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Research Article

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AFIKPO EDUCATION ZONE OF EBONYI STATE

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Abstract

This study compared the management practices in public and private secondary schools in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State. Two purposes, two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated for the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A population of 151 principals from the existing seventy-one (71) and eighty (80) private and public secondary schools respectively in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State participated in the study. There were no sample and sampling technique as the whole population participated in the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Secondary School Management Practices Questionnaire (SSMPQ)". The instrument was validated by three experts with overall reliability coefficient of 0.98. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions and t-test statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the data analysis revealed that public school principals were less effective in the adoption of staff personnel management practices in public secondary schools while principals from private secondary schools were more effective on the staff personnel management practices among others. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended that principals should be given appropriate managerial support and reasonable autonomy to implement effective recruitment, staff placement, orientation, supervision, motivation, welfare and retention practices.

Keywords: Management Practice, financial, Staff Personnel, Management, Public Schools, Private Schools

Introduction

Education for good living has been one of the most persistent concerns of man throughout history, although the approach to the management of education may differ from place to place (Boy & Makasi, 2023). The training and education of young ones starts from home and continues in an organized place of learning known as school. Nigeria today has both the public and private secondary schools.Public schools areschools which are directly sponsored controlled and managed administratively by government of the state or nation, while private secondary schools are secondary schools established and run by missions, individuals, organizations with the approval of government (Ogakwu, 2023). School managers or administrators are principals, head masters or mistresses in the school system, they carry out the work of administration; that is, the implementation of policies and programs formulated by the management.

Management in the context of this study, is concerned with formulation of strategies, plans, policies and programs with a view to achieving set organizational goals, while administration is the process of implementing the policies and programs formulated by management for the purpose of achieving organizational goals (Ozochi, 2021). O'Cornor in Obi (2023) view management as a process by which human and materials resources are coordinated to accomplish a given set of objectives. Managing human resources and getting the best out of them in terms of productivity, integrity, loyalty to the organization and their retention in the organization is a difficult task (Okonkwo, 2024). It is the human resources that have to procure material resources, preserve and utilize them systematically to accomplish organizational goals. Management practices are the methods or techniques found to be the most effective means of achieving an objective in secondary schools (Goodrich, 2023).

Management practices are observed in both public and private secondary schools. Management practices in secondary schools include planning, recruitment procedure, fund raising practices, quality control practices, communication procedure, method of teachers' motivation and guidance and counseling services.Principalship involves the control of human and material resources of the school. The principal is often charge with daunting task of harnessing both human and other resources (Aja-Okorie and Ndubuisi, 2021). There are many management practices, but in the context of this study, management practices are staff personnel management, financial management practice, quality control measure and student personnel management practices.

Staff personnel management is a core function of school administrators that focuses on managing the human resources of an organization. It deals with getting the right people, at the right place, at the right time, and keeping them motivated to achieve school goals. Staff personnel management is the process of planning, recruiting, selecting, training, motivating, evaluating, and maintaining school staff so they can perform effectively (Omasa&Anho, 2023). It covers both teaching and non-teaching staff. The goal is to ensure staff welfare, job satisfaction, and productivity. Personnel management is the effective utilization of human resources in order to achieve organizational goals through the satisfaction of individual staff needs and aspirations (Ogakwu, 2023). Secondary school principals are the chief personnel managers of their schools. Their practices determine staff morale, performance, and students' learning outcomes. Effective principals adopt several personnel management practices daily. In schools, staff personnel management means the principal ensures teachers and non-teaching staff are well recruited, placed, trained, appraised, disciplined fairly, and rewarded. the principals ensure new teachers

are oriented on school rules, values, and schemes of work. Principals also organize workshops, seminars, and sponsor teachers for further training to update their skills. Principals motivate staff through praise, awards for "Best Teacher", timely approval of leave, prompt salary recommendations, and support during personal challenges (Akpa, 2022). Principal also regular classroom supervision, lesson note checks, and annual appraisal help principals identify strengths and weaknesses. Feedback is given to help teachers improve in their teaching profession and also ensure effective utilization of financial resources in related to staff professional development (Aja-Okorie and Ndubuisi, 2021).

Financial management is the core administrative function that ensures a school's resources are planned, sourced, used, and accounted effectively in secondary schools. Financial management directly affects teaching quality, infrastructure, and students' welfare (Ogakwu, 2023). Financial management implies the process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling the financial activities of an organization to achieve its objectives (Oko, Andrew, Ifeoma (2023). For schools, it involves budgeting, record keeping, accountability, and prudent use of funds from government, PTA, and other sources. Financial management is the process of planning, organizing, controlling and monitoring financial resources to achieve organizational goals efficiently and effectively (Ofojebe&Ezugoh, 2023). In educational institutions, financial management refers to all activities involved in acquiring, allocating, utilizing and accounting for funds to support teaching, learning and school development. Financial management in schools is all about making sure that limited resources are used wisely to maximize educational outcomes while maintaining transparency and accountability. Principals are accounting officers of their schools. The way they manage finances determines whether the school grows or struggles. Effective financial management practices help prevent mismanagement and build trust with government, parents, and staff. Principals prepare annual budgets with input from staff and PTA. The budget estimates income from subvention, fees, grants and outlines planned expenditure on salaries, materials, maintenance, and co-curricular activities. Principals ensure cash books, ledgers, receipts, payment vouchers, and asset registers are updated daily. notwithstanding, financial management practices adopted by secondary school principalsbudgeting, record keeping, internal control, accountability, resource mobilization, and auditensure that school funds are used transparently and effectively. However, in recent times, there has been controversy on if private schools are better than the public ones, secondly if government should return schools completely to private ownership or not (Abdukareen, 2023).The current trend of parents' preference of private schools to public schools' demand on answer to why parents send their children to private schools despite the comparatively high fees they pay. According to Aghenta (2024), many parents prefer to send their children/wards to private schools despite the escalating costs probably because, the benefit of such schools is higher than that of public schools and probably because, private schools are better managed than the public ones.

Some parents argue that proprietors of private schools have more positive policies towards intellectual achievement and therefore, offer greater opportunities for their students' academic performance. On the contrary, it is felt that the governmentwho is, the owner of public schools provides no motivation for the teachers, students and principals in their schools (Ogakwu, 2023). On the other hand, it is generally assumed that principals of private secondary schools perform their duties more effectively and efficiently better than their counterparts in the public schools. According to Okon in Ogakwu (2023), education environment of private schools is better and

more conducive to learning than that of the public schools, the expectation is that principals in private schools should do better than their counterparts in the public ones.

Ikpeoma cited in Aghenta (2024) states that a meager amount is often budgeted by the Federal Government for education each year, thereby making It difficult for administrators to plan and operate effectively. On the other hand, Ani (2024) states that education should be made number one priority in the national plan because,it is the most important instruments of change. The ability of a nation to grow and develop depends on the quality and emphasis in its educational system, not on the amount of natural wealth available in the country.

There is also the speculation that teachers in private secondary schools are paid on time and as such, do not participate in strike (Ogakwu, 2023). Hence, there is the need to compare the management practices in these two types of schools for improved productivity in the secondary schools. However, there are many management practices in both public and private secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

Statement of the Problem

It is observed that parents express strong preference to private secondary school education to the public secondary schools. Experience reveals that despite the amount of money ploughed into public secondary schools by the government including the introduction of free education for its citizens from primary to secondary school, parents still preferred sending their children to private secondary schools for learning. It has been observed that some private secondary schools demand huge sum of money for tuition fees and other fees for development and maintenances, yet, majority of parents still send their children to private secondary schools. The above decision taken by parents may border on certain management practices in both public and private schools and may be that academic planning in private secondary schools is more effective compared to public secondary schools.

Observation shows that, the welfare of teachers in the public secondary schools are not adequately catered for, which invariably may affect their productivity. All these are linked to the management practices in the schools. The implication of these is that many parents and guidance take their children and wards to the private secondary schools despite the exorbitant cost contradiction compared to the public secondary schools that are almost tuition free. It is on this based that this study sought to compare the school management practices in public and private secondary schools in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to compare management practices in public and private secondary schools in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study sought to compare:

1. Staff personnel management practices in public and private secondary schools in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State
2. Financial management practices in public and private secondary schools in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

Research Questions

This study guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the difference in staff personnel management practices in public and private secondary schools in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State?

2. What is the difference in financial management practices in public and private secondary schools in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

$H0_1$: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals on staff personnel management practices in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

$H0_2$: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals on financial management practices inAfikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

Methodology

The design for this study is descriptive survey research design. According to Ozochi (2021) descriptive survey aims at collecting data describing in a systematic manner the characteristics of a given population. The study area is Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State, consisting of five (5) Local Government Area (LGA). The Local Government Areas are: IVO Local Government Area, Afikpo Local Government Area, Edda Local Government Area, Ohaozara Local Government Area and Onicha Local Government Area. Afikpo education zone is one of the three (3) education zones in Ebonyi State. The population of this study comprised 151 principals in eighty (80) public secondary school principals and 71 private secondary school principals in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State; give a total of 151 principals. The researcher made use of all the 151 principals in both public and private secondary schools because, the number of secondary school principals in Afikpo Education Zone, Ebonyi State is not too large and is sizeable for the study.The instrument that was used by the researcher in this study is a structured questionnaire titled "Secondary School Management Practices Questionnaire (SSMPQ)" based on a four-point likertrating scale of: Strongly Agree (SA) with 4 points, agree (A) with 3 points, disagree (D) with 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1point. The instrument titled secondary school management practices Questionnaire (SSMPO) was validated by three experts in the faculty of education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Two experts from Administration and Planning, and one from Measurement and Evaluation. The experts assessed the instrument for relevance, clarity and coverage.overall reliability coefficient of 0.98. Since all values are above 0.70, the instrument was considered reliable.

Two hundred and fifty-one (151) copies of questionnaire were administered. The instrument was administered and retrieved by the researcher with the help of five (5) research assistants. These research assistants were chosen from the five local government Areas that made up the Afikpo education zone in the state and were briefed and instructed on the modalities for administering and retrieving of the instrument. Research questions 1-2 were answered on individual item basis using mean and standard deviation on item by item basis a criterion mean of 2.50 was used as the cut off point. The two null hypotheses were tested using independent t-test at 0.05 level of significant.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the differences in staff personnel management practices in public and private secondary schools in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State?

Table1: **Mean and standard deviation of Principals' responses on differences in staff personnel management practices in public and private secondary schools (N=149)**

S/N	ITEM	Public school			Private school		
		$\bar{X}$	S.D	Decision	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Decision
1	Recruitment flexibility is highly adopted in secondary schools	3.93	0.24	Agree	3.01	0.11	Agree
2	Recruitment of part time staff are sourced locally	3.39	0.60	Agree	1.50	0.58	Disagree
3	Remuneration of staff are on performance	1.60	0.60	Disagree	3.50	0.58	Agree
4	Orientation is usually organized for the newly recruited	1.58	0.61	Disagree	3.51	0.53	Agree
5	Supervision tends to be stricter in secondary schools	2.12	0.49	Disagree	3.97	0.23	Agree
6	Regular staff are consulted before recruitment of part time staff.	1.93	0.24	Disagree	1.54	0.50	Disagree
7	Staff welfare are often funded directly by the school retain talent	2.06	0.24	Disagree	3.51	0.53	Agree
8	Only qualified staff are recruited.	2.12	0.49	Disagree	3.97	0.23	Agree
	Grand Mean	**2.34**	**0.43**	**Disagree**	**3.06**	**0.41**	**Agree**

Source: Researcher'sField Work, 2026

Based on the results in Table 1, the grand mean of 2.34 for public school principals is less than 2.50, hence they disagreed on staff personnel management practices, while the grand mean of 3.06 for principals from private secondary schools is greater than 2.50; hence the principals in private secondary schools agreed on effectiveness of staff personnel management practices.

Research Question 2

What are the differences in financial management practices in public and private secondary schools in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State?

Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviation of the responses of the principals' on financial management practices in public and private secondary schools (N=149)

S/N	ITEM	Public school			Private school		
		$\bar{X}$	S.D	Decision	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Decision
9	Sources of funding is through donations	2.12	0.49	Disagree	3.97	0.23	Agree
10	Budget approval process is centralized	3.87	0.49	Agree	2.02	0.23	Disagree
11	Fund allocation flexibility is limited by the school principals	2.06	0.24	Disagree	3.51	0.53	Agree
12	Procurement procedures in secondary schools follow due process	3.02	0.97	Agree	2.45	0.50	Disagree

13	Financial record keeping in secondary schools are standardized	3.45	0.50	Agree	3.01	0.11	Agree
14	Fee collection is restricted in schools	1.64	0.78	Disagree	3.97	0.23	Agree
15	Expenditure control is bound by civil service financial auditing rules	1.51	0.50	Disagree	2.00	0.00	Disagree
16	Schools access grants from government	1.58	0.61	Disagree	3.51	0.53	Agree
	Grand Mean	**2.40**	**0.57**	**Disagree**	**3.05**	**0.29**	**Agree**

Source: Researcher'sField Work, 2026

The results in Table 2 indicated that principals from public secondary schools indicated low practices on items 9,11,14,15 and 17 with a mean score of: 2.12, 2.06, 1.64, 1.51 and 1.59. On the side of private secondary school principals, they indicated high practices on: most of the items with the exclusion of item 10, 12 and 15. However, the grand mean of 2.40 for public school principals is less than 2.50, therefore, they indicated low practices on the financial management practices in the management of secondary schools, while the grand mean of 3.05 for principals from private schools is greater than 2.50, hence the principals in private secondary schools indicated high practices on financial management practice in Private secondary schools.

Research Hypotheses

$H0_1$: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals on staff personnel management practices in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

Table 3: t-test of difference in the mean responses of public and private secondary school principals on staff personnel management practices

S/N	Variable	No	$\overline{X}$	S.D	df	t-cal	P-value	Decision
1	Public School Principals	79	3.93	0.24	147	28.61	0.000	Significant
	Private School Principals	70	3.01	0.11		5		
2	Public School Principals	79	3.39	0.60	147	19.32	0.000	Significant
	Private School Principals	70	1.50	0.58		2		
3	Public School Principals	79	1.60	0.60	147	19.32	0.000	Significant
	Private School Principals	70	3.50	0.58		2		
4	Public School Principals	79	1.58	0.61	147	20.44	0.000	Significant
	Private School Principals	70	3.51	0.53		9		
5	Public School Principals	79	2.12	0.49	147	28.61	0.000	Significant
	Private School Principals	70	3.97	0.23		5		
6	Public School Principals	79	1.93	0.24	147	6.195	0.000	Significant
	Private School Principals	70	1.54	0.50				
7	Public School Principals	79	2.06	0.24	147	21.80	0.000	Significant

	Private School Principals	70	3.51	0.53		0		
8	Public School Principals	79	2.12	0.49	147	28.61	0.000	Significant
	Private School Principals	70	3.97	0.23		5		

Source: Researcher'sField Work, 2026

Result in Table 3 indicated that the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principalresponse on staff personnel management practices in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State was significant as the p-value is less than alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principalresponse on staff personnel management practices in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State is rejected.

$H0_2$: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals on financial management practices in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

Table 4: t-test of difference in the mean responses of public and private school principals onfinancial management practices

S/N	Variable	No	$\dot{X}$	S.D	df	t-cal	P-value	Decision
9	Public School Principals	79	2.12	0.49	147	28.615	0.000	
	Private School Principals	70	3.97	0.23				Significant
10	Public School Principals	79	3.87	0.49	147	28.615	0.000	
	Private School Principals	70	2.02	0.23				Significant
11	Public School Principals	79	2.06	0.24	147	21.800	0.000	
	Private School Principals	70	3.51	0.53				Significant
12	Public School Principals	79	3.02	0.97	147	4.392	0.000	
	Private School Principals	70	2.45	0.50				Significant
13	Public School Principals	79	3.45	0.50	147	7.187	0.000	
	Private School Principals	70	3.01	0.11				Significant
14	Public School Principals	79	1.64	0.78	147	23.819	0.000	
	Private School Principals	70	3.97	0.23				Significant
15	Public School Principals	79	1.51	0.50	147	8.000	0.000	
	Private School Principals	70	2.00	0.00				Significant
16	Public School Principals	79	1.58	0.61	147	20.449	0.000	
	Private School Principals	70	3.51	0.53				Significant

Source: Researcher'sField Work, 2026

As shown in Table 4, the P- value is less than the alpha level of 0.05 significance. Hence, Ho_2 is not accepted. This indicates that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals on financial management practices inAfikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

Discussion of Findings

Staff Personnel Management Practices in Public and Private Secondary Schools

The results presented in Table 1 reveal a clear difference between the perceptions of principals in public and private secondary schools regarding recruitment and human resource management practices. Principals in public secondary schools agreed that recruitment flexibility is highly

adopted and that part-time staff are predominantly sourced locally. However, they disagreed that other human resource practices are consistently implemented, including performance-based remuneration, orientation of newly recruited staff, stricter supervision, direct funding of staff welfare, retention-oriented welfare practices, and the recruitment of only qualified personnel.In contrast, principals in private secondary schools reported broader adoption of the identified human resource practices. They agreed that recruitment is flexible, remuneration is performance-oriented, orientation is provided for newly recruited employees, supervision is relatively strict, staff welfare is directly supported by the school, welfare practices are used to retain staff, and recruitment is restricted to qualified personnel. This observation that private secondary schools have greater managerial autonomy and flexibility in recruiting, rewarding, supervising, and retaining employees, whereas public schools may be constrained by centralized government procedures, bureaucratic recruitment processes, standardized remuneration structures, and limited control over staff welfare.Overall, the findings indicate that human resource management practices are more comprehensively implemented in private secondary schools than in public secondary schools. The difference is particularly important because recruitment, remuneration, orientation, supervision, welfare, and staff retention are interconnected practices that can influence teacher motivation, commitment, and effectiveness. The finding therefore points to the need for public secondary schools to strengthen their recruitment and staff-management systems while maintaining transparency, merit, fairness, and compliance with public-sector regulations.The result of the hypothesis revealed that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals on staff personnel management practices in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

The findings are consistent with Ibrahim, Yusuff, and Adebayo, (2024) who observed that human resource management in Nigerian public secondary schools faces challenges including inadequate funding, shortages of qualified teachers, poor compensation and motivation, inadequate staff development, and brain drain. In support of the findings Balogun (2021) emphasized that human resource management is essential for improving the quality and effectiveness of secondary schools..

Financial Management Practices in Public and Private Secondary Schools

The results presented in Table 2 show a marked difference between public and private secondary schools in the adoption of financial management practices. Principals of public secondary schools generally expressed disagreement with several of the identified financial management practices. Specifically, they disagreed that school funding is substantially sourced through donations, that principals have flexibility in allocating funds, that fee collection is restricted, and that expenditure control is governed by civil service financial auditing rules. In contrast, principals of private secondary schools demonstrated a more favorable perception of financial management practices. They agreed that donations constitute a source of school funding, financial record keeping is standardized, fee collection is restricted, and schools have access to government grants. They also agreed that fund allocation flexibility is limited by school principals. However, they disagreed that the budget approval process is centralized, that procurement procedures necessarily follow due process, and that expenditure control is bound by civil service financial auditing rules. This pattern suggests that private schools operate with greater managerial and financial autonomy, allowing school administrators to exercise more direct control over financial decisions than their counterparts in public schools.The finding therefore indicates that financial management practices are perceived to be more effectively

implemented in private secondary schools than in public secondary schools.One possible explanation is that public secondary schools are more strongly influenced by government financial regulations, centralized procedures, budgetary controls and public-sector accountability requirements. Private schools, on the other hand, generally have greater autonomy over revenue generation, expenditure decisions, procurement and internal financial controls. Consequently, the flexibility available to private-school proprietors and principals may facilitate quicker financial decisions and closer monitoring of school resources. The hypothesis result revealed that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals on financial management practices in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

The finding is consistent with the study of Agada (2020) on financial management and budgeting in public and private secondary schools in South-East Nigeria. Agada found differences in the financial management practices of the two categories of schools. The study reported that public-school principals generally prepared school budgets in advance, worked with bursars to ensure accountability and prioritized expenditure, whereas private schools showed weaknesses in some of these areas and depended substantially on school fees and levies. Although this differs in some respects from the present finding, it confirms that financial management structures and practices vary significantly between public and private secondary schools. Agada further emphasized that inadequate provision and ineffective management of financial resources could hinder the achievement of educational objectives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings indicated that significant differences exist between public and private secondary schools in the effectiveness of their management practices. Public secondary school principals disagreed that staff personnel management and financial management practices were effectively adopted, whereas private secondary school principals agreed that these practices were effectively implemented in their schools. This suggests that public secondary schools may face greater administrative and financial constraints that affect effective management of personnel and school resources.However, both public and private secondary school principals agreed that quality control and communication practices are effectively adopted.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, recommendations were made thus;

1. Principals should be given appropriate managerial support and reasonable autonomy to implement effective recruitment, staff placement, orientation, supervision, motivation, welfare and retention practices.
2. Principals should receive regular training in budget preparation, financial planning, fund allocation, expenditure control, procurement, financial reporting and record keeping. Such training should be practical and periodically updated to reflect current government financial regulations.

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