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# Private sector participation in secondary education in Nigeria: Implications for national development

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## Abstract

The study examines private sector participation in secondary education in Nigeria and its implications for national development. The population consisted all the providers and recipients of private secondary education in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Simple random sampling was used to select 200 providers and recipients of private secondary education across the six Area Councils in the FCT. An instrument designated Private Sector Participation in Secondary Education (PSPSE) was used to collect data. The data were analysed using Chi-Square method to test for the acceptance or rejection of the study hypotheses. The findings revealed that the academic performance of students in private secondary schools is better than the academic performance of students in public secondary schools. The study further revealed that private secondary schools have better infrastructure than public secondary schools in Nigeria, but private secondary schools contribute less to the development of human resources than public schools in Nigeria. Recommendations are proffered to make private secondary education more viable and responsive to the needs of the society.

**Keywords:** Private sector participation, Secondary education, National development

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## **1. Introduction**

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 pivotal to the actualization of the current national and global policy objectives. Nigeria want 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 are to prepare the individuals for useful living with the society and for higher education (NPE, 2004). Public secondary schools alone cannot meet the educational needs of the teaming 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. To achieve the objectives of secondary education as highlighted in National Policy on 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 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 in 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 concern 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 seem to be a persistent and wide-spread loss of confidence in public educational institutions. As Ajayi (2000) 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 living 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; 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. 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<sup>1</sup>.

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.

According to Adebayo (2009, p. 2):

*“Since the early 1900s, private ownership and control of schools is becoming (or has become) very popular. Privately run schools are now being looked upon to correct the ills and lapses by the long years of government involvement in running of schools, we are now witnessing a situation whereby, faith-based or missionary schools that were wrested from their founders by government are now being returned to their former owners; and some schools that were- established by government are even to be concession out to private people for management e.g. the Federal Government Colleges or Unity Schools”*

The nation’s education aims and objectives are linked with the philosophy of education in many areas one of such is the acquisition of appropriate skills to live and contribute to the development of the society. Education should equip one with the appropriate skills, abilities, competence and above all, the right mind to use one’s resources to contribute to the development of one’s society. These aims and objectives when critically studied will show the intention of the policy on self-reliant tendency of the individual either on a sole proprietor or corporate basic for the betterment of himself, on the one hand and that of the larger society on the other hand. Just as education helps one to develop these skills, ability and competence to enable one contribute to the development of one’s environment, so also does the education system require sustained development so that it can effectively possess the ability to train the citizens. There is the need to make education more functional, qualitative as well as quantitative so that more people could have access to it.

The history of modern education in Nigeria could be traced to the efforts of private organization especially the Christian mission. Although Fafunwa (1981) affirms that “the missionaries without exception used the school as a means of conversion”. There is no doubt that the schools established during these periods served as a springboard for the emergence of nationalized government schools in Nigeria. The issue of government’s neglect of educational sector is not a new phenomenon. As Fafunwa (1981) postulates that “up to 1882, the colonial government in Nigeria paid little or no attention to the educational needs of the people, and the field was left entirely to the mission. This period can therefore be justifiably termed the era of exclusive Christian

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<sup>1</sup> Adebayo, (2009) Parents’ Preference for Private Secondary Schools in Nigeria

Missionary education in southern Nigeria". During this period, the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Western Methodist Missionary Society, the Roma Catholic Mission, the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Qua Iboe Mission, firmly established themselves with each having a school for teaching their devotees. In addition to the teaching of their religious doctrines however, Fafunwa (1981) confirms that subjects like carpentry, bricklaying, ginnery and agriculture were taught especially at missionary schools located in places like Abeokuta, Onitsha, Lokoja and Calabar. By the end of 1912, there were already ninety-one mission schools in southern Nigeria.

Secondary education level has experienced a tremendous development over the past five decades in terms of number and enrolments<sup>2</sup>. The grammar and comprehensive high schools gave way to the 6-year junior and secondary school system all over the country. The boost in enrolment has necessitated the establishment of new 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<sup>3</sup>. 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 continues to militate against quality teaching. 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. Consequently in public schools, there are schools without classrooms, classroom without chairs and tables, science schools without laboratories, and laboratories without chemicals, schools without libraries and libraries with books older than the parents of the readers<sup>4</sup>. In such a situation, can children acquire appropriate skills? In public schools, 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 teachers. The utmost neglect of public schools leads to the proliferation of private secondary schools.<sup>5</sup>

The clarion call on individuals to help finance education has led to the proliferation of private secondary schools in Nigeria. Arguments abound as to whether these private secondary schools contribute to the development of secondary education in Nigeria and by extension to national development. Some analysts agreed that these private secondary schools are too expensive for majority of Nigerians to afford. That the main motive behind their establishment is profit motives. Others say that these schools are established to fill the gap created by the dilapidating nature of public schools. This study intends to investigate the impact of private secondary schools on the development of secondary education Nigeria.

The study intends the test the following hypotheses;

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the academic performance of students in public and private secondary schools in Nigeria.

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<sup>2</sup> Agboola, (2003) *Issues in the Management of Education in Nigeria*.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> Maicibi. (2002) *The Need to Reform the Management of Education in Nigeria*.

<sup>5</sup> Maicibi (2002) *The Need to Reform the Management of Education in Nigeria*.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference in infrastructural development in public and private secondary schools in Nigeria.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the development of human resources in public and private secondary schools in Nigeria.

## 2. Literature review

Several studies have been conducted on the impact of private secondary education on the academic achievement of the students. Some of these studies reported that private schools contribute immensely to the development of secondary education in Nigeria, while others claimed otherwise.

*“Afolabi (2005) revealed in his study that students who attended private primary schools performed better in Mathematics and English language (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 complete favourably with the products of the private schools” (In Oguntimehin et al. 2010 P. 284).*

Corroborating Afolabi's view, Tooley and Dixon (2005) in their 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.

Babayomi (1999) and Adeogun (2001) in their separate studies explained that better academic performance by students in private schools was as a result of availability and usage of instructional materials by the private schools teachers. Likoko, et al. (2013 p. 403) asserted that

*“Adeogun (2001) discovered a very strong positive significant relationship between instructional resources and academic performance. According to Adeogun, schools endowed with more resources performed better than schools that are less endowed. This corroborated the study by Babayomi (1999) that private schools performed better than public schools because of the availability and adequacy of teaching and learning resources. Adeogun (2001) discovered a low level of instructional resources available in public schools and stated that our public schools are starved of both teaching and learning resources. To him, effective teaching cannot take place within the classroom if basic instructional resources are not present” (Likoko, et al 2013, p. 403).*

The teachers perceived it. This study clearly showed that private schools are contributing significantly to educational development in Nigeria.

In their study entitled "Teachers perception of private schools contribution to educational development in Ijebu North Local Government Areas of Ogun State, Nigeria", Oguntimehin et al. (2010) discovered among other thing 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 them private schools have an edge over public schools and that academic performance in private schools is better than that of public schools" (Oguntimehin et al. 2010 P. 284). This they say could be attributed to the incessant strike actions usually embarked upon by the public schools teachers. Strike action by staff is completely strange to private schools.

Oguntimehin et al (2010, pp. 284-285) concluded that:

*Private schools have been playing prominent role 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. Many private schools also use a form of standardized testing to determine student's competency (pp. 284-285).*

Tooley and Dixon (2005) 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 on 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, Tooley and Dixon (2005) reported in their research that private schools had superior facilities to those of government schools:

*"They further discovered that teacher absenteeism was also highest in the government schools. On every input, including the availability of blackboards, playgrounds, desks, drinking water, toilets, and separate toilets for boys and girls, private schools were superior to the government schools" (p. 23).*

And;

*"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 between*

*three and four times higher than in private schools. Despite this, teacher satisfaction with salaries is not lower in private than in government schools and, in many cases, is higher” (p.38).*

### 3. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research. The population consisted of all the private secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Simple random sampling was used to select 200 providers and recipients of private secondary schools in the six Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory. An instrument designated ‘A Questionnaire for Principals, Teachers and Students on the impact of Private Secondary Schools on the Development of Secondary Education in Nigeria’ was used to collect data. The instrument was validated and the reliability coefficient was 0.87. Results were analysed using Percentages and Chi-Square method. The Chi-square method is used to determine the acceptance or non – acceptance of the research hypothesis: that is

$$X^2 = \frac{\sum(O - E)^2}{E}$$

where  $X^2$  = Chi-square; O = Observed responses; E = Expected responses; and  $\sum$  = Summation.

This is done at 0.05 level of significant at degree of freedom 12.

The Chi-square decision rule says that if the calculated Chi-square value is higher than the table Chi-square value, the hypothesis is rejected, where the calculated Chi-square value is lower than the table Chi-square value, the hypothesis is accepted. But if the calculated Chi-square equals the table Chi-square value more information is needed to accept or reject the hypothesis.

### 4. Presentation of results and discussion

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the academic performance of students in public and private secondary schools in Nigeria.

Table 1 shows that the calculated Chi-square value is 94.72 and the table value is 21.03 at 0.05 significant level and at 12 degree of freedom. Following the Chi-square decision rule, the calculated Chi-square value is higher than the table value. Hence, the null hypothesis which says that there is no significant difference in the academic performance of students in public and private secondary schools in Nigeria is thereby rejected, whereas the alternative hypothesis which says that students in private secondary schools perform better than their counterparts in public schools is thereby accepted. This means that the academic performance of students in private schools is better than the academic performance of students in public schools.

The studies also revealed that the better performance of the private school pupils was not as a result of more qualified teachers in the private schools but as a result of better supervision from the school heads, because adequate and thorough supervision cannot be compromised in any privately owned organization. Furthermore, Tooley and Dixon (2005) 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.

Table 1. Showing the Contingency Frequency values of the Relationship between Private Secondary Schools and Academic Performance of Students

Observed Frequency (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	(O-E)	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E
52	41	11	121	2.95
24	23.7	0.3	0.09	0.004
20	17.3	2.8	7.29	0.99
8	19.4	-11.4	129.9	6.69
4	6.5	-2.5	6.25	0.96
16	18.3	-2.3	5.29	0.29
20	10.6	9.4	88.4	8.34
-	7.7	7.7	59.29	7.7
12	8.6	3.4	11.56	1.34
-	2.9	2.9	8.41	2.9
-	13.7	13.7	187.69	13.7
-	7.9	7.9	62.4	7.9
12	5.76	6.24	38.94	6.76
16	6.48	9.52	90.6	5.66
8	2.16	5.84	34.11	15.79
8	3.1	4.9	24.01	7.75
-	1.8	-1.8	3.24	1.8
-	1.3	-1.3	1.69	1.3
-	1.4	-1.4	1.96	1.4
-	0.5	-0.5	0.25	0.5
			Total	94.72

Calculated Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) Value = 94.72

Table Chi-Square( $X^2$ ) Value= 21.03 at 0.05, at 12 df

Level of significance =0.05

Degree of Freedom (df) = (No of columns-1)(No of rows-1)

Expected Frequency = {(Row Total)(Column Total)}/Grand Total

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference in infrastructural development in public and private secondary schools in Nigeria.



Table 2 shows that the calculated Chi-square value is 109.78 and the table value is 21.03 at 0.05 significant level and at 12 degree of freedom. Following the Chi-square decision rule, the calculated Chi-square value is higher than the table value. Hence, the null hypothesis which says that there is no significant difference in infrastructural development in public and private secondary schools in Nigeria is thereby rejected, whereas the alternative hypothesis which says that infrastructure are better developed in private secondary schools than in public schools is thereby accepted. This means that private secondary schools have better infrastructure than public secondary schools in Nigeria. This finding agrees with the findings of Tooley and Dixon (2005) who reported in their research that in the areas of infrastructure private schools had superior facilities to those of government schools.

Torulagha (2010, p.4) submitted that:

*“Since the late 1980s until today education has been treated as an unimportant variable in the development of the country. Hence, public secondary school buildings are crumbling, and due to lack of concern for infrastructural development, modernization and rehabilitation, public schools do not have sufficient dormitory space to accommodate students”.*

He further submitted that:

*“it is not surprising that public schools’ dormitories in Nigeria are always crowded with students, thereby, making it exceedingly difficult for students to concentrate on their studies”. He added that “during the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, both public and private primary and secondary schools competed to be the best. Just as there were very prestigious private and religious schools, there were also very prestigious public schools. However, it appears that as corruption became rampant in the middle and late 1980s, public schools began to suffer. As these schools cropped up in every part of the country, public schools began to suffer from lack of maintenance” (Torulagha 2010, p. 8).*

The findings of Adebayo (2010, p.1) revealed some factors responsible for parents’ preference for private secondary schools in Nigeria to include:

*“teacher quality and quantity, facilities, class size, curriculum practices, stability of academic activities, disciplinary concerns, cost effectiveness and overall output quality as responsible concepts preference to private secondary schools. Some of the recommendations made were curriculum implementation should be more targeted and student-specific in public schools, public school administrators are encouraged to learn from best practices that makes private secondary school such an attractive option for both students and parents. Government is encouraged to borrow leaf from the management and supervision of schools who designed quality activity and requirements that are consistent with the ever changing intellectual, social and physical development of the child”.*

Table 3 shows that the calculated Chi-square value is 13.05 and the table value is 21.03 at 0.05 significant level and at 12 degree of freedom. Following the Chi-square decision rule, the calculated Chi-square value is

lower than the table value. Hence, the null hypothesis which says that There is no significant difference in human resource management in public and private secondary schools in Nigeria is thereby accepted, whereas the alternative hypothesis which says that human resource management are better developed in private secondary schools than in public schools is thereby rejected. This means that private secondary schools contribute minimally to the development of human resource in Nigeria.

Table 2. Showing the Contingency Frequency values of the Relationship between Private Secondary Schools and Infrastructural Development

Observed Frequency (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	(O-E)	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E
48	39.5	8.5	72.25	1.83
20	18.7	1.3	1.69	0.09
16	18.7	-2.7	7.29	0.39
16	14.5	1.5	2.25	0.16
4	12.4	-8.4	70.56	5.69
24	19.7	4.3	18.49	0.94
12	9.3	2.7	7.29	0.78
-	9.3	-9.3	86.49	9.3
4	7.2	-3.2	10.24	1.42
12	6.2	5.8	33.64	5.43
4	7.6	-3.6	12.96	1.70
-	3.6	-3.6	12.96	3.6
16	3.6	12.4	153.76	42.71
-	2.8	-2.8	7.84	2.8
-	2.4	-2.4	5.76	2.4
-	9.1	-9.1	82.81	9.1
4	4.3	-0.3	0.09	0.02
4	4.3	-0.3	0.09	0.02
8	3.3	4.7	22.09	6.69
8	28	-20	400	14.23
			Total	109.78

Calculated Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) Value = 109.78

Table Chi-Square( $X^2$ ) Value= 21.03 at 0.05, at 12 df

Level of significance =0.05

Degree of Freedom (df) = (No of columns-1)(No of rows-1)

Expected Frequency = {(Row Total)(Column Total)}/Grand Total

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the development of human resources in public and private secondary schools in Nigeria

The result of the findings of Nakpodia (2010) revealed that human resources undergo different forms of training and that there is a significance difference between the performance of human resources in relation to students' academic performance. Also, the performance of human resources has considerable effects on

students' academic performance. "He therefore concluded that school personnel should undergo training and attend regular workshops and seminars and recommended that the human resources in schools who are not trained professional staff should be advised to go for Post Graduate Diploma in Education to acquire teaching skills" (Nakpodia 2010, p. 1).

Table 3. Showing the Contingency Frequency values of the Relationship between Private Secondary Schools and Human Resource Management

Observed Frequency (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	(O-E)	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E
24	25.8	-1.8	3.24	0.13
20	20.8	-0.8	0.64	0.03
8	9.5	-1.5	2.25	0.24
12	13.6	-1.6	2.56	0.19
4	4.1	-0.1	0.01	0.002
44	41.9	2.1	4.41	0.11
8	13.4	5.4	29.16	2.18
12	11.7	0.3	0.09	0.007
16	16.8	-0.8	0.64	0.03
4	4.1	--0.1	0.01	0.002
4	4.1	-0.1	0.01	0.002
-	3.8	-3.8	14.44	3.8
-	3.3	-3.3	10.89	3.3
4	4.8	-0.8	0.64	0.133
6	5.8	0.2	0.04	0.006
4	4.1	-0.1	0.01	0.002
4	3.8	0.2	0.04	0.01
8	7.3	0.7	0.49	0.07
8	7.8	-0.2	0.04	0.005
-	2.8	-2.8	7.84	2.8
			Total	13.05

Calculated Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) Value = 13.05

Table Chi-Square( $X^2$ ) Value= 21.03 at 0.05, at 12 df

Level of significance =0.05

Degree of Freedom (df) = (No of columns-1)(No of rows-1)

Expected Frequency = {(Row Total)(Column Total)}/Grand Total

## 5. Findings, recommendations and conclusion

The paper found out that academic performance of students in private schools is better than the academic performance of students in public schools.

It was also revealed that private secondary schools have better infrastructure than public secondary schools in Nigeria.

The paper finally discovered that private secondary schools contribute minimally to the development of human resource in Nigeria.

From the foregoing findings, the following were recommended (Torulagha 2010, p.44):

*Access to private education should be extended even further by building on the initiatives already undertaken by the private schools themselves so as to promote students' academic performance. Such informal schemes could be extended and replicated by philanthropists and/or the state. With these, many more children of the poor could be empowered to attend private secondary schools. Private school managers themselves realize that their school infrastructure and facilities can be improved, and many are active in creating private school federations or associations that link together school managers in self-help organizations. Such associations are actively pursuing management and teacher training and curriculum development, as well as challenging the regulatory regimes imposed by government. They could be supported in their endeavours, perhaps through the creation of a global network of private schools and their associations that would conduct further research and disseminate information about the role of private schools for the poor to opinion leaders and policymakers.*

The government of Nigeria should create the enabling environment for private schools to thrive so that they can mobilize resources to develop their infrastructure and human resources.

In conclusion, the importance of education in our national development cannot be overemphasized. But it is glaring that government alone cannot provide the education needed in the country in adequate quantity and quality to achieve national development. Therefore, all hands should be on desk to provide functional education to the citizens of the country with a view to achieving the much needed national development.

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