IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION THROUGH STUDENTS' HEALTH AND WELFARE MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

BY

Ugwu, Ifeanyichuwku PhD[1]
Phone: 08036052742
E-mail:if.ugwu@unizik.edu.ng
Department of Educational Management & Policy
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

&

Anachuna Obinna Nonso. PhD[2]
Phone: 08063260029
E-mail: on.anachuna@unizik.edu.ng
Department of Educational Management & Policy
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Abstract

Management of students' health and welfare is central to improving the quality of education. There are noticeable signs of poor students' health and welfare services across public and private secondary schools in Anambra state. This prompted the study to comparatively analyze the health and welfare practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra state. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 657 public and private secondary school principals in Anambra state. No sampling was done due to the relatively small size of the population of the study. A 18-item questionnaire titled ''Questionnaire for Health and Welfare Practices of Principals' in Public and Private Secondary Schools (QHWPP)"was the instrument for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts from Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Cronbach alpha method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. The overall coefficient of 0.91 was obtained. The researchers together with the help of six research assistants collected the data for the study. Mean was used to answer the research questions, while z-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study among others revealed that Private secondary schools principals in Anambra state adopt and engage in students' health management practices more than their public secondary schools counterparts. Based on the findings it was recommended among others that Physical and health education teachers in public secondary schools should be encouraged by their principals to increase their level of commitment in inculcating in their students, a positive health awareness attitude with a view to reducing the incidence of diseases.

Introduction

It is a settled argument in literature that the quality of life enjoyed by the citizens is closely associated with the quality of a nation's education system. Nwabueze (2016) confirmed this by positing hat a good education does not simply mean attending school or college and graduating with a degree, the country's trade and commerce will also flourish if its citizens are well-educated-learning helps them to become more independent and gives them the knowledge and skills to overcome hard challenges; it also improves their quality of life. It is therefore necessary for every nation to develop mechanisms that will ensure that consistent improvement is made in their education system be it in primary, secondary or tertiary level.

Secondary education unarguably is a very critical and crucial level of education because in addition to bridging the gap between primary and tertiary levels, it equips the learners and provides them with additional skills, aptitudes and competences beyond what is taught in primary schools. In Nigeria, secondary schools are categorized as either public or private. Public secondary schools are post-primary institutions of learning established, controlled and financed by the government. Public

secondary schools rely on government funding for their operation, whereas private secondary schools are post-primary institutions of learning established, controlled and financed by individuals, group of persons, organizations or mission bodies. Private secondary schools are completely run through fees paid by the students of the institution. Notwithstanding the differences, the objective of secondary education whether it is public or private is the same.

The objectives of secondary education cannot be realized if the health and welfare of the students are not adequately managed. It is incumbent on the principals to help students develop good habits and personal cleanliness and in doing so they among other things: engage the services of physical education teacher to care for the health and safety needs of the students, provide a first aid box fully equipped with requisite instruments and drugs to cater for urgent health emergencies, employ the services of guidance counselor who will in addition to academic guidance, inculcate in the students the right type of health and safety habits and ensure that the objectives of health services are incorporated in the curriculum of health and physical education lessons. The need for these health practices is supported by Littlecot, Moore and Murphy (2018) who submitted that a growing evidence base, however, indicates that health and educational attainment are synergistic rather than competing goals.

Health and welfare are like Siamese twins, each of them cannot exist in isolation. In school system, the student welfare services are those services available in the school for the wellbeing of the students and when adequately provided and properly administered, contribute significantly to the physical, mental and emotional wellness of the students (Yusuf and Afolabi, 2017). For instance, the school management is expected to observe and maintain high-level hygiene at the canteens and cafeterias to ensure that whole some food and drinks are served to the students and also promote recreational activities to facilitate all round development and mental alertness among others.

However, observations made by the researchers in secondary schools across Anambra state as well as documentary research evidence confirm that there are several preconceived notions regarding private and public schools. For instance, NCES (2017) posits that private school principals were more likely than public school principals to develop and implement students' health policies. On the other hand, Public secondary school principals unlike their private secondary school counterparts consider making provisions for transportation services for students to ease their movement to and fro the school, ensuring that the toilet facilities are kept clean at all time by hiring the services of cleaners who are paid as and when due among others as priority areas. More so, some private schools offer buses and other health and welfare services, while public schools are assumed not to be doing the same as much. To resolve this debate, would require further empirical investigation. Therefore, this study compared the principals' management of health and welfare practices in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

The provision of quality education is vital for the growth and development of the state. Principals in secondary schools in Anambra state are responsible for bringing about the need leadership that will help ensure that consistent improvement in terms of quality and standards of secondary education are maintained and improved upon. Some of the key indicators of quality education are; well-thought out students' health services and a good packaged welfare scheme for the students. Its only when the health and welfare of the students are sufficiently taken care of that effective learning takes place.

However, the surge in number of private secondary schools in Anambra state some of which are yet to secure approval from government and the seeming preference and scramble for space in private schools by parents and guardians would seem to suggest that principals in public schools are not operating optimally in terms of students' health and welfare practices. This is a serious cause for concern, although some argue that public secondary schools have infrastructural deficit and poor sanitary conditions compared to private schools, principals in public secondary schools seem to be more experienced and knowledgeable in terms of teaching and learning. More so, the prevalence of several indicators of poor students' health and welfare management practices cutting across public and private schools in Anambra state such as dirty cafeterias, bushy surroundings, and lack of basic medical equipment in case of emergencies among others is altogether worrisome. If this trend is not mitigated urgently, sooner than later, the realization of secondary education goals of preparing the learners for higher studies, provision of required manpower, skills and competences needed for sustainable growth

and development of the state would become a mirage. Hence this study compared principals' health and welfare management practices in public and private secondary schools in Anambra state.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to empirically compare the students' health and welfare management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra state. Specifically, this study compared principals':

1. Students' health management practices in public and private secondary schools in Anambra state. and
2. Students' welfare management practices in public and private secondary schools in Anambra state.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the students' health management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State? And
2. What are the students' welfare management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Anambra State public and private secondary school principals on their engagement in students' health management practices.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Anambra State public and private secondary school principals on their engagement in students' welfare management practices.

Research Method

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive research design aims at collecting data on, describing and assessing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. The design was found appropriate for the study because principals' health and welfare practices are existing characteristics, features and facts in secondary schools in Anambra state. The population of the study comprised all the 657 public and private secondary school principals in Anambra state. No sampling was done due to the relatively small size of the population of the study. A-18-item questionnaire titled ''Questionnaire for Health and Welfare Practices of Principals' in Public and Private Secondary Schools (QHWPP)" was the instrument for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts from Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Cronbach alpha method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. The overall coefficient of 0.91 was obtained. The researchers together with the help of six research assistants collected the data for the study. The data collected were analyzed using mean while the hypotheses were tested using t-test. In answering the research questions, mean scores less than 2.5 are considered as disagreement while mean scores from 2.5 and above are considered as agreement. The range of values of the mean ratings for the two school types (public and private) were used to determine the level of engagement of principals in students' health and welfare management practices and accordingly, used for the comparison.

In testing the null hypotheses, the null hypotheses were rejected when the calculated P-value associated with the t-cal is less than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance. Whereas the null hypotheses were not rejected where the calculated P-value associated with the t-cal is greater than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of Results

Based on data analysis the following results were obtained:

Research Question One: What are the students' health management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings on the Students' Health Management Practices of Principals in Public and Private Secondary Schools.

As a principal, indicate whether you engage in the following practices or not by your agreement or disagreement

		Public (n=250)			Private (n=382)		
		Mean	**SD**	**Remark**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Remark**
1.	Engage the services of a physical education teacher to care for the health and safety instructional needs of the students	2.75	.78	Agree	3.29	.78	Agree
2.	Ensure that the objectives of health services are incorporated in the curriculum of health and physical education lesson.	3.12	.80	Agree	3.42	.68	Agree
3.	Inculcate in students, a positive health awareness attitude with a view to reducing the incidence of disease.	2.89	.90	Agree	3.22	.94	Agree
4.	Conduct routine medical inspection of the students to help identify student(s) with communicable disease in good time	2.78	.82	Agree	3.07	.97	Agree
5.	Invite health visitors during disease outbreak to vaccinate the students	2.84	.84	Agree	3.05	.92	Agree
6.	Conduct seminars and workshops on topical health issues like drug abuse, personal, healthy diet etc	2.82	.78	Agree	3.20	.72	Agree
7.	Provide a system of evaluation of the effectiveness of the school health program for the purpose improvement	3.18	.62	Agree	3.29	.66	Agree
8.	Conduct health risk appraisals to determine life-style practices of students that could endanger their lives in near future.	2.47	.79	Disagree	3.09	.85	Agree
9.	Provide a first aid box fully equipped with requisite instruments and drugs to cater for health emergencies.	2.76	.87	Agree	3.17	.83	Agree

Table 1 shows students' health management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State. Public secondary school principals agree to eight of the nine listed items as students' health management practices they adopt in their schools. The eight items include: item 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, and 58 with mean ranging from 2.75 to 3.18. On the other hand, their counterpart in private schools agree to all the nine listed items as students' health management practices they adopt in their schools with their mean ranging from 2.88 to 3.14.

Research Question Two: What are the students' welfare management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: Mean Ratings on the Students' Welfare Management Practices of Principals in Public and Private Secondary Schools.

As a principal, indicate whether you engage in the following practices or not by your agreement or disagreement

		Public (n=250)			Private (n=382)		
		Mean	**SD**	**Remark**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Remark**
1.	Make Provisions for transportation services for students to ease their movement to and fro the school	2.44	.77	Disagree	2.97	.76	Agree
2.	Employ the services of trained security personnel to guard the students from bandits and kidnappers	2.85	.80	Agree	2.82	.88	Agree
3.	Provide wholesome water for the students	2.88	.84	Agree	2.81	.91	Agree
4.	Ensure that the toilet facility is kept clean at all time by hiring the services of a cleaner who is paid as and when due	2.82	.74	Agree	2.96	.74	Agree
5.	Ensure that wholesome food and snacks are available at the school cafeteria	2.90	.80	Agree	3.05	.73	Agree
6.	Make provision for free or subsidized internet service for student to increase their access to E-books and other digital learning facilities	2.83	.81	Agree	3.01	.81	Agree
7.	Provide travel links for international students	2.45	.82	Disagree	2.89	.74	Agree

8.	Attract funds from illustrious members of the community and use same to sponsor holiday trips for students to enhance their knowledge of the world around them and boost their social wellbeing	2.64	.74	Agree	2.64	.88	Agree
9.	Procure and make available, facilities for sports and other recreational activities for students	2.60	.77	Agree	2.84	.76	Agree

Table 2 above shows the students' welfare management practices of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State. The analysis indicated that public secondary school principals agree to seven of the nine listed items as the students' welfare management practices they adopt in their schools. The seven items include: item 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66 and 67 with mean rating ranging from 2.60 to 2.90 while their counterpart in private schools on the other hand agree to all the nine items with mean ranging from 2.64 to 3.06

Hypotheses One: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Anambra State public and private secondary school principals on the level of their engagement in students' health management practices

Table 3: t-test Comparison of Public and Private Secondary School Principals' Mean Ratings of Their Health Management Practices.

Source of variation	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	*P*-value	Decision
Public	250	2.87	.48	630	9.29	.00	Sig
Private	382	3.20	.39				

Table 3 indicates that the mean score for public secondary school principals (*M=2.87, SD=.48*) was significantly less than that of the private school principals (*M=3.20, SD=.39); t (630) 9.29, p=.00*. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on their engagement in health management practices was therefore rejected.

Hypotheses Two: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Anambra State public and private secondary school principals on the level of their engagement in students' welfare management practices.

Table 4: t-test Comparison of Public and Private Secondary School Principals' Mean Ratings of Their Welfare Management Practices.

Source of variation	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	*P*-value	Decision
Public	250	2.77	.52	630	3.14	.00	Sig
Private	382	2.88	.39				

Table 4 indicates that the mean score for public secondary school principals (*M=2.77, SD=.52*) was significantly less than that of private school principals (*M=2.88, SD=.39); t (630) 3.14, p=.00*. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on their engagement in welfare management practices was therefore rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Discussion was done based on the findings of the two research question and hypotheses

Comparative Analysis of Students' health management practices of Principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra state.

The result on table one shows that both public and private secondary schools adopt and engage in

students' health management practices but by inspection, the mean scores for 8 out of the 9 items ranged from 3.09 to 3.42 for private while that of their public school counterpart ranged from 2.75 to 3.18 indicating that private school principals adopt and engage in students' health management practices more than their colleagues in public schools. The finding of this study is in agreement with the finding of Olorunfemi (2017) whose study on assessment of the personal hygiene in primary schools revealed that the proportion of pupils who were rated as 'very clean' was higher in the private schools than the public schools. The study further revealed that there were significant differences in favour of the private schools in the cleanliness of the nails, body (skin) and mouth/teeth etc. it is interesting to observe that despite the differences of the two studies in terms of location, method, instrument for data collection, time lag and class/level of students studied, the results are the same. Indeed, this suggests that private schools perform better than public schools, health-wise. The finding of this study was equally corroborated by Nwadiuto et al (2022) who found out that generally, pupils from private schools were more knowledgeable about hygiene compared to those from public schools. The result on table 3 showed that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of Anambra State public and private secondary school principals on the level of their engagement in students' health management practices. The finding of this study agrees with the finding of Nwadiuto et al (2022) whose study showed that statistically, in public and private schools significant differences were observed for knowledge of where germs are found, worm infestation, disposal of waste and how malaria is prevented.

Comparative Analysis of Students' welfare management practices of Principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra state

The result on table two shows that both public and private secondary schools adopt and engage in students' welfare management practices, however, the mean scores for the 9 items ranged from 2.64 to 3.06 for private while that of their public school counterpart ranged from 2.60 to 2.90 indicating that private school principals adopt and engage in students' welfare management practices more than their colleagues in public schools. The finding of this study is consistent with the finding of Scheper (2013) whose study showed that unlike private schools, 98.5% of public high schools reported a violent incident such as rape, robbery, physical attack or threat of attack. More so, over 93% of public high schools reported other incidents such as possession of a weapon or explosive, distribution, possession, or use of illegal drugs and alcohol, or vandalism indicating that the welfare and safety of students in public schools are nothing to write home about compared to private high schools. The finding of the present study is also in agreement with Ahlem (2015) whose study showed that private schools are generally safe access to campuses and buildings is carefully monitored and controlled because schools usually have fewer students than a public school. The result on table 4 shows that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of Anambra State public and private secondary school principals on the level of their engagement in students' welfare management practices. This finding contradicts the finding of Ibezim and Ikediugwu (2021) whose study showed that the difference in the mean scores of principals in public and mission owned secondary schools on their students' welfare practices was not significant. The disparity in the findings of the two studies could be linked to disparity in scope. Whereas the present study covered all the private schools of which mission owned schools is just a subset, the study of Ibezim and Ikediugwu was restricted to mission owned schools.

Conclusion

Based on the findings it was concluded that private secondary school principals in Anambra state engage in students' health and welfare management practices more than their counterparts in public secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study it was recommended among others that:

1. Physical and health education teachers in public secondary schools should be encouraged by their principals to increase their level of commitment in inculcating in their students, a positive health awareness attitude with a view to reducing the incidence of disease in the school.
2. Anambra state government should as a matter of urgency, constitute a committee of sanitary inspectors for schools that will regularly visit secondary schools to ensure that toilet facilities are kept clean, wholesome food and snacks are sold at the cafeteria among others.

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