

PRIVATIZATION OF UNITY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EDUCATION SECTOR

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Abstract

The sweeping change occasioned by the neo-liberal privatization policy of the 21st century has virtually affected all sectors of the Nigerian economy, and at the same time a source of public concern. This study therefore focuses on the privatization of Unity Schools in Nigeria: implications for the nation's education sector. The study became imperative based on the public outcry that followed the privatization of the one hundred and four (104) unity schools in the eleventh hour of the Obasanjo's administration in 2007. The unpopular policy which was later reversed by the Yar adua's reign has some implications for the education sectors. The paper adopted content analysis and Focused Group Study (FGS) techniques to sample opinion from the public. Human Capital Development Theory was adopted to establish a strong linkage between education and training and the overall development of any giving nation. The paper observed that pro-privatization groups agued that privatization of Unity Schools in Nigeria will lessen government's financial burden, improve efficiency and effectiveness in the management of schools, ensure stable academic calendar among others. Critics on the other hand, maintained that the policy will lead to more enrollment problems, poor staffing/ quality of personnel, exploitation, inequality, increased examination malpractices etc. the paper concludes that education is part of government's social service constitutional responsibility, and that considering the nation's population and the high rate of poverty, privatizing unity schools portends danger for development of the country and therefore recommended among other things that the government should ensure proper funding of education especially, in line with the 26% UNESCO benchmark, practically implement the free and compulsory education at primary and secondary levels as contained in section 18 (3) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended.

Keywords: Unity Schools, Privatization, Education, Human Capital, Development.

Introduction

The sweeping change that characterized the 21st century governance following the introduction of the privatization policy in the early 70s, has affected virtually all sectors of the Nigerian economy. However, the privatization of the unity schools in the eleventh hours of the Obasanjo's administration, which was later botched by president Yaradua was welcomed with mixed reactions. The reason is not farfetched. Simply, education is very important to the survival of an individual as person and the society at large.

The former federal minister of Education, Professor Badalola Barishade (UNESCO 2002:8) said:

Today, ordinary people and government all over the world have many concerns about education. They boil down to three key issues. The first is access, the second is quality, and the third is cost. I think the tension between these three indices as the external triangle of education.

Education has been defined by Fafuman (2003) as all efforts, conscious and direct, incidental and indirect, made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives that are considered in terms of the individuals own needs, as well as the needs of the society where that education is based. Education satisfies men's need for knowledge, accelerates development and influences social welfare (Kwayong, 1995). It is a mechanism through which the society generates the knowledge and skill required for its survival and substance. It enriches people's understanding of themselves and the world (Kazeem and Ige, 2013).

Due to the value attach to education, there are lots of international human rights instruments that provide for education as a fundamental human right. These include the Universal Declaration of Human rights (1948), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1996), the African charter on Human and People's Right (1981), the world conference for all (WCWFA) held in Jometin, Thailand in 1990 and Child Rights Acts. The National Policy on Education (2004) documented that the Nigeria philosophy of education is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen, as well as the full integration of the individual into the community and also the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizen of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and the formed school system. Also, the 1999 constitution, section 18(3), according to Idowu (2003) provides that:

1. Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels.
2. Government shall promote science and technology
3. Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy, and to this end, Government shall ensure the provision of free compulsory and universal primary Education and free Adult Literacy programme.
4. Government shall make education the pivot of the nation's society development, mobilization and ethical re-orientation of the citizen.

The above acts, charters and constitutional provisions underscore the importance of education; specifically item 3 of the above four items places strong emphasis on children right to education

in Nigeria. It also clearly shows that education is a social enterprise. This may in part justify the quantum of criticisms leveled against adoption of privatization of the 104 unity schools.

According to Savas (1997), three subtle different and often implicit definitions of privatization are in common use. The first group is categorized under the broad definitions and they emphasize a philosophical basis. Privatization here means relying more on the private institutions of society and less on government (the state) to satisfy people's needs. These private institutions include the market place and business operating therein, voluntary, organizations (religion, neighborhood, civil, cooperative and charitable, for example and the family, clan or tribe. The second and more operational definition sees Privatization as the act of reducing the role of government or increasing the role of the private sector, in an activity or in the ownership of assets. The third and most constrained definition considers Privatization to be the act of transferring government enterprises or assets to the private sector.

The second definition appears to be a common feature of Privatization exercise in Nigeria. The Unity Schools, include Federal Government Collages (FGCs), king's Collage and Queen School, Lagos, Suleija Academy for Gifted Children, etc. the FGCs came into existence after the Nigeria Civil War, the Biafran War of 1967 to 1970 and were actually by-products of the war. Fresh from the war, the Federal Government of Nigeria decided to establish those schools in each state of the federation as a model to forge the much-needed understanding, patriotism and national unity among the feuding tribes through education. Schools were rightly thought to be the fastest means of promoting understanding, appreciation, tolerance and respect for each other's culture, and children in their formative years, given the opportunity to live together, are better placed to forge that national unity. They were therefore boarding schools, mostly mixed at first, while a few were single-sex only (female), but eventually, each state got additional female type. Together with their predecessors, (Kings Collage and Queen's School, both in Lagos) and the specialized ones like the Suleija Academy, the Unity schools are now 104 in number.

At inception, these collages were designed to be truly national with admission quota guideline enforced to ensure that no state is left out due to lower scores, though merit was not totally sacrificed. The best from each state were considered for admission. Up to the early 1980s, the schools were centers of excellence and the toast of parents and serious students from both the urban and rural areas. They encouraged parents, teachers, primary schools and the pupils to work hard to secure admission into those schools. They propelled the educational system. They were the ultimate then, not the private schools. Competition was high once a child secured admission through examinations and interviews, the parents were rest secured of his or her passing the West African Examination Council (WAEC) examination in flying colours, all other things being equal.

Apart from academic excellence, they also lived up to the vision that established them through their national spread and alumin activities. The schools have produced excellent students who have and are still contributing to national development e.g. past and current Head of Service at federal level, engineers, doctors, professors, governors, notable accountants, bankers etc.

This cheering development however, began to decline in the decade or as the Unity schools became disorientated. The usually strict admission policy was no longer respected, and there

were allegations of corruption. There were a few reported cases by aggrieved candidates and their parents who felt they had been cheated in the admission process. Some principals were sanctioned over breach of admission policy. The general decay in the public schools also afflicted these schools. The rot is such that today the Unity schools are mostly shadows of their past in terms of infrastructural facilities and academic performance. In a recent survey of secondary school National Examination Council (NECO) results throughout the country by the FME. The first Unity school to appear on the rating took 54th position in the SSCF results (*Daily Sun, November 21, 2006.p. 19*). Though this claim has been challenged... this is a marked departure from their performance in the 1970s and 1980s, and certainly needs to be arrested. Many parents withdrew their children even from the Suleija Academy for Gifted Children because the quality they were looking for was no longer there.

The then minister of education Ezekwesili (2007) revealed that about 80% of FG's budgetary allocation to the ministry of education goes to the unity schools; out of 6.4 Million secondary schools students, only 120,1718 are in the unity schools, out of more than 6000 secondary schools (including states and privately owned) in the country, Unity Schools only constitute a meager fraction. Out of 27000, one staff of the ministry education more than 23,000 are deployed to federal government collage (FGC) which is 85.6% of the total enrolment. To add to the gory tales going states she added that, with the pampering of those collages about 70 percent of the students failed the WAEC examination woefully. According to the advocates of the privatization policy, privatization of the unity schools became imperative to revamp the ailing educational institutions. Critics on the other hand also argued that the policy is exploitative and can do more harm than good to the educational system considering the level of poverty in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the implications of privatization of Unity Schools in Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

Nigeria's education sector is characterized by numerous problems ranging from low access to basic education, poor finding, unqualified teachers, inadequate provision of basic teaching and learning materials, lack of commitment to implementation of educational policies and programmes, poor remuneration of teachers among others. The decay in unity schools has affected negatively teaching and learning in these schools and by extension performance of students in external examinations. Olaniyem (2012) wrote that a situation is on our hands in which our senior secondary students who sat for West African Examination Council Exam made less than ten percent (10%) credit pass in their final examination. University products of the educational system have been described as mostly unemployable (Babalola, 2009). Isiramen (2012) added that, the Nigerian children who somehow find themselves in schools are confronted with the problem of getting sub-standard education as most of the teaching personnel are unqualified.

Teachers' strikes at all levels of education and incessant closure of schools have become the norm. Cultism and violent crime are common in our educational institutions. Examination malpractices and admission racketeering is a common phenomenon. unconducive teaching and learning environment abound everywhere, dilapidated infrastructure, all constitute cogs in the

wheel of development of the sector. Also access and funding is still a problem. A 2002 UNICEF investigation showed that there are over (10) Million Nigeria children of school age who are not in any formal education. Prof. Mobolaji Aliko in 2006 stated that the “Education Sector has 160billion or 8.77% of a total of N.I.9 trillion which is far below the 26% UNESCO international target. The above also points to the poor funding of education in Nigeria. Parents, guardians and sponsors are worried over the ugly trends in the Nigeria public schools, most of them now prefer to send their children and wards to private schools. Most top government officers nowadays hardly send their children to public schools, perhaps quality education is guaranteed. The erosion of public confidence arising from the decay in the Nigeria education system is most unfortunate. The question is where then lies the hope of the future generation if education is fully privatized that about 112.519 million Nigerians live in relative poverty conditions (NBS, 2013). It means that the children of the low income earners will hardly acquire basic education. This is not a welcome development; it is unacceptable.

Theoretical Framework

The work adopted Human Capital Development Theory. The theory is based on the work of Schult (1971), Solow (1966) and Woodhall (1997). Human capital theory is anchored on the assumption that human beings are capita, hence the degree of investment in physical capital (human beings) determines national economic growth. Training and education are highly instrumental and each necessary to improve the productive capacities of human beings as income producing agents; in the economy. The human capital development has focused mainly on the productive value of education and training Fingerling and Saha (1997) emphasized the importance of human capital development theory in providing basic justification for large expenditure on training and development both in public and private organization. The theory of Human Capital Development is further supported by Lucas (1988) who argues that human capital is an integral part of physical capital which is only noticeable through workers activities especially in education and on job training.

The relevance of the theory to the study is predicated on the fact that education plays a pivotal role in the development of individuals and the society at large. Igboaja, (2010) wrote that “education is a spiritual and material investment” it is spiritual because it drives the mystical forces of ethics, morality and patriotism needed for the material investments for national development. John and Agba, (2010) opined that education is the single major factor for stimulating national development. This corroborated Kelly’s (1995) view that the economic, social and political status of any nation depends on education. The significance and linkage of education to national development is well known in Nigeria. This is evident in the Nigeria government’s policy statements on education, the National policy on Education (2004) that education is the instrument “par excellence” for effecting national development. Education and training enriches people’s understanding of themselves and the world. It improves the quality of lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society. Development of human capital holds a better future for the Nigerian youths. This is why frantic efforts should be geared towards improving access and quality of education in Nigeria.

Implications of Privatization of the Unity Schools to the Nigerian Education Sector:

Privatization of unity schools in Nigeria has both positive and negative implications. Public owned institutions in Nigeria especially, public schools have performed abysmally low. This has necessitated government's policy of privatization. Scholar public commentators and top government officials have adduced reasons to justify the privatization of public owned enterprises. Obikeze and Obi (2003) maintain that over the years government enterprises have become so inefficient as epitomized by the epileptic services they render to the public in spite of the fact that the government has and still continues to pump in a lot of money into them. They further argued that instead of improving most of them seem to be retrogressing and acting as drain pipes on the economy without making any meaningful contribution to our economic development via service delivery.

Corroborating the views of Obikeze and Obi (2003), a one time Director-general Bureau of public Enterprise Nasir Ahmed el-Rufai said that:

Those public enterprises consumed over one third of all the money we made from the sales of oil since 1973. Estimates of the vision 2010 committee indicate that federal government investments in public enterprises stood at over US\$ 100 billions in 1996. The return on these investments averaged less than 0.5 percent of perineum.

Privatization as has been widely acclaimed has several (benefits such as reduce Government Bureaucracy, reduce state monopolies, and ensure level playing fields, cases of mismanagement, correct defective capital and financial structures, increase competitiveness, increase the quality of goods and services, reduce corruption and control by government, increase staff quality of supervision, increase the quality of goods and service, create employment, re-invigorate the local economy, attract direct foreign investments, improve technological transfer among others. Anyanwu, (1993) argued that privatization will help restructure the Nigerian economy, reallocate public fund to efficient users, create a self-sustaining culture, and attract foreign investors, while goods and services will reflect real values. This goes to support the view that the Nigerian government welcomes participation of private individuals voluntary agencies and communities in the establishment and management of schools (FRN, 2004). Osokoya (2006) identified your reasons which make privatization of education imperative. These include:

1. Inability of the public schools to satisfy the growing demand for quality education, hence the need for the private sector to expand student access to quality education.
2. There are the de-regulation policies of the government on the provision of education and they are giving adequate opportunities for private participation in education.
3. In many African countries, the demand for employment oriented courses and subjects of study had changed and public schools seem unable to respond adequately to this phenomenon, hence it become necessary that private sector should increase.
4. Public education is criticized for inefficiency while the private sector is increasingly promoted for its efficiency in operation.

Saidu, Amali Oniye and Bello (2013) have argued that prospects for privatization of secondary education in Nigeria include the following:

1. **Academic Quality:** They believe that private sectors are well known for their efficiency and effectiveness in the discharge of their services than the public sector. In Nigeria, as they argued, private sectors are known to be given qualitative secondary education to the populace by striving to provide good facilities such as e-library modern and well equipped laboratories, well managed hostels, conducive class rooms and so on. All of these are compromised in public secondary schools.
2. **Under funding of Public Schools:** Funding plays a major role in any development programme. It is central to the provision of education in the society lack or inadequacy of it, as it was observed by Azikiwe (2008), is capable of hindering the provision of qualitative education to the citizenry.

However, studies such as Daramola (2010), Azikiwe (2008) have shown that Nigerian public secondary schools are grossly under funded which is resulting into infrastructural decay, ill-equipped library, and poor condition of service and welfare of teachers among others.

All these impact negatively on the standard of education in Nigeria. Hence, the private sectors involvement in the provision of secondary education would go a long way to ameliorate most of the funding associated problems in the sectors.

3. **Stable academic calendar:** Saidu, etal (2013) argued that one major quality of private secondary schools in Nigeria and anywhere in the world is stable academic calendar. Public secondary schools are characterized by incessant strike actions. According to Faniran (2010) cited in Saidu etal (2013) strike action usually take away valuable times of the students and thereby preventing them from acquiring the required knowledge. Also the disruption of academic calendar according to him makes the financial planning for the education of children very difficult for parents. Therefore, parents prefer to choose private secondary schools for their children.
4. **Students Discipline:** Faniran (2010) opined that the issue of moral decadence and high level of indiscipline among students of secondary schools in Nigeria had became a source of concern to stakeholders. However, with the opportunities of private participation in the provision and management of education, it is now possible for many missionary bodies to intervene in the education of the citizenry. These missionary bodies are widely known to be good providers of moral education which help in shaping the behaviours of Nigerian students.
5. **Adequate Access:** They agreed they with the involvement of private individuals and organization in the provision of secondary education in Nigeria, secondary schools are now established in every nook and cranny of the country which is making secondary education to be easily accessible by the teeming schools leavers who are yearning or admission into secondary schools.

Still on the side of support for adopting privatization of unity schools, the following reasons were put forward by the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) to reinforce the need for reforms as contained in one of its releases “Education Sector Situation Analysis,” Draft 4”p.35’

1. The unity schools, in spite of their “proud history are no longer fulfilling the purpose for which they were founded”

2. Constitutionally, secondary schools are not within federal government's responsibility. On the other hand, the unity schools are getting too much attention of the FME, which is distracting it from its normal constitutional role of visioning and supervision of dire entire system.
3. The unity schools are also said to be consuming disproportionate percentage of the ministry's funds. According to the ministry Unity Schools students constituting "1.88% of the total students in secondary schools in Nigeria"....over 80% of the FME'S budget and over 85% of the ministry's staff resources are being spent on the management of the Unity schools" (p.35);
4. Out of the 27,000 workers of the FME, 23,110 are said to be working in the Unity schools and out of this number, only 6,000 are teachers. The rest are non teaching staff, giving a ratio of 1.4. The then Minister Dr. Oby Ezekwesili regarded this state of affairs as lopsided and should not be allowed to go on. There is therefore, a need for a new approach or strategy for managing the Unity schools, "which if successful" might attract widen application according to the FME.

However, convincing the pro-privatization of education scholars, public commentators and government officials may sound, critics of the privatization move believe that privatization of the Unity schools in Nigeria has several negative consequences. They argue that education is a social enterprise. In the countries where privatization gets the strongest advocacy, their governments provide qualitative and free education for their young citizens up to secondary school level. The public schools are efficiently run and their students do well. Unity schools were sold at the eleventh hour of the Obasango's administration to; quite predictably select few in government. Unfortunately, Government in Nigeria mistook education for manufacturing industry. Popular view has it that the privatize education is simply to render large segment of our society illiterates because poverty would not allow them access to quality education. Both parents and teachers unions' argued that the reform would bring quality education beyond the reach of the poor.

Saidu etal (2013) agreed that privatization of secondary education in Nigeria has some negative implications.

1. **Enrolment Problem:** The demand for secondary education in Nigeria is on the increase. Adebayo (2010) established that there is appreciable increase in the population of students seeking admission into all levels of Nigerian educational institutions. In this case, if government is not doing anything to improve the deplorable conditions of the existing public schools, it is the private schools that would face the challenge of admitting more than the can cater for or admitting students beyond their carrying capacity. Hence, quality may be compromised in this case.
2. **Staffing/Quality of Personnel:** One of the major challenges in most private educational institutions in Nigeria is acute shortage of personnel. In most cases and also, in a bid to maximize profit, duties that are supposed to be assigned to five persons are usually assigned to one person. This is done at the expense of quality. Closely related to the above is the fact that most private schools lack quality staff and this portends danger for the future generation if secondary education is privatized. Most private schools in Nigeria, in a bid to make profit parade mostly secondary school leavers as their teachers who do not possess

the requisite qualifications, knowledge and experience to actually impact knowledge to the students. This has become a big problem to the education sector as no one offers more than he/she has.

3. **Exploitation:** The major problem of privatization of public owned institution is the tendency to subject the parents and the students to unbearable exploitation. Education is a social enterprise, privatization of this all important sector will not only jeopardize the goals and objective behind secondary education but will also render a large segment of the society illiterates with debilitating consequence on the Nigerian economy. As a result of the fact that private secondary schools are not funded by the government, sourcing for fund is now a challenge. The private sectors therefore charge exorbitant prices to meet up with their expenses. Adebayo (2010) established that there is appreciable increase in the population of students seeking admission into all level, of Nigerian educational institutions. It was reported that Nigeria has about twenty (20) million primary school pupils, five (5) million secondary school students and one million five hundred (1.5m) students in her tertiary institutions (voice of America Hausa service 6.00-6.3am news, 28/5/2012). Annually, about one (1) million students pass out of secondary schools and about seven hundred thousand of them meet entry requirements or conditions for admission into universities, but only about one hundred and fifth thousand of the students get admitted into the Universities (Ibid). This shows an acute shortage of access to educational opportunities for the Nigerian students, particularly in the higher education sector which is the most important sector with respect to contributions for national development in science, technology and skilled manpower production for the society. Isiran (2010) added that, the Nigerian children who somehow find themselves in schools are confronted with the problem of getting substandard education as most of the teaching personnel are unqualified. There is shortfall in placement of primary school pupils into secondary school education. A 2008 UNICEF investigation showed there are ten (10) million Nigeria children of school age who are not in any form of formal school (Ibid). In this case, if government is not doing anything to improve the deplorable conditions of the existing public schools, it is the private schools that people will turn to for their educational needs. In a bid to meet up with this challenge of funding, the private sectors resorted to charging exorbitant prices which most parents find very hard to cope with. Considering the level of poverty in Nigeria, privatization of the education sector and the Unity Schools in particular will not solve the problem of this sector. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2013, revealed that about 12.519 million Nigerians live in relative poverty conditions. This figure represents 69 percent of the countries population estimated at 169 million. In a country like Nigeria, ravaged by poverty, hunger and diseases, privatization of Unity schools may not be a sure way to revitalizing the ailing education sector. The privatization policies will undoubtedly hike the school fees which by and large will deny the children of low income earners the opportunity of attending such schools, by so doing, schools can only be attended by the children of those who have wherewithal; education would have become “goods” for the highest bidder.

4. **Inequality**: Privatization of education in Nigeria at all levels-primary, secondary and tertiary creates inequalities among Nigeria students (Adeogun, subair and Osifila, 2009). It is a known fact that in most public secondary schools in Nigeria, there are adverse conditions such as poor physical facilities and overcrowded classrooms. While in private secondary schools the condition is better as they enjoy the splendors of small classroom size and modern facilities which are capable of enhancing effective teaching and learning. This situation could lead to social inequalities in the society. The inequalities already created by the proliferation of private schools is noticed where fees are charged because of the name of these school and the so called “facilities” rather than what the school s can offer which should be the priority factor.
5. **Examination Malpractice**: examination malpractice, pervades all levels of our educational institutions. Jekayinfa (2012) has argued that examination malpractice has become a cankerworm in the Nigeria education system. This menace is very prominent in private schools in Nigeria. The idea is to make flying colour results that will attract parents to bring their children to the school. Privatization has also given way to all manner of sharp practices in the education sector which are not in line with the international best practices. The sudden rise in the number of “miracle” centers where private individuals organize WAEC, NECO, G.C.E etc, exams for students is a testimony to the level of examination malpractices orchestrated by the unregulated proliferation of external private examination centers in Nigeria. These set of unregistered set of “stakeholders” and centers connive with students and unscrupulous exam officials to commit examination malpractice. In the end, students are issued results which are not in anyway a true reflection of their academic performance. This has constituted the bane of Nigeria education sector.
6. Another implication is that the major aim of establishing the Unity schools which is Unity will be lost. The idea behind the establishment of the schools was that it would bring children from diverse ethnic backgrounds together in one place for five years and turn them into untied Nigerians at the end of their secondary education, and eventually transform them into leaders that are capable of keeping Nigeria united like the soldiers that created the schools. With privatization of these schools, this lofty ideas will not be realized. If not for anything, the friendship built following the establishment of these schools manifests in the activities of their old boys associations. These associations have helped in funding some major projects in the schools.
7. **Loss of Job**. One major problem of the privatization policy is that it leads to loss of job. Ezeani (2004) in one of his articles “Privatization and Labour in Africa” wrote that one of major criticisms leveled against the privatization exercise currently embarked upon by the government of most developing countries has been its negative impact on labour particularly, workforce reduction. Foremost among the critics of privatization are state enterprise workers and unions who fear retrenchment and the loss of benefits, often compounded by lack of social safety nets and functioning labour market (Chotten, 2000). For instance, the Association of Senior Civil Servants of Nigeria (ASCSN) countered the Federal Government’s move to privatise the unity schools for fear that most of them will loose their job. The main reason often adduced to justify downsizing of the labour force is

that many state owned enterprise have excess staff, often necessitating massive retrenchments if they are to compete under commercial conditions (Ezeani, 2004). Unity schools are not exceptions as they are characterized by the same problem that constitute the challenge of public enterprise in Nigeria. The private institutions cannot employ those staff that may be displaced as a result of the exercise. For instance, they do not possess the required financial capacity to do so. Privatization of Unity Schools will therefore expand the labour market.

8. Furthermore, the argument presented by government officials, that part of the reasons for the privatization of the schools was because of their poor performance in external exams does not hold water. Examination failure is a function of many factors and can not be addressed by privatization of the schools. Facilities like well equipped laboratories, libraries, well ventilated and adequate classroom, humanly hostel facilities and most importantly the welfare of education workers including the teaching staff must be considered as factors that can either mar or make for better students performance.

Conclusion

In this study, attempt has been made to examine the implications of privatization of Unity schools in Nigeria. The study noted with total dismay the rot in Nigeria education institutions which include poor funding, incessant strikes, unqualified teachers, inadequate provision of basic teaching and learning materials, cultism and violence among students, unconducive teaching and learning, environment among others. All these constitute the major challenges of the Nigerian education performance of students. Privatization as argued by the advocate of the policy from government and those outside the government circle will bring about lasting solution by revitalizing, the comatose educational institutions through provision of qualify education by the private sector; stable academic calendar; students discipline; adequate access etc. critics of the policy argued that it would lead to exploitation; low quality of staff of private schools; inequality; examination malpractice; displacement of the goals of the Unity schools etc. Education the paper contends, falls under the fundamental functions of governments social service provision and constitutes a major factor in the overall development of any nation. Considering the population and the high level of poverty in Nigeria, privatization of education specifically unity school will deprive many, Nigerian children rights of education and therefore portends danger for the future generation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been put forward to address some of the challenges of the Nigeria educational system.

1. Government should ensure proper funding of education at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) in Nigeria. Education in Nigeria had long been neglected in terms of budgetary allocation, government should atleast adopt the 26% UNESCO standard. Teachers should be adequately paid as and when due including other entitlement, due to them as this will serve as a motivation.
2. Government should practically implement the free and compulsory education at primary and secondary levels as contained in section 18(3) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as this will go a long way to improve access to basic education in

Nigeria. Privatization of Unity schools will only deter many Nigerian children from having access to basic education considering the high level of poverty in the country.

3. There should be proper monitoring of both public and private schools in Nigeria to ensure that the minimum standard is maintained. The proliferations of “miracle” centers whereby students go to get the best result without hardwork should be checked to forestall the level of examination malpractices among Nigeria students.
4. Government should ensure regular training and retraining teachers in the public schools to equip them with the relevant skills in line with the contemporary international best practices of teaching and learning.
5. The National policy on education has put forward excellent policies. The problem lies in the implementation. Government should therefore ensure judicious use of both human and material resources and efficiently implement educational policies.
6. To improve the educational system in Nigeria government should sincerely fight corruption. The dilapidated nature of infrastructure in most of the Unity schools is the way they are today because some government contractors embezzled the money meant for projects. Government should review the contracts and those found guilty should be made to face the rot of law to serve as deterrence to others.
7. Finally, government should ensure a conducive learning environment and provide libraries stuffed with current textbooks and other reading materials relevant to students study areas, to further enhance teaching and learning in secondary schools.
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