

The History of Private Sector Participation in University Education in Nigeria (1989-2012)

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ABSTRACT—There has been a consistent quest for higher education (especially university) in Nigeria due to the unstable academic system, coupled with the total number of candidates seeking admission into the various higher institutions in Nigeria yearly. On the basis of this, it has become obvious that the existing higher institutions, which were mainly government-owned, cannot cope with the ever increasing demand for higher education in Nigeria. One of the basic solutions to this challenge is the liberalization of participation in the education sector. The study applied both historical and sociological methodology in its investigation. This study examined the history of higher education in Nigeria, from 1989 to 2012. In addition, it also examined the role played by the private sector in the Nigerian educational sector in this present dispensation. The writers recommended that there should be a consistent upsurge of private higher institutions in Nigeria to adequately address the challenge posed by high prospective students' demand for university education. This is due to the fact that the government alone cannot handle the ever increasing demand for higher education in Nigeria.

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I. Introduction

There is a glaring consensus that education is the catalyst for sustainable national development. For any society to enjoy remarkable progress, the citizens must be exposed to the right type of learning (education). The implication of this is that human capital development is of tremendous value in achieving the enviable quest for both economic and technological development by any society. On the strength of this, Adegbile (1991) opined that “the most valuable of all capital is that invested in human beings”. This level of investment will drive such a society to an enduring progress and development. This is in line with the position of UNESCO (2005), which concurred that the “key to creating a more sustainable and peaceful world is learning”. No doubt this will lead to unprecedented national development. It is on the strength of this that any nation that desires growth and progress in all ramifications must accord education its rightful position. How then can this feat be clearly articulated by education? No doubt, the government (that is both at the federal, state and local levels) has attempted in different ways and at sundry times to promote education and support its desire to drive the nation’s wheel of development. However, it has been unanimously acknowledged that as much as the government tried and participated in education (both at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels), it has not been able to actualize its dream towards the right educational attainment. This is evident in its struggle for adequate funding, increasing students’ enrolment and the number of schools, and so on. One of the major challenges faced by the public sector with regards to education is the unavailability of adequate funding. On their part, Bassey and Wokocha (1999) argued that “virtually every service requires funds which are piteously and frustratingly limited”. Although the aspect of adequate funds is incriminated as one of the major challenges of higher education in Nigeria, suffice it to say that other factors such as the right manpower and quality assurance could also be considered. What then is the way forward?

The tremendous importance of education in fostering sustainable development in Nigeria cannot be underestimated. The World Bank (1998) had argued that “today’s most technologically advanced

economies are truly knowledge based”. On their part, Shapira, et al (2005) defined knowledge content as “the sum of human capacities.....that can be used to create wealth and foster economic competitiveness”. No doubt there is a clarion call for the elaborate increase in investment in knowledge (Brinkley, 2006). The implication of this is that any investment in knowledge signifies investment in education. It follows therefore, that higher education in Nigeria, represented, within the context of this paper, by the universities, stands out as the storehouse of knowledge. The consequence is that universities are able to disseminate the right knowledge to their students who will invariably contribute to sustainable development. In support of this, Olaniyanu (2001) argued that “university education is expected to create needed human capital with enhanced skills that can lead to technological innovation, productivity and growth within the economy”.

This position was restated by the World Bank (1999) that “education, and particularly university education, is fundamental to the constitution of a knowledge economy and society in all nations”. One of the major aims of university education as highlighted by the National policy on Education (2004) is “to contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training.” On this premise, Ibukun (1997) argued that the “provision of the much needed manpower to accelerate the growth and development of the economy has been said to be the main relevance of university education in Nigeria”. It is generally agreed that in Nigeria, “university education is the focal point of higher education. It is the most preferred education that an individual receives after secondary-level education” (Ayo-Sobowale and Akinyemi, 2011). Nigeria is said to have a total of one hundred and twenty two universities—fifty private, thirty six state-owned, and thirty six federal (Okojie, 2012). In addition to this, Ayo-Sobowale and Akinyemi (2011) declared that there are about fifty seven (57) polytechnics and sixty-five (65) colleges of education in Nigeria.

Although the above mentioned schools are all tertiary institutions, our focus in this paper is on university education, especially the private universities. In light of this, the paper focuses on the private sector’s participation in Higher Education in Nigeria for sustainable development. The attempt will be to examine the history of higher education in Nigeria, consequently, the role played by the private universities (private sector’s intervention) in the sustainable development of education.

II. The History of Higher Education in Nigeria

The classification of Nigerian education as elementary, middle and higher is credited to E. H. J. Hussey. In 1930, he made this three-level educational classification (Omuta, 2010), although the higher level of education was referred to as “vocational training”. This was basically for professional assistants (Lawal, et al, 2009). This new level of education had Yaba Higher College as its first institution. It was established by the then colonial government and her first intake was in 1932. They were trained in different post-secondary courses leading to professions such as medical assistants, agricultural assistants, teachers, engineering assistants, administrators, etc. (Toye, 2004). In 1945, the report submitted by the Elliot Commission supported the establishment of a University College in Nigeria. Thus, in 1948, the University College Ibadan was established as a campus of the University of London (Okojie, 2008). The Ashby Commission was later set up, but before submitting her report in 1960 (when Nigeria gained her independence), the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was established (Ajayi and Ekundayo, 2006). Although this started as a regional university, established by the Eastern region, it was the first indigenous university in Nigeria (Toye, 2004). It could be argued that, a “healthy rivalry existed between the regional governments at that time”. In quick succession, in 1962, two other universities were established. The university of Ife, Ile-Ife, (now Obafemi Awolowo University) was established by the Western regional government and the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, was established by the Northern regional government.

On the strength of a report by the UNESCO Advisory Commission, the University of Lagos was established in 1962. According to Babalola et al (2007), the University College Ibadan became a full-fledged University in 1962. Hence, the universities of Ibadan and Lagos were the first federal universities in Nigeria and the other three were regional universities. Following in the same heel, the Mid-Western region established the University of Benin in 1970. These five universities are referred to as first-generation universities. However, between 1975 and 1980, according to the third national development plan, the government established seven more universities. They were, Calabar, Jos, Ilorin, Sokoto, Maiduguri, Port Harcourt and Ado Bayero. These are the second-generation

universities. Between 1980 and 1990, the third-generation universities emerged. These were Federal University Owerri, Makurdi, Yola, Akwa Ibom, and Cross River (Anyambele, 2004). All the universities established between 1991 and the present date are said to belong to the fourth generation. They consist of different state universities, federal universities, the National Open University of Nigeria and various private universities. It is worth mentioning that this has brought the total number of universities in Nigeria to one hundred and twenty-two. The government-owned (public) universities are thirty six by the federal government and thirty six by the state governments, while the remaining fifty are owned by private institutions, individuals and faith-based organizations.

III. The Private Sector Participation in Higher Education in Nigeria

The idea of private sector participation in university education in Nigeria can be aptly described as the process of deregulation of education. According to Adeogun et al (2009) “deregulation of University education has been linked with privatization where the universities will have to be self-regulated and controlled, that is, freedom from government imposed decisions”. In the words of Ajayi and Ekundayo (2008), deregulation of education, means “breaking the government’s monopoly of the provision and management of education by giving free hand to private participation in the provision and management of education in the country”. On their part, Caldwell and Spinks (1992), supported the entire concept of deregulation. They argued that, the “deregulation of education will help schools to become self-managing”.

It is argued that the idea of private universities was conceived in the 1960s. The idea failed at that time, primarily due to the government’s intolerance and rejection, and the lack of adequate funds by the proponents. On an optimistic note, private individuals later took steps to establish private universities (Osagie, 2009). The first private university was Tandem University at Owerri, established by Dr. Basil Nnnana Ukaegbu, in 1980 (Adeogun, et al, 2009, Gabriel et al, 2006). The university became a matter of judicial contest between the proprietor and government (state) at that time. This led the proprietor to seek legal redress. Having lost his case at the Court of Appeal, he got justice at the Supreme Court. On the strength of Dr.

Ukeagbu's victory at the Supreme Court, private individuals, organizations, etc, took the initiative to establish private universities. In all, a total of twenty six private universities were established at that time, with most of them in the Southern part of the country (Osagie, 2009). This dream was short-lived. As soon as the military took over in December 1983, General Mohammed Buhari, the then head of state, promulgated Decree No. 19 of June 1984, abolishing and prohibiting private universities. Thus, the then private universities ceased to function (Obasi, 2007).

The dream of private sector participation in higher education came alive again with the inauguration of the Commission on the Review of Higher Education by the next Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida in 1991. On the strength of the recommendation by the Longe Commission, the former decree on private universities was repealed. This meant that private individuals and organizations were again allowed to run private universities, provided they met the guidelines and obtained government's approval (Okojie, 2008). The National Universities Commission, in May 1993, established the Standing Committee on the Establishment of Private Universities (SCOPU). It was responsible for thoroughly evaluating the process of establishing private universities (Okojie, 2008). With the coast now clear, there arose an upsurge of private universities in Nigeria. With the advent of democracy in 1999, under the former civilian president General Olusegun Obasanjo, private universities in Nigeria received a geometrical boost. Among the first set of private universities that were screened in 1999, three were approved. These were Igbinedion University, Okada, Babcock University, Ilisan Remo and Madonna University, Okija (Omuta, 2010). The first licensed private university in Nigeria was Igbinedion University, Okada (Owoeye, 2012). There arose a tremendous upsurge in the number of private universities in Nigeria after this time, bringing the present number of private universities to fifty (Okojie, 2012).

The tables below show the list of the private universities in Nigeria as at 2010. Subsequent portions of the paper also show the students enrolment in Federal, State, and Private universities between 2006 and 2010.

List of Private Universities in Nigeria (2012)

S/N	Name of University	Location	Year Established
1	Fountain University	Oshogbo, Osun State	2006
2	Bingham University	New Karu, Nassarawa State	2005
3	Wukari Jubilee University (Kwarafa University)	Wukari, Taraba State	2005
4	American University of Nigeria (ABTI)	Yola, Adamawa State	2005
5	Pan African University (Lagos Business School)	Lagos State	1991
6	Caritas University	Enugu State	2005
7	Western Delta University	Oghara, Delta State	2007
8	Wellspring University	Evbuobosa, Edo State	2009
9	University of Mkar	Mkar, Benue State	2005
10	Salem University	Lokoja, Kogi State	2007
11	Oduduwa University	Ipetumudu, Osun State	2009
12	Obong University	Obong Ntak, Akwa Ibom State	2007
13	Novena University	Ogume, Delta State	2005
14	Renaissance University	Enugu State	2005
15	Nigerian Turkish Nile	Abuja	2009
16	Madona University	Okija, Elele	1999
17	Lead City University	Ibadan, Oyo State	2005
18	Baze University	Abuja	2011
19	Landmark University	Omu Aran, Kwara State	2011
20	Igbinedion University	Okada, Edo State	1999
21	Redeemers University	Mowe, Ogun State	2005
22	Joseph Ayo Babalola University	Ikija, Ilesha, Osun State	2006
23	Crawford University	Igbesa, Ogun State	2005
24	Covenant University	Ota, Ogun State	2002
25	Caleb University	Imota, Lagos State	2007
26	Afe Babalola University	Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State	2009
27	Bowen University	Iwo, Osun State	2002
28	Benson Idahosa University	Benin City, Edo State	2002
29	Bells University of Technology	Ota, Ogun State	2004
30	Babcock University	Ilisan, Ogun State	1999
31	Ajayi Crowther University	Oyo, Oyo State	2005
32	The African University of science & Technology	Abuja	2007

33	Achievers University	Owo, Ondo State	2007
34	McPherson University	Seriki Sotayo, Ogun State	2012
35	South Western University	Okunowa, Ogun State	2012
36	Evangel University	Akaeze, Ebonyi State	2012
37	Samuel Adegboyega University	Ogwa, Edo State	2009
38	Adeleke University	Ede, Osun State	2009
39	Elizade University	Ilara Mokin, Ondo State	2012
40	Al – Hikman University	Ilorin, Kwara State	2005
41	CETEP City University	Lagos	2005
42	Godfrey Okoye University	Ugwuono-Nike, Enugu State	2009
43	Gregory University	Uturu	2012
44	Katsina University	Katsina	2005
45	Paul University	Awka, Anambra State	2009
46	Rhema University	Obeama Asa, Rivers State	2009
47	Tansian University	Umunya	2007
48	Wesley University of Science and Technology	Ondo, Ondo State	2007
49	Crescent University	Abeokuta, Ogun State	2005
50	Varitas University	Abuja	2007

Source: National Universities Commission (NUC) - Google Search, 17/7/2012

The above table shows the total number of private universities in Nigeria as of the year 2012. The locations and year of establishment of the universities are also indicated. It is anticipated that with the present rate of growth/increase of private universities in Nigeria since 1999, coupled with the demand for university education, the number of Private Universities in Nigeria will continue to rise appreciably.

Enrolment in Federal, State and Private Universities, including their carrying capacities as shown in the table below:

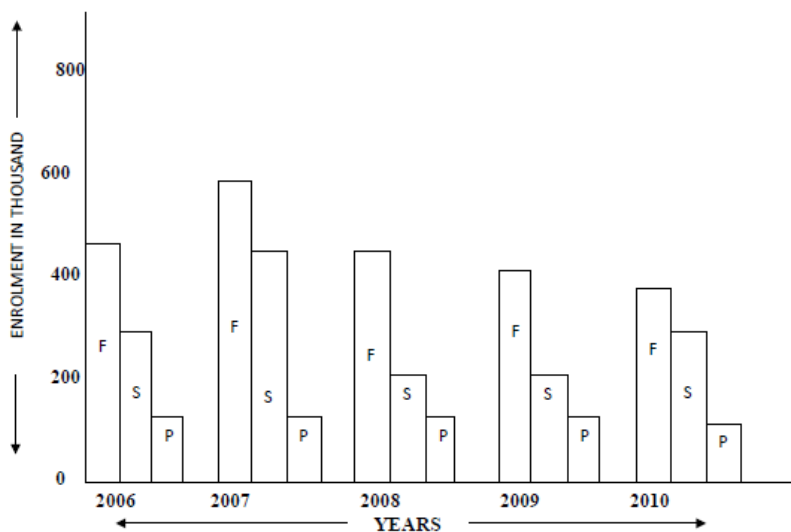
S/N	Type of University	Current Enrolment	Carrying capacity	Difference
1	Federal Universities	442,834	342,049	+ 100, 785
2	State Universities	265,166	163,586	+ 101, 580
3	Private Universities	19,740	28,548	- 8,808
TOTAL		727,740	534,183	+ 192, 557

Source: NUC (2005).

From the above table it is revealed that the Federal universities had an excess number of students beyond the recommended carrying capacity. Enrolment was in excess of 100,785 students. State universities also had an excess of 101,580 students while private universities, in the year under review, had vacancies of 8,808 spaces. It can therefore be deduced that private universities could have absorbed more than the 19,740 students that were enrolled in 2005. However, the State and Federal universities will definitely have to contest with the heavy pressure on the available resources due to the upsurge in students' enrolment. This means that private universities, as they increase in numbers due to the present educational thrust with regards to privatization been pursued by the Government of Nigeria, will serve as an enduring solution to this challenge.

UNIVERSITY ENROLMENT BETWEEN 2006 TO 2010 IN NIGERIA

The diagram below captures the enrolment by Federal, State and Private Universities between 2006 to 2010. It shows university enrolment in the thousands:



Source: Nigeria Education fact sheet (2012)

Key: F Federal University
S State University
P Private University

From the graph above, the enrolment of students at the Federal, State and Private Universities from 2006 to 2010 is clearly shown. It is revealed from the graph that student enrolment in Federal universities rose sharply in 2007 to about 550,000 and dropped to 350,000 in both 2009 and 2010. While in the private universities' enrolment, the sharpest increase was observed in 2008—about 20,000. In the subsequent years (2009 and 2010), less than 20,000 students enrolled in the private sector.

Representing the above information in a table shows the following:

YEAR	UNIVERSITY	ENROLMENT (IN THOUSANDS) (APPROXIMATIONS)
2006	Federal	420,000
	State	240,000
	Private	10,000
2007	Federal	580,000
	State	420,000
	Private	15,000
2008	Federal	420,000
	State	180,000
	Private	20,000
2009	Federal	380,000
	State	180,000
	Private	10,000
2010	Federal	380,000
	State	220,000
	Private	10,000

The table above represents the figures in the diagram considered earlier on. It reflects the enrolments in the private universities from 2006 to 2010. The table also reflects the enrolments in State and Federal universities for the period under review. The implication is that the private universities can accommodate more of the prospective admission seekers.

List of Private Christian Universities in Nigeria

- 1) Babcock University 1999
- 2) Covenant University 2002

3) Bowen University	2002
4) Benson Idahosa University	2002
5) Bingham University	2005
6) Redeemers University	2005
7) Crawford University	2005
8) Ajayi Crowther University	2005
9) Joseph Ayo Babalola University	2006
10) Salem University	2007
11) Samuel Adegboyega University	2009
12) Landmark University	2011
13) Mcpherson University	2012
14) Evangel University	2012

From the above list, Backcock University was the first Christian University to be established in Nigeria. It was also among the first private universities established in Nigeria. Others were Igbinedion University and Madona University, which were established in 1999. This was the year that education was formally liberalized and licenses were given to private organizations and individuals who were interested in establishing universities in Nigeria. The above list is also an intense testimony of the involvement of Christian organizations in university education in Nigeria.

As a result of the marked interest in missions and evangelism, most of these Christian private universities have incorporated their Christian principles and beliefs into the entire curriculum of the university. It is often commonly attested that these faith-based universities have affected their students morally through various Christian activities that are allowed to run during the course of their studies. This, no doubt, would build the right type of graduates that would influence the society positively. There has been a consistent need for right values and ethics in our society. It is hoped that the type of education promoted by the Christian private universities would be able to address this vacuum.

IV. The Role Played by the Private Sector in Higher Education in Nigeria

It is common knowledge that in most developed economies of the world, the role of the private sector is tremendously articulated and appreciated. It is agreed by such economies that the involvement of

the private sector will act as a catalyst for sustainable development. As a result, the private sector is involved in education, telecommunication, health, transportation (air, road, sea, rail, etc.), and so on. This approach is premised on the fact that the government alone cannot adequately run these various enterprises.

The Nigerian government, before this present dispensation, had been involved, to a large extent, in the running of our educational sector. The government had, for a long time, either through the state or federal governments, managed university education. In the opinion of the writers, as well-intended as the motive may appear, it is not possible for the government (State or Federal) to carry on with the onerous task of managing education alone. The government definitely needs private sector participation in the quest for educational development for sustainable national development.

There seem to be a new awareness and clear acknowledgement on the part of the government with regards to private sector participation in educational development in Nigeria. Presently, there is an upsurge in the number of private universities. It is a welcome idea, as this will give an opportunity to the teeming population of youths in quest of higher education. The available government-owned institutions can definitely not meet this ever increasing demand. If the argument that “education brings about enlightenment and development” is to make any meaning to us as a nation, then the education of the citizenry should be given a priority. This can only become a reality with all hands on deck. That is, both the government and the private sector. The various private universities have continued to produce professionals that are contributing their quota to the development of the nation. They have trained engineers, lawyers, doctors, accountants, teachers, and so on. These have continued to excel in their different fields.

The Nigerian educational history will definitely be incomplete with respect to her educational endeavors if the priority is not accorded to the private sector. In agreement with this assertion, Fafunwa (1982) argued that “up to 1882, the colonial government in Nigeria paid little or no attention to the educational needs of the people and the field was left entirely to the missions”. He further argued that the first primary school in Badagry in 1843 was founded by the Methodist missionaries. The Christian missionaries were also at the forefront in the establishment of secondary schools, with the establishment of C.M.S Grammar School, Lagos, in 1859. When the northern and southern protectorates were amalgamated, there were

fifty-nine government-owned primary schools and ninety-one mission-owned primary schools in the southern protectorate. In addition, there were eleven secondary schools, all owned by the missionary organizations, except one of them, King's College, Lagos, which was run by the government (Fafunwa, 1982). This shows that the Nigerian educational sector long before now has been private sector driven, with mission agencies playing formidable roles. There is a dire need for the private sector to repeat the feat that was demonstrated during the time of heavy mission involvement in education in Nigeria. It is argued by Emunemu (2008) that until recently, the government has largely been responsible for the provision of education in Nigeria with very minimal involvement of the private sector. However, he further argued that, "private schooling is significant in every state of Nigeria. The private sector for primary and secondary education has been growing for the past two decades".

It is also unanimously accepted that with the lifting of the ban on the establishment of private universities in 1993, there arose a tremendous proliferation in the educational sector. According to the report given by the Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC), Professor Julius Okojie (Punch, February 29th 2012 p. 9), there are a total of one hundred and twenty two universities in Nigeria. Of this, thirty-six are owned by the federal government and state governments respectively, while fifty are privately owned.

V. Contributions of Private Universities to Nigeria's Educational Development

There appears to be a consensus that the government alone cannot manage higher education in Nigeria. On the strength of this, it has become appropriate for the private sector to lavishly participate in education.

Let us examine in an outline below the contributions of the private sector towards the growth/ development of university education in Nigeria:

1. It is estimated that about 1.5 million candidates participate in the Joint Admission and Matriculation Examination (JME) annually, and less than 25% of this actually gain admission into the universities (Owoeye, 2012). It is obvious that the available public universities cannot absorb them. With the advent of private universities, this

problem is gradually being checked, as some of the eligible candidates are now being absorbed by the private universities.

2. The aspect of adequate funding has also put the private universities at a vantage position. They are often well funded, thus able to provide adequate facilities for learning and development.

3. The advent of private universities has also given prospective students and their parents the opportunity to make choices. Some may desire their wards to attend private universities.

4. Apart from the availability of adequate facilities in most of the private universities, they also provide an environment conducive for learning (Adegun et al, 2009).

5. Private universities have a stable academic program and are not saddled with incessant strikes and others that affect students' learning.

6. Private universities have developed an appropriate curriculum in line with the current global needs (Adegun, et al, 2009). Most of them have structured their curricula to meet the present global demands. This is to make their graduates globally relevant.

7. Private universities have brought about competition, and ultimately, improvement of the university educational system. According to Ibadin, Shofoyeke and Ilusanya (2005), "competition brings improved quality of educational inputs and outputs".

8. The private universities have curbed the draining of our hard earned foreign exchange. Most students choose to go outside the country for studies once they cannot gain admission to available public universities. This definitely drains our foreign exchange (Owoeye, 2012).

9. Most private schools tend to give top priority to the academic demands of their system. The students are exposed to the right academic needs under the right learning conditions, such as modern equipment, an equipped library, and motivated members of staff.

10. Regular attendance of lectures is given the right attention in private institutions. Hence, they are sure to record outstanding levels of productivity, especially in students' academic outcomes. The parents who have spent great funds will also effect this as they check their wards consistently.

11. Private institutions provide an appropriate level of discipline. Both students and staff are punctual to classes and carry out their work effectively.

12. Private institutions provide an appropriate level of accountability. There is no doubt that the consistent supervision of staff and students have made them more accountable and efficient.

These and many other points are the contributions of the private universities to the development of education in Nigeria. The above listed strengths cause private institutions to stand out as they act in driving the wheel of development in Nigeria. However, there are some perceived weaknesses which they should address. If this is not done, they could act as a possible clog in the wheel of our national development.

VI. Perceived Weaknesses of Private Higher Education (University) in Nigeria

1. Exorbitant school fees: This is sometimes extreme and not also commensurate with the academic input/output.

2. Under-payment of staff: Private schools are sometimes more interested in the desire to make profit and discard the welfare of the staff. Staff members are considered underpaid in most cases.

3. Staff turn-over: Most of private schools, at the least provocation, will “fire” any staff member, sometimes without consideration for due process. This affects the teaching and learning process. Most of the staff easily seek “greener pastures”.

4. Inequalities in both social and economic status: It is argued that only the children of the affluent in the society can actually attend private universities in Nigeria.

5. Involvement in examination malpractices: It is argued that some of the private institutions are forced to indulge in examination malpractices in order to woo parents with the claim that the school is doing well academically. This, according to Ajayi and Ekundayo (2008), is “sacrificing quality for profit”.

The above perceived weaknesses and others should be addressed in order to attain the desired national development in Nigeria.

VII. Private Higher Education in Some Countries in Africa

The effort towards deregulation of education is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. Other countries in Africa, and especially the West African sub-region in recent times, have mounted an aggressive advocacy towards private sector participation in higher education. According to Varghese (2004), in some “African countries such as Uganda, Cameroon, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, the legislative

measures on private higher education institutions got momentum in the 1990's and more private universities have been established since then." The example of Ghana is quite instructive. Adu (2009) argued that in Ghana private universities have sprung up like mushrooms. In 1999 there existed only two (2) private universities, but since then eleven (11) new private universities and nineteen (19) private polytechnics or colleges have opened their doors. Supporting this development, Gyasi (2012) opined that private universities in Ghana have been a welcomed solution with respect to the student intake pressure faced by the few public universities.

It is also argued that the "private sector share of the education market ranges from 4 percent in Mauritania to 21 percent in Gambia, with Senegal and Cote d' Ivoire at 15 percent and 19 percent respectively (Ngware, et al, 2005). They further opined that in Kenya there are twenty three (23) universities and out of this, six (6) are public owned, while the remaining seventeen (17) are private owned (Ngware, et al, 2005). The growth, according to them, has been quite astronomical, with an increase of private universities from eight (8) in 1999 to twenty three in 2003. This has contributed immensely towards providing access to tertiary education in Kenya.

The president of Tanzania, President Jakaya Kikwete, lending a voice to private sector participation in education, had argued that, "it is the government's desire to see more participation of the private sector in building universities across the country" (African News, 2012). On the strength of this, Ofori-Attah (2012), had argued that "all over the continent, governments and the private sector are collaborating in finding ways and means to provide higher educational institutions that meet international standards".

In the Asian axis, Parekh and Manjrekar (2011), posited that the "private sector is a key constituent segment in India." They further stated that it accounts for "more than a third of all higher educational institutions and more than two-thirds of all professional higher education institutions".

The implication of this is that the immense roles played by the private sector in higher education should be harnessed by Nigeria and all the nations of Africa and the world at large. There is the clarion call for global relevance with regards to higher education. The present private higher educational revolution in Nigeria will make this a genuine reality.

VIII. Conclusion

It must be noted, however, that even though the ‘field of education’ is left ‘open’, there is still the need for consistent evaluation. This should be in terms of teacher effectiveness, the curriculum, the facilities and right management. It is the responsibility of the government to guarantee the quality of education being received at various levels. It is only a genuine effort of this nature that can secure true sustainable national development. No country can excel technologically or otherwise if the quality of students churned out of the various institutions are ‘half-baked’. Any nation that treats this aspect with ‘kid’s gloves’ will definitely continue to remain at the lowest ebb of technological advancement among the committee of nations.

On the strength of the aforementioned, the private sector should partner with the government as they bridge the seeming gap in the role of education for sustainable national development. The private sector should seize the present opportunity in the Nigerian educational sector as they establish more universities. This will give ample opportunity to more youths who would ordinarily not be able to acquire the right higher education for sustainable national development.

It is important to re-iterate the fact that “there is the need for a greater community and civil society participation in providing, managing and funding education. There is the need for all levels of government to forge partnership across the public and private sectors in the provision, management and financing of education in order to meet the challenges of Education for ALL – EFA” (Emunemu, 2008). It is the goal of Nigeria to be among the first twenty leading economies of the world by 2020. Suffice it to say that we can achieve this if the private sector is allowed, through genuine liberalization, to participate in education in Nigeria. The Nigerian educational history gives us sufficient evidences of the role played by Christian Missions in education and how this catalyzed our development. This can be repeated by genuine private sector participation in education in Nigeria.

IX. Recommendations

1. The National Universities Commission (NUC) should ensure that quality is strictly adhered to in terms of curriculum delivery and personnel.

2. The right synergy should be built between the public and private universities as this will ensure the right symbiotic relationship. 'No man is an island'.

3. The government should intervene with respect to giving some financial leverage to the private universities. This could be through the Petroleum Trust Fund (P.T.F), Education Trust Fund (E.T.F) and others. This should, however, not warrant undue interference without any interference in the sector.

4. The issue of 'exorbitant fees' charged by the private universities should be objectively addressed by the government and all the stake holders in the education enterprise.

5. There is the need to continue to encourage the private sector to participate in university education in Nigeria. This can be achieved through the right enabling environment for them to thrive, mounting a formidable advocacy for more private organizations, individuals and others to participate in university education in Nigeria.

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