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**Chima Daniel Nwosu (Ph.D)**

Department Educational  
Management (Economics of  
Education), Faculty of  
Education, University of Port  
Harcourt, Nigeria

**Okekeuche Eucheria. C (Ph.D)**

Department Educational  
Management (Educational  
Administration), Faculty of  
Education, University of Port  
Harcourt, Nigeria

**Correspondence:**

**Chima Daniel Nwosu (Ph.D)**

Department Educational  
Management (Economics of  
Education), Faculty of  
Education, University of Port  
Harcourt, Nigeria

## Constraints to Private Sector Participation in the Development of Secondary Education in Abia State. Nigeria

**Chima Daniel Nwosu, Okekeuche Eucheria. C**

### Abstract

This study hinged on constraints to private sector participation in the development of secondary education in Abia State. The researcher formulated two objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses to guide the work. The population of the study comprised of 190 secondary schools. The sample size of 1500 private and public secondary school staff were drawn through stratified random sampling technique. An instrument called “Constraints to private sector participation in the development of secondary school education assessment questionnaire (CPSPDSEAQ)” was used for data collection. Means, and rank order statistics were used to answer the two research questions, while z-test statistics was used to test the null hypothesis. The following findings were made: private schools, non-governmental organizations, business owners/wealthy individuals, MTN Nigeria and other networks, Banks, Parents Teachers Association (PTA), old students association, Shell Petroleum and other oil companies, and publishing houses fall under private sector that participate in the development of secondary education in Abia state. Private sector participates actively in the development of secondary education in Abia State. The study recommended that government should establish a functional framework for the establishment, control and supervision of private schools in Abia State, Private investors should be encouraged to expand to rural areas to avoid overcrowding in the cities.

**Keywords:** Constraints, Private Sector, Participation, Development, Secondary Education.

### Introduction

The Nigerian society, before the advent of western education, was not without education. Taiwo (1985) describes this type of education as the one, which each Nigerian community has handed down to succeeding generations. He regards such education as living in conformity. Basically, this type of education still exists side by side with the western style of education. According to the Federal Ministry of Education (2004), the basic legal framework for educational management in the country, as provided in the 1999 constitution, spells out basic national objectives for education. It stipulates that the government should seek to ensure equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels, to promote science and technology and to eradicate illiteracy. To achieve these objectives, a holistic approach involving the government, the private sector and the general society needs to be adopted in order to give education its rightful place in the society, most especially the secondary educational system.

Secondary education is the second tier of education. It is the educational structure that lies between the primary and tertiary education. The secondary educational system prepares the youths for political, social and economic life. This is so because it is regarded as the education of youths and youth education is a central process in the building of nations. Secondary education occupies strategic position in Abia State because of the important role it plays in preparing the students for useful living in the society and for higher education. To ensure that secondary education achieves its roles, aims and objectives, the attainment of high standard should be the strong point of the schools (Olanrewaju, 2005).

Education is a key contributor to development and the crucial role of the private sector cannot be overemphasized. The private sector refers to that sector of the economy not owned and controlled by the government. They include the wealthy private individuals, Non-

governmental organizations (NGOs) such as UNESCO, SPDC, and other oil companies, private schools, religious societies and organizations, World Bank, IMF, Parents Teachers Association (PTA), Alumnus of schools etc. Some of these organized private sectors are playing active and valid roles in developing various programmes in the key focus areas of education as well as complimenting the efforts of the government by participating in the funding of secondary education in Abia State. This is because the greatest potential for development lies in education which spawn's manpower resources, economic and social development (okoro, 2005).

There is growing evidence that private sector participation in education can improve effectiveness in developing countries. The active participation of private sector could partially have the greatest impact of expansion of opportunities, improving cost effectiveness of educational delivery and also improve the quality of education in Nigeria. Therefore, If the private sector in Nigeria thinks about education differently as an opportunity for innovation, competition, entrepreneurship and compensation hinged on productivity, it will eventually lead high performance standards to in the educational sector and also help to address the problems mitigating this particular sector.

Our secondary schools have been confronted with a lot of issues. They include the seemingly falling standard, emphasis on science and technology education, finance, teacher education, the relationship between education, self-fulfilment and self-reliance etc. This has raised a lot of public debates and this is because the society, individuals and even the government have realized that the nation's overall development is so closely linked to its educational system. A time has come for everybody; government, private individuals, multinationals companies, local government etc. to come together and pull their resources, efforts, initiatives together to solve the problem that is plaguing the educational system in order to revive it.

The research is in agreement with the view that education is indeed capital intensive and government alone cannot adequately cater for it especially in a period of dwindling researches and increasing population. Hence, the private sector should be encouraged to actively participate in developing education, most especially, our secondary education.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The issue of qualitative education has been a matter of concern, not only to the government but also to the entire society. Most secondary schools in Abia State lack the necessary equipment and infrastructures that will help facilitate teaching and learning. Teachers are not adequately motivated. This, coupled with the dwindling resources increasing population and increasing demand for education, has combined to make it difficult for government alone to provide all that the citizens required in terms of educational needs. Therefore, there is need, for a greater community and civil society participation in providing, managing and funding education. Thus, this entails the need for all levels of government to forge participation across the public and private sectors in the provision, management and financing of education in order to meet the challenges of education for all.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study set out to achieve the following objectives: Identify the constraints to private sector participation in the development of secondary education in Abia State.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the Constraints to the Private Sector Participation to the development of secondary education in Abia State?

2.

### **Research Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of private school staff and staff of public schools on the constraints to the private sector participation in the development of secondary education in Abia State.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Constraints to Private Sector Participation in the Development of Secondary Education**

Factors that hinder the effective participation of the private sector in the development of secondary education can be viewed from three different perspectives: the government, the lending agencies and the private entrepreneurs themselves.

#### **From Government Perspective**

From the area of the government perspective, there is the issue of political sensibilities. In this regard, the most insurmountable problem is not even necessarily a lack of political commitment but rather the wide range of actions that are needed and the intensely political nature of the reforms that are required to create effective service delivery systems under a partnership arrangement with the private sector. According to World Bank, this can be exemplified in two ways: internal efficiency and allocative efficiency.

#### **Internal Efficiency**

Africa's unit cost in education are twice as high at the primary levels as in Asia and Latin America. Also, high teacher salaries relative to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capital is one of the reasons, yet the publicly employed teachers are a well-entrenched set of interest groups who tub oppose building partnership with the private sector.

#### **Allocative Efficiency**

Despite low enrolment rates, in both sub sectors, education spending is skewed towards the secondary and tertiary sub sectors, yet from a political standpoint, the introduction of tuition fees is a dangerous step in summary, it is difficult to envision a situation in which sufficient incentives are forth coming to encourage a government to agree voluntarily to the redirection of their resources from institutions to consumers" (World Bank, 2000).

#### **From the Lending Agency Perspective**

Also, from the lending agency perspective, there is the issue of reluctance from the agencies and the fear of globalization. Reluctance from the lending agencies; now, even if there was a political commitment from the public sector that is led most probably by the ministry of finance, is the government likely to receive an adequate response from the lending agencies, whom they will receive policy advice and an introduction to alternative funding modalities? Why is private participation in the social sector not championed

more strongly? A number of reasons is posited: first, lack of resources, second, lack of sufficient knowledge base and third, ideological bias.

The amount of money to be disbursed is either comparable or: less than a traditional loan but it will be more complex to process and regulate and the project manager involved shall be operating an unknown area. Further, it is much easier to disburse an infrastructure loan and remain within the project pipeline structures through adherence to well-tried mechanism than to develop and trail on an innovatory policy loan especially a loan in which there is on-lending from the lending agency and national government to the private sector.

### From the Private Sector Perspective

Different issue stands as hindrance to their effective participation in the development of education. From the private sector angle, such issues include:

**Lack of access to Capital:** This is probably the most significant constraint to any expansion of the private education sector. It is caused partly by the undeveloped and unpredictable nature of the banking sector. Social areas such as education and health are not so much a focus for lenders and a resulting reluctance to lend to the social sector is exacerbated by presiding economic cultural and attitudinal factors.

**Lack of Skilled Staff:** One of the major constraints to expansion in the private education sector is the shortage of skilled and qualified teachers. The absence of both comprehensive audit of teacher supply and a definitive number of private schools in operation makes it difficult to access the shortage with any accuracy. The following observations are often made with private schools:

1. Obtaining and retaining staff is a major problem
2. Teachers frequently move between schools without warning
3. Salaries offered are 10% or more above the public sector rate; and the majority of teachers lacked the requisite qualifications to teach at the secondary level.

**Lack of Access to Buildings and Land:** Lack of access to appropriate land and buildings for school act as another crucial restraint to any expansion of the private sector. There are often a number of elite schools that have impressive purpose - built abilities, yet the majority of the private schools have been forced to lease residential and business facilities (Motels, houses, shops etc.) for use as schools. While these do enable schools to operate, the constrain class size, are often not conducive to learning as is either too small, dark or too noisy and limits the use of innovative teaching practices. In addition, the absence of long term-leases on purpose-built premises increases the risk that students and teachers will probably have to relocate at some time in the future.

### Theoretical Framework

This theory that this study is hinged on is the Privatization Model proposed by Varghese (2000). The privatization model argues that funding of education should be left in the hands of the private sector. The argument here is that the cost and provision of education is determined by the price mechanism i.e., the market forces of demand and supply. Therefore, education is a private investment from which the

beneficiaries will reap the benefits.

Varghese (2000, p.3) stated that the efforts to privatize education by encouraging private agencies to set up institutions of learning enjoys limited success in general education". Hence, the growth of private sector education has led to two types of distortions.

- i. The encouragement of only certain courses especially professional course.
- ii. It adversely affects equality consideration in education since admission is based more on to pay principle than on merit.

Hence, private sector may respond more to the market process than to national social concerns. Thus, to Varghese, privatization of the education sector may lead to the promotion of certain courses at the expense of other courses and better of section of the society at the cost of those who deserve it but are economically poor students. He went further to explain that educational burden should be a shared responsibility between the government and the non-governmental agencies since education is both to the interest and benefit of the public and private. In supporting this, Levin (2000,p.S) stated "that education addresses, public interest by preparing the young to assume adult role that promotes Civic responsibilities, embrace a commonest of economic and political values and share a common Language and on the other hand, service private interest as it promotes individual development". Hence, to Levin, education should be a shared responsibility and not a one-man burden.

### Review of Empirical Studies

Agboola (2003) investigated Public-private Partnership in Managing Secondary schools' infrastructural development in Anambra State: limiting factors and improvement strategies. The study identified limiting factors in public - private partnership in managing secondary education for infrastructural development in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study; population of the study was made up of all the 700 managers of public and private sector establishments in Anambra State. The sample of the study was 520 respondents selected using purposive sampling, frequencies and percentages was used in answering the research questions. The findings from the study indicated that lack of awareness of the need for public - private partnership, government attitudes and also relationships with schools and then lack of structures are the major limiting factors in public – private partnership in education. It was recommended that government should implement the identified strategies and eliminate the limiting factors in public - private partnership in managing secondary school education.

Afolabi (2005) posited 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. 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. Afangideh (2009) studied private sector participation in the funding and management of interventions in secondary schools in Akwa -Ibom state. The study examined private sector participation in the funding and management of interventions in the education system focusing on sources of funds, modes of funding, management and impediments to the funding and management of interventions. Two research questions and two null hypotheses was used to guide the study. The design for the study was a descriptive survey. The population comprised of four hundred and eighty-seven (487) public and private schools in Akwa- Ibom state. One hundred and ninety-four (194) principals comprising of 94 from public schools and 100 from private schools respectively were drawn from the population. Results from data analysis show that private sector are more interested in funding and managing interventions than their public sector counterparts. Recommendations were made for the establishment of sound and effective community relation in order to attract private sector interests in secondary schools. Oguntimehin, et al. (2010) in a study titled Teachers perception of private schools' contribution to educational

development in Ijebu North Local Government of Ogun State, Nigeria, discovered that private schools contributed significantly to educational development in the Local Government Areas. Thus, the performance could further be enhanced if they are properly monitored and supervised by the government.

### Methods

The study adopted a survey design. It involves a systematic collection of data on the items of the subject based on which decision was taken. The target population comprised of all the 190 Secondary Schools in Abia State with 156 Private Secondary Schools and 34 Public Secondary Schools. The stratified random sample and sampling technique was used in this study. A total of one thousand five hundred (1500) respondents comprising of seven hundred (700) Private School staff from the 156 Private Secondary Schools and eight hundred (800) public school staff from the 34 Public Secondary Schools were randomly selected for the study. Mean score and rank order statistics was used to answer the research questions while z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Data collected from the respondents was scored and the following values assigned to the points rating scale, with a criterion mean of 2.50

### Results and Discussion

**Research Question:** What are the constraints to the private participation in the development of secondary education in Abia State?

**Table 1:** Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and Rank order statistics of respondents on the constraints to the private sector participation in the development of secondary education.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Private School Staff		Public School Staff		$\bar{X}_1$ $\bar{X}_2$	Rank Order	Remark
		N	$\bar{X}$	N	$\bar{X}$			
1	Education is intensive which restricts expansion	700	3.09	800	3.76	3.43	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Accepted
2	No clear-cut legislation to guide private investors	700	1.99	800	1.48	1.74	8 <sup>th</sup>	Rejected
3	Bureaucratic bottleneck in registration procedures	700	1.69	800	2.69	2.19	7 <sup>th</sup>	Rejected
4	The private participants are always after their gain	700	3.30	800	3.25	3.28	6 <sup>th</sup>	Accepted
5	The private participants do not always have enough fund	700	3.55	800	3.48	3.52	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Accepted
6	Most private participants lack the interest	700	3.5	800	3.58	3.54	1 <sup>st</sup>	Accepted
7	The socio-political situation in the country is a great impediment	700	1.30	800	1.44	1.37	9 <sup>th</sup>	Rejected
8	High interest rate of the banking system which restricts expansion	700	3.57	800	3.25	3.41	4 <sup>th</sup>	Accepted
9	Poor government assistance to private investors	700	3.5	800	3.28	3.39	5 <sup>th</sup>	Accepted
	<b>Total</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>2.91</b>			Accepted

The result in the table above shows that the mean scores of the assessed variables ranged between 1.37 to 3.54. The data revealed that items 2, 8 and 7 were rejected by the respondents on the constraints to private sector participation in the development of secondary education. This is because the items mean were less than the criterion mean of 2.50. While items 1, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 were accepted by the respondents. This is because their items mean were greater than the criterion mean of 2.50.

### Test of Hypothesis

**Hypothesis :** There is no significant difference between the mean score of private school staff and public-school staff on the constraints to the private sector participation in the development of secondary education in the state.

**Table 2:** z-test of the difference between the mean score of private school staff and public-school staff on the constraints to private sector participation in the development of secondary education in Abia State.

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	z-Cal	z-Crit	Level of Significance	Decision
Private School Staff	700	2.83	0.58	1498	29.49	1.96	0.05	Ho was Rejected
Public School Staff	800	0.53	0.53					

The table showed that the z-calculated value of 29.41 was greater than the z-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with the degree of freedom 1498. This implies that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of private school staff and public-school staff on the constraints to private sector participation in the development of secondary education in Abia State.

### Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that the major constraints to private sector participation in the development of secondary education were the intensive nature of education which restricts expansion, high interest rate of the banking system, poor government assistance to private investors and lack of interest by most private participants. The statistical test showed that there is a significant difference between the mean score of private school staff and public-school staff on the issues. It is equally evident from the study that government assistance and supervision were lacking. The situation that could be responsible for this is the inability of the private sector to expand to rural areas and improve on their quality. It is disheartening to note that private schools are established at every nook and cranny of the state and sometimes in private buildings without adherence to specify cautions. This situation calls for urgent government intervention and provide further justification for education of legislation to guide the operations of private schools.

### Conclusion

The constraints of the private sector in developing secondary education in Abia State was the focus of this study. The study found that the private sector involvement in educational development was a means of assisting government in the funding and expansion of education to reach the citizens and reduce inequality. However, not much has been achieved in this regards due to a number of factors which include: uncoordinated operations, bureaucratic bottleneck and high interest rate which have considered high cost of investment in education by private investors. The study concluded that the policy framework for private sector participation in education has not been fully implemented, at most private participation appears to be unregulated and uncoordinated. Thus, the dreams of assisting government in educational expansion and equality of access to citizens have remained stillborn as the presence of private secondary schools have helped to worsen the gap in inequality through exorbitant school fees.

### Recommendations

1. Government should establish a well-designed functional framework that will guide the establishment, control and also supervision of private owned secondary schools in Abia State.
2. Private investors should expand its educational services to the rural parts of the state to avoid overcrowding in the cities.

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