

**FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROLIFERATION OF
PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND ITS INFLUENCE
ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF SCIENCE
SUBJECTS IN DELTA STATE**

*Assoc. Prof. T. E. Agboghoroma, Ph.D.
Department of Curriculum and Integrated Science
Delta State University, Abraka
Delta State.*

and

*Faith Nneka Okose
College of Education Demonstration Secondary School, Warri,
Delta State.*

Abstract

Secondary Education is aimed at promoting a progressive and united Nigeria. It is expected to function as a preparation for life and for higher education. Nigeria's ability to realize her vision of becoming one of the largest twenty economies in the world by the year 2020 is largely dependent on the capacity to transform her population into highly skilled and competent citizens capable of competing globally. The education sector is consequently special to the actualization of the current national and global policy objectives. Nigeria wants to use education as a tool for fostering development of all Nigeria's citizens to their full potentials in the promotion of a strong, democratic, egalitarian, prosperous, indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God. Findings show that Public secondary schools alone cannot meet the educational needs of the teeming population of the country. This is because many public secondary schools in Nigeria are characterized by inadequacy of infrastructure and personnel, declining standard, prevalent of cultism, examination malpractices and maladministration. The government should ensure that private schools meet up with the necessary standard before approval. This will help to reduce quacks.

Keywords: Factors, Proliferation, Private, Secondary Schools, Influence, Teaching, Learning and Science Subjects

Over ten years now, it has been alleged that there is a considerable decline in the learning of Science Subjects at the secondary school level of education in Nigeria. As a result, various reasons have been attributed to the poor learning mastery, use and low performance of students in Science Subjects in both internal and external examinations.

The poor teaching and learning of Science Subjects in public schools across the country of Nigeria is an issue that needs urgent attention. In a bid to addressing this problem, several privately owned schools sprang up in the early 1990. Although, this is without some limitations on the part of the private schools as many of them are being considered as unregistered and mush rooms. These private schools are in greater proportion compared to their public school counterpart. They are found in virtually every nook and cranny of Delta State. Many of them are yet to secure approval from the ministry of education. Yet they operate unhindered. This research is set out to determine the extent to which proliferation of private secondary schools has affected the teaching and learning of Science Subjects in Delta State.

Private Schools Defined

Private schools are classified as independent schools or non-state schools. They are not administered by local, state or national governments; thus, they retain the right to employ qualified Science Subjects teachers to handle the subject effectively and efficiently for the good of their students. Private schools are funded in whole or in part by charging their students tuition, rather than relying on mandatory taxation through public (government) funding; at some private schools students may be able to get a scholarship, which makes the cost cheaper, depending on a talent the student may have e.g. sport scholarship, art scholarship, academic scholarship etc. Private schools are typically more expensive than their public counterparts.

Nigeria's ability to realize her vision of becoming one of the largest twenty economies in the world by the year 2020 is largely dependent on the capacity to transform her population into highly skilled and competent citizens capable of competing globally. The education sector is consequently special to the actualization of the current national and global policy objectives. Nigeria wants to use education as a tool for fostering development of all Nigeria's citizens to their full potentials in the promotion of a strong, democratic, egalitarian, prosperous, indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God.

The broad objectives of secondary schools (which stand as one of the foundations of education) are to prepare the individuals for useful living with the society and for higher education (FRN, 2004).

Public secondary schools alone cannot meet the educational needs of the teeming population of the country. This is because many public secondary schools in Nigeria are characterized by inadequacy of infrastructure and personnel, declining standard, prevalence of cultism, examination malpractices and maladministration. To achieve the objectives of secondary education as highlighted in National Policy on

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Education (2004), government recognized that education is an expensive social service that requires adequate financial provisions from all tiers of government, private sector, communities, individuals and other organizations for successful implementation of education programmes.

Secondary Education in Nigeria is also aimed at promoting a progressive and united Nigeria. It is expected to function as a preparation for life and for higher education. Secondary education in Nigeria is one of the levels of education for the achievement of the philosophy and objectives of Nigerian Education as highlighted in the National Policy on Education (2004). The objectives include: a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy and a land of bright and full opportunity for all citizens.

To achieve these objectives, the policy stated that the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented towards inculcating the values among others: respect for the dignity of labour, and shared responsibility of the common good of the society. Government recognized the importance of education in the realization of the above five important objectives of education and so asks for the cooperation of all other agencies concerned with education. This, the policy believed will foster the much needed unity in Nigeria. The policy is not only confident that education is the greatest force that can bring about redress in these areas but also, the greatest investment that the nation can make for quick development of its economic, political, sociological and human resources.

However, there seems to be a persistent and wide-spread loss of confidence in public educational institutions hence the proliferation of private schools. As Ajayi (2010) noted, it is still observed that public education today has been faced with various challenges ranging from mismanagement of allocated resources, to falling academic standards. Other important reasons for loss of confidence in our educational system include poor planning and consistent lack of investment in the education system. This had led to a near collapse of the system leaving the education infrastructure in an appalling and dilapidated state.

A casual visit to any public school in Nigeria would reveal the extent to which these educational institutions have decayed. Educational facilities at all levels are in a terrible shape; schools are littered with battered structures; quacks are being engaged to teach the all important subject – English language, there is what one may call worn out equipment (where they are available at all); junk and unserviceable vehicles, raggedy classroom buildings, over-crowded classrooms, inadequate manpower in quantity and quality, instability in the academic calendar owing to strikes, very low teacher (staff) morale due to poor remuneration and working conditions. All these have paved way for the wide and high spread of private schools in Delta State .

With the public educational infrastructure in this condition (and very little is being done to remedy the situation) parents who are concerned about giving their wards the best available educational options will obviously be looking for viable alternatives and this, it seems, is manifestly the case in Nigeria. Many parents seem to

be looking for quality education at whatever cost, economically and otherwise and regardless of who is providing it. Therefore, given the level of decay and the pervasive conditions of ineptitude and lack of professionalism in the public schools, many parents feel let down; but they cannot give up their dream of giving their children the best in terms of education. This is where the private educational institutions come in.

Secondary Education in Nigeria

Secondary education level has experienced a tremendous development over the past five decades in terms of number and enrolments. The grammar and comprehensive high schools gave way to the 6-year junior and senior secondary school system all over the country. The boost in enrolment has necessitated the establishment of new private schools in both rural and urban areas. School size has grown beyond elastic limit to the extent that some schools have more than 2000 students and more than 100 teachers with fewer qualified Science Subjects teachers.

The school attendance shift system of morning and afternoon has given way to large compounds schools with several buildings. Inadequate provision of appropriate instructional materials particularly for the teaching and learning of Science Subjects continues to militate against quality standards as expected of secondary schools to deliver. Currently the 6-3-3-4 education system has also been reviewed in such a way that junior secondary segment is now part of the UBE scheme.

Although, in public schools when compared with private schools, there are schools without classrooms, classroom without chairs and tables, science schools without laboratories, and laboratories without chemicals, schools without libraries and libraries without up-to-date books, most of their libraries are stocked with Science Subjects journals, magazines and text books older than the parents of the readers. In such a situation, can children acquire appropriate skills or knowledge in English language? The answer is basically no.

In public schools, Science Subjects teachers are largely neglected, despised, degraded, belittled, looked upon with pity and contempt and often denied their salaries. This treatment causes frequent strike actions by such teachers. The utmost neglect of public schools leads to the proliferation of private secondary schools. The clarion call on individuals to help finance education has led to the proliferation of private secondary schools in Nigeria, for the reason above lots of private secondary schools and primary schools have been established in so many places.

The proliferation of private secondary schools has not helped matters as many of them engage the services of ill-trained Science Subjects teachers to teach this all important subject. The sharp decline in the performance of students in Science Subjects in external examination such as SSCE OR NECO and the inability of so many secondary school leavers to make good use of Science Subjects during and after graduation even when they attended private schools has become worrisome, it is assumed that if this problem is left unattended to, many private schools will keep on producing semi-illiterate persons with little or no knowledge of Science Subjects and

hence the need to determine the factors responsible for the proliferation of private secondary schools and how it has affected the teaching and learning of Science Subjects in Delta State with a bid to proffering solutions to identified problems.

Several studies have been conducted on the impact of private secondary education on the academic achievement of the students but not much study has been carried out on the factors responsible for the proliferation of private secondary schools and its effects on the teaching and learning of Science Subjects in Delta State. Hence the need for this study, some of these studies reported that private schools contribute immensely to the development of secondary education in Nigeria, while others claimed otherwise.

Abort (2011) revealed in his study that students who attended private primary schools performed better in Mathematics and Science Subjects (at the junior secondary school) than those who attended public primary schools. He went further to conclude that his findings seemed to discredit the standard of education in public schools since their products could not compete favorably with the products of the private schools” (Adebayo, 2009).

Corroborating Agbada (2012) in his study of private schools serving the poor in low-income countries discovered that higher achievement is attained in private unaided than in government schools. Children in private unaided schools usually perform better in terms of raw scores than do children in government schools in three curriculum subjects, including mathematics and English. Moreover, private unaided schools achieve these results at between half and a quarter of the per pupil teacher cost. Although teachers are paid considerably less in private unaided schools, they are not any less satisfied than their government school counterparts.

In the study entitled “Teachers perception of private schools contribution to educational development in Ijebu North Local Government Areas of Ogun State, Nigeria”, Edward (2009) discovered among other things that private schools were contributing significantly to educational development in the Local Government Areas. The performance could however be further enhanced if they are adequately monitored and supervised by the government. To him, private schools have an edge over public schools and that academic performance in private schools is better than that of public schools. This could be attributed to the incessant strike actions usually embarked upon by the public school teachers. Strike action by staff is completely strange to private schools.

Emarievbe (2011) concluded that private schools have been playing prominent roles in the development of Nigerian education industry. As a result they should be protected by law so that no government will decide in future to seize privately owned schools as it happened in the early 1970s. Some private schools have facilities and amenities which surpass those found at many public colleges and universities. Some of them have libraries, laboratories and athletic facilities which are at par with those at public secondary schools. Some private schools also offer academic and sports programs which make full use of all those resources. In the area of curriculum, private

schools may generate their own curriculum and may offer more specialized courses, perhaps even taking students on extended field trips that cover one or more of the topics being focused on.

Finacchino (2014) also discovered in their research that better pupil-teacher ratios prevail in private unaided than in government schools. Pupil-teacher ratios in private schools are usually about half those in government schools. Consequently, more teaching is occurring in private than in government schools. In all cases, when researchers called unannounced in classrooms, there was a significantly higher level of teaching going on in private unaided schools than in government schools. In the areas of infrastructure and staff commitment. Also, government schools have considerably higher levels of financial resources than do their private school counterparts. In general, the average monthly teacher salary in a government school is higher than in private school.

Difference between Private and Public Schools

There are significant differences between private and public schools in the following ways:

1. Financial Situation: Most public schools are financed by the government, payment of teacher's salary and other financial activities are made by the government. But in private schools which are financed by private individuals or organization, everything is properly managed by the owner.
2. In private schools, all educational facilities to help the students to develop in all ramifications are provided by proprietors/proprietress, but in public schools everything is provided by the government.
3. The ratio of student to teacher in public schools is high, hence it is owned by the government and it attracts little or no cost by the student. While in private schools the ratio of student to teacher is low because every student have their financial obligation borne by them.
4. Public school teacher do go on strike while private school teachers do not go on strike because their salary is paid from fees collected by the proprietor(s) as school fees.
5. All public school teachers are members of Nigeria Union of Teachers while private school teachers do not belong.

The Factors Responsible for the Proliferation of Private Secondary Schools

The alarming rate at which private schools are being established has not affected the existence of the public schools in our society Lado (2007). There are likely certain factors responsible for the growth of private schools in Warri South Local Government Area. These are as follows:

- * Falling standards of education in the public schools: The outcry of the fallen standards of education which most observers attribute to poor school supervision and

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co-ordination of public schools which make most parents to look for alternatives to public schools. (Schools that were established and funded by the government).

* **Infrastructural facilities:** Most private schools have better infrastructural facilities that public schools do not have in terms of basic infrastructures like classrooms. They have good classrooms that are able to protect the learners from rain and sun unlike most of the public schools' classrooms and staff rooms without roofs. When the rain falls, it falls on them and when the sun shines, it shines on them. Also facilities such as teaching aids and laboratory equipments are more in private schools when compared to public schools.

* **Performance of students:** Students and pupils from private school perform better than those in the public school in some aspects. The performance might be said to be dependent on ability, circumstances and effort. What induces students to expect efforts on learning are interest, aspiration and study attitude. Likoko and Jucius (2010) are of the opinion that it is the academic performance of a child that determines whether he or she has benefited from learning in school or not. The academic performance will also determines whether he or she can proceed from one level to another.

* **Supervision:** Supervision is a very important factor in the school. Supervision may be viewed as a social relation which exists between super ordinate and subordinates to improve their performance in order to achieve the goals of the organization. Supervision is one of the strategies for improving the quality of the school and ensuring that educational objectives are achieved. Supervision is concerned with the efficient and effective utilization of school buildings and facilities, instructional materials and teacher. There is adequate supervision in the private schools and this has contributed to the improvement of instructional programmes, teaching methods, learning outcomes and achievement of educational goals.

* **Discipline:** The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2005) defined discipline as the training of the mind and character aimed at producing self control and obedience. From this definition, a disciplined person must have self control and be obedient to constituted authorities. The teachers in private schools are disciplined. They arrive at school early before the pupils, there is high sense of duty on the part of the teachers. The pupils in the private school are well dressed, well behaved and are obedient to the laws of the school. Taking our immediate environment into consideration you are not likely to find pupils/students of private schools getting to school at 9.00am as the second period of the day would have started in most private schools. This is not usually the case in public schools. Most students and teachers arrive school late. Sometimes as late as 9.00 or 10.00am in the morning.

* **Population:** In Delta State, the emergence of the petroleum oil market have given rise to the increasing population of its citizens in the area. The public schools cannot adequately cater for the increasing population of school age children in Delta State. Hence private schools are on the increase so as to complement the educational

needs of the population in Delta State. The job opportunities in Delta State made it easier for parents to pay the huge sums of money as school fees for their children.

The Problems Confronting Private Schools in Nigeria

Private schools in Delta State are faced with the following problems;

* **Constraint of land space**

Most private schools in Delta State are faced with the above mentioned problem. An ideal school ought to possess the following facilities and adequate land space for them to operate. A good school should have a fairly level, fertile land and it should be located in an easily accessible road. Two hectares of land is sufficient for a school and a playing field with modern recreational facilities. In order to enhance the pupils/students with the prospects of Agriculture, there should be a school garden for them to grow crops and good practical knowledge of agriculture. Land space is therefore a serious problem to most private schools in Delta State (Oguntimehi and Solerin, 2010).

* **Problem of quacks**

According to Oguntimehi and Okoye (2010), today, small rooms, a room and parlor are being used as school in some private schools. In it you have all the classes. In this case, the learning environment which is expected to be conducive for learning has failed. In some cases these rooms have no windows for ventilation and the pupils/students are bound to suffer suffocation and this influences their level of concentration during learning in science lesson.

In order to gain favour from parents, most of these private schools promote pupils to the next class without adequate assessment of the academic performance and ability of the child. Hence, most times promotions do not depend on academic performance in these private schools. In a situation where a child failed, such a child will be promoted to the next class for the fear not to allow the child to repeat that class and to prevent the parents from taking the child from the school. So for them not to lose their pupils/students they have to promote the pupils/students. This is a serious problem which could lead to producing bulk of illiterates who cannot even read and write.

* **Most of these private schools are not approved**

Certainly, most private schools are not approved by the government before they are established. Most private school owners are not properly oriented about the pros and cons of establishing a school. They engage in this business because they believe that schools are lucrative businesses and due to the high level of corruption and lack of monitoring teams from education authorities, schools are established by anybody. Sometimes even when government officials disapproves a particular school, these private school owners lobby their way through (Shaidu, 2010).

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* Most professional teachers are not retained
Private schools do not retain most of their professional teachers because of poor payment. As a result, most of them are going out while others are coming in. For example most private school owners pay B.Sc. holder in Science Subject fifteen to twenty thousand naira as monthly salaries which is not up to the minimum wage, thereby making them to look for higher paid jobs. In addition to this, there are no good welfare packages to motivate them to stay on the job. Examples of welfare package includes transportation allowance, awards for best performing teacher, salaries during maternity leave and Christmas bonuses.

Conclusion

Conclusively, the paper has revealed without equivocation that factors responsible for the growth of private schools over public schools in Delta State are: :

- i. Existence of inadequate infrastructural facilities in public secondary schools.
- ii. The good relationship between parents and teachers in private schools affect teaching of the sciences.
- iii. The performance of pupils/students in the private schools
- iv. Discipline in private schools which is on the high rate affects the teaching of the sciences.
- v. Provision of self employment and employment. Furthermore, the standard of private schools has brought competition into the public schools hence it has helped to raise the standard of education in Delta State.

Recommendation

With the above write up, the researcher then recommends some remedies which might help to improve both private and public schools.

1. The government should ensure that private schools meet up with the necessary standards before approval. This will help to reduce quacks.
2. Parents/guardians should play their roles effectively by paying their wards school fees as and when due in order to maintain and purchase all necessary equipment for the running of the school.
3. An adequate and regular supervision and co-ordination should be carried out by the government officials to check the schools.
4. The various levels of government, voluntary organizations and individuals should come to the aid of these schools that are performing below expectation.

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