BRANDING DYNAMICS IN EDUCATION PLANNING FOR SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION AND TRANFORMATION

By

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Abstract

Basically, the education sector is paramount in generating the energy with which nations grow and develop. The educational goal of this nation among others has been the inculcation of national unity and the acquisition of appropriate skills for development. But current changes in Science and Technology as well as perceived social vices in the sector have gradually rendered the plan and skills of yesterday's education inappropriate in today's globalized world setting. Despite reforms, the public schools have not performed up to expectations. Considering the privatization wave of the moment, we observed that the education industry faces challenging conditions similar to those of the business world and requires business concepts devoid of bureaucracy in its solution. This paper focuses on the discussion of a theoretical background to deliver a business model in form of an educational brand and franchise within a corporate framework. The contribution of this paper is to broaden and enrich the theory of educational planning and quality control debate. Drawing on perspectives from Brands and Franchise "theory of business and marketing", the paper evaluates the principles of branding and franchise using some evidence and makes a contribution to educational reform, management and control through a structured franchise framework. It concluded that if education must be the pivot of economic growth and development, then its conduct has to be based on business principles.

Introduction

There is no doubt education being a necessary condition that waters the ground for 'the germination and sustenance of' economic growth and development of nations. Development in the real sense however, must be perceived in terms of progress towards reducing the incidence of poverty, unemployment and income gaps among the populace. Essentially, education, as an input factor in the development matrix ought to bring about changes which should result in increasing the standard of living of the benefiting citizens of the country in question. According to Adenipekun (2007), education is the foundation stone of development of all nations, such that many of the countries that have achieved greatness today have been able to do so as a result of their sound educational system. In Nigeria today, there is the urgent need by stakeholders in the sector to suggest innovative reforms that will address and resolve current educational challenges that were absent in the system, from independence to the early or mid 1980s. In that period majority of Nigerians including a greater percentage of the political leaders are products of public schools. Today, what we have seemed to be the reversal of what it was. Public schools that produced current leaders have become undisputable shadows of their former selves. This is evident in the fact that no Nigerian in a position of authority sends their wards to the public schools they attended. Preferred schools for their children are local private or foreign public or private schools. Public schools being shadows of what they ought to be has become idle centres that breeds social vices such as corruption, cultism, immorality, impunity among others, that basically produces unemployable human resources as outputs. It is on the basis of these challenges that the then minister of Education, Ezekwesili (2007) in Udegbe, (2007), called for public-private participation in the development of federal government colleges across the country if we must achieve the globalization challenges of providing and exporting human capital and technology.

The author of this paper propose applying brands and Franchising theory in guiding education privatization as a form of educational reform not only for the purpose of returning the lost glory of the sector, but mainly to position the sector to meet technological challenges endogenously. On this score, this paper focuses on a theoretical model borrowed from business within a corporate framework in form of an educational brand and franchise. The contribution of this paper is aimed at broadening and enriching the theory of educational planning and quality control management debate. Drawing on perspectives from brands and franchise "theory of business and marketing", it makes a contribution to educational reform, management and control through a structured franchise framework for managing the brand via interactions with the stakeholders of the brands and franchise owners (the government). As a starting point, Section 1 introduces the issue, section 2 discusses the conceptual issues, while the challenging issues are presented in section 3, section 4 we introduce the concept of educational franchise and brand management, as a model of educational reform and section 5 conclusion and recommendations. It is hoped that our discussion will be a good contribution to the educational reforms debate.

The Conceptual of Globalisation and Privatisation

Globalization refers to the growing interactions in the world trade, exchange, and social services made possible by technological advances in transport, information and communications. The hallmark of globalization is thus the promotion of the free market, individual initiatives, private enterprise, competition and capitalism to its credo. The Machiavellian logic of the survival of the fittest of the 17^{th} and 18^{th} century may again be the order of the day. In this system, weak people, poor countries and their governments may be absolutely disadvantaged for lack of competitiveness and efficiency. For competition to thrive emphasis must be laid on free market and limiting the economic role of the state through the government policy of privatization, deregulation and liberalization. Government meddling in economic affairs is said to spoil the market, distorts competition, promote inefficiency, waste, corruption, misplacement and misallocation of resources and priorities. According to Aluko (2003), for African countries to fit into the new arrangement of globalized economy there has to be wholesale privatization of state owned and state controlled agencies, companies and institutions, including educational institutions. But again, globalization is a two-edged sword that will bring benefits to some and more misery to an increasing number of others. It concentrates wealth in the hands of few and poverty to the majority of people. For instance, when a public monopoly is sold, it simply creates a private monopoly. Monopolies in a sense are not usually very efficient, partly because they lack the stimulus of competition and regulations. Otherwise, if a public enterprise is sold out to foreign investors, the dividends will be transferred partly or wholly abroad while the control-of the sold outfit will also be done from the foreign country. Again, imagine a scenario where the investors are foreign governments, it implies sowing seed of underdevelopment and re-colonialism, the effects of which can only be better imagined than experienced. In the pursuit of these agenda government must not lose sight of health and education of the poorer segments of the society whose access to the benefits from such utility services are hinged on government subsidies.

In all, globalization is a process of creating a global market place in which free markets, investment flows, trade and information are integrated. It is a process of heightening the level of interconnections between nation-states. At the core of this process is technological advancement in communication the immediate and concrete impact of which has been the creation of a global society. It has been argued that this process would eventually result in a broader less world Nan technically. From economic perspective, it is simply seen as process of intensifying and broadening interdependence among nations.

Concept of the private sector

The concept of privatization can be defined as the transfer of ownership and control of an enterprise from the state to the private sector. This subject has been seen from different perspectives and interest groups and has also been defined differently. The Privatization and Commercialization Act of 1988 and the Bureau of Public Enterprises Act of 1993 defined privatization as the relinquishment of part or all of the equity and other interests held by the Federal Government or any of its agencies, in enterprises whether wholly or partly owned by the Government. However, Nwaoye (1997) as cited by Adamolekun, (2007) defined, it as the transfers of ownership of production and control of enterprises from the public to the private sector. Oyeranti (2004) defined the private sector as a basic organizing unit for economic activity where private ownership is an important factor, where markets and competition drive production and private initiative and risk-taking set activities in motion. It adds that the private sector principle can be applied in all economic activities, including the delivery of public services. Privatization could be defined as a process designed to achieve a diminished role of the state in the economy, so as to achieve greater economic ciency through increased private participation, in the development process. The major objectives privatization programs are meant to achieve is broad and has many fundamental components that can act together for the enhancement of microeconomic efficiency. Among these objectives of privatization includes the following: strengthening the role of the private sector in the economy, which will guarantee higher capacity utilization; improving the financial health of public services with savings from suspended subsidies; and reducing corruption because interference by politicians will cease among others.

Privatization in Nigeria was formally introduced through the Privatization and Commercialization Act of 1988, with the Technical Committee on Privatization and Commercialization (TCPC) given the mandate to privatize 111 public enterprises and commercialize 34 others. By 1999, the Federal Government enacted the Public Enterprise (Privatization and Commercialization) Act, which was created by the National Council on Privatization chaired by the then Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar to make policy for the implementation of the privatization program in Nigeria. The 1999 Act also established the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) as the secretariat of the National Council on Privatization. Whose functions are to; implement the council's policies on privatization and commercialization; prepare public enterprises approved by the council for privatization and commercialization; advise the council on capital restructuring needs of enterprises to be privatized; ensure financial discipline and accountability of commercialized enterprises; make recommendations to the council in the appointment of consultants, advisers, investment bankers, issuing houses, stockbrokers, solicitors, trustees, accountants, and other professionals required for the purpose of either privatization or commercialization; and ensure the success of privatization and commercialization implementation through monitoring and evaluation.

The Challenging Issues

It is clear that the Education sector in Nigeria has not been able to drive the development process effectively in its bid to provide human capital. In spite of the various policies in place, the country has witnessed over time, that the outcomes of the school system is still very much below the standard required to bring about sustainable development in the Nigerian economy. Among the challenges expected from a privatized educational sector of the Nigerian economy can be summarized as follows:

a. **The inspectorate and control of standard**: The Federal Ministry of Education Inspectorate as well as independent/private inspectorate to be established must be allowed to operate without undue interference.

b. **Sharp practices**: Since Education will be based on business principles partially, with profits as an objective, it is obvious that proprietors may cut corners and indulge in sharp practices as with other ventures in the private sector, in other to gain public acceptance and enlarged profits. Based on the above, the system must of necessity be monitored by a quality control agency established by the government as in the case of NAFDAC, to monitor closely, the events and progression of the schools in the new franchise policy arrangement. Monitoring humans is a more Herculean tax than monitoring substandard drugs. Hence, the employees of the agency must be people of integrity and rich knowledge

c. **Role of government**: The private investors must be ready to enter into strategic alliance with the public sector while at the same time encouraging the former to drive the educational process. Again, government should make policies and strategies interventions at crucial times. This challenge is to minimize failure even on the side of the private sector.

d. **Infrastructure:** Infrastructural development is a sine-qua-non to quality and standard of education in any nation. An infrastructural model has to be designed for the primary, and secondary schools in terms of environment, materials and human resources, necessary for learning experiences to take place. On one hand this will enhance a sense of uniformity and operations.

e. **Foreign Investors:** Care has to be taken to ensure that foreign investors are not allowed to purchase controlling equity percentage of the school capital. However, they should be encouraged to enter into partnership with Nigerians to establish and run world class educational facilities where the students could be subjected to examinations of same school grade e.g. London GCE, Staff Exchange programmes should be encouraged as currently being done by very few privately owned educational institutions at both the secondary and post-secondary levels.

Branding Dynamics and Franchising as a Model for Education Reform

In the beginning, schools though few were both owned and managed independently by the government and non-governmental organizations (Ngo's), basically the Christian church. At that time the schools had high moral values, accompanied by academics per-excellence. These successes were based on good management, the principles of true moral values and real patriotism, comparable only to the zeal of a heavenly race. Corruption and moral decay in the other spheres and sectors of the economy attracted corrupt practices, which crept into the system essentially in favour of social elites and the political class whose wards tend to be "school landlords or ghost students", that always became the never do wells in the school system, according to Oma-Williams (2007). The failure of the public schools gave rise to the establishment of private schools, which are based on profit and competition. In competition, the bad and ugly will naturally fissile out, under good policy and supervision, leaving the good. Problem arises where the bad schools have no competitor. Again, the increase in other government schools enrolments has never been matched with integrity and honesty. The present dispensation is witnessing a Nigeria where Naira, kobo and dollars are struggling for supremacy as school outcomes, since the core values and competence operationally associated with education previously are sidetracked (Oma-Williams, 2007).

UNESCO recommended 26% of developing countries annual budgets to be on education if they are to meet the challenges of globalization, Millennium Development Goals, NEEDS, and education for all developmental goals. Nigeria for instance, since 2007 has been earmarking nothing less than 8.19% of her annual budget on education. This is a far cry from the realities on ground. Out of the 56.7 million children of primary school age; only 15.25 million are in school representing 26.9 million while 73.1% or 41.45 million children are not in school. The public or government cannot do it alone.

School management and finance are few of problems bisecting our educational systems, bureaucracy and unnecessary government intervention has also taken their tolls. The system has not been reliable but fraught with constant policy changes, incessant and unpredictable strikes, massive systemic rot, infrastructural decay, academic decline, facility dilapidation, diversion of funds, obsolete equipments, overcrowded classrooms, lack of sporting equipments, poorly paid staff, libraries are stocked with expired and antiquated books, absence of health and hostel facilities among others. Since the growth and development of a country depend on the educational system and how it is organized, funded and managed.

For educational reform to be meaningfully effective in this country, the approach has to be comprehensive, well above the Basic Need standard to be able to sustain and enhance the overall growth and development of the nation. The education sector faces similar conditions and problems as the business sector in their various processes. Instances are: issues of management of scarce resources, choice of whom to employ, human capital development, gratuities and pensions, foreign direct investment, image making, and competition among others. At this point, it would be inferred that the business of educating the learner, should be predicated on business principles devoid of unnecessary bureaucracy and laissez-faire attitudes where domestic and foreign investors alike have interest to stake their finances, energy and expertise. One of such principles is "Educational Brands and Franchising". A franchise is a business model where by a production structure is laid out to ensure a universal quality in all the production plants (schools) or outlays all over. In other words, all production units have similar infrastructures, ethics; factor input mix, management styles, standard output and specification. The concept is subsumed under the corporate marketing paradigm; it may be explained to include related concepts like corporate identity, corporate communication and corporate reputation. Franchising and Branding education can be defined as the process of creating and maintaining a favourable reputation of the schools and their constituent elements which is based on the identity of the franchise (Maathuis, 1999). Bickerton (2000) suggests that the concept of franchise and brand management unites the concept with the concept of corporate identity. Hence, there is an increasing linkage between schools identity and the government educational supervisors (Balmer and Gray, 2003; Knox and Bickerton, 2003; Brown, Dacin, Pratt, and Whetten, 2006). This integration combines the "inside out" organisational focus with the "outside in" image focus (Knox and Bickerton, 2003). Such, integrated conceptualisation incorporates the internal infrastructures and the development of expected values outcome (Kiriakidou and Millward, 2000). Essentially, the concern of such franchise is to align each school's activities with a more coherent strategic framework. As such, the school under a franchise arrangement becomes an expression of the nation's strategic intent (Urde, 1999, 2009; Knox and Bickerton, 2003).

In all, this concept embodies the communication of values, identity and control in a strategic and coherent way, internal and external, by the government through the education Ministry. As such, the public perception of schools under franchise arrangement is then perceived positively without doubt.

Some Evidence

There are several examples that offer insight into franchising, for instance, meat-pie baked by MR BIGGS at any of its location is similar with same quality. 504 wagon made by Peugeot automobile France is of same standard with those assembled in Kaduna, Nigeria. We can fashion out our own educational franchise considering our national peculiarities to propel our growth and development.

For this model to function as expected, education per se ought not to function as a public good, but to be seen as any other commodity traded on, for the purpose of making profit as well as possessing welfare values. Educational franchising may be the best option for partially or wholly privatising educational services in the public sector from being pure public good to a private or semi-private good. The transition is expected to be smooth because there are a handful of educational institutions in the private sector already in Nigeria that have achieved world class standards. The process of privatization has to be controlled and guided so that the institutions to be relinquished do not fall into the wrong hands or politicized. For the process to yield desired result, it is advisable to transfer an approved percentage of ownership to the host community, old boys and the general public and foreigners alike. However, the government must retain limited percentage to cater for the welfare needs of the society.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has examined educational franchise based on privatization as an option of educational reforms for development despite various reforms in time past. It is argued that if education must be the pivot of development, then its conduct has to be based on entrepreneurship principles. This means that education has to be a private or semi-private good to fit into a global capitalist world. In order, to ensure that the privatization of schools is effective it has to be in form of a franchise. If this model is carried out with sincerity of purpose, almost every aspect of learning will be more productive. Workers and Consumers will not only be shareholders, but will be better off because of better services. New graduates and the unemployed will get jobs because they will be seen to demonstrate critical skill necessary for development. Again, Government will be relieved of the burden of subsidies. Investors will gain investment opportunities. Most of all, the model presented here, shows that using franchise (a successful business model) will ensure uniformity of quality and standard of educational output capable of generating growth and development.

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