DEREGULATION OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA AND THE ISSUES OF ACCESS, DIVERSITY AND EXCELLENCE

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Abstract

The deregulation in the provision of tertiary education in the country came about as a result of the clamour by stakeholders for the revamping of the entire educational system in Nigeria in terms of access, quality and relevance. Thus, Private Universities came into the scene as a result of the dissatisfaction of Nigerians with the existing Public Universities in terms of access and quality. This is because the carrying capacities of the Public Universities put together could not meet the aspiration of the teeming youth who desired tertiary education in Nigeria. This, therefore, underscores the need for private participation in the education sector to help increase access. The aim of this paper is to highlight the contributions of Private Universities to University Education in Nigeria in three key areas: access; diversity and excellence (quality). The Data for this study (applications and admissions into private universities from 2007 to 2013) were extracted from the Joint Admissions and
Matriculation Board (JAMB) and analysed. Findings revealed that Private Universities have continued to make steady impact on the provision of University Education in the country in such areas as diversity and competition. The Paper concluded that University Education should not be left in the hands of the government alone. Thus, it recommended that the Organised Private Sector (OPS) be involved in the provision of quality tertiary education in the African continent in line with the realities of the 21st century.

Keywords: Private universities; Access; Diversity; Quality, UTME and JAMB

The right to higher education is enshrined in a number of international human rights instruments. For example, the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UNICESCR) of 1966 declared succinctly that higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means...and should be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights @ Wikisource, 2012). The role of University Education cannot be over-emphasised; it affects positively, not only the individuals in particular but the society in general. University Education equips the individuals with relevant skills needed to enjoy richer and meaningful life.

Consequent upon this is the burgeoning demand for University Education since the last two decades, resulting in a very high percentage of unsatisfied demand every year (Ajayi and Ekundayo, 2007).

Nigeria’s National Policy on Education stipulates clearly that the University system is to contribute optimally to the development of high level manpower in the country by increasing and diversifying its programmes, making professional course contents to reflect national requirement, inculcating community spirit in students through team projects and action research, and by making all students to offer liberal or general study courses, etc. (NPE, 2013). These are all geared towards building human capacities for sustainable national development.

Nigeria possesses the largest university system in Sub-Saharan Africa. Although it boasts of more institutions in Africa, enrolment in University Education is higher in South Africa (Banker.ng, 2011). The emergence of private providers of University Education in Nigeria became a reality when the first three Private Universities were licensed to operate in 1999 after an earlier failed attempt. Private Universities in the country are subject to government regulations through the National Universities Commission (NUC). Currently, Nigeria has one hundred and twenty-three (123) Universities comprising thirty-six (36) Federal Universities, thirty-six (36) State
Universities and fifty-one (51) Private Universities. Five of the fifty Private Universities were licensed in February, 2012 while one, the Northwest University, Kano, was established in March, 2012. In spite of the acceptability of private participation in the provision of University Education in the country, some issues are still being viewed with mixed feelings. These are particularly in the areas of access and excellence. This paper will attempt, therefore, to examine some of these issues and highlight the contributions of the Private Universities to access, diversity and excellence with respect to the provision of University Education in the country.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the paper is to examine the contributions of Private Universities in the country with respect to access to University Education, diversity and excellence. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- to examine what fraction of the youth have access to University Education in Nigeria via Private Universities;
- to find out whether Private Universities have the capacity to cater and maintain a diverse student body through its faculties;
- to ascertain whether or not faculties recruit qualified candidates who perform well above the national cut-off in the Matriculation Examinations; and
- to highlight generally, contributions to quality support towards effective learning process in the Universities.

Statement of the Problem

University Education plays critical role in national development and in the development of the individual. In Nigeria, University Education seems to elude a lot of qualified candidates despite the number of Universities in the country. This is as a result of limited carrying capacities allotted to these institutions by the supervisory agency, the National Universities Commission (NUC). Quality is also a key issue in the provision of University Education. However, Private Universities have been viewed in some quarters to be profit-driven other than knowledge-driven.

Emergence of Private Universities in Nigeria

Originally, Nigeria’s University Education system was exclusively a preserve of government (Federal and State) until the coming of Private Universities. The yearly increase in the number of prospective undergraduates coupled with the increasing inability of existing Public Universities to cope with the demand for University placement as well as government inability to adequately fund the Federal and State Universities contributed to the emergence of Private Universities (Okojie, 2008). The first and most famous of the new effort was the Imo Technical University founded by Dr. Nnanna Ukaegbu. Dr. Ukaegbu’s attempt was challenged by the Government in the Supreme Court. The court ruled in his favour, asserting however, that the National
Assembly could legislate on the quality of the programmes offered in such institutions (Osagie 2009). Within six months of the ruling of the Supreme Court, twenty-six Private Universities were proposed in the country.

Act No 9 of 1993 which repealed the Private Universities (abolition and prohibition) Act of 1984 provided the platform for individuals, organizations and corporate bodies to establish and run Private Universities upon satisfying the stipulated guidelines and subsequently obtaining approval of government (Okojie, 2008). The decree stipulated the various documents that should be submitted to the NUC by proprietors of proposed Universities as well as other conditions that should be met to enable the Commission assess the adequacy or otherwise of the applications for approval. Madonna University, Okija, Anambra State, Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State and Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State were the first Private Universities to be established in Nigeria in 1999. In 2012, there were a total of 51 Private Universities in the country.

Table 1.1: Number of Universities in Nigeria from 2007 - 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Federal</th>
<th></th>
<th>State</th>
<th></th>
<th>Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NUC, 2012

Contributions of Private Universities to Nigeria’s Higher Educational System

- **Providing Education for Citizens**
  Private Universities, like the public ones, help to educate the citizenry for all duties of public and private life. Private Universities thus, provide opportunities for individuals to be educated and live meaningful lives in the societies they find themselves.

- **Widening Access to University Education**
  University education seekers in Nigeria are estimated to be about 1.5 million annually. Of this figure, less than 40% are able to secure a place in the Nigerian Public Universities (JAMB, 2013). Thus, the Private Universities help to cater for some candidates that opt for Private Universities and for others that may not be absorbed by the Public Universities at the end of each year’s admission process.

*Journal of Resourcefulness and Distinction, Volume 10 No. 1, May, 2015, ISSN: 2276 - 9684*
Healthy Competition
The coming of private handling of University Education has brought about healthy competition between the Public and Private Universities. This is expected to bring about excellence and generate growth in the entire University system.

A wide spectrum of choices
Private Universities have helped to deregulate the system by providing further choices for candidates willing to avail themselves of access to University Education but who otherwise, would not have been able to achieve their dreams. Parents who cannot afford high fees paid in Foreign Universities also have local alternatives. The establishment of Private Universities will reduce to the barest minimum, the incidence of capital flight through the higher education sector whereby rich parents send their children and wards overseas for University Education.

Employment Generation
Private Universities create employment for qualified and especially indigent members of its host communities. This presupposes that the establishment of Private Universities has helped in reducing the rate of social vices in the society as more qualified youths have been engaged in the services of these Universities.

National Development
University Education holds the key to sustainable development of any nation. The content of University Education should be made more responsive to the socio-economic needs of the country. Private Universities therefore help to develop and consolidate the nation’s higher education in response to the manpower and technological needs of the nation. Figure 1 below shows the distribution of Private Universities in the country.
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Figure 1: A Map of Nigeria Showing The Distribution of Private Universities  
The Growth of Private Universities in Nigeria

Journal of Resourcefulness and Distinction, Volume 10 No. 1, May, 2015, ISSN: 2276 - 9684
Reasons for Deregulation of University Education

Ajayi and Ekundayo (2007) gave the following as reasons for deregulation of University Education.

- **Increasing Access to University Education**
  The increase in population and the desire for University Education in the country is one reason for the deregulation of University Education.

- **Addressing The Problem of Scarce Educational Resources**
  University Education invariably affects the quality of output it produces. Most Public Universities in Nigeria operate in adverse conditions; overcrowding and deteriorating physical facilities, lack of library books and educational materials among others. Private handling of University Education will address the problem of scarce educational resources.

- **Raising Alternative Ways of Funding The University**
  Public Universities depend solely on the government for funding. This has over the years generated a lot of strife between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the government. Private handling of University Education in the country is, therefore, necessary as it serves as an alternative means of funding University Education in the country.

- **Improving the quality of university education**
  Private University Education provides for healthy competition between the Public and Private Universities in terms of instructional delivery and other activities put in place to produce quality graduates for the economy. This brings about quality in the delivery of educational inputs and outputs.

  Other reasons include:

  - **Enhancing Efficiency**
    Private University Education helps in enhancing students’ learning experience(s) through the provision of strategic learning tools

  - **Aligning with best International Practices**
    In developed societies, University Education is not left only to Governments. The Organised Private Sector (OPS) is also involved in giving University Education the needed balancing. OPS such as faith-based and other corporate organisations invest hugely in the provision of University Education in the country.

  - **Providing Regular academic Calendar**
    Incessant strike actions in Public Universities lead to disruption in academic calendars. This affects the stability of University Education in the country.
However, academic calendars seem to be more regular in Private Universities in the country. This is so because no Private University has embarked on strike action since inception.

The Issue of Access

Access, according to the National Policy on Education (2013) implies making it possible for everyone who is entitled to education to receive it. Ensuring equitable access to tertiary education in institutions is based on merit, capacity, efforts and perseverance. Equity on the other hand implies ensuring that all the segments of the society get their fair share of access to whatever educational opportunities are available. In summary, access implies equal opportunity for formal education while equity is fairness in admission. The National Policy on Education provides for equal opportunities for all Nigerian citizens at all levels of education without discrimination (NPE, 2013). The issue of access to University Education has become a recurring discourse among stakeholders in Nigeria. This is obviously because less than 25% of candidates who apply to the Universities are admitted. This brings to the fore, the issues bordering on the Federal Government guidelines on admissions and how it is working to ensure equity and access to University in the country.

Federal Government Guidelines on Admissions

(i) Carrying Capacity

Carrying capacity simply means that institutions admit only the number of candidates they can cater for, taking into cognizance available facilities in the institutions. NUC therefore allocates carrying capacities (which is the sum total of candidates a University can cater for) based on available facilities in that Universities. This policy enhances quality.

(ii) Quota

The Quota system of the Federal Government of Nigeria is aimed at providing equity in University admissions. The National Universities Commission (NUC) allocates quota to each University in the country based on quality of staff, physical facilities, course content and delivery. Quota is derived from the carrying capacity of each University and further allocated to the various faculties and departments.
Table 2.1: Admissions into Public and Private Universities with respect to Carrying Capacities for 2010/2011 Academic Session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of university</th>
<th>Carrying capacity</th>
<th>Number of application</th>
<th>Number admitted</th>
<th>Percentage admitted in respect to Carrying Capacities</th>
<th>% Excess/Shortfall with respect to carrying capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal &amp; State Universities &amp; Affiliated Institutions</td>
<td>188,675</td>
<td>1,415,731</td>
<td>170,736</td>
<td>90.4%</td>
<td>17,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Universities</td>
<td>33,063</td>
<td>17,386</td>
<td>20,378</td>
<td>61.6%</td>
<td>9,685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>221,738</td>
<td>1,433,117</td>
<td>191,114</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>30,624</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: JAMB 2012

Criteria for Admission

In addition to the Federal Government guidelines on admissions into its institutions of higher learning, the Federal Government stipulates forty-five percent (45%) Merit, thirty-five percent (35%) Catchment/Locality and twenty percent (20%) Educationally Less Developed Sates. Admissions are thus conducted in line with these guidelines.

- **Merit Criterion**
  The merit criterion takes care of candidates with very high scores in each Matriculation Examination for their first choice of course and institution before other candidates. Thus, Forty-five percent (45%) of the available spaces are reserved for such applicants (JAMB Brochure 2011).

- **Catchment Criterion**
  The catchment criterion groups the states of the Federation into catchment areas of each tertiary institution to give equal opportunities to all applicants. It is also called Locality. That is, the geographical and/or socio-cultural areas contiguous to the institution candidates apply to. Thirty-five percent (35%) of admission is given to candidates who fall within the catchment areas. While institutions have all the states of the federation as their catchment areas, others have states that are contiguous to institutions as catchment areas. State-owned institutions also have all the Local Government Areas of their states as their catchment areas (JAMB, 2013).
**Educationally Less Developed States (ELDS) Criterion**
Twenty percent (20%) proportion of the total number of available spaces is reserved for the Educationally Less Developed States (ELDS) in each admission year. The essence of this is to help bridge the education gap between educationally developed states and educationally less developed states in terms of educational opportunities and advancement. It is also aimed at promoting national integration by ensuring that all the under-represented states are taken care of in the admission process.

The states categorized under the ELDS criterion are Adamawa, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Benue, Borno, Cross River, Ebonyi, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Rivers, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe, Zamfara and F.C.T. Thus, the ELDS are the nineteen Northern states, the FCT, Bayelsa, Cross River, Ebonyi and Rivers (JAMB, 2013).

**Attrition**
Ten percent (10%) Attrition of carrying capacity of an institution is allowed to further increase access to University Education. That is to say Universities can admit 10% of its quota in addition to its normal quota.

**The Issue of Diversity**
Access to higher education through Private Universities like the Public ones in the country enables student populations become increasingly diverse in terms of their academic pursuit, capacities, motivation and interests. Diversity can be defined in many different ways. It can be looked at in terms of the commitment to recognize and appreciate the variety of features that make individuals unique in an atmosphere that promotes and celebrates individual and collective achievement. Private Universities thus provide diversity, particularly in terms of the competition they offer. They, like all other Universities in the country provide diversity in terms of faculties, student population and recruitment, challenging learning settings and personal growth opportunities for all students among others. Diversity is very critical to the sustenance of University Education. This is because it brings a lot of interactions in and out of class, learning and living among students from various racial, ethnic, cultural, geographic, socioeconomic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, with a wide array of academic, extracurricular, and social interests. This has a multiplier effect because it does not only benefit the student but the University as a whole. Students' exposure to diverse views and individuals provides them with greater personal development and challenges, broadening their perspectives and increasing their knowledge of the world.

In Nigeria, diversity can be seen in some of the courses being offered by the Private Universities which are not offered in some of the Federal Government and

The Issue of Excellence

Quality assurance is a proactive means of ensuring quality in the provision of University Education. It aims at preventing quality problems and ensures that the products of the University system conform to the expected standards (Ajayi and Ekundayo, 2008). Private Universities must be seen to vigorously pursue excellent academic credentials, provide safe, supportive environments, academic rigor and success, outstanding facilities and excellent learning resources in order to be able to compete favourably with other Universities in the world.

For quality, a lot of measures have to be put in place to ensure that the products of the Private Universities conform to societal needs. The National Universities Commission (NUC) as a regulatory agency of the Universities has a vital role to play in ensuring that the standards laid down are strictly adhered to. In spite of the licensing given to private education provider, the Federal Government is still in control of the University system. Below are the strategies that are put in place by the NUC to guarantee quality assurance in Private Universities like any other University in the country (Okojie, 2008):

Accreditation as a Strategy for Ensuring Quality

The NUC carries out accreditation of degree and other academic programmes in the country with the aim of assuring quality in the nation’s University Education system in line with the Minimum Academic Standards stipulated by the government. According to Okojie (2008), some of the objectives of accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian Universities by the NUC are:

- to assure employers and other members of the community that Nigerian graduates of all academic programmes have attained an acceptable level of competency in their areas of specialization;
- to certify to the international community that the programmes offered in Nigerian Universities are of high standards and their graduates are adequate for employment and for further studies.

In the pursuit of academic excellence in all Universities in the country, the NUC carries out assessment of programme content, facilities, delivery and evaluation modes (examination and continuous assessment). Thus, the NUC awards accreditation status to programmes which may be full, interim or denied, depending on their rating.
Either full or interim accreditations can be granted to any academic programme that has satisfied the provisions of the Minimum Academic Standards. For a programme to be granted full or interim accreditation status, it must attain a minimum of seventy percent (70%) or sixty percent (60%) aggregate score as well as seventy percent (70%) or sixty percent (60%) in each of the four core areas of academic content, staffing, physical facilities and library respectively. Those granted Interim accreditation on the other hand must have deficiencies noticed rectified within a stipulated period otherwise they would be denied accreditation (Okojie, 2008).

Any degree or academic programme which fails to satisfy the Minimum Academic Standards will be denied accreditation. This applies to programmes with less than sixty percent (60%) aggregate score (Okojie, 2008).

Internal Quality Assurance

Every process of the administration of a University should automatically lead to delivery of quality University Education. Private Universities like other Universities set up internal mechanisms which must start from the point of admission into the University to instructional delivery. The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) is the statutory body tasked by law to conduct Matriculation Examinations into the higher institutions in the country. JAMB ensures that quality entrants are admitted into these institutions. Minimum admission requirements are clearly stated in the JAMB brochure for guide to the candidates. Admission committees are also set up to take care of the process after the national cut-off point has been decided by the policy committee on admission which comprised the Honourable Minister of Education, Vice Chancellors, Rectors, Provosts, Admission Officers, Senior Members of Staff of JAMB among others.

Qualifications of the University teachers also impact directly on quality. In Nigeria, this is ensured through the NUC and the internal mechanisms of various Universities which ensure the recruitment of best hands.

The Future of Private Universities in Nigeria

Private Universities have come to stay in Nigeria. This is as a result of government effort to widen access to higher education to accommodate the teeming population of admission seekers. However, the University regulatory body, National Universities Commission (NUC) must ensure that standard and quality in admission, teaching and learning are not compromised. Admission should be systematic and responsive to available resources.
Private Universities may have to start diversification of revenue base so as to reduce vulnerability to fluctuations in owners’ funding. The range of Stakeholders may be expanded to reduce the influence and interference of any single interest group.

Private Universities should take strategic planning seriously as the best tool to move forward the institution. The blueprint provides structures and practices that are likely to enhance their ability to analyze conditions, to express a vision to formulate goals and to persuade Campus Community to provide the advancement of its institution in a clearly enumerated and systematically programmed manner (Ekong and Pante 1996).

One advantage of strategic plan is that it is likely to survive the threat posed by leadership change. Through SWOT analysis the institution can know the strengths needed to promote centre of excellence, weakness in a bid to minimize them, opportunities, in order to explore and exploit and threats, in order to eliminate them where possible.

Furthermore, the Private Universities will need to review the curriculum from time to time so as to maintain the relevance of learning to labour market demands especially as advances in science and technology become more rapid and driven by global communication networks.

It is instructive to note that Higher Education Management has become highly professionalised. Therefore, institutions must have to upgrade their personnel through capacity building to acquire current best practices and techniques to move the institution forward.

Procedures
Research Question
The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:
1. Has the emergence of Private Universities helped in increasing access to University Education?
2. Do Private Universities attract quality entrants?

Data Collection
Data for the study was extracted from 2007, 2008, 2009 Universities Matriculation Examination (UME) and 2010 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) of applications and admission. Candidates who took the 2007, 2008, 2009 UME and 2010 UTME formed the population for the study.
Data Analysis

All the samples collated were analysed using simple descriptive statistics. The two research questions were answered using simple descriptive statistics. Data on applications and admissions of candidates into Private Universities in Nigeria for 2007, 2008, 2009 Universities Matriculation Examination (UME) and 2010 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) were extracted from the Information Technology Services of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and analysed. The study employed the use of simple descriptive statistics for the analysis of results. Findings show that the establishment of Private Universities in the country has engendered healthy competition amongst the Universities and widened the spectrum of choices of candidates. Private Universities have continued to make steady impact on access to tertiary education without compromising excellence.

Results and Discussion

The study made some findings and these are discussed through the two research questions below.

Research Question 1: Has the emergence of Private Universities helped in increasing access to University Education?

Table 3.1: Total Number of Applications and Admissions for the Public and Private Universities for 2007, 2008, 2009 UME and 2010 UTME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Total Number of Application for Each University Type</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total Number of Admission for Each University Type</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Universities</td>
<td>Private Universities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Public Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>913,667</td>
<td>5,781</td>
<td>919,448</td>
<td>138,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1,076,486</td>
<td>6,470</td>
<td>1,082,956</td>
<td>120,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1,187,018</td>
<td>6,756</td>
<td>1,193,774</td>
<td>150,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1,433,117</td>
<td>11,900</td>
<td>1,445,017</td>
<td>170,736</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: JAMB, 2011
**Figure 1: Public and Private Universities Applications in Value and Percentage for 2007 UME**

Source: JAMB, 2011

**Figure 2: Public and Private Universities Admissions in Value and Percentages for the 2007**

Source: JAMB, 2011

**Figure 3: public and Private Universities Applications in Values and Percentages for the 2008 UME**

Source: JAMB, 2011

*Journal of Resourcefulness and Distinction, Volume 10 No. 1, May, 2015, ISSN: 2276 - 9684*
Figure 4: Public and Private Universities Admissions in Value and Percentages for the 2008 UME

Source: JAMB, 2011

Figure 5: Public and Private Universities Applications in Value and Percentages for the 2008 UME

Source: JAMB, 2011

Figure 6: Public and Private Universities Admissions in Value and Percentages for the 2009 UME

Source: JAMB, 2011
Deregulation Of University Education In Nigeria And The Issues Of Access, Diversity And Excellence

**Figure 7: Public and Private Universities Applications in Value and Percentages for the 2009 UME**

- Public Universities: 1433117, 99%
- Private Universities: 11900, 1%

Source: JAMB, 2011

**Figure 8: Public and Private Universities Admissions in Value and Percentages for the 2010 UTME**

- Public Universities: 170736, 89%
- Private Universities: 20378, 11%

Source: JAMB, 2011

*Journal of Resourcefulness and Distinction, Volume 10 No. 1, May, 2015, ISSN: 2276 - 9684*
Figure 9: Summary of Applications for Public and Private Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Applications</th>
<th>Total Applications for Public Universities</th>
<th>Total Applications for Private Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>919448</td>
<td>913667</td>
<td>5781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1082956</td>
<td>1076486</td>
<td>6470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1193774</td>
<td>1187018</td>
<td>6736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1445017</td>
<td>1433117</td>
<td>11900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables 3.1 shows the total number of applications and admissions for both the Public as well as the Private Universities for 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 academic sessions respectively. Figures 1, 3, 5, and 7 show that one percent (1%) of candidates applied to the private universities for 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 academic years respectively while ninety-nine (99%) applied to the public universities and affiliated institutions. The trend observed is that of low application patronage of Private Universities. This may be explained to be as a result of the high fees being charged by the Private Universities against the relatively moderate fees charged by the public ones. Figures 2 and 4 show that seven percent (7%) of candidates were offered admission into Private Universities. In 2009, there was a slight drop in admission with six percent (6%) of applicants being offered admission into Private Universities in the country. On the other hand, Figure 8 shows a tremendous improvement in the admissions to Private Universities with eleven percent (11%) of the total applicants being absorbed by them. The news in Figure 8 is that of a cheering one, for it can be seen that eleven (11%) of the total admissions in the 2010 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) came from the Private Universities. This is a welcome development and must be improved upon in subsequent admissions.
Ordinarily, the eleven percent (11%) absorbed by the private universities if not absorbed would have to wait and re-write the next UTME. The waiting period may cause them to be restive and push them into taking up some social vices. Figures 9 and 10 summarises in bar chart the total applications and admissions for the years under review. Private Universities have continued therefore to contribute to the steady increase of access to University Education seekers and this must be encouraged.

Research Question 2: Do Private Universities attract quality entrants?

Table 5.1: 2007 UME Score Range Performances of Candidates by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range (Performance)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180-200</td>
<td>871</td>
<td>787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-250</td>
<td>1276</td>
<td>1062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251-300</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301 and above</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2332</td>
<td>1982</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9: 2007 UME Score Range Performances of Candidates by Gender
Table 6.2: 2008 UME Score Range Performances of Candidates that chose Private Universities by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range (Performance)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180-200</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>1650</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-250</td>
<td>1764</td>
<td>1456</td>
<td>3220</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251-300</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>475</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301 and above</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2931</td>
<td>2414</td>
<td>5345</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10: 2008 UME Score Range Performances of Candidates that chose Private Universities by Gender

Table 7.1: 2009 UME Score Range Performance of Candidates that chose Private Universities by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score (Performance)</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180-200</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>819</td>
<td>1818</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-250</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1513</td>
<td>3414</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251-300</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>419</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301 and above</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3136</td>
<td>2516</td>
<td>5652</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8.1: 2010 UTME Score Range (Performance) of Candidates that chose Private Universities by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180-200</td>
<td>2115</td>
<td>1571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-250</td>
<td>3084</td>
<td>2487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251-300</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301 and above</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5717</strong></td>
<td><strong>4418</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Tables 2, 3, 4 & 5 and Figures 9, 10, 11 & 12, it can be seen that Private Universities, like Public Universities, attract quality entrants. For example, for the performance score range of 180 – 200, it can be observed that a total of 1658 (2007), 1650 (2008), 1818 (2009) and 3686 (2010) were recorded. On the other hand, the performance score range of 201 – 250 shows that total number of 2,338 (2007), 3,220 (2008), 3414 (2009) and 5571 (2010) were recorded respectively. In the score range of 251 – 300, 317 (2007), 475 (2008), 419 (2009) and 873 (2010) were recorded respectively.

All the tables and Figures show that more applicants fell in the score range of 201 – 250 than other performance score ranges. This is a welcome development and clearly attests to the fact that Private Universities also attract quality entrants into their faculties. This must be sustained for the country to achieve its desired national development.

Conclusions

Instability of academic calendars is a major problem bedeviling the Public Universities. This comes as a result of strike actions embarked upon by Academic or Non-Academic Staff Unions or the students over issues affecting the Universities and students. Private Universities in Nigeria have not recorded any case of disruption of academic calendar since inception. This has contributed to stability in the system, and can explain for why a number of Nigerians patronize the private universities.

Although the impact of Private Universities to higher education in the country has been marginal, the products have made their mark in the market place (Owoeye, 2010). Investment in the educational sector does not guarantee quick realization of
profit like investing in the extractive, manufacturing and communication industries. In the pursuit of access and excellence in Private Universities therefore, African countries should create an enabling environment to encourage Private Public Partnership in the provision and management of educational institutions, especially at the University level. Similarly, private education providers in Africa should be made to see the need to be patient and not profit driven at the expense of quality. Suffice it to say that the Organised Private Sector (OPS) should ensure proper monitoring mechanisms are put in place to always monitor the quality of education in Private Universities. This should be done in line with global best practices.

**Recommendations**

To ensure that Private Universities contribute meaningfully to University Education, the government must stick to the minimum standards set for would-be proprietors. This will guide against the establishment of sub-standard Universities. It is, therefore, recommended that quality assurance in Private Universities be premised on the following strategies: provision of adequate and modern facilities; adequate funding; appraisal of educational programmes; employment of qualified teaching personnel and close monitoring of the activities of the Universities by its regulatory body – the NUC. This will help ensure that the quality of education is not compromised (Ajayi and Ekundayo, 2007).

Governments in Africa through their various Ministries of Education should also strengthen existing public Universities alongside the private ones through adequate funding, capacity building and provision of infrastructure to enable them cope with current realities.

As part of widening access to University Education, there is the need for government to encourage Open and Distant Learning Universities (ODLU) as a matter of urgency.

**References**


**Deregulation Of University Education In Nigeria And The Issues Of Access, Diversity And Excellence**


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Dr. Obinna M. Opara And Grace Ojonide Onoja


