

## Challenges of Commercializing Education in Nigeria in a Dwindling Economy: Implication on Educational Managers

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**Abstract.** This paper is a theoretical paper which examined the challenges of commercialising education in a dwindling economy in Nigeria. It described commercialisation as synonymous but with little difference to privatisation. While privatisation is the process of transferring ownership and control of a government owned business to private individuals for profit maximisation, commercialisation means that the government while retaining ownership, will hand off the funding and management of those enterprises leaving them to tend for themselves with whatever expertise they may have. The paper highlighted the goals, types, rationale, positive and negative impacts of commercialisation. It also looked at the concept of dwindling economy and its characteristics. From the negative impacts of commercialisation of education, its challenges in the face of dwindling economy become obvious. Among others, is the hike and high rate of school fees to the level that if quality education is to be achieved through private institutions it therefore means that it is only for those who can afford leaving the less privileged in the hands of the mercy of God. The paper therefore recommended among others, that if every citizen is to enjoy quality education then the government should continue to take full risk and responsibility of giving quality education to her citizens for the betterment of our society and development.

**Keywords:** Commercialization, commercialization of education, dwindling economy, management.

### 1. Introduction

Education is the knowledge that is imparted in schools and colleges that makes us to be independent and stand on one own feet. Education is a basic need. Every child has a fundamental right to acquire education. It is often the duty of the country and its government to give back to the country and take care of its people in the context of giving education that is free to the people, which in turn, help the country grow and prosper.

Management of education however is no longer what is used to be. Most countries such as UK and US have commercialised education and more countries are following the trend. In Nigeria the history of commercialization of education began with the private schools that were operated by the missionaries before they were taken over by the government. The Nigerian government later performed badly or disappointingly in maintaining and managing these schools. Educational sector really suffered a lot of setback including inadequate funding by state and federal governments, poor educational planning of preschool, primary, secondary, vocational and universities, non-functional facilities, disruption of academic calendars by academic staff etc. To arrest the failures of

educational system many private universities were been licensed in the country while various primary and secondary schools are also proliferated thus given rise to commercialisation and privatisation of education. It is believed that the rationale of commercialisation of education among others are to achieve quality of education through quality learning environment and infrastructure, manage economic recession, to reduce financial drain on the state in the form mobilisation of private resources to finance investments that can no longer be funded from public finances and the development of professional efficiency of teachers to be more effective to produce better results than public schools.

Unfortunately, in attempt to have quality education, through commercialising education in the hands of private individuals, it is no longer the case as usual especially about the knowledge the students gain, but about how much money can be extracted to get what one wants. Commercialised education is characterised with high cost of fees and seems to be made the exclusive preserve of the rich and for the highest bidder especially when it comes to private own institutions which are there to supplement the government efforts. In the face of dwindling economy characterised with unemployment, loss of jobs, high cost of living, loss of business, fall in investment and production of capital goods, reduction in income and aggregate demand, fall in business and profit (Amarachukwu, Friday & Timothy) etc, caused by oil fall and now pandemic virus, what is the fate of less privileged Nigerians of having the chance of getting the basic education they need.

Rather than helping to manage economic recession and to help in achieving quality education in Nigeria, commercialisation of education becomes the other way round. Though commercialization of education might have its advantages, the author is of the feelings that in the face of a dwindling economy, it is posing many challenges especially when coming from the angle of the cost involved. The aim of the paper therefore is to highlight the challenges of commercialization of education in the face of a dwindling economy in Nigeria. However in

attempt to do that, concepts such commercialization, commercialisation of education, origin of commercialization of education, impacts of a commercialised education, dwindling economy and its characteristics will be reviewed.

## 2. The Concept of Commercialization

Commercialization is the process of managing or running something principally for financial gain. It is the process of introducing new product or service to the general market. It can also be seen as the process of introducing a new production method into commerce making it available on the market (Wikipedia)

Zayyad (2004) defined commercialisation as the reorganisation of enterprises wholly and partially owned by government in which such commercialised enterprises shall operate as profit making commercial venture without subvention from government.

Commercialization is also somehow synonymous but with little difference to privatisation. According to Ayodele (2004) in Chukwuma, Odiwo, Kifordu, (2016) privatisation is the process of transferring ownership and control of a government owned business to private individuals. It is a transfer of ownership right from a public agency to the private sector. It is the sale of government owned assets and the opening of certain markets to the private sector. Privatisation has also been defined by privatisation and Commercialisation Act of 1988 and the Bureau of Public Enterprises Act of 1993 as the relinquishment of part or all of the equity and other interests held by the Federal Government or any of its agencies in enterprise whether wholly or partly owned by the Federal government.

Privatisation is the transfer of ownership of enterprise to the general public through sales of their shares on the stock market or private placement. Privatisation can be said to ensure the elimination of inefficiency and the injection of efficiency in the management of the enterprise. When this is done it will have a new lease of life, price, of products, services will tend to be competitive.

On the other hand Commercialization according Chukwuma, Odiwo, Kifordu, (2016) is the practice of making a profit from services or activities formerly offer free or at low price to the public. To Chris (N.D) it simply means that the government while retaining ownership will hand off the funding and management of those enterprises leaving them to tend for themselves with whatever expertise they may have. Whether commercialization or privatisation the focus is profit maximisation. How can government own an enterprise and will not fund and manage it. Handing over the funding and management leads to privatisation. Therefore, in this paper commercialisation and privatisation are used as one, as our discussion is focused on commercialisation of education in the hands of private individuals.

### 2.1 Rationale of Commercialisation

According to (2016), the following are some of the rationale of commercialization in government enterprises or agencies:

- To overcome inefficiency enterprise
- To manage economic recession
- Bringing about a reduction in government expenditure and imports
- Reduce financial drain on the state in the form mobilisation of private resources to finance investments that can no longer be funded from public finances.
- Generation of new sources of tax and revenue etc.

### 2.2 Goals of Commercialisation

Zayyad (2004) identified the following as the main goals of commercialisation:

- To create a more result oriented and accountable management based on performance contracts.
- To strengthen the financial control at the enterprise level.
- To upgrade the management information system of the affected enterprise
- To ensure financial solvency of the enterprise through effective cost

recovery and control and prudent financial management.

- To provide enhanced operational autonomy at the enterprise level
- To remove bureaucratic bottleneck and political interference through clear role definitions between the supervising ministry, the board of directors and the management of public enterprises (pp 4-5).

### 3 Origin of Commercialization in Nigeria

In Nigeria, as already said, the history of commercialization of education began with the private schools that were operated by the missionaries before they were taken over by the government. The recent trend of the emergence of private institutions in Nigeria emerged largely as a result of the incapacity of the government to satisfy the increasing educational demands. They have evolved during two historical periods. The first during the period of Nigeria's second republic experiment (1979-1983) private universities emerged without any defined educational planning for their development and were later abolished by a military regime in 1984. Both prior to and during this period official thinking followed mainly two presidential commissions on higher education in Nigeria, the Ashby Commission (1962) and the Cookey Commission (1981) that were very conservative about proliferation of universities (public and private).

In 1986 the idea of privatisation and commercialization was made a conscious policy when President Ibrahim Babaginda budget speech clearly stated that the Federal and state government would embark on transfer of government interests in agricultural industrial and commercial enterprises.

The second period in the evolution of private universities occurred as a planned development project under the Obasanjo led government of 1999-2007 which issued licences to private individuals and organisations to establish private polytechnics, monotronics and universities.

### 4. What is Commercialization of Education?

Commercialisation of education is a trend of decreasing emphasis on the humanities and increasing attention to the demand of the students. It is a tendency which gives emphases on to make education profitable as well as business oriented.

Ogbogu and Caulfield (2015) defined commercialisation of education as the restructuring of an institution owned by government wholly or partially, giving them the right to accumulate profit. This means that profit maximisation and sustaining such institution are the driving forces to commercialisation of education as a way of preventing total collapse facing managerial and funding problems.

According to Borgoham (2016) the focus of commercialised education is that students are paying more for education than the government invests. According to Roman (2016) commercialisation of education as carried by Corporations, is the practice of altering or disrupting the teaching and learning process in schools from kindergarten through college, by introducing and advertising other commercial activities in order to increase profit. Nor (2015) says commercialization of education is same as privatisation. After education becomes commercialised the proprietors of institutions consider profit as the main criteria. In fact commercialisation of education may be seen as a process of private ownership and management of educational institutions whereby investments are made with the motive of earning profits. It is a situation where education is seen as a commodity that can be purchased like any other. Commercialisation of education is an international phenomenon which means, the movement of education from being the responsibility of government to that of commercial individuals and organisations (Twebaze, 2015).

From the definitions above it can be deduced that commercialization of education means making education a business with profit motive. Rather than seeing education as service to be rendered by the government, education is now a business operation where the services are sold to the recipients who should be ready to pay for its price.

#### 4.1 Impacts of a Commercialised Education

Commercialisation of education has both positive and negative impacts. The following are some of the positive impacts:

- Increase of private institutions which substitute government owned institutions.
- Provision of employment opportunity to the citizens
- It helps in personal development of individuals.
- It helps in economic development of the country.
- Leads to quality of education in terms of quality learning environment and infrastructure in some of the institutions.
- Reduction of the cost of education on public funds through student fees (Odebiya and Aina, 1999).
- Fulfilment of expectations of parents. Every parent tries their best to provide quality education to their wards and to fulfil their dreams
- Development of professional efficiency of teachers.
- Privately managed and regulated schools are generally supposed to be more effective efficient and produce better results than public schools.
- Parents who can afford can desire to choose the school to which they send their children.
- Enhances economic development as it is a source of income to owners of private institutions
- Increased vacancies for more teaching and non-teaching staff thereby helping to solve a small percent of the problem of unemployment in our nation as well as prospective students seeking admission.
- Safe guarding the unnecessary prolonging of school programs due to strike actions by both academic and non-academic staff.

Negative impacts include:

- It is education for sales to the highest bidders (Sam 2018).
- Extremely for those for those who can afford (Zainab, 2016)

- Only the highest bidders can purchase
- Unethical practices of obtaining degrees with money
- Exploitation of the people and the society to suffer
- Less salary to teachers and other workers.
- Poor conditions of service of teachers
- Proliferation of privately owned mushroom schools
- High cost and hiking of school fees
- Students paying more than the government
- Unable to maintain the principle of equality in education
- More profit oriented than knowledge to be acquired.
- Materialistic outlook- paying money to take education
- More emphasis on marks
- Main focus is profit maximization
- Made the exclusive preserve of the rich (Kumar, 2017)
- An act of blunder to facilitate few rich people in the business

### 5. The Concept of dwindling Economy

According to the Collins English Dictionary (2014), dwindling means growing less in size, intensity or number until there is nothing or almost nothing left. It means diminishing or shrinking gradually (Wikipedia). Economy is the state of a country or region in terms of production and consumption of goods and services and the supply of money. An economy is an area of the production, distribution or trade and consumption of goods and services by different agents. According to Shawn Grimsley an economy is a system of organisation and institutions that either facilitate or play a role in the production and distribution of goods and services in a society. Economies determine how resources are distributed among members of a society; they determine the value of goods or services and they ever determine what sorts of things can be traded.

According to Yaura and Muhammed (2020) dwindling economy put together is known as depression economy or economy depression

interchangeably and or recess economy. It is an occurrence wherein an economy is in a state of financial turmoil, often the result of a period of negative activity based on the country Gross domestic product (GDP) rate. An example of the factor that led to this dwindling economy is the fall of oil and the recent pandemic virus (COVID-19) which has been ravaging the human race and leading to the decline in GDP. This forces degradation in the performance of economic sectors, retrenchment of staff and wrapping up of industries etc. It is a difficult time for the economy of a country where there is less trade and industrial activity than usual and more people are unemployed. Dwindling economy is the backward movement of the economy from previous position. It is characterised by layoffs or employment falls, loss of business, fall in investment and production of capital goods, reduction in come and aggregate demand, fall in business and profit (Amarachukwu, Friday and Timothy). Others according to Uzie (2016) are decrease in sales and services due to decreased finances available to individuals and families, reduction in workforce and loss of jobs, high cost of living etc.

### 6. Challenges of Commercialisation of education in a dwindling economy in Nigeria

In as much as commercialisation of education is good in itself and by going through the negative impacts as already been listed, it has posed a lot of challenges to Nigerians especially the less privileged in a period of dwindling economy characterised with unemployment, loss of jobs, etc. in Nigeria.

#### 6.1 Inability of less privileged to be able to send their wards to quality and standard schools

If getting good and quality education is all about private institutions, it means most children will not be able to afford such quality education due to high cost of school fees. For some years now as rightly remarked by (Ezebuio, 2020) private educators are really doing a lot to provide standard and quality education for Nigerians but

the challenge is the better the school the more expensive it will be. Looking at the poor and below standard condition of our public schools, these private schools are gaining more patronage than one may ever imagine not minding the dwindling economy of the nation.

These private educators hike up the school fees to the extent that those who will want their children to receive quality education, and withdraw their children from public schools and enrol them in private schools struggle to provide a few thousand to settle their children fees. Some of these school fees are so high that one imagines how less privileged Nigerians can afford to give their children the required education. Let us take a look at some of these Nigeria private schools and their fees as put down by Ezebuoro (2020):

- Regent School Maitama Abuja=N1.35 million per year
- Bloombreed High School Port Harcourt=N1.5 million
- Lead british International School, Abuja= N1.5million
- Norwegian International School Port Harcourt= N1.8million
- Greenoak International School Port Harcourt= N1.9 million
- International Commuinity School, Abuja= N1.9 million
- White plain british school Abuja= N1.6million
- Charles Dale Memorial International School, Port Harcourt=N2 million
- Downen College, kekki, Lagos= N2 million
- Chrisland College, Ikeja =N2 million
- Atlantic hall, Epe, Lagos = N2.27million
- Corona Secondary school, Agbara Ogun State = N2.55 million
- Hillcrest School, Jos = N2.65 million
- Day Waterman College, Abeokuta = N3.7 million
- Grange high School, Lagos= N4.5million etc.

From the cost above it therefore implies that education is made for sales to the highest bidders (Sam, 2018). Also with hiking of school fees and students paying more, the

commercialised education becomes exclusive preserve of the rich (Kumar, 2017) etc. In the face of dwindling economy, it is not possible for the less privileged to be able to send their wards to such a school.

## **6.2 Undue increase competition by parents leading to forced expenditure**

A trend in the private school system is the notion of school visitation by parents as a way of giving their children the opportunity to check on the progress of the children. According to chukwuma and Ezepure (2018), that activity has turned showing their family's financial might by way of expensive goodies given to these children. As such children from low income families are stigmatised or their parents being forced to spend beyond their income in order to match the competition. This has continued to increase the cost-burden on the parents and robs them funds that would have been used for investment or to create more wealth for the family and nation at large.

## **6.3 Producing graduates with super grades that can hardly perform**

In a bid to create an impression that a particular school is good some as rightly posits by Chukwuma and Ezepure (2018) some resort to giving students good grades even when they do not deserve. Students are passed with high class but in the world of work where they will make their contributions; their performances are found wanting leading to graduates remaining unemployed or unemployable.

## **6.4 Poor payment of salaries to workers**

Apart from the above, teachers in some of these private institutions work more than what they are paid. In private secondary schools specially, most teachers are paid monthly peanut as salaries while the general condition of service is very poor. In most times as remarked by Azunda (2017) teachers' salaries are not paid when due while in many months they are not paid at all. What level of contribution to the society will these teachers have and how can their children also get basic education? Since they do not earn

well it means they have to take huge amount of loans with high interest to get their children educated.

### **6.5 Poor condition of service for servicing teachers**

Apart from the less salary of teachers, poor condition of servicing teachers is also a problem. Employed teachers of these private institutions are not stable and they lack job security. The recent pandemic virus in the nation for instance pushed aside many of these teachers without pay while some totally lost their jobs without sympathy from their employers. This could be as a result of no outstanding policy protecting their job. In a dwindling economy characterised with high cost of living, how could such persons survive it.

### **6.6 Proliferation of Mushroom schools that lack quality**

The challenge of proliferation of mushroom schools that lack quality, due to profit maximization attached to private institutions, cannot be overemphasised. In such schools the quality of education suffers tremendously. Some of these mushroom private schools cannot be differentiated from the public schools. The students who pass out from those institutions are inept that cause severe damage to the society. While parents are busy paying huge sums of money students are not given the desired quality education and the end point is that they cannot perform well in the labour market and their productivity will be low. In this case the economy will continue to be affected adversely.

## **7. Implications to educational managers**

Management is the process of getting things done through the use of human and material resources. Olga (2011) defined management as a process of coordinated activities involving planning, organising, directing the activities of an organisation to determine and accomplish stated objectives with the use of human beings and material resources. Educational management can be viewed as a political arena where people bargain, lobby and for power and even struggle

for power and influence over education policies especially during its formulation. Educational management can also be perceived as a democratic process where educational professionals in diverse disciplines converge and participate equally or at least on a representative level in the formulation and planning of education programs (Obasi, 2005).

In this paper educational managers are policy makers who are at the head of educational affairs who are expected to set goals, make and influence decisions, share power, allocate and expend resources as well collectively achieve goals. In this perspective educational managers are the ministers, Commissioners, directors of education with their relevant experts in the fields of education. They formulate policies on education based on national and state objectives. They are those who are the top of educational management overseeing the overall management of both private and public schools

The challenges of commercialising education in Nigeria have implications on education managers. It implies that they should do the following:

- Have regular monitoring of these commercialised institutions to assess their quality and standard so as to produce quality students
- Ensure that the management of commercialised institutions are well regulated in terms of given adequate policies that will guide a moderate and affordable school fees to be paid in these private institutions.
- Ensure education quality assurance to help check and reduce abuse of proliferation of private mushroom institutions.
- To ensure good operational environment for effective operation of educational institutions.

## **8. Conclusion**

Nigeria like other countries of the world has adopted the policy of commercialisation of it governmental programmes including education.

It is a way to bring sanity especially quality of education into the system. This paper has been able to look at the impacts of commercialised education, and challenges of commercialisation of education in the face of dwindling economy in Nigeria. From the reviews it is observed that commercialisation has both positive and negative impacts. The negative impacts on its part pose some challenges to Nigerians especially the less privileged in the face of a dwindling economy. The implication of this on education managers is that they should ensure that the management of commercialised institutions are well regulated.

### 9. Recommendations

Based on the conclusion the following recommendations are made on the way forward:

- Government through should continue to take full risk and responsibility of educating all her citizen for the betterment of society and development.
- The government should take the responsibility of giving her citizens quality and standard education so that everyone irrespective of class should have access.
- The government through education managers should enact employment policy that will guarantee workers job security in terms of stability and safety in private institutions
- In as much as profit motive is a strong character of commercialised education the government should enact economic policy that will guide a moderate and affordable school fees to be paid in these private institutions.
- The government should give adequate maintenance of public schools in terms of quality infrastructure, quality teachers to lift up the poor state of most public schools.
- The government should adhere to 26<sup>th</sup> percent of annual budget recommended by UNESCO in funding education. When this is done greater number of the citizens will benefit while few private institutions will still serve to

compliment the efforts of the government.

- Government should ban all mushroom private institutions that lack quality to produce quality students as well as adequate welfare to staff.

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