
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF PRINCIPALS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IMO STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated comparative analysis of students' personnel management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Imo State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 694 principals of which 296 were from public and 398 from private secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. All the 694 principals were used for the study due to relatively manageable size of the population. A researcher-developed questionnaire titled 'Principals' Students Personnel Management Practices Questionnaire (PSPMPQ)' was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts of which two were from the Department of Educational Management and Policy, and one in Measurement and Evaluation Unit in the Department of Educational Foundations, all from Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Cronbach alpha was used for a test of internal consistency of the instrument which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.82 and 0.77 for Clusters I-II respectively with an overall coefficient of 0.80. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed among others that the public and private secondary school principals adopt similar admission practices and disciplinary practices. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others, that the Ministry of Education should develop a comprehensive policy to guide admission practices to improve uniformity in admission processes of principals in public and private secondary schools.

Keywords: Students, Personnel Management, Practices, Principals, Admission, Discipline

Introduction

Education is an instrument for strengthening one's intellectual capacity, moulding character and facilitating moral and cultural empowerment of individuals to bring about positive development in the society. It also develops the skills and potentials of individuals for self-reliance and actualization. Formal education takes place in school. Fathi (2018) pointed out that the school is considered as one of the most important educational organizations that aim at educating human beings and helping them to develop and expand all aspects of their personality (mental, physical, psychological, spiritual and social). Every school such as primary, secondary and tertiary institution is established primarily to transmit requisite skills and knowledge to students. For this study, the interest is in secondary school.

Secondary school comes after primary education and before tertiary institutions. There are two categories of secondary schools which are public and private secondary schools. Public secondary schools are those schools established, financed and managed by governmental agencies or ministries while the private secondary schools are those schools established, financed and managed by individuals, missions and non-governmental organizations. The goals of secondary education are to prepare students for tertiary and make them useful members of society. It also equip students with requisite skills that can be applied in solving the problem. Chidobi (2015) pointed out that the aim of secondary education makes it clear that the sustainability of the human resources of any nation depends quite considerably on the quality of education and the effective students' personnel management.

There are several definitions of students' personnel management by notable scholars. According to Ohamobi, Akulue and Okonkwo (2021), students' personnel management involves all the activities or supports apart from normal classroom instructions that are rendered to the learners for the achievement of educational objectives. The authors further noted that it is the activities that are carried out by the school administrator to ensure that the students derive the best from the school curricular and extracurricular activities. Students' personnel management practices are activities involving diagnosing of needs and counselling of students, orientating and disciplining the students to improve the moral tone of the school and ensuring that they are free from dangers and harms in the school environment among others. In the conceptualization of Zahyah, Yusuf and Muhajir (2016), students' personnel management is the fundamental services which are provided by the school for the main purpose of enhancing the teaching and learning activities in the school system. Operationally, students' personnel management is a set of functions that is concerned with the provision of the necessary assistance and guidance to learners to help maximally from the school programmes. The principal as the administrative head of secondary school is responsible for students' personnel management.

The school principals are saddled with the responsibility of managing students personnel to enhance teaching and learning. Similar to this, Abdullahi (2017) pointed out that students' personnel management rests on the shoulder of school administrators who are in a position to manage the students in productive manners to achieve the stated educational goals and objectives for sustainable education. There are several students' personnel management practices. Nwite and Nwuche (2016) identified these practices as; admission exercise, orientation, guidance and counselling practices, financial aid, security and safety practices and disciplinary practices. Similarly, Chidobi (2015) identified students' personnel management practices such as discipline, orientation, safety, admission and counselling. For this study, admission practices and disciplinary practices were adopted. These areas were selected because they form the cardinal areas in school administration.

Admission is the process through which candidates are selected to study at secondary schools. Each candidate who wants to attend a particular secondary school, purchase, fill and submit an application form. Firstly, candidates seeking admissions to secondary institutions must possess First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC). In an ideal situation, once applicants are accepted, the next step is to undertake a screening examination. Another important step in the admission process is the computation of the final score that will be used for admission decision (Akpan, 2016). To Akter and Giridharan (2016), admission practices include; the invitation of applicants, shortlisting of applicants, interview or written test and decision on admission. Public secondary schools receive circular from the Ministry of Education to commence the admission processes. Akter and Giridharan observed that private schools are given autonomy in the admission of students. Continuing, Akter and Giridharan noted that the private schools are free to draw up their admission criteria and procedures. In public secondary schools in Imo State certain benchmarks are usually put in place to serve as a standard for admission of students, while private secondary schools seem to be admitted without a stipulated guideline to gain more students and profits. Soon after the admission has been concluded, it is essential to organize orientation programme for students.

Discipline is abiding by the set rules and regulations in the school and obedience to the school authority. In the school system, the principal is saddled with the responsibility of guiding the students to exhibit good behaviour through discipline. To maintain discipline in secondary school, various practices such as invitation of parents of misbehaved students for interactions on way forward, verbal warning, oral reprimand, punishment, suspension and counselling could be utilized by principals. Similar to this, Enose (2012) stressed that disciplinary practices in school include; expulsion, suspension lasting at least 5days, verbal reprimand, detention, kneeling, written warning, manual labour such as cleaning rooms, slashing grass, fining, reward for maintaining good conduct, guidance and counselling. The disciplinary practices may differ in public and private secondary schools. Olaitan, Mohammed and Ajibola (2013) noted that in Nigerian public schools, school head can only suspend a student, while expulsion of students from school is the right of the Ministry of Education based on what the school had reported. Olaitan et al added that expulsion from a private school is a more straight forward matter since the school can merely terminate its contract with the parents. Onditi (2018) stressed that discipline practice is manifested when the school becomes a harmonious, respectable and secure place where the students are responsible for themselves and are also aware of their actions and the consequences of these actions. The principals of public secondary schools in Imo State seem to be strict and harsh in their discipline practices compared to those applied in private secondary schools which are related. The observation of the researcher revealed that most private secondary school principals pamper students and instruct teachers not to take disciplinary actions on misbehaving students to avoid their withdrawal from the school.

The students' personnel management practices may differ in public and private secondary schools in Imo State. Ehiane (2014) observed that in secondary schools in Nigeria, students are habitual late comers; this is contrary to the school rules and regulations and they leave school premises without permission and refuse to do their homework among others. The way public and private secondary school principals manage disciplinary issues as in some cases; public secondary school principals require approval from Ministry of Education for some actions, while immediate action can be taken by private secondary school principals. Notwithstanding, Ofeimu, Abdulrahman and Kolawole (2018) observed that many principals in public secondary schools in Nigeria are often said to be more committed to enforcing students' discipline in schools than principals in the private schools. In addition,

Ofeimu, Abdulrahaman and Kolawole posited that many principals in private schools tend to rarely discipline the students because they must have to remain in business.

The cases of misbehaviour of learners tend to put serious doubt in the students personnel management in secondary schools in public and private secondary schools in Imo State. Similarly, Uwakwe (2017) asserts that there are incidences of lateness, absenteeism, general lack of direction in students' personnel management in secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. Uwakwe further observes that this unfortunate development has been a great concern amongst parents and the public who usually put the blame of increasing students' drop out and indiscipline as a result of inadequate students' personnel management practices of principals. The study therefore, sought to comparatively analyze students' personnel management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Imo State to address the issues hindering students to drive maximum benefits from the curricular and co-curricular activities.

Statement of the Problem

The public and private secondary school principals are responsible for the students' personnel management. However, public and private secondary school principals in Imo State may not be applying the same students' personnel management practices. Public secondary school principals in Imo State have no absolute powers to apply some students' personnel management practices without consulting and approval of Ministry of Education, while their counterparts in private secondary schools easily apply such practices. The Ministry conducts entrance examination for prospective candidates and issue benchmarks to principals of public secondary schools to use in admitting students. Public secondary school principals may require formal notification and guideline for admission and orientation, while private secondary school principals may admit students based on their discretions. The Government set standard for admission into public secondary school in Imo State, while private school principals seem to process admission without standards and this probably led to enrolment of poorly qualified candidates into the school.

The bureaucratic procedures in admission and discipline may make public and private secondary school principals differ in their students' personnel management practices. The unsatisfactory state of affairs and imbalances in public and private secondary schools in Imo State prompted the researcher to embark on this study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to comparatively analyze students' personnel management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Imo State. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Compare students' admission practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Imo State.
2. Compare students' disciplinary practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Imo State.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the study

1. What ways can students' admission practices of public secondary school principals be compared to their counterparts in private schools in Imo State?

2. What ways can students' disciplinary practices of public secondary school principals be compared to their counterparts in private schools in Imo State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of students' admission practice by principals of public and private secondary schools in Imo State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of students' disciplinary practice by principals of public and private secondary schools in Imo State.

Methods

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. This design is deemed appropriate for the study since the researcher collected data from a given population of the study to describe systematically and comparatively analyze students' personnel management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Imo State. The study was carried out in Imo state. The population of the study comprised 694 respondents of which 296 are principals of public secondary schools and 398 are principals of private secondary schools in Imo State.

The entire population was used for the study without sampling due to its manageable size. Hence, all the 694 respondents made up of 296 public and 398 private secondary school principals were used for the study. The instrument for data collection was the researcher-developed questionnaire titled "Principals' Student Personnel Management Practices Questionnaire (PSPMPQ)". The instrument was developed based on literature review and consultation of experts in educational field. The instrument has two sections namely, A and B. Section "A" dealt with the demographic variable of the respondents such as school ownership, while section B elicited information concerning student personnel management practices. These parts were based on the two areas of students' personnel management practices adopted in this study. Cluster I which is concerned with admission practices has eight items and cluster II contains 14 items on disciplinary practices. The instrument contains 22 items structured on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

Face validation of the instrument was determined by presenting three copies of the questionnaire together with title, purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses to three experts who are lecturers, two in the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one in Measurement and Evaluation, all from Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Their comments and suggestions were used to produce the final copy of the instrument. The instrument was subjected to the measure of internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha method. The internal consistency reliability coefficients obtained for cluster I and II are 0.82 and 0.77 respectively. The overall coefficient of the entire instrument was 0.80. This index is considered adequate for this study. This was above the 0.79 coefficient value suggested by Orodho (2009) for establishing the reliability of the research instrument.

The researcher together with six research assistants who are public and private secondary school teachers in Imo State employed a direct method of data collection. A total of 694 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, 296 and 398 copies for principals of public and private secondary schools respectively. Out of these, a total of 673 copies of

questionnaire made up of 288 and 385 from public and private school principals respectively were properly filled and successfully retrieved, indicating 97% percent return. The copies of the questionnaire properly filled and successfully retrieved were used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were utilized to answer the research questions and t-test was used to test the hypotheses. The decision criteria on the research questions are that any item with a mean score equal or above 2.50 indicated agreement, while the item with a mean score below 2.50 indicated disagreement. For decision on the hypotheses, if p-value is equal to or greater than significant value of 0.05 ($P \geq 0.05$), the null hypothesis was rejected and the difference was taken to be statistically significant, but if otherwise ($P < 0.05$), the null hypothesis was not rejected and the difference was taken to be statistically not significant.

Result

Research Question 1: What ways can students' admission practices of public secondary school principals be compared to their counterparts in private schools in Imo State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation Scores on Admission Practices of Principals

S/N	ITEMS	Public School Principals (N=288)			Private School Principals (N = 385)		
		Mean	SD	Decision	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Advertise the sale of admission forms to members of the public through different media	2.65	1.10	Agree	2.71	1.02	Agree
2	Conduct written entrance examinations for candidates who applied for admission	2.56	1.06	Agree	2.58	1.10	Agree
3	Invite successful candidates in the entrance examinations for oral interview	2.46	1.03	Disagree	2.40	1.04	Disagree
4	Offer admission to candidates who successfully pass the oral interview	2.48	1.15	Disagree	2.44	1.10	Disagree
5	Instruct candidates who are admitted to submit their credentials for screening	2.75	1.10	Agree	2.70	1.05	Agree
6	Provide instruction on how to make necessary payments to candidates who are offered admission	2.60	1.13	Agree	2.58	1.11	Agree
7	Register candidates who have made the necessary payments	2.80	1.10	Agree	2.73	1.13	Agree
8	Place successful candidates in various classes based on entrance examination performance	2.91	1.04	Agree	2.77	1.12	Agree
Mean of Means		2.65	1.09	Agree	2.61	1.08	Agree

Data presented on Table 1 show that public and private secondary school principals mean scores are above 2.50 for six out of the eight items listed namely 1, 2 and 5-8 revealing agreement by both groups that they adopt these items as their admission practices. On the other hand, the mean scores of below 2.50 were recorded by public and private secondary school principals for both items 3 and 4 indicating their disagreement with the items as part of their admission practices.

The overall standard deviation scores of public and private secondary school principals which were 1.09 and 1.08 indicate homogeneity in their ratings. The mean of means of 2.65 and 2.61 for both public and private secondary school principals which are above 2.50 indicated agreement that most admission practices listed are adopted by principals. The public and private secondary school principals adopt similar admission practices such as advertising the sale of admission forms to members of the public through different media, conduct written entrance examinations for candidates who applied for

admission, instruct candidates who are admitted to submit their credentials for screening, provide instruction on how to make necessary payments to candidates who are offered admission, register candidates who have made the necessary payments and place successful candidates in various classes based on entrance examination performance.

Research Question 2: What ways can students' disciplinary practices of public secondary school principals be compared to their counterparts in private schools in Imo State?

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation Scores on Disciplinary Practices of Principals

S/N	ITEMS	Public School Principals (N =288)			Private School Principals (N = 385)		
		Mean	SD	Decision	Mean	SD	Decision
9	Formulate rules and regulations to guide the conduct of students	2.91	1.04	Agree	2.87	1.08	Agree
10	Melt punishment on students who come late to school	2.79	1.03	Agree	2.66	1.11	Agree
11	Assign manual labour to students who absent themselves from school without fair reason	2.54	1.15	Agree	2.48	1.07	Agree
12	Provide counselling services to students who are aggressive in nature	2.70	1.10	Agree	2.47	1.09	Disagree
13	Invite misbehaved students' parents or guardians for interactions on the way forward	2.45	1.07	Disagree	2.52	1.07	Agree
14	Punish students who insult their peers in the classroom	2.69	0.98	Agree	2.71	0.94	Agree
15	Give suspension to students who smoke in the school compound	2.54	1.00	Agree	2.57	1.04	Agree
16	Sanction students who vandalize school properties	2.89	1.05	Agree	2.92	1.08	Agree
17	Reinforce students for desirable behaviour	2.66	1.08	Agree	2.55	1.05	Agree
18	Constitute examination malpractice committee which investigates issues related to students' examination malpractices	2.60	1.05	Agree	2.81	1.06	Agree
19	Constitute disciplinary committee to handle serious offences committed by students	2.77	1.10	Agree	2.82	1.09	Agree
20	Instruct students who abuse members of staff in school to write undertaking	2.67	1.04	Agree	2.64	1.00	Agree
21	Issue verbal warning to students who make noise in the classroom	2.61	1.05	Agree	2.70	1.04	Agree
22	Expel students who have committed several serious offences	2.58	1.02	Agree	2.54	1.02	Agree
Mean of Means		2.67	1.05		2.66	1.05	Agree

As shown on Table 2, the mean scores of public and private secondary school principals are above 2.50 for items 9, 10, 11 and 14-22 revealing agreement by both groups that they adopt these items as their disciplinary practices. On the other hand, the mean score of 2.70 recorded by public school principals for item 12 which is above 2.50 show agreement with the item as part of their disciplinary practices, while in the case of counterparts in private schools, the

mean score for the item is 2.47 which is below the cut off mean score of 2.50 indicate disagreement. Further result shows that public school principals disagreed with item 13, while their counterparts in private schools agreed with the item.

The overall standard deviation scores of public and private secondary school principals which were 1.05 and 1.05 respectively indicate homogeneity in their ratings. The mean of means of 2.67 and 2.66 for both public and private secondary school principals respectively which are above 2.50 indicated agreement that most admission practices listed are adopted by principals. The public and private secondary school principals adopt similar disciplinary practices such as formulation of rules and regulations, melting of punishment on students who come late to school assign manual labour to students who absent themselves from school without fair reason, punishment students who insult their peers in the classroom, suspension of students who smoke in the school compound, sanction students who vandalize school properties, reinforce students for desirable behaviour, issue verbal warning to students who make noise in the classroom, expelling students who have committed several serious offences but differ in the areas of provision of counselling services to students who are aggressive in nature and invitation of misbehaved students' parents or guardians for interactions on the way forward. Thus, public and private secondary school principals adopt similar disciplinary practices but differ in the areas of provision of counselling services to students who are aggressive in nature and invitation of misbehaved students' parents or guardians for interactions on the way forward

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of students' admission practice by principals of public and private secondary schools in Imo State.

Table 3: The Summary of t-test Analysis of no Significant Difference in the Mean Ratings of Students' Admission Practice by Principals of Public and Private Secondary Schools

Location	N	X	SD	p-value	Df	∞	Remark
Public Sch. Principals	288	2.65	1.09	0.17	671	0.05	Not Significant
Private Sch. Principals	385	2.61	1.08				

Data presented on Table 3 revealed that the p-value of 0.17 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance at 671 degree of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of students' admission practice by principals of public and private secondary schools in Imo State.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of students' disciplinary practice by principals of public and private secondary schools in Imo State.

Table 4: The Summary of t-test Analysis of no Significant Difference in the Mean Ratings of Students' Disciplinary Practice by Principals of Public and Private Secondary Schools

Location	N	X	SD	p-value	Df	∞	Remark
Public Sch. Principals	288	2.67	1.05	0.20	671	0.05	Not Significant
Private Sch. Principals	385	2.66	1.05				

As shown on Table 4, the p-value of 0.20 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance at 671 degree of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of students' admission practice by principals of public and private secondary schools in Imo State.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study showed that public and private secondary school principals adopt similar admission practices in Imo State. This is in line with the finding of Nwanga, Amaikwu and Ugwo (2021) which indicated that similar admission practices are applied by principals of public and private secondary schools. The possible explanation for the findings is probably due to the fact that the studies were conducted in secondary schools in south-east which have similar process and policy for admission of students in secondary schools. The similar admission practices include advertising the sale of admission forms to members of the public through different media, conduct written entrance examinations for candidates who applied for admission, instruct candidates who are admitted to submit their credentials for screening, provide instruction on how to make necessary payments to candidates who are offered admission, register candidates who have made the necessary payments and place successful candidates in various classes based on entrance examination performance.

The principals possibly apply admission practices to ensure that only qualified students who have met the entrance requirements are admitted in secondary schools. Secondary schools students are admitted based on their intellectual ability in public and private secondary schools in Imo State. Any school that admits students more than the capacity of the available human and material resources may find it extremely difficult to deliver quality instructions to learners. Admission practices are probably applied by principals to select the best candidates from numerous applicants to study in public and private secondary schools.

It was also found that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of students' admission practice by principals of public and private secondary schools in Imo State. This affirmed the finding of Nwanga, Amaikwu and Ugwo (2021) which showed that the mean ratings of students' admission practice by principals of public and private secondary schools did not differ significantly. The possible reason for no significant difference in the mean ratings of students' admission practice by principals of public and private secondary schools probably due to the fact that every educational institution strives to ensure that only qualified candidates gained entrance to study in the school.

The result of the study revealed that public and private secondary school principals adopt similar disciplinary practices but differ in the areas of provision of counselling services to students who are aggressive in nature and invitation of misbehaved students' parents or guardians for interactions on the way forward in Imo State. This agreed with the finding of Nwanga, Amaikwu and Ugwo (2021) which indicated that similar admission practices such as formulation of rules to guide the conduct of students, oral reprimand to address less serious misbehavior of students' suspension and expulsion are applied by principals of public and private secondary schools. The possible explanation for agreement between the two studies could be the fact that the two studies were conducted in Nigeria and almost the same year. This refuted the finding of Atanda and Wambugu (2022) which indicated that disciplinary practices in public secondary schools differ from that of their private school counterparts. The possible explanation for disagreement between the two studies could be the fact that the two studies were conducted in different countries. The similar disciplinary practices include:

formulation of rules and regulations, melting of punishment on students who come late to school assign manual labour to students who absent themselves from school without fair reason, punishment students who insult their peers in the classroom, suspension of students who smoke in the school compound, sanction students who vandalize school properties, reinforce students for desirable behaviour, issue verbal warning to students who make noise in the classroom, expelling students who have committed several serious offences but differ in the areas of provision of counselling services to students who are aggressive in nature and invitation of misbehaved students' parents or guardians for interactions on the way forward.

The principals probably apply disciplinary practices to control the students in public and private secondary schools. Disciplinary practices enhance the maintenance of the order in public and private secondary schools. The students act in accordance with rules, regulations and directives of principals in public and private secondary schools in Imo State. The behaviour of students in public and private secondary schools is minimized through disciplinary practice of principals.

Further results shows that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of students' disciplinary practice by principals of public and private secondary schools in Imo State. This is in agreement with the finding of Nwanga, Amaikwu and Ugwo (2021) which showed that the mean ratings of students' disciplinary practice by principals of public and private secondary schools did not differ significantly. The similarity in findings could be attributed to the fact that the two studies were conducted in south-east and within almost the same period.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that principals of public and private secondary schools in Imo State apply similar students' personnel management practices. The principals of public and private secondary schools apply similar admission and disciplinary to ensure that students derive optimal benefits from the school programmes. The students' personnel management practices of principals can make learners become emotionally stable, healthy and exhibit desirable behaviour in and outside secondary school environment in Imo.

Recommendations

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

1. The Ministry of Education should develop a comprehensive policy to guide admission practices to improve uniformity in admission processes of principals in public and private secondary schools.
2. Secondary Education Management Board and Directors of private schools should develop, enforce and monitor the implementation of quarterly training programmes for principals for them to upgrade their knowledge for continuous uniformity in disciplinary practices of principals in public and private secondary schools.

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