

Private Cost Analysis of Pre-School Education in Nigerian Private Schools

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ABSTRACT Since research has shown that high quality preschool education is associated with improved school readiness, better school performance, higher graduation rates, lower crime and delinquency and decreased welfare dependency then it is worth knowing how much is spent on such an educational programme per child per annum. One thousand parents of kindergarten pupils during the period 2004/2005 session formed the sample of this study. The study adopted the ex post facto research design. Simple percentage, averages and rank order were the statistical tools adopted for the analysis of data. The study prima facie revealed that parents spent ₦46, 450 (forty six thousand, four hundred and fifty naira) in order for their children to get kindergarten one education (KG 1) per child per annum in private schools. KG II was ₦48, 150 and KG. III was ₦50, 380. In all the programmes, school fees ranked first among the items of cost constituting over 30% of the total private cost. Also revealed is that among the three classes of KG I, II and III, academic costs were higher than incidental costs. The paper recommends the need for government to appropriate a percentage of the Education Tax Fund (ETF) to pre-school education to enable her make pre-school education affordable for all the children.

INTRODUCTION

Basic education in Nigeria has had its scope broadened to include programmes/initiative for early childhood care and socialization. According to the National Policy on Education 2004 early childhood education is the education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. In the pre-schools, the three year old are kept in kindergarten one (KG I); four year old are kept in kindergarten two (KG II); while the five year old are kept in kindergarten three (KG. III). The purpose of the pre-school education is to meet the safety, health, education and social needs of the pre schooler.

There are two categories of kindergarten schools in Nigeria. Those owned by private bodies/individuals and those owned by government that is attached to public primary schools. Private kindergarten schools owned by private bodies/individuals can be categorized into the expensive ones with adequate facilities and exorbitant fees of above ₦7, 500. The second category are moderate in their fees charging between ₦5, 000 and ₦7,500 per term. Churches and private individuals own these ones. They meet the minimum standard in facility provision. The third category charge far less than ₦5,000 per term and are usually substandard in terms of human and material facility provision.

Preschool education has become a global phenomenon. In Nigeria it was initially a status symbol for the educated and highly placed persons but today due to its availability everywhere and the decline in extended family feature, it has become a necessity. Moreover women are entering the paid workforce in increasing numbers in almost every county and so they need a safe and conducive place to keep their children.

Children's experiences from birth to the age of five have been determined to be crucial in the development of general intelligence and 50% of intelligence development occurs by age four. Bloom (1964). Of vital concern to educators is the placement of pre-school aged children in a healthy and positive atmosphere prior to entering the primary school. According to Zant and Camozzi (1992) the exposure of young children to a pre kindergarten program before first grade has been found to help children develop the social skills and acquire the knowledge needed to be ready for school. In Nigeria not many studies have been carried out as regard pre school education issues. Activities at this stage are viewed to be mainly for safety purpose. Even if it is so, the pre schools have made effort to put together some learning materials for the children. So by and large some learning must have taken place and will therefore have some impact on the lives of the children.

This study is based on the human capital theory. This theory rests fundamentally on the idea that people invest in themselves (private cost) in a variety of ways in the sense that they incur costs of schooling for the sake of future financial returns. Blaug (1974, p.1). This is evidenced in the phenomenon of families' expenditure on the pre-school education of their children as an investment in human capital because on the long run, the family is saved the agony and emotional stress of their children placed in special education programme and involvement in crime. It is therefore a worthwhile exercise to find out how much Nigerians are spending on pre-school education. In Nigeria, compulsory education begins at the primary level up to junior secondary level, thus making it 9 year of compulsory education. That aspect that ought to take care of the readiness to enter primary school (that is the pre-school education) is relegated to the background. This study is therefore an attempt to look into the cost implication of that sub sector.

The benefits of high quality pre-school education include

(a) long term cognitive benefits for children. For example, children who attended quality pre-kindergarten programmes were less likely to be retained or placed in special education classes than children who did not. Barnett (1995); The consortium for Longitudinal studies (1983).

(b) Cost – benefits have been reported for preschool. Lewis (1993) stated that for every dollar invested in a high quality prekindergarten program, \$7.16 is saved. To buttress this view Futrell (1987) and American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth (1993) stated that dollars invested in quality pre school education ends up saving society money by reducing social expenditures for welfare, prison and unemployment. This is so because the programmes can help build the foundation of children's attitudes, knowledge and behaviour related to aggression.

(c) Quality preschool education can provide a foundation for later learning and in preparing children to enter the future workforce Smith et al. (1995). They further explained that at risk children who have prekindergarten experience in high quality programmes have higher levels of success in school, greater achievement motivation, higher vocation aspiration and higher employments rates than at risk children with no prekindergarten experience.

Childcare costs represent a huge burden to

most working families. Wiefek (2001) stated that in Washington State, the average annual cost for full-time center care for pre-school children in 1998 before tax median household income in Washington State was \$44,134. He complained that despite the necessity and importance of good quality pre-school, United States under invests in both the quantity and quality of early care and education. Parents pay 60% of the costs of childcare, with the government paying approximately 39% and business only contributing 1%. To her the current costs of child care represent a large burden for most families. The situation in Nigeria is worse. Parents bear the entire cost of preschool education in private schools.

Costs in education are divided into two, social costs and private costs. Government expenditure on education is referred to as social cost. Private cost is defined as that part of investment in education which is made either by the student or the parent. Salim (1993). In this study, the parents incur the private cost because the preschoolers are too young and cannot engage in any money-yielding project. Private cost is divided into direct and indirect costs. The direct cost is those amount expended in the purchase of education goods and services. Indirect cost is the opportunity cost of the programme. That is what the family loses by sending children to school. In this study, the pupils are not mature enough to be employed for labour. Although the parents could use the money to achieve other investments. Literature has however revealed that the benefits of preschool exceed the cost.

Direct private cost is divided into academic costs and incidental costs. Academic costs show the expenditure that is directly related to instruction whereas the costs, which are not directly related to instruction, are referred to as incidental costs. The major components of academic costs for preschool education include cost of application form, registration expenses, school fees, cost of textbooks, nursery rhymes, stationary, private lesson and excursions. Incidental costs consist of feeding, transport cost to school, cost of school uniform including shoes and stockings, PTA donations, end of year party, development levy, games fee, caution fee, medical fee and Montessori fee.

Studies on private cost of education in Nigeria have been on secondary and higher education. This paper is therefore an attempt to provide data on the private cost of preschool education in

Nigeria. Adekambi (2002), Imafidon (2005), Olubor (2005) and Osemwengie (2005) have carried out various studies on the private cost of Teacher education programmes. In all these studies, incidental costs were higher than academic costs. School fees as an item of cost contributed the highest amount to the cost of education in all the studies.

The Problem

Public kindergarten schools are at their formative stage. They are few in number and so cannot meet the needs of Nigerians. The private ones are more in number and therefore more patronized. It is therefore a worthwhile exercise to find out what families are spending on the education of their children in kindergarten schools.

Research and educational discourse have revealed that the benefits of pre-school education include preparing children to enter the future workforce, achieving higher levels of success in school, encouraging greater achievement motivation, ensuring higher vocation aspiration and achieving higher employment rates than those without preschool education. More importantly, preschool education provides the social skills necessary to commence primary education thus making the beneficiary demonstrate increased academic skill in first grade.

In Nigeria, compulsory education begins at the primary level up to junior secondary level thus making it nine years of compulsory education. That aspect that ought to take care of the readiness to enter primary school (that is the preschool education) is relegated to the background. This study is therefore an attempt to look into the cost implication of that sub sector. Although government has made it a component of its Universal Basic Education. (UBE) programme yet the only responsibility government have accepted is supervision of the schools. The business is left in the hands of private individuals and organizations in a society where competition and profiteering is the order of the day. Against this background it becomes necessary to find out the extent of the burden of preschool education on families.

In Nigeria, the assessment of private costs of preschool education is one of the most neglected areas in the studies of educational costing. The

present exercise is a modest endeavour to fill this lacuna.

Research Questions

The following questions were therefore asked to direct the investigation:

1. What burden does a household bear per annum in order to provide preschool education to a child in a private school?
2. What are the component analyses of the cost of pre-school education?

Purpose and Significance of Study

The main purpose of this investigation was to find out how much Nigerian parents spend on their children for preschool education per annum. This study is absolutely essential for families in planning their yearly budget in order to make proper planning of resources for education. On the side of government it is important for her to know how much burden the citizens are bearing for preschool education in private schools in order to give some tax relief and hasten the implementation of kindergarten classes alongside the public schools. Data on private cost of preschool education will provide benchmark data on planning norms such as unit costs and cost disparities among items of cost. Since research has shown that high quality preschool education is associated with improved school readiness, better school performance; higher graduation rates, lower crime and delinquency and decreased welfare dependency then it is worth knowing how much is spent on such an educational programme. Information on unit cost will provide insight into the question of funds to be provided by financiers of education. Unit cost is also used in resource allocation, educational planning, efficiency measures and resource mobilization. Grants and other financial gestures from NGOs and private organizations will therefore have ready data as basis for allocation of funds.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the ex post facto design. The parents have already incurred the independent variables such as academic costs and incidental costs. The researcher merely observed the dependent variable (in this case the private cost to be calculated). The researcher has

no direct control over variables because they have already occurred. Thus only inferences about relations among variables were made.

Stratified random sampling technique was adopted along the stratum of class of programme (K.G.1, K.G.11 and K. G.111). The period 2004/2005 was chosen because it is the last session preceding the duration of collection of data and so the private cost is the most current so far. Edo State of Nigeria has been chosen for this study because of the fact that the state is regarded as educationally advanced and so has educated adults in good numbers. Majority of the adults are civil servants and so cannot afford expensive pre primary schools but seek for the minimum standard at least. The preschools here are therefore old enough to have stabilized their fees. The schools are government approved with school fees ranging between ₦5, 000 and ₦7, 500 per term.

A checklist named "Private cost of preschool Education" was provided to elicit information on the private cost of preschool education for the academic session of 2004/2005

The brochure of some selected preschools and reviewed literature provided the contents for the checklist. The checklist was divided into two sections. Section A was meant to seek the

background information of the pupils such as class of study. Section B focused on the items of cost such as cost of application form, registration expenses, school fees, private lesson, cost of textbooks and nursery rhymes, cost of stationeries and excursion. Others are transport cost to school, cost of mid-day meals and snacks, PTA donations, school uniform including shoes and stockings, end of year party, development levy, games fee, caution fee, medical fee and Montessori fee.

The researcher sought the assistance of her Postgraduate Diploma in Education students who helped to distribute, monitor and retrieve checklists to 1000 parents of kindergarten pupils. The statistical tools adopted in analyzing the data are simple percentage, averages and rank order.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study, private costs of preschool education are as contained in Table 1. From the analysis of the data in table 1, a household spends between ₦46,450 and ₦50,380 per preschool child per annum in a private pre primary school. Parents incurred the highest cost in the area of school fees in all the classes. (K.G. 1, K. G.11and K.G.111). This study has

Table 1: Private cost of pre-school education in Nigeria
*\$1 = ₦137.50K (August 26th, 2005)

S. No.	Items of Cost	(Class and Amount in Naira)							
		Cost	% of Cost	Rank	Cost	% of Cost	Rank	Cost	% of Cost
	<i>Class of Pupils</i>								
				<i>KG I</i>			<i>KG II</i>		<i>KG III</i>
1	Application form	1000	2.2	7 th	-	-	-	-	-
2	Registration Expenses	500	1.0	13 th	-	-	-	-	-
3	School fees (Annual)	16000	34.5	1 st	20000	41.6	1 ST	22000	43.7
4	Private lesson	2500	5.4	6 th	2500	5.2	5 TH	2500	5.0
5	Textbooks and Nursery rhymes	3000	6.5	5 th	6000	12.5	3 RD	8680	17.2
6	Cost of stationary, Biro, pencils crayon, drawing book and Exercise books	200	.4	12 th	250	0.5	15 TH	300	.6
7	Excursion	500	1.0	13 th	500	1.1	9 TH	500	1.0
8	School Uniform including stockings and shoes	5850	12.6	3 rd	2500	5.2	5 TH	-	-
9	Transport	7000	15.1	2 nd	7000	14.5	2 ND	7000	13.9
10	Feeding (including snacks & soft drinks)	5000	10.8	4 th	5000	10.4	4 TH	5000	10.0
11	PTA donations	1000	2.2	7 th	500	1.0	9 TH	500	1.0
12	End of session party	400	0.9	11 th	400	0.8	14 TH	400	.8
13	Development Levy	1000	2.2	7 th	1000	2.1	7 TH	1000	1.9
14	Games fee	500	1.0	13 th	500	1.0	9 TH	500	1
15	Caution fee	500	1.0	13 th	500	1.0	9 TH	500	1
16	Medical fee	500	1.0	13 th	500	1.0	9 TH	500	1
17	Montessori levy	1000	2.2	7 th	1000	2.1	7 TH	1000	1.9
	Total	46450	100.0		48150	100.0		50380	100.0

*Note: Exchange rate is not stable and can change after this date.

A decomposition of the private cost into academic and incidental costs is shown in Tables 2 and 3

corroborated the works of Adekambi (2002), Olubor (2005), Imafidon (2005) and Osemwengie (2005) that school fees ranked first among the items of cost. This is not unexpected because private individuals whose main motive is for profit run these schools. Moreover government regulation and supervision is grossly lacking thus leaving the parents in the whims and caprices of the proprietors. The proprietors on their part have no other sources of funding except those who patronize them. Government does not provide any grant whatsoever. In Nigeria, the minimum wage for a civil servant in the federal establishment is ₦7,500 per month before tax. However state governments decided to fix the minimum wage they can pay their civil servants. In Edo state of Nigeria, the minimum wage is ₦4500 per month before tax (Edo State Government 2001). With these meager salaries one wonders if people in the minimum wage category can afford private preschool education for their children. The calculated figures in Table 1 are per child. Other children in the home may also be of school age and need to be in other levels of education. Some necessities of life such as feeding, housing, medical and settlement of bills and taxes must be attended to. All these are forms of expenditure to the home.

Cost of transport ranked second among the items of cost for K.G 1 and K.G. 11. Whereas it ranked third for KG 111. Parents in their quest for good education for their children at times have to travel a distance to meet their heart desire. As said earlier some of the schools are in dilapidated uncompleted buildings without chairs and desks for the children to sit on and no ventilation while the kids are crowded into suffocating rooms. There are no suitable curricular and the quality of

teaching is so poor to be meaningful to the learners. Many parents will not like to patronize such schools with such uncomplimentary features. They therefore do not mind incurring cost of transport. Since the schools are not regulated or supervised, the onus is now on parents to search for a preschool that will provide a good foundation for their children. If the benefit incurring to individuals, families and the society is anything to go by then it is worth searching for a good pre-primary school for ones child.

Textbooks and Nursery rhymes ranked second among the items of cost for K.G. 111 while it ranked 3rd and 5th for K.G.11 and 1, respectively. Inflation has continued to be the bane of the country. The costs of these textbooks do not reflect the true picture, they are due to inflation. Cost of feeding ranked fourth in the three classes under study. Children between the ages of 3 and 5 years can only eat little portion at a time. While in school they are engaged in energy sapping activities such as games and so they need midday snacks to replenish their energy and sustain them.

Cost of school uniform including stockings and shoes ranked third for KG1 and fifth for KG11. There is no cost for KG111. This is so because KG1 pupils are the new entrants and so parents are excited and anxious to have their children look neat and decent. All required wears are therefore acquired for the child. By the time the child gets to KG 11 it becomes a matter of replacing some items that have worn out or are missing entirely. This is done, because the child has up to two years to stay in the kindergarten section. By the time the child gets to K.G.111 he already has his uniform, shoes and stockings. At this stage parents are reluctant to spend money on new wears bearing in mind that it is a transition class.

Table 2: Academic costs
*\$1 = ₦137.50K (August 26th, 2005)

S. No.	Items of Cost	(Class and Amount in Naira)								
		KG I			KG II			KG III		
		Cost	% of Cost	Rank	Cost	% of Cost	Rank	Cost	% of Cost	Rank
1	Application form	1000	4.2	4 th	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Registration Expenses	500	2.1	5 TH	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	School fees (Annual)	16000	67.5	1 ST	20000	68.4	1 ST	22000	64.7	1 ST
4	Private lesson	2500	10.6	3 RD	2500	8.5	3 RD	2500	7.4	3 RD
5	Textbooks and Nursery rhymes	3000	12.7	2 ND	6000	20.5	2 ND	8680	25.5	2 ND
6	Cost of stationary, Biro, pencils crayon, drawing book and Exercise books	200	0.8	7 th	250	0.9	5 TH	300	0.9	4 TH
7	Excursion	500	2.1	5 th	500	1.7	4 TH	500	1.5	4 TH
	Total	23700	100.0		29250	100.0		33980	100.0	

By the time the child gets to primary one he has to acquire a new set of uniform entirely.

The proprietors in the bid to get as much money as possible from parents have created all forms of levy. In order not to get the school fees too bloated they therefore create development levy, games fee, caution fee, medical fee, Montessori levy, PTA donations and end of session party levy. Of great interest to the children is the end of session party. They look forward to it and come to school in mufti on that day. It is a day of merriment and excitement. Montessori is a household name in Nigeria. Parents are very happy to hear the name and so believe that all the tenets in Montessori teachings are being implemented.

Cost of private lesson is quite high in the rank order. For KG. 1 it ranked 6th and KG.11 and 111 it ranked 5th. Children at the tender age of 3 to 5 years are kept behind after school that closes at 12.00 noon for private lessons. Again it is an opportunity for the proprietors to earn income for the school. The children are made to go through another round of academic work for one to two hours. Parents on their part are happy that their children are made to be studying all the time.

In the three classes under study (K.G. 1, KG. 11 and KG. 111), the academic cost was higher than the incidental cost. This is contrary to other findings of Adekambi (2002), Olubor (2005), Imafidon (2005) and Osemwengie (2005). In their findings their incidental costs were higher than the academic cost. This situation may not be unconnected to the fact that the pre-school child has no other commitment except academic activities. He is not involved in campus

accommodation. He lives with his parents. The only clothing he acquires is the uniform. He does not require buying new clothes. Cost of feeding which is substantial and ranked first in the study of Olubor (2005) is not so here. What the children require here is snacks. At the close of the day they go home for their lunch.

The academic cost of pre-school education was highest in KG III (₦ 50,380) followed by KG II (₦ 48,150) and KG I (₦ 46,450). This is understandable because the KG III child is more mature and so is involved in more advanced academic work. His textbooks are more complex than others and so are definitely more expensive than others. However, the incidental cost of KG III class was lower than the lower classes. This is so because KG III did not incur any cost for school uniform including stockings and shoes. Parents at this stage are quite reluctant to spend money since the pupils have only that session. The next session he will be in primary one where new demand for a fresh uniform will be made by the school authority.

Implications for Educational Planning

In view of previous research findings of the need to have all children have a good pre-school education, it is important to find out the cost of such a program per annum. This modest attempt has revealed that the families that decide to send their children to private pre-schools are incurring cost and this constitute financial burden. The situation is more burdensome because parents bear the entire cost. Whereas in the United State parents pay 60% of the costs of child care, with

Table 3: Incidental costs

*\$1 = ₦137.50K (August 26th, 2005)

S. No.	Items of Cost	(Class and Amount in Naira)								
		KG I			KG II			KG III		
		Cost	% of Cost	Rank	Cost	% of Cost	Rank	Cost	% of Cost	Rank
8	School Uniform including stockings and shoes	5850	25.7	2 nd	2500	13.2	3 rd	-	-	-
9	Transport	7000	30.8	1 st	7000	37.1	1 st	7000	42.7	1 st
10	Feeding (including snacks & soft drinks)	5000	21.9	3 rd	5000	26.6	2 nd	5000	30.5	2 nd
11	PTA donations	1000	4.4	4 th	500	2.6	6 TH	500	3.0	5 TH
12	End of session party	400	1.8	10 th	400	2.1	10 TH	400	2.4	9 TH
13	Development Levy	1000	4.4	4 th	1000	5.3	4 TH	1000	6.2	3 rd
14	Games fee	500	2.2	7 th	500	2.6	6 TH	500	3.0	5 TH
15	Caution fee	500	2.2	7 th	500	2.6	6 TH	500	3.0	5 TH
16	Medical fee	500	2.2	7 th	500	2.6	6 TH	500	3.0	5 TH
17	Montessori levy	1000	4.4	4 th	1000	5.3	4 TH	1000	6.2	3 rd
	Total	22750	100.0		18900	100.0		16400	100.0	

the government paying approximately 39% and business only contributing 1%. More over there are other items competing for the limited resources available to the Nigerian family. They include housing, clothing, medical and services. It therefore implies that minimum salary earners cannot patronize private kindergarten schools.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study can be summarized in the following statements

1. The private costs of pre-school education in private schools in Nigeria are N46,450, N48,150 and N50,380 per child per annum for KGI, KG II and KG III respectively.
2. In all the classes, school fees ranked 1st among the items of cost constituting over 30% of the total cost in each of the classes.
3. Academic costs were higher than incidental costs in all the classes.

Based on the research conducted and the data analyzed in this study, the following conclusion can be reached.

Since the private cost of pre-primary education per annum per child is substantial and borne entirely by the family it is likely that poor parents may not be able to afford such a program for their children. So some children may have to make do without a pre-school education before going into primary one. Thus making some children have an edge over others. Hence it is hereby recommended as follows:

1. There is need for government to be involved in the funding of pre school education in private schools. A percentage of the Education Tax Fund (ETF) should be appropriated in form of grant to pre- school education. This will ensure equity and justice since all the pre-school children will be in school.
2. As stated in the National Policy on Education (2004) government was expected to operate pre- primary schools alongside all public primary schools. This is the only way cost can be reduced and children of the low-income earners can send their children to such institutions. Government is therefore being urged and advised to establish the schools alongside with public primary schools.
3. Non Governmental Organizations, multi-national companies and banks should be encouraged to give scholarship to pupils in private pre-primary schools. Since school fees

accounted for over 30% of the cost of pre-primary school education, a relieve in that direction will ensure that many children patronize the pre schools.

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