Educational Administration: Theory and Practice
2024,30(10) 485-493
ISSN:2148-2403
https://kuey.net/

Research Article

Physical Facilities and Municipal Utilities Availability in Private Primary Schools in Southeast Nigeria

Njoku, Obiageli Chinyelu[1*]; Ejiofor, Juliana[2*]; Okonkwo, Stella Chizoba[3]; Aneke, Anthonia O[4]; Uzodinma, Uchenna Eugenia[5]; Odo Chidiebere[6]

[1.2*,3,4,5,6]Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

***Corresponding author:** Ejiofor Juliana
Email: juliana.ejiofor@unn.edu.ng

Citation: Njoku, Obiageli Chinyelu, et.al (2024), Physical Facilities and Municipal Utilities Availability in Private Primary Schools in Southeast Nigeria, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice, 30 (10), 485-493*
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v29i4.8125

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

There are a lot of private elementary schools in Southeast Nigeria, and their overall enrollment numbers are comparable to those of pupils enrolled in public primary schools. Before private schools can receive government approval and a license to operate, they must first fulfill basic requirements on quality issues. In order to guarantee that pupils receive a top-notch education at this critical foundational stage of their academic and psychological development, they are also routinely observed to guarantee that school quality is upheld. In an era where fundamental education is free and required in public primary schools, there are several reports of private primary schools manipulating quality assurance requirements fraudulently to obtain permission to operate. After that, the schools launch aggressive marketing campaigns to entice pupils from public schools. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to assess two aspects of educational quality in Southeast Nigerian private primary schools: the availability of physical facilities and utilities. The study was led by two null hypotheses and two research questions. The study used a sample of 120 private primary schools, 90 of which were located in metropolitan areas and 30 of which were located in rural areas, out of a total population of 5111 schools. Observational checklist developed by the researchers served as the instrument for gathering data. The study involved direct observation in three sample states in the Southeast, which included private primary schools. The data were examined using Chi Square statistics, frequency count, and percentage. Overall, it was discovered that private elementary schools have sufficient physical infrastructure and amenities. Physical facilities like labs, workshops, and libraries are absent from them. When it comes to availability and sufficiency, urban private primary schools almost always have better physical facilities and municipal utilities than rural ones. The findings of the X2 test showed that compared to private primary schools in rural areas, a much higher percentage of urban private primary schools had infrastructure and municipal utilities. It was suggested that in order to raise the standard of basic education that pupils receive in these private schools, these institutions should build libraries, science labs, and technical workshops.

Keywords: Availability, Physical facilities, Municipal utilities, Southeast

Introduction

High-quality education is crucial for both the person and the country. All those who benefit from quality education are able to lead fulfilling, productive, and respectable lives in addition to participating in and profiting from national development initiatives. The advantages of education for both the individual and the community highlight how highly cultures and countries value high-quality education. Every country devotes enormous resources to educating its people, beginning with pre-kindergarten and continuing through primary, secondary, and university education.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FGN) 2013 states that Nigeria launched free Universal Basic Education (UBE) in September 1999 to provide access to basic education for all citizens. The UBE policy guarantees every

Nigerian child access to a high-quality basic education free of cost. Basic education in Nigeria consists of the first ten years of formal education, which includes one year of pre-primary education (kindergarten), six years of primary education, and three years of junior secondary education (the 1-6-3 structure of basic education). Free and compulsory basic education implies that all obstacles that impede children's access to basic education are removed so that the children and their parents would accept to participate in educational programmes offered by the schools.

Basic education is on the Nigerian national concurrent legislative list. This implies that the supply of basic education is open to all the tiers of government as well as to interested private individuals, agencies and organizations that have the resources to supply basic education of good quality. Schools built by private individuals and organizations are called private schools. Private schools are licensed to operate after meeting some standards, and regulated by government educational agencies to ensure standards are maintained, so that children would receive good quality education as prescribed by the United Nations (UN) that Declared primary education of good quality as a Fundamental Human Right in 1948.

Obstacles to basic education of good quality can be in different forms such as poor quality of school infrastructure, poor quality school environment, inadequate number of teachers, poor quality/low professional capacity of available teachers, poor quality instructional delivery by the available teachers, inadequate furniture for learners and teachers, inadequate or lack of recreational facilities, lack of safe water supply, lack of toilet facilities, lack of electric power supply, lack or poor quality of physical facilities, lack of municipal services for the school etc. These bad conditions in the school tend to discourage learners and can spark high dropout rate of children from school, thereby causing children to lose their fundamental human right to basic education.

Already there is incidence of high rate of dropping out from Nigeria's basic education. A study commissioned by Federal Ministry of Education (FME), UNESCO and UNICEF in 2010 and published in 2012 showed that 10.5 million (42%) Nigerian school-aged children were out of school, (FME, UNESCO & UNICEF, 2012). This large population of 'Out-Of-School Children, (OOSC)' indicated that one of every five children that were out of school worldwide was a Nigerian child. The population of OOSC in Nigeria has considerably risen from 10.5 million in 2010 to 13.2 million in 2018 (UNICEF, 2018) and 20 million in 2022, (UNESCO, 2022). Something is very wrong with Nigeria's education and needs to be identified and resolved urgently in the interest of school-aged children. Could it be that children lack facilities and other resources in the schools?

Since the era of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) introduced as world development agenda by the UN (2000 – 2015) which dove-tailed into the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015 – 2030), very large numbers of private individuals and organizations, (including faith-based organizations, community based organizations (CBOs) and corporate entities), have invested heavily in the supply of basic education at the pre-primary and primary school levels, so much so that the enrolment in private primary schools in various states, especially, states of the South East Nigeria, rival children's enrolment in public primary schools. Therefore, the contributions of private proprietors to the supply of basic education at the primary school level has become very important and significant. Consequently, the quality of education offered in the private primary schools, (these schools are basically profit oriented), cannot be ignored. Licensing and constant quality assurance monitoring are critical actions by government education authorities to ensure that basic quality standards are met and sustained by private primary schools so that the teaming beneficiaries would not be short-changed by profit-seeking private school proprietors.

States in Nigeria have laid down basic requirements which private primary school proprietors must meet before their schools can be approved and licensed to operate. These conditions are meant to ensure that minimum quality standards are attained, to protect the consuming public from poor quality education. These conditions vary slightly from state to state, but the common denominator is that they are consistent with the principles of Child Friendly School (CFS) standards initiated and promoted by UNICEF in Nigeria since 2002 (UNICEF, 2009). These conditions include, though not limited to, the following:

- Availability of large classroom spaces with adequate ventilation
- Availability of adequate number of classrooms (for Lagos State, for instance, the minimum is 15 classrooms before a school is approved)
- The classrooms must be painted bright colours or warm colours
- Availability of special rooms such as library, sickbay, computer room, adequate number of toilets for male and female pupils, at list 2 toilets for the teachers by gender, and administrative offices
- Availability of large open space for games and sports with equipment such as balls, skittles, swing, crossbar, sand, grassed space etc
- Availability of ornamental flowers and trees on the compound,
- Availability of instructional materials like chalk boards, charts, relia, posters etc in every classroom
- Availability of adequate number of size-appropriate, suitable and comfortable furniture for both the children, and the staff,
- Availability of equipped laboratories, studios or workshops, depending on the level of education of interest to the proprietor, and.
- Availability of security equipment such as fire extinguishers, waste bins. (Ministry of Education, Enugu State- E, 2010).

Experience and observation have shown that many of the approved private primary schools seem to have failed to meet these conditions laid down for licensing by the state education authorities. This is because many of the education monitoring personnel are easily compromised by school proprietors who make them approve schools that have not met the basic requirements.

Private primary schools are popular, especially among the middle-class income groups of the society. It has, however, been observed that this popularity is often not based on verified quality of education offered by the private primary schools, but on strong ubiquitous media advertorials which proprietors use to bombard the print and electronic media to convince people of the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of private schools (Ihekwoaba, Ekeada & Otty 2015). Public schools do not advertise to get pupils enroll in the schools. Many of the advertorials by private school claim that they are government approved because of the very high-quality education they offer (Ihekwoaba, Ekeada & Otty 2015). However, experience has shown that the approval given to many of these private schools is based on corrupt practices between monitoring education personnel and the private school proprietors. Njoku (2009) asserted that many private primary schools lack basic infrastructural facilities necessary for effectiveness in teaching and learning. This assertion needs to be verified empirically. Observations show that majority of private schools lack enough space for classrooms, playground, games, equipment, and office spaces (Obinaju, Fakrogha & Igbogi, 2015). Ekanem, Esien and Ekanem, (2011), observed that private schools in Akwa Ibom State lack play equipment and games spaces for children. Very often, the Nigerian public does not have any credible means of evaluating the quality of private schools which their children attend. The public often depend on media advertorials, and people's opinions to decide which private schools to patronize. There is therefore the need to survey the private primary schools to determine their standards against some quality indicators in order to develop bases for suggestions on quality improvement (Ibiam, Ugwu, Ifelunni and Oti, 2015). What is the situation of physical facilities and municipal utilities in private primary schools in Southeast Nigeria?

The quality of a school may be influenced by the location of the school. Urban schools are usually of better quality in many areas of consideration than rural schools, (SAGEN 1 study, 2005, SAGEN 2 Study 2005, SITAN 2010). Generally, urban schools tend to have better qualified teachers, better buildings and other infrastructural facilities, better aestatics of environment and better supervision (Njoku, 2001, UNICEF, E-2015). This is because urban populations are of higher socio-economic status and are interested in better quality of education for their children than rural populations. Therefore, school proprietors in urban communities try to provide quality schools to attract and retain their clients. This implies that private primary schools in urban communities are likely to be of better quality in terms of facilities and utilities than their counterparts in rural communities. Conversely many primary school proprietors try much to ensure that their schools are of very good quality for government approval before they can roll out to operate. If the agencies that approve private primary schools do their jobs well as expected, all private primary schools should be of acceptable good standard irrespective of school location. The likely differences in the quality of private primary schools in urban and rural communities warrant that in a study of this nature, it is important to consider school location as a factor in the assessment of availability of physical facilities and utilities in private primary schools in Southeast Nigeria. The data so obtained would help to make suggestion on aspects of physical facilities and utilities that need to be improved in the private primary schools. What is the state of availability of physical infrastructural facilities and utilities in urban and rural private primary schools in Southeast Nigeria?

Statement of the Problem

Several factors are considered when the quality of education offered in schools is of interest. Some of these factors have to do with the availability of physical facilities and utilities in the schools. These two factors are important considerations in terms of the level of learner-friendly status of any school. The school should have basic physical facilities and municipal utilities. The fact that Nigeria's school dropout rate is increasing relentlessly is indicative that much have gone wrong with the primary schools. Public primary schools are not attractive to children and their parents due to poor quality of the schools, and consequently retention rate of the learners is dwindling annually. Over 20.2 million school aged Nigerian children are currently out of school, as estimated by UNICEF, 2023 and quoted by Falana (2024). Private primary schools use ubiquitous strong advertorials to promote patronage, and make parents prefer private primary schools at huge financial costs instead of taking the opportunity of free education offered in public primary schools. The reality about the state of availability physical facilities and utilities in private primary schools has not been empirically and objectively evaluated in the Southeast zone, Nigeria. Private primary schools in urban areas are likely to have better physical facilities and utilities than those in rural areas due to differences in the socio-economic status (SES) of catchment clients in urban and rural communities. Clients in urban communities are generally of higher SES and can more easily pay for higher educational charges than their counterparts in rural communities where more people are in the lower SES. Because urban slums are in the same class as the rural communities it is not clear that more private primary schools in urban areas have facilities than rural areas. It therefore becomes important to evaluate the availability of physical facilities and utilities in private primary schools for quality assurance in private primary schools.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the study:
1. What proportions of private primary schools have named physical facilities in Southeast Nigeria?
2. What proportions of private primary schools have the named utilities in southeast Nigeria?

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study:
Ho_1: The proportions of private primary schools which have adequate physical facilities in urban and rural communities are not significantly different ($p > 0.05$).
Ho_2: The proportions of private primary schools which have adequate utilities in urban and rural communities are not significantly different ($p > 0.05$).

Research Method

Design of the Study

Descriptive survey design was adopted to conduct this study. It involved observation of the private primary schools in the five states of the Southeast to ascertain the availability or otherwise of necessary physical facilities and utilities in the schools.
The states in the Southeast zone of Nigeria are very densely populated and each state has numerous private primary schools scattered unevenly within each state. There are a total of 5111 private primary schools in the zone in 2019, and this number constitutes the population of the study. It should be noted that majority of these private primary schools are in urban areas where the school proprietors obtain large learner enrolment. In rural communities, there are fewer private primary schools, and the ones that are available have relatively lower enrolment than an average urban-based private primary school. A sample of 120 private primary schools or 2.35% of 5111 was involved in this study. Since the population is large and homogeneous, this sample was considered to be representative of the study population.
Multistage sampling procedure was used to draw the sample. Using a random sampling technique (simple balloting), three of the five states were drawn as sample states from Southeast States. The capital of each state houses most of the private primary schools in the states. The Local Government Area (LGA) housing the state capital was purposively selected as an urban sample LGA. All the other LGAs of each sample state were then formed into two clusters along urban-rural dimension. One rural Local Government Area in each sample state was randomly selected from among rural cluster of LGAs. Thus, the sample LGAs were the LGA hosting the state capital as the urban LGA, and one other rural LGA per sample state. The ratio of urban to rural private primary school samples was 1:3 or 10 rural private primary schools to 30 urban private primary schools. The 10 private primary schools in the rural and the 30 private primary schools in the urban areas were randomly selected for the study. Thus 40 private primary schools were randomly selected from each sample state. A total of 120 private primary schools, 30 rural and 90 urban primary schools composed the sample for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection, called Physical Facilities and Utilities Observation Checklist (PFUOC) was an observation checklist developed by the researcher. The instrument is a list of necessary Physical Facilities and Utilities expected in a normal primary school for effectiveness in delivering learner friendly school environment. The instrument has three sections: A, B and C. Section A contains issues on the identification the school sample in relation to its name and location; section B dealt with a comprehensive list (10 items) of necessary physical facilities expected in a Learner Friendly Primary School (LFPS); while section C is a comprehensive list (10 items) of various utilities that are needed in a primary school for optimum functioning.

The instrument was face-validated to ensure that all possible necessary items that should be on the list had been included. This checklist is scored by checking the availability or otherwise of the listed items on the list in each sample private primary school.

Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure that the instrument was reliable and useable in the field, a trial test of the instrument was conducted by using the instruments to observe and collect data from five private primary schools which were outside the study area. The trial test enabled the researcher adjust the listing of the items on the checklist. Also, the researcher and her assistants used the trial test as opportunity for practising the effective use of the instrument and to synchronize their observation strategies to ensure concordance.

Research Procedure

The researcher and two trained research assistants collected the data for the study. The research assistants were trained during the pilot on the use of the instrument for ticking off what is available and what is not available in the checklist in each sample school. Each sample school was visited to conduct direct observation of available physical facilities and utilities. The completed copies of the checklist were sorted according to school location. The collected data were analyzed using frequency count and percentage. It was decided at the

outset that any item that is available in at least 60% (frequency of availability) of the schools would be regarded as being adequate; while the items which are available in less than 60% of the schools would be considered to be inadequate. The hypotheses were tested using Chi Square statistic to compare the frequency/percentage availability of the physical facilities and utilities at 5% level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the available physical facilities in urban and rural private primary schools in Southeast Nigeria? Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of the availability of physical facilities in private primary schools by location.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Schools assessed on availability of Physical Facilities, by Location

s/n	Item List	Urban (n =90)		Rural (n = 30)		Total (n 120)		
		Available (%)	Not Available (%)	Available (%)	Not Available (%)	Available (%)	Not Available (%)	Not Available
1	Spacious classrooms	64(71.1)	26(28.9)	18(60.0)	12(40.0)	**82(68.3)**	**38(31.7)**	38(31.7)
2	Laboratories	49(54.4)	41(45.6)	3(10.0)	27(90.0)	**52(43.3)**	**68(56.7)**	**68(56.7)**
3	Libraries	87(96.7)	3(3.3)	12(40.0)	18(60.0)	**99(82.5)**	**21(17.5)**	21(17.5)
4	Workshops	10(11.1)	80(88.9)	4(13.3)	26(86.7)	**14(11.7)**	**106(88.3)**	**106(88.3)**
5	Staffrooms	22(24.4)	68(75.6)	12(40.0)	18(60.0)	**34(28.3)**	**86(71.7)**	**86(71.7)**
6	Administrative spaces	88(97.8)	2(2.2)	24(80.0)	6(20.0)	**112(93.3)**	**8(6.7)**	8(6.7)
7	Enough play grounds	76(84.4)	14(15.6)	24(80.0)	6(20.0)	**100(83.3)**	**20(16.7)**	20(16.7)
8	Separate toilets for male and female teachers	89(98.9)	1(1.1)	23(76.7)	7(23.3)	**112(93.3)**	**8(6.7)**	8(6.7)
9	Separate toilets for boys and girls	89(98.9)	1(1.1)	19(63.3)	11(36.7)	**108(90.0)**	**12(10.0)**	12(10.0)
10	Toilets easily accessible to the children	90(100.0)	0(0.0)	25(83.3)	5(16.7)	**115(95.8)**	**5(4.2)**	**5(4.2)**
Total Mean score		**728(75.5)**	**236(24.5)**	**164(54.7)**	**136(45.3)**	**828(69.0)**	**372(31.0)**	**372(31.0)**

Table 1 reveals that on the average, 69.0% of all the primary schools irrespective of location have adequate physical facilities while 31% does not have. This is to say that to the extent of physical facilities, the private primary schools are fairly okay on a general note.

More specifically, while an average of 75.5% of private primary schools in urban areas have adequate physical facilities, only 54.7% of the rural private primary schools have adequate physical facilities. Since less than 60% of private primary schools in rural communities have adequate physical facilities, it can be concluded, based on the stipulated criterion score of 60%, that private primary schools in rural communities in Southeast Nigeria do not have adequate physical facilities for effectiveness in their programmes delivery. However, the pooled result shows that the private primary schools lack staff rooms (not available in 71.7% of the schools), workshops (not available in 88.3% of the schools) and science laboratory (not available in 56.7% of the schools) facilities. In these three specific cases, the mean frequency scores on availability of physical facilities were well below 60% benchmark set as the criterion mean proportion of the schools that should have it available. The reason why most of the private primary schools have no workshop facilities, staff room, laboratories is that the private schools, irrespective of location, seem to operate a policy whereby each classroom has science corner, and each teacher has her/his own classroom making it not necessary to build a central laboratory or general staff room. Only 40% of rural private primary schools have libraries, a critical facility where children are guided to develop good reading habit. Given that many children from rural communities are from low socio-economic background, they may not be in position to buy vital books for their education. Since overwhelming majority of the private primary schools (60%) has no libraries, the learners are very disadvantaged in the areas of reading materials. Also noteworthy is the result that nearly all urban private primary schools (98.9%) have separate toilets for male and female pupils, but only 36.7% of the private primary schools have separate toilets for male and female pupils in rural communities. Therefore, it should be noted that distribution of toilet facilities by gender is better in private primary schools in urban communities than in rural communities. Whether these differences are statistically significant was determined by testing hypothesis1 at 5% level of significance.

Ho_1: Hypothesis 1 sought to determine whether the proportions of urban and rural private primary schools which have adequate physical facilities are statistically significantly different ($P < 0.05$). Testing Ho_1 enables identification of the location where physical facilities are inadequate for effective running of the private primary schools in the area of study. Table 2 shows the summary of X^2 analysis of the data on availability of physical facilities based on school location.

Table 2: Summary of Chi-square Comparison of the proportions of urban and rural Private primary schools on availability of physical facilities

Location	Not Available	Available (%)	Total	Df	X^2 - Value	P-Value	Significance at P < 0.05
Urban	236	664 (73.8)	900				
Rural	136	164 (54.7)	300				
Total	372	828	1200	1	38.419	0.000	Significant

From the results of the analysis, it can be seen that significantly higher proportion (73.8%) of private primary schools in urban areas have physical facilities than in rural areas (54.7%). The calculated P-value (0.008) is far smaller than the probability level at which the hypothesis is set (P < 0.05). This indicates that the Null Hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is accepted (P < 0.05). Thus, significantly higher proportion of private primary schools in urban areas has physical facilities available in the schools than proportion of rural private primary schools. This means that location of private primary school is an important factor in the availability of physical facilities in the private primary schools. More private primary schools in urban areas have adequate physical facilities than in rural areas.

Research Question 2: What are the available utilities in urban and rural private primary schools in the Southeast, Nigeria? Table 3 shows the analyzed data on availability of municipal utilities in the private primary schools by location.

Table 3: Frequency count and Percentage of Schools Assessed on Availability of Municipal Utilities by Location

s/n	Item of Utility	Urban (n=90)		Rural (n-30)		Total (n= 120)	
		Available (%)	Not Available (%)	Available (%)	Not Available (%)	Available (%)	Not Available (%)
1	Regular portable water supply	88(97.8)	2(2.2)	18(60.0)	12(40.0)	106(88.3)	14(11.7)
2	Suitable drinking water source in each classroom	62(68.9)	28(31.1)	19(63.3)	11(36.7)	81(67.5)	39(32.5)
3	Separate drinking cups	74(82.2)	16(17.8)	16(53.3)	14(46.7)	90(75.0)	30(25.0)
4	Wash-hand basins in the classroom	90(100.0)	0(0.0)	27(90.0)	3(10.0)	117(97.5)	3(2.5)
5	Wash-hand basins in use	90(100.0)	0(0.0)	26(86.7)	4(13.3)	116(96.7)	4(3.3)
6	Soap/ashes for children's use in sanitation in each classroom	84(93.3)	6(6.7)	23(76.7)	7(23.3)	107(89.2)	13(10.8)
7	Electricity supply	84(93.3)	6(6.7)	**17(56.7)**	13(43.3)	101(84.2)	19(15.8)
8	**Internet connectivity**	**21(23.3)**	**69(76.7)**	**7(23.3)**	**23(76.7)**	**28(3.3)**	**92(76.7)**
9	Computer laboratory/room	75(83.3)	15(16.7)	11(36.7)	19(63.3)	86(71.7)	34(28.3)
10	Computer sets	78(86.7)	12(13.3)	13(43.3)	17(56.7)	91(75.8)	29(24.2)
Total Mean		**746(82.9)**	**154(17.1)**	**177(59.0)**	**123(41.0)**	**923 (76.9)**	**277(23.1)**

Table 3 shows that while urban private primary schools have adequate utilities to run the schools effectively and efficiently (mean frequency percentage availability = 82.9%), rural private primary schools do not have adequate utilities to run their schools effectively and efficiently, (Mean frequency percentage availability = 59.0%). The mean frequency percentage availability score for rural private schools is slightly below the criterion mean of 60% and therefore adjudged to be inadequate. When the data for urban and rural private primary schools are pooled together, the total mean frequency percentage score for available utility is 76.9%, showing that on the average, private primary schools have adequate municipal utilities because their mean score is above the criterion mean frequency percentage availability score of 60%. More specifically, it should be observed that irrespective of the location of the private primary school, regular portable water and suitable drinking water are available to them. However, the private schools in both urban and rural communities have their portable water supplied by commercial water tankers or water vendors. Safe and portable water is a very important condition for a school to be learner friendly because children need plenty of water every day for drinking and sanitation. The learners have drinking water in their classrooms in both urban (68.9%) and rural (63.3%) private primary schools, overall (67.5%). In rural private primary schools, sometimes the water is provided from the homes by the learners themselves on rotational basis. Groups of the learners are requested to bring drinking water from their homes each school day.

It should also be noted from Table 3 that electricity supply and computer rooms are available in 93.3% and 83.3% respectively of urban private primary schools. But these utilities are very inadequate in rural private primary schools, (36.7% and 43.3% respectively). These two utilities indicate areas of major superiority of urban private primary schools to rural private primary schools because much can be done in urban private primary schools with electricity and the computer which cannot be done in rural private primary schools.

Internet connectivity is very inadequate in both urban and rural private schools. This may be due to high cost of internet connectivity charged by network providers.

Some aspects of utilities that are adequate in both urban and rural private primary schools are utilities for hand washing and general sanitation, wash hand basins, soap/ash for hand washing and water source in each classroom. Most of the drinking water in rural private primary schools is provided by the learners who take turns for the purpose. In urban private primary schools, water is often provided by the school authority through water vendors and tankers. While majority (82.2%) of the private primary schools in urban communities have separate water drinking cups for each pupil, only 53.3% of rural private primary schools has separate water drinking cups for the pupils in their classrooms.

Ho_2: Hypothesis 2 sought to determine whether the proportions of urban and rural private primary schools with municipal utilities are significantly different. The results of the analyzed data are shown in Table 4. Table 4 shows that significantly higher proportion (58.5%) of private primary schools in urban areas has utilities than proportion of private primary schools in rural areas (44.4%). This is because the calculated P-value (0.000) is far smaller than the critical P-value (0.05) set for the null hypothesis. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is accepted. Private primary schools in urban areas have utilities more than private primary schools in rural areas.

Table 4: Summary of Chi-squared (X^2) analysis comparing the proportions of availability of utilities in private primary schools by location

Location	Not Available	Available (%)	Total	Df.	X^2 - Value	P-Value	Significance at P < 0.05
Urban	598	842 (58.5%)	1440				
Rural	267	213 (44.4%)	480				
Total	865	1055	1920	1	28.900	0.000	Significant

This means that school location is a significant factor influencing the availability of municipal utilities in private primary schools. Availability of utilities is in favour of urban private primary schools with higher proportions across the items on availability of municipal utilities.

Discussion of Results

The results of this study have revealed that the physical facilities expected in primary schools for effectiveness are available in the private primary schools in Southeast Nigeria. On a general note, the physical facilities had availability frequency mean percentage score of 69.0%, which is just adequate based on the criterion of 60% selected apriori. The facilities that scored adequate availability on the average include Spacious classrooms, Library, Administrative space, Playground, Separate toilets for male and female learners, and male and female teachers. However, such vital physical facilities as Science Laboratories, Workshops, and staff rooms had low availability mean percentage scores. It was found that the reason for this low score was that most private primary school organization was such that each teacher had his/her own classroom, making it unnecessary to build separate space as staff room. There is need for staff room even if it would be used more for staff meetings and staff interactions and mutual consultations.

Each classroom had a science corner, making it unnecessary to have separate science laboratory space where all the teachers at different times come with their pupils to learn about natural phenomenon. This arrangement does not appear to be adequate, especially for upper primary school classes in which the study of science has become very serious and systematic. The learners need to explore ideas and interact with materials. This can best be done in a formal science laboratory designed and equipped for that purpose. There are some private primary schools in which the science and Mathematics teachers are subject specialists, who teach across different classes and levels. Such schools should have science laboratory that is well equipped and not just science corner in each classroom. Lack of science laboratories in most of the private primary schools is a major deficiency and would definitely negatively affect instructional delivery in basic science which is activity oriented. In the same vein the absence of technical workshops where learners go to learn manipulation of objects, equipment/tools, and construction of crafts is a major deficiency in private primary schools in Southeast Nigeria. Children in primary schools should be guided on how to construct basic artifacts like toys, use harmers to drive nails, use various kinds of simple machines. The workshop should also serve as storeroom for the various useful outputs learners make and present for score every year. The school workshop is the hub of early engineering and technology and should not be absent as physical facility in the private primary schools. The lack of workshop facility creates the impression that the learners may not develop adequate manual dexterity and physical problem-solving skills which are necessary life skills for children.

The **rural** private primary schools indicated low mean frequency score on availability of library space on the school compound. A school without a library cannot be seriously learner friendly. Such a school would likely stultify the development of good reading habit among learners. All academic institutions should have well-resourced libraries to serve both the learners and their teachers.

It should be noted that larger proportion of private primary schools in urban areas have significantly (P < 0.05) more physical facilities than rural private primary schools in Southeast Nigeria, (see Table 2). This means that

more urban based private primary schools have more physical facilities available than their rural counterparts. Thus, in terms of learner friendly school status, private primary schools in urban areas are better than their counterparts in rural areas. This is to be expected because in urban areas, there are very many private primary schools which compete with one another to satisfy the learning needs of children so as to attract and retain more patronage and children enrolment. Higher enrolment enables them to make higher profit.

Table 3 showed that most of the utilities whose availability was assessed were found to be available in the private primary schools. In all ten items considered, apart from internet connectivity, the pooled frequency scores showed that the private primary schools have them adequately available because all items scored more than the criterion mean frequency score of 60% or more. When location is considered, the urban based private primary schools scored better than the rural based private primary schools in all items. This shows that many more urban private primary schools are provided utilities than their rural counterparts. This is probably because the many private primary schools in urban communities compete stringently in order to attract and retain more clients by providing the required utilities and making their schools more learner-friendly, (UNICEF, E-2015). Moreover, quality assurance personnel from the state ministries of education pay more regular monitoring visits to the urban based private primary schools than to their rural counterparts (UNICEF, E-2015). These incessant monitoring visits tend to make the urban based private primary schools adhere to the regulations from government so as to avoid the risk of losing their operational licenses and being closed down by government education agencies.

It must be noted that private primary schools in the area of study, irrespective of location, lack internet connectivity. This is not very surprising because the cost of internet band width and data is enormous at present. Since the private primary schools are profit-seeking institutions, buying the band width would not make them cost effective, although it can improve their competitive capacity in terms of school enrolment. With the experiences following the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the education sector, many more schools, including private primary schools would in future obtain bandwidths that are suitable for school-wide use in remote or online teaching and learning. However, school fees would likely increase and the burden on parents would also increase.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are necessary and should be implemented for progress to be achieved towards improving the Learner Friendly School (LFS) status of private primary schools in Southeast, Nigeria:

- All private primary schools should ensure that they establish well equipped school laboratories, one for junior and one for senior primary school classes in order to improve science teaching and learning in the schools. This is more appropriate now that most private primary schools are employing science subject specialists to focus and teach only science across the classes.
- All private primary schools should have well-stocked libraries to encourage good reading habit among the learners and their teachers, and to make available/accessible books and periodicals which the teachers and the learners would not find or have money to buy.
- All private primary schools should have workshops where the learner practise manipulation of equipment and tools, construction of objects and artifacts, creation of new ideas, generation of problem-solving ideas and development of cooperative attitudes to problem identification and problem solving.
- All private primary schools should install internet connectivity to improve remote teaching and learning, as well as improve access of staff and students to useful literature and documents. Primary school workshops can serve as the incubator of great technological ideas where learners try out their construction of gadgets they need such as toys sculpture, carvings and drawings. Children's technical skills should be allowed to blossom by making available conducive environment for them to thrive.

References

1. Enugu State Ministry of Education. (E-2010). Strategic Education Sector Plan (SESP) and
2. Strategic Education Sector Operational Plan (SESOP). Electronic Copy.
3. Ekanem, E. A, Essien, I. T & Ekanem, T. F. (2011). Play Facilities in Pre-Schools: Implications for Socio-Motor Skills Development of Pupils in Akwa –Ibom State. Journal of OMEP, 7&8 (1) 191 – 197.
4. Ekanem, A. E. (2012). Play and the Child's Learning: Playground and Equipment. In Obinaju, Q. I and Ibiam J. (Eds), Early Childhood Care and Education. Uyo, Soulmate Press and Publishing Company Ltd.
5. Enueme, C. P. (2004). Evaluating the Management of Primary Schools in Delta State Using UNICEF Environment. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
6. Falana, Femi .(2024). Despite Nigeria's 20m Out-of-School Children Crisis, States Fail to
7. Access N68bn UBEC Fund. https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/12/29/despite-nigerias-20m-out-of-school-children-crisis-states-fail-to-access-n68bn-ubec-fund (Retrieved 18/4/24)
8. Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN)/UNICEF (E - 2005). SAGEN Baseline Study 1:
9. Strategies for the Acceleration of Girls' Education in Nigeria.
10. FGN/UNICEF. (E - 2005). SAGEN Baseline Study 2: Classroom interaction in Nigerian primary schools.

11. FGN. (2013). National Policy on Education (NPE), Abuja, NERDC Press.
12. Ibiam, J.U., Ugwu, G.C. Ifelunni, C.O. Otti, B.N. (2015). Bench making Early childhood Education Centres in Enugu state. Journal of Research and Practice in childhood Education 1(1) 141 – 151.
13. Ihekwoaba, C. K. C; Ekeada, C & Otty, C. A. (2015). Free Quality Education as a Precursor for Socio-economic.
14. Njoku, Z.C. (2001). Primary School Teachers' Perception of the Factors affecting children's
15. Access to Basic Education in Eastern States of Nigeria. Journal of Primary Education 2 (1) 109-124.
16. Njoku, Z. C. (2009). Current National Policy on Education and Child Friendly Schools: Links and Gaps. Paper Delivered at the Workshop on Strengthening Institutional Capacity of Stakeholders in Entrenching and Establishing National Child-Friendly School Benchmark for Improved Teacher Quality Assurance in UNICEF "A" Field Zone. Owerri, 12th to 13th August, 2009.
17. Obinaju,Q. I, Fakorogha, E & Igbogi I. (2015). Managerial Constraints in Early Childhood Care and Education: Implications for Development. Journal of Research and Practice in Childhood Education, 1 (1) 65 – 77.
18. UNICEF/FME (2010) SITAN: "Education and child development: Situation Analysis"
19. UNICEF and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). (2011). Global Initiative on Out-of-school Children: Conceptual and Methodological Framework (CMF). New York and Montreal: UNICEF and UIS.
20. UNICEF/FME. (2007). "SITAN- Situation Assessment and Analysis of Nigerian
21. Children and Women Development Rights" (A UNICEF Study in Nigeria, 2007).
22. UNICEF. (2009). Child Friendly School Manual. New York, UNICEF Communication Division. www.unicef.org
23. UNICEF, UNESCO & FME. (2012). Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children. Nigeria
24. Country Study Conducted within the Conceptual and Methodology Framework (CMF).
25. UNICEF & WHO. (2018). Africa live/unicef-ranksnigeria-174-out-of-180-countries-on-
26. children's wellbeing, Retrieved 27/2/2020.
27. UNICEF. (2011). Framework for Right-Based Educational Systems and Schools. Retrieved on 21/9/10 from http://www.unicef:org/life skills.
28. UNESCO.(2022). Tackling the menace of out-of-school children in Nigeria. Retrieved 2/4/24 from http://guardian.ng>