

**THE EFFECT OF SCHOOL OWNERSHIP ON CANDIDATES'  
PERFORMANCE AT THE WEST AFRICAN SENIOR SCHOOL  
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION (WASSCE) IN NIGERIA**

**BY**  
**DR (MRS) MODUPE OKE**  
**AND**  
**MALIKI A. A.**

**THE WEST AFRICAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL,  
HEADQUARTERS OFFICE, LAGOS, NIGERIA**

Contact e-mail addressees – [modupeoke2000@yahoo.com](mailto:modupeoke2000@yahoo.com),  
[waechqrs@africaonline.co.gh](mailto:waechqrs@africaonline.co.gh)

**BEING A PAPER PRESENTED AT THE 35<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT (IAEA)  
BRISBAN, AUSTRALIA, 13 – 18 SEPTEMBER, 2009**

## **ABSTRACT**

There have been contentions that school ownership is one factor that affects learning activities which in turn affect performance of students. There is also a widely held view that students who attend private schools perform better than those who attend public schools in different parts of the world. This study therefore investigated the ownership of schools as a determinant of candidates' performance with a view to identifying the factors inherent in the two types (public and private) which promote or hinder candidates' performance in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). Adopting the cross-sectional design, two sets of questionnaires tagged 'Teachers Questionnaire' (TQ) and 'Students Questionnaire' (SQ) as well as a School Facilities Inventory (SFI) were used to elicit responses from 1,178 students, 574 teachers and 60 principals. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data while Chi-square analysis was done to see if there was a significant difference in the attitude of respondents towards the variables under study. Correlation analysis was also done to see if there was any significant relationship between school ownership and candidates' performance in WASSCE in Nigeria. In addition, regression was used to depict the paths and the contribution of instructional facilities, years of teaching experience, productive engagement of students and teachers' motivation to performance. The results showed that although candidates in private schools performed better than those in public schools, school ownership was not the sole determinant of candidates' performance; a great deal depended on access to instructional facilities. The findings were discussed and it was recommended, among others, that the type of facilities provided in Federal Government Colleges and State Model Schools should be extended to other state public schools in the country in order to improve the performance of students in WASSCE.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The cause of varying levels of academic achievement in schools has often been a subject of investigation all over the world. In Nigeria, studies sought to explain the trend of candidates' performance in the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE). Some have attributed differences in performance to factors inherent in the candidates and in the syllabuses, while attention has also been paid to other factors (Adeyegbe 1991, Uwadiae 2006 and Owokade 2007).

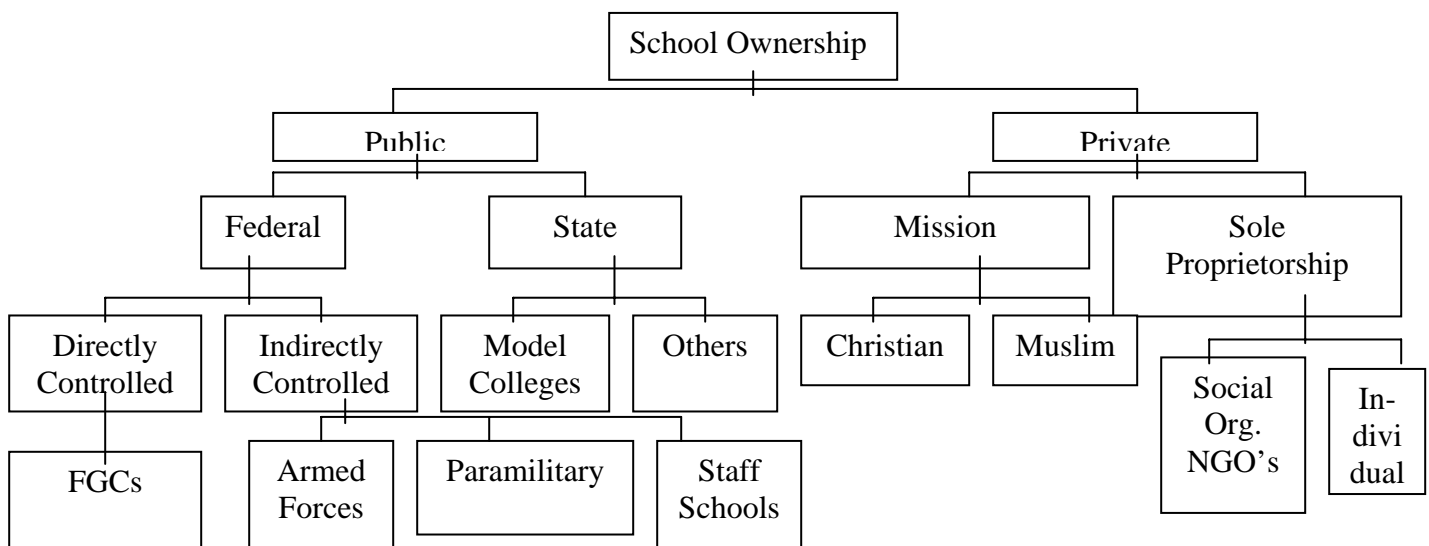
There have been contentions that school ownership is one factor that affects learning activities which in turn affect performance of students. School ownership can be viewed from two main perspectives: public and private. A public school is any school controlled and/or supported by the state or national government. A private school, on the other hand, is a school supported and controlled by religious/social organizations or other private groups/individuals.

There is a widely-held view that students who attend private schools perform better than those who attend public schools in different parts of the world. Both Adomako (2005) and Asante (2005) opined that performance of private schools in Ghana has continued to be far better than that of the public schools at the basic level. Sato (2005) argued that 'there is more chance of a better academic achievement in private schools' in Japan, just as Dalmia (2005) was of the view that public schools in the present day India were simply not up to the mark.

Similarly, available statistics on schools in the United States of America (USA) between 1993 and 2002 by the National Center for Education Statistics indicated that performance on standardized tests was higher in private schools than in public schools (CAPE, 2004). Among the reasons adduced for the relatively lower performance in public schools are ineffective supervision, low parental support and involvement, home factors and differences in the school climate including indiscipline and insecurity. Others are differences in infrastructural facilities, motivation of teachers, differences in enrolment, student-teacher ratio. Nevertheless, the belief that private schools are inherently better in academic performance than public schools has been questioned by the findings of Lubienski

and Lubienski (2005). They analysed standardised mathematics test scores in more than 1,300 public and private schools. They found that “if you look at kids of equal socio-economic class, the kids in public schools are outperforming the equivalent kids in private schools”. They therefore emphasized the importance of carefully considering socio-economic differences in comparison to school achievement. In a related study, Figlio and Stone (2006) found that errors of selection might affect the results obtained on different categories of schools. According to them, failing to correct adequately for selection leads to a systematic upward bias in the estimated treatment effect for a particular category of school, but a downward bias for others.

In Nigeria, school ownership can be diagrammatically represented as in figure 1.



**Figure 1:** *Categories of schools in terms of school ownership*

In the last decade, Nigeria has witnessed subtle but lasting changes in its educational system and management. One of these was the return of schools to their original owners. These owners include the missions and private proprietors. The return of schools thereafter witnessed proposal and implementation of changes, including advertisement on improved teaching facilities, well qualified teachers, improved teaching techniques and teacher-students interactions. These schools, along with those owned by individuals are believed to provide a better environment for studying than public schools and thus record a better

performance. There is however a paucity of evidence to support that belief. It therefore became imperative to undertake a study that would determine if private schools are really better than public schools in terms of teaching facilities and performance; which category of the public or private schools are actually affected; and what factors affect the relative performance of students in each category of schools. Consequently, the study investigated the effect of school ownership on performance of candidates in WASSCE.

## 2. **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

Students of private schools have a long-standing reputation for outperforming students of schools run by the government. Public opinion in Ghana, Japan and India as reported by Adomako (2005) and Asante (2005), Sato (2005) and Dalmia (2005) respectively support this view. In addition, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) as reported by CAPE (2004) has provided evidence on schools in the USA up till 2002 to support the view.

Based on the notion that private schools perform better than public schools, this study sought to investigate the extent to which school ownership determines candidates' performance in WASSCE in Nigeria. This is with a view to identifying the factors inherent in the two types which influence candidates' performance. However, this study was limited to students' performance in the WASSCE.

## 3. **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Attempts were made to answer the following questions:

- (1) (a) Do students in the private schools perform better than those in the public schools?  
(b) What is the relative standing of each sub-category of schools in terms of performance?
- (2) Are teachers in private schools better qualified and motivated than their counterparts in public schools?
- (3) Do private schools have more instructional facilities than the public schools?
- (4) Which type of school better engages students in instructional activities?
- (5) What other factors inherent in the category of school with the better performance could account for performance of students?

#### 4. **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

- (1) The type of school ownership does not have any significant effect on the performance of students.
- (2) Instructional facilities, years of teaching experience of teachers, productive engagement of students and teachers motivation do not have any significant effects on students' performance.
- (3) Access to instructional facilities does not have any significant relationship with the performance of students.

#### 5. **METHODOLOGY**

##### (1) **Research Design**

The cross-sectional design was employed. The design was chosen because it entails collection of both quantitative and qualitative data on more than one case with two or more variables.

##### (2) **Population**

The population involved senior secondary schools presenting candidates for the WASSCE in Nigeria. It included senior secondary school students, teachers and principals in the country.

##### (3) **Sample and Sampling Procedure**

A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select sixty (60) schools so as to ensure a representative sample. The states were clustered into six geo-political zones of the country. Two states were purposively selected from each of the six geo-political zones. The schools were thereafter stratified into public and private ones. Five schools were then randomly selected from each state comprising four public and one private school as follows: Federal Government College (FGC)/Armed forces/Paramilitary/staff school (1), State Model Colleges (1), Other State Schools (2) and Mission/Private Schools (1). In each school, twenty SS III students, and ten teachers teaching SS classes in different subjects were selected giving a total of 1200 students and 600 teachers. However 1178 and 574 questionnaires were retrieved from the students and teachers respectively.

A sample of seven WASSCE subjects was also selected. The subjects were chosen because of their linkage to physical/laboratory structures and instructional materials. In addition, the sample included all candidates in the sixty selected schools that sat the WASSCE in the subjects between 2002 and 2006. The Principal of each of the sixty (60) schools also assisted in providing relevant information sought through the School Facilities Inventory (SFI).

Table I presents the percentage distribution of sampled schools according to ownership as well as the distribution in the sub-categories of school.

**Table I: Ownership of School**

	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>S/N</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>76.7</b>
1	FGC/FGGC/Armed Forces Schools	11	18.3
2	State Model Schools	13	21.7
3	Other State Schools	22	36.7
<b>S/N</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>23.3</b>
1	Mission Schools	8	13.3
2	Other Private Schools	6	10
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

◆ *The initial ratio of Private to Public Schools was to be 4:1, but two of the schools earlier selected as public schools were found to have been handed over to their private owners, before the data collection exercise.*

Nearly 77% of the sampled schools was fully owned and managed by government (either at federal or at state levels), while the remaining 23% were owned and managed by private establishments (either as a mission or sole proprietorship).

(4) **Research Instruments**

The following research instruments were used:

- (a) Questionnaire for Teachers (TQ) to solicit information on teachers' qualification, experience and views on factors promoting or hindering students' performance in the different types of schools. The questions in the questionnaire included items on motivation of teachers, facilities and students productive engagement.

(b) Questionnaire for Students (SQ) to solicit information on their parents' socio-economic status, their perception of their school environment as well as factors influencing their learning and performance in their various schools. The questions in the questionnaire included items on motivation of teachers, facilities and students productive engagement.

Apart from the biographical section, a common feature of the questionnaire for teachers and students was the Likert-type items section consisting of structured statements with response categories from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

(c) An inventory tagged 'School Facilities Inventory' (SFI) for gathering information on facilities and ownership qualities.

The instruments were pilot tested in two public and two private schools in Lagos State in order to ascertain their psychometric properties. In the reliability analysis of the instruments, the Cronbach Alpha Coefficients of 0.62 for SQ and 0.78 for TQ, show:

(i) good interrelationship among the items that formed the instrument, hence the positive correlation.

(ii) that the results obtained using the instruments were reliable.

(5) **Data Collection**

The two sets of questionnaires were administered directly to the respondents by twelve research officers. The administration was done within five days. The results of all the candidates in the sixty (60) schools who sat the WASSCE between 2002 and 2006 in English Language, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Technical Drawing/Foods and Nutrition were collected from the Computer Services Division of WAEC, Lagos.



(6) **Analysis of Data**

The responses of the subjects to the questionnaire were coded with Strongly Disagree assigned 1, Disagree 2, Agree 3 and Strongly Agree 4. The inventory, on the other hand was coded thus: Available and Adequate - 3, Available but Inadequate - 2, Not Available - 1. The percentage credit pass for each of the schools was extracted from the statistics of performance for six different subjects that cut across board. The mean value was calculated for the six subjects to give an index of performance. The index of performance of each of the schools was arrived at using the following criteria:

V-Good - (70%-100%) → 4

Good - (40%-69%) → 3

Fair - (10%-39%) → 2

Poor - (Below 10%) → 1.

Responses to the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts. Correlation analysis and Chi-square test were also employed to ascertain the strength of association between school ownership and candidates' performance in WASSCE in Nigeria and if significant difference existed in the opinions of the respondents to the variables under study. Path-analysis was used to ascertain the level of the effects of instructional facilities, years of teaching experience of teachers, productive engagement of students and teachers' motivation on the performance of students.

6. **RESULTS**

The results of the study are presented in figures 2 to 7 (figures 2 to 6 are attached as appendix) and Tables II to IV. They are presented in the order of providing answers to the research questions and hypotheses raised in the study.

(1) (a) **Do students in the private schools perform better than those in the public schools?**

The index of performance for private schools was quite better than that of the public schools. About 85% of the private schools had a performance index of good and above as against 39% of the public schools. The superiority of private schools is confirmed by the result of chi-square test which is significant ( $\chi^2=11.36$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). This in essence shows that in terms of performance, students from the private schools were significantly better than those from the public schools.

(b) **What is the relative standing of each sub-category of schools in terms of performance?**

The relative standing of each of the sub-categories of schools under the general status of private and public schools. A close scrutiny reveals an interesting trend. The index of performance of the sole proprietorship was the highest under very good with a percentage index point of 50%, closely followed by that of the Federal Government Colleges with 45.5%, the mission schools with 25%, the state model schools with 23% and lastly the other state schools with a mere 4.5%. The differences in performance in the sub-categories are confirmed with the result of chi-square value of 49.79, which is significant at 0.05 level.

(2) **Are teachers in private schools better qualified and motivated than their counterparts in public schools?**

Majority of the teachers from both categories of schools are first degree holders and above, while the remaining are basically N.C.E holders. Though, the percentages for all levels of qualification differ. However, teachers in public schools are relatively better qualified than their counterparts in the private schools. The chi-square value of 1.701 however shows that there was no significant difference in the level of qualification of teachers in both categories of schools. This result is contrary to the years of teaching experience. More experienced teachers (11 years and above) abound in public schools (64.8%) than in the privately owned ones (54.53%). The result of chi-square test equally shows that there was a significant difference between the two categories of schools ( $\chi^2=18.407$ ;  $df = 4$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). This implies that public schools had more experienced teachers than the privately owned schools. Teachers (55.7%) in the private schools agreed that they were well motivated as against 41.5% of the teachers in the public schools.. The level of motivation significantly differs between the two categories of schools with the chi-square value of 9.23.

(3) **Do private schools have more instructional facilities than the public owned schools?**

In terms of facilities, 29.8% of the public schools falls within the very good category while 23.1% was recorded for the private schools. On the other hand, whereas 61.5% of the private schools had average instructional facilities, it was 57.4% of the public schools that had average facilities. The chi-square test of significance shows that there was no significant difference between the two categories in terms of facilities ( $\chi^2=23.48$ ;  $df = 27$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The state model schools and the federal government colleges (both public) had relatively better instructional facilities than the private schools, though the private schools had an edge over the other state schools in this area. In fact, 42.8% of other state schools had minimal or no instructional facilities. The chi-square test of significance ( $\chi^2=91.77$ ;  $df = 81$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) however shows that there was no significant difference in terms of the facilities existing as at the time of the study in the schools visited.

**(4) Which type of school better engages students in instructional activities?**

Over 60% respondents from the two categories of schools agreed that their students were productively engaged. However, the percentage response on productive engagement from the private school (71.4%) was better than that of the public schools which was 64.7%. However, Federal Government Colleges are at the forefront of productively engaging their students, followed by the private schools, the other states schools and eventually the state model schools. The chi-square test of significance ( $\chi^2=0.00$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) shows that there was no significant difference in the responses of the respondents at both levels.

**(5) What other factors inherent in the category of school with the better performance enhance the performance of students?**

A higher percentage of teachers in private school considered some other factors as enhancing performance in their schools. The factors in which their responses were significantly different from those of their counterparts in public schools are as presented in Table II.

**Table II: Other Variables Influencing Students' Performance as Perceived by Teachers**

S/N	FACTOR	PUBLIC		PRIVATE		$\chi^2$	df
		Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree		
1	Owner's Commitment	85.3%	14.7%	100%	0%	16.98**	3
2	Setting of Performance Standard	84%	16%	85.5%	14.5%	9.18**	3
3	Access to Instructional Facilities	50.4%	49.6%	52.8%	47.2%	18.98**	3

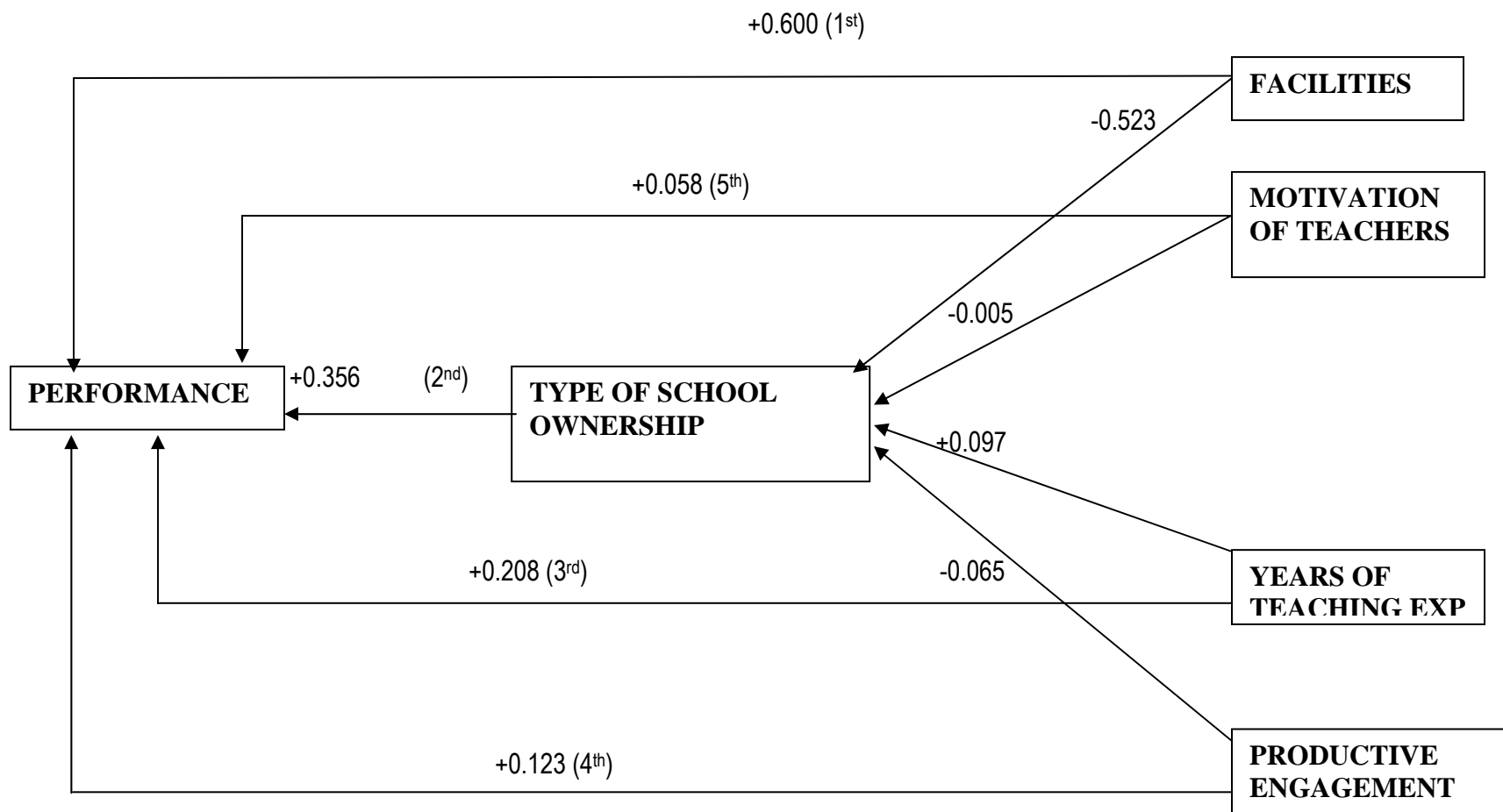
**\*\* Significant @  $p < 0.05$**

Table II shows that commitment of the school owners, setting of performance standards and access to instructional facilities were other factors that were perceived by a greater percentage of teachers in the private schools to significantly enhance the performance of their students.

**Research Hypotheses**

- (1) School ownership does not have any significant effect on the performance of students.
- (2) Instructional facilities, years of teaching experience of teachers, productive engagement of students and teachers motivation do not have any significant effects on students' performance.

Figure 7(a) depicts the paths and the associated coefficients or magnitudes of effects, while Table III shows the total, direct and indirect impacts of Instructional facilities, years of teaching experience of teachers, productive engagement of students and teachers motivation on students' performance.



\*\*R<sup>2</sup>=0.44 → Coefficient of Determination.

Figure 7(a) \*\* Path Coefficients of Instructional facilities, Years of Teaching Experience, Productive Engagement of Students, Motivation and School Ownership on Performance of Students.

Figure 7(a) shows the following:

- (a) School ownership has significant effect on the performance of students, this is accounted for by the path coefficient of **(0.356)** which was significant at  $\alpha=0.05$  at predicting performance.
- (b) Other variables within the ambit of the study in composite form like instructional facilities, productive engagement, years of teaching experience and motivation of teachers were seen to be effectively significant in predicting performance, though, this is at varying levels as depicted by their paths coefficients.
- (c)  **$R^2 = 0.44$** , is the coefficient of determination for the composite effects of instructional facilities, productive engagement, years of teaching experience and motivation of teachers on performance of students. This shows that **44%** of the total variation in performance of students is due to all the above mentioned variables combined together, while the remaining **56%** is likely due to extraneous variables not accounted for by the study.
- (d) In terms of magnitude of importance in their effects or prediction of performance of students, the following hierarchical order is assumed based on the magnitude of the path coefficients: **Instructional facilities (0.600)→ Years of Teaching Experience (0.208)→ Productive Engagement (0.123)→ Motivation of Teachers (0.058)**.

**Table III: Impact Analysis of Instructional facilities, Years of Teaching Experience, Productive Engagement of students and Motivation on students' performance**

Impacts	Direct Impact	Indirect Impact	Total Impact	Rank
<b>Instructional facilities</b>	0.60000	-0.00194	0.59807	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Motivation</b>	0.05800	-0.00241	0.05559	4 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Years of Teaching Experience</b>	0.20800	0.00359	0.21159	2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Productive Engagement</b>	0.12300	-0.00241	0.12059	3 <sup>rd</sup>

**\*\*All impacts are directed at performance as the dependent variable**

The impact analysis shows that Instructional facilities had the greatest impact on performance while motivation of teachers had the least impact.

- (3) **Ho:** Access to instructional facilities does not have any significant relationship with the performance of students.

Pearson Correlation analysis was used to ascertain the extent or the degree of relationship between availability and adequacy of instructional facilities and students' performance. Table IV presents the result:

**Table IV: Correlation Analysis**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Instructional Facilities</b>	60	7.76	1.91	0.42**	0.21
<b>Performance</b>	60	9.21	1.79		

**\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

The results in Table IV show the following:

- (i) a linear positive relationship ( $r = 0.42$ ) between availability and adequacy of instructional materials and students' performance, which is an indication of the fact that the more instructional facilities available in schools the better the performance in terms of the total achievable output.
- (ii)  $R^2 = 0.21$ , is the coefficient of determination, which shows that **21%** of the total variation in performance was due to availability of instructional facilities, while the remaining **79%** might be due to other extraneous factors.

## **7. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

- (1) (a) Students in private schools performed better than those in public Schools (Figure 2).  
(b) With regard to the relative performance of the sub-categories of schools, the sole proprietorship private schools ranked first, followed by the mission schools, the federal government colleges, the state model schools and lastly the other states schools (Figure 3).
- (2) Teachers in private schools were not better qualified but were better motivated than their counterparts in public schools. However, the latter had more experienced teachers than the privately owned schools.(Figures 4 a-c)
- (3) Generally, the public schools were found to be better equipped than the private schools. However, a further analysis shows that it was the federal government colleges and the state model schools among the public schools that were better equipped than the private schools. About 43% of the other

state schools did not have instructional facilities (Figure 5a & b).

- (4) Except in the Federal Colleges, students were said to be better engaged in instructional activities in the private schools than in the public schools. The level of productive engagement differed within the sub-categories of schools, starting with the federal government colleges, followed by the private schools, the state model schools and other state schools (Figure 6a and b).
- (5) Type of school ownership coupled with other variables like instructional facilities, years of teaching experience, motivation of teachers and productive engagements of students were found to have significant effects on the performance of students (Figure 7).
- (6) Access to instructional facilities was found to be positively related to candidates' performance (Table IV).
- (7) The following variables were perceived by teachers in private schools to significantly influence students' performance in their schools: Owner's Commitment, Setting of Performance Standard and Access to Instructional Facilities.

## 8. **DISCUSSION**

The general observable trend shows that private schools in this study performed better performers than the public schools. This trend is in accordance with widely-held view that private schools are better performers than the public schools as confirmed by Adomako (2005), Asante (2005), Sato (2005) and Dalmia (2005) in Ghana, Japan and India respectively.

However, a closer look at the sub-categories in terms of index of performance as depicted in Figure 3, shows an interesting pattern. It was not in all the cases that the private schools were better than all the public schools. Although the sole proprietorship ranked first in performance, a category of public school (the federal government colleges including the armed forces schools) outperformed the mission schools, which is private. It should however be noted that the relative better performance by the federal government colleges and some of the state model schools might be attributed to the Government's commitment to the schools in terms of proper funding and



monitoring. It will be recalled that owner's commitment has been found in this study to enhance performance of students.

This study has further shown that teachers' qualification and experience were not the sole determinants of good performance in schools. A great deal depends on how well the teachers are motivated. It has been shown that although the teachers in public schools were better qualified and more experienced, they were less motivated than those in private schools. It is therefore not surprising that the motivated teachers productively engaged their students and thus recorded a better performance.

It is interesting to note that the public schools were found to be better equipped than the private schools which were performing better. This could be explained from two perspectives. First, the lumping of public schools that were properly funded such as the Federal Government Colleges and the State Model Colleges with the poorly funded ones as other state schools might give a misleading result. Secondly, availability of facilities is by itself not as important as the effective use of such facilities. The latter argument has been confirmed by the significant difference in the responses of both categories of teachers to students' access to instructional facilities. Teachers in private schools perceived it to be better in their schools.

The study shows that school ownership and other related variables in the study like instructional facilities, years of teaching experience, motivation of teachers and productive engagements of students significantly contributed to the performance of students not only in private schools but in all the various categories of schools.

Moreover, instructional facilities have been found in this study to be positively related to the eventual outcome of the teaching-learning process. This is attested to by the 42% relationship in performance which was explained by facilities. Despite this, the fact still remains that there are other factors that must be taken into consideration when addressing the issue of performance at all levels of education.

By implication, ownership (whether public or private) is not the sole determinant of performance. Much more depends on the instructional facilities available and their effective use in the schools. Other factors perceived to enhance better performance in this study are the owner's commitment

and setting of performance standard. All these factors must therefore be considered in addressing the issue of candidates' performance in examinations.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study and the discussion thereof, the following are recommended:

- (1) Instructional facilities must be enhanced by improved funding.
- (2) The level of funding of the federal and state model schools should be extended to schools labeled in this study as 'other state schools'.
- (3) The Government should be more committed to the public schools as well as set and monitor performance standards in the schools.
- (3) Further should be carried out on in the area of supervision of teachers as it relates to the use of instructional facilities.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

This study investigated the ownership of schools as a determinant of candidates' performance with a view to identifying the factors inherent in the two types of ownership, which promote or hinder students' performance in the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE). Though the extent of agreement differs, majority of the respondents from the two categories agreed that provision and use of instructional facilities contributed in no small measure to students' performance in the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE). This was strengthened by the empirical evidence provided by the study, which confirmed a positive relationship between the two variables. Despite this, other factors such as teachers' motivation and the owners' commitment are to be considered when explaining the trend in students' performance.

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