

PARENTAL VARIABLES AND EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA**Dr. Sunday I. Efanga, Dr. Godson U. Ukanwa and Mrs. Idorenyin IniAbasi Ekanem**

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ABSTRACT: *The study examined the attitude of parent and their expectations towards public and private secondary schools and factors affecting the choice of secondary schools for their wards. Three null hypotheses were raised to guide the study. The research design was a survey. The sample size was 1,000 parents, drawn through stratified random sampling technique. The bases for stratification were Senatorial Districts. Data collection was done through structured questionnaire. Data obtained were analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The findings showed significant differences among parents who had children in public and private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. Based on these findings, it was recommended that the state government should support incentives that will transform the school plant into most conducive environment for academic activities. Similarly, proprietors of private schools should recruit professionally trained teachers for effective teaching and learning activities.*

KEYWORDS: Parental Variables Exceptions, Public, Private, Gender, Education

INTRODUCTION

Elites including high government officials in developing countries in which Nigeria is one, tend to view education as the greatest investment that a nation can make for the quick development of the economic, political and human resources of its citizenry. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2010) accepts education as an instrument of effective national development. Educational benefits may be classified according to the incidence of the benefits as private, social and spillover benefits (Mbipom, 2005). As a consumption commodity, education influences people's minds with ideas and greater capacity to think and improve their lives and society in general. Efanga and Nwakoma (2013) citing Babalola (2007), asserts that a shortage of educated people might limit economic growth, while over-supply of higher education would lead to higher unemployment and brain drain. Efanga, Usen and Idente (2014) citing Gitermer and Andal opined that when choosing a secondary school for children, parents attach great importance to the quality of teachers in the school. He added that they (parents) also look for schools that are safe, secured and which provide quality student's support services.

Assam (2010) avered that parents' schools choices are the function of their perception about the kinds of teaching and learning provided in public either by government (public) or individual (independents) schools. Recently, school characteristics such as sector (private or public) type (mixed and single) location (urban and rural) and school factors such as leadership climate, culture and students' involvement have been studied extensively in the search for significantly school predictors of student academy achievement (Sammons, 1995 and Bukar, 2008).

Bukar (2008) citing Wildy (1991), listed strong instructional leadership emphasis on building a supportive climate, academic focus and high expectations, shared sense of mission and clear goals, teaching and staff development and parental involvement as a common characteristics of effective schools. In a survey conducted by Modu (2005) private schools in Borno State, Nigeria, the finding showed that infrastructural facilities (classrooms, space for sporting activities, laboratories and libraries) were grossly inadequate.

It also indicated that sizeable percent of teacher in the private schools were not professionally trained. In spite of these challenges, most parents still preferred the private schools to the public. (Swick, 2004). These perceptions no doubt originated in parents' own schooling experiences, is widely cherished stereotypic of public and private school education. Firstly, consider the question of values: Is it true that private schools are more successful in developing young people with tolerance? Compassion for others? A heightened sense of morality? These are fundamental questions that required urgent answers.

Assam (2010), submitted that the general belief that any private property, including school and hospital will always be more effective, superior and dependable than government owned ones, that seems to be sinking deep into Nigerians conscience. This might be plausible reason for why parents seemed to favour performances of private school students as against he public school students.

The World Bank research on the determinants of academic achievement demonstrated that variations in inputs do affect educational outputs. Among the most important variables are teachers and textbooks (Ajayi, 2000). It was revealed in the study that is a significant relationship between teachers' qualifications and academic performance of students in private schools.

Efanga (2005) citing Brookever, Erickson and McEvoy, argued that private school provide adequate and standard library in school and make provision for those who will teach students on how to use the library effectively while such does not exist amongst public secondary schools. This is as expected, considering the level of supervision existing in private schools. Underlying parents' choice between private and public schools, is the prevailing perception that class sizes are smaller in private schools than their counterparts in government schools. This account for greater teacher-student interaction in private schools. Again, some private schools achieve outstanding in 12th grade results and are highly successful in terms of university entrance, some of these schools have selected intakes. In these schools, students enter with above-average records of schools achievement (Assam, 2010). A cursory review of the research of effective schools revealed that this achievement is not unconnected with parents' educational and socio-economic status.

In public secondary school in Nigeria, many teachers are known to have indulged in behavior that are detrimental to schools. In a study conducted by Efanga (2005) on Quality Assurance: A comparative study of public/private Educational Institution in Nigeria. The ex-post facto design was employed in the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 150 respondents for the study. The tool for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using independent t-test at .05 level of significance. Results showed that teachers in public schools were not putting in their best as expected by the society. Teachers the researcher observed were not regular in classes. This may informed parents' apparent lack of interest in public schools in Akwa Ibom State. Ido (2008) citing Fagbemi, took a systematic look at the issue of teachers' effectiveness and explain it as being the function of three

variables, the quality of motivation of the teacher, the method use by the teachers and adequacy of facilities and equipment. Given this to be correct, if none of these functions could be attained, it would definitely affect the output of teachers in public secondary schools. The educational implication of this is that parents' expectation towards public schools would be negatively skewed.

Parents' Gender and Expectation towards Public and Private Secondary Schools

Gender refers to social attributes that are acquired or learned during socialization and define activities, responsibilities and needs connected to being male or female and not to biological identity associated with masculinity and femininity. Gender factor and academic performance have been one of the educational problems that give educationists and psychologists great concern. Udo (2000) posits that parental attitudes and expectations towards secondary education were based on socio-economic status. He conjectured that children from high socio-economic background were sent to public schools. This view may not be completely correct. This researcher seems to hold the opinion that the choice of schools is a function of taste and style. Ezewu (2004) carried out a research to find out whether gender differences exist between the sexes in their academic achievement. The sample size was 600 subjects, 300 to each sex selected from ten co-educational secondary schools (five public and five private schools). The instrument for data collection was the end of year examination scores from the school records. The subjects were aged 12-15 years and were randomly selected from the third year (junior secondary three) of the ten schools.

The result depicts that boys tended to be superior to girls in Mathematics while girls were better than boys in English language. The researcher however observed that sex differentiated and academic achievement could not be generalized as only two subjects – Mathematics and English language. Many parents (female) refuse purchasing textbooks even though their children have explained the usefulness of the book to them (Efanga, Usen and Idante, 2014). This can hamper the mastery of the subject. The refusal may be as a result of the parents' lack of interests in the subject. Availability of suitable textbooks enhance better achievement (Mbipon, 2005). It is against this background that the study attempts to examine perceptions of parental characteristics and expectations towards and public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

1. Parental characteristics and expectations towards public and private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State do not differ significantly based on socio-economic status.
2. Parental characteristics and expectations towards public and private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State do not differ significantly based on gender.
3. Parental characteristics and expectations towards public and private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State do not differ significantly among educated and non-educated.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a survey research design in carrying out the investigation. The design was considered the most suitable since it is aimed at finding out the effects of existing variable on

another. The design is desirable since the study is non-experimental and required a large sample size. The population of this study consisted of all parents of wards in all secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. There are about 15,000 parents in all the secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

(Source: Akwa Ibom Parent Teachers Association Secretariat, Uyo).

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for this study consisted of 1000 parents drawn from the population of 15,000 parents. Stratified random sampling technique was used for the study. The basis of stratification is the Senatorial District. Thus the population of the study was stratified into, Uyo Senatorial District, Ikot Ekpena Senatorial District and Eket Senatorial District.

Instrumentation

The tool used for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire tagged: Parental Characteristics and Expectation Questionnaire (PAEQ). The instrument was made up of items covering: parents' opinion on public and private schools, education status of parents, marital status of parents, and gender of the parents and age. The marital and age factors have no prominent role to play with regards to data analysis but were just to indicate the caliber of the people that constitute the sample for the study. The respondents were requested to indicate in a four-point rating scale their level of agreement or otherwise with each statement by a tick (v) along the columns provided.

Reliability of the Instrument

To ascertain the reliability of the instrument (PAEQ) a test-retest was conducted by administering to 50 parents from two schools. One private and the other a public school. After two (2) weeks, the test was re-administered to the same group of parents. The scores obtained from the two administrations were abstracted and subjected to statistical treatment, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) analysis which stood at .67. this r-value was considered high enough to justify the use of the instrument for the study.

Administration of the Instrument

The researcher carried out administration of PAEQ through personal visit to schools selected for the study. This was done in an attempt to establish warm rapport with the respondents and to ensure high level of confidentiality. The instrument (PAEQ) was given to principals to administer to parents. In order to ensure that a fairly reliable data was obtained, the study was carried out using both male and female categories of educated and uneducated parents. It took two weeks to complete the exercise because of the dispersed nature of the schools sampled for the study. At the end of the exercise all copies of the questionnaire that were administered were returned in the useable form. Hence, the mortality rate was zero.

Method of Data Analysis

The data abstracted in the study were analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA).

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1

The null hypothesis stated that parental characteristics and expectations towards public and private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State do not differ significantly based on socio-economic status.

Table 1: Summary analysis of variance (ANOVA) of difference of parental characteristics and expectations towards public and private secondary schools and socio-economic status

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-value
Between groups	3281.22	3	1093.74	24.58
Within groups	44231.33	994	44.49	
Total	47512.55			

Significant at $p < .05$

The result of analysis in Table 1 presents computed F-value of 2.60 at .05 level of significance. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis and the retention of the alternative hypothesis. The educational implication is parent's perception clearly shows that there is a significant difference in the expectation of parents who had children in public and private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis 2

The null hypothesis speculated that parental characteristics and expectations towards public and private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State do not differ significantly based on gender.

Table 2: Summary analysis of variance (ANOVA) of difference of parental characteristics and expectations towards public and private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State based on gender

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-value
Between groups	2391.43	3	797.14	14.83*
Within groups	5343.56	994	53.75	
Total	55825.99			

Significant at $p < .05$

A perusal of data analysis in Table 2 shows calculated F-value of 14.83 which is greater than critical F-value of 2.60 at .05 level of significant. Thus the null hypothesis was rejected, in favour of alternative hypothesis. This by implication means that parents' characteristics and expectations towards those who have wards in public and private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State clearly differ based on gender.

Hypothesis 3

The null hypothesis stated that parents' characteristics and expectations towards public and private secondary schools do not differ significantly among educated and non-educated.

Table 3: Summary analysis of variance (ANOVA) of difference of parental characteristics and expectations towards public and private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State based on Education

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-value
Between groups	3112.61	3	1093.74	20.66*
Within groups	49921.73	994	50.22	
Total	53034			

Significant at $p < .05$

As presented in Table 3, the statistics reveals complete F-value of 20.66 which is greater than the critical value of 2.60 at .05 alpha level of significant, the null hypothesis is rejected while the rival hypothesis is upheld. This implies that there is a significant difference in parental characteristics and expectations towards public and private secondary schools among educated and non-educated in Akwa Ibom State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of the findings is done under the following sub-heading that have relevance to the hypotheses tested in the study.

Parental Characteristics and Expectations towards Public and Private Secondary Based on Socio-Economic Status

From the result of the data analysis in Table 1, the finding revealed that parental characteristics towards public and private schools has a significant difference based on socio-economic status. This is because the calculated F-value of 24.58 is greater than the critical F-value of 20.60 at .05 alpha level of significant. This finding is in line with finding of Udo (2000) who found out that parental attitude and expectations towards secondary education were based on socio-economic status. Udo (2000) theorized that children from high socio-economic background are sent to private schools while those from low socio-economic background are sent to public schools. So the private schools tend to justify what the parents pay by providing all round educational foundation and a record of credible academic performance. The plausible reason for this finding may be due to parents' loss of confidence in public schools due to frequent strike by teacher in public schools.

Beside, parents who put education in their priority (opportunity costs) and high taste demand more of private secondary education without consideration for high cost. Perhaps, the pattern of supervision in private schools has possibly fostered effective utilization of available resources and led to better academic achievement of the students than in public schools.

Parental Characteristics, Expectations and Gender Factor

The finding of this hypothesis showed that parental characteristics and expectations towards public and private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State significantly vary with gender. Research seems to validate a common sense assumption that parents have a need for joining together in partnership to foster positive growth in their children. The finding is line with the finding of Swick (2004) which in his study observed that male parents were more interested and sponsor their children's education than female parents.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the data analysis and research findings, it was concluded that the choice of secondary schools for their ward depends on the socio-economic status of parents. That male parent usually make the choice of schools for their wards. That despite the high costs of private secondary school, educated parents still appreciate well-equipped secondary schools than non-educated parents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In consideration of the findings, it is recommended that:

State government should provide necessary support and incentive that will transform the school environment into most conducive for academic activities. That proprietor of private schools should recruit professionally trained teachers for effective teaching and learning activities. That educational resources need to be adequate and effectively used in schools.

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