

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR QUALITY CONTROL

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Abstract

The deregulation of the economy in the wake of the present democratic administration in 1999 saw the emergency of private universities. Recently, the federal government has initiated momentous reforms in the University sub-sector, designed to promote institutional autonomy, strengthen governance and entrench mechanisms for quality assurance and control. However, there are serious allegations that the public university system in Nigeria is characterized by poor funding, high students' wastage, huge unsatisfied demand-supply gap, lack of critical educational inputs and incessant industrial unrest. Whereas university autonomy and academic freedom only exist in principle, institutional mechanisms of quality control have been weakened by the centrifugal forces of politics of ethnic balancing. Although the contention is that the standard of education is diminishing, attempts at improving the system's dysfunctions have been incremental hence Nigerian Universities are at the risk of losing their competitive edge. The increasing demand for university education, the growing importance of knowledge economy coupled with the grim logic of globalization has necessitated the establishment of 23 private Universities. The emerging private universities, if properly supervised, will constitute engines for manpower development and a critical locus for innovation and research. This paper examines private universities in Nigeria: implications for quality control. The paper discusses the rationale for the emergence of private universities, the critical issues of educational standards (quality) and the mechanisms and strategies for quality control in private universities. The paper highlights the role of quality control bodies such as the NUC and the challenges facing them. The paper advocates reciprocity of capacity and accountability as an effective paradigm for improving the quality of education in private universities. The paper concludes with recommendations that private universities adopt market responsive, "enterprise culture" curricula geared towards production and commercialization rather than continue with the conventional system, which is in dissonance with the dynamics of the labour market.

Introduction

The world over, universities are identified as critical engines for socio-economic and political development. Universities have become a primary locus for innovation, expanding the pool of high caliber manpower to address the challenges of underdevelopment. In Nigeria, education is seen as an instrument for development and national integration. According to National Policy on Education (2004), the teaching and research functions of higher educational institutions have an important role to play in national development particularly in development of high level manpower.

Specifically, the aims of higher education in Nigeria as articulated in the NPE include:

- (a) The acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value-orientation for the survival of individual and society.
- (b) The development of intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environment.
- (c) The acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community.
- (d) The acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environments.

The policy further states that higher educational institutions should pursue their goals through:

- I. teaching
- II. research
- III. the dissemination of existing and new information
- IV. Being a storehouse of knowledge (NPE, 2004)

The exponential expansion of the university system since the 1980's amidst complaints of dwindling standards led the federal government to adopt measures designed to control the quality of education. Some of these measures include: the closure to outreach centers or satellite campuses, introduction of rigid entry requirements such as the post JAMB aptitude test, unduly long duration of programmes and the transfer of regulations of regular programmes to Distance Learning Programme. The Federal Government has embarked on some forward-looking policies to reform the University System.

In July 2001, universities were given full responsibility for institutional governance, although some areas of the policy thrust are still contentious. In March 2002, a National Summit on Higher Education was held to examine the management, funding curriculum relevance and access into universities. There is a mass of evidence to show that the existing curriculum is not only defective but also lacks quality. The NUC accreditation exercise in 2000 showed that of the 1,185 academic programmes, only 11% were given full accreditation, (NUC, 2001). In the face of mystification of access to university education reduced levels of funding. Besides, the requirements to run Universities according to private sectors principles and the dominance of managerial and entrepreneurial approaches to higher education have occupied the centre stage in educational management. What has become fashionable in Universities around the world is a shift from basic to applied research, with emphasis on the nexus between education and the economy, and greater concern with issues of intellectual property rights and the prioritization of research for product development and commercialization. (Mala Singh, 2001). These trends are bringing Universities in line with influential global paradigms and best practices.

Nigeria has the largest university system in the Sub-Saharan Africa. Enrolments grow at a rapid growth rate of 12% with an average staff-student ratio of 1:21 in the Sciences; 1:25 in Engineering, 1:37 in Law and 1:37 in Education. Efforts in recent times to win the confidence of recipients, to improve the quality of education are vitiated by acute shortage of high level manpower. In 1997 and 1999, the number of academic staff declined by 12%. This is most conspicuous in engineering, medicine and business disciplines (NUC, 2002). A substantial chunk of the high caliber manpower has been consumed by the long term brain drain. At present, the university system has only about 46% of its estimated staffing needs.

The Nigerian university system is yet to grapple with the **New Innovation System**, which has been in vogue in the advanced countries. Universities around the world now compete nationally and

internationally for quality staff and students. This is because innovation involves creativity and resourcefulness. The competition has been made keener by globalization, which again constitutes a major challenge to the Nigeria University System. Another challenge is the expansion of higher education systems coupled with the need for universities to become less dependent on government funding. The challenge to maintain systematic efficiency and stability is also daunting.

The phenomenon of brain drain is worsened by the low reward of staff increasing workloads and teacher-pupil ratio-a corollary of system expansion, student's irredentism and teacher militancy. Brain drain has in turn been compounded by lack of capacities for managing the large and complex university system. Whereas the application of Management Information System is still limited, strategic planning is at its infancy. Nigeria is also far behind in developing a linkage between knowledge and economic growth as compared to other countries. Other countries have made appreciable progress in this regard. For example the ratio of scientists and engineers engaged in active research in Nigeria is 115:1 million people; thus compares with 168 in Brazil, 459 in China 158 in India 4, 103 U.S (World Bank, 2002). Nigeria has not embraced the "National Innovation System" apparently because of her low investment in basic tertiary education and poor funding of research. Hartnett (2000) observes that only 1.3% of the budget of federal universities in Nigeria is spent on research. Nigeria spends an estimated 2.4% of its GNP on education.

There are about 23 private universities in Nigeria but considering the existing gap between demand and supply, the number of private universities is still inadequate. Okebukola (2005) further shows that the carrying capacity for fresh students into the 73 universities is 130, 00. This implies that in the 2005/2006 session, there are only 130, 000 places for the 800, 000 candidates who applied for places in the universities. This has created a very huge demand-supply gap in the public university system, necessitating the establishment of private universities.

Table 1 below presents the list of 23 private universities in Nigeria as at 2006.

Table I: Private Universities in Nigeria as at 2006

1.	Babcock University Ilishan-Remo	1999
2.	Madonna University, Okija	1999
3.	Igbinedion University, Okada	1999
4.	Bowen University, Iwo	1999
5.	Covenant University, Lagos	2002
6.	Benson Idahosa University, Benin	2002
7.	Yola Abti-American University, Yola	2002
8.	Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo	2003
9.	Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin	2005
10.	Bingham University, New Karu	2005
11.	Caritas University, Enugu	2005
12.	CETEP City University, Mowe	2005
13.	Katsina University, Katsina	2005
14.	Redeemer's University, Ede	2005
15.	City University, Ibadan	2005
16.	Bells University of Technology, Badagry	2005
17.	Crawford University, Igbesa	2005
18.	Wukari Jubilee University, Wukari	2005
19.	Crescent university, Enugu	2005
20.	Novena University, Ogume	2005

21.	Renaissance University, Enugu	2005
22.	Pan African University	2005
23.	University of Mkar	2005

Source: Okebukola, 2005

The Private universities are owned by individuals or corporate bodies. The corporate bodies are mostly religious organizations. Private universities are wholly funded by the proprietors hence they do not benefit from the NUC government grants.

Rationale for the Emergence of Private universities:

Realizing that education is the spark plug for development, Nigeria adopted policies and programmes that are inclined to the Social Demand Approach to the supply of education. It was for the same reason that in 1979, university education was placed on the concurrent list in the Nigerian Constitution. This provision marked the genesis of the establishment of private universities in Nigeria.

The rationale for establishing state universities was essentially political because of the entrenched quota system tradition in Nigeria, which is driven by politics rather of ethnic balancing rather than merit. Some state universities were established to reflect the federal character and to bridge the huge demand-supply gap. There was a feeling that candidates from the Southern part of the country were denied places in universities outside their catchments areas. There is today an increasing demand for university education, which the existing universities cannot accommodate. Therefore State universities were established to accommodate the increasing demand for places in existing institutions.

A fundamental justification for the emergence of private universities in the late 1990s is the rising index of unsatisfied demand. This is illustrated in table 11 below.

Table II: Unsatisfied demands for Education in Nigerian Universities from 1990 to 2004

Year	No. of Universities	Applications	Admissions	%Admitted	Unsatisfied Demand
1989/90		255,638	38,431	15.0	85.0
1990/91	31	287,572	48,504	16.9	83.1
1991/92		398,270	61,479	15.4	84.6
1992/93		357,950	57,685	16.1	83.9
1993/94		420,681	59,378	14.1	85.9
1994/95**		-	-	-	-
1995/96		512,797	37,498	7.3	92.7
1996/97		376,827	56,055	14.9	85.1
1997/98	37	419,807	72,791	17.3	82.7
1998/99		321,268	78,550	24.4	75.6
1999/2000		418,928	78,550	18.8	81.2
2000/01	47	467,490	502,77	10.7	89.3
2001/02		842,072	95,199	11.3	88.7
2002/03		1,039,183	N.A	N.A	N.A
2003/04	53	838,051	N.A	N.A	N.A

Source: Fieldwork= Admissions not processed due to prolonged strike of Academic Staff Union of Universities in 1994.**

Table 11 shows that the unsatisfied demand index began to rise as from 1991. For example in the 1990/91 academic session, 255, 638 applied for admissions but only a paltry 48, 504 representing 16.9% was admitted, leaving a colossal unsatisfied demand of 83.1%. In the 2001/2002 academic year a total of 842,072 candidates applied for places into Nigerian universities, but only 95,199 students or 11.3% was admitted with a robust unsatisfied demand of 88.7%. the advocacy was for private universities to mop up or accommodate qualified students who are denied places because of the keen competition for admission in the system.

There is vast literature on existence of private universities around the world. In Japan the public Universities (Daigakus) co-exist with the private Universities (Jukus). Nwadiani (1997:147) reports that 90% of the institutions in Japan are private and university autonomy and academic freedom are rarely interfered with. Russell (2002) points out that there is proliferation of private schools in Japan. Ibadin (1997:186) reports that the active private sector participation in university education in the United States should encourage developing countries to establish private universities because of the ever increasing social demand for it. In the United States of America, the spate of violence and indiscipline in public schools, the rapid decline in the quality of education in public schools and the robust commitment of private school proprietors especially their propensity to improve standards of education. (World Bank, 2003). Similarly, the direct subsidies by the Netherlands government to private schools boosted the growth of such schools. It is well documented that in Canada, most of the universities in the East are founded or owned by religious institutions, while the Western Universities were basically owned by the federal governments. In Chile, private universities are established and funded by religious bodies, businesses and military organizations. In Brazil, private universities account for more than 70% of the country's higher education system. (Levy, 2006).

It has been argued that the quality of education offered in public universities coupled with indiscipline and other attendant social vices have necessitated the establishment of private universities in many countries, Nigeria inclusive. In Nigerian universities, thousands of graduates (output) are turned out every year. There are serious complaints that the quality of graduates has diminished. In fact Mgbekem (2004: 208) observed that the quality of degrees obtained by students is being questioned by employers because of the inability of graduates to demonstrate their academic potentials in the work place.

Maduagwu (2004) corroborates this view point:

Within the past two decades in Japan, public school education has been under pressure from parents and critics of education because of rising social problems within the education system such as suicide among students, stress problems and violence in the schools. Specifically, the rigid examination policy in the public schools and the growing number of cases of poor discipline among public school students are posing many problems for society, leading students and their parents to look in the direction of private schools as a better educational alternative.

The Nigerian University system is characterized by rough politics, and it is believed that deregulation of university education would reduce excessive politicization and encourage stakeholders to be more committed to investment in education. Nwagwu (1998) therefore argues that privatization would spread more strongly at the university level to sustain the system.

Nigeria is a pluralistic society with different ethnic groups, many having the tendency of propagating their own religions and projecting their own culture using the instrumentality of education. Bergen (1989) seems to support this view point when he observed that in Canada almost every group decided to establish its own schools to cater for their religious or cultural interests. In Nigeria, political factors of fear of domination and the need for ethnic balancing are crucial factors underpinning the establishment

of state and private universities. The World Bank (2003) supports the existence of private educational institutions when it avers that:

On average, more than 20 percent of enrollment in secondary schools in industrialized countries is private schools, ranging from 2 percent in Sweden to 62 percent in Belgium and 72 percent in Netherlands. In Morocco, private secondary enrollment is only 6 percent while it is 45 percent in Argentina and 60 percent in Indonesia. In America, one-third of all university students study at private universities; in the Philippines, 85 percent of enrollment in higher education is in private institutions.

In Nigeria, public universities are yet to grapple with the problems of lack of commitment of teachers resulting from peer remuneration and conditions of service, the creeping monster of cultism, examination malpractices, moral decadences and low quality of education as manifested in the products of the public school system.

Nigerian Universities also suffer from the crisis of underfunding. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria, (2000), poor financial investment has been the bane of the Nigerian Educational System. It also reported that the federal allocation to education has witnessed a steady decline since 1999 and it is much lower than the average in the last five years of military rule. Poor funding has in turn led to incessant strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities, ASUU, and the Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities, NASU. The strikes have often truncated academic work.

Table III: Federal Government Expenditure and Federal Allocation to the Education Sector in Millions of Naira

Year	(1) Total Expenditure	(2) Allocation to Education	(3) Percentage Allocation to Education	(4) UNESCO Threshold 26% of Column 1	(5) Amount of Under- funding	(6) Percentage of Under- funding
1983	11,525.4	440.3	3.8	2,996.6	2,556.3	85.3
1984	11,686.7	745.5	6.4	3,038.5	2,293.0	75.5
1985	15,369.1	823.4	5.4	3,996.0	3,172.6	79.4
1986	12,642.0	999.0	7.9	3,286.9	2,287.9	69.6
1987	22,018.7	448.7	2.0	5,724.9	5,276.2	92.2
1988	27,749.5	1,786.7	6.4	7,214.9	5,428.2	75.2
1989	41,028.0	3,399.0	8.3	10,667.3	7,268.3	68.1
1990	61,149.1	2,819.1	4.6	15,898.8	13,079.7	82.3
1991	66,584.4	1,166.0	1.88	17,311.9	16,145.9	93.3
1992	93,835.5	2,756.0	2.9	24,397.2	21,641.2	88.7
1993	191,228	6,331.5	3.3	49,719.5	43,388.0	87.3
1994	160,893.2	9,434.7	5.9	41,832.2	32,397.5	77.4
1995	248,768.1	12,172.8	4.9	64,679.7	52,506.9	81.2
1996	337,257.6	14,882.7	4.4	87,687.0	72,804.3	83.0
1997	428,215.2	16,791.3	3.9	11,336.0	94,544.7	84.9
1998	487,113.4	24,614.1	5.1	126,649.5	102,035.4	80.6
1999	947,690.0	31,563.8	3.3	246,399.4	214,835.6	87.2
2000	701,059.4	49,563.2	7.1	182,275.4	132,712.2	72.8
2001	894,200.0	62,600.0	7.0	232,492.0	169,892.0	73.1

Source: Central Bank of Nigeria, Annual Report and Statement of Accounts; July 2002.

The table 111 shows that the percentage allocation to education in 1986 stood at 7.9 and in 1986 stood at 7.9 and in the present dispensation in 2000, the percentage allocation was 7.1% of the budget far below the UNESCO recommended threshold of 26%. The percentage of under-funding ranges from 68.1% in 1989 and to 93.3% in 1991. The implications of the continued trend of under funding are that educational inputs are either unavailable, grossly inadequate or existing ones suffer from obsolescence.

A noticeable dimension of under-funding of the educational system is the politics in budgetary allocations to Nigerian Universities. Legislators play politics with education budgets. Emunemu and Babalola (2005) posit that legislators often play politics with education budgets so as to create political problems and they may consciously cut-down budgetary allocations to universities to cause social unrest and attract action from other trade unions.

The area of politics of funding university research takes place at three levels. First, as a result of scarce financial resources and their competing uses, government and donors attempt to spread resources too thinly over a set of research projects. The result is that politics influences the prioritization of research projects to be selected. Second, there is politics of striking a balance between applied and pure sciences as well as their quality and pragmatic utility with a view to satisfying the various clienteles in the system. Thirdly, research in Nigerian Universities lacks political support because policy makers hardly understand the nexus between research and national development.

Arising from the problem of under funding is the phenomenon of brain drain which has worsened the academic staff situation in Nigerian Universities. Oni (1991) identifies three dimensions of brain-drain affecting the staffing situation of Nigerian Universities. The first dimension comprises manpower movement from Nigeria to other countries, while the second consists of those who move from the Universities to the private sector. The third category is made up of people who go abroad to study and decide to stay away because of the poor working conditions in Nigerian Universities. Table IV illustrates the yawning gap between the manpower production level and the shortfall in teaching staff.

Table IV: University Academic Staff Shortfalls in Nigerian Universities in 2000

Discipline	Staff Available	Students Enrolment	Existing Staff Student Ratio	NUC Staff-Student Ratio	NUC Staff Requirement	% Shortfall by NUC Norm
Administration	697	43,933	1:63	1:20	2,197	1500 (68)
Agriculture	1,904	25,602	1:13	1:9	2,845	941 (33)
Arts	2,116	45,440	1:21	1:20	2,272	156 (7)
Education	1,652	46,812	1:28	1:24	1,930	278 (14)
Engineering Technology	1,798	52,843	1:29	1:9	5,871	4,073 (69)
Environmental Science	904	15,663	1:17	1:10	1,566	4,073 (69)
Medicine	1,876	23,241	1:12	1:6	3,874	1,998 (56)
Pharmacy	360	5,066	1:14	1:10	507	147 (29)
Sciences	4,146	77,092	1:19	1:10	7,709	3,563 (46)
Social Sciences	4,146	77,092	1:19	1:10	7,709	3,563 (46)
Vet Medicine	368	2,318	1:6.0	1:10	386	16 (4)
Law	586	23,431	1:40.0	1:6	1,172	586 (50)
Total	18,328	433,87		1:20	33,951	115,718 (46)

- Sources: i. National Universities Commission (2001)**
ii. Federal Ministry of Education (2003)

The figures in the table IV show that the dearth of academic staff in Nigerian Universities was most severe in Engineering and Technology (69%), Administration (68%) and Medicine (56%). The existing

student-staff ratios in Engineering, Technology and Administration more than doubled the standard NUC ratios. All these have grave implications for quality.

Concept of Quality or Standard

Quality thinking in Nigerian Universities is not a new phenomenon. Quality in education is usually confused with standards. Standards are usually specified targets with measurable indicators for comparative purposes; quality can be achieved through the execution of the core functions of the University – namely teaching, research and community service. With the operation of a knowledge-based economy, private universities are faced with the challenge of operationalizing the notion of quality of education - which involves a wide gamut of functions, processes, activities and infrastructure as well as the academic environment.

For the purpose of this work, quality and standards are used interchangeably. The standard of University education in Nigeria is a matter of critical concern. This concern has been highlighted by the emergence of private universities almost the decadence of public Universities. Idumange and Major (2005:158) posed three critical questions on the issue of quality of education.

- What is the quality of students admitted into the private universities?
- Which regulatory bodies have the responsibility of ensuring the quality content in the curricula?
- Who determines the quality of teachers in private universities whereas the aforementioned question bothers on control?

The above questions are central in determining the quality of education.

Standards of performance need to be stated clearly; and where such standards are stated in quality terms, they should be expressed in quantifiable terms, such that can be measured. When comparing actual target performance against set standards, corrective measures would only be taken where there is deviation of performance set standards.

There are many scholastic definitions of what quality or standard of education. In general connotations, standard is visualized as not monolithic and therefore cannot be measured with exactitude. Middlehurst (1992) perceives quality as a grade of achievement, a standard against which to judge others. The definitional problematic of standard notwithstanding, experts are agreed that the standard of university education is rapidly declining. The indicators of declining quality include: high dropout rates and high academic wastage and inability of University graduates to perform well on the job. What is central to all these definitions is that quality is not some fixative, immutable, target to be attained but a dynamic target which attainment is facilitated by a set of strategies. Ekhuere (2000) believes that quality is a process involving many variables and activities which include: quality of staff, environment of instruction, content of instruction, students support services, culture of quality, continuous learning and improvement, quality of instruction and feedback from clients and consumers of product.

UNESCO posits that quality in higher education is multidimensional and embraces the entire gamut of all functions and activities of a university including teaching, academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment.

It was against this background that Mgbekem (2004) identifies nine indicators of quality education. These include:

1. Effective teaching which results in high performance by students

2. Adequate quantity and quality
3. Provision of adequate teacher and learning materials
4. Stability in the apply of teachers
5. Conducive environment for teaching and learning
6. Effective supervision, monitoring & evaluation
7. Adequate financing of educator
8. Well equipped school library
9. Effective management of universities

Harvey and Green (1993) propose five major approaches to quality control namely: exceptionalism, consistency, fitness of purpose, value for money and transformation. Exceptionalism implies excellence, distinctiveness and the passing of set minimum standards. Constituency is associated with zero defects and getting things fact. Fitness of purpose is judged by the extent to which a product meets the stated purpose. Value - for – money is associated with accountability, which within the university system implies the extent to which the products justify the quantum of resources expended on them. Transformation is an on-going process measured by the extent to which education enhances knowledge abilities and skills of recipients. The quality of university graduates could be measured by how well they have been prepared for life and for service to society in various spheres of human endeavour. Quality may also be considered on the basis of how good and efficient the teachers are, how adequate and accessible the facilities and materials needed for effective teaching and learning are and how prepared the graduates are for meeting the challenges of life and for solving the problems of society.

Strategies for Maintaining and Controlling the Quality of Education

There are internal and external strategies for quality control in university education in Nigeria.

The Minimum Academic Standards (MAS)

The UNESCO Global Forum in its Action Plan for ensuring quality of education set out to achieve the following:

- Updating the regional conventions so that they better respond to the new challenges of a changing higher education environment.
- Capacity building for quality assurance at national and regional levels to ensure the sustainable development of higher education systems
- Developing information tools for students on quality provision of higher education to empower them for informed decision making.
- Developing international guidelines and codes of good practice were proposed to support an international framework for national policy development.

Enabled by Act No. 16 of 1985, the National Universities Commission, NUC, first established criteria for the assessment of quality in Nigerian universities in 1989. The NUC developed MAS for the thirteen broad disciplines offered in the Nigerian universities in 1989 by setting up panels of professionals in these disciplines. Comments by university faculties and departments on the draft MAS produced by the panels were duly incorporated into the documents after which they were given formal approval by the Federal Government in July, 1989. The minimum standards are subject to review every five years in order to update them in line with the dynamics of hi-technology and societal needs.

Accordingly, the NUC organized a Stakeholders Conference on Curriculum Review in April 2001 during which panels of expert academics and professional bodies drew up subject benchmark statements for all undergraduate academic programmes taught in the universities. The commission then drew up panels

of academics which incorporated comments of universities into the draft documents to produce national benchmarks. Subsequently, the Commission constituted teams of expert academics in 2004 to merge the Minimum Academic Standards (MAS) with the Benchmark Statements into a single document, the Benchmark-MAS for the different disciplines.

The Minimum Academic Standards (MAS) documents which the commission produced in 1989 considered some of the following criteria: minimum floor space for lectures, minimum laboratory facilities per student, minimum library space, library holdings; minimum staff/student ratios for effective teaching and learning. In addition stipulates a curriculum as well as minimum entry and graduation requirements for each discipline. These criteria been used (and are still being used) as benchmarks for accreditation for enhancing quality in Nigerian universities.

The NUC uses five major criteria for the accreditation of programmes in Nigerian universities. In its accreditation standard the assessment is as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| • Academic Content | 23% |
| • Staffing | 32% |
| • Physical Facilities | 25% |
| • Funding | 5% |
| • Library | 15% |
| • Employee Rating | 3% |

By this assessment criteria, a programme receives **full** accreditation status if it obtains a minimum of 70 points overall i.e. 70% in each of the three major areas. A programme receives **interim** accreditation if it obtains a minimum score of at least one major component and also obtains an overall score of between 60 to 69 points. A programme with less than 60 points receives **denied** accreditation status. (NUC, 2004).

The quality of university education is also measured in terms of four criteria namely: teaching/learning and research environment; quality of students, quality of staff and the curricula. The availability of standard, functional, well-equipped laboratories, libraries, special rooms, lecture theatres and audio-visual aids-constitute the teaching and learning environment. Tougher admission requirements, smaller class sizes, high quality manpower and manageable teacher-student ratio are some of the ingredients that make up the quality of students.

Private Universities and Quality Control

Any proposed academic programmes of any prior to establishment, have to be approved by the National Universities Commission (NUC) after ensuring that the approved guidelines have been met. The basic consideration of the NUC is that the university is adequately positioned to provide the requisite human and material resources, to ensure the good quality of the proposed programme at inception. The National Universities Commission has put in place a number of mechanisms to ensure quality in Nigerian universities. The following are some of such mechanisms:

Accreditation of Undergraduate Programmes: There has been increasing concern on the part of governments around the world that higher education would lose its meaning if measures are not taken to restore quality. Consequently, varying approaches to quality assurance have been adopted. The United States depends on university-resourced private quality assurance agencies for the accreditation of its institutions; internal peer review is in vogue in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom, Quality Assurance Agency for higher education is charged with the responsibility for quality assurance. In

Nigeria, the National Universities Commission (NUC) empanels university academics and members of the statutory professional bodies who utilize the Minimum Academic Standards documents as benchmarks for the accreditation of programmes. To facilitate the assessment process, the NUC developed formats and guidelines such as the Programme Evaluation Form (NUC/PEF), Accreditation Panel Report Form (NUC/APRF), Self-Study Form (NUC/SSF), Accreditation Revisitation Form (NUC/ARVF) and a Manual on accreditation Procedures (MAP). Also, statutory professional bodies are also empowered by Federal Law to, carry out professional accreditation evaluation of the academic programmes of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria.

Accreditation of Postgraduate Programmes: with the assistance of Deans of Postgraduate Schools of Nigerian Universities, the NUC had developed guidelines and modalities for the conduct of postgraduate studies in the universities. Arrangements are under way for accreditation of all postgraduate programmes at the universities based not only on provisions of the guidelines but also on minimum standards that are being developed.

University Ranking: The NUC first conducted ranking of Nigerian universities based on performance of their academic programmes utilizing results of the 1999/2000 accreditation exercise. This was intended to encourage those universities with top level performance in the different disciplines to strive to maintain and enhance their lead. Those at the bottom of the performance league were expected to take necessary steps to remedy the identified deficiencies not only to improve the quality of their programmes but also to improve their rating in the league table. The Commission has subsequently ranked Nigerian universities on the basis of a multiple set of performance indicators encompassing such areas as governance, academic excellence, research and adherence to approved national norms. The aim is to encourage healthy competition in maintenance of academic quality and good governance.

NUC Quality Support Strategies

Virtual Library Initiatives

The objectives of the National Virtual Library Initiative include: improving the quality of teaching and research institutions through the provision of current books, journal and other library resources; enhancing access of academic libraries to global library and information resources; enhancing scholarship and lifelong learning through the establishment of permanent access to shared digital archival collections; provision of guidance to academic libraries on ways of applying appropriate technologies for production of digital library resources; and to advance the use and usability of globally distributed networks library resources. Virtual library initiatives in Nigeria include:

- The National Virtual (Digital) Library Project of the Ministry of Education, which is supervised by the National Universities Commission.
- The National Virtual Library Project of the Ministry of Science and Technology which is supervised by the National IT Development Agency.
- An ongoing effort by UNESCO to develop a Virtual Library for all Nigerian Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria.

Private universities should also key into this scheme to promote excellence in research and pedagogy.

The NUC has also initiated the Virtual Institute for Higher Education Pedagogy (VIHEP), aimed at improvement of the quality of teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities. The Institute is an on-line training site where participants have the opportunity to update their knowledge and skills in educational delivery using internet protocols as platform. The VIHEP is designed to provide academic staff in tertiary institutions in Nigeria especially universities with internet-based training on modern methods of

teaching and learning and enhance modern methods of assessment and evaluation of student performance.

Annual Review Meetings

These are interactive Annual Review Meetings which are held yearly between the NUC and the management of each Nigerian University at the NUC Secretariat. The objectives of such meetings include:

1. Assess the performance of the universities with regards to teaching, research and community service.
2. Identify the factors that inhibited optimal performance of the system in achieving its goals and objectives.
3. Assess the internal and external efficiency of the universities viz-a-viz the role of the NUC in facilitating the delivery of quality university education.

Such meetings provide a forum for explanation of Government policies and intention on matters of tertiary education.

Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB): the joint Admissions and Matriculation Board was established by Act 2 of 1978 (as amended by Act 33 of 1999) regulates the admission of students into the universities taking cognizance of available spaces and federal equity. Section 5 of the 1978 Act describes the functions of the Board. Sections 5(1) (a) and 5(1) (b) empower JAMB to conduct matriculation examinations for admission into all universities in Nigeria, whether federal, state or private. The role of Jamb in quality assurance includes:

- (a) Ensuring high quality matriculation examinations so that only those that are adequately prepared to benefit by university education do gain entrance to the institutions; and
- (b) Ensuring high quality of administration of the examination to minimize the exploits of cheats toward ensuring the good quality of new entrants to the universities.

The best efforts of JAMB have met with qualified success in the matter of exam cheating. Consequently, Government recently introduced university-gate interviews as an additional measure to ensure that only good quality candidates get enrolled into the public universities. This could be introduced in private universities as well.

Institutional Mechanisms for Quality Control

Over the Nigerian university system has evolved some efficacious quality control measure. While some of the strategies are internal others are external bodies statutorily established to ensure that the quality of university education is maintained. These measures are highlighted below.

Admission Requirements: The internal mechanism for maintaining academic quality starts with the set of requirements for admission aimed at ensuring that only the best candidates with requisite qualification are enrolled as freshmen into the universities. Quality is assured through scrutiny at registration in the departments and facilities.

Process for Establishment of New Programmes: Establishment of fresh programmes also follows a strict internal process by which proposals emanate from the departments and are scrutinized by the faculty boards and then considered by senate. This way, all relevant inputs and queries would have been made and addressed. Frequently, however, the matter of the resources required to commence a programme is not sufficiently addressed before attempting to start operating it. Universities are also expected to seek and obtain NUC approval before implementing internal approvals for the establishment of new academic programmes.

Programme Review: University academic departments are expected to conduct annual end of year programme review to determine how effectively a programme has achieved its stated aims, and the extent to which students have been successful in attaining the intended learning outcomes. This would involve members of a programme appraising its performance. The process may take into account reports from external examiners, staff and student feedback, reports from NUC and any professional body that accredited the programme, as well as feedback from former students and their employers. The exercise could result in adjustments to the curriculum for to test methods to ensure continued effectiveness. It is also relevant that examiners, supervisors and examination results are considered at departmental, faculty and senate levels and reports from this process serve to reshape the programme toward improved quality.

Strengthening the External Examiner Tradition: It is an established tradition for each university to appoint external examiners, who report to the head of the institution. External Examiners are independent academic experts, drawn from other institutions and from areas of relevant academic discipline and/or professional practice. They provide impartial advice on performance in relation to particular programmes. Institutions require external examiners, in their expert judgment, to report on whether the standards set are appropriate for the achievement of MAS. In addition, the NUC has therefore been encouraging Nigerian universities to establish their quality assurance offices possibly in the office of the Director of Academic Planning (or other academic office) which will serve as a quality assurance secretariat. Departmental academic committees and faculty academic boards should be part of the quality assurance structure; the latter should be represented on a university-wide quality assurance committee reporting to senate.

Proposed Quality Senate Committee: Considering the importance of academic quality in university education, universities are being encouraged to establish a Quality Assurance Committee either separately, where this is practicable, or as part of the functions of the Development Committee of Senate to oversee issues germane to entrenchment and maintenance of quality in the university. To complement the efforts of the NUC individual universities also establish and maintain a culture of strategic planning and management since 1995. These control measure should be adopted by the private universities in Nigeria.

Challenges of Quality Control in Private Universities

Babalola (1999) asserted that it is the responsibility of government to monitor the activities of private institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. Although government may not specify for the private sector an expected student-teacher ration, the qualification of staff to employ, recommends staff salary or school fees, it is sufficient for government to make efforts at ensuring quality output, while allowing each institution some degree of autonomy.

The proprietary Logic: one of the challenges of quality control in private universities in Nigeria is the critical concern that the most of the private school owners are owned by religious bodies. For instance

Babcock is owned by Seventh Day Adventist Church; Covenant University is the property of Living Faith Church (Winners Chapel); Madonna University is a Catholic owned university; Redeemers University belongs to the Redeemers Christian Church, Benson Idahosa University is owned by the Church of God Mission etc. the challenge here is to strike a balance between the secular and ecclesiastical content of curricula activities, since most religious institutions use the universities to propagate their doctrines and beliefs.

The Profit-Logic: In some quarters, the emergence of private universities is seen as an attempt at marketization. With the creeping monetization of admission and the mercantile approach to issues of management, serious concerns are being expressed about the quality of such universities, their lecturers, students and academic programmes. In most developing countries, private universities are perceived as demand-absorbing, where quality is compromised in favour of quantity. For example in South Africa, the profit-logic plays out in all aspects of private higher education including missions, actors roles, ties to the labour market and relationship with the public.

The Peril of Academic Freedom: Academic freedom confers on teachers and students the right to express free and frank opinions, publish newsletter and to disseminate information without interference. If Nigerian universities are to fulfill their mandate of teaching, research, public service and public enlightenment, academic freedom is a necessary pre-requisite. Academic freedom is a pragmatic imperative for scholarship, light and leadership. Slaughter and Larry (1997) argued that the academe's increased involvement in corporation and the growth of privately sponsored research have transformed research funding and that the implications for academic freedom. Academe has become "*corporatized*" and the interest of firms has become dominant on campus. Research funding is sometimes actually suppressed because of corporate funding arrangement. This is considered as a violation of the freedom of academics to disseminate the results of their research. Another snag to academic freedom in higher institutions is "*Managerialism*" that the increase in the power of administrators as distinct from the authority of the professorate in the governance and management of the academe.

The Logic of He Who Pays the Piper Controls Quality: Private universities are funded by their owners; it will be extremely difficult for NUC to control the quality of education since funding largely determines education. The funding cutbacks in Nigerian universities have led to a major increase in workloads, with its attendant cuts into teaching time per student. Already government has over the years advocated the commercialize universities as a basis for generating funds (Dotun, 2004) asserted that the privatization and commercialization of universities would lead to the abolition of public universities because funds generated commercialization cannot be adequate enough to provide education inputs including funding of research. The policy option will deny the majority the right to education and make up the property of a privilege few.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

The conclusion is that Private Universities are owned by private individuals and religious organizations in Nigeria. Private Universities certainly have the challenge of quality control to contend with. Private universities should adhere to the principle of reciprocity of capacity and accountability. In a system governed by the principle of reciprocity of capacity and accountability, everyone re-writes his job description in terms of the value they add to enhance the instructional programme. Essentially, too, private Universities in Nigeria must collaborate and partner with Universities abroad under the partnership for Higher Education in Africa. Such partnerships will open windows of co-funding certain programmes, support capacity building efforts and promote quality research. Olajuwon (2003) believes that a framework for pulling together, resources and expertise of tertiary institutions will create understanding, cooperation and good academic input into various issues. The issue of autonomy is also

crucial. Private universities should be given the autonomy to constitute their Governing Councils, Senates and other Academic Boards with the most qualified manpower to meet criteria for the accreditation of programmes. The NUC should be more determined to play its statutory role of enforcing minimum standards for private universities. Accordingly, NUC should enforce criteria such as quality of teachers, accreditation of courses/programmes, funding requirements, and other educational inputs to ensure that there is effective teaching and learning.

Private Universities should avoid replicating the conventional courses/programmes offered in public Universities; rather they should move towards specialization in certain disciplines so they can be centers of excellence. Universities should develop a culture of quality through strategic planning, which will set out the university's notion of quality, quality management goals and objectives, entrench a framework for quality management and a framework for Monitoring and Evaluation. Quality control units should also be set up at all levels of the University i.e. departmental level, faculty level. Finally, attracting high caliber staff with good salary and better conditions of service to recruit and retain staff. Where there is high quality teaching staff and students, universities will attract grants, endowments and fellowships needed to promote scholarship and sustain excellence in private universities in Nigeria.

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