

Could Nonprofits Running Public Schools Help Improve Standards?

A Governance Reform for Nigeria's Failing Public Schools:
Proposing the Public Accountability School System (PASS)

Executive Summary

Nigeria's education crisis is defined by a staggering duality: a world-leading out-of-school population and a systemic collapse in classroom quality. Our proposal introduces the **Public Accountability School System (PASS)** to address the quality crisis by transferring the day-to-day management of public schools to high-accountability, non-profit trusts. By decoupling management from state ownership, PASS grants schools the pedagogical and budgetary autonomy necessary to drive academic excellence. We contend that restoring the integrity of public education will improve public school enrolment, creating a sustainable pathway to solving the out-of-school crisis while reducing parents' reliance on private schools.

Under PASS, school trusts may include alumni associations, community and parents' associations, faith-based organisations, educational foundations, and credible nongovernmental organisations. They will exercise direct control over staffing, budgets, and pedagogy, while being held to rigorous performance standards by an independent inspectorate.

Drawing on local and foreign evidence, PASS offers a politically and financially feasible intervention. Under this model, school assets remain public property, and funding flows from the government treasury according to an agreed-upon formula that rises with inflation. What changes is the locus of accountability and a management driven by academic performance.

The Problem

73% of children aged 7–14 cannot read at Primary 2 or 3 level despite more than two decades of renewed federal funding through UBEC supporting state and local government funding.

The Proposal

Transfer day-to-day management of schools to vetted non-profit trusts under renewable performance agreements. These trusts gain full autonomy over staffing, curriculum delivery, and budget.

The Evidence

Full government control of schools has continued to deliver poor results. Evidence demonstrates that governance reforms can improve academic outcomes in ways resource increases alone cannot.

The Safeguard

Schools remain state property, admission is free, and an independent inspectorate enforces standards with real consequences for poor performance.

We recognise potential concerns about capacity limitations, regulatory capture, and equity issues. Nevertheless, if appropriate safeguards are in place, the potential advantages - better learning outcomes, increased accountability, and greater efficiency across the system - outweigh the risks.

1. Introduction: The Crisis in Nigerian Public Education

Research has shown that Nigeria's public education is failing the country's children (Ogunode, et. al., 2022). After years of efforts such as Universal Basic Education funding, public primary and junior secondary schools enrol less than 61% of children aged 6 to 14 in the country, with the rest either in private schools or out-of-school. According to 2022 data from the federal ministry of education, only 31m of the estimated 51 million basic education-age children (ages 6–14) in Nigeria are enrolled in public schools.

EduIntel's analysis of available data shows that less than 50% of pupils who start the first year of primary school make it to the end of nine years of basic education, with Nigeria's senior secondary participation also trailing its peers around the world. Final secondary school examination candidates in Nigeria constitute just **2.7%** of school-aged children, less than half the rates seen in South Africa (**6.4%**), Kenya (**5.9%**) and Malaysia (**6.1%**). More troubling is the fact **73%** of children aged 7 to 14 are unable to read at a Primary 2 or 3 level and **75%** of them are unable to solve simple maths problems (UNICEF, 2024). It is therefore no wonder that only around a quarter of candidates who write the annual Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination score above 50% (that's 200 out of 400 obtainable marks).

The World Bank's 2013 Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) survey of 760 primary schools across Anambra, Bauchi, Ekiti, and Niger states offers perhaps the most forensic picture of where the system fails. Private school teachers in the four states surveyed scored 11 percentage points (pp) higher on subject-knowledge assessments than their public-school counterparts, yet held fewer formal qualifications. The average teacher competency score in private schools was 42% compared to 31% in public schools (World Bank SDI, 2013).

1.1 Mind the Gap

The SDI found a yawning gap between private and public school teachers. Public school teachers were absent from school at more than double the rate of private school teachers: 16% versus 6%. On a typical school day, pupils in private schools received 1 hour and 10 minutes more instruction than their public-school peers, equivalent to 22 additional learning days per term (World Bank SDI, 2013).

22

11pp

Additional learning days

per term private school pupils receive over public school peers

Knowledge Gap

Higher subject-knowledge scores among private school teachers vs. public

These findings present a fundamental challenge to the orthodox explanation of Nigeria's education crisis. The standard diagnosis is that public schools are underfunded. The data, however, suggest something more troubling: qualified public school teachers with better job security and a structured salary scale systematically underperform their counterparts in private schools who are relatively poorer paid and have more uncertain terms of employment. The table below, drawn from the World Bank SDI Survey, reflects this performance gap.

Indicator	All Schools	Public Schools	Private Schools
Overall pupil test score	32.2	25.1	61.0
Literacy score	31.4	23.3	64.1
Read paragraph	11.7	5.8	35.2
Reading comprehension	15.8	9.5	41.5
Numeracy score	31.9	28.2	46.8
Single-digit multiplication	21.7	17.7	38.0
Double-digit multiplication	4.4	3.0	10.1

Source: World Bank Nigeria SDI Education Survey 2013. Results from 6,644 pupils in 760 schools. Primary 4 Student Performance in Literacy and Numeracy (Out of 100).

1.2 The Accountability Gap

The private school proprietor possesses what the public system structurally lacks: "skin in the game." Poor performance translates directly into declining enrolment, reduced fee revenue, and potential business collapse. This existential pressure incentivises meticulous teacher supervision, rapid response to parental concerns, and continuous attention to learning outcomes. By contrast, public school headteachers and teachers operate within a system in which salaries and promotions are largely assured regardless of pupil achievement.

As Nassim Taleb articulates in *Skin in the Game* (2018), "Bureaucracy is a construction by which a person is conveniently separated from the consequences of his or her actions." The Nigerian public school system is precisely such a construction. The World Bank's Service Delivery Indicators survey frames its core finding as the ability of private schools to "elicit greater effort on the part of teachers" despite having fewer resources. The clear implication is that when institutional structures align incentives with outcomes, teachers teach. When they do not, poor outcomes become the norm. Tooley and Longfield (2015) found this pattern across multiple low-income countries, pointing to governance rather than funding as the differentiating variable.

The credential gap might also be reversing. A national survey has revealed that NCE holders scored significantly lower than bachelor's degree holders on teacher knowledge tests and performed similarly to teachers with only secondary school certificates — an unflattering verdict on decades of Colleges of Education serving as a dumping ground for candidates with the lowest entry (UTME) scores. Adejumo et al. (2025) found that private primary school teachers are now three times as likely as their public school counterparts to hold a bachelor's degree, helping to explain their higher demonstrated knowledge in reading instruction. It seems that private proprietors are pivoting toward degree holders not out of policy compliance but survival: unlike the public sector, where recruitment is muddied by political patronage, they hire for competence because their business depends on it. Skin in the game.

2. A History of Managed Decline

Formal Western-oriented education in Nigeria began with the Wesleyan Methodist Church's establishment of a school in Badagry in 1842 (Birabil & Ogeh, 2020). For a long time, mission schools operated by Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, and later Islamic bodies like the Ansaru-deen formed the backbone of Nigerian education. Community bodies also set up and managed district schools whilst, in many cases, providing support to mission schools. Governments aided these schools financially and further provided curricular oversight and inspection. But the schools were ultimately managed by organisations with clear institutional identities, reputational stakes, and a defined mission.

The defining characteristic of this era was organisational accountability. Although funded and regulated at various levels, these schools were managed by institutions with clear identities, reputational stakes, and defined missions. Teachers were not accountable to a distant, impersonal ministry, but to a visible, local authority that viewed educational outcomes as a reflection of its institutional integrity. This is the historical precedent to which PASS seeks to return.

As Nigeria moved towards independence, self-government administrations increased their involvement in providing basic education to spur enrolment and ensure universal access. This period saw increased government support for mission and community schools, as well as the creation of more government schools. Gradually, as the state became the dominant financier of basic education, it sought greater control over the delivery apparatus.

The decisive break came in the early 1970s, following the civil war. State military governments across Nigeria promulgated edicts that transferred operational control of mission schools to the government bureaucracy. The takeover was framed as a matter of national unity and equitable access, and a bid to remove denominational control from institutions serving the whole nation. Imam (2012) notes that during that era, education was seen as an important government venture rather than a private enterprise. The consequences were not long in arriving. While access improved, particularly among families in northern Nigeria who had previously kept their children out of mission-run schools, quality declined (Ezegwu and Okoye, 2024). As the accountability structures that had made the schools effective were dismantled, nothing adequate was put in place to replace them.

3. Skin in the Game: Why Governance Structure Matters

Nassim Taleb's *Skin in the Game* (2018) contends that systems improve when actors face the consequences of their decisions. He argues that "forcing skin in the game" is more effective than numerous laws and regulations, while bureaucratic systems lacking accountability consistently underperform. When applied to public education in Nigeria, this perspective suggests the issue lies not in teachers' abilities - private school teachers achieve good results - but in a governance structure that removes incentives for public school teachers and supervisors to perform well.

Yoruba people describe an employee's lack of skin in the game as "**oga ta, oga o ta, owo alaru o pe**" - meaning that whether or not a sale is made, the wage worker must be paid. Our proposed model can help in ending this mentality by ensuring that teachers and school managers are appropriately motivated to deliver results. Unlike a civil service structure, a trust's institutional identity is tied to its schools. An alumni association running its historic Government College has a reputational stake that no Ministry of Education can replicate. A Catholic diocese managing schools it founded has a century of institutional character invested in those schools' performance. An educational NGO whose credibility depends on demonstrated learning outcomes has a direct organisational interest in every child who passes through its classrooms. This is what we intend our proposal to fix, by transferring schools to managers that can be held accountable, and whose continued management depends on their performance.

Chubb & Moe (1990)

In *Politics, Markets and America's Schools*, they argued that the fundamental structural flaw in public school bureaucracies is their control by actors with no direct stake in educational outcomes. Their primary incentive is the management of political processes rather than the delivery of learning.

Ekwueme (2025)

Observes that schools in Nigeria often function as extensions of political systems, with administrative decisions and leadership appointments driven by patronage rather than merit. Under these conditions, the objective shifts from student achievement to the maintenance of political and bureaucratic stability.

Taleb (2018)

The PASS model imposes skin in the game. Its incentive structure is the antithesis of a ministry's as trusts must produce results or risk losing their management agreements. This alignment of incentives with outcomes, guaranteed by contract and enforced by an independent inspectorate, is the primary mechanism for improvement.

3.3 Lessons from England and New York

Has something like PASS been tried elsewhere? Two bodies of international evidence strongly support the proposition that governance structure, rather than resource level, is the primary determinant of school performance.

England's Academy Programme

England's academy programme, which began in 2002, transferred the management of failing state-funded schools to independent non-profit trusts operating under legally binding performance agreements. These academies receive the same per-pupil funding as local authority schools through the national funding formula. The UK government has explicitly stated that academy status should bring no financial advantage or disadvantage.

A 2022 Department for Education analysis found that more than 70% of sponsored academies previously rated inadequate achieved good or outstanding Ofsted ratings after academisation (DfE, 2022). Andrews and Perera (2017) of the Education Policy Institute found consistent patterns of improvement, with the governance structure identified as the key variable.

New York's Success Academy

New York's charter school experience is equally instructive. Success Academy schools serve a student population that is 93% Black or Hispanic and 78% from low-income households, yet consistently outperform traditional public schools in the state's wealthiest districts. In 2023, 98% of Success Academy students passed the state mathematics exam, and 91% passed the English Language Arts exam, compared to citywide averages of 49% and 52%, respectively.

The Stanford CREDO study (2015) found that the average New York City charter school student gained approximately 23 additional days of learning in reading and 63 in mathematics per year compared to peers in traditional public schools.

- ❏ There are recent tech-led reforms in states like Edo and Lagos that have shown that structured pedagogy and targeted intervention can improve outcomes in schools. These gains, however, are fragile as they rely on a single technical partner and the political will of their initiators. This creates points of failure: if the partner exits or the administration changes, progress might be reversed. PASS tries to sidestep this problem by implementing a distributed governance model and anchoring proposed reforms in law rather than executive whim. By engaging diverse local trusts, PASS prevents a state-wide monopoly, fostering a competitive ecosystem where results are the only criterion for renewal.

4. PASS: Design and Core Elements

4.1 What the Model Does

PASS transfers day-to-day management of underperforming public schools to vetted non-profit education trusts under renewable performance agreements of 10 to 15 years. Schools remain state property. Funding remains public, and admission remains free as the trusts are not permitted to charge any fee. What changes is who manages the schools, under what conditions, and what the consequences are if those conditions are not met.

Eligible trusts may include alumni associations of public secondary schools, and there are already examples of this such as the Government College Ibadan that is currently managed by its alumni. Faith-based organisations, educational NGOs with proven track records, universities, and community foundations are also eligible to run their school trusts. Reputable private schools may also be allowed, or even encouraged, to establish a non-profit education trust to take over the operation of public schools in their neighbourhoods.

While faith-based organisations are welcome participants, every trust, regardless of affiliation, must commit to a non-discrimination and religious neutrality policy as a condition of accreditation: no religious instruction may be imposed on pupils, admission is open to children of all faiths and none, and the school environment must be actively welcoming of religious and ethnic diversity. A faith organisation wishing to run a school with a religious character may do so privately; a PASS school/trust, as a publicly funded institution, must serve every child equally.

Trusts exercise substantial operational autonomy over teacher deployment, performance appraisal, resource allocation, curriculum design (within national standards), and extended school hours. In return, they accept contractual obligations covering (1) performance targets for literacy, numeracy, and attendance; (2) annual inflation-linked funding, and (3) termination clauses that provide for transfer to a new trust or return to direct government management upon persistent failure.

Alumni Associations

Alumni associations of historic government schools carry deep reputational stakes. An alumni body running its own school has institutional pride, community networks, and a long memory of what quality looked like before decline set in.

Faith-Based Organisations

Christian and Islamic mission/educational institutions already have a century of school management experience in Nigeria. Under PASS, they can return to management guided by strict religious neutrality conditions, serving every child equally.

Educational NGOs

NGOs whose credibility depends on demonstrated learning outcomes have a direct organisational interest in every child who passes through their classrooms. They are natural candidates for PASS trusts, especially in under-served communities.

4.2 What Would the Funding Look Like?

PASS consolidates fragmented federal, state, and local government funding channels that currently scatter resources without coherent accountability. A universal baseline of ₦168,000 per pupil annually - set at 20 per cent of the annual national minimum wage (NMW), making NMW a useful funding index - covers staff salaries, teaching materials, utilities, ongoing maintenance, and administrative costs. Schools in challenging areas (rural, hard-to-reach locations, conflict zones) receive a modest premium to attract trust interest. Capital investment for new buildings and new schools remains the government's responsibility.

This amount applies equally to trust-managed and government-run schools in every implementing state. PASS schools receive no preferential funding. Their claim to superior outcomes rests entirely on better governance: accountable management, real-time oversight, and genuine consequences for underperformance. Governments may invest additional funds, but any increases must apply uniformly to both trust-run and government-run schools.

To cover an estimated 35 million public primary and junior secondary pupils across the country at this funding level, ₦5.88 trillion would be required per year. This would amount to less than 10% of total government spending in Nigeria in 2025. If this calculation is based on just state and local government budgets as they are the responsible authorities for basic education, then around 25% of combined spending of the two levels of government (2025) would have been required. While this is a lot of money, we believe it is nonetheless a fair price to pay for basic education to achieve improved outcomes.

A Sample School Budget

Available funding at ₦168,000 per pupil (300 pupils assumed): ₦50,400,000.

Expenditure Category	Amount (₦)	% of Spend
Personnel cost	29,040,000	60%
Running costs	4,840,000	10%
Books & instructional materials & ICT	3,872,000	8%
Infrastructure & maintenance	3,388,000	7%
Central management fee	2,420,000	5%
Continuous teacher training	1,936,000	4%
Performance bonuses	1,452,000	3%
School events & outreach	1,452,000	3%
Total Expenditure	48,400,000	100%
Surplus	2,000,000	-

5. Measuring Standards: Independent Inspection and State Examinations

Any accountability system is only as credible as its measurement mechanisms. The history of Nigerian education is littered with unreliable data: school-reported attendance figures that bear little relationship to reality, examination results that are more a product of malpractice than academic prowess, and inspection processes so under-resourced and infrequent as to be meaningless. PASS requires a different approach to measuring school standards.

The primary means of measuring school quality under PASS will be centrally-administered standardised examinations at Primary 3, Primary 6, and JSS3. These examinations — covering English, Mathematics, and Basic Science — are held at centralised or neutral venues (for Primary 6 and JSS3), preventing schools from influencing results. Results are marked and published centrally at the school level, with rankings made available to the public. Where infrastructure allows, the Primary 6 and JSS3 assessments should be computer-based. External, school-level examination results are the gold standard of accountability in education systems worldwide, precisely because they are harder to game by the institutions being measured.

England's GCSE and Key Stage assessments, New York's Regents examinations, and Singapore's Primary School Leaving Examination all perform this function. Nigeria already has the NECO Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) at JSS3, but fewer than 5% of eligible students currently sit it. PASS extends this principle to Primary 3 and Primary 6, and insists that all enrolled students sit the exams. This creates a diagnostic trail that identifies underperformance early enough to intervene. Examination results are the primary accountability signal for trusts: consistent failure to improve pupil performance on standardised assessments, relative to baseline and to comparator schools, triggers the graduated consequences described in the management agreement.

5.2 Independent School Inspectorate

- The independent school inspectorate is established as a statutory body at the state level, funded as a first-line charge on the education budget - protected from ordinary budget cuts - with fixed-term leadership appointments to ensure operational independence from political interference.
- The inspectorate is lean, technology-driven, and focused on process and outcomes. It conducts both announced and unannounced visits using digital observation tools and real-time data on teacher attendance and lesson delivery.
- Inspection frameworks cover teaching quality, school leadership, pupil attendance and safeguarding, community satisfaction, and compliance with agreement obligations, including religious neutrality.
- Technology keeps the inspectorate efficient. Biometric teacher attendance systems provide daily attendance data without requiring an inspector's presence. School dashboards update in real time and are publicly accessible. The inspectorate investigates and validates rather than generating all primary data.

Inspection Rating Categories

1 Outstanding Trusts maintaining this standard are recognised publicly and may be invited to expand.	2 Good Meets all performance obligations. Trust agreement continues without intervention.
3 Requires Improvement Triggers immediate performance improvement plan. Two consecutive ratings treated as inadequate.	4 Inadequate Triggers graduated sanctions. Persistent inadequacy results in agreement termination.

Inspection findings are published online and offline, and feed directly into agreement review cycles. An inadequate rating triggers the graduated sanctions process independent of examination results. The two mechanisms operate in parallel: a school can face enhanced monitoring based on either signal.

5.3 Key Performance Indicators

PASS establishes clear, quantified performance targets across literacy, numeracy, attendance, and school conditions. These are not aspirational benchmarks - they are contractual obligations with defined consequences for failure. The distinction between minimum and ideal thresholds allows trusts to understand both the floor below which they must not fall and the ceiling towards which they are expected to strive.

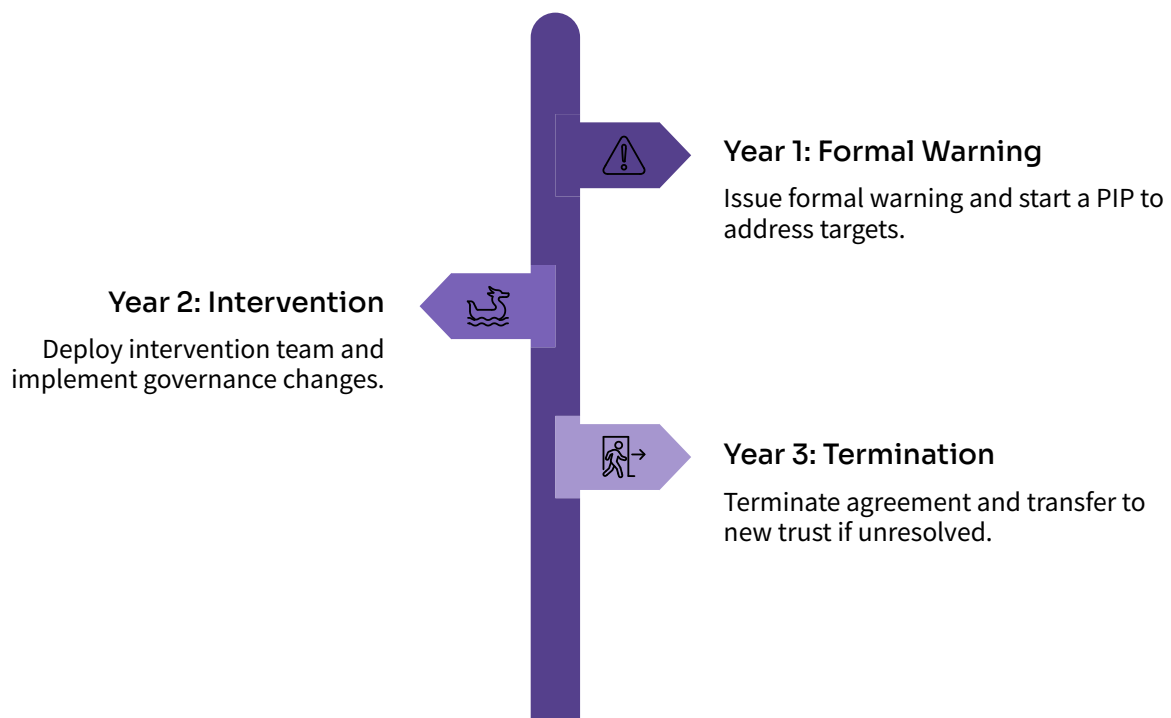
Performance Area	Minimum Standard	Ideal Standard
Literacy - Primary 3	60% reading at grade level	80% reading at grade level
Literacy - Primary 6	70% reading at grade level	90% reading at grade level
Literacy - JSS3	75% meeting NECO BECE benchmark	90% meeting or exceeding benchmark
Numeracy - Primary 3	60% at grade level	80% at grade level
Numeracy - Primary 6	60% at grade level	80% at grade level
Numeracy - JSS3	70% scoring C or above	80% scoring C or above
Pupil attendance rate	88% average daily attendance	95% average daily attendance
Staff attendance rate	95% of teachers present daily	97% staff attendance
Progression to Senior Secondary School	75% of JSS3 completers transitioning	90% with gender gap not exceeding 5 percentage points
School condition score	Rated good on inspection checklist	Rated outstanding with documented maintenance schedule
Comprehensive inspection	Rated good; requires improvement triggers immediate plan	Rated outstanding

6. Accountability, Consequences, and Safeguards

6.1 Graduated Consequences

PASS incorporates a clear escalation structure.

1. Year 1 of underperformance - defined as failure to meet agreed examination and attendance targets - triggers a formal warning and performance improvement plan (PIP), developed jointly by the trusts and the inspectorate.
2. Year 2 of persistent underperformance triggers the deployment of an intervention team and, if necessary, mandatory governance changes.
3. Year 3 results in the termination of the agreement: the school transfers to a new trust or returns to direct state management. Trusts must understand that management is a privilege contingent on results, not a permanent entitlement.



6.2 Safeguards Against Mission Drift

Management agreements prohibit entrance examinations, fees, and any selection criteria. Trusts must enrol pupils with special educational needs. Suspension and expulsion rates are closely monitored by the inspectorate to ensure that schools are not using them to exclude weaker students. All performance data are disaggregated by gender, socio-economic status, and disability, ensuring that improvements are universal and not achieved by pushing out weaker pupils. The equal-funding principle prevents trusts from gaming results by attracting better-resourced families.

6.3 Political Feasibility

PASS envisages a state-led reform as it is a more politically feasible approach. Nigerian laws assign primary responsibility for basic education to state governments. States can reform public school governance without federal approval, enabling diverse experimentation. The Federal Government can support the proposed model through policy advocacy, technical assistance, and funding.

Teacher union resistance to the shift of salary responsibility to trusts is predictable and must be managed proactively. Management agreements must contain strong protections: competitive salaries, timely payment, and clear dispute resolution. The model is not a race to the bottom on teacher pay; trusts that cut salaries attract poor staff, produce poor results, and lose their management contract with government.

While PASS is proposed as a state-led programme with federal support, reflecting current legal arrangements under the Universal Basic Education Act, we recognise that federal leadership of the programme would significantly strengthen its prospects for success. The basic education crisis in most states stems partly from state governments' inability to ensure quality education for all children. If the Federal Government can pull off an amendment of the UBE Act in a way that empowers her to mobilise states behind a national basic education reform programme, outcomes would likely improve faster.

Funding could be structured as a guaranteed percentage of FAAC allocations, ensuring adequate, predictable resources independent of individual state or local government leaders. This approach would provide the fiscal stability and political continuity the model requires to succeed at scale.



State-Led

States begin with 5–10% of schools as a pilot, scaling gradually.



Federally Supported

FG provides policy advocacy, technical assistance, and enhanced UBEC allocations.



Legally Grounded

State legislatures amend enabling legislation to authorise and regulate trust management.



Teachers Protected

Competitive salaries, timely payment, and clear dispute resolution are contractual obligations.

7. Addressing Concerns

Every serious reform proposal must reckon honestly with its critics. PASS is no exception, and the following objections are the most commonly raised. We address each in turn.

"This is privatisation by stealth"

PASS is not privatisation. Schools remain state property, funding is public, and admission is free. Non-state management of publicly funded services is commonplace internationally. The real privatisation by default is the current system's failure, which already drives millions of Nigerians to pay fees to private schools because public schools have failed them. States like Lagos and Anambra now have more than 70% of school-age children outside of public school system. Furthermore, due to poor supervision, individual public school administrators are known to levy various fees on their students, which parents and guardians are expected to pay. PASS ends this through enforceable prohibition.

"Just give schools more money"

Schools under PASS are designed to receive the same per-pupil allocation as government-run schools, so this can mean more funding for all schools. But funding is not a silver bullet. Evidence from a large-scale experiment in Indonesia (de Ree et al., 2016) shows that doubling teacher salaries, while improving job satisfaction, had zero impact on student learning outcomes. The unconditional pay rise failed to improve classroom quality because it lacked a mechanism for accountability. The question is not how much money flows into the system; it is through what governance structure that money flows. Resource increases (for example UBEC funding) without governance reform have been tried repeatedly. The evidence does not support them as a sufficient intervention.

"Corruption will undermine it"

Corruption thrives in opacity. PASS will lay emphasis on transparent trust selection, mandatory audits, public examination results, and inspectorate reports - which is a structural improvement on the current system, in which education budgets are managed with minimal public visibility. The inspectorate must be charged with the responsibility of publishing ratings for all schools, as well as an annual report. Transparency is not a guarantee against corruption, but it is the most powerful systemic deterrent available.

"There are not enough credible trusts"

Nigeria's vibrant civil society - including hundreds of active alumni associations, established NGOs, universities, and faith-based bodies - provides a credible supply pipeline. The model encourages implementing states to start with 5% to 10% of their schools as a pilot and to scale gradually, building PASS trusts' capacity in parallel with programme expansion. The trust pool does not need to be fully formed before the first school is transferred; it needs to be seeded, supported, and allowed to grow with the programme.

8. Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations are addressed to state legislatures, state governments, examination authorities, and the Federal Government respectively. They are sequenced in the order in which they must be addressed to operationalise PASS.



State Legislatures

Amend enabling legislation to authorise the transfer of management to non-profit entities, specify performance indicators and grounds for revocation, protect school assets as public property, and establish the legal basis for the independent inspectorate.



State Governments

Establish an independent school inspectorate as a statutory body, funded as a first-line charge, with a transparently appointed board, a clear mandate from accreditation through enforcement, and digital infrastructure for real-time data collection.



State Examination Authorities

Working with national institutions like the West African Examination Council and the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board, develop standardised Primary 3, Primary 6, and JSS3 examinations in English, Mathematics, and Basic Science, administered at neutral venues and published at the school level. National examination bodies are natural allies here, ensuring high standards and objectivity to ensure public confidence.



Federal Government

In exchange for states agreeing to more federal government involvement, the FG should provide more funding to basic education through an agreed share of FAAC allocations, and work with states and local governments to ring-fence education resources from the rest of their budgets. This way, funding for education can be more predictable and near-guaranteed.

9. Conclusion: Restoring the Mission of Public Education

The crisis in Nigerian education is ultimately one of institutional design. For over half a century, the system has operated under a governance structure that separates school managers from the consequences of their performance. When the state took over mission schools in the 1970s, it traded mission-driven excellence for bureaucratic insulation. We replaced institutions whose reputations were at stake with a system in which operators have no "skin in the game."

The public accountability school model is the mechanism to reverse this decline. It does not ask for an exceptional level of funding but for better accountability. We have a chance to empower organisations whose identity and future are tied to the success of their students. This creates a system where excellence is the only path to survival.

This reform is both a return to our roots and a leap into the future. It honours the historical success of community-led education whilst utilising modern, technology-driven oversight to ensure standards are met. Maintaining the status quo is dangerous, and a choice to consign another generation of Nigerian children to a system designed to fail them. PASS offers a politically feasible, fiscally responsible, and morally necessary path forward.

The objective of this paper is to start a much-needed conversation that can help move governments away from the current bureaucrats-led system, which lacks accountability and produces poor results, onto a better model that works for learners. - EduIntel

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About EduIntel

Nigeria's education crisis is compounded by a data and accountability problem. Too many decisions are made without evidence; too many failures go unmeasured and therefore unremedied. EduIntel exists to help change that. We are an independent social enterprise combining research, education data and analysis, and digital dissemination of insight to put the right information in the hands of those who can act on it - policymakers, school leaders, civil society, and citizens.

We are dedicated to Nigeria's public schools because that is where the crisis is, and where the solution must be found.

[Learn more at eduintelng.org](https://eduintelng.org)

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