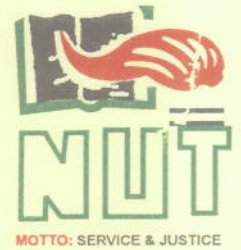


# NIGERIA UNION OF TEACHERS

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## STAND UP FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

**A Statement by Nigeria Union of Teachers on the occasion of the Launch of Education International's Research on Quality and Equalities: A Comparative Study of Public and Low-Cost Private Schools in Lagos on 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2018.**

Education is a public good and the right of every child, and therefore its provision should be a fundamental responsibility of government. Quality free public education for all is key to the future prosperity of our country. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides that government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels, and acknowledges the importance of free and compulsory primary education for every Nigerian child. The Nigerian Universal Basic Education Act (2004) aims to ensure free basic education for nine years to all Nigerian children. The Nigerian Policy on Education also recognises the rights of every child to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities.

Furthermore, the Federal Republic of Nigeria is a signatory to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Goal 4 commits all governments to providing free inclusive and equitable quality primary and secondary education for every girl and boy.

According to the 2015 National Education Survey, fees are the main reason for school dropout in the South West zone. Any fee, any economic barrier is an obstacle to access to education, particularly for girls and the socially disadvantaged. To date, global progress in education access has only been possible thanks to the public sector expansion and the abolition of fees.

Profit-making in education undermines the right of all students to free quality education, creates and entrenches inequalities, undermines the working conditions and rights of teacher's whilst also contributing to their de-professionalization, and erodes democratic decision-making and public accountability in relation to education governance.

According to Education International's research, *Quality and Equalities: a comparative study of public and low-cost private schools in Lagos*. Since the 1980s, a huge private sector has grown with limited effective regulation. Currently, about 18,000 private schools operate in Lagos.

Low-cost private schools, are not an alternative to public education in Lagos. The promise of education for every child can only be realised in an inclusive and equitable quality free public education system serving the needs of all children regardless of their background.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria remains in need of and appreciates the assistance of international agencies in working with us to strengthen our public school systems. However, we consider it inappropriate that international development assistance is going to the private sector, rather than working with the government to develop quality in public schools.

In effect, aid money is supporting the expansion of private schools. These schools are not accessible to all, certainly not the poor, and are therefore contributing to a growing inequality and segregation in education.

It is deplorable that millions of UK Pounds (£3.45 million) have been donated from UK's Department for International Development (DFID) to Bridge International Academies. Facilitating its entry into Nigeria.

Bridge International Academies is a for-profit company operating illegally in neighbouring Kenya and Uganda. Aid money should be targeted to improve educational access and equity for all, particularly the poor.

As such, we have called on the British government, to cease any further funding to Bridge and instead invest in quality public education for all in Nigeria.

Research has found that among private education providers in Lagos, Bridge is on average **more expensive for parents, uses unqualified staff, has low standards for staff training and is less concerned about inclusiveness and equality** than others.

**By comparison, public schools in Lagos, which are free, have teachers with the highest level of qualification - all have formal teaching qualifications and in-service training.**

NUT applauds the *professionalism and dedication of Nigeria's public school teachers* to their students and to the values of equality and inclusiveness. The Union calls on stakeholders and all lovers of education to support public education, and urges governments to redouble their efforts in providing quality free education for all.

The realisation of our national objectives and SDG 4 will require a greater level of investment in free quality public education. Resources for education need to be identified and actions taken to support an expanding school sector. It will also require a strengthening of legislative and financing frameworks to clearly reflect the government's primary obligation to properly and adequately fund free quality public education for all children, regardless of their background.

Let's stand up for Public Education!



Comrade Michael A. Olukoya

National President



Dr. Mike Ike Ene

Secretary-General