

ASSESSMENT OF THE POST-LICENSING STATUS OF NURSERY/PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE AGEGE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

¹Animola Odunayo Victor (Ph.D) and ²Awosusi Kehinde Blessing

Phone Number: +2347032303535/ +2348066868614

Email: animolaov@fceiwo.edu.ng

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Abstract

This study examined the post-licensing stature of nursery and primary schools in Lagos State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study population comprised nursery and primary schools in the Agege Local Government Area of Lagos State. Two research instruments were used for data collection: Nursery School Post-licensing Status Questionnaire (NPSQ) and the Nursery School Quality of Infrastructure Assessment Scale (NPSIAS). The results showed that 9.6% of the schools were licensed between 1980 and 1999; 51.8% were licensed from year 2000 and above, and 38.6% are yet to be licensed. The results also showed that 6.0% of the schools had high level of enrollment; 42.2% had moderate level of enrollment, while 51.8% had low level of enrollment. A total of 36.1% of the schools are of high quality in terms of physical infrastructure; 62.7% of the schools are of medium quality; and 1.2% of the schools are of low quality. The results also showed that 77.1% of the schools were owned by private individual when compare with 17(20.5%) of the schools owned by religious organizations, while 2.4% of the schools were owned by tertiary institutions. The study concluded that there were variations in post-licensing timeline, level of enrollment, quality infrastructure, and school owners of nursery/primary schools in the Agege local government area of Lagos State.

Introduction

Nursery and primary education make the child ready for life beyond the four walls of the classroom. It enhances the skill sets of the child most especially regarding numeracy and literacy. Nursery and primary education exist as

¹ Integrated Science Department, Federal College of Education, Iwo

² Institute of Education, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

the bedrock of formal education. The evolution of nursery and primary schools in Nigeria is traceable to the primitive societies, where the onus was on families and communities to train a child, with the mother as the first teacher (Uduigwomen, 2019). The institutionalization of this stage of a child's development was far from the imagination, as communities had responsibilities and arrangements for educating their young ones as conscientious members of the societies. It has evolved to exist as a fundamental piece of the instructive framework across the globe (Kabay, Wolf & Yoshikawa, 2017). Advancement into other stages of education can only be guaranteed when an entity has successfully passed through the nursery and primary schools. Thus, nursery and primary school education is a premise upon which other educational stages are built. Again, the National Policy on Education (2013) declared education at this primary level as the apparatus for national development needed to enhance individual development for advanced learning as well as the holistic development of the society and fair access to education among the children. The role of nursery and primary education is to provide a basis for advanced education at higher levels to ensure that there is no problem at the subsequent level (Shofoye, 2015). Primary and nursery establishment must be approved by the government (Ogunyemi, 2019).

Licensing refers to the permission given to a particular body or organization to run or function (Hamilton & Saunderson, 2017). In the case of nursery and primary schools, licensing refers to the permission given to schools to operate after meeting the required standards and measures (Omotehinse & De Tomi, 2020; Yusuf, 2022). Hence, the process of establishing a nursery and primary schools runs the stages of ensuring that intending school owner submits a proposal form to start the school to the government through the Local Inspector Office of Education in the host Local Government. After the proposal is received, the location of the intending school would be cited with the aim of advertising to parents to bring their wards. In the process, other forms of registration such as taxation, water and public health, nursery school registration, primary school registration and many more will occur. This process can take a period of not less than 6 months. The National Policy on Education (2013) stipulated that for nursery and primary schools to operate, there must be professionals on the ground, such as teacher and, non-teaching staff, and many more. Teaching and learning resources like chairs, tables and more must be made available (Abah, 2020).

Based on the registration criteria, the initial registration and the annual renewal may also be a form of documentation and registration of premises for the running of the school. Therefore, this documentation and registration give legitimacy to running the school. The process or act of documentation and registration makes the school a licensed school, which is what this study has regarded as a license. By and large, the take-off of schools is not made at the same time, so also could their years of existence vary. This also showed that schools in the range may be older than one another. From the date of registration to the date of the present operation, the schools are expected to have attained some levels of strength that could be compared to those other schools that started at the same time with and could also outperform others relying on their experiences and other variables such as infrastructure, retention of staff, enrollment size, learning output and many more (Sukavejworakit, Aeknarajindawat, Raksakao & Pulphon, (2023).

Certain factors and requirements should be put in place for nursery and primary schools to operate (Stewart, Gambaro & Reader, 2024). In that context, all learners must be regarded as important, and there should be enough school resources to aid and encourage their learning processes. Similarly, all children must participate in active learning with the guide of the teachers and other structures that have been made available in the school. This would assist in the smooth transfer of the child from home to school. Learners must be made to participate in activities that are carried out in their school while they are supported by the school as a whole; giving children the support not to see their challenges as the final take of their life; making it possible for all children to know their rights and

civil responsibilities. Employing quality trained teachers and staff members is a necessity for learning; schools should provide the necessary school resources needed for learning; and, encouraging relationship between the school and community (Hooker & Denker, 2014).

In the same accord, these features imply that licensed nursery and primary schools are expected to be able to deliver quality education to learners. Henceforth, Centers (2019) noted that nursery and primary education are settings where learners' interests are developed through appropriate play-based curriculum. Therefore, nursery education is the process of grooming and developing children via the use of learner-centered teaching methods alongside friendly environment mechanisms. In the words of Morgan (2014), the aim of nursery and primary education that must be carried out by the educator must aim to build on this and facilitate learning in physical education. This suggests that teaching and educating learners should be holistic, using a thematic approach to education; using teaching methods developmentally appropriate for each child, taking account of social, physical, cognitive, and affective domains; allowing for spontaneity and child-centered activity; and discouraging overly depending on teacher intervention. This assertion agreed with the opinion of Sulyman (2022), that where nursery and primary schools are of good quality, the school will attract more enrollment and this could provide more revenue.

Some consequences for running an unlicensed school is that the government can close at any time. Observations have shown that this largely occurs in headquarter states that are closer to the ministry of education. In most cases, pupils in these schools might not be exposed to quality education as expected from a standard school. This reason, however why parents enroll their children in such school is due to affordable schools. Aina and Olanipekun, (2015) added that when schools are not properly licensed, educational quality and standards in such settings are questionable.

In Nigeria, like every other country in the world, every business must be legitimate, and the school business is not an exception to this reality. Especially nursery and primary school business, which serves as the provider of foundation to every form of learning. Sukavejworakit, Aeknarajindawat, Raksakao and Pulphon, (2023) observed high proliferation of nursery and primary schools in Nigeria; observations have further shown that Lagos state is not an exception from this list. Primary schools in Lagos, especially where there are large number of prospective children enrollment and prospective entrepreneurs. The prospect of a good business and provision of education as an essential social service by private individual from the scratch (nursery and primary schools) suggests that the school business could provide substantial amounts of revenue to the state government through taxation in the form of licensing of schools with some forms of payment of the outset and also through an annual revenue. After some periods of government approval, a nursery/primary school should have attained some high standards, such as high compliance with government-approved curriculum, quality infrastructure, and high enrollment. However, such schools may suffer low patronage or shut down. Therefore, the licensing stature of nursery/primary schools in the Agege Area of Lagos State requires investigation, hence this study.

Objective of the Study

This study was designed to assess the post-licensing status of nursery and primary schools in Lagos state. Therefore, the specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. Examine the variation in the post-licensing timeline (age of existence) of nursery/primary schools clustered around the Agege Area of Lagos State;
- ii. Determine the post-licensing status of the nursery/primary schools in terms of level of enrollment; and
- iii. Compare the post-licensing status of the schools by different categories of proprietorship (private individuals, religious organizations owned and tertiary institution owned) in the area.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- 1a what is the level of variation in the post-licensing time (age of existence) of Nursery/Primary schools in the Agege Local Government Area?
- 1b what is the proportion of schools that got licenses in the same period in each category of age of existence?
- 2 How strong is the enrollment level of Nursery/Primary schools in the Agege Local Government Area?
- b. How good are the Nursery/Primary schools in the Agege Local Government Area in terms of physical infrastructure?
3. What is the post-licensing status of the schools according to different categories of proprietorship (private individuals, religious organizations owned and tertiary institution owned) in the area?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study population comprised all nursery and primary schools in the Agege Area of Lagos State. The study sample was composed of 83 nursery and primary schools in Lagos state which were selected using a multistage sampling procedure. Lagos State has three senatorial districts. One senatorial district was selected from the state using simple random sampling technique. From the selected senatorial district, one Local Government Area (LGA) was selected using a simple random sampling technique. Nursery/primary schools clustered around the 11 Divisions (Wards) of the Agege Local Government Area (LGA) of Lagos State were used. One-third (4) of the 11 wards in the LGA were selected through a simple random sampling technique to form the sample frame for the study. The total study sample comprised 21 Nursery/Primary Schools (NPS) in each ward using the quota sampling technique. The first 21 schools found in each ward were selected using the accidental sampling technique. Two research instruments were employed to collect data for this study. The instrument is a self-designed structured questionnaire titled; “Nursery School Post-licensing Status Questionnaire (NPSQ)” and “Nursery School Quality of Infrastructure Assessment Scale (NPSIAS)”.

The NPSQ was used to gather information on the licensing timeline, level of enrollment, ranking status, and rate of learners’ transition to recognized secondary schools. This questionnaire had closed-ended questions, which allowed the respondents to choose from the options with the view to answer the research questions. The NPSQ was divided into five sections. Section A contained items on the socio-demographic status of the school. Sections B, C, D, and E comprised items with a four-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Agree” to “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree”. As well as “Always” to “Often” to “Sometimes” and “Never”. The NPSIAS was used to measure the quality of the infrastructures of the licensed schools used in the study. To determine the face and content validity of the instruments, the drafted copy of the questionnaires was given to the expert to read and after necessary corrections; before the researcher went to the field to administer the instruments. The validity study was conducted using Lawshe’s Content Validity Criterion. This was done to ascertain the strength of the validity of the instruments. Therefore, after assessment and scoring by the researcher, the instruments were subjected to Lawshe’s Content Validity Criterion computation. The validity values were 0.89 and 0.86, respectively. The collected data were analyzed using appropriate descriptive statistics of frequency counts, simple percentages, and necessary charts to add credence to the analysis.

4.1 Results

Research Question 1:

- a. What is the level of variation in the post-licensing time (age of existence) of Nursery/Primary schools in the Agege Local Government Area?

To answer this research question, item between 1-5years was scored 1; 6-10years was scored 2; 11-15years was scored 3; 16-20years was scored 4 and 21years above was scored 5. A histogram was used to present the level of

variation in the post-licensing time (age of existence) of Nursery/Primary schools, and the results are presented below.

TABLE 1: Frequency and percentage of variation in the post-licensing time in terms of the age of existence

Age of existence	Frequency	Percentage
1–5 years	21	25.3
6–10 years	18	21.7
11–15 years	21	25.3
16–20 years	9	10.8
21 years Above	14	16.9

N = 83

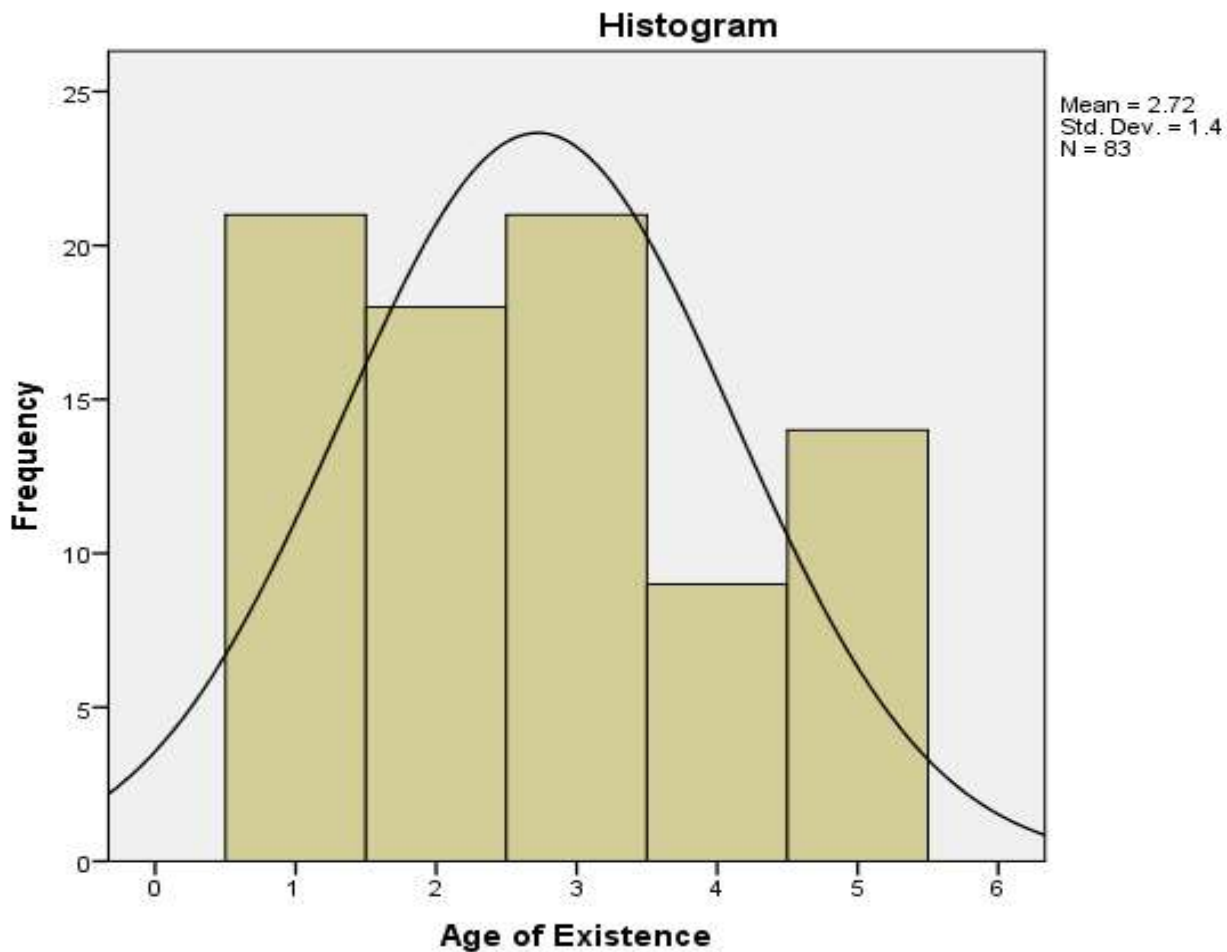


Figure 1: Histogram of the level of variation in post-licensing time in terms of age of existence of Nursery/Primary schools

Table 1 presents the students' level of variation in post-licensing time in terms of the age of the existence of nursery/primary schools. The results showed that 21(25.3%) had licenses between 1-5years; 18(21.7%) had licenses between 6-10years; 21(25.3%) had licenses between 11-15years; 9(10.8%) had licenses between 16-20years and about 14(16.9%) had licenses from 21years above. This can be inferred that the majority of the schools had been licensed with majority of the schools were licensed between 1 to 10years with 39(47.0%), follow by schools licensed between 11 to 20years with 30(36.1%).

b. What is the proportion of schools that got licenses in the same period in each category of age of existence?

TABLE 2: Frequency and percentage of schools licensed within the timeline category

Timeline in Years	Frequency	Percentage
1980–1999	8	9.6
2000 Above	43	51.8
Not Yet	32	38.6

N = 83

Table 2 shows the proportion of schools that got licenses in the same period in the category of age of existence. The results showed that 8(9.6%) of the schools got licensed between year 1980 to 1999; 43(51.8%) of the schools got licensed from the year 2000 above while 32(38.6%) of the schools were yet to be licensed.

Research Question Two: How strong is the enrollment level of nursery/primary schools in the Agege Local Government Area?

Items three of the questionnaire gathered information on enrollment in different classes. 1-10 pupils on the scale were scored 1, 11-20 pupils were scored 2, 21-30 pupils were scored 3, and 31 above were scored 4. Items not responded to were scored 0. The maximum score obtainable by each respondent was 36. The respondents' scores were categorized into "High Level of Enrollment", Moderate Level of Enrollment" and "Low Level of Enrollment". This was done such that scores below 12.0 were categorized as "Low Level of Enrollment", those that the scored is within 12 and 24 were categorized as "Moderate Level of Enrollment" while those that scored above 24 were categorized as "High Level of Enrollment".

TABLE 3: Frequency and percentage of students' enrollment level of nursery/primary schools in the Agege local government

Level of Enrollment	Frequency	Percentage
High Enrollment Level	5	6.0
Moderate Enrollment Level	35	42.2
Low Enrollment Level	43	51.8

N = 83

Table 3 shows how strong the level of enrollment of nursery/primary schools in the Agege Local Government Area. From the table 5(6.0%) of the schools had a high level of enrollment; 35(42.2%) of the schools had moderate level of enrollment and 43(51.8%) of the schools had low level of enrollment.

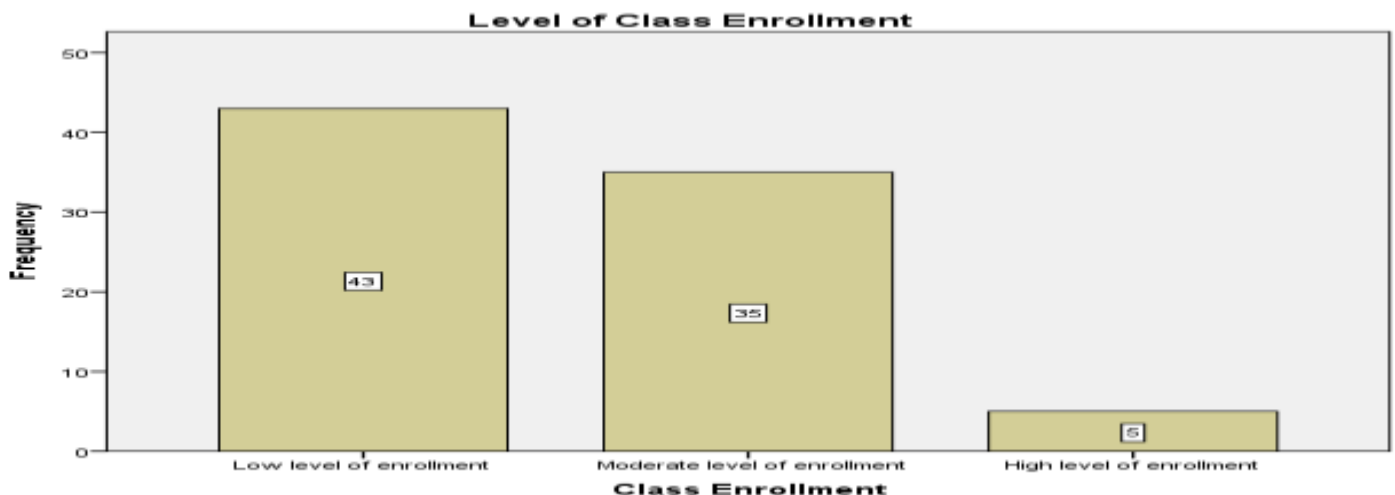
**Figure 2:** Bar chart of enrollment level

Figure 2 shows the enrollment level of nursery/primary schools in the Agege Local Government Area. From the figure above, 5(6.0%) of the schools had a high level of enrollment; 35(42.2%) of the schools had moderate level of enrollment and 43(51.8%) of the schools had low level of enrollment.

b. How good are the nursery/primary schools in the Agege Local Government Area in terms of physical infrastructure?

Part B of the questionnaire gathered information on the physical infrastructure of the schools. The maximum score obtainable by each respondent was 54. The respondents' scores categorized into "High", "Medium" and "Low". This was done such that those that scored below 18.0 were categorized as "Low Quality", those that the scored is within 18 and 36 were categorized as "Medium Quality" while those that scored above 36 were categorized as "High Quality". The results are presented in the table below.

TABLE 4

Frequency and percentage of infrastructure quality in nursery/primary schools in the Agege local government

Quality of the Infrastructure	Frequency	Percentage
High Quality	30	36.1
Medium Quality	52	62.7
Low Quality	1	1.2

N = 83

Table 4 shows the quality of nursery/primary schools in the Agege local government area in terms of physical infrastructure. From the table, 30(36.1%) of the schools are of high quality in terms of physical infrastructure, 52(62.7%) of the schools are of medium quality in terms of physical infrastructure while 1(1.2%) of the schools are of low quality in terms of physical infrastructure.

3. What is the post-licensing status of the schools according to different categories of proprietorship (private individuals, religious organizations owned and tertiary institution owned) in the area?

Item six of the questionnaire gathered information on the post-licensing status of schools by different proprietorship categories in the Agege local government area. The results are presented in the Table 5.

TABLE 5: Frequency and percentage of post-licensing status of the schools by different categories of proprietorship

Categories of Proprietorship	Frequency	Percentage
Private Individual	64	77.1
Religious Organizations	17	20.5
Tertiary Institutions	2	2.4

N = 83

Table 5 shows the post-licensing status of the schools by different categories of proprietorship (private individuals, religious organizations owned and tertiary institution owned) in the Agege local government area. From the table, 64(77.1%) of the schools were owned by private individual when compare with 17(20.5%) were owned by religious organizations. Also, 2(2.4%) of the schools owned by tertiary institutions.

Discussion of the Findings

The results showed that most schools had been licensed within different timelines in terms of the age of existence of nursery/primary schools clustered around the Agege area of Lagos State. The findings did not corroborate those of Tooley, Dixon, and Olaniyan (2005), who conducted a census and survey of schools in selected poor areas of

Lagos State and, explored the nature and extent of private education and, compared inputs to public and private schooling. The findings showed that, about (71%) of schools were private, with more unregistered private schools than government and registered private schools. The findings is not consistent with Abdul-Hamid, Baum, Lusk-Stover, and Wesley (2016), who reported that the majority of private schools in the Ajeromi Ifelodun area in Lagos state are not approved by the government. Among the 726 schools surveyed in the local government area, only 11 percent were officially registered/approved. This was attributed to the arduous registration criteria that many small providers find difficult to meet.

Additionally, the results showed that the level of enrollment of nursery/primary schools in the Agege local government area is relatively moderate. The findings did not agree with those of Tooley, Dixon, and Olaniyan (2005), who estimated that 33% of school children were enrolled in private unregistered schools and, 75% in private schools in general. The findings are in variance with Nasuna (2022), who reported that in Mbarara City that in one school in 2021 the expected enrollment was 3,000, the enrollment was much higher at 4011. On the other hand, while the expected number of pupils in another school was 800, the school had only 268 pupils. In another school, while the expected number was 480 pupils, the school had 224 pupils. The findings substantiated National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) that the number of children who enrolled in public early childhood education dropped from 4,672,908 in 2015 to 2,694,787 in 2016. Enrollment in private early childhood education also decreased from 2,076,420 in 2015 to 1,457,461 in 2016. Lagos State recorded 134,578 children in public preschools in 2014 but only 90,640 in 2015 and 69,240 in 2016 up till date. The result is consistent with the World Bank's collection of development indicators (2023), which reported that school enrollment, primary (% gross) in Nigeria was reported at 85.73 % in 2019.

Moreover, the results showed that the quality of physical infrastructure in Nursery/Primary schools in the Agege Local Government Area is at medium level. The findings are in line with those of Shuaibu (2016), who stated that the infrastructural facilities were available but not adequate, resulting in overcrowded classrooms in some schools, while most of the infrastructural facilities were dilapidated in other schools. This finding concurs with those of previous scholars. For instance, Guardino and Antia (2012) established that classroom ambient conditions, spatial layout, and functionality significantly enhanced cognitive and affective evaluations with the course affecting enrollment. Similarly, Khan et al. (2017) reported that proper physical and educational facilities and a favorable school environment are related to school enrollment. Limaye (2016) concurred that quality infrastructure and facilities led to children's stay in school. Moreover, Mugizi (2021) reported that physical infrastructure, including lecture rooms, was a significant positive predictor of students' engagement. In same the vein, Elie and Andala (2021) revealed that school physical infrastructures, such as classrooms, were significantly positively related to pupils' enrollment.

Finally, the results showed that most schools in the Agege Local Government area were owned by private individuals. The findings are not consistent with the report from Statista (2023), which reported that in the school year 2018/2019, there were approximately 117 thousand elementary schools in Nigeria. In terms of ownership, 62 thousand were public and 55 thousand were private.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the majority of the schools had been licensed within a different timeline in terms of age of existence, and the level of enrollment of nursery/primary schools in the Agege Local Government Area is relatively moderate. Furthermore, the results revealed that the quality of physical infrastructure in nursery/primary schools is at a medium level, and the ranking strength of nursery/primary schools is at a medium level. Finally, the results showed that most schools in the Agege Local Government area were owned by private individuals.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of findings of this study, it is hereby recommended that;

1. Physical and service infrastructures should be improved in order to enable the schools attract the required number of pupils.
2. The government should increase the information on school quality provided to parents.
3. Government inspections should outline improvement priorities, which should be closely linked to school improvement plans. Strengthening the role of inspectors would help ensure that school action and improvement plans are submitted and enacted to facilitate change at the school level.

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