

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES PROLIFERATION AND ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND WAY FORWARD

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ABSTRACT

Access to quality education in Nigeria had become the issue of concern for the Nigerian government. However, the existing public Universities are not enough to accommodate the admission applicants, however, in order to complement the governmental efforts. The Federal government grants license for the private individuals or organizations to establish private universities; yet, the students many students that apply for admission are not admitted. The problems however, lead to proliferation of the private universities and the existing private universities out numbered the public universities and the generality of people could not get access. The paper therefore focused on the concepts, the reasons, the associated problems and the effects on the quality education. It was suggested that the public education programme should be expanded towards equity, access and quality universities education and that the programme be adequately funded to revitalize the programme in Nigeria.

Keywords: Private Universities, Proliferations, Access, Quality Education, Problems and Way Forwards.

Introduction

It is generally agreed that education is instrument and effective tool for social, economic, political transformation and sustainable national development. It is generally believed that no nation can aspire to a greater height without providing quality education for her citizens FGN (2013). However due to the high respect accorded education in Nigeria, there are high demand for all levels of educational programme. According to Osuntokun (2019) the social demand for education in Nigeria had caused a list of problems like class over crowdedness leading to high teacher-students ratio, irrelevant educational provisions leading to unemployment, under employment, over schooling and out of school problems.

It should however be noted that in Nigeria, there are 169 universities which comprises 79 private universities to 43 Federal and 47 state universities, Obajemu (2019) noted that accommodate the secondary school graduate's the available universities could not accommodate the available students that apply for the universities admission.

According to Lawal (2017) the registered candidates for 2017 was 1,178, 425 while in 2018, the total number dropped to 1,662,762, however, only 414,696 (25%) are eligible for admission in 2018 while the eligible candidates for 2017 who rally 465,025 (27%) it should also be noted that the other candidate failed to get admission into the public universities and those candidate from rich parents ventured into the private universities while the candidate from the lower and middle class status that cannot afford the exorbitant fees stayed behind and become nuisance to the society and many become frustrated to constitute themselves into thugs, armed robbery, prostitutions, hire killers, rapists, just to get needs and mean end satisfied. Proliferation of private Universities therefore become issue of concern to the stakeholders in education and members of the society. the worrisome aspects of the proliferation are whether there will be expected quality education, with the exorbitant fees payment of the private universities whether the issues of equality access and quality universities be achieved in Nigeria, whether the proliferation of the private universities be able to cater for the educational concern issues of out-of-school children, internally displaced children and over schooling in the society.

Concept and History of Private Universities in Nigeria

Many definitions had been ascribed for the private universities in Nigeria. However, the general definition stands as the higher education that was established based on the independent policies, goals and privately founded by the individuals or group of people or mission. The private universities are smaller than the public universities in term of structure staff programme and students enrolment. It should be noted that the private universities are approved and established to complement the government efforts in the provision of university education to all sundry. Therefore, for effectiveness of private universities in Nigeria, the admission recruitment and funding policies are in the hand of the private individuals called the proprietor Ogunlade (2018).

The history of universities education in Nigeria can be traced back to 1999 when Sir Gabriel Osawan Igbiniedon established a private university in Osad in Edo state. The name was given after the founder, Igbiniedon University in Nigeria constituted a landmark in university education in Nigeria and consortium of development partnerships, research and teaching. There are seven colleges of faculties at the institution. Within the same year 1999 three private universities were established in 1999.

However, in the total number of approved private universities have increased to 79 which outnumbered the total number of 43 which is for the Federal universities in Nigeria. The increased rate of the Private universities in Nigeria however become a controversial issue among the stakeholders. The question is whether those private universities in Nigeria will be able to provide the expected quality university education for the Nigeria. Whether the funding of the private universities will quite different from those public universities, whether the policies required will be different, the researcher therefore seek to examine what can be the

root cause of the proliferation of the private universities in Nigeria and proffer solution that will enhance effective access and equity to Educational Provisions.

Factors Influencing Proliferation of Private Universities In Nigeria

Proliferation of private universities in Nigeria have been influenced by many factors prominently among which are:

High Social Demand for Education

Educational provision had become an essential government for national transformation and development. Since education had become social-responsibilities and right which everyone should enjoy as a citizen of any country. It is therefore noted that everyone wants to go to school. Every member society are demanding for education.

However, the high demand for education lead to high student population which the available resources could not accommodated. Also due to the flimsy excuse of the leaders that the government alone can provide education to all. It is on the basic that called for the proliferation of private educational system from the primary education to universities education (Kolawole 2018), Bello (2013)

Deregulation of educational system in Nigeria: Due to the fact that the educational provision should be shared responsibilities of everyone. In view of the policy, the stakeholders in educational system like the communities religion bodies, the philanthropist therefore become actively involved in the establishment and in the organization of educational programmes. The development therefore encouraged the active participation in the private institutions in Nigeria. Today however, most of the private universities are owned by international university (Atiku), Afe Babalola, Dr. Olusegun Obasanjo etc. churches like catholic church, An-Sarul-Islam etc. The private universities in Nigeria are established funded and controlled by the single individuals churches and Islamic societies. The aim is to bring the control and management of universities nearer to the people accessibility of universities to all and sundry. Politics in the administration of universities education in Nigeria. Since the public universities in Nigeria had been greatly affected by political undertone especially in the areas of university location, appointments, admission and in the quality control. Therefore, the need for the establish private universities came up in order to reduce the rate of god fatherism that had become perpetrated in public universities. The Proliferation of private universities in Nigeria will definitely reduce the perpetration of god fatherism and politics in the management of university education Ogundele 2018.

Ethnical issues in the public universities lead to the Proliferation of private universities in Nigeria. In Nigeria today, the public universities have been experiencing many ethical challenges like sexual harassment, examination malpractice, forgery of academic certificates, plagiarism, truancy, indolence, stealing, robbery, cheating etc. all the ethnic challenges are attributed to inadequate supervision, poor staff motivation, incessant strikes and stress and stressors. The problem therefore affect the quality of education provided; the causes of the ethnical challenges therefore influenced individuals, societies, association and religious bodies to think of establishing their own private universities which will be effectively supervised and given adequate total controls incessant strikes among the public universities.

Due to constant and incessant strikes among the public universities in Nigeria which lead to constant close down of the universities had encouraged the philanthropist and religious bodies to start their own independent universities. This is because the private universities operate based on their condition of services and autocratic supervisory techniques which does not call for strikes nor truncated institutional calendars. The low truncated calendars and high progression rates encourage optimum access to university education in Nigeria. Alabi (2014).

Nearest Neighbour Analysis of the public universities in Nigeria influenced the proliferation of the private universities in Nigeria. Afolabs (2007) defined nearest neighbour analysis as the strategies distribution of institutional location in an area. Oparinde (2012) also defined Nearest Neighbour Analysis as the degree of scattering and chattering of geographical area.

However, in Nigeria, most of the public universities are not equally distributed. The proliferation helps to equalize the access to the Nigerian Universities.

Private Universities an Access to Quality Educational in Nigeria

Due to high proliferation of private universities in Nigeria, today the numbers of the private universities in the country outnumbered the public universities in Nigeria. However, the issues that bordered the mind of the researcher is that whether the existed rate of proliferation will aid good access to quality university education in Nigeria. It should be observed that the proliferation of private universities failed in their operation towards the access to quality university education in Nigeria because of the following reasons:

Exorbitant and outrageous school fees: The establishment of private universities in Nigeria occurred in Nigeria purposely to complement the existing public universities. To display of the researcher, the high tuition fees charged by the private universities in Nigeria is out of poor man and middle man power reach. The tuition fees charged discouraged access to the private universities. According to the Nigeria universities commission (2019) the tuition fees range from Three Million Naira which is the highest school fees three hundred and fifty thousand naira. The range of the school fees is outrageous to the parental socio-economic status and many parents cannot afford to pay for such exorbitant tuition fees and as such debarred many students to wait for long and unexpected admission from public universities which their tuition fees stood at forty-five thousand naira only. However, the outrageous of the tuition fees affect access to quality universities school in private universities (Abubakar 2010) low Lecturer's qualification and expectations in private universities.

It is expected that the minimum qualification for lecturers in any university be it public or private universities must be Ph.D. or at worst master degree with computer literacy. It should be noted that most of the private universities do have capability of employing qualified lectures to handle most of their courses. According to Ibrahim (2005) which stated that most of the private universities looked for cheap labour force for their institute even some of the private university employed adjudge staff, some lecturers from the public universities as visiting lecturers. Most of the private universities always make use of cheap labours. With the operations of the private universities, there is problem of quality delivery when compared with the public universities that have all the qualified lecturers. (Ogundele and Jake (2017)

Inadequate Instituted Programme

Courses and programmes that attracted larger students population were not instituted in private schools, for instance, facilities of education and social sciences attract large students population but unfortunately, only few private universities are admitting students for these programme with large population. Such private universities that have faculties of education and social science are Al-Hikma and Lead city universities but all others private universities in Nigeria did not include education and social sciences in their programme. Therefore, reducing the access to the university education (Alexandra, 2008)

Low implementation of the university admission policy: the issue of quality delivery and quality assurance in the products of private universities are low. Afolabi (2002) revealed that there is significant relationship between the entry behaviour and the internal efficiency of the university graduates. It should be noted that the Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) (2017) reduced the entry qualification scores from 180 scores to 140 score for the public institution and 180 scores for the private universities college of education, polytechnics and monotechnics. Many private universities always lower their JAMB scores so as to get more candidates for admission. Though the lowering of admission scores has negative impacts on the quality of university education but increase access to university education in Nigeria.

Access and Quality control

Mechanism of the private universities in Nigeria: As Ogundele (2008) rightly said that the private institutions are characterized by high graduation rates, absence of strikes and truncated calendars, Autocratic supervisory styles, high teachers commitment, high job satisfaction and effective students' academic performance and high success rate. However, in Nigerian private universities the autocratic supervision of the management aid quality control in research, teaching, community services and institutional record keeping. The success rate and absence of strikes at the private universities attract access to the institutions mindless of the cost of private universities in Nigeria. The quality possess by the private universities encourage high patronage of the parents.

Finally, the quality of physical resource availability: Manga (2007) Durosaro (2012) and Aluwalola (2013) described physical resources as those facilities that are put in place and utilized for effective teaching-learning processes. The author cited examples of physical resources as building, instructional transportation, recreation, equipment loans and landscaping. However, Oyediji, (2013) state that the quality of the physical resources that are available in the school system determine the qualities of the education provided in such an institution. Yusuf (2014) before noted that the quality physical resources in private universities are not available when compared with those in the public universities in Nigeria. Ogundele and Taiwo (2015) also noted that the public institutions do complain for inadequate physical structures for both the staff and students use. What they would happen to the private universities that are solely control and founded; yet the students still patronize them for quality university education.

Suggestion

For enhancing access to quality education in Nigerian private university the following suggestions were made. There is the need for TETFUND intervention in the grants to the private universities in Nigeria. The federal government through the Nigerian universities commission (NUC) should raise the minimum standard for licensing the establishment of private universities and raise the cut off marks for students admission in order to enhance quality assurances in the private universities.

The university ranking should adequately be initiated to ensure the quality of physical Faculties the available lecturers and the quality products expectations at the private universities.

The cost of tuition fees be reduced so as to encourage many students to have access and select private universities as their choice of their institution.

There should be no discrimination in the staff development in the private universities in order to ensure quality research, teaching and communicating service.

Also, effective programme monitoring should be initiated towards encouraging global competitiveness of Nigerian private universities.

Finally, governance should be initiated towards providing conducive environment for educational system. Effectiveness of government will encourage access to both the public and private universities education in Nigeria without any discrepancies.

Conclusion

Based on the suggestions, it could be concluded that private universities in Nigeria will attract high parental patronage whatever be their challenges militating access and quality control. The proliferation of the private universities will be meaningful to all and sundry especially in Nigerian. The patronage will therefore aid quality assurance and they will be ranked high among other private universities at the global level.

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