value over another (Lines, 2008; Crain and Rossell, 2009; Marshall and Brant, 2009). In other countries, both public and private systems of education are fully supported by the government and the only difference between the two is recognized by who runs the school, the government, or a private organization. While many private school systems operate as non-profit organizations, there are private systems which operate strictly for profit purposes. So there is a great deal of variance in the private sector of education itself. Depending on the type of private institution, its degree of effectiveness or appropriateness might be different on a national perspective.

Countries have gone back and forth in promoting and adopting private education systems. In Australia, the dual system of public and private schools, both supported by government funding, has been in existence for a long time. Sherman (2002) stated that there have been many proposals to expand the private sector to create a competitive education system. These proposals have asked for increased government funding for private schools mainly with tax-credit legislation, education vouchers, and direct grants to low income families. Nevertheless, with the development of the system of free, compulsory, and secular public education, the government funding for private sector education was discontinued (Beswick and Harman, 2004; Sherman, 2002).

Kenya's Harambee Schools, which were considered private, offer a different example of local communities coming together to open new schools to meet the demands of education, although they were not free of controversies. Sixty percent of financing of secondary education in Kenya was local, one of the highest in developing countries. These schools enroll more than half of the country's secondary school population (Mwiria, 2000). Even so, the Harambee schools had criticism for the deteriorating quality of education they provide, over-crowded classrooms, planning that does not meet government expectations, and the burden they put on local communities.

In Sweden the public system tends to be more popular than the private. The government provides an equal amount of financial support to both the public and private sector of education (up to 50 percent of their expenditure); local authorities were responsible for the other 50 percent (marklund, 2004). This made private ventures in education less appealing because there was no problem with excess demand. Marklund (2004) reported that in Sweden, establishing a private school was very simple and easy but little use was made of that liberty. In Sweden's case, the effectiveness of the public system and the quality of education was not a concern, thus reducing the need for an expanded private school system (James, 2009).

Public versus private education was nowhere more controversial than in the United States of America. The controversy was not only about effectiveness and efficiency of the systems, but was surrounded by broader issues such as social inequality, desegregation, service and power

to the elite class. The controversy between public and private schools became intense mainly after the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954, which required states to desegregate schools. In this context, Guthrie and Bodenhausen (2004: 247) wrote:

The mid-1950s Supreme Court school desegregation precipitated numerous reactions. One outcome, white efforts to avoid racially desegregated schools ... resulted in the greatest surge in non-public school enrollments in the twentieth century. By 1968, the time by which court-ordered desegregation was at its most intense, nationwide non-public school enrollments climbed to 14 percent of the total population. The growth resulted primarily from the formation of hundreds of 'white academies' in the southern states .. Virginia attempted to aid such segregated schools by closing its public schools. Mississippi rescinded its compulsory school attendance law and attempted to arrange state tuition payments for students attending segregated private schools.

While many segregated schools could not operate because of court rulings and other federal government investigations, and private school enrollment went down to 7 percent by 1975, the popularity, demand, and success of private schools was not gone for long. By 1980, the K-12 private school enrollment in the US had risen to about 11 percent (Guthrie and Bodenhausen, 2004). This indicates that despite all the controversies, private schools continue to play an important role in the United States.

These are just few examples of the private public debate. In all of these, one thing that could be held on to as sacrosanct was that parents want the best and the most effective school for their children and for this reason in many instances they selected the private schools. Research on private school effectiveness is important and this can be done more effectively on a case by case basis. Also, what can be seen from the above debates and examples from the countries cited is that both public and private schools continue to remain in those countries amidst growing controversies. Instead of getting into the uncompromising debate of which system is better and effective, extensive and reliable research studies are needed as evidence, hence the need for this study in Idah Education Zone of Kogi State, Nigeria using Oral English as a case study.

Oral English Teaching and Learning

The English language has become greatly valued and adorned in Nigeria's educational system. As remarked by Bamgbose, Banjo & Thomas (1995), the dominance of English in formal and transactional communication is unchallengeable. In view of the multilingual nature of Nigeria, with more than 400 indigenous languages (Ufomata 2015), English is regarded as the only feasible and realistic choice for the nation now and in the foreseeable future. The greatest

efforts expended on English language in Nigeria have been in the area of the educational system, particularly in relation to Nigerian indigenous languages. Issues regarding to model choice, examination assessment criteria, intelligibility and acceptability of the Nigerian variety etc. continue to attract heated debates on regular basis. In Nigerian educational system, English is both a medium of instruction for other subjects in all secondary schools as well as a subject from the first year in primary schools. In addition, a credit at O' level in English is a prerequisite for admission into any higher institution in the country. The National Policy on Education (NPE) has been constantly criticized and critiqued for its lack of clarity on issues relating to the teaching of English language in Nigeria (Bamgbose and Akere 2006; Jibril 2006). It is against this background that the teaching of Oral English was introduced into the curriculum about three decades ago.

Oral English, also known as spoken English, is the form of English that is used when people speak to one another. It is the way in which the English Language is transmitted through a conventional system of sounds. It is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts. According to Chaney and Buck (2008), Oral English is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. It is a crucial part of second language teaching and learning. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which they occur, including the participants themselves and their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking. It is often spontaneous, open-ended and evolving.

Oral English is an important part of the language curriculum in Nigeria. The efficiency of the English language in the wider Nigerian society depends largely on the English Curriculum and the competence of the teacher. Little wonder therefore that what goes on in the classroom eventually shapes students outlook and output. Oral English therefore needs to be taught properly using innovative techniques such as games, not only for examination purposes, but also for future use by the learners. This is because when one considers the fact that the essence of learning a language is to use it to communicate and that the goal of language programme is to enable learners acquire linguistic and communicative competence to enable them carry out their studies and interact in the wider society; one would realize that a distal goal as this could be un-motivating to many learners with varied emotional and psychological baggage and interests. This may make the use of the conventional method of language teaching that gives prominent position to the teacher in the teaching-learning process unproductive and irrelevant. Therefore, different techniques, approaches, strategies etc. have to be deployed in the teaching and learning of Oral English. One of such approaches is the use of games technique.

Games Technique as a Teaching Strategy

Teaching has changed a lot over the years. In the past it was all about learners being passive listeners in the classroom, but today learners are usually much more active in the classroom, and what better way to be active than by playing games (Sugar, 1998). According to Harmer (2007:84), "There is almost nothing more exciting than a class of involved young people pursuing a learning goal with enthusiasm." The teacher's role is to encourage students to learn by preparing adequate materials concerning their interests or even to provoke students' engagement with material which is relevant and involving. One way of doing this is through the use of games.

A game is a contest between two or more participants. Hadfield (2008) defines game as an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun. According to Salen and Zimmerman (2003),

a game is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, which result in a quantifiable outcome. It is an activity among two independent decision-makers seeking to achieve their objectives in some limiting contest. The essence of a game lies in outstripping, in a friendly fashion, someone else's performance, or in bettering one's own, as in sport.

Technique is a systematic procedure, or routine by which a task is accomplished. It is the manner and ability which a professional employs the technical know-how of a particular discipline. Cohen (2007) sees language teaching techniques as those processes which are consciously selected by teachers and which may result in actions taken to enhance the teaching and learning of a second language. It is a contrivance or stratagem which helps the language teacher to achieve an immediate objective. Games technique in this study, therefore, means the use of or an adaptation of existing games for teaching and learning Oral English to make the lesson more engaging.

Method

The study was guided by one research question and one null hypothesis. These are:

Research Question

What is the difference between public and private school students' achievement in Oral English?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the achievements of students in public and private schools in Oral English.

Design of the Study

The design for this study is the quasi-experimental research design. A quasi-experimental research design is a type of evaluation which aims at determining whether a programme or intervention has the intended effect on a study's participants (Ali, 1996). It is an empirical technique used to estimate the causal impact of an intervention on its target population. Since the most common form of a quasi-experimental study includes a pre-test and post-test design with a treatment group and a control group, quasi-experimental study is often an impact evaluation that assigns members to the treatment and control group by a method other than random assignment. The quasi experimental design is, therefore, adopted for this study because it is a non-randomized experimental and control group pre-test – post-test study.

Area of the Study

This study was conducted in Idah Education Zone of Kogi State, Nigeria. Idah Education Zone comprises Idah and Ibaji Local Government Areas of Kogi State. In the Education Zone, the quality of the spoken English is very poor. There is also mad rush to send children to private schools by parents who can afford it, even when some of these private schools do not have enough qualified teachers. Since the question of achievement and achievement gaps in schools are important issues because of their implications for equity between different social groups; and equity is a central concern in education, Idah Education Zone is chosen for the study to determine the differences in achievement between the two types of school.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of all the junior secondary school students (JS III) in Idah Education Zone registered for the 2017/2018 academic session. The sample was 304 students drawn from eight schools in the Zone. In the first instance, stratified random sampling technique was used to draw four schools from each strata (urban and rural), making a total of eight schools altogether (four public and four private). The balloting procedure was used to draw the eight schools. The researcher wrote the names of all the public schools in the urban area on pieces of paper which were squeezed and dropped on the floor. Then four were picked at random. The same procedure was used to sample the four private schools in the urban area. This procedure was repeated all over again to sample public and private schools from the rural area. One intact class in each of the sampled schools in each location was then randomly assigned to treatment and control groups respectively by balloting.

Instrument for data collection

The instrument for data collection was a 60-item multiple-choice Oral English Achievement Test (OEAT). It is an audio C.D which students were required to listen to while it was playing and then answer basic questions. Three words numbered A to C were written on paper but only one word out of the three was pronounced on the audio C.D. Students were then required to identify the word they heard on the C.D and write the letter of the alphabet that corresponds with the word pronounced. Each question correctly answered carries 1 mark, i.e. 60 marks.

Validation of the Instrument

Two specialists in Language Education and one in Measurement and evaluation from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka validated the instrument. Both face and content validity were established after careful scrutiny with suggestions of whether to retain, modify or drop a particular statement.

Reliability

The coefficient of the internal consistency of the instrument was determined by administering a trial-testing of OEAT on 30 JS III students drawn from an equivalent group in Igalamela/Odolu Education Zone of Kogi State, Nigeria. The data obtained were used for both item analysis and in estimating the reliability of the instrument. The internal consistency of the test items was determined using Kuder Richardson Formula 20. The reliability co-efficient based on K – R 20 was 0.86.

Procedure

Two weeks before the commencement of the experiment, the test instrument, Oral English Achievement Test (OEAT), was administered as pre-test on the 304 students sampled for the study. Since the test instrument was an audio C.D, it was not possible for the researcher to reshuffle the test items. This was why it had to be administered two weeks ahead of the commencement of treatment. The actual treatment session was conducted by the regular English Language teachers in their respective classes using the lesson plans prepared by the researcher which were validated along with the instrument. The major treatment was the teaching of Oral English. The experimental groups were taught with the lesson plans on games' technique while the control groups were taught with the lesson plans on the conventional

method. The researcher regularly monitored the classes to ensure compliance with the procedure of instruction.

Four games developed by the researcher were used for the experiment. The games were the traditional non-computer type games that relied on props and teams and the creation of an entertaining learning environment that emphasized sound production, discrimination and placement. Specifically, they were pronunciation games that were anchored on a combination of flashcards and guessing games tagged 'sound production puzzle', 'sound placement puzzle', sound 'identification and discrimination puzzles'. Game one dealt with production of sounds. It was aimed at developing students' skills for the production of the sounds of English Language in such a way that a listener could understand the sounds so produced without doubts as to the quality and meaning of the utterances. Games two and three dealt with identification and placement of sounds. They were aimed at developing students' skill for proper identification of vowel and consonant sounds presented to them by the teacher. It was a kind of guessing game. While game four dealt with discrimination of the sounds of the English Language. It was aimed at developing the ability of students to perceive similarities and differences between two or more speech stimuli. In this game, students learnt to attend to differences among sounds or to respond differently to different sounds. The treatment session lasted for six weeks. After treatment, the same test was re-administered as post-test on the two groups – treatment and control.

Method of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed based on the research question and hypothesis. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation of the test scores. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypothesis. It was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question

What is the difference between public and private school students' achievement in Oral English?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the achievement scores of students in public and private schools in experimental group

School	N	Pretest		Post-test		Gain Score
		Mean	Stan. Dev.	Mean	Stan. Dev.	
Public	151	23.69	2.26	29.15	4.98	5.49
Private	153	33.29	8.13	43.43	0.12	10.14

Table 1 shows the achievement score and standard deviation of students attending public and private schools in the experimental group. The result reveals that the students attending public

schools had the mean achievement score of 23.69 and standard deviation of 2.26 for pre-test; mean achievement score of 29.15 and standard deviation of 4.98 for the post-test. Similarly, students attending private schools had the mean achievement score of 33.29 and standard deviation of 8.13 for pre-test; mean achievement score of 43.43 and standard deviation of 0.12 for the post-test. This result shows that the students attending private schools with the gain score of 10.14 achieve higher than their counterparts attending public schools with the gain score of 5.49 in the post-test.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the achievement of students in public and private schools in Oral English.

Table 2: Summary of ANCOVA table for significant difference in the mean achievement scores of public and private school students taught Oral English

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	29932.055 ^a	4	7483.014	227.681	.000
Intercept	152.537	1	152.537	4.641	.032
Pretest	14812.358	1	14812.358	450.687	.000
Groups	3228.080	1	3228.080	98.219	.000
Sch. Type	54.950	1	54.950	1.672	.197
Groups * Sch. Type	622.426	1	622.426	18.938	.000
Error	9826.984	299	32.866		
Total	437062.000	304			
Corrected Total	39759.039	303			

Table 2 shows the Summary of ANCOVA table for significant difference in the mean achievement scores of public and private school students taught Oral English with games technique. The result reveals that the F-value for the proprietorship is 1.67 with the significant value of 0.19. However, this value of F is not significant at 0.05. This is because 0.19 is greater than 0.05, that is ($p = 0.19$; $p > 0.05$). Therefore, the null-hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted; hence, there was no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students in public and private schools taught Oral English with games technique.

DISCUSSION

The results presented on table 1 shows that students in private schools achieved higher than their counterparts in public schools This finding support existing evidences on the relative efficiency of private schools over public schools (Omachonu & Offorma, 2008); and Kingdon, 2016).

To answer hypothesis 1 the results on table 2 show that statistically, there is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students in public and private schools. This finding disagrees with Kamwendo (2010) who did a comparison of students' achievement in private and conventional public secondary schools from a gender perspective in Malawi and reported that the pass rate for both males and females was higher in public than private schools. Kamwendo further reported that females' achievement was highest in public single sex schools than public mixed schools.

The no significant difference in the achievement of private and public school students taught Oral English with game techniques could be attributed to the commitment of the teachers trained for the Oral English instruction using the lesson plans on games technique prepared by the researcher. The strict adherence to the Oral English instruction by the participating teachers in this study ensured homogeneity of instruction across the sampled schools in both private and public schools, thereby leading to almost equal achievement. The implication of this finding is that, if students are exposed to equal treatment with regard to classroom instruction, there might not be much difference in the achievement of students attending schools in private and public schools.

CONCLUSION

The debate on public versus private education is a continuing one. The critics of the public schools say that the public sector is ineffective in delivering quality education. But in Idah Education Zone, especially given the present situation where teachers in public schools' salaries are not paid, the problem requires special attention because of the increasing demand and role of private schools.

Some private schools, like the ones examined in this study, are providing better quality education, but the expansion of private schools without organized implementation of government policy and procedure seem to create more quality problem. In addition, most private schools in the Zone operate with money making motives rather than institutions of learning. But without a clear evaluation process in place, it would be difficult to figure out which private school is providing good education and which is not. This problem becomes even more complicated when one considers that majority of the parents are uneducated themselves, and thus, are not able to understand the school system. Salaries paid by private schools are only about one-fifth of those paid by public schools. The public schools have many more teachers relative to the number of pupils, and the private-school teachers are more likely to be teaching than public school teachers.

These have a number of implications. First, efforts to improve the quality of education in the Zone should consider the private as well as public sector – especially since the former are disproportionately located where the public system has failed. For example, policy makers might consider the possibility of offering short training courses to raise skills among private

school teachers. Second, the disparities between private and public schools highlight some potential areas for reform in the public sector. The huge salary differential suggests that many public school teachers may be receiving enormous money to the detriment of private school teachers. There should be public-private partnerships in education to bridge the gap.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Given the poor state of most public schools in Nigeria where learning environments are awkward and incompatible with the requirement for treatment of specified content, teaching and learning seem ineffective. Government should make concerted effort to bring up public schools to standard with regards to facilities and amenities for effective teaching and learning. This would help bridge the gap between students in private schools and their counterparts in public schools.
2. The fact that private school students achieved higher than their counterparts in the public schools could also be attributed to lack of monitoring and supervision of public schools unlike the private school teachers that are properly monitored. Government should, therefore, pay attention to this factor, i.e. proper monitoring and supervision of teachers in public schools in the performance of their duties.

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