THE PREFERENCE OF PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS TO PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA; A CASE OF OKIRIKA PEOPLE OF RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA

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The Preference of Private Secondary Schools to Public Secondary Schools in Nigeria; A Case of Okrika People of Rivers State of Nigeria

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Abstract
The study investigated the reference of private secondary schools to public secondary schools and the effects on the development in Okrika Local Government Area of Rivers State. The objective of the study was to find out whether the private secondary schools are preferred more than public secondary schools in Okrika local government area. It is a survey study. For this study, the students of both private and public secondary schools were used; the teachers of the same level and the parents of both were also used. The instruments used for this study are the questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered to the students, teachers and parents of six selected private and public secondary schools in Okrika Local Government Area. Two research questions were employed and the responses analyzed by the researcher. The method of analysis was based on simple percentage for the research questions. The study revealed that private secondary schools were preferred to public schools by the people of Okrika Local Government Area of Rivers State. Thus the recommendation that private secondary schools be allowed to operate along side the public and the private secondary schools should complement each other in order to ensure that qualitative education for all is attained in the possible shortest time. There is a need for a supportive frame works in the education that will provide an enabling environment for the private sectors. The private owned institutions should benefit from such education support fund like Education Trust Fund (ETF) as well as grant and supply of instructional materials by the government.

Introduction
Nigeria education industries are in two basic categories, namely the public schools and the private schools. According to Nebo (2008), in some countries formal education depends on private schools even in compulsory education while in others, public schools take a major responsibility for basic education. In Nigeria, public schools are more or less under the control by local and or national government through their budgets and human resource management. Private schools on the other hand are essentially more independent of national governance. Therefore, it can be inferred that private schools system in Nigeria can become agent of change in our school system based on their administrative flexibility and ability to explore and adopt best practices (Onah, 2008).

Research Questions
1) To what extent are parents interested in the establishment of private secondary schools?
2) Should private secondary schools be allowed to operate?
Design of the Study
The research design employed in this study is the descriptive survey method. This design was selected in order to help the researcher collect data from a large sample drawn from a given population as regard the effects of the preference of private/public secondary schools in Okrika Local Government Area.

Population of the Study
The population for the study consists of all senior secondary schools students of SS1-SS3 of both public and private secondary schools, their teachers and all the parents having their children or wards in both public and private secondary schools of the ten (10) private and public secondary schools in Okrika Local Government Area. As at the time of study, the population size comprised 1829 SS1-SS3 students, 123 teachers of same level and a marginal estimate of about 150 parents drawn from the ten (10) public and private secondary schools in the area given a total of 2102. (Source of the population size of the students and teachers is the various heads of the schools and the Zonal Ministry of Education). But that of the parents could not be gotten since no office keeps such statistics. These populations were selected in this research among other population for these reasons. The teachers and the students carried the heavy load of teaching and learning process while the parents bear the cost of education.

Sample and Sampling Techniques
There are five (5) privates and five (5) public secondary schools in the area under study. Three private and three public secondary schools will be drawn for the study using simple random sampling (balloting) bringing the total number of schools to be sample to six (6). The selection of these schools was based on the setting of the schools and the convenience of administration of questionnaires. A sample size of forty-five (45) SS1-3 students will be randomly drawn from each of the public and private secondary schools constituted the first sample. Fifteen (15) teachers in each of the schools teaching at that level will also be drawn included as the second sample and about thirty (30) parents having their children or wards in both public and private secondary schools constitute the third sample. On the whole, ninety (90) SS1 – SS3 students, thirty teachers and thirty (30) parents given a total of one hundred and fifty (150) will be drawn using the random selection procedure.

Instrumentation:
The instrument used for data collection in this study is the questionnaire containing twenty structure items. While section one (1)sought response on personal data of the respondent section two(2) is designed to elicit responses on the private secondary schools effect on the development of Okrika Local Government Area. Questionnaires are administered and the respondents are provided with answers whether they strongly agreed, agreed, strongly disagreed, disagree, and undecided with the statement. They are expected to fill in the answers applicable to them. The researcher thereafter base his analysis of field data from the answer filled in the respondents. Also to ensure an effective study, the researcher will use documented literature, textbooks, journals, unpublished projects, newspapers, etc to source for relevant information

Limitations of the Study
This study is limited to Okrika Local Government Area of Rivers State due to lack of transportation and financial constraints. Most of the roads leading to some of these schools are bad
Research Question 1: To what extent are parents interested in the establishment of more private secondary schools in the area?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Questionnaire Item</th>
<th>Respondents Options</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SA/A %</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>U D %</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>SD/ D %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parent spend more money to train their children in private secondary schools (fees and equipment)</td>
<td>149 99.3%</td>
<td>1 0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parent are concern about educating their children in private secondary schools</td>
<td>124 82.6%</td>
<td>22 14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Parents equipped their children in private secondary schools than the ones in public</td>
<td>128 85.2%</td>
<td>17 11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sending children/wards to private secondary schools by parents is an avenue for wasting resources</td>
<td>13 8.7%</td>
<td>133 88.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average Response</td>
<td>414 69%</td>
<td>173 28.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Percentage of the respondents responding to parent’s interest in the establishment of more private secondary schools in Okrika Local government Area

The analysis on the item question one (1) in the table 1 above shows that 99.3% (149) of the sampled population agreed that parents spend more money to train their children/wards in private secondary schools but 0.7% (1) disagreed. The result is that parents spend more money to train their children/wards in private secondary schools. In item thirteen (2) 82.6% (124) positively agreed that parents in this Local Government Area are concerned about the education of their children/wards in private secondary schools.
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children or wards in private secondary schools, 14.8% (22) responded negatively or disagreed to the opinion while 2.6% (4) could not decide on the opinion. The result is that parents are concerned about their children / wards in private secondary schools. From the same table 1 above the questionnaire fourteen (3) shows that 85.2% (128) agreed or accepted that parents equipped their children or wards in private secondary schools in Okrika Local Government area while 11.3% (17) disagreed or responded negatively to the question. But 3.5% (5) remain undecided. The result is that parents equipped their children or wards in private secondary schools than in publics. Result obtained from the item four (4) relating to whether sending children or wards to private secondary schools in the area by the parents is an avenue to wasting resources 8.7% (13) agreed while 88.7% (133) disagreed to the opinion. Only 2.6% (4) were unable to decide. The result is that sending children or wards to private schools is not an avenue to wasting resources.

Research Question 2: Should private secondary schools be allowed to operate in the area

Table 2: Percentage respondents responding to private schools being allowed to operate in the area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N Questionnaire</th>
<th>Respondents Options</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Emergence of private secondary schools have helped the government to reduce the cost of funding public secondary schools</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Questionnaire</th>
<th>Respondents Options</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Government should take over all private secondary schools for better standard and uniformity of national ideology</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>If not private secondary schools in the area, public secondary schools would have collapsed</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The emergences of private secondary schools have made government to be more responsible to their duties</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Private secondary schools offers employment to people in the area</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In table 2 above, the item five (5) of the questionnaire indicated that 18.1% (27) responded positively or agreed and 74% (111) responded negatively or disagreed that government should take over all private secondary schools for better academics standard and uniformity of national ideology. 8% (12) could not decide on the above item. The result is that government should not take over all private secondary schools for better academics standard and uniformity of national ideology. In item six (6) on table 2 shows that 54% (81) agreed to the opinion that public secondary schools would have collapsed if not the establishment of private school. 38% (57) disagreed while 8% (12) could not decide whether the private secondary schools would have collapsed or not. The result is that public secondary schools would have collapsed if not for the emergence of private secondary schools. The analysis on the item questionnaire seven (7) 74.7% (112) agreed while 17.4% (26) disagreed that the emergence of private secondary schools have made the government to be more responsible to their duties. 8% (12) remain undecided. The result shows that the emergence of the private secondary schools made the government to be responsible to their duties.

Another question on the table 2 that followed in item eight (8) is whether the operation of private secondary schools gives employment to the people of the area. 70.7% (106) agreed while 29.3% (44) disagreed to the above opinion. The result shows that private schools give employment to the people in the area. In the last question that followed in item nine (9) was whether the emergence of private secondary schools have helped to reduce cost of funding public secondary schools in the area. While 59.3% (89) of the sampled population agreed, 40.7% (61) disagreed to the fact. The result is that the emergence of private secondary schools has helped to reduce the cost of funding the public secondary schools in the area.

Summary of Major Findings:
The findings of the study are summarized below:
The findings revealed on table 1 shows that 69% of the average population responded positively to the research question whether parents are interested in the establishment of more private secondary schools in the area. 28.8% on the average responded negatively while 2.2% could not ascertain. The result is that parents are interested in the establishment of more private secondary schools. The average respondents on the table 2 shows that 51.6% of the total population responded positively or agreed to the statement whether private secondary school be allowed to operate in the area, while 43.6% disagreed to the opinion. Only 4.8% could not ascertain whether private secondary schools should be allowed to operate in the area. The result is that private secondary schools should be allowed to operate. Adequate and thorough supervision cannot be compromised in any private owned organization hence the study revealed that the better performance of the private secondary schools is as a result of better supervision from the school heads (Njoku, 2008). In Nigeria, although a private secondary school is not only an educational or social venture but in addition, a profit-making venture understandably that the principal pays serious attention at supervision. On the issue of whether private secondary schools be allowed to operate and that of government take over all private secondary schools, the contention of majority is that private secondary schools should be allowed to operate. Also, there should be proper funding of both private and public secondary schools. The provision of central curriculum for them as well as proper supervision by the government is another solution to their problems. Also revealed in the study is the issue of unemployment in the area. It was revealed that the establishment of private secondary schools has helped in reducing unemployment in the area.
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under study by employing majority of the youths who would have being rendered jobless thereby increasing the act of criminality in the area (Uforna, 1984).

Conclusion
Consequently, you do not need a prophet to tell you that the people of Okirika L.G.A. prefer private secondary school to public once not minding the cost. Private secondary schools have been playing prominent role in the development of Nigeria education industry. As a result, they should be protected by law so that no government will decide in future to seize privately owned schools as it happened in the early 1970s. From my interview with acclaimed educationists, Wariboko E. and Amamina V., it was observed that European countries have similar educational environment that protect private and independent schools. In France, the state provides financial aids to many private schools. Also in places like United Kingdom and Germany, private schools are in partnership with public schools to achieve collective objectives of engineering economic, political and social growth. No country can boast of attaining her aspiration, goals and values without effective and efficient educational sector. This is the time that all hands should be on deck to ensure that aspirations of our founding fathers are attained. This is the time to follow the global trend of access to quality education by the entire citizenry. The private secondary schools must take up the role for a better and brighter future for Nigerian children. There is the need for many more Nigerians to take up the challenge to build such high quality schools. Government must avoid the impulse to live only for today pursuing selfish interest of political leaders plundering over their own comfort and precious resource of tomorrow. The future of our children depends so much on the type of quality of education we give them now. We can not mortgage the material well-being of our students required for acquisition of good quality of education. The Nigeria future depends upon these young students who must be well educated and trained in a more human dignified and satisfying environment in order to assume the challenge of the future to help write the agenda for Nigeria. Private secondary schools owner have done a lot to compliment government effort.

The finding of this study revealed that private secondary schools are contributing significantly to educational development in Okrika Local Government Area. The revelation from the data analysis in this research shows that there is wide gab in the standard, staff, equipment and infrastructural facilities between the private and public secondary schools in Okrika Local Government Area. Among these revelations also is the issue of an uneven distribution of teachers in the private and public secondary schools system. For instance, whereas there is shortage of teachers in the public schools, there are more teachers in the private secondary schools. This finding or study also revealed that students who attended private secondary schools performed better in their academic work than those who attended public secondary schools especially in compulsory subjects like in Mathematics and English (Nwideedu & Kaegon, 2008). Their products cannot compete favorably with products of the private secondary schools. An oral and written interview conducted with selected secondary schools from both private and public schools in the local government shows that some public secondary students today are hardly able to speak or write simple correct English and are unable to solve simple Mathematical problems. The standard of education acquired by public secondary schools students of today is unable to help them realize the national policy on secondary education (Wariboko, 1984).

Recommendations
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There is a need for a supportive frame works in the education that will provide an enabling environment for the private sectors. The private owned institutions should benefit from such education support fund like Education Trust Fund (ETF) as well as grant and supply of instructional materials by the government.

References


