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# The Place of Private Participation in Higher Education: A Periscope On Private Universities in Nigeria

By

Gideon E.D. Omuta

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(C) Gideon E.D. Omuta

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Professor Andrew G. Onokerhoraye  
Executive Director, CPED, Benin City

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## PREFACE

This policy research monograph is part of the on-going research of the *Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED)* on the research theme titled “Education and Development in Nigeria” in the current strategic plan (2010-2014) of the Centre. During the past three decades, Nigerian universities have faced a myriad of problems that led to a remarkable decline in the quality of research and student output from the institutions. One major development in university education in the last ten years in Nigeria has been the emergence of private universities. This monograph examines the contemporary challenges facing Nigerian universities and the place of private universities in ameliorating the problems. It also discusses the strategies for improving the contribution of private universities to higher education in Nigeria.

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## INTRODUCTION

The truism that the demand for higher education, and particularly university education, is on the increase throughout the world is impossible to exaggerate. This could be seen as a re-awakening of universities to their *raison d'être*. In the early universities, scholars devoted their efforts to the generation of knowledge and truth, irrespective of whether or not such knowledge had social utility (Osagie, 2009: 110). This was the classical case of *knowledge qua knowledge*; where knowledge was pursued purely for the sake of knowledge (Ramkissoon, 2008).

In yesteryears, it was popular and indeed acceptable to think of the strength of an economy in terms of the stock of its physical factors, especially, the natural recourses, such as land; physical capital and skilled labour, among others. Today, however, many economies are moving away from this archaic, almost static perception, towards what is now known as a knowledge-based economy; “one in which the generation, exploitation, dissemination and sharing of knowledge has come to play the prominent part in the creation of wealth” (DTI, in Ramkissoon, 2008:2). A knowledge-based economy is not just a matter of pushing back the frontiers of knowledge; it is also, and probably more so, about the most effective use and exploitation of all types of knowledge in all manner of economic activity (Brinkley, 2006:4).

Indeed, the World Bank (1998) has observed that “For countries in the vanguard of the world economy, the balance between knowledge and resources has shifted towards the former; knowledge has become, perhaps, the most important factor determining the standard of living .... Today’s most technologically advanced economies are truly knowledge based”. In the same vein, according to Cader (2008), although “all economies have some stock of knowledge ... those that are growing are distinguished by the generation of new knowledge derived from existing knowledge”. This is how Vuksan, Delic and Przulj (2008: 171) put it, “In today’s open and competitive economy, knowledge and innovation become major driving factors of growth and economic development”. In other words, economic success is increasingly becoming based on the effective utilization of intangible assets such as knowledge, skills and innovative potential as the key resources for getting and retaining competitive advantage. According to Brinkley (2006), the term knowledge economy is used to describe the emerging economic structure.

The quality and depth of the *knowledge content* of a society, therefore, determines its strength, its prospects and its future. Shapira, *et al* (2005) have defined *knowledge content* as “the sum of human capacities, leadership assets, and experience, technology and information capital, collaborative relationships, intellectual property, information stocks and capabilities for shared learning and utilization that can be used to create wealth and foster economic competitiveness”. The ability to store, share, analyze and retrieve knowledge through networks and communities, especially using the information and

communication technologies, allows communities to exploit the unique properties of knowledge to gain, retain and expand their competitive edge. Perhaps the most important property of knowledge is that it is the *ultimate economic renewable*; in the sense that the stock of knowledge, unlike traditional factors of production, is not depleted by use, rather the value and utility of knowledge to an economy comes from sharing it with others.

Characteristically, knowledge is essentially a public good because it can be accessed and it easily leaks. It is, therefore, very difficult, if not outrightly impossible, for an economy, society or community to seek to retain and cage its stock of knowledge just for its own advantage, for any length of time. This is why countries like Nigeria have been unable to halt the brain drain that started in the wake of the Structural Adjustment Programme of the 1980s, without infringing on the fundamental human rights of academics.

In the new conception of economic development, where high value production base has shifted to information and knowledge, the quality of educational systems becomes an essential component of a country's capacity and capability to respond to the challenges that confront them. The role of the educational system is to generate intellectual, professionally skilled, and competent human capital that will benefit economic and the country's development. A prerequisite for an effective participation of the people in the emerging knowledge-based economy and the society at large is the possession of the basic level of linguistic, scientific, mathematical, technological and social education (Vuskan, Delic and Przulj, 2008).

Because it is now conceived as an economic good, on the one hand, and as the core driver of the modern economy, on the other, OECD has recommended the massive stepping up of investment in knowledge (Brinkley, 2006:7). Investment in knowledge is synonymous with investing in education. As stated earlier, universities have been the traditional repositories of knowledge; the highest concentration of intellectual strength. They are, therefore, best suited to create and disseminate knowledge through their students. As carriers of knowledge, students with university-processed knowledge are the engines of the modern economy, future labour force; they play vital roles in the national and international public society. Therefore, tertiary institutions, and particularly, universities are inevitable contributors to national development.

It is, therefore, against the background of the very strategic position of universities in the generation and dissemination of the knowledge needed to drive today's economy that this contribution is made. The rest of the write up is segmented into seven sections. First, an attempt is made to survey the evolution of higher education, focusing on Nigeria; this is followed by discussing the emergence of private participation in higher education, focusing on university education. Then, we examined the persistent and recurrent challenges of public universities, as the

justification for the introduction of private universities into the educational landscape. We then examined some of the roles that private universities are playing in alleviating the challenges that have plagued public universities, thereby contributing to national development. We also considered some of the challenges currently facing private universities in Nigeria, and looked at some of the options available to alleviate them. Finally, we made our concluding remarks.

## EVOLUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION, WITH A FOCUS ON NIGERIA

Although tertiary or higher education is relatively new in Nigeria, Africa is reputed to have established some of the oldest institutions, even

universities, in the world. Some of the earliest universities in the world that are still in continuous operation are listed in Table I.

**TABLE I: Some of the Earliest Universities Still in Continuous Operation**

| S/N | Name of University                          | Year Established |
|-----|---|------------------|
| 1   | University of Al Karaoune, Fez, Morocco     | 859AD            |
| 2   | Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt           | 975AD            |
| 3   | University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy       | 1088             |
| 4   | University of Oxford, Oxford, England       | 1096             |
| 5   | University of Paris, Paris, France          | 1150             |
| 6   | University of Modena, Modena, Italy         | 1175             |
| 6   | University of Cambridge, Cambridge, England | 1209             |
| 7   | Salamanca University, Salamanca, Spain      | 1218             |
| 8   | Mustansiriya University, Baghdad, Iraq      | 1233             |
| 9   | University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal    | 1290             |
| 10  | University of Sankore, Timbuktu, Mali       | 1327             |
| 11  | Istanbul University, Istanbul, Turkey       | 1453             |

Sources: Okebukola, (2002); and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/list-of-oldest-universities-in-continuous-operation>.

The Table shows that university education actually started in Africa, and that the continent can still boast of the two oldest universities, and three of the eleven oldest, that are still in continuous operation in the world.

Though the earliest universities were conceived, designed and operated as centres of theological learning, they, over the time expanded their intellectual exploits to cover such disciplines as philosophy, the liberal arts and the sciences. Universities were known as centres for the development of new ideas and

theories, the transmission of such knowledge from wise teachers to eager and inquisitive students, and the publication of new ideas for the benefit of the wider society (Osagie, 2009).

By global dating, therefore, university education is quite recent in Nigeria. The history of higher education in general, in Nigeria dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was when Nigerians, attracted by the ideals of the liberal education introduced by the early missionaries, started seeking avenues to explore the new and exciting vision of life which was only available



overseas (Okojie, 2008), and for which Nigerians had hitherto “traversed all parts of the world” (Erinosho, 2008). The categorization of institutions as “higher education” is associated with E.H.J. Hussey, who in 1930 made a three-level classification of educational systems as follows: elementary level; middle level and higher level, the latter which he called ‘vocational training’ for the production of professional assistants (Lawal, *et al*, 2008). The first institution that epitomized this new level of education was the Yaba Higher College, established by the colonial government and admitted its first set of students in 1932. The Yaba Higher College offered multi-disciplinary post-secondary courses ending up in the production of the much needed indigenous personnel such as medical assistants, surveyors, engineering assistants, administrators, agricultural assistants and teachers for ‘higher middle’ (secondary) schools, who serviced the operations of the British Colonial government of Nigeria (Toye, 2004). Later, the institution offered sub-degree courses in engineering, medicine, agriculture and teacher training, to fill specific gaps in the personnel needs of the colonial administration. According to Lawal, *et al*, (2008: 47), the Yaba College had two major challenges, namely; a high drop-out rate and its perceived sub-standard level of education. The College soon slipped into disrepute, forcing the colonial authorities to constitute a Commission to examine the feasibility of university education in Nigeria.

The Report of the 1945 Elliot Commission concluded that “the need for educated Africans in West Africa, in general, far outruns the supply, both present and potential” (Okojie, 2008). Furthermore, the Report specifically recommended the establishment of a university college in Nigeria. Consequently, upon the adoption of the recommendation of the Report, the University College of Ibadan was established in 1948, as a residential tutorial campus of the University of London. The examiners came from the University of London; and the Senate of the university granted the degrees of the early sets of students, who received their education at the Ibadan College.

Between 1948 and 1960, the University College of Ibadan was the only university in Nigeria. However, as the nation was preparing for independence, the need was felt to review and ascertain the educational needs for the first two decades of a post-independent Nigeria. Consequently, another Commission, the Ashby Commission, was set up (Ajayi and Haastrup, 2006). In 1960, as Nigeria was gaining independence, but before the Ashby Report was submitted, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, was established as the first indigenous university in Nigeria. It was initially a regional university, set up by the then Eastern Nigerian Government (Toye, 2004). The implementation of the Ashby Report, on the one hand, and the political rivalry that existed among the regional governments, on the other, led to the establishment of two more regional universities in 1962,

namely; the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), Ile-Ife, by the government of Western Region, and the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, by the government of the Northern Region. Although the University of Lagos was also established in 1962, it was set up by the Federal Government as the second national university, beside the University College of Ibadan, as an autonomous federal university. According to Toye (2004), the founding of the University of Lagos was as a result of the recommendations of the report of a UNESCO Advisory Commission. He claims that the university was designed as a “city institution”, expected to be professionally and technologically oriented. When the Midwest Region was created in 1963, it continued the regional, political rivalry for higher education and consequently established the Midwest Institute of Technology (MIT), the precursor of the present University of Benin, in 1970. These six universities, namely: Universities of Ibadan, Ibadan, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, (Obafemi Awolowo, now) University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Lagos, Lagos and University of Benin, Benin City, became known, and are still referred to, as first generation universities.

The Third National Development Plan (1975-1980) provided for the establishment of four federal universities. However, propelled by the sudden increase in income from oil, on the one hand, and the increased demand for higher education, on the

other, the Federal Government did two things. First, it took over the four state universities at Nsukka, Ife, Zaria and Benin City. Secondly, it established seven (three more than planned) new universities, namely; University of Calabar, Calabar; University of Ilorin, Ilorin; University of Jos, Jos; University of Sokoto, Sokoto; University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri; University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt and Bayero University, Kano. These seven universities, which become full-fledged in 1977, were and are known as second generation universities. What the first and second generation universities had in common was that they were all federal universities.

The next (third) generation of universities were established between 1979 and the early 1990s. Three major things characterized this generation of universities. First, was the continuation of the establishment of federal universities. Second, was the emergence of what could be called specialized universities. Third, was the emergence of state universities. This was the period when specialized Federal Universities of Technology were established in Owerri (1980), Akure (1981), Minna (1982) and Yola (1982). Similarly, specialized Federal Universities of Agriculture were established in Makurdi (1988), Abeokuta (1988) and the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (1992). Along with the first set of specialized Universities of Agriculture, the conventional Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi was established in 1988. In addition, states started establishing their own

universities, beginning with the Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt, in 1979. The Rivers State initiative seemed to have started a second round of “regional” competition for the establishment of universities. Thus, between the 1980s and early 1990s state universities were founded in Imo, Ondo, Bendel (Edo and Delta), Lagos, Akwa Ibom, Oyo and Cross River States (Anyambele, 2004).

The fourth generation of universities are those established between 1991 to

date. They are made up mostly of more state universities, private universities and at least two federal universities, namely; the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), and the University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun.

At present, there are sixty-two public universities, made up of twenty-seven owned by the Federal Government, and thirty-five owned by state governments. These are presented in Table II.

**TABLE II: List of Public Universities in Nigeria, by 2009**

| S/N | Federal Universities  |                  | State Universities                                     |                  |
|-----|---|------------------|--|------------------|
|     | University  | Year Established | University   | Year Established |
| 1   | Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi                       | 1988             | Abia State University, Uturu                           | 1981             |
| 2   | Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria                                  | 1962             | Adamawa State University, Mubi                         | 2002             |
| 3   | Bayero University, Kano   | 1975             | Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba, Ondo State        | 1999             |
| 4   | Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun, Delta State | 2007             | Akwa Ibom State University of Technology, Uyo          | 2005             |
| 5   | Federal University of Technology, Yola                          | 1981             | Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State             | 1980             |
| 6   | Federal University of Technology, Akure                         | 1981             | Anambra State University of Science & Technology, Ulli | 2000             |
| 7   | Federal University of Technology, Minna                         | 1982             | Benue State University Makurdi                         | 1992             |
| 8   | Federal University of Technology, Owerri                        | 1980             | Bukar Abba Ibrahim University, Yobe, Yobe State        | 2006             |

|    |   |      |   |      |
|----|---|------|---|------|
| 9  | Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State | 1992 | Cross River State University of Science & Technology, Calabar   | 2004 |
| 10 | National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos                    | 2002 | Delta State University, Abraka                                  | 1992 |
| 11 | Nigerian Defense Academy, Kaduna                              | 1985 | Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki                              | 2000 |
| 12 | Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka                               | 1992 | Enugu State University of Science & Technology, Enugu           | 1982 |
| 13 | Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife                           | 1962 | Gombe State University, Gombe                                   | 2004 |
| 14 | University of Abuja, Gwagwalada                               | 1988 | Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida University, Lapai, Niger State       | 2005 |
| 15 | University of Agriculture, Abeokuta                           | 1988 | Imo State University, Owerri                                    | 1992 |
| 16 | University of Agriculture, Makurdi                            | 1988 | Kaduna State University, Kaduna                                 | 2004 |
| 17 | University of Benin, Benin City                               | 1970 | Kano State University of Technology, Wudil                      | 2000 |
| 18 | University of Calabar, Calabar                                | 1975 | Umaru Musa Yar'Adua University, Katsina, Katsina State          | 2006 |
| 19 | Unibversity of Ibadan, Ibadan                                 | 1948 | Kebbi State University, Kebbi                                   | 2006 |
| 20 | University of Ilorin, Ilorin                                  | 1975 | Kogi State University, Anyigba                                  | 1999 |
| 21 | University of Jos, Jos  | 1975 | Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho, Osun State | 1990 |
| 22 | University of Lagos, Lagos                                    | 1962 | Lagos State University, Ojo                                     | 1983 |
| 23 | University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri                            | 1975 | Nasarawa State University, Keffi                                | 2002 |
| 24 | University of Nigeria, Nsukka                                 | 1960 | Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State       | 2000 |
| 25 | University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt                    | 1975 | Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State              | 1982 |

|    |                                     |      |  |      |
|----|-------------------------------------|------|--|------|
| 26 | University of Uyo, Uyo              | 1991 | Osun State University, Osogbo                                  | 2006 |
| 27 | Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto | 1975 | Plateau State University, Boko                                 | 2005 |
| 28 |                                     |      | Rivers State University of Science & Technology, Port Harcourt | 1979 |
| 29 |                                     |      | Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State     | 2005 |
| 30 |                                     |      | University of Ado-Ekiti, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State                | 1982 |
| 31 |                                     |      | University of Education, Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State              | 2008 |
| 32 |                                     |      | Ondo State University of Science & Technology, Okitipupa       | 2008 |
| 33 |                                     |      | Taraba State University, Jalingo                               | 2008 |
| 34 |                                     |      | Kwara State University, Malete                                 | 2009 |
| 35 |                                     |      | Sokoto State University, Sokoto                                | 2009 |

Source: NUC Monday Bulletin 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2009

### THE EMERGENCE OF PRIVATE PARTICIPATION IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

In principle, private participation in the education sector, in general, was recommended as far back as the second decade of the twentieth century, by the Phelps-Stokes Commission of 1920. The report of the Commission which was released in 1922, gave rise to the Memorandum (White Paper) of 1925. Article 1 of the said Memorandum stated as follows: "While the government reserves the right to direct educational policy and to supervise all educational institutions by inspections, *voluntary efforts should be*

*encouraged*, and advisory Boards of Education should be established" (Fafunwa, 1975). However, in terms of tangible action, private participation, particularly in university education in Nigeria did not take start until the second half of the century. According to Imafidon (1982), although the idea of private universities was first mooted in the 1960s, it was dropped due primarily to government intolerance and rejection, on the one hand, and lack of funds, on the other. However, according to Osagie, (2009), later, certain individuals took bold steps to float private universities. According to Gabriel *et al* (2006), one of the earliest

attempts at establishing private universities in Nigeria was the unsuccessful one made by Dr. Basil Nnanna Ukaegbu, who founded the Imo Technical University at Owerri, in the late 1970s. The attempt was unsuccessful because Dr. Ukaegbu was caught in a legal battle with the then military administration. However, the Supreme Court ruled in Dr. Ukaegbu's favour, asserting, however, that the National Assembly has the right to legislate on the quality of the programmes offered in such institutions (Oladapo, 1988). Consequently, between 1979 and 1983, during the brief spell of civil rule, many private individuals and organizations leveraged on Dr. Ukaegbu's initiative and eventual legal victory and twenty-six (26) private universities were established. They were:

1. National College of Advanced Studies, Aba, Imo State,
2. Theological Colleges, sponsored by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN); apparently at various locations,
3. Afro-American University, Orogun, Bendel State,
4. Ekpoma University, Illeh, Ekpoma, Bendel State (not the precursor of Edo State University, Ekpoma),
5. Uzoma University, Ajowa, Akoko,
6. Pope John Paul University, Aba, Imo State,
7. Ogodogu University, Abuja,
8. University of Akokoa, Ideato, Imo State,

9. University Courses College, Port Harcourt, Rivers State,
10. Ajom Middle Belt University, Ibadan, Oyo State,
11. Afendomifok University, Ikot-Ekpene, Cross River State,
12. World University, Owerri, Imo State,
13. Institute of Open Cast Mining and Technology, Auchu, Bendel State,
14. Imo Technical University, Imo State,
15. Akoko Christian University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State,
16. Open University College, Kaduna, Kaduna State,
17. Laity School of African Thought, Nembe, Rivers State,
18. Feyon University, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State,
19. Epe Graduate Teachers University, Epe, Lagos State,
20. Ezena University, Owerri, Imo State,
21. Trinity University, Awo-Omamma, Oru, Imo State,
22. West African University, Nkwerre,
23. Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Onitsha, Anambra State (not the precursor of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State),
24. God's University, Umuezema Ojoto, Anambra State (with campuses all over the world),
25. Technical University of Afa, Imo State (with campuses all over the world), and
26. Islamic University of Nigeria, Alabatan, Ogun State (Osagie, 2009).

However, when the military came back to power in December, 1983, General Mohammadu Buhari promulgated Decree No. 19 of (June) 1984 which abolished and prohibited private universities. Consequently, all the then twenty-six (26) existing private universities were forced to close down (Obasi, 2007). In 1991, Governor Chukwuemeka Ezeife of Anambra State signed the Madonna University Bill, which granted approval to Madonna University to operate as a private university. The Federal Government promptly came out with a law against the Bill, claiming that only the Federal Government can legislate on private universities.

However, the issue of private universities was re-opened soon, later the same year, 1991, when the then Vice Chancellor of the Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi, in his convocation address made a strong case for the establishment of private universities to absorb the unbearable admission pressure that was upon public universities. Interestingly, although the military was still in power, in 1991, the then Head of State, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, set up the *Commission on the Review of Higher Education in Nigeria*, widely known as the Longe Commission, with a view to considering the possible lifting of the embargo on, and prohibition of, the establishment of private universities. In fact, one of the fifteen-item terms of reference of the Commission was to 'propose eligibility criteria for the establishment of future universities in Nigeria'. Most remarkably, among

other things, the Longe Report of 1991 recommended private participation in university education, and specifically the establishment of private universities. Consequently, and in support of the recommendation, government promulgated Act No 9 of 1993 which repealed the Private Universities (Abolition and Prohibition) Act of 1984. Act No 9 of 1993 allowed individuals, organizations, corporate bodies, as well as local governments to establish and run private universities, provided that they meet laid down guidelines and subsequently obtain the approval of government (Okojie, 2008).

According to Okojie (2008), in order to avoid the serious threats to standards of teaching and learning which was posed on Nigerian universities by the twenty-six (illegal) private universities that operated in the early 1980s, the Management of the National Universities Commission (NUC) rose to the challenges faced during the process of approving private universities by establishing the Standing Committee on (the establishment of) Private Universities (SCOPU) on May 27, 1993. The responsibility of SCOPU is "to ensure a fair, effective, thorough and prompt evaluation of all application forms received by the Commission from individuals, organizations as well as corporate bodies wishing to establish private universities, bearing in mind the sensitive nature of the issue" (Okojie, 2008: 10). The terms of reference of SCOPU were and still are:

- ❖ To consider applications received by the National Universities Commission from individuals and organizations wishing to establish private universities;
- ❖ To assess the applications received; and
- ❖ To prepare a report of its assessment of each application to Management Committee of the Commission, which will consider and make recommendations to the University Development Committee for onward submission to the NUC Board and eventually to Government for consideration and appropriate decision.

To ensure quality control, applicants for the license to operate private universities are expected to satisfy a rigorous thirteen-stage process, as detailed below:

1. Application in writing stating the intent for the establishment of the university,
2. Collection of application forms,
3. Submission of application forms and relevant documents,
4. Intensive interviews/analysis of documents by experts in the relevant NUC Department,
5. Revision of documentation by proprietor(s), based on the report by SCOPU,
6. Interactive meeting of SCOPU with the proposed university,
7. First site assessment visit,
8. Finalization of documentation,

9. Second (final) site assessment visit,
10. Security screening of proprietor(s) and Board of Trustees,
11. Approval by NUC Management,
12. Approval by NUC Board,
13. Approval by Federal Executive Council (made up of the President, Vice President and the Ministers)

Each of these states requires an enormous amount of information, thus, making the process of establishing a private university, to say the least, very difficult (Okojie, 2008: 11).

## **JUSTIFICATION FOR PRIVATE PARTICIPATION IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION**

The emergence and present surge of private universities in the Nigerian educational system has been explained in terms of a number of factors. These include, but are by no means limited to the following: The Public Failure Theory, the Demand Absorption Theory, and the Choice Theory.

### **1. The Public Failure Theory**

The story of contemporary university education in Nigeria has largely been a story of mixed fortunes (Ajayi and Haastrup, 2006). In the beginning, Nigerian universities laid justifiable claim to remarkable impact on the socio-economic and political development of the country. The likes of the University of Ibadan, University of Ife, University of Lagos, Ahmadu Bello University and University of Nigeria compared very favourable with



the best universities any where in the world. They boasted of the best facilities and teachers. Their products stood out globally, especially in post-graduate studies, and secured very competitive international jobs, both in academics and in the industry. However, today, most people will doubt if, in their present conditions, Nigerian universities can continue to lay serious claim to their relevance

even locally, in the nation's capacity to properly connect with the new global knowledge economy and adapt, adopt and further develop the emerging technologies in the wider society (Verspoor, 1994).

For instance, according to the 2010 edition of the Webometrics Ranking of world universities, the five best universities are presented in Table III.

**TABLE III: Global Ranking Nigeria's Five Best Universities.**

| S/N | Name of University                  | World Ranking |
|-----|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1   | University of Ilorin, Ilorin        | 5,846         |
| 2   | Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife | 6,228         |
| 3   | Universitu of Ibadan, Ibadan        | 6,396         |
| 4   | University of Jos, Jos              | 7,000         |
| 5   | University of Lagos, Lagos          | 7,246         |

Source: <http://www.webometris.info>

Table III shows that Nigerian universities are no longer competitive globally. They have lost their attraction for quality faculty, which has in turn negatively impacted on their products. This is largely because they have been distracted from the classical academic tradition of best practices. According to Ibukun (1997), today's Nigerian university system is nothing but crisis management. It is indeed, a manifestation of public failure, or what Adalemo (2001) has called institutional inadequacies. The public failure theory in support of the emergence of private participation in the university system has been characterized by the following interrelated factors and indicators, among others: Inadequate Funding; Dilapidated Infrastructure;

Erosion of Autonomy; Secret Cults and Union Agitations; Brain Drain and Curriculum Development.

***Inadequate Funding:***

Like other sectors of the economy, the planning and management of education, and the quality of service delivery in Nigeria depend on the availability of funds to implement policies and execute projects and programmes and best practices. However, according to Osagie (2009), over the years, the education sector got not what it needed for minimum standards to be achieved, but what the government could afford; and what government could afford has never been enough. In other words, the Nigerian university system of today is

characterized by a growing challenge of the shortage of funds, which ultimately translates into shortage of teaching and learning resources (to be discussed in greater detail next; Ibukun, 1997; Oyeneeye, 2006; Adegbite, 2002). Under the various military regimes, university funding was virtually neglected. According to Ajayi and Ayodele (2002), although there has been some increase in the level of funding, the funds released are still grossly inadequate, compared to the huge increase in student enrolment and associated high and rising costs of providing rapidly evolving facilities required for quality service delivery

and best practices. These have been further aggravated by equally high and rising inflation and falling value of the Nigerian currency. Furthermore, Ajayi and Ekundayo (2006) and Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) have observed that the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has been unable to meet the benchmark of 26 per cent of total budget allocation to education as recommended by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Table IV shows the allocation to the education sector in the eight years of Obasanjo's administration.

**TABLE IV: Allocations to Education (1999 – 2007)**

| Year | Amount in Billion Naira | Percentage of Annual Budget |
|------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1999 | 23.047                  | 11.2                        |
| 2000 | 44.25                   | 8.3                         |
| 2001 | 39.885                  | 7.0                         |
| 2002 | 100.2                   | 5.09                        |
| 2003 | 64.7                    | 11.83                       |
| 2004 | 72.22                   | 7.8                         |
| 2005 | 93.59                   | 8.3                         |
| 2006 | 166.6                   | 8.7                         |
| 2007 | 137.48                  | 6.07                        |

*Source:* Collated from Osagie, (2009: 3)

These figures show that at no time was the federal allocation to education up to half of the UNESCO's prescribed minimum. In fact, in seven of the nine years covered by the Table, government allocation to the education sector was less than one-quarter of UNESCO's prescription. Based on this evident and consistent gross under

funding, Omuta recently (2009) took a critical look at the UNESCO recommendation and observed that the benchmark assumes that an adequate foundation has been laid for the sector. Consequently, he concluded that considering the long neglect of the educational sector by successive governments in Nigeria, it

would require a budgetary allocation of about 30 per cent for an unbroken period of ten years to redress past neglect, before dedicating 26 per cent for its maintenance and sustainability. If government is no longer interested in funding education, or cannot adequately fund the sector, then those who can or are willing should be allowed, and invited to do so. This is where private sector participation provides an option.

### ***Dilapidated Infrastructure:***

As hinted above, the expected and indeed inevitable physical manifestation of the endemic financial crisis in the Nigerian university system is the deterioration and decay of facilities and resources; evidenced in a myriad of ways. According to Ekundayo, and Ajayi (2009) and Ochuba (2001), cited by Ajayi and Haastrup (2006:226), libraries and library space, social and laboratory facilities, lecture halls, students' hostels, books and journals, office space, among others are inadequate. The World Bank (1994) has observed that equipment for teaching, research and learning are either lacking or very inadequate and are in too bad a shape to enable the universities carry out their basic academic functions. Even the National Universities Commission (2004) admitted that the Presidential Visitation Panels that assessed the operations of all federal universities between 1999 and 2003, found and confirmed that the stock of physical facilities in all the institutions were deplorable.

In spite of these deficiencies, the demand for placement has continued to rise. Consequently, because staff and student populations far exceed the carrying capacities of public universities, classrooms are over-crowded and students are compelled to receive instructions, peeping from outside, through windows; do their practical experiments in empty or ill-equipped laboratories; read out-dated books and journals, in over-crowded libraries, even in a fast changing, knowledge-driven world; and ten students live in hostels rooms designed for two. Similarly, lecturers, even some very senior academics, are compelled to share offices, with the attendant implication for the privacy that is necessary for research and supervision. In such circumstances, teaching and learning are highly compromised. Ultimately, quality is sacrificed. It would, therefore, be a great relief to government, if private interests could be found that could close this gap.

### ***Erosion of Autonomy:***

University autonomy has been defined as the protection of the institution from interference by government officials in the day-to-day running of its affairs, especially pertaining to issues such as the selection of students, the appointment and removal of academic staff, including Vice Chancellors, the determination of the content of university education and the control of the degree standard and the determination of the size and rate of growth (Ojedele and Ilusanya, 2006; Bablola, Jaiyeoba and Okediran,

2007). It is believed that university autonomy is essential to the creation, advancement, transmission and application of knowledge (Ajayi and Haastrup, 2006). Indeed, Ajayi and Ayodele (2002) have asserted that government's undue involvement in university governance has been a core cause of strife between government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) over the years. More specifically, Ekundayo, and Ajayi (2009); Ekundayo, and Ajayi (2009) and Ajayi and Haastrup (2006: 229) have observed that in public (federal and state-owned) universities, there is the erosion of the statutory functions of Vice Chancellors by the Chancellors and Pro-chancellors (who are, in reality, mere titular heads of the university) as some of them now decide to stay permanently in their offices on campus, seeing to the day-to-day running of some universities. They have become so visible and powerful that some union officials prefer to see them on issues relating to the internal governance of the universities, rather than the Vice Chancellors or the proper schedule officers. The truth is that any structure or activity that undermines the authority of the Vice Chancellor has fatal implications for the ability of the university to deliver on its primary mandate.

### ***Secret Cults and Union Agitations:***

Ogunbameru (2004) has asserted that the most important challenge facing tertiary institutions, especially universities, in Nigeria today, is perhaps how to handle the menace

and aggressiveness of secret cults on university campuses. Smah (2007) also observed that where secret cults exist, there can be no guarantee that academic programmes and activities would run smoothly and normally, without sudden interruptions. The prevalence of secret cults on our campuses, therefore, meant that universities run the risk of being constantly shut down and academic programmes and calendars disrupted. Besides student secret cults, the various unions in the university system, such as the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) and Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU), as well as the Student Union Government (SUG) are constantly in dispute with governments (federal and state), on the one hand, and with the authorities of individual universities, on the other, over national issues and peculiar local disagreements, respectively.

A major indicator of the public failure theory, therefore, is the inability of public universities to run uninterrupted university calendars, resulting in the costly loss of valuable time. Indeed, the Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission, Professor Okojie recently (2010) claimed that in the past fifteen years, the Nigerian university system has lost three and a half years of academic work due to crises arising from union agitations. The implicit presumption is that the absence of these pre-disposing factors should engender a more conducive environment for the delivery of quality university education.

### **Brain Drain**

According to Akindutire (2004), brain drain refers to the uncontrolled and widespread migration of academic staff from the Nigerian university system, primarily to foreign universities or similar institutions, where their services are better appreciated and rewarded. The concept could, however, also be extended to the loss of academic personnel to the non-university and non-academic sectors (like the oil and gas, as well as, the financial) even within the country. The major factors that triggered brain drain included institutional deterioration, low level of attractive remuneration of academic staff, salary erosion and general decline in the financial attraction of university employment (Ajayi and Haastrup, 2006; Saint, Hartnett and Strassner, 2003). More pointedly, Bangura (1994) asserts that between 1988 and 1990 over 1,000 academic staff left the Nigerian university system. Similarly, available data from the Federal office of Statistics (FOS) show that between 1992 and 1995 a total of 883 lecturers and professors (representing 6.8 per cent of the total stock of academic staff) left the system.

The significance of these figures is better appreciated against the background of two facts: first, that the stock from which this loss is suffered was already deficient and inadequate, and secondly, that it is difficult, slow and almost impossible to replenish any loss. Institutional deterioration and salary erosion not only caused brain drain, they discouraged new

recruitment and replenishment of lost stock of academics. One of many repercussions of brain drain was the high and rising workload associated with the negative imbalance in staff: student ratios. Rising workload, in turn, has implications for efficiency, as teachers struggle to cope with:

- a large and increasing number of courses,
- having to rely on residual knowledge to teach courses in which there are not experts,
- as well as large and unmanageable classes, both in teaching and supervision.

These, in turn also have implications for the quality of instruction, advising, counselling, supervision, and by extension, ultimately, the quality of graduates.

### **Curriculum Development Inertia:**

Human capital is developed for the need of the market place of labour. It is, therefore, its readiness for the market place that determines its relevance and value. We reiterate, here, that the market-readiness of human capital depends on several factors, the most important of which is the quality of knowledge acquired. As we have seen earlier, knowledge is highly dynamic and its value increases with its upgrading through sharing. In this regard, it has been observed that the curricula of most public universities do not seem to be designed to respond to the labour and skill requirements of the modern market

place of labour. Indeed, most of them have remained static, outdated and archaic. This is because, according to Osagie, (2209:9) they are “overloaded, centrally imposed, examination-driven, and content-based, rather than being process based”. Consequently, their products, though educated, are not market-ready and knowledge economy compliant. This is why most our graduates have severally been tags as unemployable.

Private universities were, therefore, needed to rescue government, both federal and state, from the burden of funding, decaying and dilapidated infrastructure, crises caused by contentions that arise from reactions to the perceived erosion of autonomy, and the menace of secret cults. Ultimately, private universities were needed to stabilize the university academic calendar.

## 2. The Demand Absorption Theory

Although public universities have dominated the higher education

landscape in Nigeria for several decades, their failure to cope with admission pressures became more critical with the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the later part of the 1980s (Obasi, 2007). The demand absorption theory of the emergence of private universities, therefore, is rooted in the argument that the public supply of higher education falls far short of new demand (Lawal, Ossai and Ekundayo, 2008:207; Osagie, 2009:17; Ajadi, 2010:19).

According to Jubril (2000); Obasi and Eboh (2004), in 1990, about 250,000 candidates applied for admission into Nigerian universities, out of which less than 50,000 or about 20 per cent were admitted. In 1992, close to 300,000 candidates applied for admission and about 50,000 (17 per cent) were successful. In 1994, out of the 400,000 that applied, less than 50,000 (13 per cent) were admitted. Table V shows that this trend has continued.

**Table V: Trends in University Admissions (1995-2000)**

| Academic Year  | No. of Applications Received | No. of Admissions Given | Percentage Admitted |
|----------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1995/1996      | 508,280                      | 32,473                  | 6.4                 |
| 1996           | 376,645                      | 56,055                  | 14.9                |
| 1997           | 419,807                      | 73,781                  | 17.6                |
| 1998           | 321,368                      | 78,550                  | 24.4                |
| 1999           | 593,670                      | 64,358                  | 10.8                |
| 2000           | 467,490                      | 50,277                  | 10.8                |
| 2000/2001      | 550,399                      | 60,718                  | 11.0                |
| <b>Average</b> |                              |                         | <b>13.7</b>         |

Source: JAMB, Annual Report for Various Years as cited in Obasi (2007:47)

Table V shows that in the few years preceding the emergence of private universities, and in the first couple of years of their establishment, the rate of placement of university admission seekers varied from as low as 6.4 per cent to as high as 24.4 per cent. The average success rate was an abysmal 13.7 per cent. Obasi (2007) claims that

the admission crisis in the Nigerian university system became even more critical after 2001. He cited Okebukola (2002) as confirming that in 2002, the access rate had fallen below 13 per cent.

The details of the figures between 2001 and 2009 are contained in Table VI

**TABLE VI: Applications for Admissions into University Placements (2001-2009)**

| Academic Year  | Applications for University Placement | Admissions into Universities | Admissions as % of Applications |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2001           | 893,259                               | 106,304                      | 11.90                           |
| 2002           | 1,028,988                             | 129,525                      | 12.60                           |
| 2003           | 1,172,313                             | 175,358                      | 14.90                           |
| 2004           | 1,043,361                             | 108,148                      | 10.40                           |
| 2005           | 926,133                               | 125,673                      | 13.10                           |
| 2006           | 1,030,670                             | 107,161                      | 10.40                           |
| 2007           | 893,259                               | 149,033                      | 16.70                           |
| 2008           | 1,028,988                             | 183,420                      | 17.80                           |
| 2009           | 1,183,574                             | 211,991                      | 17.90                           |
| <b>Average</b> |                                       |                              | <b>13.87</b>                    |

*Source:* Ojerinde (2009); as cited by Omoregie (2010)

These time-series statistics show that Nigeria's participation rate in university education, even in recent times, is rather low, especially considering the enormous human and material resources at her disposal. A comparison of the rates in other countries highlights Nigeria's poor performance in very bold relief. For instance, while South Africa's rate of participation in higher education in 1995 was 1,434 per 100,000, and while the average rate of participation in developing counties is 824 per 1,000, it was only 667 per 1,000 in

Nigeria, in 1996 (Jubril, 2000; Obasi, 2002). Based on this trend, the expansion of access through the establishment of private universities became the most reasonable policy option (Obasi, 2004; 2005).

It is against this background that the emergence and rather very rapid expansion of private universities in Nigeria can be appreciated. It is, however, pertinent to note that the Nigerian experience merely reflects the global trend, as such developments have been known to

occur in India and the Philippines (Osagie, 2009), as well as, Mexico and Peru (Lawal, Ossai and Ekundayo (2008),

### 3. The Choice Theory

Osagie (2009) has also posited the Choice Theory of the emergence of private universities in Nigeria. Simply put, the theory takes the position that private universities offer the admission seeker a choice beyond what is available in, or can be offered by, public universities. Many of the candidates that fall into this category are children who attended private primary and secondary schools; to whom admission into private universities is a mere continuation of the tradition of attending “special schools”. The Choice Theory also includes the argument that the more students pay for their education, the more pressure, rational and informed, students and their parents put on the institutions to provide the courses they wish to study (Babalola et al, 2006:141). Recently, the Pro-Chancellor of a state public university, the Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, in making case for charging fees argued that “cheap university education produces cheap graduates” (Sunday Punch, June 6, 2010: 53). The concept of choice also implies competition. And in connection with private participation in university education, the World Bank (IBRD/World Bank, 2002: 72) has asserted that in many parts of the world, increased competition from private institutions has brought about greater diversity and choice for

students and has served as a powerful incentive for public universities to innovate and modernize.

### THE SUCCESS STORY OF PRIVATE PARTICIPATION IN THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

The review so far shows that over the years, and especially recently, the federal government has been quite reluctant to establish new public universities. This was to be expected, against the background of the earlier observation of its inability to adequately fund and manage the existing ones. Even when state governments came to the rescue with the establishment of fee-paying state universities, there was still a gaping gap to fill. The result was the explosion of private universities.

Out of the forty applications sent to the National Universities Commission for screening for the first set of private universities, only three were approved, namely; Igbinedion University, Okada, Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo and Madonna University, Okija. Since then, in the space of ten years, thirty-eight more private universities have been licensed, bringing the present total to forty-one. The last batch of seven was licensed in November, 2009. Thus, with twenty-seven federal universities, thirty-five state universities and forty-one private universities, there are now one hundred and four universities in Nigeria. They are distribution by the type of ownership and percentage as shown in Table VII



**TABLE VII: Distribution of Federal, State and Private Universities in Nigeria**

| Type of ownership  | Number     | Percentage of total |
|--------------------|------------|---------------------|
| Federal Government | 27         | 26.21               |
| State Government   | 35         | 33.98               |
| Private            | 41         | 39.81               |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>103</b> | <b>100.00</b>       |

Table VII shows that at present, four out of every ten universities in Nigeria is under private proprietorship. Furthermore, the National Universities Commission (NUC) has also declared that the Standing Committee on Private Universities (SCOPU) is currently processing a large number of applications for licenses. This is apart from the forty-four illegal universities that are said to be operating in the country (Okojie, 2008). Thus, Nigeria appears to be in line to follow the

examples of Japan, the Philippines, South Korea and Indonesia, where private universities currently dominate the tertiary education landscape (Obasi, 2007: 49). Indeed it may be safe to predict that in another decade there may be more private universities than federal and state universities put together.

The forty-one private universities so far licensed to operate in Nigeria are presented in Table VIII.

**TABLE VIII: List of Licensed Private Universities in Nigeria and Year Established**

| S/N | Name of University                                | Year Established |
|-----|---|------------------|
| 1   | ABTI-American University, Yola                    | 2003             |
| 2   | Achievers University, Owo                         | 2007             |
| 3   | Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti                | 2009             |
| 4   | African University of Science & Technology, Abuja | 2007             |
| 5   | Ajayi Crowder University, Oyo                     | 2005             |
| 6   | Al-Hikman University, Ilorin                      | 2005             |
| 7   | Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo                   | 1999             |
| 8   | Bells University of Technology, Otta              | 2005             |
| 9   | Benson Idahosa University, Benin City             | 2002             |
| 10  | Bingham University, Jos                           | 2005             |
| 11  | Bowen University, Iwo                             | 2001             |
| 12  | Caleb University, Lagos                           | 2007             |
| 13  | Caritas University, Enugu                         | 2005             |
| 14  | CETEP City University, Lagos                      | 2005             |

|    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 15 | Covenant University, Otta                       | 2002 |
| 16 | Crawford University, Igbesa                     | 2005 |
| 17 | Crescent University, Abeokuta                   | 2005 |
| 18 | Fountain University, Osogbo                     | 2007 |
| 19 | Godfrey Okoye University, Ogbuomu-Nike          | 2009 |
| 20 | Igbinedion University, Okada                    | 1999 |
| 21 | Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji   | 2007 |
| 22 | Katsina University, Katsina                     | 2005 |
| 23 | Lead City University, Ibadan                    | 2005 |
| 24 | Madonna University, Okija                       | 1999 |
| 25 | Nigerian Turkish Nile University, Abuja         | 2009 |
| 26 | Novena University, Ogume                        | 2005 |
| 27 | Obong University, Obong Ntak                    | 2007 |
| 28 | Oduduwa University, Ipetumodu                   | 2009 |
| 29 | Pan African University, Lagos                   | 2002 |
| 30 | Paul University, Awka                           | 2009 |
| 31 | Redeemer University, Mowe                       | 2005 |
| 32 | Rhema University, Obeama Asa                    | 2009 |
| 33 | Renaissance University, Enugu                   | 2005 |
| 34 | Salem University, Lokoja                        | 2007 |
| 35 | Tansian University, Umunya                      | 2007 |
| 36 | University of Mkar, Mkar                        | 2005 |
| 37 | Veritas University, Abuja                       | 2007 |
| 38 | Wellspring University, Evbuobanosa              | 2009 |
| 39 | Wesley University of Science & Technology, Ondo | 2007 |
| 40 | Western Delta University, Oghara                | 2007 |
| 41 | Wukari Jubilee University, Wukari               | 2005 |

Source: NUC (Varied dates)

- The relevance of private universities in the development of higher education in Nigeria can best be appreciated against the background of the theoretical basis for their emergence. In other words, the place of private universities in higher education in Nigeria can be determined and evaluated by the extent to which they have addressed or are addressing the failures that have been identified with public universities. The pertinent questions are: To what extent have private universities;
  - Expanded the supply of admission places to seekers,
  - Addressed the funding problems of higher education,
  - Improved the infrastructure and facilities for teaching and learning,

- Restored the autonomy of universities,
- Arrested the menace of secret cults and union militancy,
- Arrested the problem of brain drain,
- Responded to the skills demand of the labour market through curriculum development,
- Provided differentiated education, among others.

Because of the interrelatedness and even overlap of some of these

challenges, they will not necessarily be addressed as itemized above.

### **Boost in the Number of Students Admitted into Universities**

We reiterate that because of their limited carrying capacities, public universities have not been able to absorb all those seeking admission into them. By the 2006/2007 admission exercise (only six years after the first set opened their doors) it had started to become clear that private universities have come to the rescue of candidates seeking university admission. Table IX presents the picture.

**Table IX: Students Enrolment in Nigerian Universities (2006/2007)**

| S/N | Proprietorship | Sub-degree | Undergraduate | Post-graduate | Total     | Percentage |  |
|-----|----------------|------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|------------|--|
| 1   | Federal        | 49,999     | 503,154       | 57,300        | 610,453   | 55.7       |  |
| 2   | State          | 8,734      | 419,901       | 19,459        | 448,094   | 40.9       |  |
| 3   | Private        | 357        | 36,641        | 767           | 37,765    | 3.4        |  |
| 4   | Total          | 59,090     | 959,696       | 77,526        | 1,096,312 | 100.0      |  |
| 5   | Grand Total    |            |               |               |           | 1,096,312  |  |

Source: Okojie, (2008:4)

To fully appreciate Table IX, we should note that:

- By 2006/2007, only 24 private universities had been licensed to operate and could, therefore, admit students,
- One of the 24 private universities (Pan-African University) is a specialized

university, offering only post-graduate programmes. By implication, only 23 private universities were available to candidates seeking admission into undergraduate programmes,

- By 2006/2007, the youngest federal university (University of Uyo, established in 1991) had

existed longer than the oldest private universities (Igbinedion University, Babcock University and Madonna University, established in 1999),

- The pressure on admission is more on undergraduate programmes than either sub-degree or post-graduate programmes.

Against the background of these facts, Table IX shows that the percentage of total undergraduate admissions (34,675) in private universities to undergraduate admissions in public universities (691,224) (i.e. excluding post-graduate and diploma courses) is about 4.8 per cent. Also, in terms of raw figures, if it is considered that about 40,000 would have been without admission, it can be rightly concluded that private universities have indeed come to rescue university undergraduate admission seekers in Nigeria.

The experience in economies where private universities have a much longer history would suggest that these seemingly low figures will increase with time with a possibility of private universities overtaking their public counterparts in the very near future; and that they hold great potentials for undergraduate enrolment in Nigeria. For instance, Obasi (2007:52) cited Chiba (2000) and Altbach, (2002) as claiming that in some Asian countries, undergraduate enrolment in private universities is in the order of 76 per cent to 80 per cent. Bernasconi (2003) also claims that in

Chile, 71 per cent of the nation's undergraduate admission is in private universities.

In fact, if it is assumed that government continues to be reluctant to adequately fund public universities, then their carrying capacities will be not be expected to expand, remarkably in the very near future. Consequently, if admission into them were to be properly monitored by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), their enrolment can at best remain at the present levels. Even if funding improves, and carrying capacity is correspondingly expanded, if it is further assumed that the regulators do their work well, enrolment in public universities should not significantly exceed their present levels, because the expanded capacity will only absorb the excess enrolment they have been having all along, which is one of the challenges that government is attempting to tackle with the licensing of private universities. If it further assumed, as expected, that more private universities will be licensed by the NUC, and given that all licensed private universities currently have excess carrying capacity, then it is safe to project that by 2015, at least every one in four of all the university enrolment in Nigeria will be in private universities

### **Quality of Infrastructure and Facilities**

The processes for the licensing of private universities ensure that they corrected the deficiencies prevalent in infrastructure and facilities in public

universities. In the assessment of Obasi (2007), it appears that the enforcement of the criteria for granting of licenses to private universities has had positive impact on the quality of facilities for teaching, research and learning in the institutions. He asserts that some of the universities have state-of-the-art facilities that are the envy of students in public universities, where there are dilapidated infrastructural facilities (Obasi, 2007:54).

One of such private universities is the ABTI-American University of Nigeria, Yola, which is reputed for her air-conditioned classrooms, offices and staff quarters. According to Oyekanmi (2006), the National Universities Commission accreditation report of 2006 made very copious and positive comments on the older private universities. In the said report, the NUC was claimed to have expressed satisfaction with the standard of laboratories as well as the quantity of equipment acquired. Furthermore, the report was satisfied with the availability and level of furnishing of classrooms, workshops, studios and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities. More specifically, and with respect to Covenant University, Otta, the report confirmed that three-quarters of the programmes offered were provided with well-equipped computer laboratories. However, for the purpose of balancing, it must also be noted that the report observed that a few facilities in some of the private universities assessed needed to be upgraded. These included the staff offices at Igbinedion University, Okada

and the buildings and fittings in Madonna University, Okija.

Concerning the provision of infrastructure, the Executive Secretary of the NUC has observed that some of the private universities are still operating in their take-off sites and are just putting up the facilities stipulated in their master plans, in their permanent sites. However, his assessment, by virtue of his vintage position, is that if the construction works are not truncated, the private universities will soon be boasting of infrastructure that are comparable with what is available in a standard university anywhere in the world (Okojie, 2008: 25). Covenant University, Otta, and Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti have some state-of-the-arts infrastructure in the Nigerian university system.

### **Assurance of the Quality of Programmes Offered**

Private universities were licensed to operate at the time when it was widely claimed that the vast majority of the Nigerian university graduates were unemployable. Furthermore, it is widely claimed that the average Nigerian graduate of today may be required to audit some undergraduate courses before determining his or her suitability for post-graduate studies overseas. This is because it is believed that standards have fallen drastically and that the products of our university system are correspondingly substandard and “half-baked”.

The quality assurance and quality control mechanism for guaranteeing

the quality of academic programmes of all Nigerian universities is the periodic programme accreditation carried out by the National Universities Commission. According to Lawal, Ossai and Ekundayo (2008), quality assurance is generally understood as the process by which a producer of a service or product can be confident of its consistency, reliability, safety and to some extent, its value for money. Although the individual universities are the producers, as the regulators, the National Universities Commission is ultimately held responsible for the quality of programmes and by implication, also of the products of the Nigerian university system. The purpose of accreditation, as quality assurance, is to determine the degree of excellence of both the individual university, as institutions, and the programmes they offer (Olagboye, 1997). It is also to determine their fitness for the purpose for which they have been licensed (Juran, 1986).

In this regards, the report of the NUC accreditation exercises carried out in 2005 and 2006 revealed that none of the programmes evaluated in five private universities failed accreditation, as they either earned full or interim accreditation categories. Specifically, of the eleven programmes evaluated in Covenant University, Otta, seven earned full accreditation, while four earned interim status. It was on the strength of this performance that the Chancellor proudly announced that the university “was moving from accreditation success to distinction” (Obasi, 2007: 55).

For the purpose of a cross-sectional comparison of the performance of federal, state and private universities in the 2007 exercise, the zonal summaries published by the NUC are presented in Tables X, XI, and XII.

There are three categories of accreditation: full, interim and denied. Full accreditation is granted to an academic programme that satisfies the provisions of minimum academic standards and it is for a period of five academic sessions. On the other hand, interim accreditation is granted to an academic programme that has minor deficiencies that must be rectified within a period of two years, when a mandatory re-assessment is carried out. In the interim, the university is allowed to continue to admit new students into the programme. A denied accreditation means that the affected programme has failed to satisfy NUC minimum academic standards. The university ceases to admit fresh students into such a programme with effect from the next academic session; and a re-visitation can only be at the invitation of the university. To ensure compliance with the non-admission sanction of programmes with denied accreditation, the National Universities Commission informs the general public and such relevant bodies as the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Civil Service Commission, National Employers Consultative Association (NECA), relevant professional regulatory bodies, such as the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN), the

Council of Legal Education (CLE), the Council for Registered Engineers (COREN), and Institute of Chartered

Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), among others (Okojie, 2008:18), of its verdict.

**TABLE X: Summary of Accreditation Results of all Universities (Northern Zone)**

| S/N | Name of University                        | Ownership | Accreditation Status |         |        | Total Number of Programmes Accredited |
|-----|---|-----------|----------------------|---------|--------|---------------------------------------|
|     |   |           | Full                 | Interim | Denied |                                       |
| 1.  | Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria            | Federal   | 30                   | 3       | -      | 33                                    |
| 2.  | Bayero University, Kano                   | Federal   | 4                    | -       | -      | 4                                     |
| 3.  | University of Jos, Jos                    | Federal   | 13                   | 3       | 2      | 18                                    |
| 4.  | University of Sokoto, Sokoto              | Federal   | 6                    | -       | -      | 6                                     |
| 5.  | University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri        | Federal   | 12                   | 8       | 3      | 23                                    |
| 6.  | Federal University of Technology, Yola    | Federal   | 13                   | 5       | -      | 18                                    |
| 7.  | University of Agriculture, Makurdi        | Federal   | 13                   | 4       | -      | 17                                    |
| 8.  | Abubakar Tafawa Belewa University, Bauchi | Federal   | 11                   | 7       | 4      | 22                                    |
| 9.  | Benue State University,                   | State     | 9                    | 3       | -      | 12                                    |
| 10. | Nasarawa State University, Keffi          | State     | 13                   | 12      | 1      | 26                                    |
| 11. | Kogi State University                     | State     | 10                   | 1       | -      | 11                                    |
| 12. | Kano University of Technology, Wudil      | State     | 13                   | -       | -      | 13                                    |
| 13. | ABTI American University of Nigeria       | Private   | 14                   | -       | -      | 14                                    |

|     |   |         |            |           |           |            |
|-----|---|---------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 14. | Nigerian Defence Academy                | Federal | 6          | 1         | -         | 7          |
| 15. | University of Abuja, Gwagwalada         | Federal | -          | 2         | -         | 2          |
| 16. | Federal University of Technology, Minna | Federal | 8          | 6         | -         | 14         |
| 17. | University of Ilorin                    | Federal | 10         | 1         | -         | 11         |
| 18. | <b>Total</b>                            |         | <b>185</b> | <b>56</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>251</b> |
| 19. | Percentage                              |         | 73.7%      | 22.3%     | 4.0%      | 100%       |

Source: NUC Monday Bulletin (21 April, 2008)



**TABLE XI: Summary of Accreditation Results of all Universities (Eastern Zone)**

| S/N | Name of University                               | Ownership | Accreditation Status |         |        | Total Number Of Programmes Accredited |
|-----|--|-----------|----------------------|---------|--------|---------------------------------------|
|     |  |           | Full                 | Interim | Denied |                                       |
| 1   | University of Nigeria, Nsukka                    | Federal   | 17                   | 4       | -      | 21                                    |
| 2.  | Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awaka                 | Federal   | 19                   | 1       | -      | 20                                    |
| 3.  | University of Calabar                            | Federal   | 13                   | 9       | -      | 22                                    |
| 4.  | University of Uyo                                | Federal   | 12                   | 8       | -      | 20                                    |
| 5.  | Michael Opara University of Agriculture, Umudike | Federal   | 8                    | -       | -      | 8                                     |
| 6.  | Federal University of Technology, Owerri         | Federal   | 8                    | 1       | -      | 9                                     |
| 7.  | Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki               | State     | 20                   | 5       | -      | 25                                    |
| 8.  | Anambra State University, Uli                    | State     | 7                    | 1       | -      | 8                                     |
| 9.  | Enugu State University of Technology, Enugu      | State     | 13                   | 7       | -      | 20                                    |
| 10. | Cross River University of Technology             | State     | 9                    | 7       | -      | 16                                    |
| 11. | Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island       | State     | 22                   | 15      | -      | 37                                    |
| 12. | Madonna University, Okija                        | Private   | 1                    | 8       | -      | 9                                     |
| 13. | Caritas University, Enugu                        | Private   | 6                    | 9       | 4      | 19                                    |
| 14. | Imo State University, Owerri                     | State     | 19                   | -       | -      | 19                                    |

|     |                              |         |            |           |          |            |
|-----|------------------------------|---------|------------|-----------|----------|------------|
| 15. | University of Port Harcourt  | Federal | 9          | 3         | -        | 12         |
| 16. | Abia State University, Uturu | State   | 23         | 1         | -        | 24         |
| 17. | <b>Total</b>                 |         | <b>206</b> | <b>79</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>289</b> |
| 18. | Percentage                   |         | 71.3%      | 27.3%     | 1.4%     | 100%       |

Source: NUC Monday Bulletin (21 April, 2008)

**TABLE XII: Summary of Accreditation Results of all Universities (Western Zone)**

| S/N | Name of University                                 | Ownership | Accreditation Status |         |        | Total Number of Programmes Accredited |
|-----|--|-----------|----------------------|---------|--------|---------------------------------------|
|     |  |           | Full                 | Interim | Denied |                                       |
| 1.  | University of Lagos, Akoka                         | Federal   | 9                    | 4       | -      | 13                                    |
| 2.  | Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife                | Federal   | 25                   | 3       | -      | 28                                    |
| 3.  | Federal University of Technology, Akure            | Federal   | 7                    | -       | -      | 7                                     |
| 4.  | University of Benin                                | Federal   | 12                   | 7       | -      | 19                                    |
| 5.  | University of Ado-Ekiti, Ado-Ekiti                 | Federal   | 19                   | 6       | 1      | 26                                    |
| 6.  | Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso | State     | 9                    | 1       | -      | 10                                    |
| 7.  | Lagos State University, Ojo                        | State     | 8                    | 8       | -      | 16                                    |
| 8.  | Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma                    | State     | 24                   | 7       | -      | 31                                    |
| 9.  | Delta State University, Abraka                     | State     | 12                   | 8       | 4      | 24                                    |
| 10. | Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye             | State     | 16                   | 7       | -      | 23                                    |
| 11. | Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba, Akoko         | State     | 10                   | 11      | 2      | 23                                    |
| 12. | Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode     | State     | 11                   | 8       | -      | 19                                    |
| 13. | Redeemer's University, Mowe                        | Private   | 1                    | 18      | 1      | 20                                    |
| 14. | Benson Idahosa University, Benin City              | Private   | 11                   | 2       | -      | 13                                    |

|     |                                 |         |            |            |           |            |
|-----|---------------------------------|---------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| 15. | Covenant University, Ota        | Private | 7          | 4          | -         | 11         |
| 16. | Igbinedion University, Okada    | Private | 11         | -          | -         | 11         |
| 17. | Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo  | Private | 2          | 5          | 1         | 8          |
| 18. | Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo | Private | 3          | 1          | -         | 4          |
| 19. | Bowen University, Iwo           | Private | 11         | 5          | -         | 16         |
| 20. | Lead City University            | Private | -          | 7          | 3         | 10         |
| 21. | <b>Total</b>                    |         | <b>208</b> | <b>112</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>332</b> |
| 22. | Percentage                      |         | 62.7%      | 33.7%      | 3.6%      | 110%       |

Source: NUC Monday Bulletin (21 April, 2008)

These Tables show that of the 150 programmes evaluated in thirteen private universities, 114 earned full accreditation, 63 earned interim accreditation, while nine were denied accreditation. This compares favourably with the nine and eight programmes that were denied accreditation in federal and state universities. Indeed, Lawal, Ossai and Ekundayo, (<http://www.herp-net.org>) have concluded that “with respect to standards, on the average, the private universities have done better in the NUC accreditation process than their public counterparts” In any case, since programmes that are denied accreditation are automatically barred from admitting new students, and since this information is given the widest possible publicity, the fear of sub-standard academic programmes and sub-standard products does not arise, since such programmes cannot be patronized.

### Quality of Graduates Produced`

Traditionally, university degrees are awarded on the basis of being found worthy in character and learning. However, it is common knowledge that many of the university graduates produced in last two decades have been found wanting in character. This is because the training of undergraduates has tended to emphasize head knowledge to the dangerous neglect of cultivating the heart along side. For instance, university graduates have been paraded among armed robbers, fraudsters and cyber criminals, in recent years. Against this background, and seeking to make an obvious and noticeable difference, private universities, especially those founded and operated by religious bodies and organizations, have clearly declared that their vision and mission are to produce well-rounded graduates.

In Covenant University it is called the Total Man Concept (TMC). According to Izedonmi (2009:155,156), the Total Man has three components: the spiritual man, the intellectual man and the physical man. Correspondingly:

- To produce the Total Man, “character formation is considered a spiritual issue that is instilled by self-discipline and commitment to the principles enunciated by our Lord Jesus Christ”, and enshrined in the Holy Bible.
- The intellectual man is developed through academic programmes that are innovative, creative and functional. Students are equipped “to face the challenges of academic leadership through the provision of the highest standards of educational infrastructure and facilities and recruiting, maintaining and sustaining a group of outstanding academics as faculty members”. In addition to the normal NUC prescribed General Study (GST) courses, the university has included “specially-designed courses in such areas as: *Biographical Studies, Entrepreneurship, Investment Intelligence, Entrepreneurship Intelligence, Family Life, Human Development Process, Leadership Development, Mental Development, Success Concepts and Works Ethics*”.

- The physical component of the Total Man involves the provision of “avenues for sound physical development via recreational activities that engage the body and also enhance activities personality development, stimulating the cultivation of lifestyles that are conducive to healthy living”.

The Total Graduate of Covenant University “is expected to be resourceful, intellectually reinforced, enterprisingly self-dependent, futuristically visionary and responsibility-sensitive to the changes demanded for the leadership role, or dominion nature he is made for” (Izedonmi, 2009: 157).

In Benson Idahosa University, the focus is on “**developing the whole man: spiritually mentally and physically**” (Idahosa II, 2007: X). According to the President, Rt. Rev. Faith Emmanuel Benson Idahosa II, Benson Idahosa University was established to “raise for God, an army of Academics, professionals and entrepreneurs, who will go in the name of th Lord Jesus Christ to the ends of the world with the fire of the Holy Ghost, to impart truth by precepts and example”. Furthermore, he declared that the university was established for the purpose of “preparing men and women to serve God under the leadership of Jesus Christ, through well-struturs academic programmers and learning experiences designed to produce students of academic excellence with Godliness ..... above all, to produce good, solid and

academically brilliant graduates with God at the centre of their lives” (Idahosa II, 2007: IX)

Elsewhere, in the current Student Hand Book of Benson Idahosa University, the Vision of the university is stated as follows: “We are a university that will raise academics, professionals and entrepreneurs, who will be effective disciples for Christ by excelling in their professional fields. Benson Idahosa University aspires to be a model for “academic excellence with Godliness” and will be distinguished by high performance in interdisciplinary research, addressing national and international problems, eliminating wrong behavioural patterns among students and becoming a storehouse of knowledge to be used for the benefit of mankind on Christian ethical principles. We are designed to change the nation and the continent by changing one student’s life at a time”. Finally, the Mission of the university is stated as follows: “BIU is a private Christian university, providing state-of-the-art undergraduate, postgraduate and professional education. We are committed to the mission of raising leaders for the nation, who are complete in spirit, mind and body: thus contributing to the production of high level leadership and quality manpower for the nation and the world” (BIU, undated: 8, 9)

As its philosophical baseline, Babcock University is developed on the concept of “harmonious development” of the total man (Alalade and Tayo, 2009:68). The traditional emphasis of the Seven-day Adventist philosophy of education

is on the balanced and harmonious development of the whole man in his physical, social and spiritual environment. Using the concept as its educational task, Babcock University offers academic, professional and theological education. The institution is concerned with spiritual, intellectual and personal growth, the development of attitudes and values, as well as occupational and professional skills. Among others, the goals of the university include to:

- Provide its students a high quality education in the arts and sciences, as well as certain professional and pre-professional programmes for students to study in an atmosphere of learning governed by mental, physical, social and spiritual excellence,
- Develop in students, the competences by which they may become economically independent,
- Help students learn effective communication and human relation skills that cross the boundaries of disciplines, cultures and personal philosophies
- Impress in students a sense of good citizenship, patriotism and loyalty to the nation and every legitimate action of government which is scripturally regarded as divinely approved means for the maintenance of order and for

the protection of persons and property,

- Develop genuine Christian character motivated by love and controlled by steadfast principle, thus preparing the individual for self-government and self-discipline (Alalade and Tayo, 2009: 69-71).

As Nigeria continues its recent image laundry campaign with the slogan Nigeria: good people, great nation”, it would seem that private universities, especially those that are faith-based, have actually gone ahead as trail blazers. *Ab intio* these universities were set up and structured to produce Nigerians that are not only fit for the global market, but more importantly, fit for the world as worthy ambassadors.

### Increased Female Participation in University Education.

One of the major challenges of public universities is the inadequate representation of the female gender in their studentship. As at now, private universities seem to be well positioned to address this imbalance. Indeed, it has been opined that private universities have been able to add value in the area of female involvement in tertiary education, in particular, and human capital development, in general. For instance, during the 2001/2002 session, Igbinedion and Madonna Universities had refreshingly high percentages of female enrolment, with their 60 per cent and 54.6 per cent female enrolments, respectively (Obasi, 2007). Further comparative data are provided by Erinoshio (2008), in Table XIII.

**TABLE XIII: Gender of Students of some Private Universities.**

| S/N          | Name of University    | Male Students |             | Female Students |             | Total         |              |
|--------------|-----------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
|              |                       | No            | %           | No              | %           | No            | %            |
| 1            | Babcock University    | 1,706         | 48.0        | 1,845           | 52.0        | 3,551         | 100.0        |
| 2            | Bowen University      | 1,583         | 45.9        | 1,864           | 54.1        | 3,447         | 100.0        |
| 3            | Igbinedion University | 2,484         | 48.6        | 2,626           | 51.4        | 5,110         | 100.0        |
| <b>Total</b> |                       | <b>5,773</b>  | <b>47.7</b> | <b>6,335</b>    | <b>52.3</b> | <b>12,108</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Source: Erinoshio (2008).

The historical data of the gender distribution of admissions into Benson Idahosa University, Benin City (Table XIV) are also evaluated.

**TABLE XIV: Gender Distribution of Students in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City**

| Year         | Male Students |             | Female Students |             | Total        |              |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
|              | No            | %           | No              | %           | No           | %            |
| 2007/2008    | 315           | 45.9        | 371             | 54.1        | 686          | 100.0        |
| 2008/2009    | 335           | 47.3        | 373             | 52.7        | 708          | 100.0        |
| 2009/2010    | 418           | 44.3        | 525             | 55.7        | 943          | 100.0        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1,068</b>  | <b>45.7</b> | <b>1,269</b>    | <b>54.3</b> | <b>2,337</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Source: BIU, University Admissions Board.

The Tables show a consistent pattern of enrolment, with the female gender being higher in all the private universities studied. In fact, this pattern obtains in all private universities in Nigeria.

Among the reasons that have been adduced for this deviation from what obtains in public universities is the fact that parents believe that their female children are safer in private universities. This is so because the strong moral character and spiritual content of the universities reduce, and possibly totally eliminates the environmental dangers to which female students are exposed in public universities. These environmental dangers include attacks by cultist male students, on the one hand, and sexual harassment by morally depraved male teachers, on the other. As noted earlier, most of these universities were established and are operated by religious organizations. For instance, Babcock University is owned and run by the Seventh Day Adventists Worldwide; the proprietor of Madonna University is of the Catholic faith; Bowen University is run by the Baptist Convention; Covenant University by

the Living Faith Church; while Benson Idahosa University is an offspring of the Church of God Mission International. It is presumed and indeed expected that private universities operated by other religious bodies such as the Anglican Church, the Apostolic Faith, Redeemed Christian Church of God, Christ Apostolic Church, on the one hand, and Muslim organizations, on the other, have the same appeal to parents of female children, who have, therefore, come to see private universities as safe havens.

### **Introduction of Market-Driven Curricula (Programmes)**

Part of the explanation for the widely acclaimed unemployability of the products of the average Nigerian public university is the fact the courses they studied are static, not only in their structure but also in their programme design and content. Consequently, public universities are considered to be sluggish in responding, or have not been able to respond, to the skills demanded in the labour market place, in an increasingly dynamic and globally competitive knowledge-driven



economy. In other words, the programmes offered by most public universities do not prepare and equip their products enough for the challenges of today's highly competitive labour market.

The programme focus of private universities has, therefore, been intentionally designed to address this inadequacy. Consequently, the academic programmes of these institutions are driven by the market, rather than by a mere commitment to a diversity of disciplines. Most private universities, therefore, tend to offer courses such as accounting, banking and finance, marketing, insurance, international studies and diplomacy, peace and conflict resolution, hotel management and tourism, public relations, political communication, business administration, mass communication, among others (Erinosho, 2008).

The thread that runs through these courses is that they are entrepreneurial and professional in content. This accent and emphasis in the programme design of their academic programmes is clearly reflected in their mission statements. For instance the Mission Statement of Benson Idahosa University, Benin City is: "To raise **academics, professionals and entrepreneurs**, who will be effective disciples for Christ by excelling in their fields" (BIU, undated: 9). In the same vein, Bowen University, Iwo, was set up to provide "high quality morally sound and socially-relevant education in the most cost-effective manner to all

students..." (Erinosho, 2008: 52). Similarly, the Mission Statement of Covenant University, Ota, include: "To train students to be expert thinkers in their fields, producing graduates who shall be .... **entrepreneurially (enterprisingly) self-dependent** ..... to develop and offer academic and **professional programmes**.. which emphasize ..... developmental and productive skills" (Izedonmi, 2009: 153, 154).

In Covenant University, entrepreneurship programme has been elevated to the status of a Centre, offering a compulsory eight-semester programme to all the students, irrespective of their primary, chosen field of studies. The programme involves theory, practical and local internship in the Entrepreneurship Development Studies (EDS) village, within the university (Izedonmi, 2009:160).

The Entrepreneurial Development Studies Village of Covenant University is an incubator for prospective small scale entrepreneurs. It is a model of how private universities can prepare their graduates to be truly self-reliant and self-dependent. It houses, among others:

- Fish Pond (including mobile fish farm, hatchery, feed-mill and grow-out units),
- Snail Farm Unit,
- Grass-cutter Rearing Unit,
- Soap-making (disinfectant and air freshener) Unit,

- Bead-making Unit,
- Hats-making Unit,
- Paint-making Unit,
- Fruit and Juice (ice cream, water production) Unit,
- Baking and Pastry-making Unit,
- Tie and Dye (Textile) Unit,
- Printing and Publishing Unit. (Izedonmi, 2009: 168, 169).

Other private universities have less elaborate infrastructure for entrepreneurial training. For instance, Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji, offers ten credit hours of elective entrepreneurship training to all its undergraduates (Ayo, *et al*, 2010). Also at Benson Idahosa University,

Benin City, the entrepreneurship training includes:

- Photography,
- Construction of inverters,
- Tie and Dye (Textile),
- Screen printing,
- Making of light packaging,
- Fashion designing,
- Production of bottled table water, and
- ICT solution software, among others.

Obasi (2007) has summarized the programme-focus of some private universities, as presented in Table XV

**TABLE XV: Status, Identity and Major Programme Focus of Private Universities**

| <b>University</b>               | <b>Status</b>  | <b>Major Programme Focus</b>  |
|---------------------------------|----------------|---|
| Igbinedion University, Okada    | For-profit     | <b>Business/Entrepreneurial</b> , Pure and Applied Sciences   |
| Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo | Not-for-profit | Diverse but more of <b>Professionalism</b> in Science and Technology, Social and Management Sciences. |
| Madonna University, Okija       | Not-for-profit | <b>Professionalism</b> in Medical, Legal, Social and Management Sciences                              |
| Bowen University, Iwo           | Not-for-profit | Diverse, not too sure of prime focus  |
| Covenant University, Otta       | Not-for-profit | <b>Entrepreneurship</b> in Science and Technology, Human development, Social and Management Sciences  |
| Pan African University, Lagos   | For-profit     | Business and <b>Entrepreneurial</b> education   |

|   |                |   |
|---|----------------|---|
| Benson Idahosa University, Benin City     | Not-for-profit | Diverse, but focus on <b>Entrepreneurship</b> in Science, Social and Management Sciences, Law |
| ABTI-American University of Nigeria, Yola | For-profit     | Business and <b>Entrepreneurship/ICT</b> , Arts and Science                                   |

Source: Adapted from Obasi, (2007: 62)

The bottom line is that private universities are motivated to produce graduates who will be employers of labour rather than those who will lengthen the unemployment line. For the products that decide to seek employment, either for mentorship or post-qualification experience, the academic programmes of private universities are designed to make them market-ready; to meet the present need and challenges of the market place.

### **Maintenance of Stable Academic Calendar**

In the 1970s and 1980s Nigerian universities operated predictable academic calendars that commenced in October and ended in June. July, August and September were long vacation months, during which university undergraduates could take up "vacation jobs" to earn some income, and university workers could take their annual leave and execute some personal programmes and projects. As observed earlier, in the past twenty years, this calendar has been disrupted largely as a result of disputes between workers and students, on the one hand, and university managements and

governments, on the other. Among the negative externalities and "social costs" of these disruptions are the elongation of the completion time for various academic programmes, underutilization of manpower, and youth restiveness, among others.

More specifically, disrupted and truncated academic calendars meant that programmes designed for four years took up to six or more years to complete. This meant slowing down the capacity of public universities to develop needed manpower. This also meant that university workers were underutilized during the periods of closure. If it is considered that workers are eventually fully paid even when they are technically underutilized during closures, it means that the cost of human capital development in public universities could be higher than it should be. Furthermore, the uncertainty of reopening of public universities whenever they are closed means that affected undergraduates become vulnerable to societal vices such as armed robbery, thuggery, militancy, rape, cyber crimes, among others. When eventually the closed universities are re-opened, students whose studies have become rusty are subjected to crash programmes and

hurriedly rushed into examination halls. Their performance can only be expected to be below standard. Where and when there are yearly disruptions, some students go through such unprofitable, crash-programmes for more than half of their courses of studies.

The emergence of private universities seems to have brought great change to, and reversed, the instability in university calendars. Indeed, Obasi (2007: 59) has concluded that the restoration of stable academic calendar “has remained one of the greatest achievements of private universities”. With the emergence of private universities, the duration of university education has become, once again, predictable. The major factor responsible for the stability of the academic calendars of private universities is the non-existence of unions and agitation groups. Consequently, there are no strikes and work-to-rule; and as a result, there are no closures. Indeed no case of disruption of academic work has been recorded since the first set of private universities was licensed in 1999.

Students know when they will graduate from the day of matriculation. The Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission has concluded that “a number of Nigerians that patronize them (private universities) do so primarily because of the stability of the system, which further makes the prospect of private participation in the delivery of university education in Nigeria high” (Okojie, 2008: 28).

### **Optimum Balance between Academic and Non-Academic Staff Ratio**

One of the stubborn challenges in the administration of universities is the lopsided distribution of staff between academic and non-academic staff. This lack of balance in staff-mix has resulted in an unusually high wage bill on non-academic staff. In other words, most universities are spending more money on emolument than they should, if they had complied with prescribed staff-mix. A sample of the mix of academic and non-academic staff of some public and private universities is presented in Table XVI.

**TABLE XVI: Staff-mix of some Public and Private Universities**

| S/N | University                            | Academic Staff |       | Non-Academic Staff |       | Total |        |
|-----|---------------------------------------|----------------|-------|--------------------|-------|-------|--------|
|     |                                       | No.            | %     | No.                | %     | No.   | %      |
| 1   | University of Abuja, Abuja            | N/A            | 19.00 | N/A                | 81.00 | N/A   | 100.00 |
| 2   | Benson Idahosa University, Benin City | 164            | 48.53 | 186                | 51.47 | 340   | 100.00 |
| 3   | University of Agriculture, Abeokuta   | 465            | 37.17 | 786                | 62.83 | 1,251 | 100.00 |
| 4   | Western Delta University, Oghara      | 83             | 48.82 | 87                 | 51.18 | 170   | 100.00 |

Sources: Okebukola, 2002; Obasi, 2002; UNAAB Calendar, 2009-2012; BIU, 2009.

These statistics show that public universities tend to have over bloated complement of non-academic staff. It is impossible to overlook the case of the University of Abuja, Abuja, where only 19 per cent of the total staff strength are academics, while the remaining overwhelming 81 per cent are non-academics. By way of contrast, private universities tend to have a more manageable staff-mix. It is indeed remarkable that the mix between academic and non-academic staff in Benson Idahosa University and Western Niger University are practically identical. More importantly, they mirror the pattern in other private universities.

One of the strategies that produce the optimal balance between academic and non-academic staff ratio in private universities is the recruitment of people who are proficient in information and communication technology and can perform multiple tasks. While some of the non-academic appointments made in public university may for the purpose of

patronage and pressure from high places, recruitments into private universities tend to be overwhelmingly based on cost-benefit and merit considerations.

#### **Effective Check on the Menace of Secret Cults**

A recent study by Adeyemi (2009) confirmed an earlier one by Townsley (1997) to the effect that cultism is “one of the major causes of students’ crises in public universities..... which negates smooth academic programmes”. Many causative factors have been associated with menace of cultism in the public university system. These include unmanageably large student populations, which cannot be accommodated in the limited hostels, resulting in the development of “colonies” of loose students around university campuses. Many of those accommodated in hostels harbour illegal squatters, some of which may not even be *bona fide* students. Since some of the residents are not students, they have no records in the university. They can, therefore, not be tracked for

appropriate sanctions in the event of any violations of university codes of conduct. The result is the consequent inability of the university authorities to know their students and monitor their activities. It has also been argued that the secular environment and disposition of public universities places no moral demand and restraint on staff and students.

Against these backgrounds, private universities have zero-tolerance for cultism. This is facilitated by their smaller student populations, which constitute a definite general advantage. This is further enhanced by the 100 per cent residency policy pursued by most private universities, which compels all *bona fide* students, with few exceptions (often due to marital status or health challenges), to be mandatorily resident on the campuses. In addition, in order to regulate and control their activities, private universities have student handbooks that detail out the code of conduct of students: their movements within the university; when they may not leave the campus; the procedure for obtaining permission to leave the campus; attendance at lectures and other mandatory university activities (such as mandatory devotions, in faith-based private universities); when they cannot re-enter the campus; when they must be in their hostels and be in bed; their mode of dressing; their conduct in various settings; their interpersonal relationships; the group activities that are permitted; their relationships with various levels of authority; among others. The sanctions for violating these codes are also

clearly stated and meticulously enforced. This arrangement enables the authorities to know and monitor the students and their activities.

Furthermore, although various organs are set up, and arrangements are made, for the students to express themselves, and ensure that their interests are adequately represented in the overall management of the university, active student unionism is discouraged. There are no student union governments. This ensures that there is no organized rivalry and no inordinate ambition, struggle or competition for power among organized groups on the campuses; which are common platforms for cultism in public universities. Since most of the private universities are owned and operated by religious bodies, religious activities, such as fellowships, monthly, weekly, morning and evening devotions, chapel services, among others, provide opportunities for the students to imbibe sound moral and religious (Christian and Muslim) habits, principles and attitudes designed to develop and mould their character.

These structures and activities have successfully checked the activities and menace of cultism in private universities. Among the gains are: stoppage of the wanton carnage and destruction of lives on the campuses; and reduction and possible elimination of armed robbery, rape and general violence (Obasi (2007; 2004; Jason, 1998). According to Obasi (2007: 59), this is where the provision of differentiated education by private

universities through their emphasis on moral and spiritual training has been a great value to the society.

In addition, most private universities have invested in recreational and sporting facilities, which engage students' idle time and divert their attention from anti-social activities, including cultism.

### **CHALLENGES FACING PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES**

Private universities are set up primarily to deliver on quality. Quality in turn is a function of cost-effectiveness; the capacity to apply state-of-the-art technology; accountability and transparency in expenditure and governance; a strict adherence to the requirements set out in the academic brief, master plan and strategic plan; and an uncompromisingly strict adherence to the estimates contained in the annual budget (Osagie, 2009: 113). This is another way of saying that running a private university is very serious business which requires great discipline. There are, however, a number of challenges that impinge on the ability and capability of private universities to deliver on their various mandates. Some of these challenges discussed below are: Funding; Staffing; Interference from Proprietors and Quality of Students.

#### **Funding:**

Table XII shows that most private universities were licensed as "not-for-profit" institutions. However in order to guarantee their sustainability, the criteria for granting their licenses to operation includes a "security deposit"

of 200 million naira. The security deposit is collateral of sorts, to guarantee that in the event of financial challenges, private universities will not suddenly go under. However, after a decade of operation, it has become clear that one of the most obvious challenges facing private universities is the perennial shortage of funds (Omuta, 2008; 2009). The traditional sources of funding private universities are: subventions from proprietors, internally generated revenue (IGR) and external linkages (Okojie, [www.unilorin.edu.ng/unilorin/.../Okojie-Innovation%20funding.ppt](http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/unilorin/.../Okojie-Innovation%20funding.ppt)). In reality, most private universities depend overwhelmingly on tuition fees and other charges for their funding. While funds from proprietors are considered to be very critical by the National Universities Commission, these sources have in most cases proved to be grossly inadequate to run private universities, if they are to justify and confirm general expectations. Consequently, private universities have resorted to fees and sundry charges as the major sources of their funding. In fact, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education recently defined privatization of universities in terms of the necessity for institutions and systems to earn income in order to pay for (at least part of) their operations; including the charging of tuition fees and other costs to students, so that a part of the expenditure of education is shared by the students (Emordi, 2010:5)

Table XVII presents the fees charged by some universities, by type.

**TABLE XVII: Comparative Analysis of Fees Charged by Some Public, Private and Foreign Universities**

| S/N | University                                | Ownership         | Range of Fees in Naira  |                         |
|-----|---|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|     |   |                   | Lowest                  | Highest                 |
| 1   | University of Abuja, Abuja                | Federal           | 25,000                  | 25,000                  |
| 2   | Delta State University, Abraka            | State             | 86,000                  | 86,000                  |
| 3   | ABTI American University of Nigeria, Yola | Private           | 1,369,000               | 1,739,000               |
| 4   | Crawford University, Igbesa               | Private           | 355,000                 | 355,000                 |
| 5   | Benson Idahosa University, Benin City     | Private           | 471,500                 | 673,500                 |
| 6   | Veritas University, Enugu                 | Private           | 387,000                 | 427,000                 |
| 7   | Western Delta University, Oghara          | Private           | 345,000                 | 345,000                 |
| 8   | Igbinedion University, Okada              | Private           | 513,000                 | 589,000                 |
| 9   | Madonna University, Okija                 | Private           | 238,000                 | 491,000                 |
| 10  | University of Ghana, Legon                | Foreign (African) | 984,750<br>(\$6,565)    | 984,750<br>(\$6,565)    |
| 11  | Marquette University, Milwaukee,          | Foreign (USA)     | 6,585,000<br>(\$43,900) | 6,585,000<br>(\$43,900) |

Sources: Osagie, 2009; Eyekoba, 2008; Nwamuo, 2000; Universities' websites.

The Table shows that the fees charged vary rather remarkably from one university to the other, depending on their components or break down. In fact there is hardly an objective basis for comparison. For instance, public universities are no longer involved in feeding, while all private universities have various catering arrangements. Even among private university, it was observed that while in Benson Idahosa University the fees cover tuition (varying according to courses), and uniform accommodation and feeding, in ABTI American University of Nigeria, tuition and other charges are uniform,

but accommodation ranges from 120,000 to 480,000, and feeding ranges from 160,000 to 360,000. On the average, however, the fees charged by private universities are considered high, compared to what parents and guardians pay in public universities. For instance, the lowest fees in the private university sub-sector (Western Delta University) are at least four times the fees in Delta State University, and fourteen times the fees in the University of Abuja.

Against this background, some observers have argued that private



university education in Nigeria is elitist and discriminatory, because it is priced out of the reach of the affordability of the average parent. In defence of the higher fees in private universities, the Chancellor of Covenant University has been quoted to have argued that the fees of public universities appear to be low because it is subsidized; citing an NUC source that claims that the Federal Government spends about 300,000 naira per session on training an undergraduate in its universities (Obasi, 2007). This means that the real cost of training an undergraduate in a federal university is in the order of 325,000 naira. If the same level of subsidy is applied to state universities, then the real cost of training an undergraduate is in the order of 386,000. If it is also considered that this cost excludes feeding, which most private universities provide, then the fees of private universities become even more competitive. Similarly, the Chancellor of Igbinedion University has been cited as defending the university's seemingly high fees by arguing that the fees was "only a small fraction of what it costs to send children abroad for the same standard of education he was ready to provide in Nigeria" (Osagie, 2009: 55).

One way that parents have responded to the deteriorating standard of university education in Nigeria is to send their children to foreign universities. One of the destinations of these students is Ghana. Outside the continent, many parents send their children to the United State of America. Here, Table XIV shows that the University of Ghana, Legon, which

is popular among parents, charges about 1,000,000 naira per session per child, while a small American university like Marquette University, Milwaukee, charges over 6,500,000 naira per session per student, excluding feeding and accommodation. These fees seem to justify the arguments of the Chancellors of Covenant University and Igbinedion University. In other words, considering their confirmed competitive quality, private universities, therefore, present a more affordable option to parents seeking quality university education, outside the public system for their children. School fees can, therefore, be justified as a strategy for coping with the funding challenges of private universities. From this point of view it could be argued that in trying to meet the challenge of funding, private universities have contributed towards national development by curtailing foreign exchange drain.

#### **Staffing:**

The Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission stated the obvious when he acknowledged recently, that "staffing is a critical challenge of the Nigerian university system today" (Okojie, 2008:24). He stated that paradoxically, the university system which generates its manpower has not been able to attract them to remain in the system. There is a general shortage of academic staff in Nigeria; due to some of the factors discussed earlier, especially brain drain and non-conducive, unattractive conditions of

service. This is to say that Nigerian universities have the problem of attracting and retaining quality academic staff. In the face of the shortage of academic staff in Nigerian universities, the recent surge in the establishment of private universities has put further strain on the existing inadequate stock. Consequently, most of the private universities do not have the required quantity and quality of manpower to take care of teaching and research, as well as other serious academic activities such as postgraduate supervision. One other factor militating against adequate staffing in private universities is the perceived job insecurity in such institutions (Adediran, 2010). Indeed Emordi (2010) has concluded that “most aspiring and bright scholars merely accept appointments in private universities, just to make a start, while having their eyes and ears beyond the institutions for any tip in opportunities in government higher institutions”.

Private universities have consequently adopted a number of coping strategies to stem their staffing challenges. These include, among others:

- Sharing the limited academic staff in the public universities with private universities, (Okojie, 2008), usually as associate or part-time or adjunct lecturers,
- Offering contract appointment to senior academics who have retired from public universities. Some of these senior academics are very old and

quite frail and are beginning to manifest diminishing returns.

- Giving accelerated, and often undue and unmerited promotion to junior academics to either lure and or retain them. There have reported cases of Lecturers I in public universities who were appointed into professorial cadres in private universities.
- Offering enhanced conditions of service especially to academic staff, including higher salaries, peculiar allowances and provision of free accommodation.

These strategies, however, tend to impact negatively on the quality of service delivery. For instance, as academics run between and among public and private universities, their efficiency and effectiveness are greatly compromised, due to wear and tear, and fatigue. Similarly, accelerated promotions do not allow for the seasoning and maturity of beneficiaries. Consequently, they are not able to justify their ranks in the competitive academic market place.

### **Interference from Proprietors**

Universities are specialized institutions. They can, therefore, not be run and managed like regular companies and businesses. However, proprietors of private universities are mostly entrepreneurs, businessmen, religious clerics, professional technocrats or politicians. Only a few have cognate experience in university

administration and management, as former pro-chancellors or former members of councils of public universities. The backgrounds of these proprietors create the platform for conflict between the Visitor/Chancellor/President/Chairman of the Board of Trustees, on the one hand, and the Governing Council of the university, on the other hand. Caught at the centre of this conflict is the Vice Chancellor, who has the responsibility to implement decisions in the day-to-day running of the university. In other words, most private universities tend to be characterized by undue meddlesomeness of their proprietors in their day-to-day operations. Emordi has cited the UNESCO as observing that private universities are “run mostly on a business model. With power and authority concentrated in the Board of Trustees and Proprietors, while the Faculty holds little authority or influence, and students are seen more as customers”. In the final analysis, the Vice Chancellors of many private universities are “glorified errand boys”. Osagie (2009:54) gave the example of Igbinedion University, Okada, where, at least in the first four years, the Chancellor, an accomplished and successful entrepreneur disregarded due process and literally usurped the powers of Council, Senate and their organs and, among other things:

- Managed the university by giving weekly instructions to the Vice Chancellor, many of which almost always ran counter to Council position,

- Refused to run the university by an approved budget, compelling the university to be run at his discretion, compelling the Vice Chancellor to go “cap-in-hand” begging for funds for educational materials, salaries and infrastructure maintenance.
- Unilaterally fixed school fees, which although were considered generally unaffordable, he argued were lower than the charges abroad,
- Personally supervised the construction of building projects (classrooms, laboratories, even auditorium), usually without the input of end users, and the aid of plans, designs, drawings and a master plan,
- Recruited and placed staff, without regard to qualifications and experience. Consequently even people with forged and fake credentials were engaged.

The situation is only different in its degree from one private university to another. For instance, in public universities, the Vice Chancellor is the Chief Executive Officer, as well as the administrative and academic head. However, in Benson Idahosa University, Benin City, the President believes that he should be the Chief Executive Officer and the administrative head of the university, while the Vice Chancellor is the academic head. This scenario has created a setting for conflicts, confusion and disharmony, as well as

very massive violation and erosion of the powers of the Vice Chancellor. Even decisions of Council are subject to the approval of the President. Consequently the President has, on several occasions, practically usurped the powers of Council, Senate, Management and the Vice Chancellor. For instance: Council met several times and considered the reports of disciplinary cases against some staff, students and contractors and approved prescribed sanctions against those that were found to have violated the rules and regulations of the university. However, when such Council decisions were sent to the President for approval and for their implementation, he over-ruled Council, without any justification. Until recently, when he was forced to accept that Senate is the highest authority on all academic matters, the President had been known to set aside the decision of Senate, especially when his personal interest was involved.

Although the Academic Brief of the university stipulates that the Bursar reports to the Vice Chancellor (which is in fact the practice in all Nigerian universities), recently, the President unilaterally appointed a "Chief Financial Officer" (CFO) to replace the Bursar, who had been forced to proceed on a premature pre-retirement leave. The CFO's letter of appointment was written by the President, since he was not appointed by Council. In the letter of appointment, the "Chief Financial Officer" is to report to the President, and not the Vice Chancellor. Even when Council and the National Universities Commission

asked the university to revert to the *status quo*, the order was ignored. Consequently, the Vice Chancellor no longer knows what happens to the finances of the university. The Vice Chancellor's inquiries about the university's finances are very conveniently ignored by the CFO. Similarly, although in all universities, the Vice Chancellor is responsible for students' discipline, and in this regards he is assisted by the Dean of Students, in Benson Idahosa University, the Vice Chancellor's disciplinary powers over students are limited to academic matters such as examination misconduct, while on all other matter, "Director of Students' Services" reports directly to the President. The President has, on occasions, appointed staff without following due process of formal interview and interaction. These are monumental infringements on the powers of the Vice Chancellor, which make the management of private universities very clumsy and difficult for their Vice Chancellors.

However, these specific cases are not peculiar to the universities cited. Rather such interferences exist to varying degrees in all private universities. Generally, however, those owned and managed by Orthodox Christian bodies like the Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and Catholic churches, tend to give greater freedom and free hand to their Vice Chancellors, as the examples of Bowen, Babcock, and Ajayi Crowther Universities have shown.

The conclusion of the matter is that although erosion of autonomy is identified as a challenge in public universities, private universities are not insulated from the challenge of interference. In fact, it could be said that there is far greater interference in the management of private universities than of public universities. For instance, the President of Nigeria, as the Visitor to all federal universities does not have the time to be involved in their day-to-day running. Similarly, State Governors are too busy running the affairs of state to meddle with the day-to-day running of their universities. But by way of contrast, private universities are probably the biggest businesses of their proprietors. They, therefore, closely watch over their daily affairs.

### **Quality of Students**

Admission into all Nigerian universities is controlled by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB). For this purpose a national absolute minimum cut-off is set every year by JAMB. At present, the national absolute cut-off mark is 180. It, however, varies from one university to another. Generally, however, most public universities do not consider candidates that score below 200 points. This is because the number of applicants seeking placement far exceeds their carrying capacity and are able to admit only a very small percentage. For instance, the number of applicants to the University of Benin is so high that the university does not consider candidates that choose it as a second choice. Contrastingly, most

private universities still face the challenge of getting quality students to fill the quota allocated to them.

At the centre of the challenge are the relatively higher fees that they charge. Ordinarily, all things being equal, and from the rational economic point of view, for courses that are also offered by public universities, the first choice of candidates would be federal universities, because they charge the lowest fees, followed by state universities. Consequently, the number of students that apply to private universities as first choice is usually grossly below their allocated quotas and carrying capacities. In almost all cases, the candidates that apply to private universities would also have applied to federal and state universities. Private universities, therefore, invariably find themselves in situations where their choice of candidates is left wide open; to those who chose and those who did not choose them; and even those who may not initially be interested in them. The result is that even after private universities have processed applications for admission and have made offers, most of the candidates do not take up such offers until, and after the public universities they applied to have closed their admissions and it is certain that they have not been offered places. Out of desperation and not wanting to spend another year at home, those who can afford the fees reluctantly take up admissions in private universities, as matter of last resort. This means that many of the students who end up in private universities may be those rejected by

public universities. This has implications for the quality of the students that are admitted into private universities.

It has been alleged that in the desperate bid to get students some private universities have been involved in all sorts of irregular activities. These include running un-approved pre-degree, remedial and diploma programmes. The products of such programmes are irregularly processed into university degree programmes, without the approval of JAMB. However, JAMB warns that such students may not be mobilized for the mandatory national youth service, because they were not admitted through the appropriate regulatory body. Such private universities may eventually have monumental crisis on their hands when this set of students graduate.

### **OPTIONS FOR MOVING PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES FORWARD**

It is now impossible to over-emphasize the fact that the emergence of private universities in the Nigerian educational system is a very welcome development that must not only be encouraged but sustained. The challenges outlined above should, therefore, be seen as the elixir that they need to “change metal to gold”. In order to achieve this, private universities must begin to learn to think outside the box. They cannot rely on the remedies that are available to public universities, either because such remedies are not available to them or because they cannot be

expected to produce the same or desired results in private university settings. While they may “adapt” and customize some of the conventional strategies of public universities, emphasize and mainstream some that are considered marginal to public universities, they may need to craft new ones to address their unique challenges. Some of the areas that private universities will need to emphasize and strengthen in their quest to justify their not only their licenses but that they are indeed the preferred alternative in the Nigerian university system are presented below. They are: Alumni Relations and Associations; Consultancy Services; Linkages and Partnerships; Small and Medium Scale Enterprises; Community Engagement; Good Governance; Aggressive and Accelerated Staff Development Programmes and Reviewing the Education Trust Fund.

### **Alumni Relations and Associations**

According to Babalola *et al* (2006:146), in most developed nations, alumni associations are like tonic for the virility of their universities. This is so because many universities have come to rely on their alumni associations for timely and useful advice and suggestions for the continued relevance and responsiveness of the school’s programmes to society. In addition, many universities in Western Europe and the Americas rely heavily on the financial and cultural support of their alumni associations. Apart from being a rallying point for old students, an alumni association also provides an interactive forum for both the old and

new students of the school, and provides them the opportunity to reflect on the past, examine the present and map out strategies for the maintenance of the good tradition of the school.

Experience, worldwide, has shown that most old students develop and sustain very strong feelings of attachment, pride and love for their university, and are willing and ready to show this appreciation in various ways, including the establishment of endowment fund, scholarships, prizes, and donations of cash, equipment and buildings. Although such gestures could be expressed individually, it is considered that alumni associations provide far better, stronger and more focused platforms for harnessing and expressing them (Babalola *et al*, 2006).

Private universities are, therefore, encouraged to set up and sustain alumni associations. This can be maximized by making it compulsory for all graduates to join and or form alumni association. Indeed, it is suggested that the induction into the global alumni association should be made part of the convocation ceremonies of universities. Beyond their induction, strategies should be put in place for tracking old students. Technology has made this easier with facilities like face book. Universities should endeavour to build robust database of their alumni. Periodic but regular contacts should be maintained through emails, bulletins and newsletters. Finally, in order to develop confidence in alumni associations, unbiased representation,

transparency and accountability must be upheld.

### **Consultancy Services**

Universities are perhaps the most virile consultancy platforms that can be accessed any where and for any purpose. This is so because universities have enormous resources of competencies (Okojie, [www.unilorin.edu.ng/unilorin/Okojie-Inovation%20funding](http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/unilorin/Okojie-Inovation%20funding)) or what Osagie (2009:61) calls “gold mines of intellectual knowledge” and counsels that universities must dig deep inside this resource base. Universities have an uncommon assemblage of competent scientist, engineers and technocrats with current skills for global best practices in practically all areas of societal challenges. Universities have expertise to tackle and investigate social, economic, political, legal, environmental, health, capacity building, and management and provide advisory services on sundry matters and challenges. It is in realization of this that universities are usually the first stop for governments in the developed world in their search for solutions to their challenges. They rely on universities’ consultancy units. However, the situation is different in the developing world, including Nigeria. This has in no way distracted from the fact that universities are the incubators of societal solutions. It is left for them to realize this and take advantage of the rear stock of human capital at their disposal, to provide service, on the one hand, and earn money for their development, on the other.

Private universities are, therefore, encouraged to establish consultancy services units to provide services to the general public, industries, governments, the corporate world and even individuals, as the need arises. Broadly put, consultancy is service for money. Consultancy services units can do so many things, including: manpower training; running of short courses; providing advisory and technical services to oil companies, local, state and federal governments on issues such as ecological and environmental challenges; involvement in small scale manufacturing of items such as table water, sandcrete blocks, bread, ice-cream; printing and publishing. The major challenge facing private universities' consultancy services units is that their proprietors register them (and all other internal revenue generating units) as their personal businesses, and as such, the revenue they generate does not go to the universities' coffers. Consequently their impacts are rarely felt in terms of contributing to the development of the universities.

### **Linkages/Partnerships**

In an era of globalization, synergy and networking, no institution, no matter its age, size and the resources available to it, can pretend to be able to survive operating in isolation, and private universities are not excluded. Because of their unique challenges, private universities need to identify, cultivate, nurture and sustain partnerships in a globalized world. Linkages are needed for various purposes. Some linkages are for "mentorship", where a young

university is considered to need the oversight of an older, more developed one. For instance, the National Universities Commission licensed Wellspring University, Irehiri, Benin City, in November 2009, and placed it under the oversight of the University of Benin, Benin City for the first few years.

However, in most cases linkages are for mutual collaboration and exchanges. For instance, Babcock University, Ilesan-Remo, owned and operated by the Seventh Day Adventist Church Worldwide, is administered essentially at the same level of commitment and administrative arrangement as all the 110 Seventh Day Adventist universities worldwide. They are, therefore, necessarily linked and networked with all members of the group, especially, with their parent university in the United States of America. They exchange faculty and students.

Benson Idahosa University, Benin City, has maintained very close linkage with Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA since its inception. Among the benefits of this linkage are mutual exchange of faculty and generous donations of books and equipment by Oral Roberts University. Benson Idahosa University also has linkages with the Universities of Delaware and Pennsylvania, both in the United States. Recently, the University of Manchester, UK donated law books worth more than five million naira to the Faculty of Law of Benson Idahosa University. Finally, in the last two academic sessions BIU has



organized Summer Study Abroad Programme for students of Law, International Studies and Diplomacy, Political Science and Public Administration, Business Administration, among others. Among the European universities visited were:

- University of Sussex, Brighton, UK,
- The Catholic University, Ingolstadt, Germany,
- Munich University Training Institute,, Munich, Germany,
- International Institute for Human Rights, Strasbourg, France,
- The Summer School, University of Vienna, Austria, and
- The American University, Cairo, Egypt.

The students participated in short courses with students from the host and other universities across the world. They wrote competitive examinations and passed and were awarded certificates and testimonials. Such exposure builds up the confidence of the students and the university, and provides the authorities a platform to gauge the global competitiveness of their curricula and programmes (Omuta, 2009).

Igbinedion University, Okada, also has linkages with Howard University and the Harvard Medical School, both in the United States. The university is attempting to upgrade its linkage with Howard University to involve the

students undergoing part of their studies in Nigeria and in the United States, with the credits obtained in either institution being acceptable and transferable for the purpose of awarding degrees. It is advisable and indeed recommended that private universities should cultivate such linkages for such benefits as well as intellectual enrichment through funded collaborative research by philanthropists and donor agencies.

Another major area of linkages that is largely under-exploited is *Capital Campaigns*. A capital campaign is a major commitment to attract “serious money from targeted benefactors for specific projects over a specific period of time, usually three to five years” (Okigbo, 2008). It involves an intensive programme to raise a large amount of money to meet specific needs, usually of expansions such as: new buildings, remodelling of old buildings, acquiring a new technology and equipment, or increasing endowment (for scholarship, new programmes, strengthen existing ones, among others). A successful capital campaign is one of the best expressions of trust in any organization. Examples of capital campaigns are the \$2.1 billion started by Harvard University in 1994. Stanford University started a \$1.0 billion campaign in 1987. Today more than 30 universities are in the billion dollar capital campaign club. In Nigeria, Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo started a 32 billion naira capital campaign targeted at their medical school. There are usually three categories of capital campaigns:

- Single-purpose: to raise funds to do one thing only, such as the medical school project of Babcock University,
- Historical campaign: to secure gifts to meet development needs such as buildings, and scholarships,
- Comprehensive: combines operating, annual planned and deferred gifts and pledges of all kinds, such as the Harvard campaign (Okigbo, 2008).

In the face of declining funding from proprietors, high and rising operating costs and competition from other players in the system, private universities are encouraged to aggressively explore the option of capital campaign to shore up their resources.

Another aspect of linkages and partnership that private universities are yet to fully explore and exploit is accessing competitive **grants**. There are huge sums of easy money with generous donors through the development of competitive proposals. Competitiveness depends on a series of well-informed decision points made through the writing of a proposal related to arguing the merit of the research and culminating in a well-integrated document that convinces the reviewers to recommend funding (Thompson, 2008). Funding agencies often have a clearly defined agenda and mission. Consequently funded grants are those that best advance the mission of such agencies. Writing

proposal that can be funded is an art and a skill. It is acquired through training and perfected and sharpened through development and practice. Private universities must, therefore, equip their academic staff to be competitive in grantsmanship. Identified and interested academics should be sponsored for training on how to write competitive proposals that can be funded.

Considering the strategic importance of the activities outlined above, it is recommended that an autonomous unit be set up to coordinate them, such as the Centre for Research and Development in the Federal University of Technology, Akure, and Obafemi Awolowo University's Information and Communication Technology Industry Linkages.

### **Small and Medium Scale Enterprises**

One of the creative strategies some universities have adopted for generating funds for development is setting up small and medium scale enterprises. These include building and renting shops and other business spaces, setting up and operating cybercafés, providing transportation services, renting of university facilities, such as auditorium and reception halls and hostels during idle time, among others. Where these enterprises belong to the universities, they have helped to boost their revenue base, as the case is in Babcock University.

However, even when they are categorized as not-for-profit, some proprietors see private universities as

profit making businesses and consequently see such revenue generating small and medium scale enterprises as “subsidiaries” of the main business (the university). Consequently, they see the revenue generated by such enterprises as belonging to them, even when university facilities are used to operate them. In Benson Idahosa University, for instance, the revenue from the table water produced in the university’s name does not go the university. Similarly, the revenue collected from the business spaces in the hostels and other parts of the university, but rented out to vendors does not go to the universities

### **Community Engagement**

Universities are not islands unto themselves. They are in symbiotic relationships with the community and society, especially through their students. Universities must recognize that their students are their *raison d’être*. A cordial relationship with the parents of students could be a very potent instrument for empowering universities, especially the private ones that are not funded and supported by governments and government agencies. Public universities have not felt the need to engage the parents of their students in the running their institutions because they receive regular and steady financial support from governments. A state university like the Osun State University, for instance receives monthly grants from the state government, while each local government council also remits 5 per

cent of its monthly allocation to it. The situation in private universities is different. It is imperative for private universities to partner with the parents and guardians of their students. Private universities are, therefore, encouraged to cultivate healthy community engagement through the establishment of Parents’ Consultative Forum (PCF), as Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo has done.

Parents chose to send their children to particular universities because of certain qualities. Since parents want the best for these children, they would be willing and ready to make contributions, and if necessary, sacrifices, to sustain and improve on the peculiar qualities that attracted them to the universities of their choice. Using the example of Babcock University, it has been established that parents are willing to engage in infrastructure development and maintenance, provision of municipal services (such as water and light) and even assist in the enforcement of the discipline of their children and wards. Specifically, the Parents’ Consultative Forum of Babcock University has successfully executed multi-million naira projects like a mini water scheme and a comprehensive sports complex.

Like we suggested in connection with alumni associations, the success of parents’ consultative forums in empowering private universities will depend on its structure and operations. Again the example of Babcock University is illuminating. It is not a pressure group that joins issues with the university authorities. Rather,

because it is a consultative forum, its owned and operated by both the university authorities and the parents of the students, in the overall interest of the university and its students. It has a constitution. The executive is well balanced between the two blocks; with the Vice Chancellor as the Chairman and a parent as the Treasurer. Levies per student are fixed. Revenues collected are spent on projects that both the university authorities and parents agree are top priorities. In addition, voluntary donations of services and materials are encouraged. Because of its very positively strategic role in the development of the university, the PCF is represented in the Governing Council of the university. This is to say that there is transparency and accountability in the operations of the Parents' Consultative Forum.

### **Good Governance**

There must be assurances of transparency and accountability, if the public is to be persuaded to commit their resources to the comparatively higher cost of training their children and wards in private universities. They must be convinced that they will get value for their money. The greatest guarantee for this is good governance. Structures must, therefore, be put created to achieve and sustain transparency and accountability in private universities. Good managers must be recruited, especially to top positions. Good managers are people who have cognate experience in university administration and management. When engaged, these

managers must be given the freedom to run the system with a view to meeting the global expectations of university systems. Proprietors must resist the temptation of seeing private universities as one more member of a conglomerate of which they are the Chief Executive Officer. Profit should not be the overriding consideration in the running of universities. Rather service delivery, in the forms of quality instruction, quality research and quality community engagement, should be the driving motive of private universities.

Good governance is essential to the success of all efforts geared toward the growth and development of private universities; whether in community engagement, linkages and partnering, alumni relations, capital campaign or whatsoever.

### **Aggressive and Accelerated Staff Development Programmes**

It has been stated emphatically that the staffing challenges of the Nigerian university system can not be expected to persist, but in fact get more serious as more universities are licensed. At the receiving end would be the private universities. The present practice of "poaching" will be unsustainable in the final analysis. The number of Ph. Ds being produced by the older universities like the Universities of Ibadan and Lagos, and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ahmadu Bello University and University of Nigeria will never be enough to meet private universities' need for senior academic staff. Private universities must devise strategies and programmes for

developing and retaining their own stock of academic staff.

One of the ways to do this is the massive sponsorship of junior academics for post-graduate (masters and doctoral) studies, both within and outside the country (outside, especially where the relevant programmes are not locally available). In order to guarantee that they stay and serve the university, beneficiaries should be bonded, say, two years of service for every year of sponsorship. Universities that have post-graduate programmes could enrol all their junior academics as the first crop of their post-graduate students. Covenant University adopted this strategy, and in a few years all their graduate assistants had become assistant lecturers, and all their masters' degree holders acquired their doctorate degrees. In this way, a succession plan has been established, because younger academics are now available to replace the older one, mostly retired professors, with which they started.

### **Reviewing the Education Trust Fund (ETF)**

In apparent realization that individual universities may never be able to meet the challenges of funding their physical infrastructure needs, the Federal Government set up the Education Trust Fund (ETF) with the enactment of Education Tax Act No. 7 of 1993 and amended by Act No.40 of 1998, "with the objective of using the fund for project management to improve the quality of education in Nigeria". Furthermore, the Fund is "to deliver

competent and forward-looking intervention programmes through funding to all levels of the Nigerian education system" ([http://www.adsubeb.gov.ng/education\\_tax\\_fund.htm](http://www.adsubeb.gov.ng/education_tax_fund.htm)). ETF is funded from a 2 per cent tax on the profit made by all companies operating in Nigeria. It is, therefore, sourced and held in trust for all Nigerians. However, and rather curiously, although the act stipulates that the Fund is for "funding to all levels of the Nigerian education system" private universities have been excluded from accessing it. This has been controverted, faulted and condemned for several reasons including that:

- Private universities are helping the government to mop up the excess enrolment that public universities cannot absorb,
- The students absorbed by private universities are withdrawn from the pool of idle youths that fuel militancy and violence in the country,
- The parents of the students absorbed by private universities are among the Nigerians on behalf of whom the Fund is sourced for whom its held in trust,
- The products of private universities are released into the pool of skilled human capital that the nation needs and depends on for its development, among others.

- Between 1999 and October, 2007, ETF was said to have 93.4 billion naira in its coffers. However, only 41.4 billion naira had been accessed by public universities, leaving a surplus of an overwhelming 51.9 billion naira (Attahiru, 2010). It does not make economic sense to allow such huge funds belonging to all Nigerians to lie idle when they could be better and more effectively used to empower private universities.

Consequently, calls have been made to the government to review the enabling Act, so as to enable private universities access the Fund (Omuta, 2008; 2009; Omoregie, 2010). The argument of government has been that proprietors of private universities were expected to demonstrate the capacity to be able to fund and sustain them before licenses were issued to them. The fear has also been expressed that if private universities were granted unconditional access to the Fund, proprietors who cannot fund private universities would apply for licenses, only to fall back on government to fund them. These are valid arguments and legitimate fears. However, they are not strong enough to defeat that position that government has been unfair and unjust in denying some Nigerians from accessing what belongs to all Nigerians. Perhaps a compromise position will suffice. It is, therefore, suggested that rather than granting private universities unconditional access to the Fund, a minimum waiting time (moratorium) of say ten (10) years could be set. In addition a minimum

quality of the programmes could be set. Accordingly, we believe any private university that been able to operate for at least ten years without fundamental funding set backs, and has fifty (50) per cent of all its academic programmes fully accredited, should be considered eligible to access the Fund.

## CONCLUSION

Globally, universities are set up to develop human capital for the modern knowledge-driven economy. In the beginning in Nigeria, when the numbers were few, universities were able to meet this expectation. However, as they increased in number and their sizes also grew, the burden of sustenance became too much for government. This created the setting for a number of systemic challenges. Funding started to decline and become inadequate; facilities became deplorable; demand for admissions rapidly exceeded the capacity to absorb them; working conditions deteriorated and became unattractive; consequently, staff, especially academics, started to look elsewhere; the authorities started to loose control of discipline of both staff and students, creating environments for anti-social behaviours like cultism to thrive; agitations by unions became rampant; academic calendars became unstable and unpredictable; and eventually, the quality of teaching and learning plummeted, and the quality of graduates fell.

Consequently, government was compelled to consider opening the

doors for private participation in the provision of university education. It is already ten years since private universities were licensed in Nigeria. At present there are forty-one of them, accounting for 39.42 per cent of the one hundred and four universities in the country. Admittedly, ten years is a rather short time to evaluate the effectiveness of private universities in addressing the challenges of tertiary education in Nigeria. However, it has been established private universities have acquitted themselves very well in their short history. Among other things, they have been able to absorb a reasonable number of admission seekers who would otherwise be at home or roaming the streets; and with their existing excess carrying capacity, and the possibility of licensing more, they are projected to absorb at least a quarter of all admission seekers in the next five years; they have succeeded in raising the quality of infrastructure and facilities for teaching and learning; they are aggressively redressing the gender imbalance in the participation in university education; they have successfully restored and stabilized academic calendars; checked the menace of cultism; developed market-driven curricula; redressed the imbalance in the mix between academic and non-academic staff; enhanced the quality of university graduates by producing morally sound graduates based on the spiritual principles, since most of them are owned and operated by religious bodies and organization; among others.

However, private universities still face a number of serious challenges. These include: insufficiency of funds to sustain the high standards they have set; the shortage of quality academics, which has necessitated sharing and poaching, with their attendant implication or efficiency and effectiveness; high fees that have tended to restrict patronage, as well as affect the quality of student in-take, since the first choice tends to be non-fee paying universities, and private universities being a matter of last resort; and excessive interference by overbearing proprietors, who see private universities as business and seek to be directly involved in their day-to-day running; among others.

Among the options available to the authorities of private universities to deal with their challenges are: the setting up and maintaining virile alumni associations, ensuring transparency and accountability in governance; setting up strong consultancy units; establishing and maintaining linkages and partnerships; developing healthy community engagement; aggressive staff development schemes to meet their staff needs and ensure replacement for older ones; and lobbying for the review of the enabling laws setting up the Education Trust Fund (ETF), so that private universities could access its facilities, provided that they meet some conditions like a period of moratorium and a certain percentage of all their academic programmes being fully accredited.

In spite of the challenges facing private universities, the general verdict on

their assessment is that they have done very well so far, and that government did the wise thing to have opened the doors for private participation in the provision of university education in Nigeria. Indeed, private universities are already being celebrated as the hope for redeeming university education in Nigeria. For instance, one Mr. Ambrose Agbugba, has been quoted to have assessed the performance of private universities from his experience with Covenant University and concluded that "Until recently, the problems facing our university education sector seemed insurmountable. Successive governments came to tackle the problems, yet without success. The human capital required to develop our nation's technology has been in short supply, as our education system continue to decline. Nigeria still depends on expatriates in critical sectors of our economy. The worst hit is our tertiary education sector, where gross indiscipline, corruption, inadequate facilities and under-funding have been the bane of the sector. In this state of hopelessness, God intervened by giving his servant, Bishop David Oyedepo, the vision to set up a university that is today an example for other universities to follow ..... Now, my joy is that I can send my children to a university here in Nigeria and go to sleep, knowing that they will come home better. No more sexual harassment, cultism, strikes,

irresponsible student unionism, undergraduate prostitution and armed robbery" (Osagie, 2009: 200, 201). The testimony of Covenant University can be replicated several times among Nigerian private universities.

There have also been strong official endorsements of the value that private universities have added to university education in Nigeria. At a recent International Conference of Private Universities in Africa, the Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission, Professor Julius Okojie, declared that "Nigeria's hope of attaining greatness rests on the gains recorded with the establishment of private universities in the Nigerian educational system" (The Punch, May 5, 2010). Similarly, the Executive Governor of Niger State, Dr. Muazu Babangida Aliyu, after reviewing the nation's university system, concluded that "the emergence of private universities has contributed to the development of the sector" (Sunday Punch, May 16, 2010: 5

The conclusion of the matter is that, although there are certainly many challenges still facing private universities in Nigeria, after only ten years of operation, it appears safe to say that private universities hold tremendous potentials to restore the Nigerian university system to its high pedestal of the seventies and early eighties.



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