

Policy of Deregulation of Education in Nigeria: Achievements, Challenges and Way Forward

Obono Ebri Emmanuel PhD

Department of Educational Management, University of Cross River State, Nigeria

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One of the remarkable policies in Nigeria is the policy of deregulation of education. The policy aimed at encouraging private participation in the provision and funding of education, with the view to increasing access to formal education for all Nigerians, and also to reduce the burden of education funding on government. After many years of its implementation at all levels of education, it is necessary to examine the policy. Therefore, this paper examined the policy of deregulation of education in Nigeria. The achievements of the policy such as increase access to education, less burden of education funding on government, improved manpower supply, employment generation and community development were all pointed out and discussed. The major challenges of the policy include lack of fund, high tuition fees, poor condition of service, inequality of graduates examination malpractice and urban concentration were all examined. Furthermore, way forward such as financial grants to private institutions, improved condition of service, among others were provided in the paper, followed by conclusion.

Keywords: Policy, deregulation, education, funding, private institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria and indeed the world over, education system is guided by policies. Policies are guidelines or principles that guide implementation of a programme. It is a framework that guide actions, activities and decision making in a formal organization. Tunison cited in Okpa (2018), defined policies as those general regulations made by governing or administrative bodies that communicate value statements which are intended to give acceptable choices for decision making especially in problem or controversial areas. Policies are different from laws or rules, in the sense that laws or rules compel or prohibit behaviour of individual or group of individuals, while policies only guide

actions for those who are working in an organization to achieve desired result. According to Okpa (2018), policies are written when they are documented somewhere for reference purpose, and unwritten when they are made in form of pronouncements.

In education, policies are made to guide activities, operations, decision making and implementation of programmes within educational system. They are a general statement containing principles, regulations and rules, which govern many of the decisions on how to educate children, where to get them educated, who to teach them, how to finance their education and so on. Educational policies embraces all aspects of the educational system helping to keep it running smoothly and



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thereby saving a great deal of time and efforts (Ekpiken, 2018). Educational policies are official plans, statements and directives developed by policy makers to guide the delivery of educational services at all levels. This policies serves as essential tools for shaping the structure of the educational system, setting quality and standard, allocating resources and aligning educational outcomes with national development priorities. On their part Udida, Ovat and Agim (2013) described educational policies as the guiding ideas designed to influence school decisions, actions and practices; a plan of action agreed by individuals, group of individuals or government to solve educational problems.

Nigerian government have embarked on many educational policies in recent times. Among these policies is the policy of deregulation of education. Policy of deregulation of education stipulates how education will be owned, manage and finance in Nigeria. The idea behind this policy was to enable private individuals, nongovernmental organizations and religious bodies participate in the ownership, management and financing of education at all levels. Hence, this paper examined the policy of deregulation of education in Nigeria in terms of its achievements, challenges and way forward.

AN OVERVIEW OF POLICY OF Deregulation of EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

As earlier stated, Nigeria have embarked on many educational policies in recent times to reshape educational system. Deregulation of education is one of the numerous policies. Deregulation is a global economic order or declaration that seeks for more competition within the economy. It is a declaration that called for removal of restrictions or barriers to competitions in the economy, to enable private participation in all the aspects of the economy. The policy of deregulation of education in Nigeria is a product of this declaration. The policy aimed at allowing private individuals, nongovernmental organizations and religious bodies to establish, fund and manage schools. According to Undie (2007), the whole essence of deregulation of education is to ensure increase access to education, and to also

reduce the burden on government as the sole provider of the pecuniary nature of education.

Deregulation is an economic concept that advocates for reduction and/or cessation of government control in the provision and supply of goods and services. It is historically traceable to Adam Smith's *laissez – faire* theory. It is synonymous with privatization, and it aimed at removing of government regulations and the initiation of the private sector participation in the free market force driven competition in education (Asogwa, 2020). The policy came on board as a result of poor quality, overcrowded and poor funding of public education. Therefore, its main objectives include, to increase access to education; improve quality of education through competition; and sought for private funding of education to reduce the burden on government.

Deregulation is an economic intervention instrument. It means divestment of monopolistic control over a system or an institution, allowing the participation of corporate, non-corporate, government and non-governmental bodies. Deregulation of education characterized by private profit oriented investment in education, which entails users to pay for services consumed and optionality necessitated cost (Njoku, Chinewu & Gbokwe, 2013). Deregulation of education is based on noninterference of government, an approach which favor capitalist's self-interest, innate consumer's preferences, competition and freedom as the impetus for optimal prosperity. Deregulation of education has been linked to privatization, where educational institutions will have to be self – regulated and controlled; that is freedom from government imposed decisions (Ossai & Ajudeonu, 2023). This is particularly in university education where there is limited government control.

Deregulation of education implies the withdrawal of government control in the allocation of resources and the production of educational goods and services. It removed the monopoly of government in the provision and management of education and then transfer the power to the private sector. It nullified the notion that education is a public good that can be provided free of charge. As



against the features of public good, consumption by an individual is now deemed to reduce the amount left for others, and the derived benefit is directly related to the person contribution. Deregulation of education breed competition and hence, expectation of high yield or dividend or profit (Oluwatosin, Bello & Ogundele, 2020).

In the opinion of Babalola and Adedeji (2009), deregulation of education is not government handover of education or complete elimination of government regulations in education. According to the authors, deregulation of education deals with minimum involvement of government in the provision, financing and regulation of education. It involves a deliberate elimination of wrong regulations, directives, rules, guidelines, laws, policies and practices that stands as a barrier to free market and competitive system in education. It also involve making a minimum requirements for private participation in the provision of education. It aimed at enhancing ownership, financing, administration and control of education and thereby making the system more efficient in responding to the learning needs of the society and that of individual in a dwindling economy (Babalola and Adedeji, 2009).

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE POLICY OF DEREGULATION OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The policy of deregulation of education in Nigeria have recorded some remarkable achievements in critical areas since its inception. These include;

1. **Access to education:** The policy of deregulation of education has created more access to educational opportunities to many Nigerians, both in urban centers and rural areas. Through this policy, private institutions were established by private individuals, nongovernmental organizations and religious bodies hence, making it possible for education seekers to access education of their choice. The policy has also limited the number of people seeking quality education in overseas, as educational

institutions can now be found everywhere in Nigeria.

2. **Reduce funding burden on government:** One of the reasons for deregulation of education in Nigeria was to reduce the burden of education funding on government. This has been achieved. Private participation in the provision of education means private individuals and nongovernmental organizations will now establish, own and finance education, hence, reduce the burden of education funding on government that has been the sole financer of education. With increasing population of Nigeria, the government alone could not have provide and fund education to cater for the population with private sector involvement. Ossai and Ajudeonu (2023) state that the presence of organizations and individuals in educational provision is considered as alternative means of funding education in Nigeria.
3. **Employment generation:** The policy of deregulation of education creates employment opportunities directly and indirectly to many Nigerians. Many people today are employ in private institutions including, primary, secondary and higher institutions which are all products of deregulation of education, thus, helping the government to reduce the burden of providing employment to the citizens.
4. **Manpower training and supply:** With this policy, manpower training and supply have been improved in all areas of human endeavors. Over the years, private institutions (especially universities) are competing with their public counterpart in training and providing the nation manpower for national development. Many employers of labor now prefer graduates from private universities because of the belief that private universities offer more qualitative education than public universities Adeogunet'al (2009) opined that deregulation of education present a unique experience that will enhance human capital development.



5. **Community development:** The policy of deregulation of education have brought about rapid development of many communities through community service efforts of both public and private institutions. Private institutions are now partners in community development in terms of creating access roads, provision of water, electricity supply, youth employment, award of scholarship to deserving members of the host communities and other developmental initiatives. Presence of private institutions have also opened more business opportunities to both young and adult members of the immediate communities.

CHALLENGES OF THE POLICY OF DEREGULATION OF EDUCATION

Despite the achievements recorded so far, the policy of deregulation of education also have some challenges including;

1. **Lack of funds:** inadequate funding of public institutions and lack of adequate funds for individuals and organizations to establish more schools remain one of major challenge to the policy of deregulation of education in Nigeria. Available educational institutions in Nigeria seems to be insufficient to Carter for educational needs of the society, as many Nigerians who are qualified and willing to be educated cannot access schools within their localities. Establishment of educational institution is a capital intensive project. A lot of financial resources is needed to establish school and sustain it operations in terms of salary payment, hiring of qualified teachers, provision of educational materials, facilities and equipment for quality teaching and learning. Furthermore, lack of funds have also contributed to closing down of many private institutions, while some existing ones are struggling to provide facilities for teaching and learning.

2. **Poor condition of service:** Many private institutions in Nigeria not have favorable condition of service for staff. They offer poor salary that is not commensurate with teachers job, they neglect staff welfare, load teachers with excessive work, they monitor teachers strictly, no supportive facilities and work incentives, intimidate teachers and more worrisome terminate teachers appointment at will. This conditions often result to teachers job dissatisfaction and turnover which eventually led to frictional unemployment. Olawole and Oladipo (2021) noted that many teachers exit their schools and teaching profession due to some factors such as low job satisfaction, poor salary, limited professional development opportunities and unfavorable working conditions. Poor condition of service among private institutions is a set back to the policy of deregulation of education.

3. **High tuition fees:** High tuition fees and other school charges characterized the policy deregulation of education in Nigeria. Many private institutions takes advantage of this policy to charge exorbitant fees from students. This expensive nature of private institutions have deprived some parents from sending their children to school especially where there is no public schools. Adeogun, Subair and Osifila (2009) noted that the excessive fees imposed on students in private institutions would be difficult to control by government since private institutions are profit making oriented. High tuition fees among private institutions is a set to the policy of deregulation of education as many parents who are willing to send their children to school cannot afford to pay these expensive school fees. High tuition fees have denied many people opportunity of going to school which



- become a challenge to deregulation of education in Nigeria
4. **Problem of equality:** Problem of inequality among graduates of private and public institutions is another challenge of the policy of deregulation of education in Nigeria. While it is clear that most private institutions enjoyed modern educational facilities with small class sizes, public institutions in Nigeria operate in adverse conditions such as deteriorated facilities and overcrowded classrooms. This situation in turn led to production of half-baked graduates in public institutions and well trained graduates at the private institutions (Ossai and Ajudeonu,2023).
5. **Employment of quack teachers:** The policy of deregulation of education in Nigeria has also suffered set back due to employment of unqualified teachers into the educational system. Many private institutions engages those without teaching qualifications to carry out the duties of teachers. These so called teachers lack pedagogical skill required from every teacher to deliver instruction and implement school and government programmes to the learners. The adverse effect of engaging quack teachers poor academic performance of students and consequently poor quality of output from the system.
6. **Examination malpractice:** Many graduates of private institutions are termed products of examination malpractice because some private institutions encourages examination malpractice to make good results and attract more patronage from parents. Today many private secondary schools are termed special centers for external examinations such as the West Africa Senior School Examination and National Examination Council. Parents sees these schools as last resort for their children to have their senior school certificates. Supervisors in these schools compromised and received bribe to allow students copy. In most cases, parents paid money to teachers to write examination for their children in these special centers. This examination malpractice among private institutions posed a challenge to the policy of deregulation of education in Nigeria.
7. **Urban concentration:** Urban concentration of private institutions constitute a major challenge to the policy of deregulation of education in Nigeria. Many private institutions are establish in urban centers due to population, thereby leaving some rural areas without schools for rural dwellers.

WAY FORWARD

The following remedies are provided to cope the challenges of deregulation of education in Nigeria.

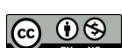
- Government and multinational companies should consider giving out take up grants to individuals or organizations who have shown genuine interest in the provision of education. This is because, education so provided by private individuals or organizations will help in developing the skills needed in these companies. Furthermore, government should also consider to give grant to existing private universities to provide facilities needed to deliver quality educational services to the learners. During pre-independence era in Nigeria, the colonial government were giving grant-in-aid to missionaries to support education. This gesture can as well be replicated to private institutions to ease financial challenge. Government should also step up the funding of public education for quality and standard.
- Condition of service in private institutions should be improved in line with public institutions. The government through its agencies should endeavour to monitor activities of private institutions closely



- especially, the conditions through which teachers operate to deliver their services. The interest of the teachers should be protected. Teachers welfare and job security must be guaranteed. Salary must be improved and regularly paid as at when due, workload must be minimized to be in line with government approved standard, and most importantly, school proprietors should stop teachers harassment and intimidation, rather, see them as asset to the school.
- iii. The issue of tuition fees and other charges should be regulated by the government, though its agencies. The government should not give private institutions total control in deciding their school fees. There should be a benchmark for school fee to guide against exorbitant school fees charged by many private institutions. This will create more access to education as many parents who wish to patronage private institutions for their children can do so without much stress.
- iv. Government should provide adequate facilities in public institutions to match with those in private institutions. If students in both public and private institutions receive the same education with the same quality of facilities and quality of manpower, the issue of inequality of graduates will be addressed or minimized.
- v. The government through the various educational agencies such as National Universities Commission, National Board for Technical Education, National Commission for Colleges of Education, Secondary Education Board and the Universal Basic Education Board should constantly monitor private institutions to ensure they adhere to international best practices and quality assurance. Private institutions should have adequate qualified teachers with pedagogical skills to deliver instruction adequately to the learners, and also make provision for in-service training and development programmes to keep their teachers abreast with the current methods, techniques and technology of teaching.
- vi. Examination bodies such as the West Africa Examination Council (WEAC) and National Examination Council (NECO) should ensure that the conduct of external examinations is not compromise in private institutions. School found to have engage in any form of examination malpractice should be seriously sanctioned. Students grades in external examinations should be a reflection for their academic performance, and not in the other way round.
- vii. Government should improve rural infrastructures to encourage people to establish school in those localities. Lack of infrastructures hinders the establishment of schools in rural areas, hence, making some rural areas completely without any form educational institution.

Conclusion

The policy of deregulation of education aimed at encouraging private participation in the provision of education at all levelly, with the view to increasing access to education to al Nigerians, and also to less the burden of funding on government. The policy does not mean total handover of education to private sector, rather, it emphasize the need for private public partnership in the provision of education to all citizens at all levels of education. The policy have recorded remarkable achievements such as creating more access to education for Nigerians, less burden of funding on government, increase manpower supply, employment generation, and community development. However, as laudable the policy is, it has some major challenges such as lack of adequate funding, poor condition of service among private institutions, high tuition fees, problem of inequality among graduates, and poor quality output. Interestingly, these challenges are not without remedies. Government financial support standardization of tuition fee, improved condition of service, provision of facilities and monitoring of quality practices if well-articulated, will go a long way in address the of deregulation of education for optimum result.



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