
Commercialization of Basic Education in Nigeria: Causes and Consequences

By

CHIOMA ORIAKU

Mathematics Department,
Aminu Saleh College of Education Azare
Bauchi State

AHMED ABDULLAHI ZUWAIRA

Foundations Department,
Aminu Saleh College of Education Azare
Bauchi State

And

MULIKAT AGBOOLA

Integrated Science Department,
Aminu Saleh College of Education Azare
Bauchi State

Abstract

This study was carried out to investigate the causes and consequences of commercialization of basic education in Nigeria. Two research questions were posed in line with the purpose of the study. The population of the study consists of all the 34 primary schools and 32 secondary schools in Azare. A sample of 4 primary schools and 4 secondary schools was randomly drawn from the population out of which 2 are government owned and 2 are privately owned. A researcher made questionnaire titled 'Causes and Consequences of Commercialization of Education in Nigeria' was administered to the school heads to capture the inventory of available resources. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Findings of the study revealed that the major cause of commercialization of basic education in Nigeria is the apparent inadequate state of infrastructure and basic facilities in the public schools and one of the consequences is that basic education is made expensive

for majority of the populace. The study recommended that Government should release adequate funds to public schools for provision and maintenance of basic infrastructure and other facilities.

Key words: commercialization, privatization, basic education.

Education can be defined as the process of educating or teaching. To educate means to develop the knowledge, skill, or character of an individual or individuals. The purpose of education is to develop the knowledge, skill, or character of students. Ugwu (2015), defines education as the instrument used for the development of human beings in the cognitive, affective, psychomotor and psycho productive domains. This is achieved through the process of teaching and learning.

Achigaonye (2014), on the other hand, described education as the process of training and development of mental potentials, physical knowledge, skills and character of individuals by formal and informal schooling. Education, in this paper, shall focus on formal education as being carried out in the process of teaching and learning, at the primary and secondary school levels.

Definition of Terms

Privatization of schools can be described as the development of quasi-markets through institutional and policy structures that favour parental choice, school autonomy and venture philanthropy, often with the state regulating for public accountability (Hogan, A. and Thompson, G., 2017). Furthermore, Ball and Youdell (2008) suggested that privatization in education is the process in which ideas, techniques, and practices are imported from the private sector to make the public sector more business-like, or that in which public services are opened to private sector participation where the private sector designs, manages, or delivers aspects of public education.

While private education refers to a type of education, privatization is a process that can be defined as ‘the transfer of activities, assets and responsibilities from government/public institutions and organizations to private individuals and agencies’ (Belfield and Levin, 2002). The issue of privatization is also connected to parents’ freedom to choose their children’s education.

Commercialization of education is the process by which the education sector is increasingly being opened up to profit-making and trade by private, commercial interests that conceptualize the learner as a consumer and education as a consumer good (Macpherson, Robertson and Walford, 2014). In this context, privatized and commercialized education can have dreadful consequences on the social development of a country if it is not duly regulated, monitored and if private entities cannot be found accountable in case of violations of the right to education.

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Commercialization of education could also include every activity that the private sector undertakes in education institutions such as maintenance, infrastructure, building, provision of textbooks and materials.

In the context of this paper, public schools shall refer to those schools which are owned and managed by a public education authority or agency, be it at the federal, state or local government levels. Whereas, private schools shall refer to those schools that are owned, controlled and managed by any type of private entity, a non-government organization, such as a church, a trade union or a private institution, associations or businesses.

Article 6 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: ‘Everyone has a right to education. Education shall be free in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory’ Education is a fundamental human right upon which the development of any society or nation is based. While the provision of education for citizenry of any nation, whether free or not ought to be the responsibility of the state, Education can also be provided by non-state actors, including religious institutions, non-governmental organizations, community-based groups, trusts, enterprises and individual proprietors.

The National Policy on Education clearly states that Government welcomes contributions of voluntary agencies, communities and private individuals in the establishment and management of primary schools along side, those provided by states and local Governments as long as they meet the minimum standards laid down by the Federal Government’ (FGN, 2013). It is via the above provision that the Nigerian government delegated the management and funding of primary and secondary schools into the hands of private individuals and other non- governmental bodies.

Problem of the Study

At present free basic education is being implemented in some parts of Nigeria. This implies that that students are not expected to pay school fees in government owned primary and secondary schools. Unfortunately, this has resulted in students being exposed to half education. (Thovoetin,2012).This can be attributed to several factors ranging from lack of adequate facilities and manpower on one hand to ineptitude of the available staff on the other hand. Some of these schools cannot boast of library, laboratories, computers and other facilities necessary for the attainment of basic qualitative education. In some other schools, most buildings are in dilapidated conditions, while students receive lessons seated on the bare floor. The overall effect of all these is that the standard of education keeps falling. Thus, a remarkable number of children in Nigeria are at risk of half education, thereby creating the dilemma between quantitative and qualitative education. Free education policy has succeeded in increasing the number of pupils that will have access to basic education, but it has not succeeded in adequately addressing the quality of such education. It is this dilemma that gave rise to the privatization of education leading to its commercialization. This paper

therefore tries to investigate the consequences of commercialization of basic education in Nigeria.

Research questions

1. What are the causes of the commercialization of education in Nigeria?
2. What are the consequences of the commercialization of education in Nigeria?

Methodology

The population consists of all the 34 primary schools and 32 secondary schools in Azare. 12 primary schools are government owned while 22 are privately owned. 11 secondary schools are government owned while 21 are privately owned. A sample of 4 primary schools and 4 secondary schools was randomly drawn from the population out of which 2 are government owned and 2 are privately owned. An instrument titled: ‘Causes and Consequences of Commercialization of Education in Nigeria’ was developed by the researcher for data collection and was validated by two lecturers from Aminu Saleh College of Education, Azare. The instrument was divided into two sections I and II. Section I sought general information about the school while section II sought information about the possible causes and consequences of commercialization of education. Section II was structured on a 4 point rating scale of available in good condition and adequate(4); available in good condition but inadequate(3); available in poor condition(2); not available(1). Data was analyzed and research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation.

The decision rule was that, for Table 1, any school with a mean score of 2.5 and above was accepted as well equipped and any school with a mean score less than 2.5 was regarded as being under equipped. For table 2, a score of 2.5 and above accepted the variables as being available and sufficient in the named school, while a score less than 2.5 indicated that the mentioned variables were either not available, not sufficient or both, in the named school.

Results

Table 1: General information on the schools

TYPE OF SCHOOL	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	NUMBER OF TEACHERS	No. of teachers with NCE and above	No. of Teachers with qual below NCE	NUM OF NON-TEACHING STAFF	CHARGING SCHOOL FEES
GP1	3,415	92	50	42	6	No
GP2	786	57	41	16	1	No
PP1	415	21	10	11	7	Yes
PP2	300	15	9	6	5	Yes

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GS 1	409	39	39	0	1	No
GS2	432	63	63	0	2	No
PS1	252	54	54	0	8	Yes
PS2	114	18	18	0	10	Yes

Table 2: causes of commercialization of basic education in Nigeria

Type of school	Teachers	Staff room	Non-teaching staff	Class-rooms	Seats	Science lab	Comp lab	library	Toilet facility	Port. drinking water	mean	SD	Decision
GP1	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	2	4	2.4	1.02	Rejected
GP2	3	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	4	2.0	1.10	Rejected
PP 1	4	3	4	4	1	1	3	1	4	4	2.9	1.30	Accepted
PP 2	4	4	4	4	1	1	1	1	4	4	2.8	1.47	Accepted
GS1	3	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.5	0.81	Rejected
GS2	3	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	4	1.8	1.08	Rejected
PS 1	4	3	3	4	4	4	1	1	4	4	3.2	1.17	Accepted
PS 2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3.7	0.46	Accepted

Table3: Consequences of Commercialization of Education in Nigeria

Type of school	High tuition/other charges	Qualified teachers	Monitoring by govt. agencies	improvement of facilities	mean	Decision
GP1	1	3	3	2	2.25	rejected
GP2	1	3	3	1	2.0	rejected
PP1	4	3	1	3	2.75	accepted
PP2	4	3	1	3	2.75	accepted
GS 1	1	4	3	1	2.25	rejected
GS2	1	4	3	1	2.25	rejected
PS1	4	4	2	4	3.5	accepted
PS2	4	4	2	4	3.5	accepted

Key: GP-government owned primary school
GS- government owned sec. school

PP-privately owned primary school,
PS- privately owned sec. school

Research question1: What are the causes of the commercialization of education in Nigeria? Table 2 above reveals that all the government primary and secondary schools in the sample were rejected and regarded as under-equipped while the privately owned schools were accepted as being well equipped. This leads to the conclusion that the major causes of the commercialization of education in Nigeria is the apparent inadequate state of infrastructure and basic facilities in the government owned schools. It can be concluded that the establishment of private schools in Nigeria is a response to the gap created by government in the management of the government schools. The state of some public schools is the reason some parents prefer to send their wards to private schools, even though they may be more expensive. No parent, for example, would like to send his ward to a school where he would seat on bare floor to receive lessons and might not have access to hygienic conveniences, all in the name of free education. The preferred option would be to send the child to an affordable private school where the basic needs of pupils/students are being met. if governments cannot afford to provide and fund all the education that parents expect for their children, then those parents will seek private suppliers (Clive R. Belfield Henry M. Levin 2002) Government systems may not be able to cope with increases in enrolments because they must raise money from taxpayers who may not be willing to pay. For many developing countries and economies where state finance and taxation systems are not fully set up, private provision may be the only way in which the education system can grow in response to increased demand.

The second factor that motivates privatization is the decline in the quality of education provided by the public sector. Many parents may feel that the public schools are inefficient in providing education of the type that is most needed. These parents consequently seek alternatives, often in the private sector. Another explanation for the perceived decline in quality may be that the public school system has reached a capacity constraint. With rapid population growth, government schools may be overcrowded, as in the case of GP1 therefore private school providers are needed.

Research question 2: What are the consequences of commercialization of education in Nigeria? The direct consequence of the commercialization of education in Nigeria is that parents are made to pay for basic education which was intended to be free or subsidized ab initio, even when some of these parents are tax payers whose children and wards ought to benefit from the taxes they pay. Table 3 reveals that while tuition is virtually free in the government owned schools, the private schools charged a fee for every service rendered. Some private schools actually charge exorbitant and outrageous fees. As a result basic education can no longer be said to be free as it is accessible to only those that can afford it.

Another consequence, as revealed by Table3, is that citizens, who should hold government accountable, don't seem to care about what goes on in the public schools since they have an alternative. As a result, the situation of things in public schools keep going from bad to worse leading to the falling standard of education in Nigeria. On the

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other hand, accountability may be lacking in terms of the quality and content of education being provided by the private schools, except the government agencies rise to the challenge of regular monitoring and supervision. As shown in Table3, the government owned schools were better monitored by government agencies than the privately owned schools.

A positive consequence is that jobs are provided for both university graduates and NCE graduates (as shown in Table1) who would have otherwise remained jobless, thereby reducing the vices that would have been caused by unemployment.

Conclusion

It is clear that the major purpose of every commercial venture is profit. Notwithstanding, the second aim of those who privatize education systems is to provide greater efficiency. In summary, therefore, the effects of competition seem to be positive, although modest. In a bid to provide efficiency, expenses escalate, making private education very expensive for majority of the populace. The likely result is that children from wealthy families will be more able and likely to take advantage of, and benefit from, private schools.

Recommendations

The paper recommends as follows:

1. Government should release adequate funds to public schools for provision and maintenance of basic infrastructure and other facilities.
2. Privately owned schools should be monitored by government to ensure adherence to the recommended curriculum.
3. Proprietors of private schools should ensure that their teachers are well remunerated, commensurate with their counterparts in public schools in order for them give their best to the pupils/students.
4. Only well qualified teachers should be employed in both public and private schools, in order to maintain a good standard of education.

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