

Trends in Academic Achievement of Students in Public and Privately Owned Secondary Schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State, Nigeria

Rev. Fr. Hilary Obinna Nwajagu, Dr. Emmanuel Chidubem Asiegbu
Department of Educational Management & Policy
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
Anambra State, Nigeria

Abstract:- The study sought to ascertain the trends on academic achievement of students in public and private secondary schools in Awka Education zone of Anambra State. Five research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) scores in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 academic sessions were used for data collation. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 15 public and 15 private secondary schools in Awka Education zone. Simple percentage was used to establish the academic achievement trends in public and private secondary schools in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 academic sessions. Findings of the study reveal that private school students had a higher percentage of excellent (A1-B3) passes in Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and English Language than public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 academic sessions. Although the study also discovered that public school students had more percentage of credit-level passes than private school students in Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and English Language in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 academic sessions. This may be as a result of the fact that there are more qualified teachers in public schools due to strict policy of government in employment. The study concluded that teachers of Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and English Language in private schools are more motivated and committed in ensuring excellent performance of their students than their counterparts in public schools. It was recommended among others that, principals should increase their instructional supervision on teachers teaching Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and English Language to energize them in doing their work diligently and professionally, especially in public schools.

Keywords:- Academic Achievement, Public and Privately Secondary Schools.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a major role in human capital formation. Education, in this perspective is perceived as a cornerstone of economic growth, social development and a major means of improving the welfare of individuals. According to Asikha(2010), education is an investment as well as an instrument that can be used to achieve a more rapid economic, social, political, technological, scientific

and cultural development in a country. A comprehensive outlook into the Nigerian educational system shows that, it is systematically structured into pre-basic/pre-primary, basic/primary, secondary and tertiary education. This study focused on the form of education children receive after primary and before tertiary stage which is called secondary education.

Secondary education is a six-year form of education which children receive after primary school before proceeding to the tertiary level of education. Secondary education is critical to the development of the nation being the bridge between primary/basic and tertiary education. Apart from serving as the link between primary and tertiary education, it provides opportunity for a child to acquire additional knowledge, skills and traits beyond the primary level (Ifeyinwa, 2013). Without secondary school education, the basis for any future academic study cannot be laid. The importance of secondary school education cannot be overemphasized because it consumes the products of primary schools and produce candidates for tertiary education in the nation (Abdul rahaman, 2014). According to Okorji Asiegbu & Ibeziakor (2018), Secondary Education occupy a strategic and prominent position in Nigeria's education system because it serves as the core link to the Tertiary education and the world of work. This means that, it equips the students with appropriate vocational and technical skills, to survive in the society, especially when they can't afford tertiary education.

In Nigeria, secondary school education is structured into public and private schools (including voluntary agency schools). Public secondary schools are established by federal and state governments and communities with the approval of their state governments which are managed or supervised by their respective governments through the Post Primary School Service Commission (PPSSC). Public secondary schools in Nigeria are divided into; state and unity schools. The state schools are managed by state government while the unity schools are managed by the federal government.

On the other hand, private secondary schools are established and managed by individuals, non-governmental organizations and voluntary agencies in line with government framework, guidelines and regulations which are subject to approval by their state governments. Private secondary schools are independent schools established by non-governmental agencies. While pure private schools are for profit making venture, voluntary agency schools which

includes mission schools, are usually for social and humanitarian services to the nation. Voluntary agency secondary schools are set up to aid the government in providing better teaching and learning services to the masses.

Both public and private secondary schools are designed to prepare students for advanced courses in science education, social science education, arts and humanities as well as vocational and entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions. Science education is designed to guide the world towards a scientific and technology oriented society. Science education is geared towards confronting issues that require scientific way of thinking for informed discussion, management and sharing of resources such as air, water and vegetation (Ellis, 2010). In a nutshell, science education is applied knowledge and comprises subjects that have an impact on human everyday activities. In Nigerian senior secondary school system, core science subjects include physics, chemistry, biology as well as compulsory General mathematics and English language.

The role of core science subjects to the development of nations cannot be over emphasized. The study of physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics coupled with English language plays an important role in reducing illiteracy, poverty and technological transformation in developing and developed nations. However, In Nigeria, educational planners and policy makers are faced with the challenges of how to improve the quality of science education and academic achievement of science oriented subjects in her educational institutions. One of the issues at stake in education today is centred on improving students' academic achievement in relation to teaching. Academic achievement is something of great importance to parents, teachers as well as students.

Academic achievement is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessment. In his own view, Adeyemo (2011) stated that academic achievement entails the achievement a student makes in school. Academic achievement deals with the extent students have gained from a particular course of instruction. Determining academic achievement helps the teacher and the students to evaluate and estimate the degree of success attained in learning a given body of knowledge. Hence, Chowdhury and Pati (2011) stated that academic achievement is defined by examination marks, teachers' given grades and percentiles in academic subjects.

Undoubtedly, the purpose of teaching and learning is to satisfy the set objectives of instructions with the aim of improving students' academic achievement. Regrettably, despite the increasing public funds committed to education, students' academic achievement over the years in West Africa School Certificate Examination (WASCE) has continued to be of great concern to the society as a result of continuous failure (Rufai, 2010). One of the most potent barometers so far, if not the strongest, of measuring students' academic achievement is through public examinations such as Senior School Certificate Examination (S.S.C.E.) in Nigeria. These examinations are externally

moderated and enjoy a lot of public confidence. The hues and cries that normally accompany the release of students' results by the West African Examination Council every year has become a disturbing trend. The high rate of students' failure in core science subjects as well as Mathematics and English language has become a thing of worry to parents.

For example, in the S.S.C.E of May/June 2010, overall percentage of students with five credit and above in physics, biology, chemistry including English language and mathematics recorded 40.4 percent pass while 59.6 percent fail. In the examinations taken in June 2011, overall percentage of students with five credit and above in physics, biology, chemistry including English language and mathematics recorded 27.9 percent pass while 72.1 percent fail. Results in 2012 recorded failure rates of 61.3 percent while 39.7 percent success rates were recorded. The cause of varying levels of academic achievement in secondary schools' students in core science subjects has often been a subject of investigation in Nigeria.

As multidimensional as the problems associated with students' poor academic achievement are in core science subjects there have been contentions that school ownership is one of the essential factors that affect students' academic achievement. School ownership can be viewed from two main perspectives: public and private. Across all levels of education, there is a widely-held view that students who attend private schools perform better than those who attend public schools (Adeyemi, 2014). Ajayi (2009) asserted that a significant difference exists in the academic achievement of private and public secondary school students in mathematics, English language and core science subjects. According to him, private schools' students performed significantly better than their public school counterparts. This same assertion is being held by most parents in their choice of school for their wards. This, according to Akinsolu (2009), explains why a close study of Nigerian's current trends observes parents' preference for a privately-owned educational institution for their children, rather than public institutions. He attributed the reason for this choice by parents to various factors ranging from large class size to poor infrastructures which adversely affect the performance of students in public schools.

However, in comparing public and private secondary schools in Anambra State especially after the state Government's return of some schools back to their original owners – the Church, one might begin to have the perception that the business of education is not taken with all the seriousness in public schools unlike the private schools. One major feature between private and public secondary schools is that, unlike private secondary schools that offer greater learning opportunities for their students' academic growth, public secondary schools provide skimpy intellectual and motivational environment for their students, which in turn has adverse effect on the students' academic achievement. Perhaps, it is on this premise, parents prefer private schooling for their children without minding the high cost of private education.

It is against this backdrop, that this study sought to ascertain the trends in academic achievement of students in 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 academic sessions in public and private secondary schools in Awka Education zone of Anambra State.

Meanwhile, this study would be beneficial to the teachers and students of private and public schools, secondary school authorities and future researchers such that, having seen the academic achievement trends in the five core science courses over three academic sessions, they will take necessary action towards academic improvement.

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to ascertain the trends in academic achievement of students in public and private secondary schools in Awka Education zone of Anambra State. Specifically, the study will ascertain the;

- Percentage of students that passed physics in public and private secondary schools in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions in Awka Education zone of Anambra State
- Percentage of students that passed biology in public and private secondary schools in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions in Awka Education zone of Anambra State
- Percentage of students that passed chemistry in public and private secondary schools in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions in Awka Education zone of Anambra State
- Percentage of students that passed mathematics in public and private secondary schools in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions in Awka Education zone of Anambra State
- Percentage of students that passed English language in public and private secondary schools in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions in Awka Education zone of Anambra State

III. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focused on the academic achievement trends of students in public and private secondary schools in Awka Education zone of Anambra State. Physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics and English language achievement scores of students from both private and public secondary school were analysed on a three-year trend. This study involved 15 private and 15 public secondary schools in Awka Education zone of Anambra State. The study is delimited to Senior Secondary School (SSS) III students who have taken and passed Senior Secondary Certificate Examination conducted by West African Examination Council (WAEC) in 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were formulated to serve as guide for this study:

- What is the percentage of students that passed physics in public and private secondary schools in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions in Awka Education zone of Anambra State?
- What is the percentage of students that passed biology in public and private secondary schools in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions in Awka Education zone of Anambra State?
- What is the percentage of students that passed chemistry in public and private secondary schools in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions in Awka Education zone of Anambra State?
- What is the percentage of students that passed mathematics in public and private secondary schools in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions in Awka Education zone of Anambra State?
- What is the percentage of students that passed English language in public and private secondary schools in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions in Awka Education zone of Anambra State?

V. METHOD

This study which ascertained the trends in academic achievement of students in public and private secondary schools adopted a descriptive survey design and was conducted in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. The population of this study comprised of all the students in the 62 public secondary schools and 166 private secondary schools in Awka Education zone of Anambra State. These secondary schools are different types of schools which cut across single-sex, religious inclined and mixed schools and they offer sciences and technology, humanities and arts as well as commercial subjects. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for this study. In the first stage, three government areas (Awka South, Anaocha and Njikoka LGAs) were selected from the five local government areas that made up Awka Education zone using purposive random sampling technique. In the second stage, five public and five private secondary schools were selected from each of the three local government areas using simple random sampling technique. Therefore, the sample size for this study is 15 public and 15 private secondary schools. The researchers used the WAEC grading of candidates raw scores of passes (A1 – C6) obtained by Senior Secondary Students (SSS) (III) with particular reference to physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics and English language for 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 in Awka Education zone of Anambra State. The researchers, within 3-weeks, personally visited principals of the sampled school and collected copies of West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) result sheet conducted in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 with reference to physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics and English language. The collected results were analysed using simple percentages to determine the comparative success rates of students that passed biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics and English language in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016

academic sessions in order to establish the academic achievement trends in public and private secondary schools.

VI. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter contains the analysis of data collected for this study. Data collected with respect to the research questions were analyzed and presented in Table 1 – 5. Results thereof as well as the summary of findings of the study were presented.

A. Research Question 1:

What is the percentage of students that passed physics in public and private secondary schools in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions in Awka Education zone of Anambra State?

Data collected in respect to this research question were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 1.

| School Type | Grades of Physics | | | | | | TOTAL |
|----------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| | C6 | C5 | C4 | B3 | B2 | A1 | |
| Public Schools | 322 30.52% | 429 40.66% | 187 17.73% | 96 9.10% | 13 1.23% | 8 0.76% | 1055 |
| Private School | 157 17.21% | 149 16.34% | 412 45.18% | 104 11.40% | 61 6.69% | 29 3.18% | 912 |

Table 1: Summary of private and public students’ academic achievement trends in physics in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 academic sessions

Data in Table 1 revealed that private school students had more percentage of excellent passes in physics than public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. The result revealed that public school students had more percentage of credit passes in physics than private school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. However, public school students had more percentage of C5 and C6 in physics than private school students who had more C4 in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. On the whole, private school students performed better in physics than

public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions

B. Research Question 2:

What is the percentage of students that passed biology in public and private secondary schools in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions in Awka Education zone of Anambra State?

Data collected in respect to this research question were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 2.

| School Type | Grades of Biology | | | | | | TOTAL |
|----------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| | C6 | C5 | C4 | B3 | B2 | A1 | |
| Public Schools | 411 39.98% | 363 35.31% | 199 19.36% | 26 2.53% | 18 1.75% | 11 1.07% | 1028 |
| Private School | 443 44.48% | 215 21.59% | 24 2.41% | 204 20.48% | 77 7.73% | 43 4.32% | 996 |

Table 2: Summary of private and public students’ academic achievement trends in biology in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions

Data in Table 2 revealed that private school students had more percentage of excellent passes in biology than public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. The result revealed that public school students had more percentage of credit passes in biology than private school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. However, public school students had more percentage of C4 and C5 in biology than private school students who had more C6 in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. On the whole, private school students performed better in biology than

public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions

C. Research Question 3:

What is the percentage of students that passed chemistry in public and private secondary schools in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions in Awka Education zone of Anambra State?

Data collected in respect to this research question were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 3

| School type | Grades of Chemistry | | | | | | TOTAL |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| | C6 | C5 | C4 | B3 | B2 | A1 | |
| Public schools | 674 60.66% | 318 28.62% | 97 8.73% | 14 1.26% | 6 0.54% | 2 0.18% | 1111 |
| private school | 226 33.19% | 109 16.01% | 93 13.66% | 133 19.53% | 99 14.54% | 21 3.08% | 681 |

Table 3: Summary of private and public students' academic achievement trends in chemistry in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions

Data in Table 3 revealed that private school students had more percentage of excellent passes in chemistry than public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. The result revealed that public school students had more percentage of credit passes in chemistry than private school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. However, public school students had more percentage of C5 and C6 in chemistry than private school students who had more C4 in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. On the whole, private school students performed better in chemistry

than public school students from 2013/14 to 2015/16 academic sessions.

D. Research Question 4:

What is the percentage of students that passed mathematics in public and private secondary schools in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions in Awka Education zone of Anambra State?

Data collected in respect to this research question were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 4.

| School Type | Grades of Mathematics | | | | | | TOTAL |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| | C6 | C5 | C4 | B3 | B2 | A1 | |
| Public Schools | 803 63.08% | 318 24.98% | 124 9.74% | 14 1.10% | 10 0.79% | 4 0.31% | 1273 |
| Private School | 284 27.28% | 462 44.38% | 227 21.81% | 36 3.46% | 20 1.92% | 12 1.15% | 1041 |

Table 4: Summary of private and public students' academic achievement trends in mathematics in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions

Data in Table 4 revealed that private school students had more percentage of excellent passes in mathematics than public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. The result revealed that public school students had more percentage of credit passes in mathematics than private school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. However, private school students had more percentage of C4 and C5 in mathematics than public school students who had more C6 in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. On the whole, private school students performed better in mathematics than public school students from 2013/14 to 2015/16 academic sessions.

E. Research Question 5:

What is the percentage of students that passed English language in public and private secondary schools in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions in Awka Education zone of Anambra State?

Data collected in respect to this research question were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 5.

Data in Table 5 revealed that private school students had more percentage of excellent passes in English language than public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. The result revealed that public school students had more percentage of credit passes in English language than private school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. However, public school students had more percentage of C6 in English language than private school students who had more C4 and C5 in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. On the whole, private school students performed better in English language than public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions

| School Type | Grades of English language | | | | | | TOTAL |
|----------------|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------|
| | C6 | C5 | C4 | B3 | B2 | A1 | |
| Public Schools | 934 67.53% | 386 27.91% | 54 3.90% | 4 0.29% | 4 0.29% | 1 0.07% | 1383 |
| Private School | 238 19.85% | 782 65.22% | 127 10.59% | 29 2.42% | 16 1.33% | 7 0.58% | 1199 |

Table 5: Summary of private and public students' academic achievement trends in English language in the 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 sessions

VII. SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS

From the results of the analysis presented in this chapter, findings of the study are summarized as follows:

- Private school students had more percentage of excellent passes in physics than public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. While, public school students had more percentage of credit passes in physics than private school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions
- Private school students had more percentage of excellent passes in biology than public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. Whereas, public school students had more percentage of credit passes in biology than private school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions
- Private school students had more percentage of excellent passes in chemistry than public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. But, public school students had more percentage of credit passes in chemistry than private school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions
- Private school students had more percentage of excellent passes in mathematics than public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. While, public school students had more percentage of credit passes in mathematics than private school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions
- Private school students had more percentage of excellent passes in English language than public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. Although, public school students had more percentage of credit passes in English language than private school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions

VIII. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

A. Academic Achievement Trends of Students in Private and Public Schools

Findings of the study revealed that private school students had excellent passes in physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics and English language than public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. The findings of this work corroborate with that of Mohammed, Yakubu, Zayyanu and Habu (2017) which discovered that private school students performed better in physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics and English language than public school students. This could justify the reason why parents prefer their children to attend private schools. This study lends credence to the work of Rong'uno

(2017) who reported that private school students performed better in physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics and English language than public school students. Perhaps, teachers in private schools are more serious with their job than their counterparts in public schools because their promotion and salaries depends on the academic achievement of their students.

The discovery of this study that private school students had more percentage of excellent passes than public school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions in physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics and English language is in agreement with the study of Khan (2012) who attributed the difference to private school administrators having better instructional behaviour and vision to improve their schools as compared to public school administrators. Supporting the Khan's study, Adeyemi (2014) asserted that efficient instructional encounter in the classroom as a result of frequent and thorough supervision, dynamic school administration, frequent class assignments, prompt payment of teachers' salaries and allowances, mutual parent-school relationship, positive pupil-teacher interactions, absence of industrial strike actions, provision of adequate furniture and the maintenance of the standard teacher-pupil ratio are some of the reasons why private school students have been outshining their counterparts in public schools over the years.

Interestingly, the study disclosed that public school students had more percentage of credit passes in physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics and English language than private school students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/2016 academic sessions. This suggests that, secondary school students in public secondary schools are working hard to meet up with their counterparts in private secondary schools. The finding of this study concurs with that of Igbiniedion and Epumepu (2011) which reported that the percentage performance of public school students in credit passes were higher than those of the private schools. This supports, the earlier findings of Olatoye (2009) who discovered motivation for examinations, study habit, self-concept could have significant influence on public school students to obtain credit passes in physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics and English language.

IX. CONCLUSION

The major index used for assessing scientific and technological advancement through education is the academic achievement of the students. The transformation of a nation through education depends largely on the academic achievement of the students in science subjects, mathematics and English language. Depending on choice of parents, a child can attend public or private school. The study concluded that teachers of physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics and English language in private schools are motivated and committed in ensuring excellent performance of their students than their counterparts in public schools

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

With regards to the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Ministry of education should organize in-service retraining programmes for teachers in both school types to improve their instructional strategies in teaching secondary school subjects.
- Principals should increase their instructional supervision on teachers teaching physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics and English language to energize them in doing their work diligently and professional especially in public schools.
- The government should further encourage the establishment of private schools including mission/faith-based schools.
- The Ministry of Education in the State should also intensify more efforts in conducting regular and adequate short visits and routine inspection to schools in order to improve the instructional competencies of teachers in private and public schools.

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