

Abstract

Deregulation of Education Management in Nigeria: Implication for Equality of Access to Post-Primary Education in Imo State

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In the effort to fix her socio-economic problems, Nigeria, since the 1980's, has found herself experimenting with and implementing economic reform programmes mostly dictated by such international reform agencies as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Some of such programs are the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the 1980's, globalization and commercialization, and recent deregulation. The extension of the deregulation programme to the education sector of the economy is what informed the present study; "Deregulation of Education in Nigeria; Implications for Equality of Access to Education in Imo State", the purpose of which was to ascertain whether education deregulation could guarantee citizens' equal right to education and ensure standards between public and private educational institutions. Four research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated for the study. A twenty-nine item questionnaire was developed and administered to 684 respondents, comprising 354 educational experts and 330 parents drawn from both public and private secondary schools in Imo State. The sampling was done using the multi-stage sampling technique. The mean scores and standard deviation were used to analyse the data collected while the z-test statistic was used to test the two null hypotheses. The study, among other things, found that deregulation of education negates a citizen's right to education mainly because the policy aims at disengaging the government from the responsibility of funding education and handing such a vital social role to the private sector and the vagaries of market force competition. It was also discovered that deregulation of education does not guarantee equal access to education for all.

Keywords: *deregulation, education, management, equality of access, post-primary, private and public*

INTRODUCTION

Deregulation is a neo-liberal economic concept that seeks to open up institutions or companies by insisting on the removal of statutory regulations. As the title connotes, de-regulation means the removal or withdrawal of rules and regulations or some statutory controls from an establishment or organization so that it can compete with other or similar organizations. This ideology is based on the idea that the government shouldn't make it hard to enter or leave any sector or organization.

With deregulation, an organization or agency is divested of its privileged right of monopoly in the production, provision, and distribution of any goods or services. By this measure, noted Enemu (2005), the veil of protectionism hitherto accorded and enjoyed is thrown aboard and an era of liberalization of access is thereby ushered in. In line with this, Akpotu (2005) opines that deregulation involves the virtual elimination of price, entry, and exit controls, as well as the elimination of monopoly in any individual sub-market. When control or regulation is eliminated or removed, private investors are allowed to come on board, invest and operate in an open market environment. Thus, deregulation denotes a paradigm shift from a public-sector-led economy (characterized by restrictive control) to an open and liberalized private-sector-led economy characterized by emphasis on the logic of market-driven competition.

When it comes to education, deregulation means that education will no longer be only a government-provided public benefit but will also include the participation of interested individuals and corporations (Danhassan & Abdulmumirie, 2005). According to Kalusi and Ozano (2005:15), deregulation, as applied to the education sector, involves the removal of all types of impediments to entry into the education sector by private people who are competent and qualified to do so. It creates a level playing field for people and groups who want to offer educational services to society's members.

Statement of the Problem

Deregulation denotes and stands for the removal of control measures which hitherto had ensured and guaranteed organizations and institutions the convenience of monopoly and protection against competition from similar institutions. By deregulation, private individuals, organizations, and partnerships are encouraged to source and provide similar services and have access to the same clientele and patronage, allowing the free reign of market forces to determine fees.

Deregulation affords the clientele a motley/myriad of options from which to make their choices.

Many positive benefits appear to be now countable with the onset of privatization and now deregulation. For one, with the emergence of many secondary schools, parents and their wards have the opportunity of choice. Also, there is hope that as service providers compete for more customers, fees will go down and the quality of services will go up.

Experience has, however, shown that with investors expecting, understandably, high returns on their investments, prohibitive fees have become the order of the day and will continue to be so. The consequence is that economically weak parents and pupils do not and cannot have equal access to the same quality education that they so much crave. This is informed by the simple fact that they cannot compete for space with their rich counterparts in those schools known for quality education. Deregulation therefore breeds and fosters inequality and further denies our children of school age the right to a quality education. Such children will be constrained to low-quality education on account of their financial incapacity. In this respect, again, access is not automatic.

With Somalia, Pakistan, Ethiopia and Nigeria accounting for the 23 million out-of-school children in the world, the situation is especially worrisome in Nigeria, where a survey shows that only 6.4 million of the 33.9 million eligible pupils are actually enrolled for secondary education. This is all in the era of privatization and deregulation. Rather than, therefore, decreasing the number, it actually increases the number of children on the streets. This brings about serious socio-political problems besides education. Enlightened patriots should be concerned. The main question of this study is, "What does the deregulation of education mean in terms of access to quality education and the provision of educational opportunities, as stated in section 18(1) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria?"

However, when there are lapses in educational administration, many negative situations are bound to be present. One of these situations will be the resurgence of indiscipline among students and a subsequent unpreparedness to learn. This situation could degenerate into ills like an increase in the failure rates of students in both internal and external examinations. Greenfield (1995) recounts that "boys resort to gang activities; girls, on their own part, become immorally derelict." For the same reason, Ezeocha (1985), observed that when principals and teachers, owing to economic and social pressures, cannot effectively perform their roles with regard to quality learning as expected of them for the school and society, they also become irresponsible in the discharge of their duties. And because they lack confidence in both themselves and their teachers, they resort to all types of anti-social and criminal practices.

It has been observed by Kankarofi (1983) that in Nigeria in general and Imo State in particular, non-professionals in education were appointed administrators. Most of the secretaries and the chairman of the state education commission had been civil servants and lawyers sent on posting.

posting from the cabinet office. Their officers manage the school through a remote control system.

To make things harder and more complicated when it comes to achieving educational goals, these political appointees don't just set policies; they also act as education executives (Ocho, 1982).

Still, it is important to find out what administrative problems affect a teacher's performance, which is one of the educational goals, and maybe figure out the best way to deal with these problems so that the educational goals can be met.

Significance of the Study

The study will serve as a veritable opportunity to affirm or disapprove of the Neo-liberal economic theory guiding this work, namely the Laissez-faire theory. The work will go a long way toward demonstrating the positive and/or negative implications of applying such a pure economic theory undiluted into the education sector.

Furthermore, the work is considered significant as it will prove of immense benefit to all stakeholders in education, namely the PTA of our secondary schools, the educational policy makers, school administrators, the government, and our politicians.

Following the findings of the study, the PTAs of public schools will be acquainted with the adverse effect of deregulation on the sustenance of public schools. This is because, with the government progressively divesting itself of funding of public schools in a deregulated milieu, the challenge of providing the required funds to at least reduce the likely infrastructural decay as well as the lack of instructional and other essential materials lies (consequently) heavily on the PTA.

Educational policymakers will, through the findings and insights of this study, be made to know the impact of educational deregulation on the citizens' right to education. In other words, the study will show whether deregulation policy improves or decreases equal access to quality education. This knowledge, it is hoped, will spur policymakers to make alternative policies to alleviate the likely problems caused by deregulation or even consider expunging it entirely in the educational field. Alternatively, educational policymakers should restructure and improve the curriculum contents of the school system in order to provide qualitative and quantitative education in the school system.

The politicians, for their part, will benefit from the findings of this study. This is because deregulation of education is a new policy that may either succeed or fail in the Nigerian experiment. Whether you succeed or fail, it will have a clear social impact on the majority of citizens, keeping in mind that whatever affects education has an impact on the entire society. Armed with this knowledge, the politicians, it is hoped, will be persuaded to include these likely effects in their campaign manifestos and possibly sponsor legislative bills to address them.

The government of the day will, in no less measure, benefit from the present study. To begin with, it will be reminded that educational services are a social responsibility of the government, and that such a vital public good cannot be left to the whims and caprices of deregulation and its ever-changing market force competition.. Additionally, education of the citizens is a constitutional responsibility of the government to the citizenry. It is, in fact, a constitutional right of every citizen of any country worth its name. The need, therefore, has arisen to query the extent of the adoption of deregulation policy in Nigeria's education system. Thus, the present guise of withdrawing from funding and providing education and expecting deregulation to supply it should be checked.

It is also believed that the findings of this study will be of immense value to the principals, teachers, and staff of the school, the community, and the government, and the students will not be left out either. It will help the principals of various schools to plan, organize, and coordinate their schools effectively. Their studies will also be of great benefit to the state education commission in Imo State, for they will evaluate their performance towards the teachers' task in secondary schools. The Parents-Teachers Association (P.T.A.) will also evaluate their

contributions to the school. It is also hoped that the study will yield some findings, which are likely to have an impact on education in the state both financially and otherwise. It will also improve the work of other researchers. It will assist the teacher in restructuring their teaching methods while benefiting the students by achieving their goal.

Finally, it is hoped that recommendations made based on the finding will lead to more efficient and effective teacher task performance in Imo State secondary education.

Scope of the Study

The study is limited to determining the degree of a citizen's right to access quality education, equality of educational opportunity, and the possibility of deregulation promoting the attainment of national unity. The work is limited to secondary schools in Imo State. Secondary schools in Imo State are 291 in number, unevenly spread across the three (3) education zones cutting across the three political/senatorial zones in the state; namely: Owerri, Okigwe, and Orlu zones.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

- (1) Would deregulation guarantee the citizens' right to education?
- (2) Would access to equal educational opportunity be guaranteed in a deregulated school system in Imo State?
- (3) Would educational deregulation, given our peculiar circumstance, guarantee equality in educational standards in both public and private schools?
- (4) To what extent does deregulation of education aid towards promoting national unity?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There will be no significant difference between the mean ratings of education experts, and parents on whether deregulation will ensure citizens' right to education.
2. There will be no significant difference between the mean ratings of education experts, and parents on whether deregulation will guarantee equal access to education.

METHODS

Design of the study

The design of the study is the descriptive survey research design. The rationale for choosing a descriptive survey research design is in line with Nworgu (1991) who stated that descriptive survey research aims at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristic features of facts in a given population.

Area of the Study

The study was carried out in secondary schools in Imo State. These schools are unevenly spread out within the three (3) education zones and three (3) L.G.A's of the state namely Okigwe, Orlu, Owerri, Ihite-Oboma, Ehime and Isiala Mbano. It is important to note that Imo State (which was carved out when Anambara State was also created) is an educationally advantaged state, hence anything that affects educationally advantaged state, is bound to affect majority of the citizens. Deregulation of education is likely to affect majority of the citizens, thus the choice of the state for the present study.

Population of the Study

The population used for the study comprises all the 9136 educational experts (made up of 40 education officers and 9096 teachers) and 125,645 (approximate) parents of secondary school students in the 585 (459 public and 126 government approved private) secondary schools in Imo State. Secondary school teachers, educational officers and parents were chosen because they respectively stand in the best position to assess the advantage and or disadvantage of deregulation policy.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study consists of 684 respondents. They were selected using the multi-stage sampling technique. Using the Purposive sampling technique, the researcher selected the three education zones in the state. The three zones are Okigwe, Orlu and Owerri. Owing to the manageable number of education officers in the three zones (24 in number) there was no sampling for them. All participated.

At the next level, given that there are 307 (215 public and 92 private) secondary schools in the three zones – thus spread: Okigwe 97 (63 public and 34 private); Orlu 93 (52 public and 41 private) and Owerri 117 (100 public and 17 private), using the proportionate Stratified Random Sampling Techniques, 10% of the schools (public and private) in each of the zones was considered representative as it accords well with Nwana's (1981) recommendation that where the number is a few thousands, (78,879 thousand in the present study) a 10% sampling will do. Following this, 11 (8 public and 3 private), 9 (5 public and 4 private) and 13 (11 public and 2 private) secondary schools were selected from Okigwe, Orlu and Owerri educational zones respectively.

In all, 33 (24 public and 9 private) secondary schools participated in the study. From each school of the zones came twenty respondents made up ten (10) teachers and ten (10) parents and these was added to the 24 educational officers in the three zones. In sum, 684 subjects participated in the study. All these are as shown in a sample of respondents' distribution table. (*see appendix ii*).

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection is the questionnaire. The questionnaire is known as: Education Deregulation Appraisal Questionnaire (EDAQ). The researcher developed EDAQ to gather data from the respondents based on the topic with much insight drawn from the literature reviewed.

The EDAQ instrument was a 29 item questionnaire divided into two sections: A and B. While section A is on demography, section B, which has fixed evaluative statement so constructed to aid understanding and response, was divided into four (4) clusters, with A seeking to elicit information on the effect of deregulation on a citizen's right to education. Cluster B focuses on access to educational opportunity. Cluster C dwells on education deregulation and standards between public and private secondary schools while cluster D was focused on education deregulation vis-à-vis the promotion of national unity. The EDAQ instrument, modeled on a four-point rating scale, has response modes of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) rated 4,3,2 and 1 respectively.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was face-validated by three experts, one in Philosophy of Education, and another in Measurement and Evaluation and the third in Arts education (Educational Technology). They were requested to study the items and assess the instrument in terms of language, relevance, comprehensibility and comprehensiveness. Their corrections and comments were used to modify the questionnaire. The modification gave rise to the final draft which was produced and eventually administered on the respondents.

Reliability of the Instrument

In order to establish the reliability of the instrument, a test retest exercise was carried out using 20 respondents drawn from three education zones of Isiala Mbanu, Ehime and Ihite-Oboma. These are all outside the education zones being used for the study. After two weeks the same instrument was administered to the same respondents again. The interval of two weeks was necessary to check recall effect and bias. Furthermore, the test-retest sample of 20 respondents was decided in favour of as following Croker cited in Onwuka (1991), the correlation coefficient yields better results with groups below 30.

Using the Cronbach alfa, the data were analyzed to establish the internal consistency and reliability of the instrument. It yielded the following results: cluster A (on education deregulation and citizen's right to education) yielded .6568, cluster B (on education deregulation and access to

equal educational opportunity) .5217, cluster C (on equality of standard between public and private secondary schools). .6678, cluster D (on deregulation and promotion of national unity) 7218. These gave a sum total of 0.76 reliability co-efficient interpreted to mean that the instrument is reliable.

Method of Data Collection

The instrument was administered to the respondents using trained research assistants who were employed by the researcher for the purpose. In each of the selected schools used, teachers were used to reach at the students, through whom the literate parents were reached.

Method of Data Analysis

The frequencies and the mean scores (both descriptive statistical tools) were used to analyse the data collected, all towards providing answers to the research questions guiding the study. A mean of 2.5 was used to establish a cut-off point. In other words, items with mean scores of 2.50 and above were categorized as meeting the acceptance mean and accordingly accepted, and those below the 2.50 mean were rated as not meeting the acceptance mean and accordingly rejected. The z-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha levels.

RESULT

Research Question One

Would deregulation guarantee citizens' right to education?

Data in respect of research question one were analysed descriptively using the mean statistics and the findings are reported on Table I following, where X_1 = the mean of education experts; X_2 = the mean of parents; and X the mean of X_1 and X_2 .

Table 1: mean ratings of education experts and parents on deregulation and citizen's right to education

S/N	ITEM	Education Experts			Parents						Rank
		X_1	SD	DEC	X_2	SD	DEC	\bar{X}	SD	DEC	
1	Education is a fundamental right	3.56	0.68	SA	3.64	0.66	SA	3.60	0.67	Accept	5
2	Deregulation negates citizen right to education	3.56	0.68	SA	3.64	0.66	SA	3.60	0.67	Accept	5

3	Deregulation leaves citizens' education to the vagaries of force competition	3.66	0.5	SA	3.78	0.48	SA	3.72	0.49	Accept	4
4	Right to education will be limited by prohibitive fees in a deregulated education system	3.76	0.42	SA	3.74	0.48	SA	3.75	0.45	Accept	3
5	Right to education is not guaranteed for the less privileged in a deregulated education system	3.84	0.44	SA	3.78	0.50	SA	3.81	0.47	Accept	1
6	The financial capability of parents will determine right of access if education is deregulated	3.82	0.36	SA	3.76	0.44	SD	3.79	0.40	Accept	2
	Cluster mean	3.70	0.51	SA	3.74	0.50	SA	3.72	0.51	Accept	

Research Question Two

Would access to equal educational opportunity be guaranteed in a deregulated school system?

The data for answering the above research question were analysed descriptively using the mean statistics and the findings are reports on Table 2 following, where X_1 = the mean of education experts; X_2 = the mean of parents and X = the mean of X_1 and X_2 .

Table 2: mean ratings of education experts, and parents on deregulation and access to equal Education opportunity.

S/N	ITEM	Education Experts			Parents						Rank
		\bar{X}_1	SD	DEC	\bar{X}_2	SD	DEC	\bar{X}	SD	DEC	
7	Deregulation of education creates wide range of admission choice	3.24	0.82	SA	3.16	0.62	SA	3.2	0.72	Accept	5
8	Deregulation negates the UNO declaration of equal access to education on the basis of merit	3.64	0.64	SA	3.68	0.54	SA	3.66	0.59	Accept	4
9	Access to good education/ school will depend on one's ability to pay	3.84	0.46	SA	3.82	0.38	SA	3.83	0.42	Accept	3

10	Deregulation does not guarantee equal and adequate education to children of different economic background	3.88	0.42	SA	3.86	0.38	SA	3.85	0.40	Accept	2
11	Deregulation makes education elitist only the rich can afford quality education usually provided in costly private schools	3.84	0.48	SA	3.82	0.42	SA	3.83	0.45	Accept	3
12	With deregulation the poor students stand disadvantaged	3.86	0.34	SA	3.86	0.36	SA	3.86	0.35	Accept	1
	Cluster mean	3.73	0.53	SA	3.70	0.45	SA	3.71	0.49	Accept	

Research Question Three

Would deregulation guarantee equality of standard between public and private secondary schools?

Data in respect of research question three were analysed descriptively using the mean statistics and the findings are reported on table 3 below, where X_1 = the mean of education experts; X_2 = the mean of parents; and X = the mean of X_1 and X_2 .

Table 3: mean ratings of education experts and parents on deregulation vis-s-vis equality standard between public, and private school

S/N	ITEM	Education Experts			Parents						Rank
		\bar{X}_1	SD	DEC	\bar{X}_2	SD	DEC	\bar{X}	SD	DEC	
13	Deregulation will stimulate competition between public, and private schools	2.86	0.88	A	2.76	0.93	A	2.81	0.90	Accept	7
14	Deregulation does not favour equality of standard between public and private schools	2.92	0.86	A	3.01	0.86	SA	2.96	0.86	Accept	6

15	Competition between public, and private school will result to better standard	2.56	1.02	A	2.52	1.04	A	2.54	1.03	Accept	9
16	Best graduate students in secondary school come from private school	3.11	0.64	SA	3.06	0.86	SA	3.09	0.75	Accept	5
17	Deregulation will make private school to be preferable to public schools	2.56	0.88	A	2.54	0.92	A	2.55	0.90	Accept	8
18	Deregulation will make cause migration of good teachers to high-paying schools	3.76	0.64	SA	3.24	0.78	SA	3.20	0.71	Accept	4
19	Deregulation do not guarantee the substance of public education	3.46	0.66	SA	3.44	0.66	SA	3.45	0.66	Accept	2
20	Deregulation will lower standard because prospectors' will be profit-making	2.78	0.98	A	2.82	0.88	A	3.80	0.93	Accept	1
21	Deregulation will create schools-for-haves and schools-for-have-nots	3.44	0.64	SA	3.41	0.46	SA	3.42	0.55	Accept	3

Research Question Four

To what extent does deregulation aid the promotion of national unity?

Data in respect of research quest four were analyzed descriptively using the mean statistics and the finding are reported on Table 4 below, where X_1 = the mean of education experts; X_2 = the mean of parents; and X = the mean of X_1 and X_2 .

Table 4: mean ratings of education experts and parents on deregulation vis-à-vis the promotion of national unity

S/N	ITEM	Education Experts			Parents						Rank
		\bar{X}_1	SD	DEC	\bar{X}_2	SD	DEC	\bar{X}	SD	DEC	
22	Education is an instrument for national unity and integration	2.68	0.94	A	2.66	0.86	A	2.65	0.90	Accept	8

23	Deregulation does not favour the national principle of freedom equality and justice	3.16	0.66	SA	3.14	0.62	SA	3.15	0.64	Accept	5
24	Deregulation widens the social gap between the rich and the poor	3.76	0.52	SA	3.78	0.42	SA	3.77	0.47	Accept	2
25	Deregulation will discourage students from studying outside their tribe and or place of birth	3.76	0.68	SA	3.78	0.42	SA	3.51	0.55	Accept	4

Hypothesis 1

There will be no significant difference between the mean ratings of education experts and parents on whether deregulation will ensure citizens' right to education.

Table 5: Result of z-test Analysis of Education Experts and Parents on Education Deregulation and Citizen's right to Education

Category	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	Level of sig.	z-cal	z-table	Dec
Education Experts	354	3.70	0.51	682	0.05	-1.03	1.96	110 ₁
Parents	330	3.74	0.50					Accepted

Table 5 above presents the z-test analysis of the mean ratings of education experts and parents on the phenomenon of education deregulation and citizen's right to it. An examination of the table indicated shows that the critical value required for significance at 682 degree of freedom at 0.05 confidence level is 1.96. Given this, the calculation z-value (z-cal) of 1.03 is not significant, an indication that the views of the respondents are appreciably the same. The null hypothesis is, therefore, accepted.

Hypothesis 2

There will be no significant difference between the mean ratings of education experts and parents on whether deregulation will equal access to education.

Table 6: Result of z-test Analysis of views of Education Experts and Parents on Education Deregulation and Access to equal Educational Opportunity

Subjects	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	Level of sig.	z-cal	z-table	Dec
Education Experts	354	3.72	0.53	682	0.05	0.54	1.96	110 ₂
Parents	330	3.70	0.45					Accepted

Table 6 above presents the z-test analysis of the mean ratings of education experts and parents on education deregulation and access to equal educational opportunity. The critical value required for significance of these means at 682 degree of freedom (df) at 0.05 percentage probability level is 1.96. With the calculated z-value (z-cal) being 0.54, the indication is that it is not significant. Therefore, the respective null hypothesis is accepted, meaning in effect that the views of the two classes of respondents (education experts and parents) do not differ appreciably.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1:

Analysis of data in respect of research question one shows that all the related items met the acceptance criterion mean of 2.50 and above on the four-point ratings scale. Consequent upon this, it is the perspective of both parents and education experts that deregulation, inter alia, constitutes a potent threat to a citizen's right to education as a fundamental right; leaves quality education more as a preserve of children whose parents are financially capable; all consequent on the prohibitive fees that institutions of learning charge. This contradicts the intent of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (to which Nigeria is a signatory) with a provision that "everyone has the right to education." Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education will be mandated..."Higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit."

Research Question #2

Analysis of items related to research question two showed that all the items met the acceptance criterion mean of 2.50 and above on the four-point rating scale. Thus, both the parents and education experts agreed that education deregulation has all it takes to provide parents and their wards with a wide range of school choices but does not guarantee equal access to education to children of different economic backgrounds, makes access to quality education elitist, at the disadvantage of poor students, and all in all constitutes an antithesis to the UNO declaration of equal access to education on the basis of merit. According to Mbipom and Achibong (2005), this is exemplified by the emergence of private schools at all levels of the nation's education system. Malogo (2005) opined that deregulation makes education "to be hijacked by men of wealth and influence" and for Onigbo (2005), with deregulation, education becomes a preserve for children of "the blessed elite families. As much as these findings are interesting and understandable, they are no less disturbing for the fact that they are against the spirit and interests of the constitution (the ground norm of our legal system), which in S.42 (2) provides that "no citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of his birth" (FRN-99).

Research Question #3

Analysis of data with respect to research question three reveals that, with no exceptions, all the items met the acceptance criterion mean of 2.50 and above on the four-point rating scale. Both education experts and parents appear to agree that, among other things, deregulation of education stimulates competition between public and private schools but does not guarantee equality of standards in such schools; it creates a situation in which private educational institutions are the most sought after; and, as a result, it creates a social milieu of schools of the "haves" and the "have nots." The finding is in line with Okafor (1992) and Mbiom and Achibongs (2005) views and findings that deregulation stimulates competition between public and private schools. All the same, the findings give cause for concern and worry because, as noted by Sanyaolu (2005), deregulation neither favours nor guarantees equality of standards among schools. And what is more, because deregulation precipitates a situation where private schools will turn out to be most sought after [Adeiyi (2005), Enemou (2005), and Fasana (2006)] because of the apparent availability of quality education [which all the same is not accessible to children of different

economic backgrounds (Malogo (2005)], it will end up balkanizing our educational institutions into schools of the "haves" and "have-nots" (Shuiab, 2005).

Research Question #4

Analysis of data in respect of research question four demonstrates that both classes of respondents, namely, the education experts and parents, are unanimous in their view that: education is an instrument for forging national unity (the very reason that informed the establishment of the Unity schools); it is inimical to the sustenance of unity among the citizenry; and by limiting access to quality education to children of different backgrounds, it does not seem to favour the principles of freedom, justice, and equality of persons.

Apart from limiting access to education, Shuaib (2005) and Kalusi and Ozano (2005) have noted that deregulation will widen the gap between the rich and poor in matters of access to quality education. And what is more, noted Sanyaolu (2006), the policy of deregulation has caused the "Unity" schools to start losing in their unity functions.

Hypothesis One

Data analysis in respect of hypothesis one of the study showed that the calculated z-value of 1.03 is lower than the critical value of 1.96. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the responses from the two classes of respondents, namely, the education experts and parents, on the issue of deregulation of education and citizens' right to it. This is also in line with the findings of Oguntuase (2005), Shuaib (2005) and Wokocha (2005) that citizens' rights to education will suffer enormous restrictions consequent on the regime of prohibitive fees that will ensure.

Hypothesis Two

Analysis of data in respect of hypothesis two showed also that the calculated z-value of 0.54 being lower than the critical value of 1.96, therefore the views of education experts and parents on the issue of equality of access to education in deregulated social milieu do not significantly differ leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. Consequent, access to quality education is obviously only to those who can "pay" leaving those unable to "pay" with no other option than

the decaying public schools (Shuaib, 2005). Rightly did Malogo (2006) lament that under the deregulated milieu, education would be hijacked by men of wealth and influence.

Recommendation

Sequel to the findings of the study and the educational implication arising there from, the researcher recommends as follows

1. Government should be cautious in adopting educational deregulation bearing in mind that while the policy is an economic theory, education is not a commodity but a public good. In fact, rather than deregulate education, the dividends accruing to government from the deregulation of other more business sectors should be used to fund education.
2. Government should continue to fund public schools so as make them viable and able to engage the private schools in the competition not just for clientele but also for standards. Otherwise our public schools which are fast dwindling in standard and viability will sooner than later come to constitute a matter just for the concern of historians.
3. Adequate provisions should also be made by the government for children of low income families to have access to quality education through awards of scholarships and bursary provisions. In the end, the graduates from public and private schools could be seen competing for job openings on equitable grounds.
4. Although deregulation policy is welcome because of its positive character of breaking monopolies and removing protectionism, it should be noted that the enabling environment is not yet rife in Nigeria considering our very low literacy level (57%). Consequent on this, not just the government alone but and more importantly all who consume the products of education institutions (ie private and corporate organizations) should join hands to ensure sustainable quality education capable of guaranteeing having in place the required workforce resting on whose shoulder Nigeria can compete equitably in the information age and era of globalization. Government should closely monitor the private schools – especially with regard to the fees charged. This is to check excessive quest for profit which sometimes are at the expense of teaching and learning and social engineering towards nation building.

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