PRIVATE OWNERSHIP AND EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Donald Abidemi Odeleye
Department of Educational Management, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria
E-mail:bodeleye@gmail.com +234-806-016-2719

Oyekunle Oyelami
Department of Adult Education, University of Lagos, Lagos

&

Odeleye Oluwatoyin Abike
Department of Primary Education Studies, Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, Nigeria

Abstract
Management and administration of education in Nigeria by law is vested under the stable of the three tiers of government namely, federal, state and local governments on the concurrent list. Under both federal and state governments, respective ministries of education discharge administrative and professional duties while local governments oversee elementary education through the local government education authorities. Apart from the contributions of various tiers of government, the educational system has an ongoing boost arising from the efforts of entrepreneurs, teacher professional associations, governing councils of schools, advisory and consultative councils, publishers, manufacturers and community members at large. Even though the Nigerian educational system had experienced tremendous growth since independence, there has been a quantum leap in proprietorship of educational institutions in the past two decades. This paper, among other things, examines the antecedents of the Nigerian educational system with particular reference to the role of private ownership of educational institutions. Inhibiting factors against the health of human capacity efforts and suggestions for successful private initiatives in educational are also proffered. It is the thesis of this paper that since antecedently, education has been privately initiated, government should concentrate more on providing requisite infrastructure and physical plant, while encouraging the private proprietors with less stringent registration conditions.

Keywords: Private ownership, educational management, entrepreneurship

Introduction
The Management and administration of the Nigeria Educational system is by law vested concurrently in the hands of the Federal, State and Local Government. Whereas the Federal and State Governments carry out their responsibility and duties on education through the respective ministries of Education which according to Ajayi and Oni (1992) essentially render administrative and professional services, the Local Government administers elementary education under its jurisdiction through Local Governments Education Authority. The contribution of the three tiers of governments is equally complemented by the efforts of the private entrepreneurs and professional associations such as the Parents Teachers Association (PTA), Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) and corporate agencies, among others. In addition, there have been commendable efforts of philanthropists and community members who are committed to reviving education service delivery in Nigeria.
This paper takes a critical look at the evolution of the Private Ownership of educational institutions in Nigeria. It will also proffer suggestions to educational entrepreneurs in improving their service delivery.

**Antecedents of formal education in Nigeria**

**Mission and efforts**
The fact that education is pivotal to the development of every nation is only stating the obvious. It, therefore, attracts considerable attention, at the family, community, state, local and federal government levels, education is dismissed planned and processed. It is believed that education makes both the person and the nation and influences people’s values and attitudes (Omolewa 2001).

Formal education in Nigeria began formally in 1842 when the first primary school was established in Badagry. As a result of this movement, the formal education spread to other parts of Nigeria which included Abeokuta, Ibadan, Ogbomoso, Oyo, Calabar and a host of other towns particularly in the then Southern protectorate of Nigeria. It is important again to note that the efforts of churches like Church Missionary Society (CMS) Roman Catholic Missions and Wesleyan Missionary Society were prominent in the spread of Western education and its management in Nigeria.

Ajayi and Oni (1992) observed that the missionaries decided to shoulder the rather cumbersome task of educational management not because of their interest in the African natives, but in order to accomplish their major goals of evangelization. Also, Fafunwa (1981) submitted that:

“The church introduced the business of education, not because it regarded education as good in itself, but because it found that it could not do its own proper work without giving its adherents and especially its clergy, as much of the formal learning as was required for the study of the sacred writings and for the performance of their religious duties (p.52)”

Again, Omolewa (2001) argued that: the credit of the success of laying the foundation and the subsequent development and management of the educational system should still be placed at the door of the Christian Missionaries.

**Era of ordinances and laws**
Between 1842 and 1882, the administration and management of education was left in the hands of the missionaries. The school curriculum was heavily religious based and the content was mainly the three RS – Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. Other activities such as sewing, arts, and host of others found their place into the curriculum. As a result of these activities, schools were first an extension of the church. This resulted in unnecessary proliferation of schools in every community depending on the number of Missions readily available. These schools were taken care of with grants from the missions, contributions from groups and individuals outside the country and voluntary donations by local Christians and children’s parents as well as the children’s fees. It is in this connection that Taiwo (1994) stated that:

The Missionaries reported to their respective missions, but it was clear that they enjoyed the exercise of their non discretion in their administration of the schools, as long as they kept in view the aims of the mission, with the greatest emphasis on evangelization (P.43)

Accordingly, objections were raised by the Government, traders and the Nationalist leaders at the reproductive nature of the educational system. For example, the traders criticized the system because the products of the school were not fit to be employed in either government or the commercial enterprises. The nationalist on their own part raised the issue on denationalizing tendencies of the educational system (Ajayi and Oni 1992).

The government as a result of these criticisms had no choice other than to set machinery in motion to salvage educational system. Thus, the colonial administration enacted the first education ordinance...
in 1882 and this gave the government the opportunity to partly take over the content of education (Omolewa, 2001).

Fafunwa (1981) submitted that the ordinance made provisions for the constitution of General Board of Education, Local Board for Education, as well as setting out the rules and regulations guiding the management and administration of the schools. Thereafter, the Education Ordinance of 1887 was enacted and was regarded as the first truly Nigerian Ordinance and the principles have become the foundation of the education laws of the nation. The provisions of the ordinance according to Fafunwa (1981) included:

(i) the constitution of a Board of Education, 
(ii) the appointment of an inspector of schools and other educational officers, 
(iii) grants-in-aid to schools and teacher training of institutions, 
(iv) certificate of teachers establishment of scholarships for secondary and technical educations and, 
(v) power of government is open and maintains government schools.

Similarly, the education ordinances of 1908, 1916, 1926, 1942, 1948 and 1952 were improvements on the previous ones. It must be noted that despite the efforts of the Colonial Government through its laws and ordinances on education, the Government was not shouldering the responsibilities of education alone, the roles and duties of the private initiatives was also welcomed.

**Era of sole determination.**

Omolewa (2001) and Fafunwa (1981) submitted that as Nigeria tended towards self-government and independence, the political leaders began to think of the possibility of expanding the educational space and to provide wider access to those who had been denied educational opportunities. The Action Group in the Western Region blazed the trail and launched the Universal Primary Education in 1951. This was followed by the Eastern and Northern Regions respectively in 1954/1955 and 1956. In 1957, the Colonial Government enacted the Education Act (No. 26 of 1957), which stated thus, To amend the law relating to education in the Federal Territory of Lagos to provide for Universal free Primary education and the establishment of an education authority in such Federal Territory and for matters relating thereto (Taiwo and Oni, 1992).

The trend of management and control of the educational system in Nigeria in the 1950s continued during the first Republic. A situation by which higher education system was on the concurrent list of the central and Regional movement, other levels of education was on the Residual Legislative List of the Regional Government. The military take-over of governance in 1966 created another dimension to educational management and control in Nigeria. In 1982, the Military Government made the following declaration thus:

The Supreme Military Council has decided that the Federal Government should henceforth assume full responsibility for higher education throughout the country, with the provision that status quo in respect of the existing universities should be maintained … It also decided that education, other than higher education, should become the concurrent responsibility of both the Federal and State Governments and be transferred to the concurrent legislated list (F.G.N 1999).

It will not be out of place to point out that this transfer of higher education from the concurrent to the exclusive legislative list was only in principle. In practice according to Omolewa (1981), was limited to university education, because states and even private owners were free to establish and manage institutions of higher learning such as Polytechnic and colleges of Education.
Educational management and private ownership in Nigeria

The history of private ownership in educational administration in Nigeria could be traced to the period when Western education was introduced to the country, in the 19th century. As at the time in question missionaries and churches played dominant roles towards the development and administration of education. Even, when the colonial and self-governments took over the control the significance of education towards national development made private individual, communities and even both the local and international organizations to have interest in the development of education at all level.

Thus, Ade-Ajayi (1968) opined that education is the mechanism by means of which a society generates the knowledge and skills required for its own survival and sustenance and which it transmits to future generations through the process of instruction to its youths. Society can only develop and exist decently and wisely if it ensures that its educational system is adequate, relevant and sustainable. Also, against the background of the apparent inertia of government apparatus in providing quality education for the teeming population, it becomes expedient that private initiative in education be facilitated and encouraged.

The decentralization of educational administration and management is in response to the National Policy on Education (NPE) guidelines which contains the institutional responsibilities on the different sectors charged with the functioning of the educational system. In this connection, the Federal Government of Nigeria (1985) stated that:

- The success of any system of education is hanged on the proper planning, efficient administration and adequate financing. Administration includes organization and structure, proprietorship and control, inspection and supervision (p.44).

The experience over the years is that public educational institutions in Nigeria have been poorly managed and administered in terms of poor funding, low morale of teachers and inspectors, hence, the call by public-spirited individuals and educationists that a state of emergency to be declared on the Nigerian educational system.

Hence, the recognition of the private ownership to help towards salvaging the problems of educational sector. In relation to this Akintayo and Oghenekowho (2008) argued that the private ownership in education could help in the attainment of the following goals:

1. qualitative research and development;
2. access to advanced educational needs for technological development;
3. efficiency in resource generation through partnership and cooperation;
4. enhanced capacity-building relevant for the needs of the economies;
5. moderation of university carrying capacity for observation of qualified and trainable human resources and
6. combating the threats of the global challenges of illiteracy, poverty, disease, war and insecurity (p.509).

Again, Omotosho (2008) noted that, the education crisis in the country is rooted in the deterioration conditions within the citadels of learning in respect of teaching facilities, and other infrastructural facilities, the welfare of those engaged in the teaching profession and the ever increasing cost of education. The above submission corroborates the findings of Ajayi and Alamu (1996) and Odudeye (1985) that students’ unrest, teacher strikes and other industrial actions are at the bane of Nigeria’s educational woes. These and others are the situation and, the bye-product of the spreading of private schools and institutions at all levels in Nigeria.

Omotosho (2008) stressed that: the proprietors of the private owned universities must ensure that all individuals have access to quality and appropriate educational opportunities. (p.522).

The challenges of private ownership in educational management in Nigeria were emphasized by Ayeni (2008) particularly in the areas like

- Ranking of Universities – which rated Nigerian universities among the 50 and above position in Africa (NUC 2006)
Increase in enrolment – this doubled every four to five years.

The changing environment – the influences of environment can not be over looked in educational management (p.535).

For private ownership to be seen as alternative way of engendering better performance and better products that could meet the challenges of the world of works, efforts should be geared towards the following:

- discipline among the staff and students;
- conducive environment for learning;
- appropriate teaching facilities;
- moral conducts among students;
- student-teachers ratio;
- motivations and rewards for excellent performance;
- training and re-training of staff-members;
- research – grants and loans for staff.

**Way forward**

The participation, partnership and involvement of private ownership in educational management and administration pose a new challenge to all tiers of educational service delivery in Nigeria. Not only did the private initiatives came at a time of declining standards of educational trends in Nigeria, it also presents a new order and policy challenges on the roles of the private owners in our educational system. It must be emphasized that contrary to misconception in some quarters, the efforts of the private ownership in both secondary and tertiary education are geared towards providing wider access to education by all and this marriage undoubtedly has the potential of jumpstarting Nigeria’s socioeconomic growth and development.

Nigerian government’s vision of making Nigeria rank among the world’s 20 strongest economies is realizable if the public private partnerships (PPPs) are optimized. In recent years, government has continually provided the enabling environment for entrepreneurial initiatives in virtually all sectors of the economy. In education, the upsurge of private initiatives in secondary and tertiary education in the past decade may have began to put the heat on publicly funded institutions to return to the drawing board, refashioning and realigning their curricula to meet contemporary exigencies. It is suggested that government should as a matter of policy continue to support and provide enabling environment for private initiatives to thrive in the emerging Nigerian educational economy.

It is imperative to reiterate the challenge of funding accessibility. There are so many possibilities for entrepreneurs in educational management, but many times they may be hindered by lack of access to capital. For instance, the average Higher Education (HE) provider usually would desire to keep up with modern trends in educational service delivery and would want to extend the frontiers of their operations, but they need to able to access substantial funds. This is where government machinery should be quite relevant by providing the backing for the private entrepreneurs.

With the deplorable state of most public schools at all levels, another major area of concern for private owners is the improvement of the standard of services provided to the students. The private entrepreneur would also be concerned with what to do to attract more students to join their school and how to step up the range of courses being offered in order to stay in business. This is why the Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) may be most expedient. The Private Finance Initiative ("PFI") is a form of PPP under which the Government funds the capital repayments to the Private Sector Partner (PSP). School proprietors could use partnership with public or private sector as a way of overcoming infrastructural challenges and getting the new facilities required. For instance, finance companies and banking institutions could be approached to fund new student accommodation, library facility, sports gymnasium and classrooms. Under the arrangement, the Private Sector Partner (PSP) will finance, design, build and maintain to a predetermined high standard and operate the new hostel facility for the entrepreneur for 25 years. At the end of the 25 year period, the private owner gets the new halls returned to its control at no cost.

This is one reason why it is worthwhile to optimize the PPPs. Using the new student hostels as a case study, it can be stated that the schemes can be completely self-funding. It is to be noted that the Private Sector Provider (PSP) should be able to recover the costs of construction from the students’ rent. Also, the Private Owner does not need to contribute to the costs of construction, neither is he
involved in the burden of maintaining and operating the new halls; thus giving more time and energy to its core educational objectives.

The thesis of this paper is that education whether formal, non-formal or informal is normally private-sector driven. The position of government historically is to provide the enabling environment for human capacity building efforts to thrive. In advanced economies like United States of America, majority of Europe and Asia, most educational institutions are owned by communities, corporate agencies and families (individuals) while government’s quality control mechanism always guide the modus operandi of such schools. It is suggested that government should divest its resources in providing requisite infrastructures and physical plant. Also, government should ensure that even in private tertiary institutions, education should be accessible and affordable to all qualified Nigerians. Since the private schools need funds to run and stay afloat, government needs to revive its moribund agencies like Loans Board and Scholarships Board. It is also expected that governments at various levels should begin to give bursary to all qualified citizens.

The earlier Nigeria reverted to the pre-independence experience where government ran special model schools like King’s College Lagos, Queen’s College, Lagos, Government College, Ibadan and Queen’s School, Ibadan to provide benchmarks for their privately owned counterparts. It is the position of these authors that schools should be returned to their original owners and most of the government-owned schools should be privatized if the envisioned revitalization of the education sector would not remain a pipe dream.

**References:**


