COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TEAMWORK AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES APPLIED BY PRINCIPALS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BENUE STATE

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Abstract
The study compared teamwork and communication strategies applied by principals for quality assurance in public and private secondary schools in Benue State. Two research questions guided the study and five hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 13,559 respondents (3,878 teachers in public and 9,681 teachers in private) secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. The sample size for this study consisted of 688 respondents (204 teachers of public and 484 teachers of private) secondary schools using drawn using proportionate stratified sampling technique. A researcher-developed questionnaire titled ‘‘Teamwork and Communication Strategies Applied by Principals for Quality Assurance Questionnaire (TCSPQAQ)’’ were used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts who were lecturers from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Using Cronbach alpha for test of internal consistency, the co-efficient for Clusters I-V of instrument were, 0.77 and 0.82 respectively and overall coefficient was 0.80. The researcher together with five research assistants collected data for the study using the direct approach method and 98% return was recorded. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses. The results of the study showed among others that the teamwork and communication strategies applied by principals for quality assurance are similar in public and private secondary schools in Benue State. It was also found that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school teachers on the teamwork and communication strategies applied by their principals for quality assurance in Benue State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that principals of public and private schools should be provided opportunity to attend annual seminar acquire more skills and knowledge needed to improve their communication strategies.

Keywords: Teamwork, Communication, Strategies, Principals, Quality Assurance, Public Schools, Private Schools

Introduction

Education is a fundamental pillar of societal development by playing a vital role in developing skills, advancing knowledge and strengthening the intellectual capacity of individuals. It also offers opportunities to inculcate right values, build the character and develop the potentials of individuals to enable them make significant contributions towards the development of the society. Mbonu (2024) opined that education is a veritable tool for facilitating learning and acquisition of skills and knowledge for self-reliance and improvement in the standard of living. One of the crucial levels of education is secondary school.

Secondary education offers diverse learning opportunities to students to enable them acquire skills and knowledge necessary for meaningful participation towards the progress of the society. Okonkwo and Okoye (2024) maintained that secondary education is post basic level of education which equips students with skills and knowledge to further their studies in higher institution and also contribute to the development of the society. Secondary education which serves as bridge between basic and tertiary education develop the potentials of learners, shape their behaviour and prepare them for higher studies. Akhibi and Omenyi (2024) averred that secondary education equally provides opportunities for pupils to acquire additional knowledge, skills and traits beyond what is offered at primary school level. The post-basic learning institutions is categorized into public and private secondary schools.

Public secondary schools are post basic learning institutions owned, funded and controlled by Federal State, or Local Government through various agencies and ministries, private secondary schools are post basic learning institutions owned, funded and controlled by individuals, associations, non-governmental organizations and religion bodies. Anachuna and Emegwa (2024) noted that public secondary schools are schools that are owned by the government and its agencies, while private secondary schools are schools owned, financed and managed by private individuals, missions, corporate organizations and non- governmental organizations (NGO's). Public and private secondary schools are geared towards offering learning experience that cater for the intellectual development and character building and aspirations of the students. Akhibi and Omenyi (2024) noted that both public and private secondary schools share similarities in using the same curriculum in teaching, although the main differences between a private and public school is how they are funded, the school size and class size. Every public or private secondary school has a principal. Principal is the leader of a secondary school who get things done at the right time through exert meticulous influence on the activities of staff. According to Enwezor and Chukwunonye (2022), principal is the chief administrator that runs the daily affairs of a secondary school. Principal is the chief administrative officer who plans, directs and oversees the daily operations of activities of a secondary school. It is the duty of principal to ensure that members of staff work to attain set objectives through teamwork.

Teamwork is act of bringing people together to use their collective efforts to attain common goals. Teamwork fosters a spirit of cooperation, a sense of unity and exchange of ideas to improve the quality work done by group of staff in secondary schools. Shodeinde, Kusa, Odumu and Ijepe (2022) pointed out that teamwork allows group of staff handling a given task to combine a variety of skills and experience to get better results than an individual working alone. To Iheme and Owhondah (2020) teamwork strategies is act of bringing together a group of teachers or non-teaching staff to collectively perform certain tasks to accomplish a set goal under the support, guidance and supervision of the school administrators. A principal could encourage teamwork through committee system, team teaching and delegation of tasks to group of teachers in secondary schools. The teachers in the course of working together as a team communicate with each other on a regular basis.

Communication is the dissemination of information, transmission of facts, exchange of ideas, expression of feeling and opinions among two or more people. Okechukwu and Oputa (2021) defined communication as the process of converging information, instruction, advice, feelings, opinions, and facts correctly and accurately from one person to another person or group of people. Communication is fundamental to interaction and building of mutual interpersonal relationship in any organization. Ayeni and Akinola (2020) noted that communication enables personnel to develop and share knowledge, combine efforts and expand their store of knowledge for the purpose of achieving best strategies in service delivery. It is through the means of communication that principals inform teachers of any latest development in schools, their roles, job expectations and ways of carrying out their duties. Okechukwu, and Oputa (2021) pointed out that principals communicate with staff through email, staff meetings, memo and impromptu meetings among others. Communication strategies involve face-to-face conversation, provision of suggestion boxes at strategic position in the school, telephone calls, letters, use of social media to disseminate information, reports, listening, tabulation and use of non-verbal means. Manafa, Anyaeche and Okoye (2021) posited that communication strategies include asking question, feedback, eye contact, observation, language choice and taking time to respond to issues raised by members of staff in secondary schools. Communication is the means of getting members of staff informed of required tasks to perform for improving quality assurance.

Quality assurance is the act leading and coordinating the activities to staff to achieve academic excellence in learning institution. According to Sam-Kalagbor and Nwuke (2024), quality assurance has to do with policies, strategies and practices aimed at ensuring that secondary schools carry out programs that meets high standards and deliver effective learning outcomes. Quality assurance is geared towards ensuring teaching and learning process align with contemporary standard of education practices. Obi and Anachuna (2024) described quality assurance as actions and procedures that ensure appropriate academic standards are being maintained in implementing educational programme. The added that quality assurance is designed to prove and improve the quality of institutions methods and educational products and outcomes. Quality assurance in the

educational system is concerned with regular planning and controlling the programmes of learning institution to ensure best practices in instructional delivering to meet minimum academic standard.

The quality assurance in education is assessed through effective instructional delivery, provision of infrastructure, regularly monitoring, training, interpersonal relationship, teamwork, effective communication, managerial effectiveness, high students' academic achievement and evaluation of school's activities. Makiya, Mnyanyi and Ngirwa (2023) asserted that the criteria for measuring quality assurance in education encompass various aspects, including learners' achievement, the quality of teaching, the alignment of the curriculum with learners' needs, the effectiveness of school management, supervision and active engagement of community in school activities. Also, Onuorah, Nwaru and Ezema (2023) noted that the indicators of quality assurance are curriculum development and implementation, staff training, monitoring, provision of infrastructure and amenities, student support services and evaluation among others.

The learning quality in public and private secondary schools tend to vary probably due TQM strategies of principals as reflected in the attitude, learning outcomes of students and performance of staff in Benue State. Joan and Msughter (2019) noted that teachers exhibit poor work behaviour like tardiness, absenteeism, delays in the marking of examination scripts and submission of grades in public secondary schools in Benue State. Tyokyaa and Nwaogwugwu (2021) observed that public schools which have professional teachers keep churning out students who cannot defend themselves academically, unlike the private schools where the highest percentage of teachers are not professional teachers and yet produce students who can defend themselves academically anywhere in the society. Akhibi and Omenyi (2024) pointed out that even at the expensive nature of private secondary schools, a lot of parents still prefer to send their children and wards to private schools because they feel that private school owners maintain quality education and high standards more than the public secondary schools. The quality of education and availability of facilities could be the reason that some parents send their children send their children to private secondary schools than their public counterparts which charge low fees in Benue State. Tyokyaa and Nwaogwugwu (2021) maintained that low quality of secondary school products could be part of the reasons that parents prefer sending their children and wards to private schools than to sending them to public schools even with the overwhelming cost of the private education in Benue State. Also, Orji, Kajo and Mando (2024) noted that there seems to be a sharp decline in the quality of education system in public secondary schools which make some parents take their children to private schools within and outside Benue State. It seems that some students who patronize public secondary schools may not afford to pay the exorbitant fees and other levies charged by private schools. The high proliferation of private secondary schools is becoming worrisome in Benue State, Nigeria. Government has made efforts on addressing the gaps in public education by allocating more resources, recruiting qualified teacher and investing in staff training to reduce the reliance on private schools in Benue State. In the light of the above issues, the study compared teamwork and communication strategies applied by principals for quality assurance in public and private secondary schools in Benue State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to compare teamwork and communication strategies applied by principals for quality assurance in public and private secondary schools in Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to compare:

1. Teamwork strategies applied by principals for quality assurance in public and private secondary schools in Benue State.
2. Communication strategies applied by principals for quality assurance in public and private secondary schools in Benue State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are teamwork strategies applied by principals for quality assurance in public and private secondary schools in Benue State?
2. What are the communication strategies applied by principals for quality assurance in public and private secondary schools in Benue 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 public and private secondary school teachers on the teamwork strategies applied by their principals for quality assurance in Benue State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school teachers on the communication strategies applied by their principals for quality assurance in Benue State.

Methods

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. This design is deemed appropriate, since the researcher collected data from a given population of the study to compare teamwork and communication strategies applied by principals for quality assurance in public and private secondary schools in Benue State. The population of the study comprised 13,559 respondents (3,878 teachers in public and 9,681 teachers in private) secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. The sample size for this study consisted of 688 respondents (204 teachers of public and 484 teachers of private) secondary schools using proportionate stratified sampling technique. The sample size is 5% of the total population of teachers. A researcher-developed questionnaire titled ‘‘Team and Communication Strategies Applied by Principals for Quality Assurance Questionnaire (TCSPQAQ)’’ was used for data collection. The instrument therefore contains a total of 18 items which are 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. (See Appendix D on page 152). The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts.. Thus, their suggestions were used to produce the final version of the instrument. Cronbach alpha method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. The co-efficient obtained for clusters I-II of the section B were 0.77 and 0.83 respectively and overall coefficient was 0.80. Thus, the researcher considered the instrument to be reliable for the study. The method of data collection was direct delivery and retrieval approach. The researcher and the research assistants visited the various schools and distributed the instrument to the teachers. A total of 688 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to 688 respondents (204 teachers of public and 484 teachers of private schools respectively) out of which 673 copies (201 teachers of public and 472 teachers of private schools respectively) were properly filled and successfully retrieved indicating 98% percent return rate. At the end of the exercise, copies of the questionnaire that were properly completed and retrieved were used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and t-test was used to test the hypotheses. Decision rule on 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 not rejected, but if the p-value is less than significant value of 0.05 ($P<0.05$), the null hypothesis was rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the teamwork strategies applied by principals for quality assurance in public and private secondary schools in Benue State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation Scores of Public and Private Secondary School Principals on the Teamwork Strategies they applied for Quality Assurance

S/N	ITEMS	Teachers in Public Schools (n =201)			Teachers in Private Schools (n =472)		
		Mean	SD	Decision	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Assigned tasks to groups of staff to execute together	2.75	1.00	Agree	2.81	1.09	Agree
2	Use committee system to achieve major tasks in the school	2.60	1.02	Agree	2.56	1.12	Agree
3	Engage teachers in team teaching	2.54	1.01	Agree	2.48	1.01	Disagree
4	Give feedback on group tasks assigned to teachers	2.73	1.14	Agree	2.77	0.97	Agree
5	Establish cordial interpersonal relationship that encourage teachers to build healthy team spirit in the school	2.93	0.94	Agree	2.88	0.98	Agree

6	Encourage participatory decision making to enable members of staff exchange ideas	2.84	1.06	Agree	2.81	1.11	Agree
7	Create culture of collaboration in the learning environment by assigning teachers to mentors	2.71	1.02	Agree	2.60	1.07	Agree
	Cluster Mean	**2.73**	**1.03**	**Agree**	**2.70**	**1.05**	**Agree**

Table 1 revealed that the mean ratings of teachers of public and private secondary schools for items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 are above the cut off mean of 2.50 indicating agreement with the items as the teamwork strategies applied by their principals for quality assurance. The mean ratings of teachers in public secondary schools for item 3 is above the cut off mean score of 2.50 indicating an agreement with the item, while that of their counterparts in private schools is below the cut off mean score of 2.50 indicating disagreement with the item. The cluster standard deviation scores of 1.03 for teachers in public secondary schools and 1.05 for their counterparts in private schools indicates that there is homogeneity amongst their mean ratings. The cluster means of 2.73 for teachers in public secondary schools and 2.70 for their counterparts in private secondary schools which are above 2.50 indicated that the teamwork strategies applied by principals for quality assurance are similar in public and private secondary schools in Benue State.

Ho_1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school teachers on the teamwork strategies applied by their principals for quality assurance in Benue State.

Table 2: The Summary of t-test Analysis of no Significant Difference in the Mean Ratings of Public and Private Secondary School Teachers on the Teamwork Strategies applied by their Principals for Quality Assurance (n =671)

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	p-value	Df	Alpha	Remark
Teachers in Public Schools	201	2.73	1.03	0.21	671	0.05	Not Significant
Teachers in Private Schools	472	2.70	1.05				

As shown in table 2, the p-value of 0.21 is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school teachers on the teamwork strategies applied by their principals for quality assurance in Benue State.

Research Question 2: What are the communication strategies applied by principals for quality assurance in public and private secondary schools in Benue State?

Table 3: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation Scores of Public and Private Secondary School Principals on the Communication Strategies they applied for Quality Assurance

S/N	**ITEMS**	**Teachers in Public Schools (n =201)**			**Teachers in Private Schools (n =472)**		
		Mean	SD	Decision	Mean	SD	Decision
8	Provide suggestion boxes	2.65	1.03	Agree	2.61	1.04	Agree
9	Use electronic devices to disseminate information to staff	2.70	0.95	Agree	2.75	1.06	Agree
10	Display information on the school's notice boards	2.87	0.93	Agree	2.81	0.95	Agree
11	Organise regular staff meetings	2.75	1.10	Agree	2.83	1.12	Agree
12	Listen attentively to teachers during discussion	2.67	1.13	Agree	2.68	1.13	Agree
13	Speak in moderate tone for teachers to clearly comprehend	2.61	1.01	Agree	2.64	1.11	Agree
14	Maintain good eye contact during discussion with teachers	2.71	1.02	Agree	2.76	1.08	Agree
15	Give feedback on vital issues in schools	2.73	1.00	Agree	2.69	1.06	Agree
16	Engage in face-to-face conservations with teachers	2.95	0.85	Agree	2.91	0.92	Agree
17	Present written information in concise manner for easy understanding	2.60	1.09	Agree	2.85	1.04	Agree
18	Make use of circulars to convey message to staff	2.66	1.00	Agree	2.60	1.07	Agree
	Cluster Mean	**2.72**	**1.01**	**Agree**	**2.74**	**1.05**	**Agree**

It is revealed in table 3 that the mean ratings of teachers of public and private secondary schools for all items are above the cut off mean of 2.50 indicating agreement with the items as the communication strategies applied by their principals for quality assurance. The cluster standard deviation scores of 1.01 for teachers in public secondary schools and 1.05 for their counterparts in private schools indicates that there is homogeneity amongst their mean ratings. The cluster means of 2.72 for teachers in public secondary schools and 2.74 for their counterparts in private secondary schools which are above 2.50 indicated that the communication strategies applied by principals for quality assurance are similar in public and private secondary schools in Benue State.

Ho_2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school teachers on the communication strategies applied by their principals for quality assurance in Benue State.

Table 4: The Summary of t-test Analysis of no Significant Difference in the Mean Ratings of Public and Private Secondary School Teachers on the Communication Strategies applied by their Principals for Quality Assurance (n =671)

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	p-value	Df	Alpha	Remark
Teachers in Public Schools	201	2.72	1.01	0.18	671	0.05	Not Significant
Teachers in Private Schools	472	2.74	1.05				

Table 4 revealed that the p-value of 0.18 is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school teachers on the communication strategies applied by their principals for quality assurance in Benue State.

Discussion of Finding

The result of the study revealed that teamwork strategies applied by principals for quality assurance are similar in public and private secondary schools in Benue State. This refuted the finding of Mukolwe, Okwara and Ajowi (2017) which showed that the implementation of teamwork strategies varied widely from public primary schools to their private counterparts. The difference in the levels of education in which the studies were conducted could contribute to the disagreement with the finding. The similar teamwork strategies applied by principals for quality assurance in public and private secondary schools in Benue State include assigning tasks to groups of staff to execute together, using committee system to achieve major tasks in the school, giving feedback on group tasks assigned to teachers, establishing cordial interpersonal relationship that encourage teachers to build healthy team spirit in the school, encouraging participatory decision making to enable members of staff exchange ideas and creating culture of collaboration in the learning environment by assigning teachers to mentors

The principals of both public and private secondary schools probably applied teamwork strategies to enable members of staff to collaborate and share experience that could improve quality assurance in Benue State. Further result showed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school teachers on the teamwork strategies applied by their principals for quality assurance in Benue State. This also contradicted the finding of Mukolwe, Okwara and Ajowi (2017) which showed there was a statistical significant difference in the implementation of teamwork strategies in public and private primary schools. The time span difference of seven years might bring innovation in education system that could influence teamwork strategies in schools.

It was revealed that communication strategies applied by principals for quality assurance are similar in public and private secondary schools in Benue State. This is in agreement with the finding of Aja-Okorie and Usulor (2016) which revealed that communication practices are applied by principals of public and private secondary schools. This also supported the finding of Ibezim and Ikediugwu (2023) which showed that principals have similar effectiveness on communication in public and private secondary schools. The similarity in the levels of education and participants of the study could be responsible for the agreement with the finding. The similar communication strategies applied by principals for quality assurance in public and private secondary schools in Benue State are

provision of suggestion boxes, use of electronic devices to disseminate information to staff, display of information on the school's notice boards, organising of regular staff meetings, listening attentively to teachers during discussion, speaking in moderate tone for teachers to clearly comprehend, maintaining good eye contact during discussion with teachers, provision of feedback on vital issues in schools, engaging in face-to-face conservations with teachers and making use of circulars to convey message to staff.

The communication strategies are probably adopted by principals of public and private secondary schools to inform teachers of their job expectation and provide direction to improve quality assurance. It is through the communication strategies that principals could prevent misunderstanding, confusion and conflict among staff in public and private secondary schools in Benue State. It was also showed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school teachers on the communication strategies applied by their principals for quality assurance in Benue State. This supported the finding of Aja-Okorie and Usulor (2016) which showed that there was no significant difference in the mean rating of public and private school principals on the extent to which they apply communication practices. The studies were conducted at secondary school level using the same participants which could contribute for the agreement with the finding. The finding could explain that communication is the live wire for planning, coordinating and guiding members of staff to improve quality assurance in in public and private secondary schools in Benue State.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded teamwork and communication strategies applied by principals for quality assurance are similar in public and private secondary schools in Benue State. There is no specific type of school that performed better than the other in team and communication strategies applied by principals for quality assurance in Benue State. Principals rely on communication and teamwork strategies to bring members of staff together to work hard towards achieving common goals.

Recommendations

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

1. Principals of public and private schools should be provided opportunity to attend annual seminar acquire more skills and knowledge needed to improve their communication strategies.
2. Officials of Ministry of Education should make regular visits to both public and private school to assess teamwork strategies of principals and make recommendations to help improve on it.

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