

## Comparative Analysis of Public and Private Universities Administration in Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT** The study made a comparative analysis of private and public universities administration and their students' academic performance. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The study drew the sample of 20 public universities (10 state owned and 10 federal owned) and 20 private universities in Nigeria. 100 respondents (including teaching and non-teaching staff in charge of the data needed for the study) were selected from each university, which amounted to 4000 staff. Simple random sampling was used to select the sample. The study developed and utilised a questionnaire tagged "Mode of Administration Questionnaire (MAQ)" with reliability coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.74. While the final year results of students in the sampled universities from the period of 2006/2007 - 2008/2009 academic sessions were used to determine students' academic performance. The study used chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ) for the data analysis. While the null hypotheses developed for the study were tested at .05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there is significant difference between resource availability, resource utilization, governance, and students' academic performance in public and private universities. Also, it was concluded that there is no significant difference between student entry requirement in public and private universities in Nigeria. It was therefore recommended that universities should be adequately funded, and they should be granted the autonomy to manage their affairs in conformity with the best traditions of accepted academic norms. Also, the hierarchy of authority should also change to make room for the adoption of autonomy and thus encourage the development of universities.

### INTRODUCTION

Universities, all over the world, are accepted as the citadel of knowledge, education and human resource development. While universities in Africa in general, have been established with the lofty aims of training and supplying highly skilled manpower to manage and order change by way of technological rebirth; producing political and administrative elites to man state structures; setting standards of societal values and ethos; and championing societal renewal via cultural creativity nourished by better knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritage, higher living standards, internal and international harmony and peace based on human rights, democracy, tolerance and mutual respect (UNESCO 2000).

The Nigerian university system is not an exception; it sprang out of the need for the development of high-level manpower to take the challenge of nation building after independence. It is the hope of the people that the universities shall produce the right type of manpower in sufficient quantity and quality (Fadipe 2000) for the transformation of the nation from a developing

country to a developed country. The curricula or programmes in these universities have witnessed marked transformation over the years in response to the needs of the Nigerian society and changes in disciplinary knowledge (Okebukola 1998).

Yet, the quality of Nigerian universities and their graduates has continued to be an issue of concern among various stakeholders. Over the years this concern has been related to instability of the academic calendar, infrastructural decay in a situation of population explosion and academic staff shortages among others. Resulting from this has been a widely held perception that graduates of the Nigerian university system (NUS) are half-baked and ill-prepared for the world of work. In a bid to reverse the dwindling fortunes of Nigerian universities, the National Universities Commission (NUC) continues to intervene through various initiatives aimed at ensuring that Nigerian universities regain their past glories and continue to be relevant to the socio-economic and technological advancement of Nigeria through the production of nationally relevant and globally competitive graduates (Okojie 2009).

Employers of labour and the general public have also expressed concern over the quality of graduates of Nigerian universities. The situation is glaringly evident when Nigerian graduates seek to practise their professions or further their education outside the country where they are requested to take qualifying examinations. Hitherto Nigerian certificates were offered automatic recognition abroad. Similarly, an increasing number of employers are forced to practically retrain newly recruited graduates to give them the skills that should have been acquired in the university.

This fallen standard is not only an indictment of the National Universities Commission (NUC), the custodian of Nigeria's university education, but also of the governments of Nigeria, the universities, parents and the society at large. We have, in our various ways, contributed to the decay of the system and we are today producing graduates whose qualifications are not being accepted confidently. The ivory towers of Nigeria that have remained upright for long are on the verge of becoming the leaning towers of Nigeria. Also the appreciation of all these aforementioned facts will positively affect the posturing of the Nigerian university system in such areas as creation of centres of excellence, differential determination of conditions of service, dynamic understanding of the mandates of the universities in terms of teaching, research and community service.

From the very beginning when university education commenced in Nigeria in 1948, the government conceived of its nature as a public or social good whose production must not be left in the hands of the private sector. Hence, from then until 1999, a period of over fifty years, the establishment, ownership, management and funding of universities and all tertiary educational institutions remained the exclusive reserve of Federal and State Governments. This made the public universities to dominate the higher education landscape in Nigeria for several decades; their failure to cope with admission pressure became more critical with the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the later part of the 1980s. Also, the failure of public tertiary institutions in Nigeria manifests in the form of enlarged teacher student ratio; overcrowded classes; poor quality teaching and research; examination malpractice; cultism and incessant strikes of staff (NUC 2005).

As the Federal Universities grew in number and students enrolment, State Universities started emerging in 1979 with the Rivers State University of Science and Technology taking the lead. In the same vein, the emergence of private providers of university education in Nigeria became a reality when the first three Private Universities were licensed to operate in 1999 after an earlier failed attempt. Currently, Nigeria has one hundred and one (101) universities comprising twenty-seven (27) federal universities, thirty (33) state universities and forty-one (41) private universities. The staff strength of Nigerian universities is 99,464 comprising of 27,394 academic staff and 72,070 non-teaching staff. The current total students enrolment in Nigerian universities stands at 1,096,312 (Okojie 2009).

In the past decades, there have been crises of different types and intensity in Nigerian university system. Of all the crises, that of scarce resources arising from under-funding has been central. Resources for university education in terms of staff need, funds, physical facilities and equipment have continuously been in state of acute shortage in Nigeria (Akpotu and Nwadiani 2003; NUC 2005). Resource required to provide qualitative education has been scarce, while students' desire for university education continued to mount. Private sector participation in the provision and management of university education therefore, appear to ensure the production of quality graduates; bearing in mind that Nigeria is reputed to have the most dynamic and daring private sector in Black Africa.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study therefore carried out the comparative analysis of private and public universities administration and their students' academic performance with aim of improving university administration and the enhancement of students' academic performance in both private and public universities in Nigeria.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were developed and tested in the course of this study to find answers to the problems under investigation.

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference between resources availability in private and public universities.

- Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference between resources utilization in private and public universities.
- Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant different between governance in private and public universities.
- Ho<sub>4</sub>: There is no significant different between student entry requirement in private and public universities.
- Ho<sub>5</sub>: There is no significant difference between students' academic performance in private and public universities.

**METHODOLOGY**

Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The study drew the sample of 20 public universities (10 state owned and 10 federal owned) and 20 private universities out of 60 public and 41 private universities in Nigeria. 100 respondents (including teaching and non-teaching staff, who are in charge of the data needed for the study) were selected from each university, which amounted to 4000 staff. Simple random sampling was used to select the sample.

The study developed and used a questionnaire tagged "Mode of Administration Questionnaire (MAQ)" with reliability coefficient (r) of 0.74. While the final year results of students in the sampled universities from the period of 2006/2007 - 2008/2009 academic sessions were used to determine students' academic performance.

The study used chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ) for the data analysis. While the null hypotheses formulated for the study were tested at .05 level of significance.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the study are presented according to the hypotheses generated for the study.

**Hypothesis 1**

There is no significant difference between resources availability in private and public universities.

Table 1 provides empirical information concerning difference between resources availability in private and public universities in Nigeria. From Table 1, it is revealed that the calculated  $\chi^2$  value of 311.22 at df 3 and .05 level of significance is greater than the critical  $\chi^2$  value of 7.815. This has made the researcher to reject the hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between resources availability in private and public universities. Thus, there is significant difference between resources availability in private and public universities.

**Hypothesis 2**

There is no significant difference between resources utilization in private and public universities.

**Table 1: Difference between resources availability in private and public universities**

| Administration      | SA   | A   | D   | SD  | Total | $\chi^2$ Cal. | Df | $\chi^2$ Cri. | Remark |
|---------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-------|---------------|----|---------------|--------|
| Publicuniversities  | 1228 | 390 | 202 | 180 | 2000  | 311.22        | 3  | 7.815         | S      |
| Privateuniversities | 1302 | 398 | 170 | 130 | 2000  |               |    |               |        |
| Total               | 2530 | 788 | 372 | 310 | 4000  |               |    |               |        |

Significant at .05 level

**Table 2: Difference between resources utilization in private and public universities**

| Administration      | SA   | A    | D   | SD  | Total | $\chi^2$ Cal. | Df | $\chi^2$ Cri. | Remark |
|---------------------|------|------|-----|-----|-------|---------------|----|---------------|--------|
| Publicuniversities  | 994  | 870  | 37  | 99  | 2000  | 242.45        | 3  | 7.815         | S      |
| Privateuniversities | 842  | 1017 | 86  | 55  | 2000  |               |    |               |        |
| Total               | 1836 | 1887 | 123 | 154 | 4000  |               |    |               |        |

Significant at .05 level

Table 2 reveals significant difference between resources utilization in private and public universities. It is observed from the Table that the calculated  $\chi^2$  value of 242.45 at df 3 and .05 level of significance is greater than the critical  $\chi^2$  value of 7.815. The null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between resources utilization in private and public universities is rejected. Therefore, there is significant difference between resources utilization in private and public universities.

The results of hypotheses 1 and 2 found that resources availability and utilization are significantly different in public and private universities in Nigeria. When talking of educational resources, they are both financial, human, and material. Indeed, the availability and utilization of these resources differ in public and private universities. As public universities are funded through grants from the government, the private universities are solely funded through tuition fees paid by students. Their total incomes are determined by the number of students and the rate of tuition fees levied. Therefore, they must meet their expenditure with what they collect from their students. This is the reason private universities attract larger number of students in order to maximize profit.

The private universities usually operate with a limited number of regular staff members. Since they rely much on part-time lecturers drawn from public universities, some of them are headed by senior professors or retired professors from public universities. Although the scarcity of experienced teachers generally as brain drain is real. New universities and, to some extent, the older ones (public or private) will have to contend with the problems of staffing. There are minimum requirements for staffing programmes in departments and failure to meet with the requirements would incur the wrath of National Universities Commission (NUC) and the denial of accreditation would follow.

Younger lecturers are being employed in universities and they go through a tutelage that is devoid of a mentoring system from where they could gain experience and mature in their professional/academic development. Senior academics have either retired (having attained retirement age) or are busy recycling themselves trying to cope with new challenges in newly established universities. In the absence of senior academic colleagues, new young staffs are vir-

tually on their own and are hardly able to cut their teeth adequately in research, publications, teaching skills and other preparations without the valuable assistance and guidance of veterans of vast experience. The failure of public tertiary institutions in Nigeria manifests in the form of enlarged teacher student ratio; overcrowded classes; poor quality teaching and research; examination malpractice; cultism and incessant strikes of staff (NUC 2005).

Some of the private universities for example have state-of-the-art facilities that are the envy of students in public universities where there are dilapidated infrastructural facilities. The NUC accreditation report of 2006 made elaborate positive comments on the state of infrastructural facilities in many of the older private universities (Oyekanmi 2006). In all the private universities evaluated, the report expressed satisfaction over the standard of laboratories and quantum of equipment acquired as well as the availability and well-furnished classrooms, workshops, studios and ICT facilities. Some private universities are better equipped than public universities in Nigeria. Also, in the area of library facilities, and technology used in teaching/learning process, they are incomparable or better than those in public universities. This finding regarding significant difference in resources availability and utilization of public and private universities corroborates the findings of Akpotu and Nwadiani (2003) and Okojie (2009), which revealed the varying degrees of shortage of educational resources in both public and private universities.

### Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference between governance in private and public universities.

Table 3 reveals significant difference between governance in private and public universities. It is observed from the Table 3 that the calculated  $\chi^2$  value of 255.61 at df 3 and .05 level of significance is greater than the critical  $\chi^2$  value of 7.815. The null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between governance in private and public universities is therefore rejected. So, there is significant difference between governance in private and public universities.

The finding of the present study shows that there is significant difference between governance in private and public universities. Really,

**Table 3: Difference between governance in private and public universities**

| <i>Administration</i> | <i>SA</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Total</i> | $\chi^2$ <i>Cal.</i> | <i>Df</i> | $\chi^2$ <i>Cri.</i> | <i>Remark</i> |
|-----------------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|--------------|----------------------|-----------|----------------------|---------------|
| Publicuniversities    | 1102      | 558      | 305      | 35        | 2000         | 255.61               | 3         | 7.815                | S             |
| Privateuniversities   | 982       | 912      | 42       | 64        | 2000         |                      |           |                      |               |
| Total                 | 2084      | 1470     | 347      | 99        | 4000         |                      |           |                      |               |

Significant at .05 level

**Table 4: Difference between student entry requirement in private and public universities**

| <i>Administration</i> | <i>SA</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Total</i> | $\chi^2$ <i>Cal.</i> | <i>Df</i> | $\chi^2$ <i>Cri.</i> | <i>Remark</i> |
|-----------------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|--------------|----------------------|-----------|----------------------|---------------|
| Publicuniversities    | 150       | 64       | 794      | 992       | 2000         | 6.41                 | 3         | 7.815                | NS            |
| Privateuniversities   | 54        | 90       | 902      | 954       | 2000         |                      |           |                      |               |
| Total                 | 1748      | 1894     | 154      | 204       | 4000         |                      |           |                      |               |

Not significant at .05 level

there is difference in the governance of the public and private university system. In the private universities the directives on vital issues usually comes from one source, that is, the proprietors or the president as the nomenclature may be. It is a one man affair. The public universities governance follows protocols and committee system. It has both internal and external structures. The internal structure of the public universities has the Vice Chancellors as the executive heads. While the external structure involves the Visitor, Ministries of Education (Federal or State), National Universities Commission (NUC), Chancellor, Governing Council headed by its chairman (Pro-chancellor). This is not to say that the private universities do not have governing councils, but they are constituted by the proprietors while those of the public universities are constituted by the government that owns the universities be it federal or state. Also, the National Universities Commission (NUC) exercises some controls on both public and private universities. This result is buttressed by Okojie (2009) as expressed above.

#### Hypothesis 4

There is no significant different between student entry requirement in private and public universities.

Table 4 reveals significant difference between student entry requirement in private and public universities. It is observed from the Table

4 that the calculated  $\chi^2$  value of 6.41 at df 3 and .05 level of significance is lower than the critical  $\chi^2$  value of 7.815. The null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between student entry requirement in private and public universities is accepted. Therefore, there is significant difference between student entry requirement in private and public universities.

In Nigeria, the competition for admission to public universities is very high. Ideally, those who do not secure admission in public universities seek admission in private universities. Some universities that give their religious orientation attract students from the same community or denomination. For example, for the 2008/2009 admissions, about 1.3 million were reported to have sat for the JAMB examinations; a little over nine hundred thousand (900,000) results were released. The total number of students to be admitted into all Nigerian universities (federal, state and private) was given as 183,000 by National Universities Commission (NUC) based on assessed carrying capacities. The worst scenario is to assume that only 450,000 passed the examinations, this will mean that about 267,000 candidates will remain unplaced after admitting the National Universities Commission (NUC) figure of 183, 000. In spite of NUC's efforts to ensure that enrolments in universities are pegged down by the carrying capacities of university, some universities were so daring that they each enrolled very many more students than the facilities of the universities would allow them to

enroll. A sampling from a study on the carrying capacity of Nigerian universities conducted by National Universities Commission showed the following remarkable results. Out of the 53 universities surveyed in the study, thirty (56.6%) over-enrolled while twenty (37.7%) under-enrolled and only three (5.7%) had not admitted students (NUC 2005).

The reason for the present finding is not far-fetched. It is observed that the general entry requirement in all Nigerian universities (federal, state, and private) is 5 credit pass including Mathematics and English Language at one sitting and 6 credit pass at two sittings. All other requirements depend on the proposed courses of study. This makes the student entry requirement uniform. There is no doubt that some programmes or waivers may be provided on different courses so as to favour some ethnic groups or states under the disguise of quota system or less disadvantage state in public universities while some other ways of preferential treatment are also encouraged on the platform of religious affiliations, social groups etc. on the admission of students in private universities.

### Hypothesis 5

There is no significant difference between students' academic performance in private and public universities.

**Table 5: Difference between student's academic performance in private and public universities**

| <i>Students' academic performance</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>df</i> | $\chi^2$ <i>Cal.</i> | $\chi^2$ <i>Cri.</i> | <i>Remark</i> |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Public universities                   | 2000     |           |                      |                      |               |
| Private universities                  | 2000     | 1         | 105.25               | 3.841                | S             |

Significant at .05 level

The Table 5 reveals significant difference between students' academic performance in private and public universities. It is observed from the Table that the calculated  $\chi^2$  value of 105.25 at df 3 and .05 level of significance is greater than the critical  $\chi^2$  value of 3.841. The null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between students' academic performance in private and public universities is rejected. Therefore, there is significant differ-

ence between students' academic performance in private and public universities.

Students' academic performance is a product of many factors or indices, which vary from student factors, parental/home factors, societal/environmental factors, resources to school and teacher factors. It is not a gainsaying that the students' academic performance in private universities in general is better than those in public universities. The dropout rates are low and the graduation rates are high in almost all private universities. This may not be unconnected with the exorbitant fees paid which shows that only those who are really ready to pursue a study seek admission in private universities. Also, the students of some private universities are closely monitored and highly motivated in general than their counterparts in the public universities.

It should be a matter of great concern for us in this country that qualifications obtained in our institutions of higher learning are given a low rating not only by the world outside Nigeria but also by Nigerians within the country. This is called the crisis of credibility which appears to have encircled the worthiness of the academic qualifications obtained in Nigerian universities today (Adamu 2008).

### CONCLUSION

It is clearly observed that there are differences in the administration of public and private universities in Nigeria. Despite this fact, both are confronted with major problems, which call for urgent attention in order to save our educational system from disarray. For example, in the absence of improved facilities to cope with increased demand many of the universities had to exceed their carrying capacities, which is defined by National Universities Commission as the maximum number of students that the institution can sustain for qualitative education based on available human and material resources. These maladies without doubt have incongruent and intrinsic effects on the quality of products and service delivery in the system. Consequently, they pose further challenges on the government and the proprietors of universities as well as on university governance.

There is need for a peaceful co-existence of both public and private universities in Nigeria as viable and realistic alternatives. Also, the pri-

vate universities' role may be seen in many instances as complementary to the contributions made by public universities. For this reason, there is need for a better partnership between the private and public sectors in higher education rather than leaving the sector entirely to the public sector or to the market force.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings, it is therefore recommended that universities should be adequately funded by the government and the philanthropic that engage in the establishment of universities. It should be noted that anybody that is over-conscious of maximizing profit can not to be a university education provider since education is social service that needs to be financially subsidized.

Also, the administrative machinery of universities should be overhauled and made to fall in line with the demands of efficiency and proactiveness. The hierarchy of authority should also change to make room for the adoption of autonomy and thus encourage the development of universities.

The National Universities Commission should be re-modelled to serve the needs of universities and not those of government. The Commission should operate independent of government and serve as a buffer and a catalyst in promoting the cause of universities in all ramifications.

Finally, the universities should be granted the autonomy to manage their affairs in conformity with the best traditions of accepted academic norms.

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