

Emergence of Private Universities in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

University education in Nigeria has become a complex enterprise as public universities in the country are not able to absorb and accommodate the demand of all eligible admission seekers to institutions of higher education owing to restricted carrying capacity of the current government owned tertiary institutions. Thus, denationalization of university education has become a global issue and embraced by educational stakeholders as one of the major fastest growing segments of post-secondary education at the turn of the 21st Century. In view of the foregoing, this paper examined the emergence of private universities in Nigeria: Challenges and the prospects. The concept of private university was critically examined taking into cognizance the historical development of university education in Nigeria and its purposes as contained in the National Policy on Education. Also, the evolution, classifications as well as the list of approved private universities as at 2020 in the country were consecutively elucidated. The justifications for the establishment of private universities and the challenges serving as the stumbling blocks to the institutions were looked into. The study concluded that development and production of high-level manpower within the context of the nation's needs rely heavily on the functionality and effectively of private universities in Nigeria. It was recommended among others that the government must provide technical and logistics support as required by these institutions for effective service delivery; government scholarship as well as bursary awards should be extended to students in the private higher institutions and the management of the institutions should engage in insurance scheme of diverse categories of foreseeable risk can be shared.

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INTRODUCTION

The increase in demand for university education by students, as well as the incapability of government owned institutions of higher education to fulfil to rising social demand for university education in recent decades in Nigeria, has raised deep concern among relevant stakeholders in university education. Nigeria is projected to be the third leading nation globally by the year 2050, with 399 million people and many of her youths will be enthusiastic and ambitious to gain admission into public universities (United Nations Organization, 2020). This is evident as the public universities in the country are unable to offer admission to all eligible candidates in the country

and accommodate their demands for university education and subsequently accounted for the emergence of private universities in Nigeria to reduce pressure on admission. The issue of entrance to institutions of higher education in Nigeria has necessitated the need for the establishment of more universities in the nation due to enormous number of eligible applicants pursuing university admission were not admitted as a result of low carrying capacity of the current institutions of higher education. Thus, one of the impacts of private participation in providing tertiary education is the need for reducing pressure of admission into University in the country, as the public owned universities

were unable to admit all the qualified candidates that meet the admission requirements (Arikewuyo, 2019).

A considerable size of would-be college and university products are being graduated from the system. In 2015, only 485,338 out of 1,612,247 applicants which represent 30 percent were admitted into the university system. Likewise, out of 1,579,027 candidates that took the University Tertiary Matriculation Examination in 2016, only 547,923 candidates were given admission to public universities. Also, in 2017, a total of 1,962,364 candidates sat for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) and only 69.6 percent of the applicants were admitted to federal universities and 27.5 percent to state universities while about two thirds of applicants could not find a spot in Nigerian universities (World Education News and Review, 2017). The low percentage rate of admission is a substantial development and is noticeably different from the scenario in the past 10 years when the ratio was nearer to one in 10 for entrance into university. However, the admission crunch persists as one of the prevalent trials confronting institutions of higher learning, mostly given the robust progression of its youth populace. Educational system in the country at present verdures more than one million eligible school age Nigerians who are annually being deprived admission. The quantity of candidates at present outstrips the existing institutions of higher education spaces by a ratio of two to one as the nation's public universities were overloaded with teeming population explosion, as well as a momentous youth populace eruption by over 60 percent of the nation's population below 24 years of age (World Education News and Review, 2017).

Privatization of university education is one of the major rising sectors of tertiary education in the 21st Century. Therefore, the argument in lieu of privatization of education has become a world-wide phenomenon recently. Private university is a reality which is being emergent through globalization. Even in the centrally planned countries of Eastern Europe, France and the democratic Germany; former Soviet Union, China, Mongolia and Tanzania; where the philosophy of private proprietorship of educational institutions was outlandish; the squall of globalization and market transformations have deteriorated the condition. The emergence of university education in Nigeria is traceable to 1948 when the government considered it as a social service and its provision must not be left in the hands of the private segment (Kitaev, 2013; Ajayi & Ekindayo, 2014).

Private Universities as viewed by Grove (2017) are institutions in which funding come from tuitions,

investments and private donor not from tax payers but subject to government regulations. Varghese (2012) viewed private universities as encompassing broad collection of organizations which finance themselves, profit making initiatives or commercial body which receive limited government financial backing. To Belfield and Lenin (2013), private universities are autonomous universities that do not receive funds from the government and often managed by secular board and operated for profit motive. They are universities owned, financed and managed by individual, corporations and religious organizations with the purpose of making profit within a short period of time (Olaniyan, 2016). Hence, they are wholly funded by the proprietors with limited government grants. The Private sector as reported in the aftermath of a latest world-wide assessment is the rapid developing sector in tertiary institution globally (UNESCO, 2015). The growing quantity of these establishments so exceeded the government universities that changes in political scenario is pinpointed as an influencing factor (UNESCO, 2015).

2.0 EVOLUTION OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Yaba College was the first institution of higher learning in Nigeria which was founded in 1932, but commenced studies in 1934. The Nigerians enthusiasm for all-encompassing higher education provision made the secretary of state for the colonies to set up Elliot Commission in 1943, chaired by Sir Walter Elliot to give report regarding the organization and facilities of the existing center of higher education in British West Africa and make recommendations concerning the future university development in the colonies. The commission visited (Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, Achimota College in Gold Coast and Yaba College, Lagos) and submitted two different reports to the secretary of state for the colonies. The majority report affirmed that the three existing tertiary institutions in West Africa were not adequate to provide for the learning requirements of the West African and that University College should be founded in Nigeria, Gold Coast and the development should be carried out in Sierra Leone in partnership with Fourah Bay College. The minority report recommended the immediate establishment of only one university for the whole of the British West Africa to be called West African University College (W.A.U.C.). The minority report favored Nigerians at the expense of the gold coast and in 1945 the general report was submitted. A delegate was

sent to West African by the secretary of the state in 1946 to make detail recommendations on the establishment of University Colleges in West Africa. The delegates report submitted recommended that Gold Coast University and University of Ibadan should be established in Ghana and Nigeria respectively. Consequently, in January, 1948 University College, Ibadan was established. (Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2014; Alele, Ogunu & William, 2016)

Nigerian higher education reached landmark in its history in April 1959 when the Federal Government inaugurated Ashby commission to investigate post-secondary school and higher education. The recommendations of the Ashby report include: The Federal Government should give support to the improvement of new universities in the country; a university should be established in the North using the old site of the Nigerian College in Zaria as its base; a university should be established in Lagos to handle courses in business, commerce and economics; University College Ibadan should widen its curriculum and develop into a full university; a National Universities Commission should be set up to have undisputed control over the affairs of the universities, particularly in terms of finance, staff and courses. consequently, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was founded in 1960 while the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (formerly, the University of Ife) was established in 1961. Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and University of Lagos were both established in 1962 while the University College transformed into a substantive university also in 1962. In 1970, the newly created Bendel State established a university, known as University of Benin. (Alele; Ogunu & William, 2015; Ekundayo; 2016 & Adewale; 2017).

Subsequently, six universities were founded between 1960-1970 and known as first generation universities. Likewise, between 1975 and 1977, seven universities were established to reflect the then 19 states structure. The second generation universities were: University of Calabar (1975); University of Ilorin (1976); University of Jos (1975); University of Sokoto (1977); University of Port Harcourt (1977); and Bayero University, Kano (1977). These institutions of higher education became Federal Universities via Decree 46 of 1977 which gave the Federal Government mandate to control all universities in the country (Jubril, 2003). The 1979 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria conveyed university education from the exclusive to the concurrent legislative list, which meant that state governments were free to found state-owned

institutions of higher education if they so choose. Consequently, a number of universities were established between 1979 and 1983 among which were: Bendel State University (now Ambrose Alli University) Ekpoma; Anambra State University of Technology, Enugu; Imo State University, Owerri; Ogun State University, Ago-Iwoye. (Babalola, Jayeola & Okediran, 2017).

3.0 OBJECTIVES OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

As contained in the National Policy of Education through the (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013), the purposes of university education in Nigeria are to:

- Contribute to nationwide development via upper-level pertinent manpower training;
- Advance and instil right ethics for individual and societal continued existence;
- Improve mental ability of individuals to appreciate as well as value their internal and external surroundings;
- Develop both physical and mental abilities required for self-sufficient and functional memberships of the society;
- Encourage and strengthen research and the public service;
- Build and strengthen nationwide harmony, and
- Uphold nationwide and global understanding and relations.

4.0 EVOLUTION OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

Privatization has been embraced by many countries globally as a policy to direct their educational system based on its inherent benefits. In Africa, countries like Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia have embraced the policy (Uwekwe, 2010). Latest trends in Nigeria regarding privatization of tertiary education have led to the one of the utmost shocking sub-sectoral growth rates ever witnessed in the nation educational sector (National Universities Commission, 2015). In accordance with the global development, Nigeria government welcomed private involvement in the administration of tertiary level of educational system. Many issues like increasing cases of insatiable admission request, ethical degeneration among students, persistent strikes, students' restlessness and cult activities among others have necessitated the agitation for the involvement of private organizations besides the government owned universities in Nigeria. Privatization

of tertiary education in underdeveloped nations like Nigeria is rapidly increasing due to the powerlessness of the government sector to fulfil the rising request for higher education, the need for the deregulation procedures of the government on the provision of education and increase criticism leveled against public education efficiency (Osokoya, 2017).

The emergence of private participation in providing university education in Nigeria could be traced to 1979 when the government placed education on the concurrent legislative list in the nation constitution (Aliyu, Baron & Thaver, 2014). This provision marked the genesis of the emergence of 26 private universities (Mathew, 2013). The trend in the establishment of private universities due to degradation in the standard regarding tertiary education prompted the federal military government to scrap the already established institutions and prohibited the formation of new ones through Degree 19 of 1984. Also, the military government gave legal backing for the establishment of private universities through the proclamation of National Minimum Standard and Establishment of Institutions Amendment Decree No. 9 of 1993 (Arikewuyo, 2014). The country had a high number of government owned universities, but insatiable admission requests, limited and decaying infrastructural facilities, incessant strikes, students unrest and cults activities, negative attitudes of lecturers, low ranking of universities, trends in globalization and fall in standard of university graduates. These paved way for re-birth and emergence of the first three private universities in the country: Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo, Ogun-State, Madona University, Okija, Anambra State, and Igbinedion University, Okada-Benin, Edo State on May 10, 1999 when the Certificate of Registration was issued to each of the university by the Federal of Nigerian Government, (Mathew, 2013 & Ajadi, 2015). Since then private universities have continued to grow in number in the country and by July, 2019 there was 79 (National Universities Commission, 2020).

5.0 CLASSIFICATION OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

Private universities in Nigeria were categorized into three as acknowledged by Adeniran and Gbadamosi (2012). These are:

Sole proprietorship: The sole proprietorship is the one man enterprise which is founded and managed by individual and operates as an artificial person or organization. This category of private university possesses

all-inclusive albeit and pieces of university education among which are the Governing council, Board of agent, The Senate, Congregation and the like; yet the institution relies on the sponsor who exercises absolute mechanism over the business. Private universities that fall under this category include: Adeleke University, Ede, Afe BabaLola University, Ado Ekiti, American University of Nigerian, Yola, Igbinedion University, Okada- Benin, Edo State and Lead City University, Ibadan.

Mission or religious based: These are universities established, funded and managed by the orthodox or religious groups such as Islamic organizations or Churches and are also known as faith-based universities. The assigning of major tasks and responsibilities reflects the norms and traditions, assortment and spread of the religious bodies or groups. Although, the monetary support emanates from the religion institutions, yet the day to day administration of the institutions is under the custody of Council and Management. Private universities that fall under this category include: Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo; owned by the Anglican Communion, Babcock University, Ilisan Remo, Ogun State owned by the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Bowen University, Iwo, established by the Methodist Church, Fountain University, Osogbo owned by Nasrul-Lahi- Lifatih Society of Nigeria (NASFAT).

Hybrid Universities: These are missions oriented in nature, but which are personally driven. In this scenario, the owners do not only established the institutions but equally responsible for funding the mission. Private universities that fall into this category include: Madona University, Okija, Anambra State, Benson Idoha University, Benin City, Covenant University, Otta, Redeemer University, Ede, among others. Besides, Owsu (2019) classified private universities as spiritual, educational and profit making.

Table 1: List of Approved Private Universities in Nigeria and Year Established

S/N	Name of Universities	Years of Establishment
1	Achiever Universities,	2000
2	Owo	2011
3	Adeleke University, Ede	2009
4	Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti,	2007
5	African University of	2005
6	Science and Technology,	2005
7	Abuja	2005
8		2003

9	Ajayi Crowther	2015	Kings University, Ode-	
10	University,Oyo	1999	Omu	
11	Al-Hikimah University,	2011	Kwararafa University,	
12	Ilorin	2005	Wukari	
13	Al-Qalam University,	2002	Landmark University,	
14	Kastina	2005	Omu-Aran	
15	American University of	2001	Lead City University,	
16	Nigeria, Yola	2007	Ibadan	
17	Augustine University	2005	Madona University,	
18	Babcock University,	2015	Okija	
19	Ilisan-Remon	2002	Machpherson	
20	Braze University	2005	University, Seriki-	
21	Bells University of	2005	Sotayo, Ajebo	
22	Technology, Otta	2015	Micheal and Cecillia	
23	Benson Idahosa	2012	Ibru University	
24	University, Benin-	2012	Mountain Top	
25	Bingham University,	2007	University	
26	New Karu	2009	Nile University of	
27	Bowen University, Iwo	2012	Nigeria, Abuja	
28	Caleb University, Lagos	2015		
29	Caritas University,	2015	41	Novena University,
30	Enugu	1999	42	Ogume
31	Chrisland University	2006	43	Obong University,
32	Convenant University,	2015	44	Obong Ntak
33	Otta	2005	45	Oduduwa University,
34	Crawford University,	2011	46	Ipetumede, Osun State
35	Igbesa	2005	47	Pan Atlantic
36	Crescent University	1999	48	University, Lagos
37	Edwin Clark University,	2012	49	Paul University, Awka,
38	Kaigbodo	2015	50	Anambra state
39	Elize University, Ilara-	2015	51	Redeemer's
40	Mokin	2009	52	University, Ede
	Evangel University,		53	Renaissance
	Akaeze		54	University, Enugu
	Fountain University,		55	Rhema University,
	Osogbo		56	Obeama-Asa, River
	Godfrey Okoye		57	State
	University, Ugwuomu-		58	Ritma University, Ikot-
	Nike, Enugu			Ekpene, Akwa Ibom
	Gregory University,			Salem University,
	Uturu		59	Lokoja
	Hallmark University,		60	Samuel Adegboyega
	Ijebi-Itele, Ogun State		61	University, Ogwa
	Hezekiah University,		62	Southwest University,
	Umudi		63	Oku Owa
	Igbinedio University,		64	Summit University
	Okada		65	Tansian University,
	Joseph Ayo Babalola		66	Umunya
	University, Ikeji-Arakeji			2016

67	University of Mkar,	2010
68	Mkar	2017
69	Veritas University,	2017
70	Abuja	2017
71	Wellspring University,	2017
	Evbuobanosa, edo-	
72	State	2017
73	Wesley University of	2017
74	Science and	
75	Technology, Ondo	2018
76	Western Delta	2019
77	University, Oghara	2019
78	Delta State	2019
79	Christopher University,	2019
	Mowe	
	Kola Daisi University,	
	Ibadan, Oyo State	
	Anchor University,	
	ayobo, Lagos State	
	Dominican University,	
	Ibadan, Oyo State	
	Legacy University,	
	Okija, Anambra State	
	Arthus Javis	
	University, Akpoyubo,	
	Cross River	
	Crown Hill University,	
	Eyenkorin, Ilorin,	
	Kwara State	
	Coal City University,	
	Enugu	
	Clifford University,	
	Owerrinta, Abia State	
	Admiralty University,	
	Ibusa, Delta State	
	Spiritan University,	
	Nneochi, Abia State	
	Precious Cornerstone	
	University, Oyo	
	Pamo University of	
	Medical science,	
	Portharcourt	
	Atiba University, Oyo	
	Eko University of	
	Medical and Health	
	Sciences, Ijanikin,	
	Lagos State	
	Skyline University,	
	Kano	

	Greenfield University,	
	Kaduna	
	Dominion University	
	Ibadan, Oyo State	
	Trinity University,	
	Ogun State	
	Westland University,	
	Iwo, Osun State	

Source (National Universities Commission, 2020)

6.0 RATIONALE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

In recognizing the reality that education is an impetus for acceleration, Nigerian government embraced plan of actions which prone to the societal needs for the provision of university education. The fundamental justification for the expansion of private Universities in Nigeria was the removal of restriction of the economy in the wake of the contemporary popular government (John, 2012). Recently, the Federal government instituted monumental modifications in the school sub-sector fashioned to advance self-determination for the institutions, strengthen administration and entrenched tools for standard maintenance. This assertion was corroborated by (Okebukola, 2005) who emphasized that freedom only exists in principle and institutional mechanisms of quality control have been weakened by the centrifugal forces of politics and ethnic balancing. He accentuated that incessant request for university education; the growing importance of knowledge coupled with the stern logic of globalization necessitated the emersion of private universities.

The National Submit on Tertiary Education (2014) revealed the university management, funding, curriculum relevance and accessibility. Therefore, the demands to operate schools in accordance with the philosophy of private enterprise and dominance of entrepreneurial approach to tertiary institutions have assumed the central position in the administration of schools. What has become fashionable in universities globally is the shift from basic to applied research with emphasis on the link between schooling and the economy, issues of intellectual property rights, prioritization of research and commercialization of the sector (Maland & Singh, 2011). These trends are bringing universities in lieu of influencing global paradigms and best practices. Akindele (2013) elucidated that many issues currently called for the emergence of private universities in the country among which are:

Unfulfilled Demand for Admission into Universities: it is not disaffirming that institutions of higher education are ivory towers for knowledge acquisition and talents development. Many Nigerians want their sons and daughters to go to universities rather than polytechnics, Monotechnics and teachers training institutions. Unsatisfactory admission demand characterized university education in Nigeria, which does not depict the image of the nation well and high ranking workforce required for its development remain more of delusion than realness. As a result of the dereliction of the applicants to gain admission in to public universities, many candidates become frustrated and opted for private universities as the way out (Ige, 2010).

Inadequate and Deteriorating Infrastructures in Public Universities: infrastructural facilities are very fundamental for productivity in educational institutions (Monihin, 2003). However, it is quite unfortunate that paucity of infrastructural facilities like: classrooms, staff offices, laboratories, libraries, workshops among others characterized the Government owned universities (Saint, 2013). The appalling conditions of the existing amenities exacerbated the situation which depressingly affects tutelage and inquiry in the institutions. The failure of the authority to adhere to 26% budgetary allocation to education as suggested by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization make it problematic for university managers towards ensuring that satisfactory and unflinching instructional materials for enhancing pedagogical task are put in place.

Strikes, Students Turmoil and Cultism in Public Universities: Public universities in Nigeria over the years have been overwhelmed by widespread circumstances of turmoil, cultism and industrial action which frequently interrupt school planned programmes. There have been incessant strikes by staff of the public universities due to poor conditions of service, non-implementation of previous agreement, discrepancies in remuneration and allowances as well as academic freedom among others (Odeyemi & Afolabi, 2010). Students' discontent is usually evident on campuses, leading to loss of lives and valuable properties destroyed (Owolabi & Ige, 2010). Cultists' activities have become matter of severe worry that had revolved the university grounds to battle field of wailing rather than ivory tower. Students of government owned institutions of higher education in the country do not know the exact years to spend on their programmes before graduating. Therefore, the emersions of private universities become unavoidable.

Low Ranking of Nigerian Public Universities: Globally, universities position is a constant and yearly exercise providing opportunity for educational stakeholders to ascertain the standard of university education. Regrettably, government owned universities in the country are placed squat amid their counterparts overseas (Wasagu, 2015). In March, 2018 only University of Lagos rated top amid Nigerian universities and 11th in Africa; however none of universities in the country appeared among the best 200 globally (Uni Rank, 2018). This has raised deep concern to government and relevant educational stakeholders, therefore anticipating that with the emersion of private universities, the plague would be shattered.

Globalization: in various advanced states worldwide like United States, Britain, France and Canada among others, public and private bodies do engaged in providing tertiary education. Numerous prominent institutions of higher learning throughout the globe today are owned by private bodies. Undoubtedly the institutions contribute significantly towards preparation of a competent workforce required for advancement of national economy. Therefore, the demand for global progression in providing higher education cannot be undermined in Nigeria.

Huge Cost of University Education: In reality, university education is capital intensive in nature especially in developing countries like Nigeria where the government is the main sponsor of educational industry and bears the costs for its delivery. However, the cost for providing tertiary education for the populace become a burden to bear only by the government and clamour for better involvement of private segment in funding education. Available resources in tertiary institutions are inadequate compared to the students' enrolment which keeps on increasing. Numerous uncompleted projects overflow in most government owned universities, while larger financial resource allocated for institutions advancement are squandered on non-academic tasks. Presumably, private universities are founded mainly to ensure proper and judicious management of funds and high degree of accountability in the running of university funds (Earthmsn, 2012; Moja, 2013).

Lackadaisical Outlooks of Academic Staff of Public Universities: Attitude of few academic staff of government owned tertiary institutions leaves much to be desired. The misdemeanour, ranging from debauched bond with the opposite sex, awarding unmerited scores, non-attendance of pedagogical task, and immersion in trade and civil events instead of teaching, limit the

duration on actual pedagogical tasks that negatively affect the educational standard and students in universities owned by the government. Hence, the emersion of privatively owned universities was welcome as the way forward (Nwaidiani, 2012).

7.0 CHALLENGES OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

Undoubtedly, the emergence of private institutions of higher learning in the country has helped to resolve persistent predicaments facing the schools, however, the institutions are faced with plethora of challenges among which are:

Proliferation of Private Universities: Evidently private universities spring up every day in the country as several affluent personalities with individuals whose bases of richness are doubtful are hitherto giving approval to establish private universities. At present, the emergence of private universities in Nigeria has become a political issue as a lot of the institutions are ill planned and centred on school mapping measures. Majority of top government officers and public office holders desire to found privately owned universities where the fund looted via public treasuries are diverted to. This accounts for continuous flourish of the endemic in the country in spite of the government efforts in curbing the menace. Rasheed (2019) expressed dismay over the explosion of private universities in Nigeria, affirming that majority of them lack due respect for the ethical standard. The NUC secretary admitted that private owned universities have unlocked entrance space for the growing quantity of candidates seeking for university admission in Nigeria as only 500,000 candidates were admitted, out of 1.5 million applicants that sat for entrance examination into tertiary institution annually. Private universities explosion has turn out to be a game-changer in Nigeria's higher institution and its monetary environment. As at 2019, there are 79 private universities in Nigeria compared to 1999, when the country had only three privately owned universities – Igbinedion, Madonna and Babcock), 48 state universities and 43 federal universities (Arikewuyo, 2010; National Universities Commission)

Diverted Responsiveness from Public to Private Universities: It is alarming that currently, thoughtfulness has moved from the government to the private universities in the country. At numerous times, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and other bodies in the government universities had clamoured for adequate finance thorough revamping of the putrefying

social services by way of remedy to manage crunch in the government owned tertiary institutions. Top management functionaries often affirms that parents are allowed to enrol their progenies in the private rather than public universities which have turned out to be itch epithelium of government. Therefore, it is not amazing that progenies of top government officers in the country are in the private universities where they pay outrageous levies and are proud of riding exotic cars which put them into a category for themselves in the society; whereas children of the have and have not amid the middleclass in the society are enrolled in the private universities, the public universities nowadays are reserved for children of the down flattened less privilege.

Religious Extremism: High degree of spiritual bigotry has been the trait of Nigeria for many years as adherents of Islam and Christianity often be at loggerheads over issue of supremacy. Over the years, numerous people have died through unrests and protests and conflicts in diverse areas of the country activated through religious matter. At the moment, statistics have shown that there are more private universities owned by Christian bodies compared to those established by Muslims (Ajadi, 2015). Each of the two religious groups desires to institute institutions of higher education to uphold evangelism. The street of roads in prominent metropolises in the country is beleaguered by signboards of proposed privately owned universities which make it appears as a commercial matter and rivalry amid devout denominations. However, the idea of founding privately owned tertiary institutions of higher learning become commendable which eventually exacerbates the hitherto religious pressure in the Nigeria.

Category of Candidates Admitted: Nigerian private universities offer admission to most of the leftovers candidates that sought for admission into public universities through the Unified Tertiary Matriculations Examination (UTME). Candidates that were not fortunate to be offered admission in their first and second select tertiary institutions are often welcomed by the private universities and encouraged to request for change of institution. This denotes that excellence is compromised through the admittance procedure in the institutions, and if the scenario continues, it may possibly questioned the worth of the education from such institutions of higher education. It is often ridiculous that candidates who score below 250 in entrance examination to tertiary institutions hitherto being conferred First Class Degree. It has become that graduating with a First Class degree from private universities is questionable as their products are often

associated with the falling of the general standard of education (Abiodun, Ajadi & Oyebanji, 2018).

Carrying Capacity: Apparently, the matter of carrying capacity of the private universities is a grave worry for National Universities Commission and the general public. Carrying capacity refers to innovative element initiated by the NUC to admit students into the universities based on the resources available for teaching and learning to ensure excellence service delivery in the Nigerian university system (Arikewuyo, 2019). These include sufficient lecture halls, properly equipped libraries, effective pupils teachers ratios and hostels. The NUC accreditation exercise on the carrying capacity regarding privately owned tertiary institutions showed that 60 percent of them were unable to admit 4,000 applicants per session as a result of inadequate facilities to aid teaching and learning

process in the institutions. The capability of the institutions is judged by the category of programmes offered by the schools as most of the private universities in the Nigeria focus on discipline in management sciences, humanity and natural sciences with very few offer admission to students in the field of engineering, medicine, technology, and agricultural sciences (Ajayi & Ayodele, 2012).

Lecturers' Potentials: Institutions of higher education owned by individuals lack the ability to entice scholars in the education segment as majority of them allegedly depend on adjunct academic staff to occupy the vacant post. Majority of the institutions are unable to favourably compete with the government owned institutions in terms of experienced lecturers but on many occasions depend on jobless, superannuated, visiting, casual as well as inexperienced lecturers to churn out ill-conceived graduates. The institutions were unable to lure proven academic staff in the education industry as numerous of them allegedly depend on casual academic staff to fill the existing vacancies (Oyemitam, 2019).

8.0 CONCLUSION

Universities as centre of knowledge for global best practices are saddled with the duty of producing top skill force in the milieu of the nation's requirements. It is, however, worrisome that despite the rising quantity of tertiary institutions in the country annually, large number of competent applicants looking for university admission were not admitted as a result of restricted carrying capability of the existing institutions of higher education. The need for additional private initiatives become

imperative in order to lessen the pressure on university admission. Thus, the roles of private stakeholders in the provision of tertiary education in Nigeria are an obvious demonstration of the sustained synergy amid the government and private bodies in the delivery of standard university education. However, the recently emerging privately owned universities are threatened by varieties of challenges such as paucity of financial resource, dearth of experience academic and non-academic employees and profit maximization among others.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Synergy must be established between the public and private universities to give room for effective mentoring and qualitative growth within three years of their operations.
2. The government must make provisions for the necessary technical and logistics support as required by these institutions to achieve the university mandates.
3. Governments should adequately subsidize students in private universities so as to reduce the burden of financing private higher institutions which is usually borne by parents.
4. The management of the institutions should engage in insurance schemes of diverse categories so that foreseeable risk can be shared.
5. The National University Commission must ensure that minimum academic standard is effectively promoted in private universities.

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