

## RETURN OF MISSION SCHOOLS AND STAKEHOLDERS' DISCIPLINE IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*This study investigates stakeholders' discipline and the return of mission schools since after their return to their original proprietors. Data were gathered from secondary school students in mission schools returned to the Roman Catholic Church in Rivers State. A total of 381 respondents participated in the study. A structured questionnaire which adopted the 4-point likert scale was used to gather primary data. Mean statistical tool with a cut-off point of 2.50 value and above as accepted factor was used for data analysis of the Research Questions, the hypotheses was analyzed using the z-test. The results reveal that there is a stakeholders' discipline in mission school in Rivers State since after the return of such schools to their original owners is quite commendable. It recommends that better incentives, such as retirement benefits, be made available to teachers in mission schools. The study finally suggests that an exhaustive inquiry into the relationship between mission schools and other private schools be carried out.*

**Keywords:** Mission Schools; Stakeholder's discipline, Education, Indiscipline, Discipline, Roman Catholic Schools.

### Study Background

Formal, western-type of education was introduced by British missionaries in the 1840s. The Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) started several schools in the mid-1800s. The colonial government gave the church financial aid, but in the early twentieth century the government began building primary and secondary schools. By the time the British combined the northern and southern regions into one colony in 1914, a total of 11 secondary schools were in operation, all but one run by missionaries. There were also 91 mission and 59 government elementary schools. These mission schools provided low-cost qualitative education until 1970 when the schools were seized and nationalized by the government. At the end of the Nigerian Civil War in 1970, government seized and nationalised all schools that were hitherto owned by the missions "in an attempt to defuse tribalism". With the government take-

over the standard and quality of education fell. Fees were introduced and hiked, which kicked millions of children out of school. School infrastructures deteriorated. Libraries and laboratories disappeared in the schools. The welfare of teachers was ignored, etc. Strikes, examination malpractice, truancy on the part of students and teachers became the order of the day. The concomitant effects of these were a water-washed quality of education in Nigeria. The takeover of mission schools after Nigerian Civil War which led to the collapse of education in Nigeria gave rise to an upsurge in crime and other anti-social activities in Nigerian schools and society at large. There is the popular opinion that the result and product of new Government schools are the hired killers, kidnappers, armed robbers and the moral failure which now characterize the society. The sudden takeover of the schools by the government brought about the collapse of education in schools that were hitherto reputed for high standards. Morality and character building also collapsed.

Rather than recording improvement, the schools went into decadence to the present level where they are a mere shadow of what they used to be. Bad governance and corruption compounded the problem, as money meant for the schools were embezzled leaving the institutions in squalid condition. It is this state of affairs that fired the clamour for the return of the schools to their owners. The rationale for return of mission schools to their original owner includes the cost implications, on state governments, of running such schools at their original standard. There is reason to believe that some state governments decided to hand over the schools by compulsion rather than reason. Over the years, mounting pressure by interest groups on the states to return the schools to their owners led to this turn of events. Besides, the failure of state governments to adequately fund education and improve the condition of the schools created burden. Apparently, the state governments, which appeared over-burdened, found the demand for handover of schools a ready escape route from the statutory responsibility of catering for the schools. Thus, by handing over hundreds of schools to the churches, they have lesser burden to carry on the education front.

Having handed over mission schools to their original owners, it is pertinent to ask if there has been any observable improvement in the abject academic and moral performance of students and teachers of most of the schools since they were returned to their owners. Which primary or secondary school has been renovated to show that the rightful owners of the schools have taken over? Which school is reputed for its excellent library or laboratory as it used to be? Which of the schools has

transformed from poor performance in public examinations? Mission schools of old used to be models and their products extraordinary; which of today's mission schools is maintaining that enviable standard? Have the "new" mission schools been able to curb the social vices of examination malpractice, cultism, truancy and absenteeism? Have these mission schools, since their return to their original owners been able to inculcate discipline in students and teachers in particular and the society in general? These and other issues inform this study, 'Return of Mission schools and Stakeholders' Discipline in Rivers State'.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Specifically the objectives of the study include to investigate:

1. The rate of truancy among students of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors.
2. The rate truancy among teachers of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors.
3. The rate of examination malpractice among students of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors.
4. The rate of examination malpractice among teachers of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors.
5. The rate cultism among students of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors.
6. The rate absenteeism among students of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors.
7. The rate absenteeism among teachers of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors.

### **Research Questions**

To accomplish the objectives of this study, the following research questions have been postulated:

1. How prevalent is truancy among students of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors?

2. How prevalent is truancy among teachers of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors?
3. What is the rate of examination malpractice among students of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors?
4. What is the rate of examination malpractice among teachers of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors?
5. How prevalent is cultism among students of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors?
6. To what extent is absenteeism prevalent among students of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors?
7. To what extent is absenteeism prevalent among teachers of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors?

### **Research Hypotheses**

Based on the specific objectives set out to be achieved in this study, the following hypotheses have been postulated in the null form to help guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between stakeholders' discipline and the academic performance of students in mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors.
2. There is no significant relationship between qualitative education in Nigeria since after the return of mission schools to their original proprietors.
3. There is no significant relationship between the handing over of mission schools to their original proprietors in Rivers State and the curbing of examination malpractice in that state.

### **Stakeholders' Discipline and the Academic Performance of Students**

Scholars have dealt with teachers' disciplinary approaches on students' indiscipline in secondary schools and its correlation with students' academic performance (Nakpodia 2010; Kibet, 2012; Ehiane, 2014; Musa,

2014; Sambe and Sambe, 2015). Some draw a correlations between school leadership styles with discipline in a school system (Njoroge and Nyabuto 2014, Mahmud, 2014; Moye, 2015). Scholars like Kibet, (2012), in an attempt to establish the relationship between leadership approach and students' discipline in secondary schools lay most of the blame on the school management who frequently and very frequently retains the final authority in the school. Scholars such as Abayomi (2002) and Mlowosa and Mathias (2014) express concern that there are a lot of effects of indiscipline on a child and society in general. It may lead a child to become hardened criminal in future life, if not curbed. In her discussion of the home factor and truancy, Musa (2014:83) sees the home as a powerful determinant factor in the behaviour of children and, that children who are not adequately monitored by their parents may show a variety of unhealthy symptoms in behaviours. In most cases a child, for instance, turns truant because parent do not show any interest in their academic performance. Scholarly findings reveal that peer group factors, socio economic background of the students, poor academic performance of students, are contributory factors to indiscipline in the school system. In their paper, "To Discipline or to Punish? A Critical Discourse on Schooling in South Africa" Ndofirepi, Makaye and Ndofirepi (2012), note that the issue of discipline is a major challenge faced by educators and parents in most of the South African schools. They lament that the South African Schools Act (SASA) (1996) is not explicit on the disciplinary strategies educators should adopt to handle learner indiscipline in schools. They argued that the failure of government to suggest an immediate alternative form of punishment has led to the continuation of corporal punishment thereby causing conflict between teachers, learners, and parents. Consequently, indiscipline by students in South African schools is on the increase.

In another vein, Cornelius-Ukpepi and Ndifon (2012) study "Factors That Influence Examination Malpractice And Academic Performance in Primary Science among Primary Six Pupils in Cross River State, Nigeria", investigate factors that influence examination malpractice and academic performance in Primary Science among primary six pupils in Cross River State, Nigeria. They noted that the poor and declining academic performance of students in Nigerian schools owing to examination malpractice is becoming so alarming that the achievement of the set goals of teaching science in primary school for sustainable science and technological development is endangered. Examination malpractice is one of the common social ills threatening the educational sector at all levels and the fact that it is found among the primary school pupils is even more

worrisome. This is because the primary school is the foundation of any child's educational development. Their study further affirmed that examination malpractice is thriving in nursery and primary schools where one would have thought that the children are young and innocent. Cornelius-Ukpepi and Ndifon (2012:60) note that teachers have been variously accused of abating examination malpractice. Teachers read answers to pupils in examination hall and even work sums for them to copy quickly before they are cleaned off. Based on this statement, teachers may feel that if the pupils fail to perform well, it will be a slap on their faces hence the public will know that they did not carry out their teaching effectively. Omemu (2015) laments that, this all important means of assessing students has become ineffective as all forms of malpractice have been introduced into the school system. Jimoh's (2009) findings concur with the above findings. His study reveals that examination malpractice has become so widespread that there is virtually no examination anywhere at all levels and even outside the formal school system that there is no one form or sharp practice or the other. Every examination season witnesses the emergence of new and ingenious ways of cheating. He sees examination malpractice as a social evil that can damage society to the extent of possibly leading to a failed state. It has very serious economic, political and social consequences. He reports that in the last ten years alone, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) had to cancel the results of 814,699 candidates in its May/June Examinations. Considering the cost of buying examination forms alone, this amount to a waste of about 2.5 billion Naira. Jimoh's (2009) study further asserts that malpractice leads to irreversible loss of credibility. A country that becomes noted for examination malpractice losses international credibility. Academic documents emanating from such country will be treated with suspicion.

The literature so far revealed shows that the much needed stakeholders' discipline is lacking in the school system, especially in public schools. It is obvious that such negative behaviours such examination malpractice, truancy, cultism and lack of commitment are common features of government owned schools. Findings from scholars so far reviewed showed that due to the aforementioned factors, government owned schools have not been able to provide the much needed qualitative education in Nigeria, and that the much needed qualitative education can only be achieved if mission schools are returned to their former proprietors. It is against this backdrop that the current research examines stakeholders' discipline in mission schools in Rivers State since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors.

## **Methodology**

The peculiar nature of this study pre-supposes the use of survey method. This method provides the researcher the opportunity to investigate the place of mission schools on the academic performance of students. The area of this study is Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. The target population of this study is all Roman Catholic Mission secondary schools in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Delta State. Teachers and students from J.S.1, J.S. 2, S.S.1 and S.S. 2 were randomly selected from one secondary school in each of the districts that make up the local government area through a simple random sampling technique. A total sample of 361 respondents was sampled out of the entire population. The instrument used in collecting data was the questionnaire containing items developed from the research question, purpose of study and the literature review. The questionnaire is framed in four points Likert Scale of 4,3,2 and 1 points for strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (DA) and Strongly Disagree (SD) respectively. The questionnaire was personally administered and retrieved by the researchers to the 381 selected Teachers and students from J.S.1, J.S. 2, S.S.1 and S.S. 2 in the selected Roman Catholic Mission secondary schools. Responses obtained from the four point likert scale were treated to frequencies and mean calculated items by items. Decisions were reached based on the mean comparing with decision of 2.50. Thus any item having a mean value of 2.50 and above was accepted while any item having a mean value of <2.50 is rejected. The z-test statistics was 0.05 significant level.

## **Data Presentation and Analysis**

### **Research Question 1**

How prevalent is truancy among students of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors?

**Table 1: Opinion on the Prevalence of Truancy among Students of Mission Schools**

<b>S/NO</b>	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>REMARKS</b>
1	There is a reduction of truancy among mission schools.	3.75	Accepted
2	Truant students are severely punished.	2.75	Accepted
3	There are frequent roll calls to check truancy.	2.71	Accepted
4	Parents are consistently reminded of the consequences of truancy on students' academic	2.61	Accepted

	performance		
5	Truant students in mission schools are continuously counselled	2.83	Accepted
6	Extra curricula activities in mission schools attract students to school.	2.55	Accepted

In table 1 above items were examined to assess the frequency of truancy among students of mission schools since the return of such schools to their original proprietors. The result indicated that the mean scores from the items ranged from 2.55 to 3.75. Judging from the 4-point scale, with a cut off of 2.50, it is evident from the data that all the areas covered are accepted as evidence that the frequency of truancy among students of mission schools since the return of such schools to their original proprietors is low. This may not be unassociated with the high level of discipline in such schools.

### Research Questions 2

How prevalent is truancy among teachers of mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors?

**Table 2: Opinion on Teachers' Commitment in Mission Schools.**

12	Teachers in mission school are punctual to class	2.40	Accepted
13	Teachers in mission schools have a good rapport with students	2.53	Accepted
14	Teachers in mission schools are disciplined.	3.45	Accepted
15	Teachers in mission schools take time to explain concepts to students	2.91	Accepted

In table 2 above, the mean scores of the items assessed to ascertain the commitment of teachers in mission schools ranged from 2.40 to 3.42. Apart from item 12 (with a mean of 2.40) the other items assessed were above 2.50 cut of level of the 4 - point scale, and as such were accepted.

### Research Question 3

To what extent have mission schools in Rivers State been able to curb examination malpractice among students since their return to their original proprietors?

**Table 3: Opinion on Mission Schools and Examination Malpractice.**

7	Students in mission schools are not involved in examination malpractice.	3.51	Accepted
8	Teachers in mission schools do not aid their students	3.33	Accepted



	during external examination		
9	Students involved in examination malpractice are expelled from mission schools	2.91	Accepted
10	Students do not get involved in examination malpractice in mission schools because they are well taught.	3.21	Accepted
11	Teachers and students in mission schools do not get involved in examination malpractice because they are afraid of sanctions imposed on the vice.	3.46	Accepted

Table 3 above shows that all the items assessed to ascertain the opinion on mission schools and examination malpractice were accepted since their mean score varies between 2.91 and 3.51.

### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between stakeholders' discipline and the academic performance of students in mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors.

Table 4: z-test on the relationship between of stakeholders' discipline and the academic performance of students in mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors

Status of school	M	SD	N	Df	Table of Z-value	Calculated Z-value	Level of sig value
After the Return	3.32	78	241				
Before the Return	3.20	78	140	379	1.45	1.96	0.05
<b>Total</b>			<b>381</b>				

Table 4 above shows that at a degree of freedom of 379, the calculated z - value of 1.96 is greater than the table value of 1.45 at a 0.005 significant level; hence we reject the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between stakeholders' discipline and the academic performance of students in mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors.

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between qualitative education in Nigeria since after the return of mission schools to their original proprietors.

Table 5: Z-test on the quality of education in Nigeria since after the return of mission schools to their original proprietors

Status of school	M	SD	N	Df	Table of Z-value	Calculated Z-value	Level of sig value	Remark
After the Return	3.38	87	191	379	1.96	2.16	0.05	
Before the Return	2.33	75	190					
<b>Total</b>			<b>381</b>					

Table 5 shows that the calculated Z - value of 2.16 is greater than the table value of 1.96 at a degree of freedom of 379 and a 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the hypothesis that there is no relationship in the qualitative education in Nigeria since after the return of mission schools to their original proprietors in Rivers State is rejected.

### Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between the handing over of mission schools to their original proprietors in Rivers State and the curbing of examination malpractice in that state.

**Table 6: z-test on the effects of mission schools and examination malpractice in Rivers State**

Status of school	M	SD	N	df	Table of Z-value	Calculated Z-value	Level of sig value
After the Return	2.94	62	191		1.96	6.53	0.05
Before the Return	2.90	70	190	379			
<b>Total</b>			<b>381</b>				

Data in table 6 shows that the calculated Z - value of 6.53 was significant at the table Z- value of 1.96 at a degree of freedom of 379. Since the calculated Z-value of 6.53 is greater than the table Z-value of 1.96, we, therefore, reject the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the handing over of mission schools to their original proprietors in Rivers State and the curbing of examination malpractice in that state

### Discussion of Finding

The results of the hypothesis 1, 2 and 3 revealed that there is a significant relationship between the handing over of missions schools and discipline of stakeholders ( in this case Students) in Rivers State. This result is in consonance to the findings in the literature reviewed in, which missions schools were shown to influence students' academic performance. Scholars such as Agi (2013) study had found significant relationship between mission schools and the academic achievement and moral standards of students in such schools. According to Agi's (2013) findings mission schools in the Rivers State rate highly in terms of academic performance, good facilities, discipline, and good school climate.

From Research Question 1, it is evident that the rate of truancy in mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors is low. This is due to the fact that there is a high sense of discipline among students in such schools just as it was before the takeover of such schools by the federal Government of Nigeria. The study also shows that there is a high sense of discipline in mission schools. Reason may not be unrelated to the emphasis on spirituality and goodness. Mission schools are known to inculcate godly and goodly virtues in their students. Mission schools also maintain a very high sense of discipline and decency. This is what is often lacking in public schools ere the authorities do not a grip of control over their students. This finding is contrary to a popular opinion held by those who were against the return of mission schools to their original owners. It has been observed that mission schools have a high sense of discipline (IAARR 2013).

It is evident from Research Question Three that contemporary mission schools have been able to curb, to a greater degree, examination malpractice in Rivers State. From the study it is discovered mission schools do not hesitate to punish teachers who aid and abate examination malpractice, while guilty students are expelled from the school. Besides students from such schools are well taught and disciplined. The teachers from mission schools do justice the school curriculum and scheme of work. At the long run, the students are confident of themselves.

The study further revealed that the infrastructures in mission schools are often adequate. There is a good sense of maintenance culture on the part of the school authority. The laboratories are well equipped. The libraries are often stocked with good books. All these go a long way to improve the academic performance of students in mission schools in Rivers State. The commitment of teachers in mission schools in Rivers State is

commendable; they are punctual and regular to classes and equally do justice to the scheme of work.

Some scholars like Ugwulashi (2011) have argued that that the establishments of mission schools have made it easier for even small communities have access to quality education which the public school cannot assure in the locality. Education has been communalized by this process that even the lower class competes with the middle class and middle class with upper class on choice of schools for their children. These schools have narrowed the gap and improved the system to a great extent in standardizing education which the public schools failed to provide for the nation at large because of decaying state in the management of education.

The study also discovered that this effort is highly appreciated by many parents for creating standard considering the messy situations public educational institutions are faced mostly at the primary and secondary levels. The deteriorating state of public school has led to critics about its future by the society. Most of the public schools have the best teachers but enthusiasm is lost because of the place of teachers in the society. Also there are no funds and cannot properly generate funds for its management, meeting school demands became extremely difficult thus affecting organization performance. Finance is one problem that crumbles effective administration of public school. Unlike public schools that depend on government in the face of dwindling economy, mission schools are sole dependent on private finances.

### **Conclusion**

This study has surveyed the stakeholders discipline in mission schools since after the return of such schools to their original proprietors in Rivers State. The stakeholders examined in this study are teachers and students. It areas of discipline covered are include the frequency of truancy, examination malpractice and teachers' commitment. While it is evident that there are other variables that affect the academic performance and moral standard of students, this study has shown that the positive effects of handing over of schools to missions on the academic performance, moral development and attainments of students can never be over-emphasized. The findings of this study have a lot of implication for policy makers, stakeholders in the educational industry, the economy of the nation and the general society at large. Since the gesture of handing over of schools to missions has yielded positive impact on the educational sector, other public institutions can equally be privatized. Secondly, a

further attempt in the future to disturb private participation in the educational sector would lead to a further deterioration of the standard of education in the country. This, in the long would adversely affect the general development of the country since most of the man power of the nation was under developed,

It should be emphatically stated the government alone cannot provide sufficient and adequate education for the teaming population of the country. The cost implications of be solely responsible for the provision of education in Nigeria would be much for the government. This is the major factor responsible for the poor funding of public schools in Nigeria. the concomitant effect of this is a decline in the standard of education in the country. Indiscipline would be high on the part of the teachers who may not see the need to be committed to jobs since they are poorly paid and the motivation is low. Following this would be the tendency for teachers in public schools to embark on industrial action which would in turn disrupt the academic calendar of the school system in the country. Since the teachers are not committed to their jobs, it simply means that the curriculum would not be covered. The attendant implication of this is that teachers of public schools would devise means to aid and abate examination malpractice by collecting money from the students for both internal and external examinations.

Based on the implications of the study, we wish to recommend as follows:

- i. Government should sponsor legislation that will favour private participation in the provision of standard education in the country.
- ii. Mission schools should allow those who could not pay their school fees to continue their studies until the end of their study; but such fees should be paid before giving them their certificates.
- iii. More schools, especially primary schools should be handed over to missions.
- iv. Retired teachers from mission schools should be given pensions and gratuity.
- v. The fees charged by mission schools should be moderated by a govern agency.

- vi. The government should subsidize the cost of education.
- vii. There should be an aggressive enlightenment campaign on the need for proper funding of schools in Nigeria

May we conclude by stating that faith-based organizations and private schools operators will find this study very significant, especially missionary churches in Rivers State and other states in Nigeria. Stakeholders of the educational sector in Nigeria will benefit immensely from this study. This study is equally hoped to be able to influence government's policy on education at the federal and state levels. The research would equally go a long way to checkmate those who are against the return of schools to missions in Nigeria. Finally, the findings of this study will be an issue of great concern for the minister of education and other related cum allied agencies in Nigeria.

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