

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF MANAGING PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KANO STATE

BY

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Abstract

Education is the process of bringing desirable changes in the behaviour of human beings. To achieve these, the educational system needs to pass through a sector either public educational sector or private educational sector. Public educational sector is an educational system which is owned and controlled by the government and private educational sector is owned and controlled by an individual, cooperative individuals, voluntary agencies or faith based organizations. The private school system has contributed immensely to the development of education and by extension manpower base of Kano State. It continues to do so even now. However, as private enterprises, most owners of private schools run their schools clearly as private property often paying little attention to laws governing the operations of the education industry. This has presented challenges to the state in a bid to run and deliver education needed for sustainable development of the state. This paper looks at

the possible challenges and prospects of managing private secondary schools in Kano State and recommends among other things that private schools in the state should be subjected to direct control, regulation and supervision of the State Ministry of Education. The implication is that education venture in Kano State must conform to state policy on education in terms of structure, learning programmes, activities, administration, provision, access and delivery. And also in licencing private ownership and operators in the education sector, government must ensure evidence of current practices for staff recruitment process, staff development, staff conditions of service, mid and long term development plan covering facilities, plant, staff and students personnel policy are put in order.

Keywords: Challenges, Prospects, Managing, Private Secondary Schools

Introduction

Education can be variedly defined depending on the purpose it is meant to serve and the discipline in perspective. Education is the process of bringing desirable change into the behaviour of human beings. It can also be seen as the process of imparting or acquiring knowledge or habits through instruction. Education in the specific term is a means of making individuals understand their society, its structures and functioning effectively in it. This enables individual's opportunity of creating meaning out of their environment and relationships with other individuals in the realm of language acquisition and thought to classify and provide

meaning to things, ideas and events. (Saidu and Ahmodu, 2016).

Education, for any nation, whether developed or developing, is to help solve the problems that affect that nation. This is why according to National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004), “Government has stated that for the benefit of all citizens, the country’s educational goals shall be clearly set out in terms of their relevance to the needs of the individual and those of the society, in consonance with the realities of our environment and the modern world.” Education is the instrument for social transformation of a people. It is the vehicle for transferring values, knowledge and experience that make for proper moulding and adjustment of an individual to his dynamic environment. To achieve these, the educational system needs to pass through a sector either public or private educational sector. Public educational sector is owned and controlled by the government and private educational sector is owned and controlled by an individual, cooperate individuals, voluntary agencies or faith based organizations.

Private Secondary Schools

This paper is concerned with secondary school, which is the second level of the educational structure. It is the level that offers children the opportunity to receive education after the primary stage and before the tertiary education. (Oke, 2018). Secondary school occupies a very strategic position in any national educational system; it determines the fate and dictates the pace of education at the primary and tertiary level. In Nigeria,

the broad goals of secondary education include the preparation of the individual for useful living within the society and for higher education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Today, the management and ownership of secondary schools in Nigeria is a joint responsibility of both the public and private sectors. Therefore, private secondary school can be seen as a school which is not funded by the government and which parents have to pay fees for their children.

The history of private participation in education in Nigeria cannot begin or end without a glowing mentioning of the contribution of the missionaries who came to Nigeria in Mid Nineteenth Century. In 1843 Methodists Missionary Society (MMS) founded the first school and in 1847 the Anglican Communion also established chains of schools. Before the coming of the missionaries Islamic education has covered most part of the North. The educational as at that time was purely on private participation basis where students gather under tree or in front Imam's house for lessons. For more than four decades now private schools have been run as profit oriented enterprises, often owned by an individual, cooperating individuals, voluntary agencies or faith based organizations. Private ownership of schools as earlier noted, dominated the education landscape of the country during the mid- nineteenth century leading up to the later part of that century. The missionaries were predominantly responsible for those schools. Private schools have persisted since then.

Private secondary schools can be categorized according to fee regimes, as Low Fee Paying (LFP) and

High Fee Pay (HFP). According to Agi (2013), the fee regimes are directly determined by owner's defined standards and characteristics and not subject to government regulation. Fee payment determines access and sometimes quality of programmes available in each school. Private secondary schools are run on the basis of cash for provision mostly. He revealed some of the following about private school: Financed privately, managed and run privately, operate in environment less than the standard of public schools, process of personnel recruitment/ quantity /quality of personnel strictly restricted, conditions of service strictly restricted, monitoring/evaluation system largely unknown, admission criteria/process determined by school, teacher development/training largely unknown, quality assurance measure largely undisclosed, government recognition largely unknown for many private secondary schools, all year round admission, indiscriminate registration of candidates for certificate examinations, ready platforms as miracle centres for external and internal examinations, limited/non availability of facilitates e.g. laboratories, libraries, demonstration farms, play grounds, etc. irregular school attendance by pupils to mention a few.

It is pertinent to note that while some private schools in the Kano State are rated highly in terms of academic performance, good facilities, discipline, and good school climate, majority are usually poorly rated and scarcely sought after, because they exhibit those characteristics that neither promote excellence in learning nor make contribution to education delivery.

Here lies the challenges that confront the private secondary schools management in Kano State.

Challenges of managing private secondary schools in Kano State

In Kano State, Caleb (2024), noted the following as challenges facing private secondary schools:

Deplorable learning conditions/environment

This included cracked decking and walls, stinking toilets, broken roofs, lack of electricity connection and unkempt classrooms. This was observed by a delegation from Kano State Private and Voluntary Institution Board (KSPVIB), when they conducted an unscheduled inspection to some private secondary schools on the 26th of July, 2024 monitored by newsmen. The school buildings where supported by woods and the buildings where students wrote exams were faulty. About 70% of private secondary schools in Kano State are sited in private homes or make shift buildings and do not have the capacity for further expansion in the nearest future. The provision of sporting facilities, library, convenience, dispensary, etc are functions of space in some private secondary schools, the classroom accommodation is grossly inadequate and hence, this is a situation that generally militates against effective teaching and intellectual development of the students

Financial challenges

Most private secondary schools in Kano State are small in size due to low patronage, astronomical cost of accommodation which retard their ability to acquire required specific environment and therefore are trapped in make shift houses or rented accommodation. Funding is paramount in the acquisition of facilities, quality teachers, educational resources and equipment, necessary to meet the set standards for operation of schools in the state or even elsewhere (Odeleye, Oyelamin and Abike, 2012). Economic downturns, inflation and rising operational cost have impacted private secondary schools budgets and fee structure, making it difficult to maintain quality education delivery.

Unstable staff

As for teaching staff in private secondary school today, the problem is no longer that of unavailability, but that of instability and sustainability. This does not help the development of the educational system in Kano State where western education has not been given enough prominence. Because of the comparatively poorer conditions of service of teachers in the Nigerian society, the tendency for many teachers in the nation's schools today, as was the case with their predecessors during colonial and post-colonial Nigeria, is to use the teaching profession as a stepping stone to other highly esteemed and more attractive jobs. As a result, teaching has become a profession for fresh graduates of universities and colleges of education who are ready to call it quit without provocation, as soon as they find greener pasture

elsewhere which is also the case of Kano State. From time to time, therefore, the staffing in private secondary educational institutions is usually unstable. Consequently, the teaching, learning process is always disrupted often times. Unless the conditions of service of teachers, at all levels, are improved and their status raised higher in the state in particular and Nigeria in general, the teaching staff of private secondary schools will continue to be unstable and educational progress will continue to be retarded.

Poor preparation and examination malpractice

Experts in the education sector have been able to identify examination malpractices with poor preparation of students for examinations both internal and external and lack of self-confidence. In view of the rising costs of education in terms of school fees, enrolment fees, cost of books and other materials, students and even their parents will not ordinarily want to be held back by any form of deficit or failure in any of the required subjects, hence will go to any length to ensure success. In some cases, some teachers in private secondary schools get involved in examination malpractice by way of encouraging student to contribute money (cooperation fees) in order to secure the needed assistance during such examinations, because the teachers are left with no other alternative considering the fact that they are aware of the inadequate preparation of their students as well as the lack of facilities to get them properly prepared before the examinations. And some private secondary schools want to be recognised as one of the best secondary schools in the state and hence, get involved in examination

malpractice without considering the later effects on the school, the students and the state.

Exploitation and educational standard

A close assessment of activities in private secondary schools have revealed that, students are made to suffer undue amount of exploitation by school heads in the name of enrolment fees and assurances of success in their examination and this they do in collaboration with the ministry officials who are supposed to inspect and monitor activities in school to ensure standard compliance. Despite the fact that most of the schools lack basic learning facilities and a complete set of teachers, in some cases, a school with the services of an English Language teacher will lack that of a Mathematics teacher. This is the more reason why one may not have the guts to query the mass promotion syndrome being practice in most private secondary schools under the watch of Ministry of Education officials because the system itself in not balanced (Saidu and Sandra 2015).

Poor parenting/guidance

Parenting entails caring, protection, guidance, provision of basic needs for a child's up keep in order for him or her to be properly equipped to meet with the challenges of life, in accordance with the laws of the land. In desperation, many parents have decided to bring in additional innovation by way of not only involved in encouraging, but also financing activities in and around examination venues to effect malpractices in order to

brighten the chance of their children or ward in qualifying examination to higher institutions and some even progress on this act through the tertiary level of education. (Sule, 2012)

Facilities / equipment

In accomplishing teaching and learning, facilities/equipments are central to any learner centred education. Most private secondary schools especially Low Fee Payment (LFP) may not be able to afford facilities/equipment necessary for offering certain subjects in the curriculum especially in the sciences, technical and vocational areas. This also causes most of these schools to focus more on social sciences and art subjects to the detriment of a balanced curriculum as required by the educational system. The state education policy weighs in on sciences, technical and vocational education and has encouraged this over the years. Therefore, private schools needing to operate should have equipment and facilities as emphasized in Kano State Education policy (Agi, 2013)

Poorly equipped libraries, laboratories and subject rooms:

For effective and efficient teaching and learning to take place, well equipped laboratories and subject rooms are needed, but the truth is that private secondary schools in Kano State today lack these essential facilities. Many of them have buildings of shelves they call libraries, but most of these are not equipped with

essential books and current journals and magazines. Also, many private secondary schools do not have science laboratories while a good number of them that have, do not possess the basic tools or equipment such as microscopes, dissecting instruments and specimens. Also, many private secondary schools do not have special rooms for teaching such basic subjects as history, geography and French. In such a situation, the teachers cannot put in their best and the students too cannot, therefore, the teaching-learning process is stalled and the overall development of the children within the school system is retarded (Ahmodu, Saidu and Yahaya 2015).

Prospects for private secondary schools in Kano State

Private school system in Kano State really can be improved to succeed and contribute more to realizing the goal of education for all. Despite the avalanche of challenges facing the system, collaborative efforts between operators of private secondary schools and government machineries can open new vistas. This is even so as private education providers are accepted as partners in national development. Opportunities for improvement of private secondary education abound in Kano State. These can be seen in the following ways:

Create a strong online presence

In this digital age in the private secondary schools, an impressive online presence cannot be underestimated and is also non-negotiable. A user friendly website coupled with active social media engagement on platforms such as facebook, X and

instagram can significantly boost private secondary school visibility and enhance their administrative and academic performance in Kano State. Harnessing online advertising to reach prospective students and their parents effectively and efficiently in terms of information generation and dissemination can be seen as avenue of reaching wider audience in the community for intake of more students and seeking financial assistance. More modern technological teaching aids should be provides by the schools. Online registration being introduced now for school examination enrolment by national examination bodies should be encouraged by owners of schools as this will reduce exploitative tendencies and cub examination malpractice to a large extent by the teachers, students, schools and parents respectively. Additionally, there should be more education and orientation of teachers, parents and students on the need to eschew examination malpractice in their schools. The incorporation of ICT in education offers opportunities for interactive learning, online resource sharing and distance education (Akinyemi, 2020).

Scholarship and financial aid

Private secondary school owners should make their schools accessible by offering scholarship and financial assistance to student and parents; these not only support families with financial constraints, but also contribute to the community's perception of the school's commitment to education and community development. Private secondary school owners should as much as possible access some available financial institutions to

assist with funds for the provision of facilities and equipment.

Community engagement

Involving communities in school management can foster a sense of ownership, accountability and support for private secondary schools. According to Eniola (2022), creating private schools in the community fosters closer relationship with parents leading to higher satisfaction retention rates. And the reputation of producing high quality students can enhance long term sustainability. Private secondary schools can partner with businesses, organizations and community groups to enhance learning opportunities and provide real-world experience.

Presence of more opportunities

Presence of private secondary schools in Kano State can create healthy competition among students; encourage innovations and improvement in the overall educational landscape. This is because students in private secondary schools are more exposed to more resources and opportunities for explorations and more enriching activities as a result of their small size in number. Studies have also suggested that students in private secondary schools tend to perform better than those in the public secondary schools especially in the public certificate examinations. And this can be attributed to higher teacher quality and frequent introduction of innovations in the private secondary schools.

Registration of unregistered/unapproved private secondary schools

This should be of utmost importance to the Kano State government for the regulation of the operation of the private secondary schools, taking into consideration that the majority of the low-cost private schools are unregistered. Which makes it impossible for government to monitor the activities of these schools and hence, unable to ensure that these low-cost private schools abide by the minimum criteria for the delivery of quality education in the state in particular and the country in general (Agwaomaodoko, 2024). In dealing with unregistered private secondary schools in Kano State, there is the need to set up a data base and a website by the Kano State Ministry of Education, where all private schools can upload their information as part of information gathering operations. All private owned secondary schools should be made to seek fresh license registration to curb the effects of poor standard of education and eradicate privately owned schools whose facilities are in dilapidated state and not up to date.

Conclusion

The private secondary school system has contributed immensely to the development of education and by extension manpower base in the state. It continues to do so even now. However, as private enterprises, most owners of private secondary schools have run their schools clearly as private property often paying little attention to laws governing their operations. This has presented challenges to the state in a bid to run

and deliver education needed for sustainable development of the state. Clearly the state must exercise its authority over the education sector as important as it is by ensuring that the other operators in the education system share the state's vision, values, principles which inform the objectives of state education. In order to remove some of the major problems of educational development in Kano State, the issue of responsibility and control must be resolved and a uniform system of education introduced and operated.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion of issues involved in this paper, the following recommendations are made:

- Private schools in the state should be subjected to direct control, regulation and supervision by Kano State Ministry of Education and relevant agencies. The implication is that education venture in Kano State must conform to state policy on education in terms of structure, learning programmes, activities, administration, provision, access and delivery.
- Frequent changes of subject syllabuses should be discouraged while teachers of all categories should be encouraged to remain in the same school for stipulated years before thinking of leaving to avoid disruption of school activities thereby retarding the academic performance of the students.
- In licencing private ownership and operators in private secondary school educational sector, government should ensure evidence of teaching qualification such as, Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE), Bachelor of

Education (B.Ed), Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) for staff recruitment, staff development, staff conditions of service, mid and long term development plan covering facilities, plant, staff and students personnel policy should be put in order by the schools.

●All private schools should be augmented with adequate equipment and facilities for teaching and learning by Kano State Ministry of Education, Kano State Secondary School Management Board and well to do philanthropists in the society.

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