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TEACHERS' ASSESSMENT OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITY AS AN AGENT OF SOCIAL SEGREGATION IN NIGERIA

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Amali, I.O.O. ; Bello M.B. & Etejere, P.A.O

Abstract

This was a descriptive survey research study designed to examine private University in relation to its functional perspective towards social orders. The objective is to assess its contribution towards the enhancement of social order based on its nature, quality and scope of education vis-à-vis the recipients and the society at large. It addressed three research questions, researchers' designed questionnaire were administered to 357 respondents. The result revealed that majority of the respondents which comprised male and female teachers believed that private Universities have contributed significantly to inequality among various social class in the society. It recommended among others that the federal government should ensure that privatization of education system specially the University system should be highly regulated in terms of policies to cater for all classes of Nigerian society. This will promote social equality and not inequality.

Introduction

Privatization is one of the hottest issues currently being debated in the education sector. It is fast becoming a widespread trend when considering education reform, as it eases the pressure on governments to meet increasing demand and relieves them of excessive investment in education. In developed countries, the issues of privatization involve a huge financial provision and accountability. Armor (1995) noted that privatization can be advantageous to parents, who are given more freedom and choice when deciding on schools for their children, and greater control over the ways their children are educated. Children enter the school system from different backgrounds, have different experiences of education, and leave with very different results. Children from the poorest and most

disadvantaged homes are most likely to attend the lowest performing schools and to achieve the poorest academic outcomes. Finding ways of breaking the chains of educational disadvantages, failures and restricted life chances remains a fundamental challenge to both parents and policy makers.

It is on the basis of this that the Nigerian government to embarked on the policy of privatization with the aim of solving this challenge. According to Oakes (1985) the term 'privatization' is an umbrella term referring to many different educational programmes and policies. As an overall definition, 'privatization is the transfer of activities, assets and responsibilities from government/public institutions and organizations to private individuals and agencies'. Also, privatization is often thought of as 'liberalization' – where agents are freed from government regulations, or as 'marketization' – where new markets are created as alternatives to government services or state allocation systems (Levin, 2001).

In the view of Taeuber and David (1982) privatization in education simply means increasing the role of parents in the financing of education. This movement has thus rather negative and threatening connotations: it is associated with increased inequalities in access to education and the breaking of social cohesion. For others, privatization is a much more positive move, implying more resources for the education sector, more efficient use of these resources, and more flexibility in education delivery. The debate is loaded with ideological considerations, and little evidence is produced.

In many developing countries, privatization of education has indeed brought about an increase in the share of private financing, sometimes at the basic education level, but more commonly at the post basic education level. The number of private schools and private universities has increased at the same time as fees have been introduced in some public schools. This trend has emerged largely as a result of the incapacity of the state to satisfy the increasing educational demand at all levels.

The privatization movement is, however, much more complex than a mere increase in private funding. Sociologist of education such as Blakemore and Cooksey (1981) has said that privatization can take many forms: an increase in the number of fully privately managed and funded schools; privately managed schools financed by public funds; public schools fully or partially financed by private funds; public schools run as private institutions and which compete for public funds; private courses complementing the education provided in public schools or universities; private contracting of certain services; distance courses, etc.

New information technology opens the way to many new forms of privately financed education to satisfy many different needs. Indeed, Privatization programmes are diverse and can be designed to meet several objectives. As Reardon and Glenn (2002) pointed out that private education do promote equity, while not all public funding is equitable.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the how privatization of basic schools contributed to social segregation. Specifically the study examined;

- a. The contribution of private university to the enhancement of inequality in the society.
- b. How private universities have contributed to the promotion of social segregation.
- c. How privatization of University education helps to improve the quality of education provided to the selected few learners.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study.

- a. What are the contributions of private university to the enhancement of inequality in the society?
- b. *How* has the privatization of universities in Nigeria contributed to the promotion of social segregation?
- c. How has the privatization of University education helped to improve the quality of education provided to the selected few learners?

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used in this study. The choice of the descriptive survey was in line with Akuezuilo and Agu (2003), who maintained that it is concerned with gathering of information on peoples' opinion. The target population for this study comprised all the teachers of private Universities in Kwara State, Abuja and Adamawa, with a total population of 1,132 teaching staff out of which 357 respondents were purposively sampled. This is in line with Research Advisors (2006) table for selecting the sample size. The respondents consisted of both male and female teachers. Purposive sampling technique was used to select three private Universities from the three States of the North-central, North-West. And North-East. While proportionate sampling technique was

adopted in the selection of 98, 109 and 150 respondents from each of the geo-political zone respectively.

A -9 item four-point-Likert scale researchers designed questionnaire was used for eliciting the needed data from the respondents. The questionnaire items were validated by experts in the Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin to ensure its face and content validity. This is in line with Sambo (2008) who maintained that the best procedure for validating research instrument is to give it to a panel of experts. A test- re-test reliability method was carried out with a sample of four secondary schools within Ilorin metropolis. Three-week interval period was given. The scores of the first were correlated with the scores of the second using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient and reliability index of 0.62 was obtained. The questionnaire contained two sections. Bio-data of the respondent constituted the first section while the second contained 9 items with 4 points responses (Strongly Agree= SA, Agree=A, Disagree=D and Strongly Disagree=SD). The questionnaires were administered to the respondents. The data collected was analyzed using mean rating with accepted mean score 2.5.

Results

The results of the analysis was presented in the tables below

Research Question 1: What are the contributions of private university to the enhancement of social inequality in the society?

Table 1: Responses on the contributions of private University to the enhancement of social inequality in the society.

S/No	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1.	The composition of students in private universities do not give adequate representation of the population in the society.	133	179	35	10	3.21
2.	Private and public University education provides different, and unequal, educational experiences to different groups	221	93	37	10	3.48
3.	Classrooms teaching in private school promote class difference in the society.	231	87	25	14	3.66

The above table shows the mean value of the respondents ranging from 3.2 to 3.6 which is greater than the accepted mean value of 2.5. This is an indication that the teacher's believed that private university has contributed in no small measure to the inequality among the various social class in the society.

Research question 2: How has the privatization of universities in Nigeria contributed to the promotion of social segregation?

Table 2: Responses on the contribution of private university in Nigeria to the promotion of social segregation.

S/No	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1.	Composition of students in the private universities do not promotes social interaction students from different social class.	157	180	11	9	3.66
2.	Attending private University prevent students of different social class in the society learn from others.	301	55	—	2	3.80
3.	The population which most private universities accommodates does not give adequate representation of the larger population of the society	257	87	5	8	3.66

Table 2 reveals the mean value of the teachers ranging from 3.6 to 3.8, meaning that private universities in Nigeria society does not promote social cohesion.

Research question 3: How has the privatization of University education helped to improve the quality of education provided to the selected few learners?

Table 3: responses on the quality of education provided at the private Universities.

S/No	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1.	Private school restrict students exposure with in groups	312	45	-	-	3.87
2.	Private school provide the children with educational quality superior to public schools	188	77	61	31	3.18
3.	Private school provide the children with educational quality superior to public schools	259	51	29	18	3.66

Table 3 shows the mean value of teachers assessment of the quality of education provided by private universities ranging from 3.1 to 3.8, this is greater than accepted mean value of 2.5. Meaning there is difference in the quality of education offer by both private and public universities.

Discussion

Since Horace Mann's description of the "public school," one of the stated goals of Nigerian education according to the National Policy on Education (2004) has been to build a just and egalitarian society, by bringing students of different backgrounds together in school. The belief that government-operated schools would mix students better than private schools was one of the primary justifications for the development and growth of a universal system of public schools. The 'public or government owned school teaches children important lessons about both the commonality and diversity of Nigerian culture. These lessons are conveyed not only through what is taught in the classroom, but by the very experience of attending school with a diverse mix of students. Public owned school has been thought to be essential for producing integrated education, private schools, based on the voluntarily association of individuals, have generally been held as not conducive to integration. This is because school systems are segregated and therefore they were assumed to be providing different, and unequal, educational experiences to different groups.

Privatization of Nigeria University education created a good avenue for social class division among the various groups in the society. This system made access to qualitative education an essential commodities of a particular group of individuals (that is upper class). This is in agreement with the opinion Blakemore and Cooksey (1981) that the provision of education should be subjected to free market discipline. And that families and individuals ought to pay fees in order to access nominally available public services, otherwise these services would not be available or their quality would become unacceptably low. This is an indication that, those who are indigent may not be able to pay and they might be deprived of an access to quality education. Thus, qualitative education is for special group of the society who constitute the minority part of the population. Private institution only promote social integration and closeness within classes of people from the same social class, since it is only parents who can afford the huge fee charge that would enroll their children.

This finding is in agreement with the study of Taeuber and James (1982) and Page and Keith (1981) which revealed that private universities contributed positively to social segregation in the society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion, the following recommendations are made;

- i. The federal government should ensure that privatization of education system specially the University system is highly regulated in terms of policies and programme that will promote equality and not inequality.
- ii. The Nigeria University Commission (NUC) should formulate and also refocus the existing minimum standard to take care of the qualitative education among Nigeria university graduates. Also engaged in regular monitoring and accreditation to ensure that quality is maintained in the institution.
- iii. Effort should be intensified to ensure that Private Universities are regulated in areas such as fees, and other cost, so that the general masses could also have opportunity to attend such school.

Conclusion

It was generally observed by the respondents that privatization of University education has successfully helped to widen the gap of social inequality in the society, this it does through it quality of education among others.

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