



Privatization Policy and the Challenges of Educational Sector in Nigeria: Implications for Sustainable Development

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Abstract *The role of education in the attainment of national growth and development cannot be overemphasized. This assertion has been supported by extensive research in different socio-economic situations. This work examined the ills of state-owned institutions as well as the merits and the demerits inherent in private education. The researchers were able to adopt public choice theory to demonstrate that private participation alongside public ownership of schools is a major factor responsible for the crunches in Nigerian education. Education in Nigeria under government ownership has met numerous challenges. Some scholars have therefore argued that private participation in the Nigerian educational system is responsible for these trials and for the education to be reinvigorated and rejigged for the attainment of growth and development, the government must strictly handle the sector. Moreover, if the government is to achieve its desired objectives, the idea of private participation in the education sector should be discouraged as to allow the government to take total control of education.*

Keywords: Privatization, Education, Development, Nigeria

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1. Introduction

As human beings continue to exist, the significance of education keeps increasing. Growth, development, and quality of life require a sound quantitative and qualitative education. Education is seen as a real instrument to achieve political, social and economic advancement. According to Jekayinfa (2014) education is the method of learning and knowing, that is not limited to the school environment and textbooks. She maintained further that it is a complete process that remains throughout life. Jekayinfa (2014) opined that even the consistent activities and happenings around us teach us, in one way or the other. She concluded that it would not be an overstatement to say that the survival of human beings is futile without education. In a word of Joel (2011) education is a process of nurturing the people to development and possession of necessary skills, information, knowledge, which initiate him into his primordial setting. Joel (2011) maintained further that education prepares an individual to self-reliant and possessing the know-how to enhance the socio-

economic development of his people. He submitted that education is the process of overall development of man, his mind, his brain, his body and his interaction with other, and the environment around him.

However, the argument for privatization of education has become a phenomenon in the world in recent times. The argument has been perceived in different ways with different understandings. According to Belfied (2003), Olaniyan (2001) and Psacharopolous & Woodhall (1997) privatization of education is seen as privatization, deregulation, public-private partnership, increasing the responsibility of parents in the management of education and private investment with the focus on cost recovery. From the day of independence till 1999, Nigerian government has conceived education as a public service that must not be controlled by the private individuals. During this period, the power to establish, own, fund, and manage education especially higher education such as universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and other tertiary institutions was under the concurrent list of both federal and state governments.

Nevertheless, due to the continues increasing in public spending against the dwindling state revenues, the government has now realized that the only way to sustain the tempo of education is to liberalize or open the door for private participation. Most especially in this era of privatization as to relief the government the heavy burden of public expenditure on education. To justify this option, Kitaev (2003), corroborated this position when he averred that private education had become a global trend in the world. And he advanced further that if the government can cede the education to the private sector; the burden on the state budget can be reduced while the quality of teaching can equally be achieved. The slogan of privatization of education has increased in recent times in the world; meanwhile, private education is being encouraged and traveled by some educationists as a panacea to the lack of adequate public provision of education or alternative to failing public schools. This privatizing method of education is against the opinion of the proponents of public school with fears regarding the quality of teaching, equal access



to educational opportunities as well as the availability of free education. Disappearing from these arguments is the proof of the impacts of privatization of education, whether right or wrong on the people cum state as a whole. However, education in Nigeria is replete with antecedents of standard and successes. In recent times, however, the reverse has been the case. This development has called for the formulation and implementation of several educational policies at a different point in time aimed at revamping, reinvigorating and repositioning education to achieve its desired objectives.

Unfortunately, the illusion of these educational systems lies in their futile attempts to transform education to meet its primary goals. And central to explaining the futility of several attempts being made is the thesis upheld by some analysts that the government handles the whole education business. According to Raji (2011) education does not just being determined by the government, government regulates and control education in all ramifications. Therefore, this development now leads to different arguments upon how education is to be managed in Nigeria to achieve its desired objectives.

1.1 Problem Statement

The early stage of Nigeria Independence marked the beginning of the country's journey into development. As Danjuma (2015) rightly observed that education is the most vital tool for the development of individuals' vis-à-vis country as a whole. And to achieve this aspiration, it became vital for the state to involve and control the education that was hitherto in the hands of missionaries. Chidozie et al. (2015), maintained that this was borne out of the fact that state was perceived to be the catalyst of development, expected to provide the basic education and other infrastructural services required in the sector that could not be provided by these missionaries schools. Hence, schools were taken over by the government at various regions and this led to the set up of universities at regional level which include University of Ile Ife now Obafemi Awolowo University Ile Ife, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and University of Nigeria Nsuka. However, despite the efforts made by the nationalist leaders to provide accessible and qualitative education especially basic education to all, unfortunately, the successive governments didn't consolidate this efforts as education was faced with problem of fund and poor management. The above position was corroborated by NUT (2013) and Durosoro (2012) when they both remarked that the budgetary allocations to education over the years have dropped and it has affected the quality of education in Nigeria.

It was against this backdrop that warranted the private participation in the educational sector in Nigeria. As government belief that there is need for other stakeholders like Parent Teacher Association (PTA), philanthropic organizations and other non-governmental groups to ensure that education is taking to an enviable level. Interestingly, since the private participations in the educational sector in Nigeria, the posture has been a subject of rigorous debate among Nigerians regarding its impact on the quality of education and the overall development. Though, several studies have been carried out on the privatization policy in Nigeria especially on power, banking, and telecoms among others. However, the privatization policy and the challenges of educational sector in Nigeria have not been explored. Arising from this gap is what this paper filled.

1.2. Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the study

To examine the impact of privatization of education on the Nigerian educational sector

To identify the problems of privatization of education on the Nigerian educational sector

To suggest possible recommendations for Nigerian government based on the paper's findings

2. Literature review

2.1. Conceptualizing Education

The idea of education has an extensive usage of many other concepts. Indeed education is a process that begins when a child is born and ends at death. Though, the following definitions shall be adopted to explain the concept in this study. According to Jekayinfa (2014) education is the method of learning and knowing, that is not limited to the school environment and textbooks. She maintained further that it is a complete process that remains throughout life. Jekayinfa (2014) opined that even the consistent activities and happenings around us teach us, in one way or the other. She concluded that it would not be an overstatement to say that the survival of human beings is futile without education. Fafunwa as cited in Peter (2009) remarked that education is an aggregate of all the procedure by which young adult cultivates the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to the environment he or she lives. Okoli (2007) cited in Kinrin & Balagbogbo (2009) declared that education is geared towards a better relationship, active citizenship, individual and national efficiency, self-actualization, national consciousness and national unity. Based on the preceding definitions, one can rightly deduce that the term education is a process by which person is trained for the possession of



necessary skills, norms, knowledge, information which will make him useful for himself and his primordial setting.

2.2. Privatization of Education

From the viewpoint of International Human Rights Law (IHRL) cited in the Right to Education Project (RTEP) (2014) private education connotes knowledge that is rendered by a person or group of individuals other than the government or state. Which includes; private organizations, religious bodies, community-based groups, private individuals as well as non-governmental organizations. According to Right to Education Project (RTEP) (2014) Privatization of Education is a process by which all aspects of education such as management, assets, roles or functions formerly carried out by the government are transferred from the government to private individuals or private sector. According to Belfied (2003), Olaniyan (2001) and Psacharopolous and Woodhall (1997) privatization of education is seen with different names as privatization, deregulation, public-private partnership, increasing the responsibility of parents in the management of education and private investment with the focus on cost recovery. From the above definitions, privatization of education means handing over of assets, possession and control of state-owned institutions or schools from the state to the private organizations or sector. It could also mean liberalization of education sector for private participation.

2.3. Development

Despite the extensive usage of the concept 'development,' there is no universal meaning of the concept. It's premised on the fact that, development means different things to different people and environment. Nevertheless, the following definitions shall be examined in this paper. Todaro and Smith (2009) affirmed that development is the process by which the fundamental objectives that bring about the dignity of life of the people in connection with the overall context of their society and the environment that sustains them as a means of poverty eradication. They remarked further that development implies a process by which living standards of the people are being improved and equally enhanced. From the understanding of Otaki (2006) development suggests a quantitative and qualitative change in the structure, performance and the composition of the forces of production. Otaki advanced further that development is manifested in the living standard of the people, via eradication of unemployment, poverty, disease, hunger, inequality, squalor, and among other.

According to Amartya, Sen (1999) in his book titled "Development Freedom." development is about the conducive environment that can stimulate to the public service to every member of the society. He remarked further that development is to improve the lives we lead and the freedom we enjoy. He concluded that development is the freedom people have to basic needs such as housing, clothing, healthcare and other essential services in a given society. From the viewpoints of Todaro, Smith cum Sen and other scholars in this study, development is observed from the angle of the general improvement that translate to a favorable milieu for every member of the public. They all agreed that if the fundamental needs of the people are available in the society, then, development has been achieved.

3.1 The Role of Education in Growth and Development

Education remains an invaluable asset for the attainment of growth and development. Education equally remains a potent means through which the problem of poverty, health, and other societal issues could be addressed. There cannot be any significant development where there is no quality education. Sound and all-encompassing education engender technology and skilled manpower that can transform to economic growth and development. The role of education was encapsulated by Jekayinfa (2014) in what she termed Essential Education. She opined that essential education which is equally known as sound education is all about training the students, not just about knowledge, but the skills they need to survive and bring about positive changes in the society. She remarked further that during the time of exertion and worry in the community, whether as a result of economic depression, climate change or political turmoil, that essential education is desirable more than ever. Development of any society starts with individual or group rather than institutions in the society. This assertion was corroborated by Abdullahi (2007) when he averred that sound education is the kind of teaching that paves the way for the growth and development of any society. He went further that sound and quality education provides the society the opportunities to advance in science and technology. Abdullahi equally maintained that it prepare community in a way that such state can compete favorably in the world.

The significance of education was also captured in United Nations Millennium Project (2005) where it was declared that quality education is the bedrock of a sustainable economic growth and overall development. The UNMP (2005) remarked further that without sound education, the country will be sentenced to an importing country, and exporting



primary goods based on physical endowments, rather than different kind of export commodities based on skilled, capital investments as well as technology. Education is a basic human right and it is not easy to finance by private individuals due to financial requirements. Hence, state needs to intervene by subsidizing the sector in order to achieve development. Affirmed by Wade (1990) the role of government is not only to maintain law and order but to mobilize resources needed to achieve development. From the preceding remarks, it has been established that education has boundless potentials for improving the individual and the society. There has been a strong postulation that without education, development cannot take place and that only educated people can command the necessary skills for sustainable economic growth and development.

3.2 Constraints in Nigerian Public Education

The obstacles or challenges in Nigerian education have many faces. Constraints mean those problems

Figure1: Represents the Enrolment in Nigerian Universities from 1960-2008

Year	Number of universities	Total Enrolment	% Increase
1960/61	2	1395	-
1961/62	5	2406	72.47
1962/63	5	3,761	56.32
1963/64	5	5,106	35.76
1964/65	5	6,707	34.36
1965/66	5	7,709	14.94
1966/67	5	8904	15.50
1967/68	5	7,058	-20.73
1969/70	5	9,695	11.50
1970/71	5	14,468	49.23
1971/72	6	17,093	18.14
1972-78	13	48,698	184.94
1999-88	29	160,174	228.9
1989-99	39	574,723	258.8
2000-05	51	810, 220	40.98
2008	94	1, 096, 312	35. 31

Source: Adopted from Ajayi, K. & Adeniyi, A. (2009)

In a similar vein, the observation of Akale cited in Azuaga and Muhammed, (2005) when he observed, that there is a sharp increase in student population in Nigerian especially students population in social science and humanity courses compare to students in science-based fields. Akale, however, lamented that this arrangement has multiplier effects on the Nigerian quest for development. Another glaring constraint to Nigeria education is a lack of adequate fund. Argungu (2016) affirmed the constraint when he maintained that the rot; decay and inadequate

threaten the standard of education in Nigeria. Those problems include: Lack of necessary infrastructures in Nigerian public schools has been seen as one of the primary constraints leading to falling standard of education in Nigeria. Soludo confirmed this point, (2006) when he remarked that there are just over one hundred (100) tertiary schools in Nigeria turning out over two hundred thousand (200,000) students yearly, that if these students population is not checked, that it would snowball to the following consequences. Dilapidated buildings, lawlessness, cultism, laboratory amenities and equipment in the state of disrepair, strikes prevail in these institutions due to over overcrowding, overstretching of available space and among others. In a similar vein, Ajayi and Adeniji (2009) declared that the incredible growth in school enrollment leading to a hysterical increase, which, although, is more conspicuous at the

Lower levels of the educational system have occasioned more pressure and burden on the school system.

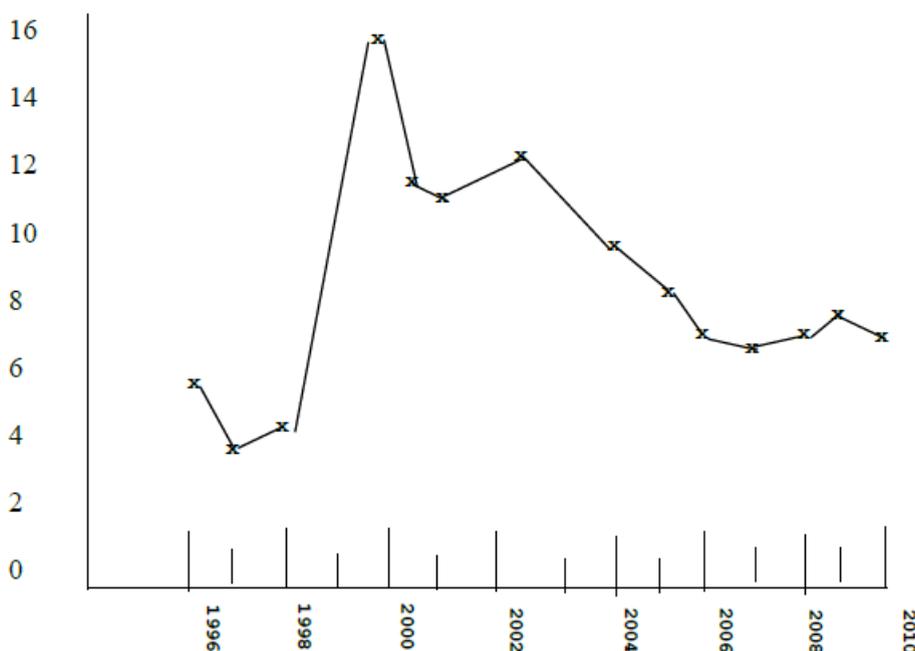
training facilities in Nigerian universities is due to inadequate funding, and it has occasioned Nigerian universities not to be rated among the best one thousand (1000) universities in the world. He lamented further, that out of 1.3trillion naira set aside for the revitalization of the schools in the country in 2013, that there is still an arrears of 605billion yet to pay by the government. Ekpouta (2009) agreed with Argungu when he described the decay in Nigerian educational sector as a result of inadequate funding. He maintained that the three



percent allocated to education in 2009 budget is absurd, and it is a complete departure from UNESCO prescription of 26 percent. In the same token, Olaniyi, and Adam (2002) equally corroborated the position of Ekpouta, when they remarked, that Nigerian government spending on education and share of total expenditure to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) have been declining. They argued further that the percentage of public spending on education from 1970 to 1998 was far below the minimum standard of United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of 26 percent. The research carried out by Adenuga (2002) point to the

fact that Nigeria’s government spending on education is entirely inadequate, or the amount claimed to have expended on education was not spent. The problem of funding was also emphasized by Ajayi and Adeniji (2009) when they remarked that funding is fundamental to unrestricted access to university education. They maintained that virtually all the challenges of universities education in Nigeria are attributable to insufficient funds.

Figure 2: Represents Federal Government Budgetary Allocation to Education from 1996-2010



Source: C.I Oriahi & P. Ebhomien (2011)

3.3 Merits of Private Education in Nigeria

It is palpable that scholars have identified the advantages that are derivable from privatization of education in Nigeria. It is why they have advocated for a paradigm shift from public to private in Nigerian educational system. Among the arguments advanced by these privatization scholars are the following.

3.3.1 Choice Advantages: The privatization scholars remarked that private institutions offer the benefit of choice to the citizens who have been denied admission in public institutions. The children of the elites and those of the rich people who have the financial mussels to bear the cost have opportunities to choose the school they want. This assertion was supported by Right to Education Project (RTEP) (2014) when it declared that the research showed that increasing private education might increase parental choice in the type and

nature of education they could choose for their wards.

3.3.2 Efficiency: The protagonists of private school advanced efficiency as one the hallmarks of private institutions. That is private institutions do not compromise standard and quality in term of service delivery to their students. Raji also corroborated this argument (2011) when he observed that lecturers and teachers in private schools hold lectures and lessons as at when due, unlike public institutions where lecturers abandon their classes because of pre-conceived notion that public school belongs to everybody, which negates quality service delivery. In related to the above argument was the research carried out by RTEP (2014), that the reason for advocating for privatization of education was based on the falling standard of education in public institutions.

3.3.3 Enhancing Parental Participation: A research carried out by Bhatta and Budathoki’s





cited in RTEP, (2014) affirmed that privatization allows parents to be more actively involved in their ward's education, such as when parental habits to their children's education change when their children move from public to private schools. They remarked further that private education gives more opportunities for interaction among teachers, parents, and students, through frequent parent/teacher meetings, such as Parents Teachers Association (PTA) and expecting parents to feature in school events.

3.3.4 The Presence of Infrastructure: According to Ndako (2014) there is high tendency in private schools to have the required infrastructure necessary for efficient and quality education that can stimulate development than in public institutions. He declared further that school like the ABTI-American University of Nigeria, Afe Babalola University Ado- Ekiti of Nigeria, Bells University of Technology Otta, Nigeria and other private institutions are highly rated in term of infrastructure in Nigeria. Ndako (2014) maintained further that besides the presence of structure in private schools, that, there exists the commitment to the maintenance of this infrastructure in private institutions. Unlike public institutions where are limited facilities that can aid teaching and learning, while the available ones are not adequately maintained by the government cum management of these establishments.

3.4 Contradictions in Private Education

The following are the contradictions identified by the critics against privatization of education in Nigeria.

3.4.1 The Cost of Privatized Education: The greatest complaint so far about private education is the outrageous fees charged by these institutions. They are so costly that the common citizens cannot afford to send their wards to those private institutions; instead, the children of the ordinary people go to public schools. According to Raji (2011) the private schools are only patronized by the wards of the wealthy. He maintained further that the cheapest private university in Nigeria is five hundred thousand naira (N500, 000), equivalent to one thousand seven hundred and twenty-three US dollars (\$1,723) per session which cannot still be afforded by the children of less privileged. Also, the private schools are only patronized by the politician's children as well as government officers wards or children while ordinary citizen's children attend public schools because of the cost of private schools in Nigeria.

3.4.2 The Tendency for the State to abandon its Responsibilities: Another critical area identified by the critics of privatization of education is that

the state as an institution to provide essential services is indirectly leaving its social liability for the private individual. The above position was affirmed by RTEP, (2014) when it observed that the negative impact of the increase in privatization is the possibility of the State 'exiting the field' of education provision. RTEP advanced that the government no longer sees itself as the primary provider of education. Hence, it can lead to a decline in the delivery for public schools and government spending on education, and this scenario can have multiplier effects on both accessibility and availability to the right to education especially for the common citizens.

3.4.3 Marginalization of the Common Masses: A research carried out by RTEP, (2014) indicates that the privatization of education leads to the total marginalization of ordinary citizens as well as the right to schooling by all and sundry.

3.4.4 Tendencies of Exploitation: The antagonists of private school perceived such education as a way to which the capitalists in the society continue their exploitative agenda. These critics observed that ninety percent of these schools are owned by the privileged elite to exploit the masses in the society. Closely related to the above assertion was the remarked of RTEP, that acquiring private tutoring services fundamentally increases household costs associated with education. The exploitative tendency, will, in turn, raises the possibility that low-income family is not capable of meeting the costs attached to the school, aggravating existing social disparities.

3.4.5 The Absence of Staff/Students' Unionism: According to Ndako (2014) and Raji (2011), the private institutions are not being friendly with the issues bothering on unions. Raji opined that many private schools have denied granting approval for their staff members to join employee unions both at local and national levels including the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP), and the Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU). He stressed further that students are equally not allowed to form Students' Union Government on private institution campuses. He concluded that the action negates fundamental human rights of both staff and students that are freedom of association which is very germane in Nigerian constitution.

Other contradictions attributed to private education by its critics is the inability to guarantee quality teaching in schools due to the engagement of under-qualified teachers and lecturers as the case may be, and by failing to ensure attractive and competitive salaries. Also, it encourages segregation of children living in abject of penury as



well as the exacerbation of inequalities in educational opportunities along classes.

4. Theoretical Viewpoint on Privatization of Education

Several theories have clarified the concept of privatization such as Radical-Marxist, Classical-liberal, neoliberal as well as Public choice theory. Radical-Marxist theory was developed by Karl Marx (1848) in his work titled Communist Manifesto; the participation of the state in the delivery of goods and services is seen as complementary to the general development goals of the state. Opposite to the theory above is the market system of the *laissez-fair* economic principle, advocated by Adam Smith (1776) in his work the “wealth of the nation” that encourages the unleashing of the viable return by unfettering uncontrolled-market pricing from government regulations (Samuelson, 1980). To classical-liberal theory, the involvement of the government in every activity is the beginning of inefficiency. Adams Smith was against to centrally planned economy. To him, planned economy will always hamper efficiency and effectiveness. Neo-liberal theories, this theory only support the classical theory by giving more recognition to privatization policy in contemporary time. The theory argued that the competitive forces that are in the market rather than government bureaucracy lead to a superior allocation of resources. Thus, privatization it is said will provide a better incentive for price maximization, boost more well-organized managerial supervision, and motivate better employee effort.

The public choice theory is a theory that relates economics understandings to the political institutions, developed by James Buchanan in 1986. According to the theory, there are certain “public goods” which cannot be delivered by the market forces or individuals but are essential to everybody in the society. The theory posits further that the nature service delivery decides whether they should be determined by the market forces or the government. Public choice encouraged that private goods should be rendered by the demand and supply while the state should deliver public goods. In sum, it opined that public goods offer separable private benefits (e. g education and health) the beneficiaries of the private benefits should be made to pay for the net proportion of the cost that represents the private interest (Ostrum and Ostrum 1991).

It is against this backdrop; this work shall be situated within public choice theory which advocated that the core goods like education, health, transportation and other services that are

central to human life should be provided by no any other person other than the state.

5. Methodology

The secondary source of data collection was employed in this paper such as relevant and recent library materials like journals, textbooks, related published articles on the internet or website that has to do with this topic. Also, the author used relevant national newspapers and magazines while the observations of the authors were also brought to bear before arriving at this sound and credible findings.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The authors have established that there is a need for government to take total control of the educational sector in the interest of education for all. The paper believes that government must not allow few individual to exploit the downtrodden masses through private education. Also, the article equally demonstrates that education is one of the fundamental social responsibilities of government which must be provided for every citizen with less cost. The paper identifies several roles that education has to play for the country to attain growth and development. It further pinpoints the constraints bedeviling Nigerian education. It concludes that for the country to achieve its desired goals, education must not be left in the hands of private individuals as education is not a profit making a venture like other sectors in the system.

Having considered Nigerian education from the different point of views, and having also looked at both merits and the negative aspect of privatization of education in Nigeria, it is against this backdrop that the paper suggests the following steps that could be adopted by the government to re-invigorate, rejig and re-position the deplorable state of the educational sector in Nigeria other than privatization of school.

The government at all levels should make funding of educational sector as a matter of priority and give hundred percent subsidy to education, by giving the fundamental aspect of the industry to national development. Because it is the development of education sector that will have multiplier effects on other areas of the nation. Funding of educational sector will eliminate the problem of research and training, infrastructural decay, brain drain, among others.

The government should comply with the recommendation of UNESCO on funding of education. UNESCO recommended that 26 percent of the annual national budget should be spent on education, given the critical nature of educational sector for national development. In a similar vein,



the government should not allow private institutions as a stop-gap measure to providing public education; or do not allow the existence of private school be the basis to stop or decrease funding and long-term asset in public education. The government should implement universal free and compulsory primary and secondary education for all. And if possible the private school will exist alongside with public school; there should be minimum standards in the educational sector for private education proprietors that conform to

international human rights laws and create mechanisms to hold both public and private education managers responsible. The government should compel the private sector to carry out their corporate social responsibility in the educational sector. The government should enact a law to stop politicians and government officers sending their children to private schools so that every stakeholder would see public schools as a matter of priority.

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