

Private Sector Participation and the Development of University Education in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, 1999-2021: A Historical Analysis

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Abstract: The main thrust of this paper is to historicise the involvement of the private sector in the development of university education in Nigeria in the Fourth Republic. While the first set of private universities began during the Second Republic, the year 1999 marked the commencement of the birth of the second set of private universities in Nigeria. The year 2021 was when the last batch of private universities was granted provisional licences of operation by the Federal Government through the National Universities Commission. There is no doubt that the history of educational development in Nigeria has its origin in the activities of the private sector, that is, Christian missions. Their involvement in the development of western education in the country between the late 19th and 20th centuries was mainly confined to the provision of primary and secondary education. Up to the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999, the provision of university education in the country was exclusively the responsibility of both the Federal and the State governments. Although an attempt was made during the Second Republic, 1979–1983, to encourage private sector participation, this eventually failed. The present paper argues that availability and accessibility to high-quality university education can be meaningfully achieved through public-private collaboration as seen in developed countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Western Europe. Active involvement of non-state actors would help the government to mobilize financial resources to meet more pressing public service needs. The methodology adopted for this work is historical, qualitative and quantitative, utilising materials from both primary and secondary sources.

Keywords: Private Sector, University, Education, Development, Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Introduction

The importance of the provision of quality university education has been recognised as central to the promotion of national development in any society. There is no doubt that access to high-quality tertiary education enriches people's lives, increases their employment opportunities and helps to build a productive skills base to drive economic growth. Every responsive and responsible government wants relevant and efficient tertiary education that meets the needs of students, the labour market and the economy. Therefore, the need to work towards developing and implementing changes to how the educational system is funded, regulated and managed should be vigorously pursued. Hence, the effectiveness of tertiary education in achieving this vision depends largely on the quality of provision and the responsiveness of providers (public and private).

It is imperative to point out here that, in a rapidly changing social and natural environment, higher education plays a varied and complex role in societal development. Thus, without adequate higher education and research institutions providing a critical mass of skilled and educated people, no country can ensure genuine endogenous and sustainable development. Higher education has given ample proof of its viability over the centuries and of its ability to change and induce change and progress in society (Osborne, 2020).

Over the years, the responsibility of managing, funding, and supervising university education in particular and tertiary education in general has solely been that of the government; first, the Federal government, and later both Federal and state governments. This development has caused a number of problems for Nigerian tertiary education in general, such as poor quality, poor funding, the problem of equity/access and inefficiency of the system. These challenges have contributed to some of the reasons why none of our public universities has ever been rated among the top best universities both in the world and in Africa. In most developed countries such as the United States, Britain, and Canada among others, the provision of university education is not the sole responsibility of the government. Both the government and the private sector are major stakeholders in the provision of university education. In other words, they had embraced

the strategy of public-private partnership in tertiary education for a very long time (Patrinos, 2010). Most of the world's best universities are private universities, which are found in the developed countries mentioned above. Notable among them are Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Brown University, Brigham Young University and so on.

Although there is extant literature on the evolution of private universities in Nigeria such as Ball (2007), Osagie (2009) Olukoju (2019) and Adeyemi (2021) among others, none of these works critically interrogate the change and continuity in the growth and development of private universities within two decades of the emergence of the second set of private universities in Nigeria. While some of these existing works such as Ball and Osagie only focused on the evolution of the second set of private universities in Nigeria, Adeyemi's work was restricted to just a state in Nigeria. Between 1999 and 2021, the number of private universities increased from three (in 1999) to 99 (in 2021). By implication, the private sector has emerged as major stakeholder in the provision of university education in Nigeria. This is a major gap that this current research intends to fill in the historiography of the evolution and development of private universities in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The current study is a significant complement to the existing literature, with great emphasis on the role played by four successive civilian administrations (namely, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo; Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, Dr Goodluck Jonathan; and Major General Muhammadu Buhari [rtd]) through the approval of licences of operation presented before them by the National Universities Commission between 1999 and 2021.

It is against this backdrop that this discourse intends to interrogate private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, between 1999 and 2021. The paper is divided into five major sections. Section one is an introduction; section two deals with an overview of the evolution and development of university education in Nigeria between 1948 and 1999; section three focuses on the history of private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria between 1999 and 2021; section four interrogates the impact of private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria; while section five is the conclusion. The methodology adopted in this paper is historical and thematic, utilising materials from both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The main primary source used for the study was oral interview.

Evolution and Development of University Education in Nigeria, 1948-1999: An Overview

The evolution and development of university education in Nigeria during this period were attributed to both the colonial government and the post-independent government. First, the history of university education in particular and tertiary education in general in Nigeria could be traced to the colonial period. An attempt towards the evolution of tertiary education during the colonial period was facilitated by the educational reforms introduced by Mr ERJ Hussey, who was appointed as the Director of Education for Nigeria in 1929. In 1930, Hussey came up with a new Policy on Education, which addressed all the levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary). Prior to this time, the provision of western education, which was exclusively in the hands of Christian missions, was restricted to primary and post-primary (secondary) education. With the arrival of Hussey, the need to expand Nigeria's educational system wore a new garment. This development was said to have been facilitated by serious agitations of a few educated Nigerian nationalists, who saw unwillingness on the part of the colonial government to embark on a programme of educating Nigerians beyond the post-primary education level. Hussey's proposal on the review of Nigeria's educational programme resulted in the establishment of the first institution of higher education known as Yaba Higher College, Lagos, in 1932, but officially opening only in 1934 (Falola, 1991). Although this development was a major milestone in the history of higher education in colonial Nigeria, its establishment met intense criticism from Nigerian nationalists on the ground that it failed to meet their demand for quality higher education. Nigerian nationalists saw the creation of Yaba Higher College by the colonial government as serving colonial ideology through producing Nigerians who were playing subordinate roles, rather than stepping into the shoes of the top European officials in government and commerce (Osoba & Fajana, 1980). In spite of the criticism of Nigerian nationalists, mostly from Lagos and other parts of the South, the College remained the first higher education institution in the country up till 1948 when the first university was set up.

The campaign by Nigerian nationalists for the Africanization of the colonial civil service and the provision of more and better educational opportunities took a new dimension in the 1940s. These demands were said to have constituted a part of the global movement in the British colonial empire for the indigenisation of the key institutions of

government and the provision of appropriate educational facilities, without which indigenes who did not have requisite training would find it difficult to take over the running of their countries from the colonial officials and other expatriates. As a result of this, the colonial government, under the leadership of Oliver Stanley as the Colonial Secretary was forced to set up two different commissions geared towards university education in West Africa in particular in September 1943. These two commissions were the Asquith Commission and the Elliot Commission. While the Asquith Commission was set up purposely to look into university education in the British Empire (West Africa inclusive), the Elliot Commission was constituted mainly to look into the problem of university education in West Africa. The two commissions submitted their recommendations (which were similar), explaining that all colonial territories able to support university institutions should have them, provided that their standards were comparable to those of British universities. With respect to the Elliot Commission, there were two reports, namely, the majority report and the minority report. While the majority report recommended that two universities be established in Nigeria and the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and that Fourah Bay College be developed into a third with limited objectives, the minority report recommended only one university in Ibadan, Nigeria, to serve the whole of British West Africa (Osoba & Fajana, 1980, p. 581). The Colonial Office eventually accepted the minority report. Its acceptance led to the establishment of University College, Ibadan; and University College, Legon, Ghana in 1948. Both university colleges were affiliated the with University of London (Adeyemi 2021, p. 3).

The two higher education institutions continued to provide limited tertiary education to Nigerians during the colonial period. However, owing to intense agitations by Nigerian nationalists for the appointment of Nigerians to posts in the Government Senior Service, which required higher qualifications, the Colonial government was again forced to set up another commission in April 1959, known as the Ashby Commission, headed by Sir Eric Ashby. The commission was charged with the responsibility to conduct an investigation into Nigeria's needs in the field of post-School Certificate and Higher Education over the next twenty years (1960-1980). With respect to higher education, the commission, which submitted its report in September 1960, observed a dearth of trained teachers in secondary schools in spite of the obvious increase in demand for their services. Thus, it recommended the opening of universities, the institution of an

undergraduate degree in Education and the training of more teachers for Nigeria's secondary schools (Taiwo, 1980, p. 4). The report of the commission provided a good foundation for the development of degree programmes in teacher education in some of the tertiary institutions that were set up in immediate post-independence Nigeria (Fafunwa, 1974, p. 10).

The development of university education in post-independence Nigeria, especially between 1960 and 1999, could be interrogated under different historical political phases, namely, the First Republic, 1960-1966; First Phase of military rule, 1966-1979; Second Republic, 1979-1983; and Second Phase of Military rule, 1983-1999. During the First Republic, university education in Nigeria witnessed major development. Between 1960 and 1966, university education was expanded in Nigeria. The number of universities rose from one to five. This period also saw the establishment of regional universities beginning with University of Nigeria, Nsukka, set up by the Eastern Regional Government on 7 October 1960. In 1962, both the Western and Northern Regional Governments founded their own universities, namely, the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife), and the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, respectively. In the same year, the Federal Government established its own university known as University of Lagos (Omolewa, 1986, p. 220), which was based in Lagos, being the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria then. Having Nigeria become a republic in 1963, the Federal Government decided to upgrade University College, Ibadan, to a full-fledged university (now known as the University of Ibadan). These five universities were referred to as the First Generation Universities in Nigeria. Following the demise of the First Republic and the emergence of military rule in 1966, the provision of university education was put under the exclusive list. By implication, it was only the Federal Government that had the authority to establish universities in the country. Thus, between 1966 and 1979, which was the First Phase of military rule, eight universities were set up in different parts of Nigeria, namely, the University of Benin (1970), the University of Jos, the University of Maiduguri, the University of Port Harcourt, the University of Calabar, the University of Kano (now the Bayero University, Kano), the University of Sokoto (now the Usman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto) and the University of Ilorin. These universities were referred to as Second Generation Universities in Nigeria (Osokoya, 1994).

With the return to civil rule in 1979, leading to the birth of the Second Republic, the development of university education wore a new garment. The birth of the republic

was made possible through successfully introducing the 1979 Constitution. The constitution removed university education from the Exclusive List to the Concurrent List. By this constitutional provision, the State Governments were granted the constitutional right to set up their own universities. Thus, between 1979 and 1983, there was the emergence of both Federal and State-owned Universities. The first State-owned University to be established in Nigeria was the Rivers State University of Science and Technology (RUST) (now known as the Rivers State University), set up in October 1980. It was formerly known as the Rivers State College of Science and Technology established in 1972, but was upgraded to the university status by Governor Melford Obiene Okilo, who was the first civilian governor of old Rivers State (now made up of new Rivers State and Bayelsa State). Other civilian state governors equally set up their own Universities during this period. These state-owned universities were the Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, 1980, the Abia State University, Uturu, 1981, the Ogun State University, Ago-Iwoye, 1982 (now Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye) and Lagos State university, Ojo, 1983. Also, the Federal Government of Nigeria, under the leadership of Alhaji Shehu Shagari set up its own universities as well, which were specialised universities in the defunct three major regions of Nigeria (North, West and East). These universities were the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, 1980 (Eastern Region); the Federal University of Technology, Akure, 1981 (Western Region); the Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola, 1981 (Northern Region); and the Federal University of Technology, Minna, 1982 (Northern Region) (Yusuf, 2017, p. 33).

It is imperative to point out here that during this republic, an attempt was made towards the establishment of the first set of private universities in Nigeria. This became possible through the 1979 Constitution, which permitted individuals, private entrepreneurs and organisations to establish and fund universities in Nigeria along with Federal and State Governments. Consequently, about twenty-six private universities were established in different parts of Nigeria during this period. Notable among them were Imo Technical University, Imo State; Akoko Christian University, Akungba Akoko, Ondo State; God's University, Umuezena, Anambra State; Feyson University, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State and so on (Osagie 2009, p. 14). However, following the collapse of the Second Republic occasioned by the military takeover of power by Major General Muhammadu Buhari in December 1983, the regime promulgated a decree in 1984 (that is, Decree 19 of 1984), which led to the abolishment of private universities (Osagie 2009, p. 15).

The second phase of military rule, which began in December 1983 and lasted till 29 May 1999, was another important phase in the history of the development of university education in post-independence Nigeria. During this period of military rule, both federal and state-owned universities were founded by different military regimes. In 1985, for example, the military regime of Major General Muhammadu Buhari established the Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna. Also, the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993) initially established three specialised universities in the three defunct regions of Nigeria between 1988 and 1992, namely, the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (1988) in the Western Region, the Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi (1988) in the Northern Region, and the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (1992) in the Eastern Region. The regime further founded four new universities, namely, the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi (1988), the University of Abuja (1988), the University of Uyo (1991) and the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (1992). There was also an emergence of state-owned universities during this period. Notable among them were Ladoke Akintola University, Ogbomosho (1990); Benue State University, Makurdi (1992); Delta State University, Abraka (1992) and Imo State University, Owerri (1992) (Yusuf, 2017, pp. 30-53).

Although the military regime of General Abdulsalam Abubakar did not set up government-owned universities, it initiated the process that led to the birth of the second attempt at establishing privately owned universities in Nigeria. The regime (which lasted from 8 June 1998 to 29 May 1999), granted Provisional Licenses of operation through the Federal Executive Council on 20 April 1999 based on the recommendation of the National Universities Commission (a federal government regulatory agency charged with the responsibility of monitoring, supervising and maintaining quality academic activities among others in all Nigerian universities) to three private universities. On 10 May 1999, the proprietors of the three universities were presented with Certificates of operation. These three private universities were Babcock University, Illisan-Remo, Ogun State; Madonna University, Okija, Anambra State; and Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State. However, these three private universities did not commence operation under the regime. They became operational under the civilian administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who was sworn in on 29 May 1999, which marked the birth of the Fourth Republic (Makinde, 2022).

Historicising Private Sector Participation in the Development of University Education in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, 1999-2021

Generally, there were two major attempts at promoting private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria. While the first attempt began during the Second Republic and was unsuccessful, the second attempt started during the Fourth Republic and has been largely successful. The year 1999 marked the genesis of the second attempt at promoting private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria. As argued earlier, the foundation for the involvement of the private sector as a major stakeholder in the provision of university education for Nigerians was laid by the regime of General Abdulsalam Abubakar, which granted Provisional Licenses of operation to three universities. The licenses of operation of these universities were later validated by the administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo on 30 September 1999. This development enabled the three universities to commence academic activities.

Over the past decade, the globalisation and governing of education through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) have generated considerable debate as to their meaning, purpose, status and outcomes (Wang, 1999). This debate is particularly heated in the education sector because of the widely-held view that education is a complex social and political activity that should remain largely, if not wholly, in the public sector serving public interests. The rapid expansion of Public Private Partnership in Education (PPPE), which increasingly involves private actors in a range of public sector education activities, including more and more of the traditional arenas of public education systems: policy-making/formulation, curriculum development, education provision, inspection/supervision/monitoring and management, has been well documented in the literature (Hatcher, 2006; Ball, 2007). While some observers argued that PPPE is simply a newer, friendlier face on a longer-standing "privatisation of education" agenda (Hatcher, 2006), others posited that it is an innovative means of financing education that draws upon the best of the public and the private spheres with the potential to resolve deep systemic problems in education systems, such as access, quality and equity (King, 2009). Therefore, whatever the veracity of either position, PPP, which was initially restricted to other sectors, has become a major educational initiative adopted by both developed and developing countries since the birth of the new millennium. For example,

the adoption of PPP by the United States, the United Kingdom and Western Europe in the 1990s, in the education sector in particular, was geared towards bringing the management practices of the private sector into the public sector, improving competitiveness and increasing efficiency. The understanding was that it would make public expenditure more effective and, in some cases, would attract financial investment from the private sector. It was also believed that partnership in education would bring in more finances to run the ailing educational system as well as improve the quality of provision through raising management standards in educational institutions (Hoxby, 2003, pp. 9-65).

Given the significant educational challenges confronting developing countries' tertiary education and the potential need to increase the accessibility, quality, efficiency and accountability of the sector, the adoption of public-private participation in tertiary education became imperative. The need to explore this innovative way of financing and delivering quality university education efficiently and effectively to Nigerians was given adequate attention by the Federal Government of Nigeria following the birth of the Fourth Republic. This could be noticeable in the increase in the number of private universities from three in 1999 to ninety-nine in 2021. This increase was attributed to the frantic efforts of successive civilian administrations that came into power during this period. Owing to the liberalisation of tertiary education by Decree 9 of 1993 (which was not implemented until 1999), which sets strict standards to be met before the National Universities Commission, several private individuals, religious organisations, corporate bodies and entrepreneurs in the country submitted their applications, which culminated in the approval of their universities by the Federal Executive Council. Between 1999 and 2021, Nigeria was governed by four different civilian administrations, namely, the Chief Olusegun Obasanjo Administration (1999-2007), the Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua Administration (2007-2010), the Dr Goodluck Jonathan Administration (2010-2015), and the General Muhammadu Buhari (ret'd) Administration (2015-2023). The administration of these four civilian presidents could be grouped into two distinct political parties, namely, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) administration (which comprised the Chief Olusegun Obasanjo Administration, the Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua administration and the Dr. Goodluck Jonathan Administration) and All Progressives Congress (APC) administration (which involved the General Muhammadu Buhari (ret'd) Administration). While the PDP administration lasted between 1999 and 2015, the APC

administration began in 2015. It is imperative to point out here that during each civilian administration, a number of private universities were approved. Aside from the initial three private universities, whose licences of operation were validated by the administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the administration approved an additional 28 universities, while the administration of Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua granted approval to nine private universities, the administration of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan granted approval to 20 private universities. Between 1999 and 2015, a total number of 60 private universities were approved by the PDP administration (which was in power for sixteen years) in Nigeria.

On 29 May 2015, Nigerian democracy witnessed a major political transformation, with the then ruling party (PDP) becoming the opposition and the then opposition party (APC) becoming the ruling party. This became possible as a result of the success of the 2015 Presidential Election in which the then incumbent President, Dr Goodluck Jonathan (PDP candidate) was defeated by now-incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari of APC; and successfully handed over the reins of power on 29 May 2015. Having taken over power, he continued with the policy of liberalisation of tertiary education in the country. Between 2016 and 2021, under the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, 39 new private universities were approved by the Federal Executive Council in different parts of Nigeria. Thus, within the space of 22 years of the birth of the Fourth Republic, a total of 99 private universities were established by private individuals, corporate bodies and religious organisations. The table below shows the list of approved private universities by the Federal Government of Nigeria as of 2021.

Table 1. List of Approved Private Universities in Nigeria, 1999-2021

S/N	Names of Universities	Year of Establishment
1	Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo	1999
2	Igbinedion University, Okada	1999
3	Madonna University, Okija	1999
4	Bowen University, Iwo	2001
5	Covenant University, Ota	2002
6	Pan African University, Lagos	2002
7	Benson Idahosa University, Benin City	2002
8	American University of Nigeria, Yola	2003
9	Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo	2005
10	Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin	2005
11	Bingham University, New Karu	2005
12	Caritas University, Enugu	2005
13	Al-Qalam University, Kastina	2005
14	Redeemer's University, Ede	2005
15	Crawford University, Igbesa	2005
16	Lead City University, Ibadan	2005
17	Bells University of Technology, Lagos	2005
18	Kwararafa University, Wukari	2005
19	Crescent University, Abeokuta	2005
20	Novena University, Ogume	2005
21	Renaissance University, Enugu	2005
22	University of Mkar, Mkar	2005
23	Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji	2006
24	Caleb University, Imota	2007
25	Fountain University, Osogbo	2007
26	Obong University, Obong Ntak	2007
27	Salem University, Lokoja	2007
28	Tansian University, Umunya	2007
29	Veritas University, Abuja	2007
30	Wesley University, Ondo	2007
31	Western Delta University, Oghara	2007
32	Achievers University, Owo	2007
33	African University of Science and Technology, Abuja	2007
34	Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti	2009
35	Rhema University, Owerinta	2009
36	Nile University of Nigeria, Abuja	2009
37	Oduduwa University, Ipetumodu	2009

S/N	Names of Universities	Year of Establishment
38	Wellspring University, Evbuobanosa	2009
39	Paul University, Awka	2009
40	Godfrey Okoye University, Ogwuomu-Nike	2009
41	Adeleke University, Ede	2011
42	Baze University, Abuja	2011
43	Landmark University, Omu-Aran	2011
44	Samuel Adegboyega University, Ogwa	2011
45	McPherson University, Seriki Sotayo	2012
46	Elizade University, Ilara-Mokin	2012
47	Southwestern University, Okun-Owa	2012
48	Gregory University, Uturu	2012
49	Evangel University, Akaeze	2012
50	Summit University, Offa	2015
51	Edwin Clark University, Kaigbodo	2015
52	Michael & Cecilia Ibru University, Orode	2015
53	Ritman University, Ikot-Ekpene	2015
54	Hezekiah University, Umudi	2015
55	Augustine University, Lagos	2015
56	Chrisland University, Abeokuta	2015
57	Mountain Top University, Ibafo	2015
58	Hallmark University, Ijebu-Itele	2015
59	Kings University, Ode-Omu	2015
60	Christopher university, Mowe	2015
61	Kola Daisi University, Ibadan	2016
62	Anchor University, Ayobo	2016
63	Crown Hill University, Eiyenkorin	2016
64	Coal City University, Enugu	2016
65	Clifford University, Owerrinta	2016
66	Arthur Javis University, Akpoyubo	2016
67	Legacy University, Okija	2016
68	Dominican University, Ibadan	2016
69	Admiralty University, Ibusa	2017
70	Spiritana University, Nneochi	2017
71	Precious Cornerstone University, Oyo	2017
72	PAMO University of Medical Sciences, Port Harcourt	2017
73	Atiba University, Oyo	2017
74	Eko University of Medical and Health Sciences, Ijanikin	2017
75	Skyline University, Kano	2018

S/N	Names of Universities	Year of Establishment
76	Greenfield University, Kaduna	2019
77	Dominion University, Ibadan	2019
78	Trinity University, Yaba	2019
79	Westland University, Iwo	2019
80	Al-Istiqama University, Sumaila	2021
81	Anan University, Kwall	2021
82	Ave Maria University, Piyanko	2021
83	Capital City University, Kano	2021
84	Claretian University of Nigeria, Nekede	2021
85	Edusko University, Bida	2021
86	Havilla University, Nde-Ikom	2021
87	James Hope University, Lagos	2021
88	Karl-Kumm University, Vom	2021
89	Khadija University, Majia	2021
90	Maranathan University, Mgbidi	2021
91	Maryam Abacha American University of Nigeria, Kano	2021
92	Mewar University, Masaka	2021
93	Mudiame University, Irrua	2021
94	NOK University, Kachia	2021
95	Philomath University, Abuja	2021
96	Thomas Adewumi University, Oko-Irese	2021
97	Topfaith University, Mkpatak	2021
98	University of Offa, Offa	2021
99	Ahman Pategi University, Kwara State	2021

Source: <https://www.nuc.edu.ng>. Accessed 10 March 2022

Importantly, the establishment of private universities in Nigeria during this period became a major competition between indigenous entrepreneurs on the one hand, and religious organisations on the other. As a result of this development, there emerged two major categories of private universities in Nigeria, namely, faith-based private universities and non-faith-based private universities. While faith-based private universities were the universities established by religious organisations, non-faith-based private universities were the universities established by private individuals and private entrepreneurs. Faith-based private universities could be subdivided into two, namely, Christian faith-based private universities and Muslim faith-based private universities. Christian faith-based private universities were the universities established by different

Orthodox and Pentecostal Missions, which included Babcock University (Seventh Day Adventist Church), Ajayi Crowther University (Anglican Mission), Bowen University (Baptist Mission), Wesley University (Methodist Mission), Redeemer's University (Redeemed Christian Church of God), Anchor University (Deeper Life Bible Church), Samuel Adegboyega University (Apostolic Church) and so on. Muslim faith-based private universities were the universities set up by different Islamic organisations such as Fountain University (Nasrul Lahi L Fathi Society-NASFAT) and Al-Hikman University (AbdulRaheem Oladimeji Islamic Foundation-AROIF). Also, the non faith-based private universities could be sub-divided into two main categories. They were universities established by private individuals (who were either Christians or Muslims) such as Lead City University, Caleb University, Afe Babalola University, and Edwin Clark University; and universities established by private entrepreneurs such as Elizade University and Oduduwa University.

The impact of the Private Sector Participation on the Development of University Education in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic: A Preliminary Assessment

Having briefly historicised the private sector's participation in the evolution and development of university education in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, it is imperative to critically analyse their impact on the development of university education in Nigeria during this period. Evidences from primary (mainly oral interview) and secondary sources revealed that private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised. Between 1999 and 2021, the private sector positively impacted the development of university education in Nigeria in no small measure.

One of the major impacts of private sector participation on the development of university education in Nigeria could be seen in the accessibility to university education. The existence of private universities in Nigeria since 1999 has helped to provide additional opportunities to prospective Nigerian undergraduates who could not gain admission into public universities (federal and state) due to limited spaces. There is no doubt that there is a huge demand for university education in Nigeria. This demand could be seen in the total number of candidates sitting for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation

Examination (UTME), which is conducted yearly by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB). The table below shows the breakdown of the total number of candidates that participated in the UTME between 2016 and 2020, as well as those that were eventually admitted.

Table 2. Breakdown of Candidates that participated in the UTME and those Admitted in all the Nigerian Universities, 2016 and 2020 (Selected)

S/N	Year	Total Application	Total Quota	Total Admitted	Unused
1	2016	1,557,017	-	405,467	-
2	2017	1,687,551	-	418,391	-
3	2018	1,558,686	575,687	445,318	130,369
4	2018	1,808,334	560,613	444,947	115,666
5	2020	1,855,072	601,775	422,453	179,322

Source: IO Oloyede, "State Ownership Dynamics, University Councils and The Need for a New Social Contract between Society and University". Paper presented at the 6th Biennial Conference of the Committee of Pro-Chancellors of State-Owned Universities in Nigeria, March 22, 2022

The table above reveals the total number of applicants as well as those that were eventually admitted into various Nigerian universities (both public and private) between 2016 and 2020. From the table, one could clearly see that not all those who sought for admission into various Nigerian universities were eventually admitted. Besides, virtually none of the universities met their yearly quota. This could be attributed to a number of reasons, such as the problem of funds, as well as the challenge of incomplete results and other admission requirements on the part of the admission seekers.

Further justification for the contribution of the private sector to the accessibility of higher education in Nigeria can be seen in table 3 below, which provides detailed statistics of degree admission offered to prospective undergraduates by both public and private universities between 2010 and 2022.

Table 3. Degree Admission by Ownership, 2010-2022

	Federal Universities	State Universities	Private Universities	Total Figure
Figure	2,579,054	1,334,536	273,982	4,187,572
Percentage	61.5%	31.87%	6.57%	100%

Source: Oloyede (2022)

The above table showcases the total number of candidates admitted into the three main categories of universities in Nigeria (federal, state and private) between 2010 and

2022. From the table, one can clearly see that all three main categories of Nigerian universities offered admission to prospective Nigerian undergraduates, though in varying number and percentage during this period. It is evident from the table that while the federal universities took the lead with 2,579,054 (61.5%), and were immediately followed by the state universities with 1,334,536 (31.87%); private universities took the least with 273,982 (6.67%). Arguably, if there were no private universities in Nigeria during this period, the number accepted by them would have been deprived of admission due to limited spaces in the public universities. In fact, as shown in Table 2, virtually none of the universities met their yearly quota of the total number of candidates that were to be admitted. Therefore, the presence of private universities in Nigeria has helped to solve the problem of the lack of admission for prospective Nigerian undergraduates whose parents could afford the high fees paid to the universities in question.

The provision of quality tertiary/university education was another major impact of the presence of private universities in Nigeria since 1999. Quality tertiary education is determined by three main pillars, which are the availability of qualified academic staff; availability, quality and utilisation of learning resources and availability of a safe and conducive learning environment. One major instrument for measuring the presence of these three pillars was the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities. Webometrics Ranking of World Universities, which is an initiative of the Cybermetrics Lab, a research group of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) located in Madrid, started in 2004. The main aim of the Webometrics Ranking is to improve the presence of academic and research institutions on the web and to promote the open access publication of scientific results (Webometrics, 2022). Although not all the existing private universities possess these pillars, some of them do. In fact, some private universities in Nigeria have distinguished themselves for the provision of quality university education in Nigeria. These are Covenant University, Redeemer's University, Babcock University and Bowen University. For instance, according to the January 2022 Webometrics Ranking of Nigerian Universities, Covenant University emerged as the second best university in Nigeria in particular. Of the 100 Nigerian universities that were ranked in 2020, 20 of the universities were private universities, occupying various positions. In fact, some of the private universities were ranked ahead of most public universities in the 2020 Webometrics Ranking such as Covenant University (2nd position), American University of Nigeria (31st position), African University of Science and Technology (35th position),

Skyline University of Nigeria (36th position), Landmark University (37th position), Redeemer's University (45th position). These universities were ranked ahead of Kwara State University (46th position), Michael Okpara University of Agriculture (47th position), Abia State University (48th position), Federal University, Dustinma (49th position), Edo University (50th position) and so on (Webometrics, 2022).

In terms of the availability, quality and utilisation of learning resources and the availability of safe and conducive learning environment to achieve quality university education in Nigeria, some private universities have made their mark. A good example is Redeemer's University. In 2014, the African Centre of Excellence for the Genomics of Infectious Disease (ACEGID) was established at Redeemer's University. The ACEGID was instrumental in containing the outbreak of Ebola in Nigeria in 2014. Since 2014, the centre has been responsible for diagnosing and containing deadly infectious diseases such as Ebola, Malaria, Lassa Fever and COVID-19. Also, with the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, ACEGID Centre at Redeemer's University was named by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and by the African Centre for Disease and Control (ACDC) as an African reference laboratory for genome research. It was not just a Nigerian centre, but also one of the regional repositories and bioinformatics centres in the continent of Africa. The centre was one of the laboratories that were launched by WHO and ACDC for the purpose of reinforcing genome sequencing of the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the virus that causes COVID-19 in Africa. This international recognition given to Redeemer's University was attributed to the availability of qualified academic staff and learning resources, as well as the conducive learning environment in the university. The Centre, since its recognition, has been sharing information with the Nigerian public on how to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 as well as mapping the first SARS-CoV-2 genome sequence in Africa.

Human capital development/manpower development constitutes another impact of the existence of private universities in Nigeria. According to Okoroafor (2010, p. 71), education and training are major components of human capital development. Erluwua (2007, p.116) sees human capital development as a process of increasing human knowledge, enhancing human skills in vocational and technical education for the purpose of increase in productivity and stimulating the resourcefulness of trainees. Therefore, the achievement of human capital development in any country requires the promotion of different educational programmes, such as the establishment of tertiary institutions for

the training of skilled labour. Since the active participation of the private sector in university education in Nigeria, private universities had contributed to the increase in the number of skilled labour (such as lawyers, scientists, doctors, engineers, nurses, academics, accountants, mass communicators, architects) being produced yearly in the country. As argued by Olukoju (2019, p. 82), some private universities have succeeded in carving out a niche for themselves in certain specialist disciplines, where the concentration of funds and facilities have produced some noteworthy results. He further explains that the performance of graduates of Afe Babalola University and Bowen University in the Nigerian Law School Examinations offers good illustration. Although the numbers of manpower being produced yearly by all the private universities in the country do not match with their public counterparts, their immense contribution to human capital development in many areas of national need remains undeniable. Evidence from oral interviews conducted revealed that some academic staff members who are lecturing in public universities in Nigeria today obtained their doctorate degrees from private universities such as Babcock University and Igbinedion University.

The maintenance of a stable academic calendar in Nigerian universities was another effect of the existence of private universities. As argued by Olukoju (2019, p.84), private universities have succeeded in demonstrating to the whole world that the implementation of five-year strategic plans, which used to be the norm in Nigerian public universities up to the 1970s and is commonplace in other countries, can be re-instituted in Nigeria. This is one of the advantages that private universities have over public universities, which has resulted in even people of middle class choosing them, in spite of their exorbitant tuition fees. This could be corroborated by the statement of Olaide (2018, pp. 1-4) that the maintenance of a stable academic calendar was the initial selling point of private universities in Nigeria. He further explains that these universities had promised and consistently guaranteed that their students would matriculate and graduate within the stipulated time frame of their course of study. The maintenance of a stable academic calendar has become a mirage in most public universities, a fact attributed to incessant strikes being initiated by different unions within public universities such as the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), the Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU) and the National Association of Academic Technologists (NAAT). Although the unions should not be blamed for going on strike, because this constitutes one of the strategies by which the governments (both federal and

state) are being forced to carry out their obligations to public universities, yet the incessant strikes had contributed largely to frequent disruptions of the university academic calendar.

The existence of private universities in Nigeria has resulted in the emergence of two major important voluntary associations geared towards the development of university education in Nigeria, namely, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Registrars of Nigerian Private Universities (CVCRPU) and the Committee of Pro Chancellors of Private-owned Universities (CPCPU). Each of the Committees appoints its own Chairman on a rational basis for a period of two years. For instance, while Prof. K.A Adeyemi (VC, Lead City University, Ibadan) is the current Chairman of CVCRPU (Kuku, 2022), Prof. Tunde Adeniran, the Pro-Chancellor of Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti, is the current Chairman of CPCPU (Jacob, 2022). The establishment of these two independent associations was facilitated by the Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities (CVCNU). These two associations are major stakeholders and voices in university education in Nigeria. They have continued to play an important role with respect to the maintenance of high academic standards and excellence in private universities in order to compete with public universities in Nigeria in particular and other universities in the world in general. The voices of the two associations were well pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, in which all universities (both public and private), as well as other educational institutions, were shut down based on the directive of the Federal Ministry of Education through the National Universities Commission (NUC) on 23 March 2020. In a separate communique, each of the associations wrote to the NUC providing suggestions and guidelines to enable private universities to re-open. Their communique was based on well-articulated reasons which showed that private universities are in compliance with the requirements of the protocols of the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 ensuring that the universities can re-open in a safe and secure environment (Olagbemi, 2020).

The promotion and maintenance of high moral standards among students was a significant impact of private universities in Nigeria. The responsibilities of universities in particular and tertiary education institutions in general go beyond academics (teaching, learning and research). Universities are supposed to be important centres of forming social morality. This belief is premised on the ground that for any graduate to be awarded a degree, he or she must have been found to show proof of “character and learning”. Thus,

the university's greatest potential in influencing the moral development of students is in the contribution that it can make to their intellectual development (Terrance, 1991). Although formal education is but one influence among many affecting character development, in our society it is the chief instrument of intellectual development. In this regard, private universities, most especially faith-based universities, have made their contribution. Without a doubt, a modicum of decency and civility underpinned by faith-induced ethical values is being instilled in students in most faith-based private universities (Olukoju, 2019, p.82). In fact, most parents prefer to send their children to faith-based private universities, not minding the cost, due to issues of moral decadence in most public universities such as indecent dressing, drug abuse, cultism, and violence among others. Although there are rules and regulations against these immoral behaviours in public universities, these social vices continue to thrive. The situation is different in most faith-based private universities. Rules and regulations against social vices are not just put in place; they are enforced, and appropriate sanctions are meted out on the culprits. One major faith-based private university notable for the strict maintenance of high moral standards among students in Nigeria is Covenant University. One major advantage that faith-based private universities in particular have over public universities in the promotion and maintenance of high moral standards among students is that they operate a purely residential university system unlike public universities, which operate both residential and non-residential systems. This has helped private universities in ensuring close monitoring of their students.

Concluding Remarks

The foregoing discourse has provided a detailed historical analysis of the evolution and development of private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria's Fourth Republic between 1999 and 2021. It argued that the first major attempt at promoting private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria was traced to the Second Republic, which lasted between 1979 and 1983. This first attempt was rendered unsuccessful by the abolition of twenty-six private universities by the regime of Major General Muhammadu Buhari through the promulgation of a decree in 1984. The situation remained the same until the return to civil rule in 1999. Although a decree on the liberalisation of tertiary education was issued by the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida in 1993, it was not implemented until 1999, when General Abdulsalam Abubakar became the 8th military head of state of Nigeria. He initiated the second attempt towards the promotion of private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria by granting licences of operation to the first set of private universities in Nigeria in May 1999. The licences of operation of these three universities were later validated by the civilian administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in September 1999. Between 1999 and 2021, the successive civilian administrations that emerged in the country made frantic efforts towards encouraging private-sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria. This is reflected by the fact that there was no administration during this period that did not grant approval to the applications from private individuals, corporate bodies and religious organisations presented before it through the agency of the Federal Government, that is, the National Universities Commission. As a result of this, the number of private universities increased from three in 1999 to 99 in 2021. By implication, the number of private universities doubled the total number of universities in the country, the number of public universities in Nigeria being 98 (with 45 Federal universities and 53 State Universities).

The impact of private sector participation in the development of university education was critically identified and discussed. The study specifically interrogated the social impact of the existence of private universities in Nigeria between 1999 and 2021. The major social impact of the existence of private universities highlighted and discussed included the provision of accessibility to university education, provision of human capital

development, maintenance of high moral standards among students and the maintenance of a stable academic calendar among others. The study concluded that though private universities during this period were confronted with a number of challenges such as inadequate funding, low enrolment, and inadequate academic staff among others, the private sector remains a major stakeholder in the provision of university education in Nigeria. In all, this study is a complement to existing body of knowledge on the history of private universities in Nigeria.

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