

Private Participation in Providing Primary School Facilities: A Survey of Nasarawa North Senatorial Zone

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Abstract

It is expected that all children of primary school age should be enrolled in primary schools. It is however, obvious that the government cannot provide enough primary schools to cater for the exponentially growing populations, hence, the need for private participation. Regrettably, a larger part of the populace is not beneficiaries of private participation in the provision of basic education. This study discovered that private providers of primary and nursery schools are concentrated in urban centers that represent a minute part of the population. It was also seen that the fees charged by these private providers are above the reach of the peasant majority in the Nigerian socio economic settings. From the findings, recommendations are made.

Key words: Private, primary, facilities, population

1. Introduction

Nigeria is a populous country, Okolo, (1999). These teeming millions of people serve as a huge human capital base that must be developed in order to enhance economic and social development of the nation. The Federal Government of Nigeria has taken education as an instrument par excellence in bringing about national development, NPE (2004).

Education at the primary level is given to children between the ages of 6 – 11. The rest of the education system is built upon the primary school education. Thus primary education is the determinant of the success or otherwise of the whole educational system.

According to NPE (2004), primary education shall be tuition free, universal and compulsory. Government welcomes the participation of voluntary agencies, communities and private individuals in establishing and managing primary schools as long as they meet the minimum standards laid down by the Federal Government. In spite of these good policy statements, statistics shows that of the 42 million Nigerian children who ought to be in primary schools, less than 24 million are actually in schools. This accounts for over 43% of children out of primary school sector, Son (2010).

School enrolment has come short of the desired standard. It is obvious that the government cannot provide enough primary schools to cater for the exponentially growing populations, hence, the need for private participation. The question this paper answers include: what is the spread of these private schools? And are they affordable to the average citizens?

2. Statement of problem

In view of Federal Government policy that made primary education tuition free, universal and compulsory, it is expected that all children of primary school age should be enrolled in primary schools. It matters little if parents belonged to any cadre in the socio-economic strata, Onche, Wokhe & Aklo (2010). The provision of education at this level, since it is compulsory should have been backed by necessary legislation against parents who are even unwilling to send their children to school.

However a colossal number of children who should be in schools are seen on the streets doing all sorts of things during school hours. This became the acute need for primary schools to be established and managed by organs other than government, private individuals inclusive.

Though there is an increasing participation of private individuals in establishing and managing primary school, the question still remains: do these private ownership of primary schools aid the universality of primary education as intended by government? Are they affordable to the ordinary Nigerian?

This paper took a look at the spread of private schools in the selected areas, and the financial requirements on the part of parents who may engage their services in the training of their children.

3. Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the occurrences of private schools in urban and rural settlements.
2. The fees charged by these private primary schools are not affordable to the average peasant Nigerian.

4. Population

The entire Nasarawa state forms the population for this study

5. Sample

Three local governments (Akwanga, Wamba and Nasarawa Eggon) were randomly selected for the study. These three local governments constitute the Nasarawa North Senatorial zone of Nasarawa state. There are three of such zones in the entire state.

6. Procedure

Statistics of all the privately owned primary schools are collected from the zonal education offices of the local governments in the sampled area. Such details like year of establishment and location are collected. A visit to a sample of these private schools is made to get information of how much they charge as school fees. The per capital income of Nigeria is collected from relevant source. These data were analyzed to determine the spread and their cost and thus determine the effectiveness of private participation in the fulfillment of the national policy of education as it concerns the primary school sector.

7. Literature Review

Private participation in the establishment and management of primary schools is not peculiar to Nigeria. Chiedel, Sekwao and Kirumba (2000) assert the increasing participation of non governmental primary schools since government lifted the ban in the mid 90s. Even with this increased participation of non-governmental agencies, the enrollment collectively is yet to get the desired result. Lockheed & Jimenez (1994) lamented that even though the public sector has played a very valuable role in the provision of education and health, the share of public subsidies (participation/investment) in these sectors is not progressive. This may be true in Nigeria. Even though private primary schools are springing up here and there at a rapid rate, we still have millions of children who are out of school of the primary school age.

Bedi and Garg (2000) indicate the presence of private participation in providing primary education in Indonesia. According to them, 97% enrollment in primary school is in government owned primary schools; this leaves at least 3% of total enrollment to private schools. Lewin (2007) taking South Africa for instance, noted that 80% of households receive income less than 50,000 rands per year. Except charges in schools are subsidized, households outside the top 20% can not afford private schooling. Citing Lewin (2007) the case is the same in countries like Benin, Ghana, Zambia, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda.

Bedi and Garg (2000) posit that public schools in Indonesia are better than the private schools with the exception of catholic/protestant owned schools. However in Nigeria, Adebayo (2009) points out that reasonable and responsible parent send their children to private schools to ensure the acquisition of quality education. Whichever position one may take, Lewin (2007) posits that primary schooling is a universal right and as such should be the responsibility of the state to provide. Any contrary action will lead to the marginalization of the majority poor, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

8. Results

Table 1: Spread of Private Nursery/primary between local government headquarters and other parts of the local government.

Local Government Headquarters	Total no. of Private Nursery/primary Schools in the Local Government Council	Total no. of Private Nursery/primary Schools in the Local Government Headquarters	Total no. of Private Nursery/primary Schools in the Local Government Headquarters
Akwanga	75	66	9
Nasarawa Eggon	15	15	0
Wamba	7	7	0

Table 1 shows the spread of private primary and nursery schools in the study area. Akwanga Local Government has 66 out of 75 private primary and nursery schools representing 88% located inside the Local Government headquarters, while other parts of the local government have 9 schools representing 12%. Nasarawa Eggon local Government has 15 private primary and nursery schools all located at the Local Government headquarters. Wamba Local Government has 7 private primary and nursery primary schools all located at the Local Government headquarters.

The population of private nursery/primary schools is in the order Akwanga>Nasarawa Eggon>Wamba.

Table 2: Comparison of fees charged per term by some of the schools-Randomly selected

Local Government Head Quarters	Fees charged
Akwanga	12,500
Nasarawa Eggon	6000
Wamba	6000

Table 2 shows that the average fees charged by the private primary and nursery schools per pupil per term in Akwanga Local Government is N12,500 Naira, while Wamba and Nasarawa Eggon charge N6,000 (N =Naira).

9. Discussion

The study shows that the private primary and nursery schools in the area studied are concentrated in the Local Government headquarters. It then follows that the larger part of the populace are not beneficiaries of private participation in the provision of basic education. Therefore hypothesis 1 which stated that there is no significant difference between the occurrences of private schools in urban and rural settlements is hereby, rejected.

The study discovered that the average fees charged per term per pupil ranged from 6,000 Naira in Wamba and Nasarawa Eggon Local Governments to 12,500 Naira in Akwanga Local Government. Going by the world Bank report, cited in Nigeria Vanguard newspapers (Retrieved on 15/1/2014), Nigerians living on \$1.25 form 29.6% of the total population, while those living on \$2 per day form 83.9% of the total population. According to that report, 25% of people in developing countries live on less than \$1.25 per day. Hypothesis 2 which states that the fees charged by these private primary schools is not affordable to the average peasant Nigerian, is hereby not rejected.

10. Conclusion

From the results of the study, it is clearly demonstrated that the availability of private primary and nursery schools is limited to a negligible few in the area under study. To worsen the matter, not many parents who struggle to fend for their families are able to afford the fees charged by these private schools. The implication of this on national development is that rich parents will continue to purchase education for their children and this will lead to inequality being passed on to each successive generation (Bedi & Garg 2009).

11. Recommendations

- 11.1 The three tiers of Government in Nigeria must see education as a right of the citizenry and rise to invest appropriately in the sector to rescue imminent socio decomposition.
- 11.2 In siting such schools, Government agencies should encourage a distribution that makes the presence of such schools be found evenly in their jurisdiction.
- 11.3 Government may need to grant aid these private primary and nursery schools. Since the reason for the high fees charged by these schools is to cater for staff salaries, provide infrastructures and some left for profit.

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