



A HISTORICAL ATTEMPT AT THE EXPANSION OF ACCESS THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA, 1999-2010

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Abstract:

The Federal government licenced the first three universities in 1999, today the number has increased from 41 to 61. However for the purpose of this work, some of the private universities will be focused on. These universities run undergraduate programmes excluding Pan African University and African University of Science and Technology. It is disheartening to know that 39 private universities can only accommodate 49,884 students or 4.0% of total student enrolment. With this situation, it has become clear that the expansion policy in Nigeria university system has failed. It is a myriad for many candidates who want to enter university outside public universities, and could not be addressed adequately even with the private universities already in existence. This is a total failure of public policy. It then means that something is fundamentally wrong with the private universities in Nigeria. Based on this findings, few suggestions are made that private universities should aggressively embark on expansion of infrastructural facilities, more academic programmes and national university commission should ensure that old private universities that have existed since 2005 should accommodate minimum students of at least 10,000 – 15,000 or be closed.

Keywords: historical, access, private, universities, public policy, failure, expansion, accommodate

1. Introduction

Since 1999, private individuals, corporate bodies, and religious organizations have engaged in the provision of alternative university education. This opportunity focuses on quality and profit. Private participation in university education came as a result of government reforms that moved the education system closer to private alternative. This

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means education have the capability of decreasing the involvement of the governments on the provision, administration and funding of education as well as reducing the number of people using public university system. The establishment of private universities in Nigeria is not deregulation of universities as misconstrued by some scholars because of the extensive interposition of governmental activity that mediates their existence and functioning. The Federal Government licences private universities for operation. JAMB mediates the admission of students into their existence and functioning. The federal government licences private universities for operation, JAMB mediates the admission of students into these universities and the NUC regulates academic standards and monitors their continued fitness for existence. The concurrence of these strands of government activities in the existence and sustenance of private universities indicates that these entities are quasi-public actors and subjects to the standards of public law applicable to public universities. This paper therefore will look into the expansion policy in university education through the establishment of private universities and find solutions and suggestions for the way forward.

2. A Brief Historical Development of Private Universities in Nigeria, 1999-1919

On the 10th of May, 1999, licences were issued to the first set of private universities by National Universities Commission (NUC) which include Igbinedion University, Okada; Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo and Madonna University Okija (NUC, 2004: iv-xvi).

On the 31st of July, 2001, Bowen University, Iwo was also licenced. On 12th February, 2002 Benson Idahosa University, Benin City, Pan African University, Lagos and Covenant University Ota received their licences and approval. America University of Nigeria (ABTI) Yola was licensed in 2003.

However, Nigeria witnessed a significant breakthrough in the establishment of private universities. When Nigeria witnessed fifteen private universities as it came into existence; they are Redeemer's University, Lagos; Ajayi Crowther University Ibadan; Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin; Ceritas University, Amorji-Nike, Enugu; Cetep University, Onike-Yaba; Bingham University, Kanu, Katsina University, Katsina; Renaissance University, Ojiagu-Agbami, Bells University of Technology, Ota; Lead City University, Ibadan; Crawford University, Igbesa; Wukari Jubilee University, Abeokuta; Novena University, Kwale and University of Mka, Gboka.

Only one private university received approval in 2006 and that is Joseph Ayo Babalola University Ikeji-Arakeji. On the second of May, 2007, the Federal Executive Council approved applications for the establishment of eight (8) new private universities in Nigeria. The new universities approved are Obong University, Obong Inta, Akwa-Ibom State, Caleb University, Ikoyi, Lagos State; Fountain University, Osogbo, Osun State; Salem University Lokoja, Kogi State; Tansian University, Oba, Anambra State, Veritas University, FCT Abuja; Western Delta University, Oghara, Delta State and Wesley University of Science and Technology, Ondo State.

On the 24th of October 2007, Federal Executive Council (FEC) approved two new private universities which include the Achievers University, Owo Ondo State and the

African University of Science and Technology, Abuja, FCT. On 22nd of October, 2009, seven (7) new private universities were approved. They include Wellspring University, Evbubanos, Edo State, Paul University Awka, Anambra State, Rhema University Obema-Asa, Rivers State, Oduduwa University, Ipetumodu, Osun State; Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu-Nike, Enugu State and Nigerian Turkish Nile University, Abuja, FCT. This brought the number to 41, the number of private universities in Nigeria by 2010. A geographical representation on the list of private universities, year of establishment, location and state is shown below in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: A geographical representation on the list of private universities, year of establishment, location and state

S/N	Name of Institution	Date	Location	State	Type	Proprietorship
1.	Igbinedion University	1999	Okada	Edo	Conventional	Chief Gabriel Igbinedion
2.	Babcock University	1999	Ilishan Remo	Lagos	Conventional	Seventh Day Adventist
3.	Madona University	1999	Okija	Anambra	Conventional	Rev. Fr. (Prof) E. Edeh
4.	Bowen University	2001	Iwo	Osun	Conventional	Baptist Convention
5.	Benson-Idahosa University	2002	Benin City	Edo	Conventional	Bishop Benson Idahosa
6.	Pan-Africa University	2002	Lagos	Lagos	Specialised/ Post-graduate	Prof. Pat Utomi
7.	Convenant University	2002	Ota	Ogun	Conventional	Living Faith
8.	ABTI-American University of Nigeria	2003	Yola	Adamawa	Conventional	Alhaji Atiku Abubakar
9.	Redeemers University	2005	Mowe	Lagos	Conventional	Redeemed
10.	Ajayi-Crowther University	2005	Ibadan	Oyo	Conventional	Anglican
11.	Al-Hikmah University	2005	Ilorin	Kwara	Conventional	Islamic
12.	Caritas University	2005	Amprji-Nike	Enugu	Conventional	Catholic (The Sisters of Jesus the Saviour)
13.	CETEP City University	2005	Onike Yaba	Lagos	Conventional	Evangelical Church of West Africa
14.	Bingham University	2005	Karu	Nasarawa	Conventional	Evangelical Church of West Africa
15.	Katsina University	2005	Katsina	Katsina	Conventional	Islamic
16.	Renaissance University	2005	Ojiagu Agbani	Enugu	Conventional	Dr. Chimaroke Nnamani
17.	Bells University	2005	Ota	Ogun	Conventional	Chief (Gen) Olusegun

Celestina Imade Harry
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	of Technology					Obasanjo
18.	Lead City University	2005	Ibadan	Oyo	Conventional	Eduserve Consult Prof. Jide Oweeye
19.	Crawford University	2005	Igbesa	Ogun	Conventional	Apostolic Faith
20.	Wukari Jubilee University	2005	Wukari	Taraba	Conventional	JBC Seminary Inc. (Mission Orgaia) & Taraba Community Project
21.	Crescent University	2005	Abeokuta	Ogun	Conventional	Prince Bola Ajibola
22.	Novena University	2005	Kwale	Delta	Conventional	Mr. Chuks Ochonogor
23.	University of Mkar	2005	Gboko	Benue	Conventional	Nongu U Kristi U Sudan Hen TIV (NKST) or The Church of Christ in Sudan among the TIV
24.	Joseph Ayo Babalola University	2006	Ikeji-Arakeji	Osun	Conventional	Christ Apostolic Church
25.	Obong University	2007	Obong-Inta	Akwa Ibom	Conventional	Individual
26.	Caleb University	2007	Ikoyi	Lagos	Conventional	Individual
27.	Fountain University	2007	Osogbo	Osun	Conventional	Islamic
28.	Salem University	2007	Lokoja	Kogi	Conventional	Foundation Faith
29.	Tansian University	2007	Oba	Anambra	Conventional	Individual
30.	Veritas Delta University	2007	Oghara	Delta	Conventional	Catholic
31.	Western Delta University	2007	Oghara	Delta	Conventional	Individual
32.	Westley University of Science & Technology	2007	Ondo	Ondo	Science & Technology	Methodist
33.	Achievers University	2007	Owo	Ondo	Conventional	Individual
34.	African University of Science & Technology	2007	Abuja	FCT	Science & Technology	African Union
35.	Wellspring University	2009	Evbubanosa	Edo	Conventional	Individual
36.	Paul University	2009	Awka	Anambra	Conventional	Individual
37.	Rhema University	2009	Obeama-Asa	Rivers	Conventional	Individual
38.	Oduduwa University	2009	Hetumodu	Osun	Conventional	Individual

Celestina Imade Harry
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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA, 1999-2010

39.	Afe Babalola University	2009	Ugwomu-Nike	Enugu	Conventional	Chief Godfrey Okoye
41.	Nigeria Turkish Nile University	2009	Abuja	FCT	Conventional	Individual
42.	Adeleke University	2011	Ede			
43.	Baze University		Abuja	FCT		
44.	Landmark University	2011	Omu-Aran	Kwara		
45.	Samuel Adegboyega University	2011	Ogwa	Edo		
46.	Elizade University	2011	Ilara-Mokin	Ondo		
47.	Evangel University	2012	Akaeze	Ebonyi		
48.	Gregory University	2012	Uturu	Abia		
49.	Mcperson University	2012	Seriki Sotayo, Ajebo	Ogun		
50.	South Western University	2012	Okun-Owa	Ogun		
51.	Augustine University	2015	Ilara	Lagos		
52.	Christland University	2015	Owode	Ogun		
53.	Christopher University	2015	Mowe	Ogun		
54.	Hallmark University	2015	Ijebu Hele			
55.	Kings University	2015	Ode-Omu	Osun		
56.	Micheal & Cecilia Ibtu	2015	Owhcode	Delta		
57.	Mountain Top University	2015		Ogun		
58.	Ritman University	2015	Ikot-Ekpene	Akwa Ibom		
59.	Summit University	2015	Offa	Kwara		
60.	Edwin Clark University	2015	Kiagbodo	Delta		
61.	Hezekiah University	2015	Umudi	Imo		

Sources:

- 1) Punch Newspaper (2007, October 8);
- 2) The Mirror Newspaper (2007, May 4-10);
- 3) Harry (2009: 83-85);
- 4) Okojie, 2008;
- 5) Jamb Brochure, 2008.

2. Clarification of Concept: Access

As part of the key words in this paper, the term "Access" according to the New Lexicon Webster Dictionary (1991:5) means "*right of approach or right to consult.*" In other words Hornby, Cowie and Gimson (1987:5) define it as "*a way (in) to a place, opportunity, or means of reaching or approaching.*" Access is defined as the increase or widening of participation rates, retention rate and inter-institutional transfer in institutions of higher education, particularly for persons belonging to under-represented groups (Letuka, Maharasoja and Strydom, 2007). Woodrow and Crosier (1996) in Letuka, Maharasoja and Strydom (2007) interpret this definition further, illuminating the submission that access should transverse the enrolment frontiers and accomplish both the retention and completion agenda.

In the same perspective, access according to Dada (2004) is the right to receive formal education as distinct from informal education, while UNESCO (2003) puts it as ensuring equitable entry to tertiary educational institutions based on merit, capacity, efforts and perseverance. Access to university education and the lack of capacity of the system to absorb the number of students seeking admission to university education institutions continues to pose a serious problem. The National Policy on Education – NPE (2004) in accordance with the national goals and philosophy of education states that every Nigerian child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities, each according to his or her ability. The provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal system is, therefore the objective of the policy. This philosophy is in consonance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that everyone has a right to education.

Access in a broad spectrum, requires attention at both the staff and the student levels. In most developing countries like Nigeria, there is a need to attend to both student and staff access, but student access will be the focus of this work. Access to private university is therefore referred to as the opportunity to secure admission into private universities. Nwagwu (1999:114-115) identifies different dimensions of access to educational opportunity which includes:

- 1) **Access to School:** This means an availability of a formal educational institution to enroll in and within reasonable choice, distance and convenience.
- 2) **Access to Good Education:** This can be interpreted as schooling which is not synonymous with education. It is not enough to have physical structures. There has to be qualified teachers, well-motivated to do their work at any given time as well as adequate instructional materials and a conducive teaching and learning environment as to ensure good education.
- 3) **Education and Value-classification:** The way people perceive modern education, especially the benefits derivable from it, determines to a large extent, the nature and objectives of equalization of educational opportunity they will aspire to after. On the other hand the value-classification orientation will be

influenced by their cultural heritage, level of literacy and exposure to the modern world of science and technology.

- 4) **Competition and Natural Selection Process:** In a global sense, there is no where there is an unrestricted access to education at all levels of the system. As a matter of fact, there is always an educational pyramid, which siphons aspirants out through a natural and administrative tunnel – like selection process, a kind of quality control process.
- 5) **Socio-economic Backgrounds and Opportunities:** There is no time that the socio-economic background of students' families is equal and it is illusive to imagine that these can be "equalized". Therefore the demand or imposition of any tuition or boarding fees, levies, and other material and monetary collections will further worsen the problem of unequal educational opportunities.

In Nigeria, the criteria and procedures for access into private universities fall mainly into four categories:

- a) Successful completion of secondary schooling with five credits in relevant subjects.
- b) The candidate's score in Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) conducted by JAMB.
- c) Success in Post-UTME screening test of various private universities.
- d) Ability for the candidate to pay school fees and other charges in order to commerce registration processes.

The concept of access has been highlighted but the crux of the matter at this point is: Can the establishment of private universities lead to greater access?

3. The Expansion Policy in Nigeria University Education

The World Bank's philosophy has been that developing countries like Nigeria do not need higher education that, what Nigeria needs is more of technical schools. Now they shifted a little and virtually sold the same thing in a more sophisticated way that what the country needs is to build the basic education. These prevailing political and economic realities had an overarching effect on all sectors including education. There was devaluation of national currencies which in turn undermined the capacity of Nigeria's institutions to achieve their set goals. The conditions of service of public sector personnel in Nigeria plummeted while the standard of her institutions declined rapidly. There was withdrawal of government's support from social sector programmes like education and health. Nigerian government embraced the notion that higher education should be regarded as a private rather than a public good in the context in which majority of her citizens are living in abject poverty according to successive UNDP annual reports.

Therefore, one way in which Nigerian government had responded to the demand for higher education on the face of declining resources was to open the sub-sector to private investors. Thus, the then Head of State General Ibrahim Babangida, the then Military President gradually began to reverse some of the policies by his

predecessor. One issue re-visited was the ban on private universities which led to the breaking up of government's monopoly, enabling private investors to come on board.

In 1991, the federal government set up a commission on the Review of Higher Education in Nigeria which submitted its report titled "Higher Education in the Nineties and Beyond, 1993". The report popularly referred to as "the longe commission" recommended the establishment of private higher institutions. In section 10(i) of the report, the commission recommended that "*sponsorship/ proprietorship of institutions of higher education in future should be by the federal or state governments, a corporate body or any group of Nigerian citizens of high repute.*" The report further recommended guidelines for the establishment of private institutions of higher learning and sealed its position by concluding the recommendations under this term of reference thus:

"...the federal government should make law/rules on the basis of these recommendations to guide the implementation of the constitutional right of private citizens and corporate bodies to establish tertiary. Institutions and ensure that it is used constructively and under controlled conditions and criteria" (FRN, 1991:75).

The federal government accepted the above recommendations leading to the promulgation of the education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions Amendment Decree No. 9 of 1993), thereby paving way for the abrogation of federal or state government monopoly of university education. Osokoya (2008: 184). Supports that "*to promote access to university education, the federal government lifted the ban on the establishment of private university by the education*" National Minimum Standard and Establishment of Institution (Amendment) Act of 1993. That indeed led to the current renewed spate of establishment of private universities in the country.

In the same way, Okebukola (2006, Thisday, September 13) attests that the thrust of the new vision in access is to open up to private providers. This is the observable trend that is proposed to continue in the coming years. This means the establishment of more private universities.

Expansion and diversification of university education, driven by the demand of an upwardly mobile population and the needs of a globalized economy, are important factors underlying the rising demand for university education in Nigeria. The major contributing factors on the expansion policy include high population growth, expansion of basic and secondary education and the number and rate of growth of students that want university education. The demand for university education continues to outweigh its supply. See Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2: Extent of unsatisfied demand for university education
in Nigeria by academic session, 1996-2010

	Academic Year	Total Applications	Total Admission	Percentage Admitted	Percentage Unsatisfied Demand
1.	1996/97	376,827	65,055	14.88	85.12
2.	1997/98	398,804	77,245	19.37	80.63
3.	1998/99	321,368	78,560	24.45	75.55
4.	1999/2000	418,928	78,550	18.78	81.25
5.	2000/2001	467,490	56,277	10.75	89.25
6.	2001/2002	842,072	95,199	11.00	89.00
7.	2002/2003	994,381	51,845	5.20	94.80
8.	2003/2004	1,048,229	105,157	10.03	89.97
9.	2004/2005	939,051	122,482	14.62	85.38
10.	2005/2006	917,960	76,984	8.39	91.61
11.	2006/2007	804,090	95,524	11.88	88.12
12.	2007/2008	1,054,053	194,521	11.76	88.24
13.	2009/2010	1,182,381	N/A	N/A	N/A

Sources:

- 1) <http://www.ume.com.ng>;
- 2) Sunday Punch (2008, October 19);
- 3) Lawal (n.d);
- 4) Harry (2009);
- 5) Punch (2009, Wednesday, May 21);
- 6) Punch (2009, Wednesday, April 15);
- 7) Jamb Application & Admission Statistics (1996-2008).

From Table 1-2 above, it shows a clear case of public policy failure. Even when private universities were established in 1999, the percentage admitted continues to decrease while the percentage of unsatisfied demand remains high. The worst of these years was 2005/2006 session when 917,960 sat for University Matriculation Examination (UME) and only 8.39% which is 76,984 were admitted leaving 91.615 candidates not admitted. This implies that private universities have not significantly ameliorated the problem of access as expected. This explicates that the rationale, policy and vision for their existence, have not been met. As a matter of fact, with the number of private universities already established, it is expected that there will be a tremendous improvement on access to university education but the percentage not admitted will continue to soar higher unabated. In 1998/1999 before the advent of private universities, the percentage admitted was 24.45% which was the highest so far. Since that year the whole universities in Nigeria have not recorded such percentage of admitted candidates not even up to 15%. This is very poor and a clear indication that the purpose for the expansion policy in university education had been defeated woefully.

4. The Carrying Capacity of Private Universities in Nigeria

The carrying capacity means that students are admitted according to the facilities available. Those facilities include libraries, good staff/student ratio, accommodation in

both classrooms and hostels etc. The policy is expected to enhance quality (Oduwaiye, 2008). It is a known fact that the demand for university education is expanding coupled with the population growth in the institutions. The universities should be expanded according to the demand. Instead of the expansion to meet the demand of the National Universities Commission (NUC), the regulatory body for all Nigerian universities came up with what is known as carrying capacity. The NUC inspected some universities and found out that many are over populated and facilities are overstretched.

The carrying capacity of any university depicts the number of total students enrolment at any given time. Vis-à-vis the staff/student ratio, available infrastructural facilities, funding among other variables. The carrying capacity is also defined as the maximum number of students that the institution can sustain for qualitative education based on available human and material resources (NUC, 2005). With dwindling prospect of external sources of funding, most universities now resort to high students intake without taking into cognizance their respective carrying capacities, thus, compromising efficiency outrightly (Oghenekohwo, Adekola and Iyunade, 2007). However, this policy has become an impediment to access to university education as universities are careful not to exceed their capacity by high margins in order not to incur sanctions from the NUC. See Table 1.3 below.

Table 1.3: Current Enrolment and Carrying Capacity of Nigerian Universities, 2010

Type of Universities	Number of Universities	Current Enrolment	Percentage Enrolment	Capacity	Difference
Federal Universities	27	642,834	54.6%	531,099	+111,735
State Universities	36	465,166	41.4%	346,586	+118,580
Private Universities	39	49,884	4.0%	55,977	-6,093

Sources: NUC, 2010 & Harry, 2009.

Table 1.3 above excluded two private universities that run post-graduate programmes exclusively. They are Pan African University, Lagos for MBA and Ph.D programmes known as Lagos Business School and African University of Science and Technology, Abuja for M.Sc and Ph.D programmes in five disciplines which include Pure and Applied Mathematics; Computer Science and Engineering; Theoretical Physics; Material Sciences Engineering and Petroleum Engineering.

Presently, there is increase number of private universities in Nigeria which has exceeded the federal and states governments owned universities. However, the numerical strength which borders on access of the private universities does not reflect high students' enrolment. Despite the high number of private universities, they are currently contributing only 4.0% of students' enrolment as shown in Table 1.3. This is abysmally poor, taking into cognizance of the number. With the level of access provided by private universities, it is tantamount to nothing because the establishment of these universities is to expand access and if they could only provide these meager

students enrolment then, the purpose of their establishment has not been achieved yet. Enrolment figures of students in most of the private universities are so insignificant. Private universities can only boast of 49,884 students less than 50,000 of total enrolment of students in 39 private universities as at 2010 statistics. This is a clear indication of public policy failure.

However, the establishment of private universities is to ameliorate the percentage of unsatisfied demand for university education in Nigeria and since they cannot address this problem, the licences of some of these private universities need to be revisited or revoked. This total enrolment figure of private universities as shown above was about the same enrolment in one federal university. For instance, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, had total enrolment of 39,219 students and university of Maiduguri had a total enrolment of 38,514 students (Obasi, Akuchie and Obasi, 2010). The establishment of private university is always justified as a means of expanding access to university education in the country but in practical term, in case of Nigeria is a far-cry from reality. Enrolments show insignificant potential for growth based on evidence before us. The public policy expansion of access has failed woefully.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

The establishment of private universities has nevertheless opened up the space and windows of opportunity to teeming population seeking university education. The percentage is really negligible and insignificant taken into consideration the number of private universities vis-à-vis the percentage admitted. Recently, private universities can only boast of less than 5% access. This is very disappointing. The establishment has not significantly and positively affected the access dimension with the number of candidates unsatisfied. For the fact that they could not improve the admission quota, the expansion policy has failed to achieve the desired vision, target and purpose. In order to remedy the situation the following suggestions are proffered.

- 1) Private universities should recruit more academic staff to enhance the teacher/student ratio.
- 2) Private universities should introduce more academic programmes to accommodate more candidates.
- 3) Private universities should aggressively embark on expansion of infrastructural facilities.
- 4) There should be a vigorous overhaul of the existing facilities in private universities.
- 5) Tuition fees of some private universities should be looked into because they are too exorbitant to enhance access.
- 6) NUC should ensure that old private universities that have existed since 2005 should accommodate minimum students' enrolment of 10,000 or be shut down.
- 7) Private universities should source for more funds to beef up all segments that will enable NUC increase their carrying capacity.

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