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## Introduction

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### Abstract

The growth of private provision of higher education in recent years is a phenomenon experienced the world over, but especially in Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America. Some of these regions had very little or no private higher education before the 1990s. As elsewhere in the world, the private provision of higher education in Africa is largely not new but has had antecedents. Hence, it is appropriate for some countries to refer to the latest wave as a resurgence rather than as a surge of the sector. Indeed, the private higher education surge happens in the context where the public sector is dominant and state policies do not cater for the private sector. This partly leads to private institutions having to deal with issues of legitimacy. Despite this, their prominence has rekindled debates on what is higher education, higher education as a public/private good, and quality, among other issues. This introductory article deals with these issues as a way of providing a background to all the other themes dealt with individually by other papers in this volume. It outlines the purposes and objectives of this special issue and gives a detailed summary of each article contained herein.

### Résumé

La croissance de la privatisation de l'enseignement supérieur au cours des dernières années est un phénomène connu dans le monde entier, surtout en Afrique, en Europe centrale et orientale, en Asie et en Amérique latine. Certaines de ces régions avaient très peu ou pas de structures privées d'enseignement supérieur avant les années 1990. Comme ailleurs dans le monde, la privatisation de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique n'est pas totalement quelque chose de nouveau, mais a eu des antécédents. Donc, il est normal, pour certains pays, de se référer à la dernière vague comme un nouvel essor plutôt que comme un essor du secteur. En effet, l'essor de l'enseignement supérieur privé survient dans le contexte où le secteur public occupe une position dominante et où la politique des états ne répond pas aux besoins du secteur privé. Ce qui fait que les institutions privées sont

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confrontées à des questions de légitimité. Malgré cela, leur importance a ravivé les débats sur ce qu'est l'enseignement supérieur, la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur dans le secteur public/privé, entre autres. Cet article liminaire aborde ces questions de façon à donner un aperçu sur tous les autres thèmes traités individuellement par d'autres articles de cet ouvrage. Il énonce les buts et objectifs de ce numéro spécial, et donne un résumé détaillé de chacun des articles qui s'y trouvent.

### Introduction

When the editors set out to put together this special issue, we were driven by a desire to further explore the dynamics of private provision<sup>1</sup> of higher education (HE) in Africa. For almost a decade, as researchers in the international network known as a Program for Researchers on Private Higher Education (PROPHE - <http://www.albany.edu/~prophe/>), we have been observing that the sector has been growing in leaps and bounds the world over. Collectively, researchers in PROPHE have been studying and monitoring development of private higher education for the past seven years. Individually, some researchers have a longer span of studying the field. Professor Levy, a co-editor, has been studying the sector for more than 25 years now. Since its inception, PROPHE has made Africa one of its priority regions for study and both its pioneer researchers from the region, Mabizela and Otieno, are co-editors of this volume. Moreover, PROPHE has researchers from all the continents and, as such, keeps up to date with current developments in the sector globally.

Research has shown that the growth of the private sector has been phenomenal in Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America. Some of these regions, like Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, had very little or no private HE institutions until very recently (basically, the past fifteen years or there about) (see, for example, Altbach 1999; Levy 2003; Sawyerr 2002). Systematic data on Africa is still sorely lacking but by combining this journal's pieces with prior PROPHE work, we can assemble a tentative data table.

The observation about sharp growth does not disregard the fact that there had been global historical antecedents of private higher education institutions (PHEIs). The African case shows that in some countries private emergence was at the same time with the commencement of post-secondary education; for further discussion on such observations see articles by Mabizela, Obasi, Onsongo, Otieno and Levy in this volume.

Besides the scholarship observations by PROPHE researchers looking at growth, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), whose interest is to seek areas of investment directly with organisations implementing capital investment projects in developing countries, has made a similar observation (Lazarus 2002

and Van Lutsenburg 2001). Citing causes for this growth, Van Lutsenburg (2001:30) reports that the majority of the world's university-age population resides in developing countries. Specific observations of this nature have also been made particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (see Banya 2001; Ajayi, Goma and Johnson 1996).

**Table 1:** Comparative Number of Public and Private Higher Education Enrolments in Some African States

Country	No. of Public Universities	Total Enrolments at Public Institutions	No. of Private Institutions	Total Enrolments at Private Institutions	% Private HE Enrolments to Overall
Benin	1	16,284 (1999)	27	2,700 (1999)	14%
Ghana	3	63,600 (2004)	28	8,000 (2004)*	11%
Kenya	6	81,400	17	10,000 (2004/05)	11%
Mozambique	6	15,113	6	7,143 (2004)	32%
Nigeria	57	1,070,563**	32	37,636 (2006)	4%
Senegal	2	33,900 (2003)	48	4,140 (2003)	11%
South Africa	23	742,000 (2005)	96	85,000 (2003)	10%
Tanzania	11	51,652	21	12,400 (2006/07)	19%
Uganda	4	96,000 (2003)***	23	17,060 (2004)	15%
Zimbabwe	7	38,000 (2004)	5	1,797 (2003)	5%

#### Notes

1. Almost all the numbers contained in this table are approximations. The sources of these numbers are both the articles in this volume and data from PROPHE, which is continuously embarking on gathering data. The data source also includes Varghese (2006) and Teferra and Altbach (2003). This table attempts to reflect on the very latest numbers, which may be different to those contained in the individual articles of this volume.
2. Some countries' data was too incomplete to include in the table.
3. The percentage column of private HE enrolments is calculated on an overall total that includes both private and public HE enrolments.

\* Based on estimate by Effah (2006).

\*\* Definitive verification of this number could not be obtained. It is likely to be inclusive of all tertiary education institutions (Monotechnics, Schools of Nursing and Midwifery, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Universities and even private HE institutions). In 2002, universities alone were reported to have enrolled 411,347 students.

\*\*\* This number possibly includes enrolments at the 29 'other' (e.g. technical) colleges in Uganda.

The intended purpose of this special issue, therefore, is to examine private higher education on the continent including, where possible, some global comparative context and in relation to the pioneering studies and concepts in the literature on private higher education. We focus primarily on the following: the private sector's interface(s) with the public sector; local and global contexts and arising dynamics brought about by expansion of private supply and delivery of higher education; private higher education's different dimensions and effects on the existing provision of higher education, still dominated by the public sector; and we reflect on new realities for higher education in sub-Saharan Africa. The different contributions in this volume deal directly or indirectly with all these aspects.

It should be stated upfront, though, that the purpose of this special issue is neither to advocate for the establishment or recognition of existing private higher education institutions in spite of the laws and policies of individual countries, nor to justify their existence. Not advocates of private higher education, or opponents of it, we simply present the evidence. *Articles in this volume drive the point home that private higher education has arrived in Africa and it is here to stay.* Some articles herein elucidate the point that in some countries on the continent, private higher education stakes as much legitimacy as the public higher education institutions, whereas legitimacy is often a major challenge for new private higher education sectors and institutions (Slantcheva and Levy 2007). The United States private higher education sector leads when it comes to private sector institutions having the same or even a better reputation and legitimacy than the public sector higher education institutions (Geiger 1986). Indeed, some South American and Asian countries such as Chile, Colombia and the Philippines have also had some well-regarded private institutions (Bernasconi 2003; Levy 1986 and Gonzalez 1999). Several articles in this volume actually demonstrate the seriousness of private higher education and their claim for government attention, including their access to public resources.

Another purpose of this special issue, therefore, is a scholarly exploration of various aspects of the existence and functioning of private higher education institutions and an attempt to understand what their existence means for the whole of the higher education systems and their communities and the society at large. Indeed, this issue attempts to be as factual as possible and of course contains empirical research.

It also needs to be 'fore-grounded' that discussions contained herein are, to some extent, comparative studies across countries within the continent as well as across continents. The countries compared are not always similar. For instance, countries in the African continent are developmentally heterogeneous. Likewise, globally the many countries classified as developing are not the same

and neither are developed countries. While these differences may not always be stated in the discussions contained here, our comparative debates take the differences into cognisance.

Our approach as editors has been driven by a desire to provide a useful volume since this is the first special journal publication that entirely focuses on private higher education in the continent. From the fifteen papers we received, covering a wide range of topics, we managed to select those herein contained, running them through a critical peer-review draft revision process. Still, we do not pretend that these articles or the issues they discuss are exhaustive of every aspect of private provision of higher education in the continent. There are still many more issues to explore.

This special issue is not primarily about comparing different practices by different African states but it is about the understanding of each country and drawing similarities or differences of aspects across countries, thereby making our understanding of private provision of higher education better.

### **Why the Title ‘Private Surge Amid Public Dominance’ ?**

The dominance of provision of higher education by the state has led to a popular belief that this domain is solely reserved for the state. State policies on higher education have usually been designed only with public sector institutions in mind. The regulation of private institutions has largely been a reaction to the surge of private institutions due to the increasing demand for access to higher education. Thus, the title ‘private surge amid public dominance’, because private sector institutions are surging to function or ‘compete’<sup>2</sup> in the space predominantly occupied by the public sector institutions. This point is ably elucidated in many articles contained in this volume (see for example Obasi, Otieno, Onsongo, Ishengoma and the conclusion by Levy).

On reading the articles in this volume, one might want to argue that the current wave of establishment and development of private higher education is not a ‘surge’ but ‘resurgence’. Such an argument would be informed by knowledge presented here that in many states in the continent there were private initiatives for establishing higher education institutions prior to the individual independence of the colonised states. Indeed, that is true and religion was involved in such initiatives, as it is still involved in the current mix of establishment of educational institutions. None of the very first private African higher education institutions, established pre-independence, survived as private institutions, an observation that has been made about post-colonial Latin America (Levy 1986). They either exist now having been converted to public institutions or they closed down. Therefore, reference to the ‘old’ generation of private higher education institutions, particularly in this article and the next, is made to those private

institutions established shortly after independence, almost alongside the establishment of public universities. These are institutions that have largely followed the classic structure of a university. Moreover, they are mostly religious and, in many (non-religious) respects, try or have tried to emulate public institutions in terms of security and legitimacy. Almost all the articles in this volume illustrate the distinct development of private institutions then (old) and now (new) in the individual countries as well as broadly across the continent. Therefore, reference to the 'resurgence' of private higher education is correct in some respect but may not be appropriate in other ways, and in some countries the current establishment of private institutions has had no historical antecedents or precursors. In any event, the 'surge' of private higher education institutions encompasses all countries whether they have had antecedents or not.

Moreover, some antecedents should not be categorically classified as higher education, similarly to what existed as institutions of higher learning in those countries or metropolises. That is, private higher education institutional antecedents may have offered post-secondary education but have not been structured as existing higher education institutions at that time. Therefore, on that basis, they were then not regarded as higher education institutions despite offering post-secondary education; hence they did not qualify to call themselves higher education. In fact, post-secondary initiatives in colonies were often made to affiliate to universities in the metropolises. In Anglophone Africa, where such arrangement existed, the concept used for 'post-secondary' education institutions in the colonies was 'University College'. Some of the private initiatives then did not have the status of a 'university college' despite also offering post-secondary education. Some of the surviving antecedents turned to providers of post-secondary education and not to higher education.

Consequent to the state takeover and overshadowing of private initiatives in higher education, as well as the establishment of new public universities, the subsequently established private institutions or the 'new' or contemporary private higher education institutions constitute a significantly smaller portion of higher education enrolments than does the public higher education sectors (see Table 1 above). Partly, the smaller private higher education sectors can be explained by the fact that private initiatives germinate through a cast of existing state policies which were not designed with private higher education institutions in mind and their mushrooming sometimes even spurs a reaction of stringency by the state which is reflected in its policies. The choice of 'surge', thus, is intended to illustrate this point and the articles by Mabizela and Levy discuss this theme in-depth. The relative smallness of the private sector vis-à-vis the public sector is despite the fact that (both regionally and globally) the number of

private institutions in a given country is often larger than that of public institutions: in our African countries *usually* larger.

Contemporary private institutions are often excess ‘demand-absorbing’, a term coined in the private higher education literature to highlight growth in large part due to shortages of space in the public sector. While the concept of demand-absorbing conjures up massification of higher education in theory, in reality the sector still enrolls the minority of students in Africa, as indicated above. Instead, demand-absorbing in the African context relates to broadening access to higher education because often private institutions provide access opportunities to students who either could not qualify for admission to public institutions or wish to continue with their studies at times convenient to them (see articles by Obasi, Ishengoma, Otieno and Onsongo). There are few exceptions to this norm.

As much as the title of this special issue was arrived at factually and based on new knowledge about private higher education sectors as demonstrated in the above discussion, it also echoes the classic pioneering and seminal work by Levy in a book published in 1986, *Higher Education and the State in Latin America: Private Challenges to Public Dominance*. The findings he made in that study continue to reflect in contemporary studies made around the world and, indeed, his work was aptly titled. His contribution honours this volume. It is also our wish that this special issue would have a similar impact on future studies of private higher education in Africa.

### **Objectives of this Special Issue**

The purpose and focus of this special issue and how they were arrived at have already been explained in the sections above. The advent of global growth of private higher education is among the forefront issues that generally highlight topical and contentious subjects in higher education. Private higher education growth has brought about new insights into these topical issues, some of which had lain dormant for many years. For example, the private higher education surge accompanied by massification of higher education and ensuing analyses has revived arguments and debates on higher education as a ‘public’ or ‘private’ good; higher education offered for-profit and not-for-profit; as well as debates on what constitutes quality in higher education. If such debates were to come up anyway due to the international development of higher education, the advent of private higher education growth and its prominence has forced such debates to acknowledge their existence. In other words, the growth of private higher education is a prominent factor in such discussions.

Furthermore, the heightened global attention on the growth of private higher education has rekindled a critical examination of the role of the State in the provision of higher education. As a result, stereotypes and assumptions, espe-



cially that higher education is the domain of only the state and therefore a public good or that it should not be offered for-profit, are being challenged. With the new critical attention paid to private higher education, there is now growing realisation that public institutions have a degree of *privateness* and private institutions have a degree of *publicness*. All these issues are considered in the various articles contained herein.

Thus, the objective of this special issue is to explore issues that arise due to the surge of private higher education in the African continent, such as interfaces between public and private sectors. Otieno, for instance, eloquently and succinctly discusses such interface using Kenya as a case study. Other articles indirectly reflect on such interfaces. Apart from his case study, we had originally hoped to achieve this objective by a choice of topics we had sought to invite contributions into, over and above articles submitted in response to a call for papers. We had specifically wanted to cover in-depth subjects like ‘globalisation, internationalisation and private higher education in Africa’, and the ‘private provision of “public good”’. The article by Mabizela deals directly with some of these issues. Moreover, the initially targeted coverage of Francophone and Lusophone<sup>3</sup> Africa turns out to be a much regretted limitation of this volume. The inability to attract articles from countries other than Anglophone countries partly reflects the fact that Africa’s private higher education surge has been strongest in Anglophone countries, an observation Levy discusses in his concluding article. In any event, this volume concentrates on where the region’s private higher education is concentrated.

### **About the Individual Articles**

The first article after this introduction is by Mahlubi Mabizela, a researcher of both private and public higher education in South Africa and a Collaborating Scholar in PROPHE. Mabizela’s article lays the foundation for the debates that follow in the rest of the volume. It provides a brief background of private higher education in Africa, exploring precursors or antecedents in-depth. In order to have the reader understand what is meant by private higher education and the complexities of arriving at that identification, Mabizela deals with issues of definition, articulation and differentiation of private higher education. As introduced above, Mabizela discusses the issue of private ‘surge’ or ‘resurgence’ further. He also explores underlying factors in the establishment and growth of private higher education, pointing to issues that seem to be unusual to the continent and other developing countries. His article additionally examines challenges facing governments amidst the development of private higher education and lessons that can be drawn from the phenomenon. In laying the foundation for other themes, the article draws extensively from articles in this special issue.



Picking up on the theme of private surge in a context of post-military dictatorships is Isaac Obasi, a Nigerian scholar working in Botswana who has written widely on private higher education in Nigeria. The development of private higher education in Nigeria was suppressed by the successive military regimes which banned the private establishment of higher education institutions. Consequently, all private higher education institutions are new in Nigeria, having been established in the 1990s and later. As Obasi illustrates, the Nigerian case typifies the establishment of private institutions due to failure of the public sector, which leads to excess demand. Thus, private institutions in Nigeria are both demand-absorbing and consequent establishments are due to public failure. The Nigerian case also illustrates the reflection of connectedness of social problems to education in general and higher education in particular. Thus, the private sector becomes demand-absorbing in many respects including excess demand and the flight of students from cultism which has plagued society and spilled over to public higher education institutions. Obasi also illustrates not only the difficulty with the definition of private higher education and demarcation of boundaries between what is higher education and post-secondary, but also the difficulty of distinction between for-profit and not-for-profit higher education institutions. In an illustration of the interface between private sector institutions and the public sector, Obasi discusses how this interface has positively influenced quality at the public institutions.

The topic of quality assurance and private HE receives more and in-depth discussion in the article by Prem Naidoo, Mala Singh and Lis Lange. All three were colleagues at the Council on Higher Education (CHE) which, among others, has functions of quality assurance of higher education in South Africa. Dr Prem Naidoo has since passed away and it is our understanding that he was the main contributor to the article. Their discussion of quality assurance at private higher education institutions is presented together with the phenomenon of transnational education, which is another aspect of private higher education in developing countries. This is another form of commercialisation of higher education wherein franchised learning programmes, often from developed countries, are offered at institutions in developing countries. The article explains the South African policy in the light of this international development which the country has experienced in the form of foreign institutions that have set up delivery sites. It further discusses elements that the authors identified in the South African private higher education sector which are determinants of the quality of their programmes and provision. It can be seen in the presentation of various permutations of franchises by authors that the underlying motive is business. Contrary to popular belief, the authors point out that the for-profit motive does not necessarily compromise academic quality. Despite this assertion, an empiri-

cal study conducted by the CHE concluded that transnational institutions lacked quality, based on the reasons stated by the authors, which do not include the for-profit nature of these institutions. The authors draw from their experience and conclude by offering advice to other developing nations regarding approaches to transnational institutions.

Staying with the theme of quality in relation to growth of private higher education is the article by Johnson Ishengoma from Tanzania. Ishengoma is a lecturer of education at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Often, private higher education is associated with poor quality and Ishengoma uses the growth of private higher education sector in Tanzania as a case study in empirically discussing this matter. He begins by showing how the private higher education sector is demand-absorbing, by using admissions data. Such a role is not only circumstantial but also recognised by government policy. Nonetheless, Ishengoma arrives at a determination of the types of institutions in Tanzania. His arguments point out that there is still a relatively poor quality of education at private institutions.

Closely linked to quality are often differing views on equity. Systems massify, among other reasons, because barriers that previously prevented certain groups in society from accessing higher education are being removed. It is in this context that some critics argue that academic quality standards get compromised in the process. Jane Onsongo tackles the implications of private higher education growth on gender equity in the Kenyan higher education system. Onsongo is a lecturer and head of the Department of Undergraduate Studies in Education at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. There is no doubt that private higher education is opening opportunities especially to those who would otherwise not have had the opportunity to access higher education. In her article, Onsongo observes certain measures adopted in order to improve the access of women to higher education, despite the absence of state policy in this regard. She discusses the intricate relationship of access vis-à-vis equity and the role of private higher education institutions in promoting women's access to higher education. Her findings show that, though private higher education institutions in Kenya attract students from relatively wealthier background than public higher education institutions, they, however, also attract relatively more females than do public institutions.

Related to quality but digging deeper to its nuances, Glenda Kruss, a Chief Research Specialist with the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa, profiles students choosing to study at private higher education institutions in South Africa. Her analysis too is based on empirical study conducted on students at private higher education institutions: a type of study still rare outside

the U.S. Within the private higher education sector, Kruss identifies the mobility and credentials sub-sectors. Institutions in these two sub-sectors are distinct and they attract different types of students who are driven by different motives in a desire for upward mobility and credentialism. Within these two sub-sectors there are further identifiable groupings of students whose desire is either directed at local or international mobility and those who either require specialised occupational or corporate credentials. In her analysis, Kruss further peels off another layer of intricacy, which defies conventional divisions of race and gender and historical advantage or disadvantage, which have defined and continue to define the landscape of higher education in South Africa. Kruss observes that students go to private higher education institutions with specific demands and objectives. However, whether these institutions fulfil their academic and skills training objectives or not is a matter for further investigation.

Picking up the topic of student choice are Carlo Salerno and Jasmin Beverwijk, both researchers at the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies at the University of Twente, the Netherlands. They examine shifts taking place in the Ugandan higher education system as a result of the entry of private higher education institutions onto the scene. They observe that the Ugandan higher education system shows parallel shifts from elite to mass higher education and from central to a more market-oriented planning. Of course, there are pros and cons on each count. For instance, they argue that centrally-planned systems ensure a supply of graduates in specific fields but limit student choices and the reverse is true for market-determined planning. The authors also observe that the geographic spread and limited variety of fields of study that private institutions offer curtails rather than expands student choices. The parallel shifts, as Salerno and Beverwijk discover, have had a serious impact on government policy on higher education, which has had to react to the sudden boom of the private sector. Due to these parallel shifts, the state has to ensure protection of 'consumers' while allowing the system to grow and supply the needs of the country's economy. Unique to this volume, the authors analyse the growth of private sector by making use of economic theories. The authors demonstrate that the complexity of these shifts has even led to legal battles between private institutions and the state, something that has also happened in other countries in the continent and the world.

The penultimate article is a contribution by Wycliffe Otieno, a PROPHE member and a lecturer in the Department of Education Administration, Planning and Curriculum Development at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya. Otieno skilfully examines the interface of private and public higher education institutions in the context of the resurgence of private institutions amid public dominance. He picks up issues that look obvious yet illustrate intricate complexities

and dynamics between private and public institutions. For instance, that while private institutions are more numerous they continue to operate in the shadows or fringes of the public sector. These are results of the historical dominance of public sectors coupled with perceptions among the populace. He also examines the role of public policy, which, in turn, influences the types, levels and fields of private institutions. Otieno observes that the advent of private higher education growth has had an influence on the privatisation of public higher education institutions. Competition for resources and students ensues between public and private sector institutions, as well as within each sector. In this public-dominated competition, issues of quality are inevitably raised, as is the case elsewhere in the world where there are newcomer institutions. Otieno un-packs these nuances of dynamism between the two sectors in the Kenyan case.

Wrapping up the volume is an article by State University of New York Distinguished Professor Daniel Levy who has continuously published on private higher education since the early 1980s. He is the founder of PROPHE, having been joined by the Africans who are co-editors of this volume and others from its inception. Despite the diversity of themes and issues discussed by individual articles in this volume, Levy moulds them together into a synergistic conclusion. One thread, which he identifies through the articles by Mabizela, Onsongo, Otieno, Obasi and Ishengoma, is the roots or precursors or antecedents of private higher education, which is common among African states as it is elsewhere in the world. Levy identifies this running theme as if it was an intended original idea for the theme of the whole volume, yet it was not. He identifies the commonality and uniqueness of the nature of development of private higher education in colonised states and their characteristic features, noting challenges to setting boundaries between higher and post-secondary education as well as defining what is private. The involvement of religion in the establishment of private higher education institutions is succinctly picked up and it too is a recurring theme of this volume. Not only does Levy discuss different religions such as Christianity and Islam, he goes further to point out the types involved such as Catholics, Protestant and Pentecostal churches. Other than religious, there are commercial, for-profit and not-for-profit institutions which he also discusses. The theme of women enrolments through to their representation at hierarchical structures of governance of private institutions is succinctly discussed and so is governance on its own. Levy also points out the intricacy of state policies vis-à-vis the future growth of private higher education in the continent and how it is also dependent on public higher education growth. In summing up identifiable themes contained in the individual articles, Levy consolidates the richness of this knowledge by comparing these themes to comparable developments taking place in other regions of the world.

### Notes

1. Private provision in this article refers to the supply of higher education by privately established higher education institutions. This excludes public institutional providers (public sector) where they establish special means of private provision, thereby privatising a designated public service.
2. In certain countries, the private higher education sector does not necessarily compete with the public higher education sector, but supplements it. This is typical of the demand-absorbing private higher education sectors. However, competition may exist in terms of the pool of students. In some countries, though, there is direct competition between the two sectors with regard to personnel, students and resources. This often takes place where the private sector has well-established universities.
3. The use of Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone designators is not meant to be a permanent identifier of African states. These identifiers are used here for purposes of shortening discussion so that it directly addresses the issues of private higher education and the different legacies left by colonisers and how such legacies follow on from the systems of the colonisers.

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## Private Surge amid Public Dominance in Higher Education: The African Perspective

Mahlubi Mabizela\*

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### Abstract

This article lays a foundation for the debates that follow in the rest of the volume. It particularly focuses on the broad pertinent issues such as the historical development of private higher education in Africa. While we may largely talk about ‘private surge’, it argues that this may be a case of ‘resurgence’ as antecedents of private higher education existed at the same time as the establishment of public sector institutions or even before in some instances. The article also explores issues of the definition of private higher education as a way of preparing the reader to understand what the rest of the articles in the volume refer to when discussing the subject. It then discusses underlying factors in the establishment and growth of private higher education, pointing to issues that seem to be unique to the continent and other developing countries. It then concludes by arguing that private higher education has a future in the continent, especially because it is required by the systems of higher education and the challenges and lessons this poses for governments. The article draws extensively from the rest of the articles in the volume, partly as a way of introducing their debates but also as an illustration of the richness of knowledge they contain, and it also draws from other international literature.

### Résumé

Cet article pose les bases des débats qui suivront dans le reste de l’ouvrage. Il est axé sur les grandes questions pertinentes telles que l’évolution historique de l’enseignement supérieur privé en Afrique. Même si nous pouvons parler largement « d’essor du privé », il souligne que cela pourrait être un cas de « nouvel essor » du moment que des antécédents de l’enseignement supérieur privé existaient au moment de la mise en place des institutions du secteur public, ou même avant dans certains cas. L’article explore également les questions de la définition de l’ensei-

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nement supérieur privé de façon à préparer le lecteur à comprendre ce à quoi le reste des articles de l'ouvrage font allusion en examinant cette question. Il examine alors les facteurs sous-jacents de la création et la croissance de l'enseignement supérieur privé, soulignant des questions qui semblent être uniques pour le continent et pour d'autres pays en développement. Il conclut ainsi en affirmant que l'enseignement supérieur privé a un avenir dans le continent, en particulier parce que cela est nécessaire pour les systèmes d'enseignement supérieur, et à cause des défis qu'il présente pour les gouvernements et des enseignements qui peuvent s'en tirer. Cet article s'inspire largement du reste des articles de l'ouvrage, il est en partie un moyen de présentation de leurs thèmes de discussion, mais aussi une illustration de la richesse des connaissances qu'ils contiennent. Il s'inspire aussi d'autres formes de littérature internationale.

### **Introduction**

This article, firstly, gives a brief overview of the history of private higher education in Africa, illustrating contrasts that exist within the continent. Secondly, it tackles some concepts relating to the *privateness* and *publicness* of HE institutions<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of such a discussion is to create awareness of the thinking involved in understanding the sector by researchers of private higher education. Of course, it is also to challenge further thinking, the theorisation and the scholarly engagement of existing understanding and theories in order to develop a new knowledge of understanding in the sector.

Thirdly, the article introduces a well-covered discussion in the rest of the articles, which is the understanding of establishment and growth of the sector in Africa. In this article, though, the focus is global rather than specific to individual countries. Indeed, the coverage includes a discussion of 'local pressures' universally rather than tackling individual issues specific to individual countries. These issues are well covered in the individual country articles in this volume.

Lastly, by way of introducing the discussions contained in the rest of the volume, this article references them extensively. As such, there is no need to elaborate on each one of them here.

### **A Brief Overview Background of Private Higher Education in Africa**

Higher education (HE) in Africa presents some interesting paradoxes. Ironically, it is the African continent that houses the world's oldest university still in operation, the Al-Azhar, in Egypt (Teferra and Altbach 2004). Yet, Africa has the most undeveloped system of HE and relatively the fewest universities. It is the same continent that began the world's first distance HE institution in the form of the University of South Africa in 1945, which is now one of the biggest, so-called mega-universities, in the world. Yet, Africa continues to have the low-

est access rate to HE and the least research output. Even though private higher education institutions (PHEIs) were among the first in the continent, they are now largely overshadowed by public HE institutions. In fact, private HE in the continent is largely thought of and regarded as a new phenomenon. Historic as these HE institutions may be, HE in sub-Saharan Africa is relatively new compared to other global regions.

Due to colonialism, many states began providing their own university education post-independence, which is since the late 1950s. However, in some African countries colonisers offered HE during the colonial period, but this was mainly from the metropolises and they focused on the elite. Some of these institutions or ventures were private initiatives, hence private HE in certain instances is as old as public HE in the continent (see Ajayi, Goma and Johnson 1996; Mabizela 2001). However, due mainly to a lack of funding from the private sector and the role of policy control by the state, the state was able to take over those private initiatives and turn them into state-owned institutions. Indeed, the phenomenon of turning private or church-owned institutions into state-owned, or public institutions, is not unique to Africa but found in other continents as well. Levy discusses in details the church-state separation which gave rise to the private-public distinction in HE in the South Americas (see Levy 1986).

Using the benchmark of the establishment of state universities after independence in African states in the late 1950s, therefore, formal PHEIs started even later. Indeed, as explained above there were antecedents of PHEIs even during the colonial period, which date back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the start of HE in some African states (see Onsongo and Otieno in this volume; Mabizela 2001 and Ajayi et al. 1996). The nature of operation of some of these older generation PHEIs took the classic structure found in the public sector and some started as post-secondary education providers. Contemporary PHEIs<sup>2</sup>, largely established post-1990 but also with antecedents (see Onsongo in this issue), are characterised by a single programme focus (often business, commerce, information technology or computer studies). They range from a few enrolments to thousands of students; many are for-profit and are even listed on stock markets. In certain respects, therefore, it would be appropriate to talk about the resurgence of PHEIs in some countries and a surge in others.

Private establishments, such as churches and foundations, have had centuries of involvement in the provision of HE, sometimes long before state involvement. Levy (1986) covers the historical evolution of this relationship, together with that of the state, in detail. Such involvement of the state was aimed at widening the access to education for the broader populace rather than it remaining the privilege of a few, mainly the rich and those belonging to church or religion.

Thus, in turn, education was labelled a 'public good' as it had to produce artisans and professionals who would serve the state, and therefore the public.

Just as the church was involved in the establishment of some of the oldest and prominent HE institutions in the world, so it was in the establishment of some of the oldest HE institutions in colonial Africa. Examples are: Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, established in 1826; the South African College (which later became the University of Cape Town), established in 1829; and the South African Native College (which later became the University of Fort Hare), established in 1916 (see Onsongo in this volume; Ajayi, Goma and Johnson 1996 and Mabizela 2001). These institutions were established through private initiatives but, as was the case elsewhere in the world as illustrated above, the state got involved largely because of its financial strength and eventually took over the provision of HE. The historical split of the partnership between the church and the state in the provision of HE, as well as the late entry of the state in the church-initiated provision of HE in some African states, brought about the language of public and private provision of education, long before private enterprise established its own HE institutions.

The tradition of the involvement of the church in the provision of HE continues in the private HE sectors, and can be found across countries and continents. Prominent among these is the Catholic Church which, for example, has HE institutions in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, Mozambique, DR Congo, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Indeed, this is not only the domain for Christianity but for Islam as well, for example the chain of Agha Khan<sup>3</sup> universities in East Africa (Zanzibar) and Arab countries as well as other country-based Islam HE institutions such as in Ghana, Niger, Uganda and Sudan.

The above illustrates the spread of the private HE sector in the continent as well as the significant involvement of the church in it. What it does not illustrate is the commercialisation of the sector, at least, in the form of private for-profit institutions. This is due to at least two reasons. Firstly, commercialised PHEIs are relatively new institutions. They largely fall in the category of contemporary PHEIs, the majority of which were established in the late 1980s onwards. They are often not church-based.

Secondly, the for-profit nature of institutions in other countries is not made as explicit as is the case in South Africa (see Levy 2003). Thus, while African states also have for-profit HE institutions, in South Africa they are clearly legal for-profit institutions. To this extent, South Africa is, therefore, different to other African states. In this regard, Levy (2003) observes that South Africa 'epitomizes certain internationally striking forms in contemporary private higher education growth'. This article, however, does not tackle this matter but cites this

peculiarity in order to illustrate the diverse nature of private HE sectors in the different states within the continent.

Indeed, Africa has diverse HE systems influenced by different historical, economic and political systems and experiences. This diversity of influences also reflects on the establishment and development of PHEIs. In laying the foundation of analysis that follows, this article, therefore, examines some of the above-stated influences, exploring why the sector has developed fast in some countries while in others the establishment and growth is rather slow. For instance, on the one hand, Botswana, with a population of about 1.7 million and one of the relatively stronger economies in the region, has only one public university and no private university, except for Damelin and NIIT (National Institute of Information Technology), which are owned by companies in South Africa and India respectively. These are not universities but providers of specialised tertiary education programmes that are narrowly focused on specific labour market demands (see TEC 2005:28). Moreover, private providers in Botswana are as yet to be regulated. On the other hand, Mauritius, with a smaller population size of 1.2 million and less economic strength than that of Botswana with respect to GDP, has five private providers operating at university level and regulated by state policy.

Even more in contrast, Mozambique, with a population of 18.8 million and one of the poorest countries in the region and in the world, has five public HE institutions and five PHEIs (Mario, Fry, Levey and Chilundo 2003)<sup>4</sup>. Teferra and Altbach (2004) observe that there are African countries with larger populations than others but with less higher education enrolments. One explanation that can be provided for these seeming contradictions is that the rich countries have the resources to put into higher education, including affording huge subsidies for university education. Since the poor do not have resources, the only route to provide HE is through private institutions. This is one way in which private institutions become elitist because the majority of the population cannot afford high fees charged at those private institutions. However, this still does not explain why some countries with resources are not attracting private providers as illustrated in the example of Botswana and Mauritius above. The answer does not only lie with population sizes as illustrated in the Botswana versus Mauritius example above. There are many factors that contribute to the establishment and growth of PHEIs. This article explores some of the nuances that seem to attract private HE providers to some countries and less so to others and seeks to provide analysis for the phenomenon. However, it is prudent though to look at definitional matters first especially if the discussion keeps referring to education systems in different countries.

### **Defining, Articulating and Differentiating Private Higher Education**

First, not all post-secondary education is higher education. Higher education is generally defined as education leading to the award of degrees and post-graduate qualifications offered primarily at universities. Whereas, further education (sometimes interchanged with post-secondary education) leads to vocational training qualifications offered at training colleges. Together, these form tertiary education and this is the distinction used in the discussions that follow<sup>5</sup>.

The definition of private HE largely depends on variables adopted by a particular country. Chances are that such a definition may not be universally applicable often in part but sometimes *in toto*. For instance, in some countries private institutions are so known because they were founded by private organisations (such as churches or stock market companies) but are financially supported by the state, for example, this is legally possible in Senegal. International examples include Canada and Sweden.

In some countries the state in part supports private HE because it significantly absorbs demand and therefore relieves financial, political and social pressures on the state, such as is the case in Tanzania. International examples include Brazil, India and Japan. While government policy entitled Bilgi University in Turkey to apply for state funds it did not take up the offer because it saw it as creating dependency on government fiscal constraint (see Van Lutsenburg 2001:37).

Yet, in some countries, such as in Ghana, private HE institutions must affiliate to public institutions for purposes of quality assurance but they continue to function independent of direct state financial support and management accountability. Indeed, in many countries, private institutions are established and operate independent of state or the public sector but are required to operate within the law and regulations set by government. These differences illustrate how private institutions are regarded in different countries making it difficult but not impossible, therefore, to coin a universal definition of private HE.

What all the above examples point to, firstly, is that the same variables such as ownership, governance, financier or sponsor, affiliation and function can be invariably combined and used differentially to yield completely different understandings. Secondly, they point to the centrality of state, state or government policies in determining the *privateness* or *publicness* of institutions. In other words, the variables are relative to the approach adopted by the state towards PHEIs. Besides, the state is an active participant and not a dormant common denominator. Sometimes state involvement clearly results in visible benefits to PHE sectors, for example in Kenya and South Africa. Strict policies regulating PHEIs in these countries have led to serious institutions remaining which have quality-assured academic programmes and facilities.

Together with the position of the state in the equation and its policies as already discussed, the above-mentioned are variables relevant for determining whether institutions are private or public. Therefore, they are variables used to define what is private (or public) HE. A simplified definition of PHE, therefore, is all tertiary education that is non-state and may sometimes be quasi-public. For instance, it would be HE offered at institutions that are non-state owned and non-state financed, therefore, not accountable to the state but to the owners of the institution and not governed by the state but by the rules set by the owners. Regardless, such institutions would still be expected to comply with state policies or regulations.

The pioneering works of Geiger (1986) and Levy (1986) on private HE already recognised that the sector is regarded and understood differently in different countries. This is because the sector takes a different nature and character almost in each and every country, influenced by its context such as existing various demands, whether perceived or real (e.g. excess, alternative education, differentiation, better education); state policies; economy and politics. Thus, cross-country comparative studies of private HE are often problematic, but it is possible to delineate regional or historical patterns.

The general character of demand-absorption of private HE institutions (especially in developing countries); the proliferation of private universities alongside non-university institutions; their range of offerings from post-secondary to HE; the specialisation of many of these institutions in business and commerce fields and computer and information technology studies; the range in their sizes from very small to large institutions with regard to their student enrolments; the often questionable quality of education they provide and the combination of for-profit and not-for-profit institutions are all typical of contemporary private ('new' generation) HE sectors internationally (see Kruss, Salerno and Beverwijk in this issue as well as Altbach 1999 and Levy 2003). These characteristics of the contemporary private HE institutions sectors are not specific to developed or developing countries, but universal. This is also the general character of private HE institutions in Africa which is presented by the papers contained in this volume.

### **Why Are Private HE Institutions Established? Why Do Private HE Sectors Grow?**

Almost all African countries have HE institutions that were privately established from 1990s onwards. Indeed, there were antecedents prior to independence, thus the 'old' generation PHEIs were established shortly after independence alongside public universities that were also established at the time. The fastest increase took place in the 1990s due to unprecedented demand for HE.

The 1990s generation of PHEIs is herein, thus, referred to as the 'new' generation of private institutions and it exists alongside the 'old' generation and public sector institutions. The characteristic features of these two groups of institutions have been discussed in the section above.

In a quest to better understand why PHEIs are established, scholarship often goes beyond what seems to be obvious in terms of types such as religious institutions; for-profit and not-for-profit institutions. Analysis of why these types were or are established often reveals a better understanding of a system and sometimes existing social problems.

There are a plethora of reasons why PHEIs are established and private sectors grow. These reasons occasionally differ from country to country but are sometimes similar. While we may have superficial semblances, the circumstances and contexts diverge, perchance explaining the lack of PHE in relatively strong economies like Botswana, and the relatively higher number (15) of PHEIs in small and weaker economies like Mozambique.

### ***Global Pressures***

The contemporary or new generation private HE is largely a direct consequence of the hegemonic neo-capitalist and neo-liberal post cold war social context. Concomitant to the fall of the 'iron curtain' in 1990, thereafter, private provision of HE in many developing countries boomed. In some instances, such a boom was and still is a direct influence of the global politics of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) accompanied by privatisation of public services; General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the phenomenon of globalisation. Within SAPs, whose implementation by some African states dates back to the 1980s, was the privatisation of social institutions including education. In a way, this also meant opening opportunities for the creation of private institutions to offer services originally provided publicly. Assie-Lumumba (2004:77) observes that the prescription by the World Bank in this regard had been 'almost an obsession', meaning that the Bank saw privatisation as the only solution or way forward for development in Africa.

Despite being a programme introduced in the 1980s, the consequences of SAPs can still be felt now. In a recent study of HE in the different regions of the continent, Assie-Lumumba (2004:76) observes that universities are revising their visions and mission statements and strategic planning based on 'frameworks and technical guidance provided by the World Bank'. Under the guidance of lending institutions, the World Bank and the IMF, many African states in the 1980s implemented SAPs which meant prioritisation of primary and secondary education and, therefore, total neglect of HE (see Assie-Lumumba 2004; Teferra



and Altbach 2004). Thus, not only were primary and secondary education levels prioritised but there was active divestiture from HE by the state, under the belief of the infallibility, efficiency and effectiveness of the private sector<sup>6</sup> (see World Bank 1989).

Indeed, such advice was attached to the conditions of the Bank's lending to developing countries. This resulted in education systems bloated with primary and secondary education graduates in the mid to late 1990s (see Onsongo in this issue). These students could not be accommodated in the existing public HE institutions, primarily because the sector had not been grown, resourced or developed concurrently. In fact, during this period (of SAPs) HE admissions were constricted. Thus, an opportunity or gap for the establishment of institutions was created and this gap was and is being taken up through private initiatives.

The context of globalisation has put pressure on national HE systems to provide competent human resources to live up to the challenges of knowledge-based economies. Simultaneously, it puts pressure on governments to allow free trade, which favours countries with stronger financial resources and stronger trade capacity, and this has been made to include services such as HE. Globalisation, therefore, has broadened the scope of HE with regard to curriculum as well as its structural organisation and in relation to international demands for knowledge. Thus, Subotzky (1999:404) observes that governments have encouraged closer links between business and higher education in pursuit of international competitive advantage. Such a collaboration and knowledge production method impacts on the organisation of HE institutions in that the role of the state is gradually replaced by private enterprise and the objectives are different. Private enterprise pursues monetary interests while the state should pursue growth and social development imperatives.

By their nature, which includes establishment, accountability and management structure, private HE institutions lend themselves to the 'marketisation' of HE. This is where HE institutions regularise their operations to resemble those of a market system, such as 'managerialism', being influenced by closer ties with actors in the market system. This is also reflected in the curricula of many private HE institutions wherein the focus is not on subjects which require high input costs as found, for example, in science and engineering, but on those that are relatively inexpensive to offer such as business and computer studies. Furthermore, Kruss (in this edition) observes that private institutions are predominantly businesses that have

identified a market to supply higher education and training in response to a demand for graduates that are directly employable, equipped with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to contribute directly to the workplace and economic growth.

Kruss's observation is based on a study of the South African private HE sector. Indeed, it is true that in some countries on the continent global pressures have partly led to excess demand, such that private HE institutions become demand-absorbing, because of shortage of spaces in the public sector as well as demand for specialised education which would lead to a quick entry into the labour market. Thus, the nature of contemporary or new generation PHEIs is such that they are largely profit-driven; demand absorbing; specialised and, therefore, not involved in research and in turn not involved in the production of new knowledge. These are partly as a result of global pressures.

### ***Local Pressures***

The differentiation into global and local pressures does not necessarily mean that the two operate mutually exclusively. Some of the issues discussed here owe their existence to global pressures. They are separated as such because the issues covered below tend to dominate the local scene. Depending on ones' vantage point, whether public or private, these issues can be seen as either push or pull factors; however, this article shall not separate them in that manner.

### ***Public Failure: Perceived or Real?***

The establishment of private institutions due to public failure has become a cliché both within the private and public HE sectors and researchers of the sector. The engagement of this topic in the past, both from the point of view of contestation and matter-of-fact, has been and continues to be extensive (see Tilak 1996; Levy 1986; Geiger 1986; Altbach, 1999). Indeed, in some cases such failure is only perceived and not real.

Public failure, or what is perceived as such, has many facets. It may be one or a combination of the issues discussed here, or even more, and here they are in no particular order. First, to the extent that shortage of public funds to meet rising demand for HE in Africa is responsible for the creation of excess demand, which, in turn, leads to the establishment of private institutions, is in fact public failure. Moreover, it has been observed that Africa has the lowest participation rates in HE in the world, at 2.5 percent in 2002/03. Recently the demand has grown fast and it is still growing, hence private institutions are being established (see Teferra and Altbach 2004).

The establishment of private institutions in order to absorb existing excess demand is apparent in many Sub-Saharan African states following the massification of HE, to the extent that exceptions are almost non-existent. South Africa is the only exception in this region. In fact, this is a characteristic feature of PHEIs in mass HE systems and of contemporary private education sectors (see Geiger 1988). Almost all sub-Saharan states had single universities at inde-

pendence resulting in the creation of exclusivity and elitism of HE. Thus, excess students accumulated over years, creating overwhelming demand, which lately forced these HE systems to massify. The newly-established private institutions contribute to that massification.

Where private HE institutions are demand-absorbing, as is the case in many sub-Saharan African states, these states have little choice but to allow the operation of privately-established HE providers. Banya (2001:161) argues that government-supported universities alone cannot realistically solve the HE crisis on the continent. Further motivation for private operators in massifying states and low-income developing countries is the view that HE is both a public and a private good (see Van Lutsenburg 2001). Thus, HE students should share the burden of its provision, hence the privatisation of public institutions and allowance of private operators. In Tanzania, for instance, new policies are being adopted wherein costs are being shared equitably between government and users of university services (see Ishengoma, Teferra and Altbach 2004:29). Moreover, public spending on HE is not easily and entirely justifiable as it is largely accessible to the rich and general middle class families, and less so or even not at all to the poor and disadvantaged groups (see Van Lutsenburg 2001).

Second is the failure to provide enough variety or differentiation of institutions and programmes. The public failure theory suggests that when governments are faced with a tough choice of using their financial resources wisely, they will do so to favour the majority of voters. This results in the minority preferences being least attended to and, as such, the creation of a gap for a privately-established service to attend to their needs (see Levy 1996:55). This is often the case with religious-based institutions. Religious institutions may have been started with the objective to train church ministers and offer exclusive space to practice religion but, in many countries, they have expanded to offer programmes in secular fields of study such as commerce, information technology, natural and social sciences. The Catholic Church-established institutions in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and the DR Congo offer examples of such secularised curricula at religious institutions. The need to expand to other fields of study, as Onsongo (in this volume) observes, 'could have been triggered' by existing demand for such programmes and the need to generate income to sustain themselves.

Differentiation also implies, that which is different to what is currently provided. For instance, as Obasi (in this volume) points out in Nigeria that some private universities offer programmes that are not offered at the public universities. Moreover, some private institutions include a range of post-secondary programmes which may be classified as further education and training (FET) and which are then made a base for higher education programmes as is the case with some private institutions in South Africa.

Third, the failure to understand and provide what is in demand in the 'market'. Market, in this case, refers to both students (and parents) and the labour market. In South Africa, for instance, it was found that the existence of partnerships between public higher education and private providers in the delivery of higher education was largely due to public failure in not providing learning programmes at flexible times and convenient places (Mabizela 2005). Moreover, many distance education students that enrolled with public institutions required face-to-face support tutorials or even lectures that distance education institutions are not offering. Private institutions partnered with them to provide these services.

From another point of view Van Lutsenburg (2001:30) observes that public sector institutions 'tend to lack incentives to adopt technological innovations as rapidly as is common in the private sector where competitive pressures often force the adoption of new technologies'. In other words, this is a lack of ability to adapt by the public sector in order to fulfil the existing demand in the 'market'. Indeed, this is one of those aspects that the private sector often uses in order to lure students away from the public sector institutions over and above inducements such as free tuition made available on a competitive basis or material goods such as computers. Sometimes the lack of failure of public institutions in this regard is perceived and not real.

Fourth is the failure to provide security for those within its institutions. Incidents like strikes and violent cultism, as happens in Nigeria, comprise push factors for both academics and (potential) students from the public sector institutions (see Otieno and Obasi in this volume). Besides insecurity, a related point is uncertainty often caused by strikes and boycotts and perceptions associated with such disruptions. Kruss (this volume) reports that students strongly emphasized the secure environment as critical to their choice, citing the small campus size in a safe location, leading to their preference of private institutions over public universities, which were seen to be lacking in this aspect.

In other words, public failure is a basis for a number of specific reasons for the establishment of PHEIs.

Fifth is the issue of poor working conditions for lecturing personnel at public institutions. Banya (2001:164) observes that the conditions at some African institutions are so dire that academics are 'without access to books, professional journals, or electronic networks and unable to attend conferences, take sabbaticals, or even find chalk for their blackboards, many African academics lose self-esteem'. On an empirical study of the sector, Wesonga *et al* (2003) observed that poor working conditions were responsible for academic flight to institutions such as the United States International University (USIU) in Kenya. Nigeria also provides another example. Kruss (this volume) also cites the workplace

relevance and 'real life' practice orientation which were stressed strongly as the motivation for selecting a private institution.

In as much as the above issues may be perceived, Kiatev (1999:16) argues that the 'dynamics of private education evolution and development in a given country may give useful clues to identify weaknesses in the public education system'. Therefore, whether some of these are perceived or not, the approach for wanting to make the situation better should be to treat all of them as real.

#### *The Convenience of Location and Flexibility of Time*

Many private institutions are located in urban areas just as some public institutions are. Often the difference with private institutions is that they are located conveniently for commuting and part-time students, perhaps because of the advantage of being newly established (see Mabizela 2005). The location of private institutions is also decided based upon the business and marketing acumen of the owners of these institutions.

As such, private HE institutions often allow for large numbers of part-time enrolments and offer teaching after hours and in the evenings. In this way, the target is employees who would naturally afford to pay fees (see Onsongo in this volume). Public institutions cannot change their locations unless they open satellite campuses at geographically convenient places and diversify in their modes of delivery, such as by offering part-time programmes. Otherwise, they face the risk of being out-competed by private institutions. Thus, private institutions become institutions of choice because of their convenient location and flexible mode of knowledge delivery.

The drive to be located at the urban areas by private institutions is motivated by the possibility of large numbers of potential students, which would translate into more revenue. Moreover, the pool of students in urban settings offers a working elite able to pay for expensive education programmes as opposed to rural areas. In other words, urban areas serve as catchment areas. Furthermore, urban areas have developed an infrastructure which offers convenience for private institutions. Unfortunately, this continues to perpetuate urban-rural disparities with rural areas always being under-resourced and under-serviced. Onsongo (in this edition) observes that the urban location of private HE institutions implies that people living far from the city are not able to access part-time (evening and weekend) programmes they offer.

Moreover, urban setting offers more potential of employability to graduates than rural areas do. Urban environment offers a wider choice of career options, thus it is easier for institutions to establish themselves in urban areas.

*Credentialism and Promise for Mobility*

Credentialism is discussed at length by Kruss (in this edition). This is pressure, perceived or real, among people to obtain a qualification with the hope that it will improve ones' chances of employability or, if already employed, will improve chances of promotion or job progression. Levy (1986) observes that institutions may or may not provide the knowledge necessary for a better job, 'but they surely provide the requisite credentials for these jobs'. Thus, credentials have a higher value than the knowledge provided simply because it is the credential that gets recognition without testing the subject knowledge. Credentialism is often underestimated yet it is also a characteristic feature of contemporary PHEIs. Many contemporary private HE institutions cash in on that pressure by offering short certificate programmes. Thus, it is one thing to obtain a certificate and another to be an employable graduate. Kruss (in this edition) observes that some students choose to study at a private institution because it promises to offer them internationally-recognised, quality programmes that will enhance their employability.

Kruss also observes that 'an internationally recognised qualification was typically venerated, simply because it is international and not South African, and thus seen to be more valuable'. The perception among students is that such a qualification then opens up greater global opportunities than a locally accredited one. Thus, she concludes that

the strength of all the students' belief that private providers can prepare more effectively for employability is thus evident, whether it is the belief of relatively privileged students that the qualification will ensure mobility or the belief of non-traditional students that the credentials will ensure employment (Kruss, this edition).

Kruss argues that the 'mobility' sub-sector attracts students by claiming to meet a demand for education that is 'better' than what the public sector can provide. She observes that in South Africa qualifications from contemporary private HE institutions promise mobility, 'whether in the sense of an internationally recognised and portable degree, or in the sense of a degree that is more oriented to the workplace and offers direct employability, and hence upward socio-economic mobility'.

However, the fact that there are successful private HE institutions and some that are not successful suggests that the sector is not necessarily a solution to the public sector problems or that it is always a better option to it. In this regard, it can, therefore, be concluded that the sector also offers hope which may not necessarily be found in the public sector. Nothing is fundamentally wrong and ille-

gal about providing hope. However, it is knowingly providing false hope and cashing in on that hope that becomes a fraudulent activity.

### **In Conclusion**

The reasons for establishment of the new generation PHEIs are not based on ideological or political reasons as was the case in some countries prior to the 1980s. For instance, ideological and political reasons led to the growth of the private HE sector in countries such as Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Bolivia (see Levy 1986). These included lack of academic freedom; suppression of individual rights; suppression of free speech; dictatorial bureaucracy; ideological indoctrination; etc. The fact that the establishment of contemporary PHEIs is not based on these reasons gives both good and concerning situations. It is good in the sense that the altruistic intentions of the public sector are not being questionable. However, it may be that people provide false reasons which are being made public, while the real reasons lie hidden. Whatever the case may be, literature has to analyse on the basis of what is publicly declared as reasons for establishing private HE institutions.

To some extent, the absence of ideological and political reasons for the establishment of private HE institutions may be an indication of how powerful states are in deciding what is taught both at public and at private HE institutions. This further underscores the centrality of state in the establishment of private HE sectors. To another extent, this is an indication of how agreeable the citizenry and the labour market are with the state in what is regarded as taught matter or curriculum, to the extent that they are even replicated at the newly established PHEIs.

Nonetheless, all the factors cited in the discussion above, both global and local, impact on different countries differently. Central to how the impact is experienced and how they affect each country are that country's policies on education and, to some extent, its policies on other social aspects such as development and equity. The establishment and growth of private HE institutions flourishes in countries where state policies favour the existence of the sector and where there is purchasing power. Of course, market forces determine the size and extent of such purchasing power. Thus, the strength of the economy does play a major part, as clearly demonstrated in the case of Mauritius and Botswana.

However, it should not be forgotten that some PHEIs survive on philanthropy rather than on for-profit. Therefore, this means that purchasing power alone is not enough to guarantee the existence of the private HE sector, hence favourable policies are key drivers. The combination of these factors, therefore, explains why, for instance, PHEIs exist in Mauritius rather than Botswana whereas the



two countries are almost similar in terms of the strength of their economies as well as their population sizes. It explains why South Africa does not have a private university or struggling foreign institutions, while Kenya boasts 18 private universities (see Otieno in this volume), even though its economy is not as strong as that of South Africa. The strength of economy not only provides better purchasing power, but also the demand of skills by the labour market, thus creating a supply gap from the HE system that leads to the establishment of PHEIs to assist in filling up skills needs.

### **Are Private HE Institutions a Future of Higher Education in Africa?**

In Africa and the world over, private HE is here to stay. Indeed, research shows that there is a huge demand for its existence. Historical antecedents elsewhere in the world show that the sector is sustained until some of its institutions attain the respectable academic status often afforded to some of their public sector counterparts. In some developed countries, the academic status of PHEIs even exceeds that of public sector universities in certain cases. However, private sector institutions often do not want to be like public sector institutions and, certainly, should not be in order to promote diversity of institutional types; programme specialisation; level of qualifications; geographical location and modes of delivery. In certain cases, of course, PHEIs aspire to attain some of the better traits of public HE institutions to the extent of blurred boundaries between the two sectors.

As much as the private HE sector has a future in the continent based on historical reasons, it is, however, not guaranteed. Over and above the policy challenges they face, it is largely down to private HE institutions to guarantee their own future.

First, and foremost, private HE institutions need to comply with the state's policies in fulfilling the state's higher education policy objectives. This may not be easy for PHEIs because their agenda may not necessarily complement that of the state, even though that agenda may not be fundamentally opposed. Indeed, state regulation of the private sector would seek to reflect its objectives so as to increase its potential for success in delivering on its agenda. As discussed above, many contemporary PHEIs may be driven by for-profit motive which could make them neglect, for instance, developmental imperatives of the state's HE objectives.

As argued earlier, the state is an active participant in the private HE sector. It has happened several times that private sector institutions have a confrontational relationship with government; sometimes winning court battles but not winning the war (see Salerno and Beverwijk in this volume). The best approach, of course, is to get the buy-in of the state; influence its policies on private HE

and have the sector positively contributing to the broader state agenda of HE. African countries are at different stages in doing this. Some have, others did and are revising, others have not, and some have not even thought about it.

Second, private HE institutions are facing a daunting challenge of competing with relatively long-established public HE institutions in many respects. One such area of competition combines a number of related issues such as building trust with communities, authorities and other HE institutions; building a reputation which may already be found at established public HE institutions; building the reputable image expected and associated with HE institutions which is often based on existing institutions and building on trusted quality of education. Levy (1999:19) observes that even when these new institutions call themselves universities they are met with derision. Lee (1999) argues that the survival of private HE institutions depends on their ability to experiment with new and different kinds of programmes so as to have variety for their clients. Therefore, this means that private HE institutions have to fight against many odds, both internally within their sector and externally, in order to guarantee themselves into the future.

Third, there is evidence that in some African states, such as Kenya and Nigeria, PHEIs identify with, and get involved in, community development issues. However, engaging the community should not be just for its sake. Instead, it should be of such a purpose as to assist communities to deal with daunting challenges they face. Indeed, this will guarantee any type of institution its relevance and, therefore, the purpose of its existence. Of course, private institutions, given their privateness, mostly engage in community activities as part of their community service responsibility/requirement, which for most firms comprises their marketing strategy anyway. In fact, in certain instances PHEIs even offer student aid programmes and other inducements in order to gain legitimacy.

Fourth, many studies have shown that private institutions are demand-absorbing. Thus, for as long as there is excess demand, PHEIs are guaranteed their existence. Crucially in this equation is that state policies are meant to regulate existence and operation of private institutions, because they can make or break their survival. Demand absorption does not necessarily imply students who could not gain access to public institutions because the points system of some public providers act to exclude students, given their low levels of attainment in school leaving examinations as Kruss (in this volume) found out. It also means providing options for relatively privileged students 'more likely to be able to meet the formal requirements for entry into public higher education, and thus able to make an active choice to attend a private institution' (Kruss, in this volume).

Fifth, PHEIs in many African states have broadened access of women to education and, therefore, assisted in states to meet their gender equity imperatives. This is certainly the case in countries such as Kenya, Mozambique, Sudan, Tanzania and Zimbabwe (see Onsongo, this volume; Banya 2001; Mario et al 2003 and Wesonga 2003). Onsongo argues that 'access introduces the concept of equity, which focuses on the values of fairness and social justice in the way social educational opportunities and resources are allocated or shared'. However, in a study of four private universities in Kenya, Wesonga (2003) observed that student enrolment patterns at private HE institutions resembled that of public HE institutions wherein female students largely concentrated in the humanities and social sciences. A different perspective which arrives at a similar conclusion is that of Onsongo who argues that

since most private universities in Kenya are religious based, with little science and technology programmes, the system subtly channels female students into the traditional fields that do not give them any competitive edge over male students. This means that private universities perpetuate the subordination of women in the labour market because they do not equip them with skills that they need to compete with men. In this regard therefore, these universities fail to promote or enhance equality of outcome and equal educational effects on life chances, though they seem to be promoting equality of access.

Thus, broadening access and equity should not be accepted at face value but a deeper analysis is required in order to ensure that PHEIs are making a qualitative difference. Nonetheless, it has been demonstrated in many African states that the demand for HE among women exists and that PHEIs assist in making HE accessible to them.

Sixth, Assie-Lumumba (2004:76) suggests that 'the notion of life-long learning is embedded in the African tradition'. Indeed, there is identifiable demand for life-long learning in African states, hence the largely-used concept of non-traditional students. Public sector institutions are playing their role; however, they seem to have limitations especially with regard to the required flexibility. Private HE institutions, therefore, are occupying this gap.

These are some of the pertinent issues which indicate the need for broadening a higher education system in African states, which is largely possible with the participation of the private HE sector. Indeed, many of these elements are dependant on state policies and how private institutions relate to them.

### **What Challenges and Lessons for Governments?**

The mushrooming of private HE has clearly brought about challenges to governments, especially with regard to the formulation of state policies. Governments are having to: balance the growth of HE systems; maintain or improve on quality; formulate unprecedented policies to regulate the functioning of the sector, bearing in mind that it has a plethora of different types, sizes, shapes, specialisations and levels of institutions; ensure equity in the system, primarily to the rich and poor and geographic spread as well as gender balance; and protect the interest of citizens against education of poor or inferior quality and unscrupulous operators.

The task of governments in formulating private HE policies is, therefore, not an easy one. The articles contained in this volume touch on some that are also contained in international literature. This section covers pertinent challenges facing governments as well as lessons emanating from experiences across the continent and some other parts of the world.

### ***Ensuring Equitable Access to Affordable Higher Education***

It is almost inevitable that education in general, and HE in particular, shall no longer be free in the various states of the African continent. This is indeed a sad reality because many African states cannot cope with the high demand for HE while they do not have enough funding to provide more learning resources. The establishment of PHEIs then becomes justifiable under these circumstances. However, PHEIs, especially for-profit ones, largely or only enrol students who are able to pay. This situation further makes education a privilege for the few or an exclusive right of those who can afford to pay. In this way, the poor and disadvantaged groupings (women, people living with disabilities and those living in rural communities) are left out of the system as they have always been.

In her study of South African private HE, Kruss (in this volume) observes that in the majority of cases, only those who can afford the generally high fees can choose to study at a private institution. Thus, in some countries the presence of private HE does not provide a solution but exacerbates an existing problems. Regarding gender equity, Onsongo observes that affirmative actions may not be the best intervention for enhancing gender equity in HE, but policies that encourage and increase opportunities for women and girls in education. She concludes that 'opening up the education market for private providers can be seen as one of such alternatives'. However, as argued earlier PHEIs tend to offer 'soft' programmes thus exacerbating the disadvantaging of women as they enrol in relatively large numbers compared to public sector institutions (see Onsongo and Wesonga 2003).

### ***Quality Assurance***

Governments have a role to ensure that public and private institutions provide quality education. This is quality as is required for human development; human resources development and, in turn, the development communities and economies. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) of South Africa describes the criteria for quality as fitness for purpose in relation to the specified mission; value for money judged in relation to the full range of HE purposes and transformation in the sense of developing the capabilities of individuals (CHE 2001). Assuring quality at both public and private institutions, fairly and equitably, would ensure that perceptions about quality and processes of either sector are dispelled. Indeed, a number of African states have put in place quality assurance bodies that serve this purpose.

In order to provide the minimum quality required, institutions need to have quality personnel (academics and administrators); good curriculum; appropriate facilities (e.g. buildings, infrastructure, teaching and learning equipment, etc.) and attract quality students determined by the national process in place. Kruss found out that some institutions in South Africa admitted students to programmes for which they did not qualify, such as MBAs. Some students were admitted to the programme without a Grade 12 qualification which is a minimum requirement for any HE qualification at public HE institutions, let alone a post-graduate qualification.

In the Nigerian HE system, Obasi observes that the enforcement of the criteria for the granting of licenses to private universities has had a positive impact on the quality of facilities for teaching and learning at the institutions. Indeed, the programmes of five private universities that were audited passed the accreditation process (Obasi in this volume). This shows the positive effect of accreditation and quality assurance set in place by the state.

### ***Facilitation of Student Mobility across Sectors and Borders***

Linked to the issue of quality is student articulation, defined as the ability of students to move from one institution to the other without losing their accumulated qualifications credits from the previous institution and to have their qualifications recognised by the receiving institution. Once private HE institutions are licensed and/or registered to operate and their programmes accredited by relevant bodies, the common practice is to still have them operate in the periphery of the public HE system. This implies that their programmes are acceptable on paper and not in practice. The challenge for policy makers, therefore, is to facilitate the mobility of students across public-private sectors. Moreover, regional accreditation bodies, at least across countries, need to exchange information, compare notes and collaborate in order to facilitate the mobility of students

across systems and borders. Salerno and Beverwijk (this volume) observe that accreditation credit-transfer and accumulation policies are being developed in Uganda to facilitate student mobility, discourage program duplication and encourage more efficient resource allocation.

### **Planned Growth of Higher Education Taking Account of Private Institutions**

Planning HE growth in African states, perhaps in all developing countries, is no longer about public HE institutions only, but private HE institutions as well. Salerno and Beverwijk observe of Uganda that the planning process involves a parallel shift from an elite to a mass HE system and ‘from a model of central planning to one that is more market oriented’. They argue that striking an appropriate balance when managing the two shifts requires strategies that seek to neutralise a situation where ‘strong points of one tend to produce dilemmas and tradeoffs that adversely affect the advantages brought about by the other’. This, therefore, means that unpopular decisions are bound to be made and mistakes may arise.

Often, the establishment of private institutions is not a state-planned developmental phenomenon. They emerge, catching the state unawares (see Obasi; Salerno and Beverwijk in this volume). As such, certain unprecedented state policies which seek to regulate the mushrooming sector get challenged, legally in certain instances, by private institutions who find them unfair, especially in comparison to how these policies apply to public sector institutions. Incidents of legal challenges by private institutions of state policies have taken place in South Africa and Uganda. These challenges take place because the new policies are viewed as more stringent than they are with public HE institutions. Coombe (2001) acknowledges that there is some merit in the allegation that private providers in South Africa are being subjected to a more stringent regulatory supervision than public institutions – this practice is characteristic of other countries as well. However, he argues that ‘it would be difficult to sustain an argument that this is systematic and deliberate’. He further argues that this is principally intended to protect the consumer and improve the quality of private provision of HE.

Within the context of planning there is a need for new innovative ways of carving the role of the new institutions. Coombe (2001) suggests that both policy makers and private HE institutions ‘will benefit by a definition of their common interests in the advancement of the nation’s human resource development strategy’. In other words, this means that the development of the private HE sector should not be left to the vagaries of the market but planned with set purposes.

### Notes

1. *Privateness* and *publicness* are concepts borrowed from the seminal work of Levy (1986) on private higher education in Latin America. In using these concepts, Levy argues that 'to evaluate privatisation in qualitative as well as quantitative terms, *private* and *public* can be defined in ideal-typical terms of *privateness* and *publicness*'. He then uses the ideal-typical categories of finance, governance and function to evaluate publicness or privateness on HE sectors.
2. Provider and institution are used interchangeably. However, 'institution' is a preferred concept rather than university. Institution is an encompassing term for all those providers operating in what in each country is regarded as HE, which is a sub-sector of post-secondary education. A university implies a particular type of institution within post-secondary system. So, HE institutions can be post-secondary but not necessarily universities while there may be those that offer both post-secondary and HE, especially some private providers as found in South Africa.
3. A unique feature about Agha Khan universities is that, although a largely Ismailia Muslim Community organisation, its higher education institutions are secular, at least outside Pakistan.
4. The number of private HE institutions in Mozambique was set at fifteen in 2006. This information, though, was gathered through an informal discussion. Thus, it is not clear what stage of official recognition the latest additions to the initial number of five private institutions are all at, hence the number which this article will refer to is that of officially recognised private institutions which is five.
5. The merits or demerits of this distinction and definition shall not be challenged or discussed in this paper. However, it has been adopted for purposes of clarity for better understanding of the discussions that follow.
6. Leading to implementation of SAPs, studies on the rates of return to different levels of education had shown greater social benefits from basic education as well as higher education offered at private institutions. Thus, the nexus of private efficiency and higher benefits from private HE provided a (further) rationale for public disengagement with HE; greater cost recovery from public spending and more private involvement. There was a belief that this would be the best route for Africa to realise sustainable development (see World Bank 1989). African academics have been generally critical of the World Bank studies which provided a background to the SAPs recommendations in Africa, mainly as having been not grounded in an African context.

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## Analysis of the Emergence and Development of Private Universities in Nigeria\* (1999–2006)

Isaac N. Obasi\*\*

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### Abstract

One of the devastating consequences of the prolonged period of military dictatorship in Nigeria is the non-development of a private higher education system. However, with the emergence of democratic rule in 1999 and the liberalization of higher education, there has been a surge in the provision of private higher education. From a modest number of three pioneer private universities in 1999, there were 23 licensed private universities as at June 2005. This article provides an assessment of the development of these universities using the older ones as the basis of empirical analysis. Also, based on the available evidence, the article concludes that private universities are currently setting the pace, and serving as a source of positive challenge to the public universities, thereby providing the much-needed healthy competitive environment for the future growth and diversification of the entire higher education system in Nigeria.

### Résumé

Une des conséquences dévastatrices de la longue période de dictature militaire au Nigeria est la non mise en place d'un système d'enseignement supérieur privé. Cependant, avec l'émergence d'un régime démocratique en 1999 et la libéralisation de l'enseignement supérieur, il y a eu un essor dans l'offre d'enseignement supérieur privé. À partir d'un nombre modeste de trois universités pionnières en 1999, il y a eu 23 universités privées agréées en juin 2005. Cet article donne une évaluation de l'évolution de ces universités en utilisant les plus anciennes comme base d'une analyse empirique. Aussi, sur la base des preuves disponibles, l'article

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conclut que les universités privées sont en train de donner le ton et de servir comme une source de défi positif pour les universités publiques, offrant ainsi un environnement compétitif sain qui est nécessaire pour la croissance future et la diversification de tout le système d'enseignement supérieur au Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

In 1998, private higher education was rightly predicted to be 'emerging as one of the most dynamic segments of post-secondary education at the turn of the 21st century' (Altbach 1998). Also not too long after that, Altbach (2000) again aptly described it as the fastest growing segment of the entire higher education system. This prediction can be true of many settings, including Nigeria.

Nigeria, no doubt, 'has one of the oldest, biggest and most comprehensive higher education systems in Africa' (CODESRIA 2005). Yet, the reality is that its private higher education system is still at an infant stage when compared with some other African countries that have had longer periods of democratic rule. Again, according to CODESRIA (2005), Nigeria's higher education system has 'undergone a considerable amount of growth and diversification over the years since the first post-secondary "modern" centres of learning were established in the country early in the 20th century'. However, surprisingly, the history of Nigeria's higher education system is simply that of underdevelopment rather than that of 'considerable amount of growth and diversification', given its size, population and material resources as well as its highly enormous, skilled and versatile human capital. This underdevelopment, which is rooted in the long period of military dictatorship (1966–1979 & 1984–1999), is glaringly manifested in the non-establishment of private universities under military rule. It is against this background that this article examines the emergence and rapid growth of private university education system in Nigeria since 1999 when military dictatorship gave way to the present civilian democratic government.

The article begins with a historical analysis of Nigeria's earlier attempts at establishing private universities under President Shehu Shagari's democratic administration (1979–1983) and the reasons that led to the abolition of these already established private universities in the subsequent period of military regime of General Muhammadu Buhari (1983–1985). Thereafter, the article traces the foundation laid by President Ibrahim Babangida's military regime (1985–1993) that eventually led much later to the re-emergence and growth of private universities under the democratic government of President Olusegun Obasanjo. In complementing earlier studies (Oladapo 1988; Barrow 1996; Nwamuo 2000; and Thaver 2004), the article assesses the state of these private universities (mainly the older ones) using some selected indicators.

The purposes of making this assessment are two-pronged. The first is to capture the dynamics of this private surge amid public dominance in Nigeria's higher education system. This would enable readers compare developments in the private provision of higher education in Nigeria, with global trends in the last few years. Secondly, the analysis is aimed at establishing if private universities are actually adding values towards the robust growth and diversification of Nigeria's higher education system.

For purpose of clarification, it is important to provide a brief background on Nigeria's system of government and ownership structure of universities. Nigeria runs a federal system of government made up of three tiers of government namely at the federal, state, and local government levels. Presently, among these three tiers, only the federal and state governments own universities. There are therefore two types of public universities in Nigeria. The first category is made up of those owned by the federal government while the second is composed of those owned by the state governments. Since the mid-seventies, the federal government has been operating a tuition-free policy in its own universities (and also in its federal polytechnics and Colleges of Education). But in the State government-owned universities, tuition fees are charged. Part of the reason for this discriminatory practice is rooted in the inequitable inter-governmental fiscal relations, which largely favours the federal government at the expense of 36 state governments. This is one of the legacies of the long period of military dictatorship. Nigeria's higher education system runs an academic session made up of two semesters and under normal circumstances this runs from October to June. For institutions that charge fees, the word 'per session' or annually is usually used to describe this period covered by the payment.

## **Global Trends in the Private Provision of Higher Education**

### ***The Driving Forces of Private Surge***

Studies across regions of the world indicate that there are both internal and external driving forces of the private surge in higher education (see for instance, Altbach 2000; Levy 2002a 2002b & 2003; Thaver 2004; Mabizela 2002; 2004; Otieno 2004; Teferra 2005; Obasi 2005g). These studies and many others (see particularly many country case studies in *International Higher Education* published by the Center for International Higher Education, Boston College) reveal a wide range of experiences, which nevertheless revolve around the combination of internal and external driving forces of the private surge in higher education. The internal driving forces include the inability of public universities to cope with increasing demands for admission; inability of the governments to fund expansion; the concomitant falling standards in public univer-

sities; frequent closures and unstable academic calendar due to staff and students' unrest among many others. The external driving forces are rooted in the prevailing neo-liberal economic policies, globalization, and the information and communication technology (ICT) revolution, all of which have affected higher education worldwide.

### ***Dominant Themes in Studies of Private Higher Education***

A survey of literature reveals that studies on private higher education have been pre-occupied mainly with, but not limited to, the following issues: character of ownership, institutional types, contexts within which private institutions emerge, operating milieu, size and factors influencing rapid expansion, financing and level of tuition fees, type of programmes and their quality, autonomy and control, level of enrolment and the quality of enrolled students, nature of staffing and its quality, infrastructural facilities, governance structures, nature and level of involvement by the state, and the sustainability questions (Barrow 1996; Useem 1999; Altbach 2002, 2000, & 1998; Levy 2002a & 2003; Thaver 2004; Mabizela 2004). These issues have continued to remain the major focus of research on private provision of higher education and this article is using some of these themes as framework for assessing the development that has taken place in Nigeria's private universities.

## **The Historical Context of the Emergence of Private Universities in Nigeria**

### ***The Earlier Background (1979–1999)***

The first successful attempt to establish private universities in Nigeria was during the period of the second democratic experiment (1979–1983) when twenty-six private universities came into being following the ruling by the Supreme Court of Nigeria that the establishment of private universities was constitutional (see Barrow 1996; Aliyu 1984, cited in Thaver 2004).

However, these private universities were poorly planned with neither good infrastructure facilities conducive for learning, nor serious-minded academics in their foundation list. Some of the institutions were widely seen as glorified secondary high schools thereby bringing to the fore the issue of quality and academic standards. This situation could be likened to what happened in India in 2002 following the proliferation of private universities in the State of Chhattisgarh. Under the State of Chhattisgarh Private Sector Universities (Establishment and Regulation) Act of 2002, a legion of private universities (108 in number) emerged over-night (Neelakantan 2005; Obasi 2005d). The establishment and operation of these poorly planned and equipped institutions de-

scribed by Neelakantan (2005), as ‘storefront universities offering dubious courses of study’ was challenged in court by an aggrieved Indian professor. And disposing the case in February 2005, the Supreme Court of India declared the provisions of the Chhattisgarh’s law to be *ultra vires* of the Constitution (Neelakantan 2005). Consequently, the new private universities were ordered to close down. In the Nigerian case however, a military government that came into existence in December 2003 (under General Muhammadu Buhari as head of state) ordered the closure of all the established private universities under a decree it promulgated.

However, following another successful military coup in 1985, the new leader General Ibrahim Babangida gradually began to reverse some of the policies of his predecessor. One issue re-visited was the ban on private universities. But one factor that brought the issue on the agenda of public discourse in 1991 was the Convocation Speech given by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Agriculture (Federal), Makurdi, who advocated for the establishment of private universities. And thereafter the government decided to lift the ban on private universities (news report by Abubakar 2005).

This was the policy climate that led to the setting up of the *Commission on the Review of Higher Education in Nigeria* of 1991 (widely known as The Longe Commission and accordingly Longe Report, and hereafter referred to as such). One of the fifteen-item terms of reference of the Commission was to ‘propose eligibility criteria for the establishment of future universities in Nigeria’ (see Longe Report, 1991 pp15-16). The Commission’s recommendations became later the foundation upon which today’s guidelines on the establishment of private universities were based.

Guided by its belief, that ‘indiscriminate proliferation of tertiary institutions should not be permitted’ (a view that derived from the lesson of history) the Longe Commission identified stringent conditions and measures under which new higher education institutions could be established. Using some criteria such as fund resources, educational standards, clear mission and geographical distribution of related institutions, the Commission identified fourteen eligibility criteria (see Appendix) for the establishment of private universities.

### ***Developments Since 1999***

The inauguration of the democratic system of government under President Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999 could be described as the turning point in the chequered history of private provision of higher education in Nigeria. With the new government, the National Universities Commission (NUC) – a federal government regulatory agency for all the universities (federal, state and private) – was empowered to receive applications, inspect and verify the facilities of



serious applicants of private universities across the country. Consequently, it processed all submitted applications and made recommendations to the federal government. Based on this, the government approved the first three licensed private universities in Nigeria in 1999 and subsequently in 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2005. Table 1 presents the evolution of these universities from 1999 to 2005 (see Obasi 2005c; Oyekanmi 2005 for an elaborate account).

**Table 1:** Evolution and Growth of Private Universities in Nigeria (1999–2005)

S/N	Name of University	Founder/Proprietor*	Date Established
1.	Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State	Chief Gabriel Igbinedion	1999 (May)
2.	Babcock University, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State	Seventh-Day Adventist Church	1999 (May)
3.	Madonna University, Okija, Anambra State	Very Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Ede's Catholic Religious Holy Ghost Ministry Baptist Convention	1999 (May)
4.	Bowen University, Iwo, Oyo State	Bishop David Oyedepo (World Mission Agency (Arm of Living Faith Church Worldwide Inc, - aka Winners Chapel)	2001 (July)
5.	Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State	Lagos Business School	2002 (February)
6.	Pan African University, Lagos, Lagos State	Bishop Benson Idahosa (Church Mission International)	2002 (February)
7.	Benson Idahosa University, Benin City, Edo State	H.E. Alhaji Abubakar Atiku (Nigeria's current Vice-President)	2003 (May)
8.	ABTI-American University, Yola, Adamawa State	Abdur-Rahim Oladimeji Islamic Foundation	2005 (January)
9.	Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Kwara State	The Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion	2005 (January)
10.	Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Oyo State	Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA)	2005 (January)
11.	Bingham University, New Karu, Nassarawa State	The Sisters of Jesus the Saviour (Linked also with the Founder of Madonna University, Okija Very Rev. Emmanuel Ede	2005 (January)
12.	Caritas University, Amorji-Nike, Enugu, Enugu State		

**Table 1:** (Continued)

S/N	Name of University	Founder/Proprietor*	Date Established
13.	Cetep City University, Lagos, Lagos State	Board of Trustees with Chief Joseph Omoyajowo as Chairman	2005 (January)
14.	Katsina University, Katsina State	Katsina Islamic Foundation	2005 (January)
15.	Redeemer's University, Ede, Oyo State	Redeemed Christian Church of God	2005 (January)
16.	Bells University of Technology, Badagry, Lagos State	H.E. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria's current President), **	2005 (June)
17.	Crawford University, Igbesa, Ogun State	The Apostolic Faith Mission	2005 (June)
18.	Crescent University, Abeokuta, Ogun State	Prince Bola Ajibola (President & Founder of the Islamic Movement for Africa - Crescent University is an offshoot of its Research Centre). Described as 'First Muslim University' in the Southern part of Nigeria.	2005 (June)
19.	University of Mkar, Mkar, Benue State	N.K.S.T Mission ('Nongu U Sudan hen Tiv' ie. Church of Christ in Sudan among the Tiv People in Benue State)	2005 (June)
20.	Novena University, Ogume, Delta State	A Businessman (Mr. Chuks Ochonogor as Pro-Chancellor)	2005 (June)
21.	Renaissance University, Enugu, Enugu State	Governor (Dr.) Chimaroke Nnamani of Enugu State via Mia Mater Elizabeth Foundation but his spokesperson 'denies' that he owns the university.	2005 (June)
22.	Wukari Jubilee University, Taraba State	Jointly owned by JBC Seminary Inc. (Missionary Organization) & Taraba Community Project.	2005 (June)
23.	Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State	Eduserve Consult, Ibadan/ Prof. Jide Owoeye***	2005 (June)

**Sources:** Obasi (2005c); Oyekanmi (2005).

### Notes

- \* This describes the individuals or organizations behind the universities, which may not necessarily coincide with the official name used for registration and licensing purposes. The NUC disclosed the names of Nos 1-15 during their licensing ceremonies but never did that (at least to this author's best knowledge) for Nos 16-23, which incidentally has President Obasanjo, and one state governor as founders.
- \*\* That President Obasanjo is the Founder/Owner of Bells University is a public knowledge (see Lohor 2005; Ojedokun 2005). Bell is a trade name for President Obasanjo's educational institutions (see Ogwuche & Ashamu 2005 *Saturday Champion*, September 3, 2005)
- \*\*\*This is the only university owned by academic(s), which is novel in a country long overshadowed by corrupt military and political class.

Table 1 shows that majority of the universities are owned by religious organizations. The table reveals that out of 23 private universities licensed so far, 15 (65 percent) are directly owned by Christian (13) and Islamic (3) religious organizations. This reflects global trend whereas Altbach (1998; 2000) and Otieno (*in this journal issue*) rightly pointed out, religious organizations have been in the forefront of the establishment of private universities. The Nigerian case can partly be attributed to widespread public disenchantment over the high level of moral decay, indiscipline and secret cult activities prevailing in public universities, and among other things, their unstable academic calendar arising from frequent unrest by both staff and students. These universities therefore came to fill this void. For example, in a six African country case study, Thaver (2004) found that private universities were performing differentiated function through the promotion of particular religions within higher education.

### Dominance of Public Universities and the Reality of their Failure

Although public universities have dominated 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. For example, in 1990, about 250,000 candidates applied for admission, and less than 50,000 (about 20 percent) were admitted. In 1992, close to 300,000 applied for admission and about 50,000 (17 percent) got admission. In 1994, out of the 400,000 that applied, less than 50,000 (13 percent) were admitted (Jibril 2000; Obasi & Eboh 2004). This has been the trend over the years as also shown in table 2.

Table 2 shows that on the average, the access rate was as low as 13.7 percent. The admission crisis became more critical after 2001. For example, by 2002, the access rate had fallen to less than 13 percent (Okebukola 2002). Based on this fact, the expansion of access through the establishment of private univer-

sities became one of the most reasonable policy options (Obasi 2004a; 2005a-c).

**Table 2:** Trends in University Admissions (1995–2000)

Year	No. of Applications Received	No. of Admissions Given	% of those Admitted
1995/96	508,280	32,473	6.4
1996	376,645	56,055	14.9
1997	419,807	73,781	17.6
1998	321,368	78,550	24.4
1999	593,670	64,358	10.8
2000	467,490	50,277	10.8
2000/2001	550,399	60,718	11.0
<b>Average</b>			<b>13.7%</b>

**Sources:** JAMB, *Annual Report*, various years; as cited in Yaqub 2002; Obasi 2002; Okebukola 2002).

All these show that Nigeria's participation rate in higher education is very low given its human and material resources. For instance, as at 1995 when the world average was 1,434 per 100,000 inhabitants, Nigeria had only 395 and later 667 in 1996. Yet South Africa had 1,524 in 1995 and the average for developing countries was 824 (Jibril 2000; Obasi 2002).

It is within this context that the emergence and rapid expansion of private universities in Nigeria can be appreciated. The Nigeria experience reflects global trends (Altbach 1998 & 2000; Mabizela 2004; Otieno 2004; Thaver 2004; Teferra 2005). But again, this domestic context does not exist in isolation of the wider external driving forces of neo-liberal economic change (Levy 2002a; Otieno in this issue), and globalization and logic of today's market economies (Altbach 2000 & 2004) in a knowledge society.

### **Assessing the State of Private Provision of Higher Education**

#### ***Overview of the Relative Size of Nigeria's Public and Private University Sectors***

The number of federal government-owned universities remained stagnant at 25 from 1992 to 2002. But in 2003, the National Open University was established

bringing the total number of federal government-owned universities to 26. In contrast, the number of state government-owned universities grew rapidly from its pre-1999 number of 13 to its present figure of 26. But the stagnancy experienced at the federal level or the expansion at state level, had nothing to do with either constitutional restriction or freedom. Both were free to run and establish universities. However, over the years, the federal government was unwilling to establish new universities against the background of its gross under-funding of the existing ones. In the case of state governments, there was healthy political competition among them to establish their own universities as a way of satisfying the yearning needs of their citizens who could not be admitted in the highly competitive and tuition-free federal government-owned universities. It can therefore be said that the size of Nigeria's public higher education sector (like its private sector counterpart) witnessed appreciable growth since the demise of military rule in 1999. Table 3 presents a summary of the size and ownership structure of universities in Nigeria.

**Table 3:** Overview of the Relative Size of Nigeria's Public and Private University Sectors

Structure of Ownership	Number of Universities	% of Total
Federal Government	26*	34.66
State Governments	26	34.66
Private (individual & corporate bodies)	23	30.68
Total	75**	100%

\* This number includes the National Defence Academy, Kaduna, and the National Open University.

\*\*There are also 17 Colleges of Education that award degrees but these are excluded here because they are not regarded as universities but are affiliated to the universities for purposes of quality assurance.

The table shows that presently, there is relative balance in the number of universities owned by the federal, state and private entities. However, in terms of public-private sector divide, the size of the public sector predominates as it controls 69 percent while the private sector controls 31 percent. But the Standing Committee on Private Universities (SCOPU) of the NUC is still processing a large number of already received applications (Taiwo & Adoba 2004) said to be about 146 in number. This makes the prospects of more private universities in the near future a possibility. It is possible that with time, its size may dominate as already

happening in some other countries like Japan (Altbach 2000; 2002; Obasi 2005f); Philippines, South Korea and Indonesia (Altbach 2000, 2002).

#### ***Student Enrolment Profile in Private Universities***

Available statistics show that enrolment in the private universities is modest but there is significant potential for growth based on statistics from older private universities. Madonna University graduated 390 students during its convocation ceremony in 2004 (Ukeh 2004) and as at 2005, it had 7000 undergraduate students, of whom 5000 were full time and 2000 part time (Madonna University 2005). The Covenant University started with a first batch of 1500 undergraduate students and matriculated 1681 students in its third matriculation ceremony for the 2004/2005 session (Covenant University, 2005a). The Benson Idahosa University registered 989 full time undergraduate students and 131 part time students (Benson Idahosa University, 2005). Also the Igbinedion University had 1027 students in the 2001-2002, while Bowen University had 650 in the same session (Okebukola 2002). The present enrolment profile which shows significant potential does not differ from that of other African countries (Thaver 2004). In Kenya for instance, the private share of total enrolment is currently 12.1 percent (Otieno's, *in this journal issue*).

**Table 4:** Total Students Enrolments in Nigerian Private Universities (May, 2007)

University	Full-Time	Part-Time (FT)	Total (PT)
Abti-American University, Yola	497		497
Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo	805	17	822
Al-Hikma University, Ilorin	167		167
Babcock University, Ilesha-Remo, Ogun State	4,046		4,046
Bells University of Technology, Ota	176		176
Benson Idahosa University, Benin City	2,212		2,212
Bingham University, New Karu	269		269
Bowen University, Iwo	3,901		3,901
Caritas University, Amorji-Nike, Enugu	1,625		1,625
Covenant University, Ota	6,617	190	6,807
Crawford University, Igbesa	311		311
Crescent University, Abeokuta	66		66

**Table 4:** Total Students Enrolments in Nigerian Private Universities (Contd.)

University	Full-Time	Part-Time (FT)	Total (PT)
Igbinedion University, Okada	5,235		5,235
Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji	246		246
Katsina University, Katsina	312		312
Lead City University, Ibadan	1,572		1,572
Madonna University, Okija	7,561		7,561
Novena University, Ogume, Delta State.	236		236
Pan-African University, Lagos.	77	130	207
Redeemer's University, Ogun State.	625		625
Renaissance University, Agbani, Enugu*	-	-	-
University of Mkar, Mkar.	566		566
Wukari Jubilee University, Wukari	117		117
Total Enrollment (both UG & PG) in Private Universities			37,636
Total Enrollment in All 76 Universities with Students as at May 2007 (Both UG & PG)			1,108,199
**Percentage of Private to Public Universities (both UG & PG)			3.4%

Source of primary data: NUC, Abuja, May 2007.

**Notes**

\* With no students as at May 2007 but to start admitting students with effect from 2007/2008 session & with a proposed figure of about 250 students. (Source: *The Guardian*, September 7, 2007). Note also that 9 other private universities already licensed are yet to admit students, hence not included in this table.

\*\* But % of Total UG Enrolment (ie 34,675) in Private Universities to UG Enrolment (ie 691,224) in Public Universities (excluding PG and diploma-related courses) is 4.8 percent showing higher enrolment figures at UG level. (Source: Extracted from NUC Primary Data, 2007).

In the United States, for example, (even with its long established tradition of private universities), only 20 percent enrolments are in such private institutions (Altbach 2002). The current admission trend in Nigerian private universities indicates the existence of significant potentials for higher education enrolments in the future perhaps as found in some other countries in Asia where enrolments



are in the range of 76 percent to 80 percent (Chiba 2000; Altbach 2002; Obasi 2005f) or in Chile (Latin America) which has 71 percent enrolment (Bernasconi 2002).

### ***Major Programme Focus of Private Universities in Nigeria***

Adapting Thaver's (2004) criteria for determining institutional types of private universities, this author presents in table 5 the status, identity and the major programme focus of eight older private universities.

The diverse nature of the programmes offered by the older private universities suggest that they are conforming to the expectation of providing 'differentiated education' (Geiger 1986; James 1991 as cited in Thaver, 2004) and adding value to existing public higher education system. This differentiated function has to do with the entrepreneurial contents and moral undertone of the programmes. For example, the Covenant University has what it calls *Unique Programmes*, which include Total Man Concept (TMC), Entrepreneurial Development Studies (EDS), Faculty Support Programme (FSP) and the Centre for Wealth Creation (CWC). The FSP for instance 'performs its role as *in-loco-parentis* to students and assist them spiritually, academically, emotionally, socially and physically during their period in the university' (Covenant University, 2005d). But more importantly, they have not fallen into the temptation of running only programmes which Mabizela (2004) describes as 'inexpensive fields of study that are in high demand' and in which 'natural and physical sciences, engineering, and technology remain largely peripheral', a trend found in Latin America, Eastern Europe and some Asian countries. In other words, these universities are actually confronting the challenges of 'offering diverse disciplines' which Mabizela (2004) fears private universities in Africa may be faced with as experiences elsewhere reveal.

### ***Fee Structure: The Blurring Line of Distinction between For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Organizations***

The issue of whether private universities in Nigeria are in reality, non-profit organizations or not, is an interesting as well as a difficult question. The crucial issue is not just a matter of what their registration status is in terms of for-profit or not-for-profit organization. Although, the distinction is helpful in issues such as tax exemption, tax relief and other privileges (Altbach 1998) but to the average fee paying student or his/her parent in Nigeria, the distinction exists mainly on paper because it does not really make them to pay less across the divide. The universities owned by religious organizations are all in the category of not-for-profit entities but except in some cases their fee structure lies close to the range that other for-profit organizations are charging.

**Table 5:** The Status, Identity and Major Programme Focus of Private Universities

University	Status	Identity	Major Programme Focus
Igbinedion University, Okada*	For-profit	Secular	Emphasis on Business/ Entrepreneurial, & Pure/ Applied Sciences
Babcock University, Ilishan Remo	Not-for-profit	Religious	Diverse Focus but more on professionalism in Science & Tech, Mgt Social Sciences & Educ./ humanities
Madonna University, Okija	Not-for-profit	Religious	More emphasis on professionalism in Medical, Legal and Management/ Social science fields
Bowen University, Iwo	Not-for-profit	Religious	Diverse Focus but not too sure of prime focus
Covenant University, Ota	Not-for-profit	Religious	Focus on Entrepreneurial in Science/Tech, Human development/Business/ Social Sciences /Arts
Pan African University, Lagos **	For-profit	Secular & Religious	Emphasis on Business/ Entrepreneurial education
Benson Idahosa University, Benin City	Not-for-profit	Religious	Diverse Focus but emphasis on Basic/Applied Sciences, Social Science/ Management, Arts and Education, & Law
Abti-American University of Nigeria	For-profit	Secular	Focus on Business & Entrepreneurship/ ICT/Arts& Science

**Sources:** Websites of the some of the different institutions (see References).

**Notes**

\* The proprietor says it was not established, as a profit making organization but the university is generally seen as a high profile businesslike institution.

\*\* It originated from the Lagos Business School known for its 'businesslike' orientation.

The gap between form and reality can be illustrated with the case of Igbinedion University. For instance, in this university's website, its proprietor clearly states that the university was not established as a profit making organization (Igbinedion University 2005), yet the fee structure negates this claim. For example, the lat-

est (2005/2006) fee structure of this university as released by the NUC shows that its range of fees from N311,000 to N427,000 (US\$2,392–3,285) is far above many others. Again, the contradiction in the proprietor's statement comes out clearly from Thaver's (2004) observation that this university reflects a 'pattern of educational entrepreneurship' in which 'private higher education is perceived as a marketable commodity that can be traded'.

Available statistics in table 6 on the tuition fee structure of many older private universities reveal that the range is between N100,000–N427,000 (One-hundred thousand Naira to Four-hundred and twenty-seven thousand Naira ie US\$769–\$3,285) per session (made up of two semesters). However, the fees charged by the ABTI-American University, is completely outside this range (see the website of ABTI-American University of Nigeria, 2006). Some universities include meals and textbooks in the fees while in some others these are excluded. The fees charged differ across universities and across disciplines in the same universities.

**Table 6:** Range of Student Fees in Selected Older Private Universities (2005–2006)

University	Nigerian Currency (Naira) (N)	US Dollar (US\$) @ N130 per \$1
Benson Idahosa University	100,000–170,000	769–1,308
Covenant University	228,000–258,000	1,754 –1,985
Babcock University	337,570–357,730*	2,597–2,752
Madonna University	200,000**	1,538
Igbinedion University	311,000–427,000	2,393–3,285
ABTI-American University	Highly differentiated fees (see dollar column)	a) Tuition: 6,600 (including laptop, internet access within campus) b) Meals: 1,900; c) Lodging: 500–1,900 depending on number in a room; d) Books: 1,900; e) Technology Fee: 150

**Sources:**

(a) (NUC Accreditation Report, 2006 (see news report by Oyekanmi, 2006); Different websites of some of the universities (listed under References). Some fees listed in the websites have been revised in 2006; (e.g. Covenant University, 2005b).

**Notes**

\* Reflecting Science only, which was available to this author.

\*\* For medical students only which was available to this author.

A comparison of this fee structure with what obtains in some African countries reveals that it appears to be on the high side. For example, in Kenya some private universities charged US\$1,268 while in Zimbabwe one university charged US\$55 as at 1999 (Thaver 2004).

### ***Assessing the Level of Tuition Fees within the Prevailing Financial Environment***

Defending its level of fees, the founder of the Covenant University, argued that an NUC statistics shows that the Federal Government spends about N300,000.00 (US\$2,308) per session as subsidy on training an undergraduate in its universities (Covenant University 2005c). For example, in 2001, the total average unit cost student in science-based disciplines was N239,408 (US\$1,842) and N186,505 (US\$1,435) for the Arts-based disciplines (Okebukola 2002). The institution's pioneer Vice-chancellor, who also defended the fee explained that if they had followed the recommendation of the NUC on fees, then they would have charged over N290,000 (US\$2,231). He cited cases of secondary schools in Lagos that charge more than that amount (Covenant University 2005c). The Executive Secretary of the NUC also confirmed that the fees charged by private universities (as at 2005), was not too exorbitant if judged against the unit cost of university education in the country (news report by Dambatta 2005). Also when the fees are compared with what the high profile (yet highly patronized private secondary schools) charge in Nigeria, the fees may be properly put in context. For example, the Loyola Jesuit Secondary School in Abuja charges above N300,000.00 (US\$2,308) per session. Another Catholic Secondary School in Abuja (The Christ the King College, Gwagwalada), charges above N150,000 (US\$1,154) per session. But it is being argued that the prevailing level of fees in the private universities can be reduced if the federal government offers some financial assistance to private universities, as it is the case in Japan. And according to Obasi (2005a), this can be achieved through the Education Trust Fund (ETF) that manages the 2 percent education tax.

### ***State of Existing Facilities and Programme Quality***

It appears that the enforcement of the criteria for granting of licenses to private universities has had positive impact on the quality of facilities for teaching and learning in the institutions. Some of the 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 (see news report by 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. The report revealed that three quarter of the programmes taught at the Covenant University for example, were provided with well-equipped computer laboratories. It however expressed dissatisfaction over few other facilities in some universities. For instance, (a) it noted that staff offices were inadequate in Igbinedion University; and (b) quality of the buildings and fittings at the two campuses of Madonna University, needs to be upgraded.

With respect to the maintenance of academic standards in the private universities, the most objective and reliable available evidence on the ground are the results of the accreditation exercises carried out by the NUC. It is necessary to place this discussion within a global national overview of the accreditation exercise. The results of two accreditation exercises released in 2005 and in early 2006 would be used for discussion. The 2005 revealed that out of the 1,415 academic programmes offered by universities in the country, only 13.8 per cent were fully accredited, with about 81.2 per cent of them having interim accreditation status (news report by Chiahemen, 2005). This report said that the NUC had ordered the closure of programmes that failed the accreditation test describing them as 'fake factories for producing half-baked graduates'. The report also revealed that none of the programmes evaluated in five private universities failed accreditation exercise as they were all either in the Full or Interim accreditation categories. It was on this ground that the founder of Covenant University proudly announced that the university 'was moving from accreditation success to Distinction' (Covenant University 2005e).

The report of another accreditation exercise released in early 2006 confirmed the positive rating of private universities in the 2005 report. In this exercise, two additional private universities (in addition to the five evaluated in 2005) were evaluated. Without going into specifics for constraints of space, the NUC made the following observations: 'It was found that those private universities that have enrolled/graduated students are well on course towards producing quality graduates that are disciplined, have the fear of God, possess leadership qualities and are job creators rather than job seekers'. It also went on to say that these 'universities exhibited characteristics such as insistence on good quality teaching by the academic staff; maintaining stable academic calendar; maintaining cult-free campuses; engaging in large-scale infrastructural development; insistence on and enforcing discipline and attitudinal change on students' (news report by Oyekanmi 2006).

On the quality of students admitted, the private universities get their students from the same matriculation body - the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board

(JAMB) – that admits students into public universities. The minimum entry qualification requirements remain the same. In addition, many of them conduct a post-JAMB screening test to filter more, the quality of the students. This available evidence therefore demonstrates that currently private universities in Nigeria do not reflect experience in some Latin American countries where there were weak admission standard, inadequate infrastructure, poor libraries and programmes concentrated in inexpensive fields, as revealed by Bernasconi (2003).

### ***Quality of Academic Staff***

This is one area where some controversies do exist. Sofola (2005) posited that most if not all private universities in Nigeria have ‘a lower proportion of seasoned and experienced teachers’. But the verdict of the NUC accreditation exercise reported earlier contradicts this observation. In more specific terms, as at 2002 Madonna University for instance, had 80 full time academic staff and 35 part time staff. Those with doctorate degrees were 30 in number. Then at the Benson Idahosa University, there were 56 full time academic staff and 30 part time staff with 40 staff having doctorate degrees. The Igbinedion University had 78 staff while Bowen University had 80 (Okebukola 2002). This statistics is not disappointing at all given the relatively young age of private universities in Nigeria. This evidence does not reflect the view that ‘the pool of qualified staff working full time in the private institutions is small’ (Thaver 2004). Evidence suggests that there is a trend of drawing academic staff from older public universities to complement full time staff in private universities. The practice of ‘moonlighting’ however has its own problems as pointed out by Thaver (2004). For instance, its unreliable nature can disrupt a teaching schedule in the middle of a semester.

There is however strong indication that with time, the staffing condition would improve. For example, the number of fresh Ph.Ds produced in the older public universities, gives one hope that this would be so. The statistics released by the NUC reveal that in 2005 alone all the six first generation universities produced a staggering number of 461 fresh Ph.Ds while the rest produced 386 thereby bringing the total figure to 847 (NUC Memo 2006). Also as Sofola (2005) rightly observed, it may be a matter of time for them to catch up since the incentive of gratuity and pension previously enjoyed in the public universities is being replaced with the contributory scheme under the new Pension Act. This may cause ‘internal brain drain’ from public to private universities. Incidentally this has started happening in the first quarter of 2006, as it was reported that the new pension scheme was forcing professors out of public universities (see news report by Adenipekun 2006).

### ***The Issues of Regulation, Control and Quality Assurance***

Judging by the enforcement of the guidelines on the establishment and operation of private universities so far, one can say that although the private universities are granted the necessary operational autonomy, they are strongly within the regulatory ambit of the Federal Government through the NUC. So far the NUC appears to be carrying out its accreditation functions with some measure of seriousness. It has closed many academic programmes in public universities that failed to meet the required minimum standards. Furthermore, the NUC has repeatedly warned that it would sanction universities that exceed their admission quota based on national manpower requirements and the resources and facilities available in each university (news report by Omuonu 2005). And in its 2006 accreditation report, the NUC withdrew accreditation from 102 programmes (representing 7.6 percent) out of the 1,343 programmes it evaluated. One of the highlights of the report was the denial of accreditation to law programmes in three first generation universities to the shock of many (Taiwo 2006; Oyekanmi 2006).

In anticipation of the enormous regulatory work involved with the granting of licenses to many private universities, the NUC itself has undergone some structural re-organization to enable it to cope with the demands of monitoring and evaluation of private universities. For example, it has established a Department of Quality Assurance headed by one of its experienced Directors and former Vice-chancellor who would be assisted by 35 other professors. Its major assignment is to conduct rigorous monitoring and evaluation activities of all universities in Nigeria. It will demand compliance with NUC's Benchmarks and Minimum Academic Standards and would recommend, for immediate sanction any university whose operation falls below the standards. And according to the NUC Executive Secretary the thrust of the work of the Department is to guarantee Nigerians that in spite of the quantitative increase in universities, the quality of the Nigerian university graduate will not be compromised (Oyekanmi 2005).

### ***Governance Structures***

Many private universities in Nigeria have not departed substantially from the conventional governance structures of public universities. The nomenclatural designation of their governance structures remain substantially the same as stipulated in the government guidelines on their establishment. Their Principal Officers go by the same names like their counterparts in public universities and organs of governance go by the same conventional names such as Colleges, Faculties, Schools, Departments, etc. However, some adopt different governance structure. For example, the ABTI-American University, Yola adopts the American nomenclature of calling its Vice-chancellor a President, and Vice-



President for three of the Deputies. However, it still retains the names Deans for heads of the Faculties (ABTI-American University 2006). Also private universities have Board of Trustees instead of Governing Councils as found in the public universities. There are some innovations in programme administration. The dominant tendency is for all of them to have a collegial structure that combines many cognate courses into one department and faculties thereby saving costs. However, some of the universities operate non-flexible working hours for their lecturers from 8a.m to official close of work. This is considered strange in a university system especially against the background that one lecturer is known to have left a private university on account of this, in spite of the salary differential between the two. This is an area that requires closer investigation in the future because of its human resource management implications.

### **The Success Story of Private Universities as a Challenge to Public Universities**

So far, the private universities have proved to be a big challenge to the public universities in some areas they have made remarkable success. Babalola's (2002) description of the Babcock University as a success story in the short period of its existence is an example of the differentiated functions that all the first three private universities have actually provided. And these functions constitute part of the contexts explaining the thriving of private universities in Nigeria. Perhaps the relevant question is: what do people pay for when they go to private universities? From evidence in Nigeria, they do not just pay for the anticipated quality of instructions in the classrooms. Some of the attractions (in comparison with public universities) are stable academic calendar; absence of frequent strikes by staff and demonstrations by students (that often lead to loss of many lives); relatively secure and peaceful learning environment characterized by near absence of secret cults (another major source of loss of lives); clean hostel environment; among many others. As a result of space constraints, the discussion that follows would briefly focus on few achievements.

*Increased Female Enrolment:* Private universities have been able to add value in the area of female gender enrolment. During the 2001/2002 session for instance, Igbinedion University recorded the highest percentage of female enrolment in both public and private universities with its 60 percent female enrolment. This was followed by Madonna University with 54.6 percent.

*Achievement of Optimum Balance between Academic-Nonacademic Staff Ratio:* The private universities have been able to set a pace in striking a reasonable balance in academic-non-academic staff mix. This has long been a big problem

in public universities in the form of heavy wage bill on non-academic staff. The worst case for instance is the University Abuja, which has only 19 percent of its total staff strength as academics as against 81 percent non-academic staff (Okebukola 2002; Obasi 2002).

*Effective Check on, and Reduction of the Menace of Secret Cult Activities:* The effective check of the menace of social ills most especially secret cult phenomenon, is also another area of contributions of private universities. Those who are familiar with the wanton killings by campus cults in Nigeria, and their associated social ills such as armed robbery and rape, are in a better position to understand its menace (see for instance, Jason 1998; Obasi 2004b&c). This is where the provision of differentiated education by private universities through their emphasis on moral and spiritual training has been a great value to the society.

*Restoration of the Badly Eroded Dignity and Welfare of Student Life:* Public universities are known for their over-congested hostels and its inhuman and intolerable living conditions (Obasi 2005e). As Sofola (2005), rightly observed, most of the private universities offer full boarding facilities and have smaller classes with fairly adequate infrastructure even though at relatively high cost.

*Maintenance of Stable Academic Calendar:* This has remained one of the greatest achievements of private universities. In the past two decades, public universities ran an unstable academic calendar, which led to a prolonged stay of students. In many universities for instance, students spent six to eight years in programmes meant to be completed in four or five years. The presence of private universities has brought a big challenge to public universities. They are now under serious pressure by the government to restore their academic calendar from October to June.

## **Conclusion**

The experience of private provision of higher education in Nigeria in only a little over half a decade (1999–2006), provides a ray of hope that given appropriate supportive public policy environment, the entire Nigerian higher education system could undergo considerable and robust amount of growth and diversification in the future. Presently, the success story of some private universities so far, has been a great challenge to the public universities in Nigeria. This remains the greatest value added function of private universities in Nigeria. It is hoped that these modest achievements of private universities would be maintained and improved upon in the future. This remains one of the challenges that

the National Universities Commission (NUC) should face for the future sustainability of private higher education in Nigeria.

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## Appendix

### Eligibility Criteria for the Establishment of Private Universities by the Longe Report (1991:180-181)

- (i) Sponsorship/proprietorship should be by the Federal or State Government, a corporate body or any legal Nigerian citizen or group of citizens of high repute.
- (ii) Licensure must be sought from the Federal Government by sponsors.
- (iii) The name of the institution should, as far as possible, reflect the philosophy and objectives for which it would be established. It is considered more desirable to name universities after the towns/areas in which they are located rather than after persons.
- (iv) A well articulated mission and set of objectives is mandatory. Such objectives may be original and innovative but must be seen to be in consonance with the nation's socio-economic and political aspirations.



- (v) It is highly desirable that such institutions in their administrative structure should not depart too radically from established norms to create and sustain credibility and confidence from the start.
- (vi) Ideally a new institution should cater for areas of felt needs in its academic structure and spread of disciplines; it must have an eye on the impact of its future products on the nation's economy.
- (vii) Adequate funding (capital and recurrent) by the sponsoring body is a *sine qua no*, and these should be available on approval to open. Sources of funding need to be diversified to make for resilience. A new institution can set up income-generating enterprises to encourage the spirit of self-reliance from the earliest stage.
- (viii) Fixed, enabling assets (funds, land, movable and immovable assets) for establishing a new institution should be ascertained by the Federal Government or its accredited agency, and deemed adequate based on such factors as type of institution envisaged, its philosophy and objectives, cost of goods and services prevailing at the time, etc.
- (ix) A proposed institutions should have a clearly spelt-out master plan for infrastructural and programmes development for 20-25 years. Such plans should make adequate provision for land space, aesthetic beauty and fixed financial assets. A minimum land area of 100 hectares or more in a salutary site is essential. The site's distance from an urban complex should take into consideration the availability or otherwise of municipal services: water, transportation, private accommodation and consequential difficulties in its community (i.e. town and gown).
- (x) A new institution should have an adequate enrolment base and should be open to all Nigerians irrespective of ethnic derivation, social status, religious or political persuasion. In line with the foregoing, its laws and statutes should not conflict with conventional responsibilities in academia nor interfere with traditional institutional autonomy.
- (xi) There should be clear policy on student and staff accommodation, and catering facilities to pre-empt problems of inadequate municipal facilities.
- (xii) A new institution should guarantee adequate academic and support staff from the beginning. Staffing guidelines should meet the NUC/NBTE/NCCE staff/student ratio based on the courses contemplated.
- (xiii) Library, laboratory and workshop facilities should be adequate and long-range plans should be put in place for sustaining them. Accreditation should depend on the adequacy of instructional tools and consumables.
- (xiv) Part of its planning or feasibility report should include proposed contacts and affiliation with existing similar institutions and plans for cooperation and interaction.





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## Private Provision, National Regulatory Systems and Quality Assurance: A Case Study of Transnational Providers in South Africa

Prem Naidoo\*, Mala Singh\*\* and Lis Lange\*\*\*

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### Abstract

This paper looks into the emergence of transnational provision in South Africa in the context of the expansion of private higher education since the mid-1990s, and of the development of a national policy and regulatory framework that defines the role of higher education in the construction of a democratic society. The article analyses the characteristics of private and transnational provision of higher education and their impact in South Africa. It concludes with a reflection on the issues which developing countries may (need to) consider when constructing regulatory frameworks for transnational provision.

### Résumé

Ce document examine l'émergence de l'offre d'enseignement à l'échelle transnationale en Afrique du Sud dans le contexte de l'expansion de l'enseignement supérieur privé depuis le milieu des années 1990, et de l'élaboration d'une politique nationale et d'un cadre réglementaire qui définit le rôle de l'enseignement supérieur dans la construction d'une société démocratique. L'article analyse les caractéristiques de la privatisation de l'enseignement supérieur à l'échelle transnationale et leur impact en Afrique du Sud. Il conclut par une réflexion sur les questions que les pays en développement peuvent (doivent) examiner en élaborant des cadres réglementaires pour l'offre d'enseignement à l'échelle transnationale.

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\* We regret to announce that Dr Prem Naidoo is deceased.

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## Introduction

In this article we look at the rise of transnational provision in South Africa as a special case of the expansion of private higher education in the context of the country's democratic transition. Based on the Higher Education Quality Committee's (HEQC) experience of programme accreditation and other studies on private providers we suggest, first, that, in contrast to some local private providers, in South Africa, transnational providers neither contribute significantly to expanding access to higher education nor are responsive to societal and developmental needs of the country, two of the goals of the post-1994 legislation on higher education. Second, we argue that the regulatory framework that governs the provision of private higher education in South Africa has to be understood against the broader context of a socio-political project to which all higher education institutions are expected to contribute. Although this article takes into account the influence that the inclusion of higher education among the services to be traded in the context of GATS has in the behaviour of transnational providers, we do not focus on this issue in detail.

This article first situates the rise of transnational provision within the expansion of private higher education in South Africa. It then explores the legislative and policy framework within which higher education institutions operate in South Africa, including the nature and scope of the quality assurance system developed by the HEQC. Third, it analyses the characteristics of private and transnational provision of higher education and their impact in South Africa and concludes with a reflection on the issues which developing countries need to consider when constructing regulatory frameworks for transnational provision.

## Setting the Scene

### *Historical and Political Contexts*

Kruss (2004) and Mabizela (2004) distinguish three stages in the history of private provision of higher education in South Africa. First, the colonial period, when private higher education responded to the demands of the colonial economy and contributed to the reproduction of the local colonial elites. During the 19th century local institutions of higher learning had strong links with churches and public higher education institutions in the colonial metropolis. Many of these institutions were at the origin of South Africa's oldest public universities.

The second stage takes place in the mid-20th century (1940s–1950s). At the height of apartheid, private higher education institutions were established by South Africans to offer vocational programmes to African, Indian and coloured South Africans largely through correspondence, whereas public universities catered mainly for the education of white South Africans. Private providers were

seen as being of inferior quality and were negligible in terms of enrolments compared to public higher education institutions.

The third stage began in the 1990s. It was characterized by a resurgence of private higher education specifically geared to profit making. This phase, particularly in relation to the expansion of foreign private providers, has to be seen in the context of globalization, trade liberalization and the introduction of education into WTO-led GATS. A new model of relationship between local and foreign private providers emerged: the franchising of qualifications from developed countries, particularly between UK institutions and local private providers.

At the time of the first democratic election, the South African higher education system, which in 1995 catered for approximately 500,000 students, consisted of 21 universities, 15 'technikons'<sup>1</sup> (offering mainly vocational programmes) and over 100 private providers which catered for approximately 30 000 students. The majority of these private providers offer undergraduate degrees at levels 4 and 5 of the National Qualifications Framework, and are, according to South African legislation, non-university higher education institutions<sup>2</sup>.

The installation of a democratic government implied the development of a new policy and legislative framework for higher education linked to the initiatives of the new government to create a higher education landscape that was more appropriate to the social justice and economic development goals of an emerging democratic society. In 2000, as part of the national goal of creating a single coordinated higher education system, the Ministry of Education initiated a series of consultations on the appropriate size and shape of a restructured public higher education system. These consultations culminated in the decision to reduce the number of public higher education institutions from 36 to 21 through mergers and incorporations.

Currently the South African higher education system comprises 23 public institutions – 17 universities, of which four offer both university and technikon-type programmes, one technikon and five universities of technology (the new designation for the former technikons). In 2004 there were approximately 700,000 students enrolled at public higher education institutions and 30,000 students enrolled at private providers of higher education<sup>2</sup>. These students were distributed among 99 private providers<sup>3</sup> of which four were transnational providers with an enrolment of less than 2,000 student headcounts.

The rise of transnational higher education provision in South Africa and the development of a regulatory framework<sup>4</sup> to govern its operations must be seen against the background of three factors:

- The social, political and economic opening up of South Africa after the first democratic elections in 1994, which gave internationalisation a new impetus and heightened the impact of globalisation on many key aspects of South African society and the economy.
- The restructuring of South African higher education, following the democratic transition in 1994, in order to produce a single system that is more co-ordinated, equitable and responsive to the needs of a post-apartheid South Africa.
- The rapid growth in South Africa of private provision, especially in the last decade, in a context where the large majority of private providers are local for-profit institutions.

In order to understand the relative weight of private provision, it is important to remember that the South African higher education system is a public system which operates with state funding and within a national regulatory system. The overwhelming majority of South African higher education students are enrolled in one of the 23 public universities. Private provision in South Africa, contrary to other countries in the African continent and Latin America, is largely for profit<sup>5</sup>.

The entry into the market of transnational providers and the nature and scope of their operations can best be understood in terms of intersecting imperatives relating, on the one hand, to South Africa's own post-1994 policy and legislative goals for the creation of a new democratic order and, on the other, to the search for new markets by entrepreneurial universities from countries like Australia and the United Kingdom. Such countries have signalled the important role that educational exports have in the growth of their economies. The discourse of the 'knowledge society' and that of the facilitation of greater access to higher education in a globalising world where borders have become much more permeable are also part of the rationale for the phenomenal expansion of higher education across borders.

### ***Policy and Legislative Contexts***

The legislative and policy framework that guided the reform and restructuring of higher education in South Africa has a clear place for private higher education and, by implication, for foreign higher education institutions. At a legislative level, the Constitution (1996: 13, Section 29 (3)) as well as the Higher Education Act of 1997 (amendments 2000 and 2001) acknowledge independent educational institutions. The Act requires that private higher education institutions be registered by the registrar of private higher education institutions (the Director-General of the Department of Education). The Act also provides for the ap-

plication of quality assurance requirements to private higher education institutions and their compliance with the legislation and regulation pertaining to the National Qualifications Framework (Higher Education Act as amended in 2001:51).

At the policy level from the National Commission on Higher Education (1995) to the National Plan on Higher Education (2001), it has been acknowledged that private provision has a role in widening access to higher education, especially in niche areas of the labour market. At the same time all higher education policy has pointed out the need to provide a framework able both to provide freedom for providers offering sound education and to prevent poor quality operators in the system. The National Plan on Higher Education (NPHE) provided a framework for the registration of private higher education institutions linked to three factors: financial viability, quality of offerings and the public interest (DoE 2001:64). The fundamental premise of the Ministry of Education in the NPHE is that it is necessary to regulate private provision within the context of the government's goals and objectives for the higher education system as a whole. The same premise is at work in relation to the presence and operations of foreign private higher education institutions (DoE 2001:65) and in relation to the partnerships between public and private institutions (DoE 2001:66).

In addition to the policy and implementation framework outlined above, which impacts on transnational providers, the Education Ministry in South Africa has also sought to address the issue of the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and its possible impact on higher education, especially in terms of the commodification of higher education

### ***The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC): Quality, restructuring and national goals***

The Higher Education Act of 1997 created the Council on Higher Education (CHE), an independent statutory body that advises the Minister of Education on all aspects of higher education. The Act gave the CHE three broad responsibilities: advise the Minister of Education, contribute to the development of higher education, and the quality assurance of all higher education institutions operating in South Africa. This latter function was to be exercised by a permanent committee of the CHE, the HEQC. HEQC is responsible for auditing the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions, accrediting programmes of higher education and promoting quality assurance. To these functions, the HEQC added capacity development.

In order to facilitate a co-ordinated approach between the quality assurance system and the other two steering instruments of funding and planning, the HEQC defined quality as fitness for purpose, value for money and transformation (HEQC



2001: 14). These three dimensions of quality are located within a 'fitness of purpose' framework based on national goals, priorities and targets. On the basis of these definitions and with due regard to the objectives of the other steering instruments, the HEQC developed a quality assurance framework and systems to give effect to its chosen goals and objectives. The HEQC's work is arranged within five sub-systems which include institutional audit, programme accreditation, national reviews, self-accreditation, and quality promotion and capacity development (Singh and Naidoo 2003).

Overall, the regulatory and quality assurance framework which emerged between 1995 and 2001 encourages greater planning within institutions, mission differentiation, increased outputs, target setting, cost efficiency and effectiveness and the planned use of earmarked funding for student equity and redress.

In relation to private and transnational providers<sup>6</sup> the regulatory system implies that these providers have to:

- Operate as a trading company that is registered under the Companies Act of South Africa.
- Sign a declaration of non-discrimination in relation to students and staff with a commitment to advance the agenda of redress and equity.
- Be financially viable, with regular monitoring and reporting.
- Have all qualification standards assessed by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and registered on the NQF. SAQA is responsible for evaluating and recognising qualifications, whereas individual institutions have the right to recognise qualifications for entrance and further study purposes.
- Have the quality of programmes as well as of the institutions assured by the CHE/HEQC.

Over and above this, no institution is allowed to offer programmes within a franchise framework. In the specific case of foreign providers, they need quality assurance clearance from their country of origin, the qualifications they offer have to be recognised by the parent institution and the quality assurance system of the country in which they are operating. Students should be able to transfer from South Africa to the parent institution without losing credits. On application for registration, foreign institutions have to submit proof of the equivalence of qualifications, recognition and accreditation in their home country.

### **The Current Provision and Quality of Private Higher Education**

Since 1997, there has been a growth in the number of private providers of higher education in South Africa. Yet currently the size of private provision in South Africa seems to have reached a plateau with 100 providers, according to the list

of the DoE. These providers offer mainly vocational education in the fields of IT, management studies, secretarial studies, public relations, marketing, communications, religion, beauty and skincare, and fashion design (Lange and Naidoo 2003). Institutions typically cater for a niche programme area, have an average of not more than 200 students, and are located in city centres and economic hubs of South Africa. They vary from operations which are run by one person to institutions run with 100 staff, and operate from venues that range from single rooms to large campuses.

Before the DoE required registration of private providers in order to offer higher education programmes, most private providers sought some form of accreditation through their association or partnership with international institutions. Between 1998 and 2000, the DoE received complaints about private providers who were not offering acceptable quality in their educational programmes. This was due mainly to lack of quality assurance of the franchiser and poor quality of the foreign institution whose programmes were offered. In response, new DoE regulations outlawed franchising. This decision forced foreign providers to establish a physical presence as transnational private providers in South Africa and to take responsibility for the quality of delivery of their own programmes. The termination of the franchising arrangements between the foreign and local private providers gave impetus to the establishment of local private providers in their own right and created greater awareness of the need to strengthen the quality of provision.

The current landscape of private higher education in South Africa has the following features (Subotzy 2003; CHE 2003):

- It caters for less than 5 percent of the total higher education enrolment in South Africa.
- 90 percent of the students (27,000 headcounts) are enrolled with South African-owned private institutions and the rest with four transnational providers.
- The major fields of study are Business Management: 36 percent, IT: 30 percent, Social and Cultural Studies: 20 percent, and Services and Applied Humanities: 14 percent.
- Approximately 90 percent of the students are enrolled for undergraduate certificates and diplomas.

The HEQC work, especially in relation to the accreditation of higher education programmes offered by private providers, generated fundamental information to evaluate the quality of the provision offered at these institutions. During 2003, in the context of an accreditation exercise, the HEQC evaluated the quality of 58 private institutions (out of a total of 117 private providers registered at the

time offering 217 higher education programmes). A report on the results of the process of accreditation (CHE 2003) indicated that:

- Notwithstanding the fact that some institutions were offering programmes in relevant niche areas with appropriate tuition, at most of the private providers, there was an uncertain correlation between programme offerings and labour market requirements. Many of the programmes offered were at level 4 of the NQF and a 'spoon-feeding' and rote learning approach was predominant.
- The quality of teaching and learning was uneven due to a lack of sufficient members of staff with adequate qualifications. Most academic staff were under-qualified, underpaid and were employed on short-term renewable contracts. These working conditions led to low morale, poor teaching, and no or poor research performance among academic staff.
- At providers offering vocational programmes, there were poor or insufficient arrangements for experiential learning due to the fact that most private providers had poor relations with industry and business.
- The infrastructure was insufficient to support teaching and learning. In most cases there were no libraries to speak of.
- There was an absence of internal mechanisms and structures to assure the quality of programme offerings. Although many private providers had some quality assurance arrangements, there was very little evidence of actual implementation and monitoring.
- There was a lack of knowledge and implementation of a series of national policies and regulations, especially in terms of human resource development and labour relations.

The CHE findings suggest that, contrary to the expectations of the White Paper on Higher Education (DoE 1997a:2.55), private providers are neither helping to broaden access nor are they responding to the needs of the South African economy for high-level skills. Although in some cases private providers offer different qualifications, most of them are lower end qualifications in management and business which were offered within the framework of vocational education provided by the ex-technikons. But what is most worrying is that the quality of provision has been poor and often inferior when compared to public higher education institutions. Based on this, it is difficult to agree that private providers of higher education are providing more, better and different education (Kruss 2004).

### **Transnational Provision of Higher Education in South Africa**

As indicated earlier, in the late 1990s transnational providers recognised South Africa as a major growth area for higher education and entered into various

collaborative arrangements with local public and private institutions, or offered the programmes themselves. These arrangements took on a variety of modalities:

- *distance and electronic education* (where cross-border providers did not have a physical presence in South Africa and students were recruited through the internet – this modality is unregulated);
- *satellite campuses* (providers operate physically in South Africa and offer an imported curriculum – this modality is regulated through accreditation requirements);
- *recognition and accreditation agreements* (forms of partnership in which the local partner is accredited by the HEQC, and the degree is recognised by the foreign partner);
- *partnership programmes* (local public providers offer programmes in partnership but the programme belongs to the public provider);
- *professional institutes* (transnational institutions provide the curricula, set examinations and licence various local institutions to offer a programme).

In January 1999, the DoE initiated the process of registration of private higher education institutions, including foreign/transnational providers. In 2000, 14 transnational institutions (11 universities and three colleges) from the UK, USA, Australia and Netherlands applied for registration. The HEQC was not in operation at the time and SAQA conducted a paper-based evaluation of the proposed programmes. In 2001, the DoE registered four foreign institutions and SAQA granted accreditation to the programmes listed in Table 1 below. Thus, in the end, South Africa only recognised four transnational providers.

As transnational providers, these institutions are for profit and enter into different types of ownership arrangements considered lucrative by their shareholders. Three of these institutions are owned in partnership with South African businesses and their establishment was co-funded by South African capital. In one case, the institution is wholly funded by South African capital while the foreign institution provided academic capital and oversight. Two institutions have entered into partnerships with black economic empowerment companies. One institution entered South Africa with the purpose of launching itself into the southern African region, using South Africa's infrastructure as its base. It has actively recruited students from neighbouring countries and has started establishing offices in those countries.

**Table 1:** Transnational Providers and Accredited Offerings in South Africa in 2001

Institution	Country of Origin	Programmes Accredited by SAQA
De Montfort University	UK	Masters in Business Administration (MBA)
Business School of Netherlands	Netherlands	MBA
Bond University	Australia	Bachelor of Arts (BA); BA (Business Communications); Bachelor of Commerce (B. Com. in Accounting; Finance; Management; Marketing; Information Systems; Information Technology) and MBA
Monash University	Australia	BA; Bachelor of Business and Commerce; Bachelor of Business Science and Bachelor of Commuting

The for-profit motive does not necessarily undermine academic governance. Three of the four institutions (those from Australia and the UK) have strong academic oversight from their home countries as a result of the national quality assurance requirements of those countries. The institution from the Netherlands does not have such a requirement and the host institution does not provide any academic oversight. In terms of investment in the local operation, the two Australian institutions invested in infrastructure. This included the purchase of land and the construction of reasonably adequate infrastructure. The other two institutions operated from rented space with minimal provision of infrastructure.

In 2000, the enrolments at these four transnational institutions totalled 3,165, which represented 0.5 percent of the total number of students enrolled in both private and public higher education and 10 percent of all private higher education students. Of the 3,165 students that were enrolled in transnational provision in 2000, the majority (88 percent) were in the field of Business, Commerce and Management Studies. Half of the enrolments were at the master's level (MBA only) and the rest at the undergraduate level.

From the point of view of the demographic profile of the enrolments, the majority of students at transnational providers were white (54 percent) with African students representing 24 percent of the total enrolments. The reasons advanced for the low number of African enrolments relate to fee structures, admission requirements and institutional culture that act as barriers to access. Kruss (2004) validates these findings and notes that 82 percent of white students at one transnational institution came from the elite private school sector.

In terms of the cost of education at transnational providers, the fee structure was on average twice that of local public providers and four times that of local private providers. These institutions did not offer bursaries or financial support for poor students. In the case of the MBA, however, companies or local government structures such as municipalities funded students who were in their employment. In one case, 30 students were recruited from, and funded by, a local municipality.<sup>7</sup>

Regarding staffing, in 2003 the two Australian institutions employed approximately 60 full-time academics and 70 non-academic staff, many of whom were South Africans who worked previously in local public higher education institutions. The two institutions from the UK and the Netherlands relied heavily on part-time staff. The characteristics of the academic staff impacted on the research profile of these institutions. Low or non-existent research production characterised most of these institutions despite the fact that they were offering a postgraduate degree like the MBA.

Finally, the very nature of these institutions limited the importance of community engagement projects and/or the integration into local networks. All four institutions had poor teaching and research linkages with local public institutions, while some had forged reasonable linkages with some of the bigger local private providers.

The actual quality of provision of higher education institutions is best judged in relation to the delivery of a specific programme. This opportunity came in 2002 and 2003 when the HEQC undertook a national review of all the MBAs offered by public and private providers in the country.

The review had two parts. The first part entailed an accreditation exercise. All MBA programmes (37 programmes) were evaluated by panels of peers and experts against a set of minimum standards. Programmes which met the minimum standards were accredited and those which did not were de-accredited and had to discontinue offering the programme.

Each programme was assessed against 13 criteria clustered into three categories:

#### Governance criteria

- The nature and level of the insertion of providers within the national higher education system in terms of its legislative framework and regulations, as well as its broad social and developmental objectives.
- The relationship between the unit offering the MBA and the higher education institution within which it is located, whether this is local or transnational.

#### Learning programme criteria

- The processes that guarantee the integrity and intellectual coherence of a programme and the mechanisms to monitor and review it.
- The actual intellectual coherence and appropriateness of the programme content in relation to its purposes.
- The structure and articulation of the teaching and learning processes, including assessment, and research education.
- The availability of adequate human resources (academic, support and administrative) to fulfil the objectives of a programme according to its specific mode of delivery. This included the translation of the national goals of equity and redress to institutional and programme level policies for appointments.
- The manner in which programmes guarantee students' access to sufficient and adequate physical and educational infrastructure according to the specific mode of delivery of programmes.

#### Contextual criteria

- The programmes' relationships with employers and the world of business.
- The ways in which the programmes articulate with broader societal needs and goals that fall within its sphere.
- The contribution of the programmes to the world of business and management in general.

The second part of the national review consisted of a report on the state of educational provision of MBA programmes in South Africa (CHE 2004). The report provides a systematic view of the state of the field, focusing on specific areas of concern such as the coherence of curriculum, the nature and impact of knowledge production and research education, the relationship between the programme structure and outputs and broader societal concerns, and the capacity to produce innovation in professional practice.



Transnational providers fared the worst among all the institutional provider types whose MBAs were evaluated. Three of their four MBA programmes did not satisfy the minimum requirements and had their accreditation withdrawn<sup>8</sup>.

The MBA re-accreditation results indicated that transnational providers in South Africa were not necessarily providing education of a higher quality than other local institutions, as perceived by some students and employers. The MBA review showed clearly that the quality of delivery was site-dependent and that justified reputations in other countries are no guarantee of good quality when programmes travel cross-border and are offered under a completely different set of conditions and with different resources.

The review also showed the importance of and need for external validation of the quality of transnational programmes, which could be carried out by local national quality assurance agencies, or by those local agencies working in partnership with the agencies from the home countries of the transnational providers. In the HEQC experience, the role of international agencies in this regard is not always a guarantee of quality. In the case of the MBA review, one transnational provider had accreditation for its South African programme from an international agency, but was de-accredited by the HEQC. The reason for this was that the international agency focused mainly on the quality of provision in the country of origin of the transnational provider rather than on South Africa as a site of delivery.

From a system level perspective, one of the effects of the implementation of the HEQC quality assurance system has been the identification of private providers who are actually responding to the expectations about private higher education expressed in the White Paper. These providers do help in broadening access, particularly in niche areas in the labour market. Moreover, they are actively involved in quality assurance at their own institutions. In this sense, quality assurance is supporting the realisation of a single coordinated system of higher education where institutions have different missions.

### Conclusions

The expansion of private and transnational higher education worldwide has been generated to a large extent by the social demand for 'more', 'different' and 'better' higher education (Kruss 2002, 2004, and this issue; Levy 1993; Altbach 1999). The issue is the extent to which private providers in different higher education systems can actually deliver on this social demand. The expansion of the private provision of higher education in South Africa is no exception. As we have seen, the South African legislative and policy framework that governs the provision of higher education in the country recognises the complementary role of the private

and transnational higher education sector in contributing to human resource development in South Africa.

However, this study has shown that transnational education in South Africa does not necessarily have a complementary role in the national higher education system. On the contrary, transnational providers:

- Do not contribute significantly to broaden access to higher education. Their share in the total enrolments is actually small in comparison with the rest of the higher education system.
- Offer ‘cherry-picked’ programmes, mainly in business and management, and do not contribute significantly to the comprehensive human resource development needs of the country.
- Lack a social engagement with South African society.
- Have limited local partnerships with local institutions.
- Hardly conduct any research.
- Rely heavily on a few full-time academic staff and many part-time academic staff.
- Are mainly institutions with public good missions in their home countries, but profit-driven in foreign countries.
- Do not focus on the development imperatives or the goals of national higher education policy

On a small scale, transnational providers in South Africa have become part of processes of selection and socialization of elites. In the contemporary South African context this means that they facilitate international mobility, possibly for emigration purposes, and respond to a demand by some historically privileged South Africans and for elites from other countries in the region for education that is perceived to be better than the public sector. On the basis of the evidence in the proceeding sections, it seem possible to conclude that transnational institutions in South Africa do not necessarily provide ‘more’, ‘better’ and ‘different’ higher education. Unlike local private providers, they do not play a complementary role to the public higher education system in the country.

Transnational provision has the potential to play an important complementary role to public higher education in developing countries, particularly in contexts where there is growing pressure to increase participation rates in higher education to ensure viable and sustainable socio-economic development, in a context of scarce public funds. Developing countries need, however, to develop policy and regulatory frameworks in which transnational education is integrated into the local system in a coherent and efficient manner. Developing countries’ regulations for the provision of transnational education may need to consider the following:

- Transnational providers could be recognised and legalised both academically and financially, i.e., the national higher education system needs to legally recognize transnational providers as part of the national system. Students from transnational providers should be able to transfer from these institutions to public institutions without losing credits. In terms of financial recognition, transnational providers need to be regulated by the importing country's financial/legal requirements, hence giving the host country some legal recourse in the event of financial impropriety by the transnational provider.
- Transnational providers may have to sign a declaration to act in accordance with the national policy goals of the importing country. This will encourage them to offer programmes in fields that are not only lucrative but also of value to the development agenda of the importing country. In this way, they could play an important role in complementing and strengthening public higher education provision.
- Transnational providers should be financially viable, with arrangements for regular monitoring and reporting to national authorities. Consideration should be given to the creation of a fidelity fund to enable students to at least recover their fees in the event of programmes being de-accredited.
- All qualifications offered by transnational providers have to be recognised in their home country, should have quality assurance clearance for export from their home country, and should ideally be registered in the national qualifications framework of the home country, if it has one. Foreign institutions should submit proof of equivalence of qualifications, proof of recognition and accreditation in their home country, and proof of registration on the national qualifications framework of the home country. In this way mobility and portability of qualifications would be facilitated for students in transnational programmes.
- Franchising of programmes by transnational providers to local providers is often fraught with quality related problems. Where possible, franchising should be avoided or at least scrutinized carefully. Transnational providers should be urged to offer their own programmes and should be held accountable for the quality of provision.
- All providers, including transnational providers, should be subject to the same national quality requirements of a robust national quality agency which implements its systems consistently across public, private and transnational providers of higher education.

The above framework is appropriate for a country that has a well developed public higher education system where demand for higher education does not outstrip supply. The existence of this situation in South Africa allows the state to implement a regulatory framework that outlaws franchising of higher education while encouraging traditional partnerships such as exchange of staff and joint offerings of academic programmes. Such partnerships have the potential to enhance the capacity of local providers to offer good quality academic programmes. In fact, there are many existing examples of such partnerships.

On the other hand, when there is a greater demand for, rather than supply of, higher education, the national systems need to develop a regulatory framework that stimulates the growth of different forms of quality higher education provision. In such cases, the regulatory framework could encourage the offering of quality higher education through franchising relationships that are monitored in some way. Only those institutions from foreign countries which meet all the quality requirements in their country of origin should be allowed to franchise education. Such institutions should obtain a clearance from their national quality assurance agencies, signalling that they have the capacity to offer good quality franchised education. Such a requirement will assist importing countries with new or poorly developed national quality assurance agencies to have some safeguards from poor quality higher education provision.

### Notes

1. Technikons were South African equivalent of Polytechnics. This concept has now been done away with since institutional mergers which resulted in the Universities of Technology.
2. In terms of government policy, there are no private universities in South Africa. Private institutions operating in higher education cannot use the designation of a university and are registered by the Department of Education as institutions. However, there is also debate about whether they are institutions or not, especially in comparison with traditional HE institutions as comprised by universities. Some private institutions do not have premises of their own where students would get the feel of an institution other than classrooms. In this regard, 'providers' is sometimes preferred to denote the difference between private providers from public institutions.
3. Private providers also embarked in a series of mergers and rationalisations, led by their holding companies, in an attempt to focus their offerings and put them on a clearer quality foundation, especially as the implementation of the HEQC's quality assurance systems gained momentum.
4. This regulatory framework includes the registration requirements of the Department of Education, the registration of qualifications requirements of the South African Qualifications Authority and the quality assurance requirements

- of the Higher Education Qualifications Committee of the Council on Higher Education (a statutory non-governmental organisation).
5. On the role of private providers in three different African contexts see in this journal the articles by Otieno, Salerno and Beverwijk; and Obasi. For the Latin American context see Levy (1993) and Levy's piece in Altbach (1999).
  6. This new regulatory framework for private providers is seen by some researchers as protectionist and constraining the growth and functioning private providers (Bitzer 2002; Kruss 2002 and Mabizela 2004).
  7. For an analysis of the use of the MBA as a device to improve the quality of government delivery see [the report on the state of provision of the MBA in South Africa] CHE (2004).
  8. The reasons for the withdrawal of accreditation were the lack of competent and adequate academic staff to deliver the programme; heavy reliance on part-time staff from industry; many of the staff had industry experience, but very few of them had teaching or research experience; dual certification by the local partner and the foreign institution in two cases; in one case, employers in the host country required the certificate to specify that the qualification was obtained in a foreign country. This suggested that employers did not see the qualifications obtained in the foreign country as equivalent to that offered in the home country; curricula which were not contextualised to reflect South African needs with regard to management training; teaching and learning material rights were controlled by the parent institution, with very little room for those academics delivering the programmes in South Africa to change and adapt to local conditions; high student-supervisor ratios; most academics had limited research supervision capacity or experience; no supervision training opportunities existed for supervisors; academics had a poor or non-existent research track record; limited and under-resourced library facilities; block teaching methods not conducive to the promotion of effective learning and mentoring; uneven quality assurance implementation which was mainly dependent on the parent institution. Policies for quality assurance were developed by the parent institution which also had oversight responsibility for them, but there was very little evidence of the implementation of such policies and external evaluation systems not implemented rigorously. No improvement and follow-plans were in operation.

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## The Debate on Quality and the Private Surge: A Status Review of Private Universities and Colleges in Tanzania

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### Abstract

While enrolments in private universities is still low in Tanzania, their number, however, is surging at an alarming rate raising critical questions about their academic quality in terms of their course offerings and the qualifications of the academic staff involved in teaching these programmes. Despite this surge in the sheer number of Tanzania private universities, public universities remain dominant in terms of enrolment. This paper (i) documents the hitherto-lacking critical information about private universities and university colleges in Tanzania, (ii) discusses the implications of the surge and (iii) discusses the related issues of academic quality.

### Résumé

Alors que les inscriptions dans les universités privées sont encore faibles en Tanzanie, leur nombre augmente toutefois à un rythme considérable soulevant ainsi des questions cruciales au sujet de leur qualité académique du point de vue de leurs programmes d'études et des qualifications du personnel universitaire impliqué dans l'enseignement de ces programmes. Malgré cette augmentation du nombre d'universités privées en Tanzanie, les universités publiques restent dominantes du point de vue de l'inscription. Ce document (i) décrit les informations jusqu'ici manquantes sur les universités et collèges privés en Tanzanie, (ii) examine les implications de leur essor et (iii) traite des questions liées à la qualité de l'enseignement universitaire.

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### Introduction

Tanzania attained her political independence in 1961. For the first seven years after independence (1961-1967), Tanzania retained the free market economy inherited from the British colonial rule, encouraging the growth and development of the private sector. A fundamental and radical shift in Tanzania's development, economic and educational policies was made in 1967 through the Arusha Declaration<sup>1</sup>. According to one of the principles of the Arusha Declaration, access to scarce resources such as education was to be regulated and controlled by the Government to ensure equal access by all socio-economic groups. The implementation of the Arusha Declaration went in tandem with the nationalization and control of all the major means of production by the state, including most of the private educational institutions owned by Christian missionaries and other religious organizations, with the exception of Roman Catholic seminaries and one tertiary education institution. There are no documented reasons as to why these educational institutions were not nationalized, but we can speculate that the Roman Catholic seminaries were *probably* not nationalized because the first Tanzania president, the late Julius Nyerere, was a devout Roman Catholic. However, with the introduction of the Arusha Declaration, private higher education sector was effectively banned.

### Higher Education Facts

In mainland Tanzania, 45 percent of the population is Christian, 35 percent Muslim, and the remaining 20 percent follow traditional religious beliefs. In Zanzibar, more than 99 percent of the population is Muslim, and about 1 percent is Christian or follows other religions. Fifty-seven point eight percent (57.8 percent) of the Tanzania population lives on less than US\$ 1 per day, while 89.9 percent live on less than US\$ 2 per day (UNDP 2006: 294). The GDP per capita (2005 estimate) at PPP was US\$ 700 (CIA World Fact Book 2006).

While the demand for university education is high in Tanzania (by using the proxy indicator of admission rate, i.e. comparing the number of candidates who applied to those who actually got admitted in any given year), the (public) higher education sector remains elitist. For example, in the academic year 2006/2007, the University of Dar es Salaam (Main Campus) enrolled only 7,049 applicants or 46 percent out of a total of 15,185 applicants who passed the matriculation examination (UDSM 2006:6-7). This implies that 8,136 applicants were eligible for admission to Tanzania private universities. The above application and admission trends also apply to other public universities with the exception of the Open University of Tanzania, which admits non-traditional students and offers academic programs through distance learning. Low admission rates to public

universities are one of the major causes of the growth in the demand-absorbing private higher education sector in Tanzania.

Participation in tertiary education as a percentage of the relevant age group<sup>2</sup> was 1 percent in Tanzania in the year 2000, compared to 3 percent for Uganda and Kenya respectively (World Bank 2003: 81-82).

There are currently 21 private universities and university colleges registered by the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU). Only 4 private universities or 19 percent of all private universities and university colleges have received *Certificates of (Full) Accreditation* from the Tanzania Commission for Universities.<sup>3</sup>

### **Introducing Private Higher Education in Tanzania**

With the exception of one tertiary education institution owned by the Roman Catholic Church (now a private university with three constituent colleges) which has existed since the 1960's, private higher education did not exist in Tanzania until 1997. The government decided to liberalize the provision of higher education in Tanzania by amending the Education Act No. 25 of 1978, which was replaced with the Education Act No. 10 of 1995. This new Act has a provision for the establishment of private higher education institutions. The *1999 National Higher Education Policy* also underscores the importance of encouraging private organizations, individuals, non-governmental organizations and communities to take an active role in establishing and maintaining institutions of higher education. This is one of the government's strategies to bring private sector support into higher education.

Consequently, as of the academic year 2006/2007, private universities made up 62.5 percent of the total universities with a total enrolment of 12,410 students or 24 percent of the total enrolment (51,652 students) in all universities in Tanzania. Total enrolment in private universities increased by 53.3 percent from 5,784 students in 2005/2006 to 12,410 students in 2006/2007, a manifestation of the private surge.

### **Causes of the Growth in Private Higher Education in Tanzania**

While the most commonly acknowledged major cause of private higher education growth globally is the surge in demand for higher education as Levy (2006) observes, there are some exceptions. For example, anecdotal evidence shows that in Tanzania, the first Archbishop of the Mwanza Catholic Diocese (the late Joseph Bloomjous, a Christian missionary from Holland) wanted to establish the first private Roman Catholic university in the Mwanza region in the Lake Zone area of Tanzania in the late 1950s. He planned this in order to meet the special manpower requirements of the Roman Catholic Church in the fields of

journalism, social work, hospital administration and accountancy. This was necessary because the demand for higher education in these specific fields was very high. When the Government refused to grant him permission, he decided to establish a private Roman Catholic tertiary education institution, the Nyegezi Social Training Center, with a disguised objective of training Church personnel. This later became the Nyegezi Social Training Institute and is now the St. Augustine University of Tanzania. In the late 1950s, the demand for university education in Tanzania was very low because of the very few high schools available then. However, at independence (1961) the demand for university education sharply increased due to the critical shortage and need for highly-trained manpower. Thus, unlike in Kenya, the Roman Catholic Church in Tanzania played a leading role in setting a precedent for establishing private higher education.

The major cause of the growth of private higher education in Tanzania, especially in the late 1990s, apart from the limited capacity of the public universities to absorb all the qualifying applicants and also the high admission criteria demanded for admission to public universities, is the stiff competition among major religious denominations to establish higher education institutions as one of their strategies to consolidate their spheres of influence among their followers.

Thus, a common trend in Tanzania now is that various religious denominations are engaged in subtle but stiff competition to establish universities (at times within the same catchment area offering similar degree programs), not *necessarily* because of the surge of demand for higher education. This explains why in Tanzania, sixteen (84.2 percent) out of nineteen private universities and university colleges are owned or affiliated to various religious denominations/organizations in Tanzania or abroad. If we include two other private higher education institutions which are not categorized as universities, but which are also owned by the Roman Catholic and the Evangelical Lutheran Churches, religious denominations own 85.7 percent of all private higher education institutions. As also Banya (2001) observes, religious ideologies have played a pivotal role in the establishment of (private) higher education institutions on the African continent.

Furthermore, total enrolment in private Tanzanian universities is still very small, compared to the large number of private institutions making it difficult to make a valid claim that the growth of private higher education in Tanzania has been largely due to the *surge* of demand for higher education. The growth of private universities in Tanzania might also be attributed to two more factors, also supported by Banya (2001), which are: (i) private universities provide a viable alternative for getting access to higher education to most of the Tanzanians who cannot get admission to very competitive public universities, and (ii) in contrast to public universities, most of the private higher education institu-

tions in Tanzania were established or are being established because of profit motives, albeit disguised.

Levy (2004: 1,6,7) makes important arguments about the reasons for the growth of private higher education worldwide which can also explain the causes of the growth of private higher education in Tanzania. He argues that private higher education growth is connected to widespread changes in the political economy, changes which have diminished the role of the state in funding and controlling higher education in many African countries.

Along the same argument, Banya (op cit: 4) observes that the proliferation of for-profit higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa is part of a larger, worldwide trend towards privatization. Levy (ibid: 7) citing Salamon (1995) further argues that the growth of private higher education or what he calls 'the new private surge' should be seen in a larger context of the 'international crisis of welfare state and the shift from state to private or mixed private-public forms.'

From 1967 until the late 1980s Tanzania adopted socialism, which among other things guaranteed free higher education. When this policy failed to work, which Levy correctly calls 'the crisis of development', the Government adopted neo-liberal economic policy of cost sharing in the provision of social services including higher education. The growth of the private higher education sector in Tanzania should also be seen in the above context of the '*crisis of development*.'

#### **The Role of the Tanzania Commission for Universities<sup>4</sup> in the Accreditation of Private Universities**

All new universities, and specifically private universities and colleges, have to secure permission to operate from a government quality assurance and control organ, the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU), formerly the Higher Education Accreditation Council. The reason new private universities have to secure permission to operate is mainly for quality control and assurance purposes; the assumption being that these institutions, because they are funded from private sources, need to prove that they meet the basic conditions for establishing an institution of higher learning. Old universities (public and private) have to be re-accredited four-yearly, but for public universities re-accreditation is merely a formality. The assumption is that these are academically credible, well-established institutions with Government-guaranteed human and financial resources, highly-qualified academic staff, and quality students<sup>5</sup> and academic programmes.

### **Stages in the Accreditation Process**

There are four stages in the process of accreditation of all new universities by the Tanzania Commission for Universities. The first stage of accreditation is when a prospective private university/university college or an investor submits an application together with documentary evidence of the following to the Commission: available premises, a basic educational infrastructure and relevant governance structures and systems, a qualified faculty, a mission and vision, and a relevant academic plan. Experts or the Technical Evaluation Committee from the Commission then visit the site for verification. If the Commission is satisfied with the report and recommendations of the Technical Evaluation Committee, a Letter of Interim Authority (LIA) to operate as a private university is granted.

Private universities and colleges holding Letters of Interim Authority are not allowed to admit students and start running courses until all basic preparations and resources for administrative functions envisaged by the institution are in place and have been verified and approved by the Commission. The Letter of Interim Authority is valid for three years and within this period the prospective private university must make progress towards the second stage otherwise the Letter can be revoked if no satisfactory reasons are given.

The second stage is the granting of the Certificate of Provisional Registration (CPR). This certificate may be granted after a prospective private university has satisfied the Commission through the recommendations made by the Technical Evaluation Committee that, among other things, it has: a strategic plan to guide the development of the planned university; furnished and equipped the required buildings in accordance with the university's approved strategic plan; appointed a fulltime, qualified and competent and experienced Chief Executive; established an administration system, and appointed an adequate and experienced academic staff for carrying out the initial and planned future programs and courses; prepared a prospectus defining, among other things, student admission requirements and procedures; submitted draft curricula for initial courses, students progress and performance assessment procedures and regulations; and established a clear and transparent procedures for the recruitment, employment and promotion of academic and administrative staff (TCU 2006: 18-19).

The Certificate of Provisional Registration is essentially a provisional license to a university to: (a) advertise for and appoint academic, administrative, technical and other support staff; (b) advertise courses and select students for initial academic programs which may commence, at the earliest, during the second year of the license period; (c) embark on teaching/learning, research and public expert service functions; (d) publish the prospectus of the university; and (e) initiate the establishment of departments, faculties, schools, institutes, constituent

colleges, campus colleges and related organs. The Certificate of Provisional Registration is valid for a period of three years (TCU 2006: 19-20).

The third stage is the granting of the Certificate of Full Registration. A university may be granted a Certificate of Full Registration (CFR) if it has attained legal status through charter, it is a holder of a Certificate of Provisional Registration for not less than three years and not more than four and half years, and it has fulfilled all the conditions stipulated under the Certificate of Provisional Registration.

The fourth and final stage is the granting of the Certificate of Accreditation. A Certificate of Accreditation may be granted after a university has attained full registration status and conducted an internal self-evaluation in accordance with the institutional self-assessment and quality assurance guidelines prescribed by the Commission. This certificate is granted after the Technical Evaluation Committee appointed by the Commission has made a thorough review and assessment of the following issues: (a) the adequacy and quality of existing academic, administrative and technical support facilities, programs, services and procedures; (b) the conditions, criteria and procedures used to select and admit students; (c) the adequacy and quality of curricula, instructional and learning environment, materials, equipment, methods and related support services; (d) the adequacy of the ratio of facilities and services such as staff: student ratio, students: facility ratio; etc. (e) the adequacy of numbers, qualifications, and experience of academic, administrative and technical support staff; (f) the conditions for course completion, students assessment and grading system and procedures, examinations regulations and the credibility of external examination; and (g) the conditions for the university's academic awards and graduation (TCU 2006: 22-23). In each of the above stages, a prospective university is required to pay a prescribed fee to the TCU. Table 1 shows the registration status of 20 Tanzania private universities and university colleges as of January 2007.

Table 1 shows that only four or 20 percent of the 20 private universities have Certificates of Accreditation, 6 private universities or 30 percent have Certificates of Provisional Registration, 6 universities also have Certificates of Full Registration, while 3 private universities or 15 percent operate with Letters of Interim Authority. The distribution of Tanzania private universities in zones/administrative regions is shown in Table 2.

Data in Table 2 shows that private universities and colleges are, to some extent, concentrated in Dar es Salaam (the capital city of Tanzania), Kilimanjaro and Arusha. These three regions also happen to have the largest share of private secondary schools in Tanzania and they are economically rich, growing cash crops for export. Yet, Arusha and Kilimanjaro have a smaller population compared to all the other regions. The rest of the regions hosting two private universities each are also economi-

cally rich. In a way, the distribution of private universities in Tanzania supports Levy's observation of the preponderance of private higher education institutions in the capital and other leading cities where the major economic activities are also located. The distribution of private universities among twenty-six administrative regions is basically inequitable leaving some economically-poor southern regions without any prospect of establishing a private university.

**Table 1:** Current Registration Status of Tanzania Private Universities and University Colleges, July 2007

Institution	Year Established	Registration Status
The Hubert Kairuki Memorial University	1996	COA
The International Medical & Technological University	1996	CFR
St. Augustine University of Tanzania	1996	COA
Zanzibar University	1998	CFR
Tumaini University	1999	COA
Mount Meru University	2002	CPR
University of Arusha	2003	CPR
Bishop Kisanji University	2004	LIA
Muslim University of Morogoro	2005	CPR
Iringa University College	1996	COA
Kilimanjaro Christian Medical College	1996	CFR
Tumaini University Dar es Salaam College	1997	CPR
International University of Africa-College of Education Zanzibar	1998	CFR
Makumira University College	1996	CFR
Aga Khan University - Tanzania Institute of Higher Education	2000	CPR
Bugando University College of Health Sciences	2002	CFR
Mwenge University College of Education	2005	CPR
Ruaha University College	2005	LIA
Bishop Stefano Memorial University College	2006	LIA
St. John's University	2007	LIA
Civic Education Center <sup>6</sup>	2003	Unknown

**Source:** *The Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU), (2006) Newsletter Vol. 1. No. 3 Dar es Salaam: HEAC pp.40-42.*

**Key:** LIA=Letter of Interim of Authority; CPR=Certificate of Provisional Registration; CFR=Certificate of Full Registration; Certificate of Accreditation, *The Guardian*, Friday November 24 2006 'Mengi appointed member of university board,' p. 5.



**Table 2:** Regional Distribution of Tanzania Private Universities and University Colleges<sup>7</sup>

Region/Zone	Number of Private Universities	percent Total	Regional Population
Dar es Salaam	4*	20.0	2,497,940
Arusha**	3	15.0	1,292,973
Kilimanjaro	4	20.0	1,381,149
Iringa	2	10.0	1,495,333
Morogoro	1	5.0	1,759,809
Mbeya	1	5.0	2,070,046
Mwanza***	2	10.0	2,942,148
Zanzibar	2	10.0	950,000
Dodoma	1	5.0	1,698,996

**Source:** Adapted from: HEAC (2005) *Guide to Higher Education in Tanzania, 2005*; United Republic of Tanzania (2003) *2002 Population and Housing Census General Report*. Dar es Salaam: National Bureau of Statistics p.2.

\* If we include the *Center for Civic Education* owned by the University of South Africa, Dar es Salaam has the largest share of private higher education institutions.

\*\* Arusha (located in the northern part of Tanzania) has been recently elevated to the status of a city.

\*\*\* This is the second largest city in Tanzania after Dar es Salaam.

### Recent Developments, and Trends and Implications for Quality Ownership of Tanzania Private Universities

A remarkable feature of Tanzania private universities and university colleges is their ownership and affiliation. Of the 20 registered private universities and university colleges, only one private university is not affiliated or owned by a religious organization based in Tanzania or abroad, although they claim to be secular universities. Religious studies or religion-related courses are made compulsory for all students in some of these universities. For example, one university owned by the Roman Catholic Church makes Social Ethics and African Religion and Philosophy compulsory to all undergraduate students.

Furthermore, the mission statements of some of these private universities, especially those owned by Churches, are contradictory. For example, it is stated in some mission statements that apart from being 'secular', these institutions have to promote certain religious values and that even faculty who do not believe

in certain religious values have to ‘respect’ certain moral and religious values advocated by a particular university. A part of the mission statement of one private university owned by the Roman Catholic Church states:

the University was founded to embrace the ideals of the Gospel message as it comes to the world through the Word of God and through Catholic Tradition and the Teaching Church.

**Table 3:** Nature of Affiliation and Ownership of Tanzania Private Universities and University Colleges, July 2007

University/University College	Nature of Affiliation/Ownership
Hubert Kairuki Memorial University	Affiliated to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT)
St. Augustine University of Tanzania	Roman Catholic Church - Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC)
Bugando University College of Health Sciences	Tanzania Episcopal Conference
Mwenge University College of Educ.	Tanzania Episcopal Conference
Ruaha University College	Tanzania Episcopal Conference
Tumaini University	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania
Tumaini University Dar es Salaam	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania
Iringa University College	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania
Makumira University College	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania
Bishop Stephano Memorial University College	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania
Kilimanjaro Christian Medical College	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania
Muslim University of Morogoro	Muslim Development Foundation
Zanzibar University based in the Gulf States.	Daral Iman Islamic Charitable Association
College of Education Zanzibar	Muslim-Affiliated to the International University of Africa in Khartoum
University of Arusha	Seventh Day Adventist
Mount Meru University	Baptist Church
International Medical & Technological University	Affiliated to Vignan Education Foundation of India <sup>8</sup>
Teofilo Kisanji University	Moravian Church
Aga Khan University-Tanzania Institute of Higher Education	Aga Khan Foundation
St. John’s University	Anglican Church

**Source:** Adapted from, HEAC (2005) *Guide to Higher Education in Tanzania, 2005* pp. 18-20.

As Levy (2006) observes, because religious institutions counted prominently among the African continent's precursors, their strong presence in private higher education is to be expected. Most of the private universities in Tanzania were established through the upgrading of existing tertiary education institutions, a phenomenon also noted by Otieno (this issue) in the Kenyan context. Table 3 below shows the nature of ownership/affiliation of Tanzania private universities.

Data in Table 3 reveals the following distribution pattern of private universities by ownership or affiliation to religious denominations: Evangelical Lutheran of Tanzania (ELCT) 7(35 percent) private universities; Roman Catholic Church 4(20.0 percent); Muslim 3 universities (15.0 percent); other religious denominations 4 universities (20.0 percent); and other non-religious organization(s) 2(10.0 percent). The current ownership pattern of private universities is dominated by Protestant churches. The dominant influence of the Protestant Church in private higher education is also noted by Otieno (2006) in Kenya.

### **The Categorization of Tanzania Private Universities**

Varghese (2004: 8) categorizes private higher education institutions as follows: (i) state-supported private institutions; (ii) not-for-profit private higher education institutions, and (iii) for-profit private higher education institutions. State-supported private higher education institutions receive minimal or substantial funding support from the government and are regulated by public authorities, while not-for profit private higher education institutions are owned and operated by trusts that rely heavily on endowments and fees collected from the students. For-profit private higher education institutions, on the other hand, operate to produce profit. Varghese further argues that for-profit private higher education institutions heavily rely on student fees as a major source of financing the institutions and offer courses in market-friendly subject areas.

Levy (in this issue) categorizes private higher education institutions as religious, elite, demand-absorbing and commercial. A clear-cut categorization of Tanzania private universities is to a certain extent elusive because they manifest the three characteristics expounded above, i.e. religious (because almost the majority of them are owned by, or affiliated to, religious organizations), are demand-absorbing and commercial, or are for-profit. With effect from the academic year 2005/2006, academically-qualified students enrolled in private universities also qualify for Government loans through the Higher Education Students' Loans Board. This means these institutions indirectly receive funding from the Government making them also qualify to be categorized as state-supported private higher education institutions. Furthermore, the fact these institutions are also regulated by the Tanzania Commission for Universities and some of them

use curricula 'borrowed' from public universities puts them in a position of being categorized as state-supported private higher education institutions per se.

The above confusion in the categorization of Tanzania private universities notwithstanding, judging from the academic quality of some of the students admitted to Tanzania private universities and colleges, the profile of the faculty employed in these institutions and state of facilities, we can confidently argue that in Tanzania there are currently no academically elite private higher education institutions. .

### **Some Elements of For-Profit Private Universities and Colleges in Tanzania**

While most of the private universities claim to be not-for-profit but established to be affordable also to poor Tanzanians, the tuition fees charged by some of these institutions for both Tanzanian and foreign students and the fact that some also run parallel/evening programs and charge tuition fees in US\$ is evidence that some are for profit. The above evidence of for-profit tendencies is also reinforced by the fact that these institutions mostly rely on students' tuition fees as a major source of finance. Table 4 below summarizes the available data on tuition fees charged by Tanzania private universities and colleges in the academic year 2005/2006. For comparison purpose, Table 5 shows tuition fees charged by some major public universities for Government-sponsored students through the Government loans scheme<sup>9</sup>.

The unusual pattern which emerges from Table 4 is that Tanzania private higher education institutions charge relatively low tuition fees for foreign students, apparently to attract more foreign students who pay their fees in US\$. As Banya (2001:4-5) observes, private universities in Africa have become an alternative route for many students especially those from wealthy families, who can afford to pay the higher tuition fees charged by these institutions.

Table 5 shows tuition fees charged by major Tanzanian public universities and university colleges for Tanzanian and non-Tanzanian students at the undergraduate degree level.

What can be deduced from Tables 5 is that public higher education institutions charge low tuition fees meaning that they are not for-profit and are also open to students from low income families, when compared to for-profit private higher education institutions.

**Table 4:** Tuition Fees Charged by Tanzania Private Universities and University Colleges for Undergraduate Degrees for On-Campus Students, 2005/2006<sup>10</sup>

Institution	Tanzanian Students (TZS)	Foreign Students (US\$)
Hubert Kairuki Memorial University	4,520,000 [US\$ 8,256] <sup>11</sup>	8, 135
International Medical & Technological University	US\$ 4,500	7,500
St. Augustine University of Tanzania	950,000 [US\$ 1,743]	
Zanzibar University	US\$ 520	US\$ 520
Mount Meru University	US\$ 1,260	US\$ 1260
University of Arusha	752,640 [US\$ 1,380]	US\$ 752.64]
The Proposed Bishop Kisanji University	600,000 [US\$ 1,100]	N/A
Muslim University of Morogoro	900,000 [US\$ 1,651]	US\$ 1,500
Iringa University College	1,500,000 [US\$ 2,752]	TZS 1,750,000 [US\$ 3211]
Makumira University College	1,500,000 <sup>12</sup> [US\$ 2,752] 1,800,000 <sup>13</sup> [US\$ 1,500]	[US\$ 3,302]
The Kilimanjaro Christian Medical College	2,000,000 [US\$ 3,669]	US\$ 2,860
Tumaini University College Dar es Salaam <sup>14</sup>	US\$ 1,560 for 1st & 2nd years and US\$ 1,700 <sup>15</sup> for 3rd and 4th years	US\$ 1,560 for 1st & 2nd years and US\$ 1,700 for 3rd & 4th years.
University College of Education Zanzibar	US\$ 200 <sup>16</sup>	US\$ 200
Bugando University College of Health Sciences	2,500,000 [US\$ 4,587]	US\$ 3,000
Mwenge University College of Health Sciences	1,700,000 [US\$ 3,119] & 1,000,000 [US\$ 1,834] <sup>17</sup>	US\$ 2,500 & US\$ 1,500]
Ruaha University College	NA	NA
Aga Khan University (Tanzania Institute for Higher Education)	1,400,000 US\$ 2,568]	NA

**Source:** Adapted from HEAC (2005) *Guide to Higher Education in Tanzania, 2005*, Third Edition pp. 46-109.

**Table 5:** Tuition Fees Charged by Major Tanzania Major Public Universities and University Colleges for Undergraduate Degrees, Academic Year 2005/2006.

Institution	Tanzanian Students (TZS)	Non-Tanzanian Students (US\$)
University of Dar es Salaam (Main Campus)	900,000–1,200,000 <sup>18</sup> [US\$ 1,651–2,201]	4,200 <sup>19</sup>
Sokoine University of Agriculture <sup>20</sup>	400,000 [US\$ 734]	3,000
Open University of Tanzania	150,000 [US\$ 275.2]	1,263
Mzumbe University	1,156,000 [US\$ 2,121]	NA
Muhimbili University Colleges of Health Sciences	1,000,000 [US\$ 1,834] <sup>21</sup>	4,200
University College of Lands & Architectural Studies	1,200,000 [US\$ 2201]	4,200
Moshi University College of Cooperatives and Business Studies	297,500 [US\$ 546]	1,250
Institute of Journalism & Mass Communication	735,000 [US\$1,348]	NA
State University of Zanzibar	500,000 [US\$ 917]	4,000
Dar es Salaam University College of Education	NA	NA
Mkwawa University College of Education	NA	NA

**Source:** HEAC (2005) *Guide to Higher Education in Tanzania, 2005* pp. 25-85.

### Administration and Governance

To some extent, Tanzania private universities have adopted a system of administration and governance used in public universities, apparently because the constitutions and charters of these universities were written by experts from public universities. This is what Levy (2004: 2) refers to as 'isomorphism and convergence that yields similarities among entities.' The highest organ in the organizational structure is the Board of Trustees (in practice this is the board of owners of a university)<sup>22</sup>. Boards of Trustees make vital strategic decisions concerning their universities, including appointing Vice Chancellors and their deputies, principals or provosts and their deputies. The University Council is the highest decision-making organ in the organizational structure charged with making deci-

sions concerning the development of a respective university including the hiring and promotion of academic staff. For universities affiliated or owned by the Church, the head of the Church or his representative with the highest rank (e.g. bishop or archbishop) is usually the Chairperson of the University Council. University Charters stipulate who should be a member of a respective University Council.

As in public universities, every private university has a ceremonial Chancellor and a Vice-Chancellor. A Vice-Chancellor is assisted by a Deputy Vice-Chancellors for Academic Affairs and Administration. Vice-Chancellors and their deputies are in charge of the day-to-day administration of their respective institutions assisted by the University Management Boards. Provosts and deputy provosts or principals and deputy principals assisted by Management Boards are in charge of the day-to-day operations of university colleges (constituent colleges).

For universities affiliated or owned by Christian religious denominations, the Chancellor is usually the head of a respective religious denomination, e.g. an archbishop or a bishop. In some cases, a Chancellor is assisted by a Pro-Chancellor who is usually a bishop or an archbishop in a diocese where a particular university is located. Compared to public universities where vice-chancellors and their deputies are appointed through a transparent competitive process, vice-chancellors and their assistants in private universities are in practice appointed by the Boards of Trustees, at times regardless of their academic ranks and experience in academia. Vice-chancellors and their deputies in most of the private universities owned or affiliated to religious denominations are members of the religious clergy. Another important organ in the administration and governance of private universities is the academic senate.

The academic senate is mainly in charge of matters related to university examinations' results, admissions and enrolments, with very limited power to enforce academic quality in terms of hiring the most qualified staff or to punish errant or ineffective professors. In most private universities and colleges, the senate is composed of heads of departments, faculty deans, and provosts or principals and their deputies. In most private universities the powers of decision making, in terms of making vital decisions concerning the faculty (e.g. promotion) and the institutions, are in practice centred on the vice-chancellor. Table 6 summarizes the academic qualifications, academic ranks, and professions of vice-chancellors in Tanzania private universities and colleges.



**Table 6:** Academic Qualifications, Ranks, and Professions of Tanzania Private Universities' Vice Chancellors and Provosts

Institution	Academic qualification of VC/Provost	Academic Ranks*	Profession
Hubert Kairuki Memorial University	Masters Degree	Professor	Medical Doctor
International Medical & Technological University	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
St. Augustine University of Tanzania	PhD (Canon Law)	Lecturer	Clergy/Priest
Zanzibar University	PhD (Law)	Professor	Lawyer
Kilimanjaro Christian Medical College	Masters (Medicine)	Professor	Medical Doctor
Mount Meru University	Masters (Divinity)	Unknown	Clergy
University of Arusha	Masters (Divinity)	Unknown	Clergy
Bishop Kisanji University	PhD (Divinity)	Unknown	Clergy
Muslim University of Morogoro	PhD	Professor	Non-Clergy
Iringa University College	PhD	Professor	Non-Clergy
Makumira University College	PhD (Theology)	Professor	Clergy
Tumaini University College Dar es Salaam	PhD	Professor	Non-Clergy
University College of Education Zanzibar	PhD	Unknown	Non-Clergy
Bugando University College of Health Sciences	Masters	Professor	Non-Clergy
Mwenge University College of Education	PhD	Unknown	Clergy/Priest
Ruaha University College	PhD	Unknown	Clergy/Priest
Aga Khan University	Unknown	Unknown	Non-Clergy
Bishop Stephano Mوشي Memorial University	Masters	Unknown	Non-Clergy

**Source:** Adapted from HEAC (2005) *Guide to Higher Education in Tanzania, 2005*, pp.46-107.

\* Our source of data does not indicate whether a vice-chancellor is an associate or full professor. However anecdotal evidence shows that most of the vice-chancellors in private universities who have been categorized as professors are associate professors. There are very few full professors leading private universities as vice-chancellors.

The data in Table 6 shows that 33.3 percent of the vice-chancellors/provosts in private universities have master's degrees; 55.5 percent have doctorates; 44.4 percent of the heads of these institutions are professors; and 38.8 percent of vice-chancellors/provosts are clerics. In comparison, 10 out of 11 vice-chancellors/principals in public universities and university colleges have doctorates, and all eleven (100 percent) are either full or associate professors with vast academic leadership experience. The fact that one-third of the vice-chancellors/provosts in Tanzanian universities have master's degrees and that only 44.4 percent have attained the academic rank of professor has implications for the quality of academic leadership in these institutions.

The significance of Table 6 lies in the fact that the quality of academic leadership, in our case manifested by the academic qualifications and ranks of chief executives, in any higher learning institution positively or negatively influences the provision of quality higher education in terms of the leadership style in which these institutions are governed. Quality democratic academic leadership also influences the practice of academic freedom by the faculty and institutional autonomy. The assumption is that a private university whose vice-chancellor is a full professor or an associate professor is more likely to oversee the enforcement of rigorous academic standards, hire the most qualified academic staff and generally abet academic practices that may undermine academic quality in an institution. While I am not arguing that Tanzanian private universities' vice-chancellors who are not PhD holders and senior members of the academia cannot and should not lead these institutions, in order to enhance the academic quality of these nascent institutions, it is desirable that they should be lead by highly-qualified and experienced university professors as is the case with public universities.

#### **Academic Staff Qualifications, Ranks and Employment Terms in Tanzania Private Universities and University Colleges: Implications for Academic Quality**

Related to the issue of academic qualifications and ranks of vice-chancellors and provosts in Tanzania private universities is the issue of academic qualifications and ranks of faculty in these institutions as summarized in Table 7. Findings in Table 7 show that of the total 499 academic staff employed in all Tanzania private universities and colleges in the academic year 2005/2006, only 86 (17.2 percent) had doctorates, about 50 percent had master's degrees, while about 16 percent had bachelor's degrees.

**Table 7:** Academic Qualifications of Teaching Staff in Tanzania Private Universities, 2005/2006<sup>23</sup>

Institution	PhD	Masters	Bachelors	Other	Total	% PhD
		Degree	Degree			
St. Augustine University of Tanzania	11	29	7	4	51	21.5
Kilimanjaro Christian Medical College	8	27	24	1	60	13.3
Iringa University College	6	35	16	4	61	10.0
Makumira University College	9	9	0	1	19	47.3
Tumaini University College Dar es Salaam	1	11	3	2	17	5.8
Muslim University of Morogoro	7	14	0	0	21	33.3
University of Arusha	2	13	1	0	16	12.5
College of Education Zanzibar	10	7	0	0	17	58.8
Hubert Kairuki Memorial University	NA	NA	NA	NA	67	NA
Bugando University College of Health Sciences	8	11	7	0	26	30.7
Aga Khan University	2	21	3	0	26	9.5
Mount Meru University	6	8	4	2	20	30.0
Teofilo Kisanji University	4	13	7	0	24	16.6
Zanzibar University	4	17	0	0	21	19.0
IMTU	3	20	2	3	28	15.0
Ruaha University College	4	8	1	0	13	30.7
Mwenge University College of Education	1	6	4	1	12	8.3
Stefano Moshi Memorial University	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>17.2</b>

**Source:** Adapted from United Republic of Tanzania (July 2006) *Basic Statistics on Higher Education, Science and Technology 2001/2002-2005/2006*. Dar es Salaam: Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Higher Education pp. 119-133.

While comprehensive data on the academic ranks of the teaching staff in all Tanzania private universities and university colleges is not available, available data from 6 private universities (31.5 percent of all private universities) shows that in the academic year 2005/2006, these universities employed in total 2 full professors; 10 associate professors; 24 senior lecturers; 45 lecturers; 14 assistant lecturers; and 11 tutorial assistants (URT 2006). Full professors accounted for 1.8 percent of all the teaching staff in 6 private universities.

Despite the unavailability of data on academic staff ranks in Tanzania private universities, anecdotal evidence shows that the majority of the teaching staff in private universities are lecturers and assistant lecturers, with a negligible number of senior lecturers, associate professors and full professors. One of the reasons why Tanzania private universities have few senior academics is because these institutions mainly employ part-time faculty or retired or retrenched civil servants on a three-year or one-year contract terms, renewable at the discretion of the employer. This employment condition implies insecurity of tenure among the academic staff and has a negative influence on the academic quality. As Mama (2004) correctly observes, security of tenure of academic staff is a minimal prerequisite of academic freedom, which is a basic tenet for the provision of quality higher education.

Insecurity of tenure as well as other consequences makes academic staff in Tanzania private universities vulnerable to some kind of censorship by employers and some kind of self-censorship in their work, especially marking and grading students' papers in order to satisfy both students and employers to secure further employment contracts.<sup>24</sup> Self-censorship and censorship by employers whether directly or indirectly compromises academic quality. As Hoeller (2006) also observes, 'college professors cannot teach successfully if they are in constant fear of losing their jobs. They cannot enforce high standards, if doing so will cost them their livelihood.'

Most of the Tanzania private higher education institutions, because of inadequate remuneration and relatively unsatisfactory working conditions, are unable to attract young senior academicians and internationally-acclaimed professors from public universities or elsewhere to work with them on a full-time basis. This explains why there is very little research and consultancy taking place in these institutions. The majority of Tanzania private universities are mainly engaged in teaching rather than in research and consultancy to such an extent that in some universities the number of years an academic staff has taught at an institution is a criterion for promotion rather than research and publication in peer-reviewed journals.

### Conclusions

Private providers of higher education in Tanzania have surged from 6 institutions in 1996 to 20 in (July) 2007 (an increase of 70 percent) and in the process outnumber public higher education institutions by 8 institutions. While private higher education institutions have grown in numbers, this growth has not been translated into growth in student enrolments, an increase in the number of highly academically qualified faculty, training at PhD level or the construction of new buildings. These issues have negative implications on the quality of these institutions.

The expansion of student enrolment in private universities is constrained by the fact that the majority of these institutions still operate from rented premises in urban and semi-urban areas, unable to undertake large-scale construction of new educational facilities because of their limited financial resources. The infrastructure and other resources, as one deputy vice-chancellor observes, are inadequate and dilapidated to such an extent that they can no longer withstand the growing number of enrolments.<sup>25</sup> Yet, some of the private universities are very busy expanding enrolments to generate the much-needed tuition fees to run these institutions. Enrolment expansion without the concomitant expansion of educational facilities negatively impacts on the quality of education. As we pointed out earlier, Tanzania private universities heavily depend on tuition fees and donations from benefactors as the major sources of income. Very few private universities (if any) undertake any commissioned or contracted research and consultancies which can generate the much-needed extra income for these institutions, because their major focus is teaching, rather than independent research and consultancy. Most private universities, because of the background, experience and to some extent academic qualifications, are unable to undertake serious publishable research and consultancy. The majority of Tanzania private universities are unable to attract highly academically qualified and experienced faculty, except retired academics, because of the relatively poor working conditions [e.g. security of employment], poor compensation and remuneration, geographical location of most of these institutions and, to some extent, academic leadership.

While there is currently a surge for private higher education institutions in Tanzania, this is not necessarily due to the *surge* of demand for higher education, but rather as a result of the initiatives of various religious denominations to establish private higher education institutions or to get involved in the provision of higher education in addition to the secondary and limited tertiary education they have been offering since independence. This explains why more than 90 percent of Tanzania private higher education institutions are owned or directly

affiliated to various religious denominations and that is why most of these institutions offer courses directly related to their religious missions and visions. At present there is some subtle competition going on between various religious denominations which have so far not established their own higher education institutions and are in the process of doing so, while religious institutions which have already established their own universities are in the process of establishing more campuses and constituent colleges and adding new programs: at times without the resources necessary to ensure minimum quality academic standards.

The surge of private higher education institutions in Tanzania and in the neighbouring East African countries has resulted in quality problems in these institutions, recently necessitating a regional workshop of the three countries under the auspices of the Inter University Council of East Africa (IUCEA). At this regional workshop, the IUCEA was urged '*to delve into the problem of the mushrooming of bogus universities and the proliferation of fake degrees*' and '*bogus providers of higher education*'.<sup>26</sup> A *Quality Assurance Handbook for University Education in East Africa* is being developed by the IUCEA in collaboration with the German International Academic Exchange Program (DAAD).

### Notes

1. The Arusha Declaration was a political blue print which intended to make Tanzania a socialist and an economically self-reliant country.
2. Tertiary education refers to post-secondary educational institutions which mostly offer non-degree vocational oriented courses.
3. Private universities pass through other stages before receiving the Certificate of Accreditation, the last stage in the whole process of accreditation. The first stage is the offer of the *Letter of Interim Authority* to operate as a private higher education institution. The second stage is the offer of Certificate of Provisional Registration, followed by the offer of the Certificate of Full Registration.
4. The Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) was established in 2005 after the enactment of the Universities Act No. 7 of 2005 to replace the Higher Education Accreditation Council (HEAC).
5. The quality of a student in the context of this paper is defined in terms of the admission criteria demanded by public and private universities for enrollment in different academic programs. Public universities impose strict admission criteria for admission to specific academic programs on the basis of high school final examination results or equivalent academic qualification, thus creating stiff competition for admission among high school graduates. On the other hand, admission to any private university in Tanzania, probably for entrepreneurial reasons, is relatively very easy.

6. This centre is owned by the University of South Africa. In 2004/2005, its total enrollment was 28 students. The Center offers undergraduate degrees in commerce, IT & computer science, banking, business administration and law through an open-learning mode.
7. There are 26 administrative regions in Tanzania (21 in Tanzania Mainland and 5 in Zanzibar).
8. It is not known whether this foundation is religious or not.
9. With effect from the academic year 2005/2006, students enrolled in private universities and university colleges are also eligible for loans from the Higher Education Loans Board [HESLB] as long as they meet the academic requirements set by the Board and are pursuing courses considered critical in the development of the country, e.g. engineering, education, medicine etc.
10. Tuition fees are controlled by the Government, but private universities have the freedom to raise tuition fees or charge any amount of tuition as long as they can justify them. Tuition fees also depend on the degree program, with medicine having the highest tuition fee.
11. Conversion from Tanzania Shillings (TZS) to US \$ is made via 2004 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) computed at US\$ 1=TZS 545
12. For Tanzanians affiliated to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT).
13. For Tanzanians not affiliated to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania.
14. This university, a constituent college of Tumaini University, offers undergraduate degree programs in business administration, law, and library and information science.
15. This is equivalent to TZS 9,265,000/=.
16. The Khartoum-based International University of Africa subsidizes this low tuition fee.
17. This college differentiates tuition fees for on and off-campus students.
18. Tuition fees vary according to faculty or cluster of courses. The breakdown is as follows: Faculties of Arts & Social Sciences, Commerce, and Education (TZS 900,000); law (TZS 1,000,000) engineering (TZS 1,200,000), and science (TZS 950,000).
19. For all courses.
20. This university offers a range of courses in agricultural sciences, including a five-year Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree.
21. For all courses including a five-year Doctor of Medicine degree.
22. In the case of universities owned by religious denominations, e.g. Roman Catholic and ELCT, the bishops and archbishops form the boards of trustees.
23. The number of academic staff presented in this table includes both full-time and part-time academic staff.



24. It should also be noted that in some private universities, because of their for-profit motive, renewal of an employment contract for academic staff in many cases solely depends on the students' evaluations and the extent to which a lecturer 'passes' students in examinations. Lecturers who adhere to strict academic standards in grading students' papers are usually given negative evaluations by students. This situation leads to some kind of compromise of academic freedom and quality because many academic staff, especially those with low academic qualifications, have to do all it takes to please the students and their employers for the sake of their employment contracts.
25. See 'St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) Facilities Inadequate', *The Citizen*, 1 May 2007, p.5.
26. See Kisembo, Patrick (December 2006) 'Proliferation of Bogus Universities Decried', *The Guardian*, 13 December 2006, p.4.

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## The Growth of Private Universities in Kenya: Implications for Gender Equity in Higher Education.

Jane Onsongo\*

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### Abstract

The establishment of private universities in Kenya and Africa is relatively new. At independence (1960s) there were about seven universities on the continent. However, by 2005 there were 85 private and 316 public universities in Africa (Kihara 2005). Kenya is leading in this expansion of private higher education in East Africa with 16 in 2006 compared to three in 1980. This article examines the implications of the growth of private universities on gender equity in higher education in Kenya. The article is based on two studies conducted in Kenya in 2002 and 2004 on the participation of women in university management. These two studies and a survey of literature on student enrolment in private and public universities reveal that private universities are providing increased opportunities for women to access higher education both as students and staff. Increased opportunities are provided through flexible admission and recruitment criteria, a conducive working environment and the appointment of more women into senior management positions.

### Résumé

La création d'universités privées au Kenya et en Afrique est relativement quelque chose de nouveau. Au moment de l'indépendance (1960), il y'avait environ sept universités sur le continent. Cependant, en 2005 il y'avait 85 universités privées et 316 universités publiques en Afrique (Kihara 2005). Le Kenya est à la tête de cette expansion de l'enseignement supérieur privé en Afrique de l'Est avec 16 universités privées en 2006 contre trois en 1980. Cet article examine les implica-

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tions de la croissance des universités privées sur l'équité des genres dans l'enseignement supérieur au Kenya. L'article est fondé sur deux études menées au Kenya en 2002 et 2004 sur la participation des femmes dans la gestion des universités. Ces deux études ainsi qu'une enquête littéraire sur le nombre d'étudiants inscrits dans les universités privées et publiques montrent que les universités privées offrent aux femmes de plus en plus de possibilités d'accès à l'enseignement supérieur, en tant qu'étudiantes et membres du personnel. Ces possibilités sont offertes à travers des critères flexibles d'admission et de recrutement, un environnement de travail propice et la nomination de plus de femmes à des postes de direction.

### **Introduction**

Kenya has experienced a rapid expansion in private university education in the last two decades. This article examines the implications of the growth of private university education in Kenya on gender equity in this sector. The history of university education in Kenya shows its demand has been growing over the years. The implications of private higher education on gender equity are discussed in relation to admission and recruitment policies, the university work environment and the appointment of women into management positions. Although the focus of the article is on the growth of private universities, a comparison is made with public universities where necessary in order to analyse the implications of the growth of private universities on gender equity in higher education.

### **Background and Context**

University education in Kenya can be traced to 1951 when the Royal Technical College of East Africa was established in Nairobi. The college opened its doors to the first students in April 1956. In 1961, the Royal Technical College was transformed into a university under the name University College of Nairobi giving University of London degrees. In 1970, the University of Nairobi was established through an Act of Parliament (University of Nairobi Act 1970). The high demand for university education in the 1980s and 1990s led to the increase in the number of universities from one public university college in 1970 to seven public universities in 2007.

Private higher education in Kenya can be traced to the colonial period when missionaries established schools and colleges for their converts. The first private institutions of higher learning were the St Paul's United Theological college (1955) and Scott Theological College (1962). In 1970 the United States International University (USIU) established a campus in Nairobi. These early universities offered degrees in the name of parent universities abroad. For a long time the government did not give accreditation to these private colleges or uni-

versities. However, the increased demand for university education led the government to encourage the establishment and accreditation of private universities in the 1990s.

Private universities in Kenya fall into three categories; chartered (University of Eastern Africa-Baraton [UEAB], Catholic University of Eastern Africa [CUEA], Daystar University, Scott Theological College, United States International University [USIU], and African Nazarene University [ANU], Kenya Methodist University [KEMU], St Paul's University - Limuru); registered (East African School of Theology, Kenya Highlands Bible College, Nairobi International School of Theology, Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, and Pan-African Christian College) and those operating on letters of interim authority (Aga Khan University, Strathmore University, Kabarak University and Kiriri Women's University of Science and Technology) (Commission for Higher Education 2007).

Most private universities (12) are located in Nairobi (the capital city) and its peri-urban zones. The location of these universities tends to follow the pattern of Christian missionaries in establishing education institutions in Kenya during the colonial period (Wesonga et al. 2003). Their location implies that women and men who live far from Nairobi are not able to access the part-time (evening and weekend) programmes offered.

The growth of private universities in Kenya can be attributed to a number of factors. First, the increase in the number of qualified secondary school leavers seeking higher education. This increase in the number of qualified secondary school graduates has been triggered in part by the massive expansion of primary education. Despite the high demand for university education in Kenya, public universities admit about 10,000 students annually out of over 50,000 qualifying secondary school graduates (Joint Admissions Board 2003). The private universities have arisen due to the inability of the public universities to absorb all university-qualifying students.

Second, most of the private universities in Kenya are established and run by religious organisations. In Kenya 7 out of the 8 private chartered universities are sponsored and managed by Christian organisations. All the five registered universities are sponsored and managed by Christian organisations. Most of the Christian-sponsored private universities started by offering courses mainly geared towards training church ministers. Nguru (1990) observes that the major aim of these church-affiliated private universities is the same as it was with the earlier missionary schools, namely, to promote the spread of the Christian gospel. However, these religious sponsored universities have expanded their programmes to include secular courses in the social and natural sciences.



### Gender Equity in Higher Education

Gender equity means giving men and women, girls and boys, the same opportunities to participate fully in the development of their societies and to achieve self-fulfilment. In this article the term gender equity is used to imply social justice and fairness in the distribution of resources and opportunities among men and women (staff and students) in universities in Kenya.

Global gender equity campaigns have been an important vehicle for encouraging the increased recruitment of women as students and staff into higher education. The issue of women's access to higher education came on the global political agenda in 1998 when UNESCO convened a World Conference on Higher Education at which a panel of experts reviewed the progress made in gender equality in higher education since the Beijing Conference (1995). The document *Higher Education and Women: Issues and Perspectives* prepared for the UNESCO conference identified two central areas related to women in higher education which needed the attention of researchers and policy makers. These are: fewer enrolments by women in higher education and the absence of a gender dimension in the higher education curriculum (UNESCO 1998a). The participants at the World Conference on Higher Education (1998) underscored the role of higher education in the enhancement of women's participation in the sector. Article 4 of the World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century (1998a) called for the elimination of all gender stereotyping in higher education at all levels and in all disciplines in which women are under-represented. Women's active involvement in decision-making in higher education was emphasised. The participants at the UNESCO conference recommended that by 2010 university chairs, professors, and heads of department posts should be filled by men and women on an equal basis (UNESCO 1998a).

A review of literature and research on Kenyan universities reveals that there are no policies or mechanisms in Kenyan universities (public and private) related to the implementation of the proposals made at the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education (Wesonga et al. 2003; Nyamu 2004; Onsongo 2002, 2005, Kimani 2005). However, there have been attempts by individual universities to incorporate women's issues in their programmes. Most of these attempts have been financed by donor funding or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the African Forum for Women Educationists (FAWE) and the Association of African Universities (AAU). The Association of African Universities, for example, launched a gender equity programme in 2001, which called for the establishment of gender units in member universities. By 2003 four public universities had established gender centres (Egerton University – 1992; Moi University – 2003; Kenyatta University – 2002, Maseno University – 2001). The

privately owned chartered universities had not established gender centres at the time when the two studies reported here were conducted.

The gender centres have been found to be ineffective in enhancing gender equity in the universities in which they have been established. This is because the centres operate in isolation from other departments and the mainstream activities of the universities. They lack adequate staff and resources to run gender sensitisation programmes on campus and the staff employed (directors) are women who sometimes lack knowledge and interest in gender issues (Keino 2002). It might be difficult for these centres to enhance gender equity if they are not incorporated in the mainstream activities of the universities. Molestone (2004) warns that so long as approaches to gender issues remain the domain of individual academics, departments, and optional courses in educational institutions, very little is going to be achieved in terms of gender equity.

Although there is no national legislation requiring universities to implement affirmative action to enhance women's access to university education, there have been temporary measures used by the Kenyan public universities to increase the access of women to university education. The Joint Admissions Board (JAB), the body that oversees all students' admissions to public universities, has been lowering the cut-off points for university entry for girls by one point. The board has used its own discretion depending on the overall performance in the national university entrance examinations. This action has sometimes increased the number of women being admitted to university. Affirmative action has been limited to student admission to undergraduate programmes in public universities. Nothing is being done with regard to, for example, the appointment of women into academic and administrative positions.

It is against this background that this article examines the implications of the growth of private universities in Kenya on gender equity. The article focuses on the areas of access, university environment (climate) and the appointment and promotion of women into management positions. In the next section a brief description of the methods used to collect data for the two studies on which this article is based is given.

### **Methods**

The research findings upon which this article is based are part of two larger studies conducted in Kenyan universities on the participation of women in university management and a review of literature on the enrolment of male and female students in the universities. The first study was sponsored by the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA). The study was carried out between January and June 2002 to survey views and perceptions of university managers (men and women) and senior academic staff

on the factors affecting women's participation in university management in Kenya (Onsongo 2002). The sample was drawn from three public and three private chartered universities in Kenya. At the time of the study (2002) there were six public and five private chartered universities in Kenya. The universities were selected using stratified random sampling procedures. They were stratified into public and private, old and new. From each stratum three universities were selected purposively. Two of the universities from each stratum were from Nairobi (the capital city) because this is where most universities (public and private) are situated and one each from the countryside.

The respondents in the study were both men and women occupying management positions as well as senior academic posts in the selected universities. They included deputy vice-chancellors, deans of faculties, registrars, deans of students, directors of institutes, heads of academic departments and senior academic staff. The university managers were selected purposely whereas the senior academic staff were selected by stratified random sampling using academic ranks. Only senior academic staff at the rank of senior lecturer and above and who had worked at the university for a period of more than five years were included in the sample.

Data were gathered through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Questionnaires were used to solicit information from the senior academics staff on the factors they thought affected the participation of women in university management. Semi-structured interview guides were used to interview university managers (men and women) regarding the policies that govern recruitment, appointment and promotion of staff to senior management positions and the possible reasons for the absence of women from these positions. Document analysis guides were used to analyse such documents as recruitment, appointment and promotion criteria, job advertisements, job application forms and interview guides, as well as staff development policies. The lists of academic and administrative staff were used for gathering information about existing positions occupied by women in the university management.

The second study was a doctoral research carried out between January and July 2004 to explore the experiences of female managers in Kenyan universities (Onsongo 2005). In order to investigate these women's experiences, their career history in university teaching, how they got into management, the challenges they have faced and their coping strategies were examined. Their perceptions on gender roles and the impact of these perceptions on their performance as managers were also explored. The data were obtained through unstructured multiple interviews, marginal participant observation and document analysis from eight women and eight men occupying management positions at the level of academic

heads of department and above in one public and one private university in Kenya. Male managers were interviewed so as to shed more light on the influence of gender on the women managers' experiences. The data were analysed using qualitative techniques.

The theoretical framework used in the analysis of the data obtained is a feminist perspective. A feminist perspective posits that women and men have equal potential to develop themselves in all spheres of life but the realisation of women's potential is hampered by externally imposed constraints and influence of social institutions and values (Nzomo 1995). A feminist perspective was considered suitable for this analysis because it problematises the gendered relations in universities in order to interrogate the taken for granted relations between men and women which have led to inequities in the distribution of resources and opportunities among them (Flax 1997). Feminist studies conducted in universities, especially in the west and also in Africa, have shown that there is a male numerical and cultural dominance in universities that results in the universities and academic life being 'highly gendered organisationally, structurally and practically' (Hearn 2001:7). Hearn (ibid) identifies three features that characterise the gendered structure of universities as the exclusion of women from university education for a long time; men continuing to dominate the top positions in most disciplines and management positions and the high status universities being more male-dominated.

A feminist perspective is used in this analysis to interrogate the implications that the growth of private universities has on gender equity in higher education in Kenya. For example, where the analysis of the growth of private universities in Kenya shows that more women are gaining access to these institutions, a feminist perspective takes the analysis further to find out the areas or courses these women are gaining access to compared to men. In the next section the implications of the growth of private universities on gender equity in higher education are examined.

### **Implications of the Growth of Private Universities on Gender Equity in Higher Education**

There has been an increased access to university education for women as evidenced by the research findings reported here. In this section a comparative analysis between private and public universities is done in the areas of admission and recruitment policies, student enrolment, appointment of women into management position and work environment in order to show the advances private universities have made in these areas.

***Admission and recruitment policies in private universities***

Recruitment and admission policies have critical implications for equity of access to university education because they provide the procedures and processes followed to realise the goal of women's access to higher education. The concepts of access and equity are closely linked. Access assumes that educational opportunities are available for all those who are eligible and who meet the required criteria (Koech 2000). This understanding of access introduces the concept of equity, which focuses on the values of fairness and social justice in the way social educational opportunities and resources are allocated or shared. Equity advocates for the elimination of all forms of discrimination based on gender, socio-economic status, geographical location, mental or other handicap (Koech 2000). Schuller (1991) argues that increased access is a precondition for equity and this entails making university education available to a greater number of students.

In this section the admission criteria used to admit students to private universities is examined with the intention of showing how they are enhancing women's access to university education.

For purposes of admission the private universities use the national minimum cut-off points of C+ (plus) in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary education (KCSE) examinations (university qualifying examination) for Kenyan students and for non-Kenyan students; the minimum university requirements in their own countries. In addition to using the national criteria for admission, private universities increase access to university education for women through flexible admission policies and programmes. Private universities also broaden access to university education for women and men by allowing the transfer of credits from previous courses attended in other accredited universities and colleges. These universities also admit working and mature students to their part-time and flexible (evening and weekends) programmes. With these flexible programmes, students can break and resume classes at their own convenience. Some public universities have also begun to make their admission policies and programmes flexible in order to widen access to university education.

It is important to note that admission to private universities is also determined by the student's ability to meet the cost of their education and accommodation. A study by Wesonga et al. (2003) found that the socio-economic status of students in the surveyed private universities was high. Most students in the private universities therefore come from high-income families and are able to meet the cost of their education. It appears that private higher education is beyond the reach of many Kenyans, especially those from poor and marginalized backgrounds. The cost of private higher education has implications for gender equity

because in most Kenyan communities the education of the boy child is valued more than that of the girl child (Eshiwani 1985; Boit and Koskei 2005).

As a result of this flexibility in admission policies and enrolment, some private universities have attained near-gender equity in enrolments. The enrolment of students in public and private chartered universities is summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Male and female enrolment in chartered private and public universities between 1997 and 2002 in regular programmes.

Year	Public Universities			Private Universities		
	M	F	%F	M	F	%F
1997/1998	30,862	12,729	29.2	1,812	1,834	50.3
1998/1999	28,163	12,360	30.5	2,072	1,816	46.7
1999/2000	28,361	12,924	30.9	3,149	3,771	54.5
2000/2001	29,033	13,475	31.7	3,297	3,702	52.9
2001/2002	35,870	17,036	32.2	3,476	4,163	54.5

**Source:** Compiled from Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Statistics.

The data in Table 1 shows that overall there were more female than male students enrolled in private chartered universities in 1997–2002. During this period, however, only in 1998/99 were there more male than female enrolments. Female students’ enrolment in public universities was lower than that of males in the same period. It appears that private universities are attracting more female than male students. However, the data in the table show that during this period the public universities together enrolled more (68,524) women than the private universities (15,286), which are small in size and offer few courses and programmes. The implication for gender equity in higher education depicted in the enrolment of women in universities in Kenya is that private universities provide additional spaces for over 10,000 women who would otherwise be denied university education due to the limited facilities in the public universities. Some of the factors contributing to the increased enrolment of female students in private universities identified by Wesonga et al. (2003:23) include:

- Because most courses offered in these universities are in the humanities and social sciences, women are over-represented in these areas.

- There is a considerable pool of female secondary school leavers with good grades in these courses that fail to get admission into public universities.
- The high levels of discipline and good learning environments in private universities reassure parents of their daughters' safety in college.
- The cost of local private universities is still lower than sending students to foreign universities abroad.

An analysis of the student enrolment in two public (Moi and Maseno) and two private (Catholic University of Eastern Africa [CUEA] and University of Eastern Africa-Baraton) in the 2002–2003 academic year revealed that female student enrolment is higher at the undergraduate degree programmes as their number decreases considerably at the postgraduate level. The student enrolment in the full-time, part-time, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in these four universities is summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Student enrolment in various programmes in two public and two private universities in the academic year 2002/2003

University and Gender	Full-time	Part-time	Undergraduate	Masters	PhD	Total	%
<i>CUEA</i>							
Male	773	105	990	62	18	1,070	49.2
Female	894	98	1,080	21	3	1,104	50.8
<i>Baraton</i>							
Male	614	199	813	1	-	814	54.2
Female	667	17	684	4	-	668	45.8
<i>Maseno</i>							
Male	2,896	99	2,995	46	26	3,067	64.5
Female	1,636	33	1,669	7	8	1,684	35.5
<i>Moi</i>							
Male	4,953	1,965	6,918	400	29	7,347	65.2
Female	2,290	1,365	3,655	250	11	3,926	34.8

**Source:** Compiled from *Commonwealth Universities Yearbook 2005*, pp.1060-1978.



The data in Table 2 show that female enrolment in the two public universities is lower than male enrolment on the undergraduate, full-time, part-time programmes and postgraduate programmes. There are slightly more female students enrolled on the undergraduate programme at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa compared to University of Eastern Africa - Baraton. A possible explanation for the low enrolment of female student at Baraton is that the university has for a long time enjoyed a monopoly in science and technology courses among private universities (Wesonga et al. 2003). The data in Table 2 also depict a low enrolment of women at postgraduate degree programmes in all four universities. This low female enrolment in postgraduate programmes has implications for women's participation in universities both as academics and managers. It implies that there will be few qualified women to apply for academic and management positions in the university.

A critical analysis of the female students' enrolment in the various courses offered at the private and public universities shows that they are concentrated in the humanities and social sciences. The student enrolment in the various courses in 4 private and 6 public universities is summarised in tables 3 and 4.

**Table 3:** Enrolment in four privately chartered universities by gender and courses of study in 1999

University	Business Studies		Humanities and Social Sciences		Science and Technology	
	% Male	% Female	% Male	% Female	% Male	% Female
USIU	51	49	32	68	-	-
CUEA	48	52	37	63	61	39
Daystar	48	52	30	70	-	-
UEAB	54	46	48	52	52	48

**Source:** Wesonga et al., 2003, 'Private Higher Education in Kenya: Analysis of Trends and Issues in Four Selected Universities', a draft research report submitted to the Ford Foundation Office for Eastern Africa.

**Table 4:** Students enrolment in public universities by selected courses and gender in 1998/99

Course	Male	Female	Total	% Female
Education	8,749	5,289	14,038	37.7
Arts	3,568	1,910	5,478	34.9
Commerce	1,162	506	1,668	30.3
Agriculture	2,530	833	3,363	24.8
Engineering	2,435	244	2,679	9.1
Medicine	729	237	966	24.5
Science	3,677	1,000	4,677	21.4
Total	22,850	10,019	32,869	30.5

**Source:** Ministry of Education, Science and Technology statistics.

The data in Tables 3 and 4 show that most female students were enrolled in the humanities and social sciences in both the private and public universities in 1999. The student enrolment in the various courses in these universities reflect a pattern of gender tracking, with females dominating in the humanities and social sciences while male students dominate in the natural sciences and technology.

The disciplinary choices of women has been the focus of debate in feminist discourses on education and gender equity especially in the western countries (Harvey 1993; McKinnon and Brooks 2001; Chanana 2004). The enrolment of women in the humanities and social sciences poses a challenge to the achievement of gender equity in higher education in Kenya and other parts of the world (Kimani 2005; Boit and Koskei 2005). The enrolment of women in these courses has knock-on effects on women's participation in the job market and implications for gender equity in higher education in particular and in society in general. The fact that women and men are not enrolled in similar courses only serves to reinforce inequality in terms of the kinds of jobs women do and this impacts on their position in society. Chanana (2004) observes that the clustering of women in specific subjects leads to their occupational segregation later in life. This is because most of the subjects that women are enrolled in do not have attractive remuneration implying that women stand to loose in terms of economic empowerment because they will earn low salaries upon employment. It can be argued therefore that since most private universities in Kenya are religious-based, with few science and technology programmes, the universities subtly channel female

students into the traditional fields that do not give them any competitive edge over male students. This means that their concentration in the non-marketable courses is being perpetuated, to their disadvantage.

In spite of the fact that most courses offered in the private universities are in the humanities and social sciences and the cost of private higher education is high, these universities are providing increased opportunities to Kenyans, especially women and those already in the job market, to benefit from university education. Those in the labour market are able to enrol and upgrade their skills at their own time and pace (evening classes and weekends). The launch of Kiriri Women's University of Science and Technology, the only women's university in Kenya, whose main goal is to encourage the enrolment of women in science and technology courses is a big step towards increasing women's participation in these courses.

However, the increased enrolment of female students in private universities is not reflected in the female academic and management staff numbers in these universities (Wesonga et al. 2003; FAWE 2001). In the next section the appointment and promotion of women staff into management positions in some of the private and public universities is examined.

#### *Appointment and promotion of women staff*

An analysis of women's participation in higher education as staff shows that there are generally fewer women holding academic and management positions compared to men in Kenya in both public and private universities (Kanake 1997; Lodiaga and Mbevi 1995; Onsongo 2002; Kamau 2001; Wesonga et al. 2003). A study by Kanake (1997) on gender disparities in Kenyan public universities revealed that women form a minority of university teachers. At the University of Nairobi alone, only 18% of the academic staff were women in 1995, while at Kenyatta University, 28.8% were women during the same year. The women were found to be concentrated in the faculties of education and environmental education. They were heavily under-represented at the University of Nairobi's faculties of Engineering (2.3%), Architecture Design and Development (9.7%), Veterinary Medicine (10.2%), Pharmacy (11.1%) and Science (12.1%). A survey of the positions women occupy in university management in 2002 in the public and private universities is summarised in tables 5 and 6.

Table 5 shows that women are missing for the senior positions in the university hierarchy (vice-chancellors, registrars, and finance officers). Overall the public universities surveyed seemed to have more women as heads of departments (35) and directors of institutes (18). Only 2 women occupied the positions of deputy vice-chancellors. It was observed that women headed and directed the

departments/centres of Home Science, Music, Food and Nutrition, Gender Studies, and Student Welfare Services.

**Table 5:** Status of women in management in six Kenyan public universities in July 2002

Position	M	F	T	%
VC	6	0	6	0
DVC	13	2	15	13.3
Registrar	14	0	14	0
Principal	7	2	9	22.2
Director	42	18	60	30
Dean of students	3	2	5	40
Dean of Faculty	38	5	43	11.6
Finance Officer	6	0	6	0
Librarian	6	0	6	0
HOD	208	35	243	14.4
Council members	119	18	137	13.1

**Source:** Compiled from university calendars and staff lists.

Table 6 shows that majority of the women in the private universities under review occupied the positions of heads of department (17). Other women occupied such positions as librarian (2), registrar (3) and food services manager (2). Overall the private universities surveyed seemed to have more women (17 out of 21) heading departments than public universities (35 out of 105). Notable from the interviews was the fact that most of the women heading departments in private universities had worked in public universities for several years before moving to private universities. This led the researcher to conclude that private universities were opening more opportunities for women in management and were tapping unused resources in the public universities. One of the private universities surveyed in 2002 had a woman vice chancellor and a woman deputy vice-chancellor. At the time of the 2004 study two women headed two of the chartered private universities as vice-chancellors. Another woman was the vice-chancellor of one of the registered private universities in Kenya. Again in December 2004, one of the Christian-sponsored universities appointed a woman as its chancellor.

The appointment of women to the positions of chancellor, vice-chancellor and deputy vice-chancellor in the private universities implies that women are capable of managing universities. What is surprising, however, is the fact that most of these women holding management positions in some of the private universities are former employees of public universities where they served for many years and yet were not appointed into management positions.

**Table 6:** Status of women in management in 4 Kenyan privately chartered universities in July 2002

Position	M	F	T	%
VC	3	1	4	10.0
DVC	8	1	9	11.1
Registrar	2	3	5	5.0
Human resource manager	2	1	3	33.3
Director	2	1	3	33.3
Dean of students	2	1	3	33.3
Dean of Faculty	11	1	12	8.3
Finance Officer	4	0	4	0
Librarian	2	2	4	50.0
HOD	35	17	52	32.7
Total	71	28	99	100

**Source:** Compiled from university calendars and staff lists

The absence of women from senior management positions in public and private universities has implications for gender equity in higher education in as far as women are not involved in key decision-making positions in the universities like policy making, monitoring and evaluation and budgeting. Women appear to hold positions in the support services sector in the universities in the areas of student discipline, catering and guidance and counselling. These roles have been traditionally associated with women and have been known not to count for promotion to senior ranks (Onsongo 2000; Morley 1999; Brook 1997).

The possible reasons why private universities are appointing more women into senior positions includes the fact that they are run by Christian organisations from western countries where gender equity policies have been in opera-

tion for several years. Another possible explanation for the increased participation of women in private universities management could be their Christian commitment. There are more women practising Christians than men in Kenya (Wesonga et al. 2003 and Kasomo 2004). Another reason could be the fact that women are more interested in offering service than power and status and hence are more willing to move to these universities that are considered to be less prestigious in this context.

It could also be attributed to the fact that most of these universities offer courses in the social sciences where the majority of the women academic staff are concentrated (World Bank 2003).

Analysis of the factors influencing appointment and promotion in the private universities appear to suggest that these universities do not emphasise academic qualifications (i.e. PhDs) and experience like the public universities. It is also possible that these universities do not discriminate against women in appointments and promotion as was found to be the case in public universities. An analysis of the rate at which the men and women are promoted through the academic ranks, especially in public universities, during the 2004 study revealed that although some of the men and women interviewed had joined the universities at the same rank and had worked for a similar number of years, men were promoted faster and appointed to management positions earlier than the women. For example, in the public university, two of the women interviewed had taken 10 and 11 years respectively before being promoted to the rank of senior lecturer. The other two women had taken 6 and 7 years respectively before promotion to this rank. On the other hand one man had taken three years, another four years and the other two 5 years. The requirement in the public universities that one rises to the rank of senior lecturer before being appointed to a management position is likely to disadvantage women who for various reasons take longer to get a doctoral degree which is mandatory before one is promoted to this rank. The experiences of most of the women interviewed in 2004 showed that they had taken longer to do their PhD than the men (Onsongo 2005).

A feminist analysis of how men and women advance their careers in universities suggests that gender differences among men and women academics in universities result from overt discrimination against women and a male culture that marginalizes women (Castlemen et al. 1995; Everett 1994; Wyn 1996, Hearn 2001). For example, a study by Everett (1994) on sex, rank and qualification of men and women in Australian universities found that gender differences in rank are not caused by differences in age, higher degree, publications or time at one's university. Instead women were appointed to lower ranks than their qualifications would provide if they were men.

The private universities in Kenya are ahead of the public universities in the fact that they are the only ones having women as vice-chancellors. It appears therefore that private universities are opening more opportunities for women in management and are tapping the unused resource in the public universities. The appointment of women into senior management positions (chancellor and vice-chancellor) in the private universities has implications on gender equity in higher education. First, these appointments show that women are capable of managing higher education institutions. Second, the senior women managers are acting as role models for young women who may be aspiring to management positions in universities.

The environment in the private universities is also considered conducive for women managers. The next section examines the work environment in private and public universities to show how it enhances the participation of women staff.

#### ***Supportive work environment***

A supportive work environment is crucial for career development for both men and women (Gupton and Slick 1996). Most of the managers in the private universities interviewed in 2004 perceived their work environment and senior management team as very supportive. The support from the senior management team in the private universities helps the managers in these universities to perform their responsibilities without fear. Most private universities surveyed were found to operate an open door policy that enabled the managers to get quick access to both their senior managers and the staff they were managing. Some managers in one private university shared their experiences:

... When we make suggestions they [administration] take them seriously ... they are very supportive (female manager).

In the public university it was quite a difficult environment because of the administrative structure. The structure was in such a way that you could not make any decision at any level without consulting the vice-chancellor... I found this slightly different in the private university... I realised that it was within my responsibility to make decisions... again in the public university policies are not followed... but in the private university the terms and conditions of service are followed faithfully... (male manager)

The male manager's comparison of the work environment in the public and private university suggests that getting the power and authority to execute responsibilities assigned is important in helping the managers in the private universities to perform their responsibilities.



The work environment in public universities in Kenya was perceived as hostile to women staff and may have contributed to some women moving to private universities. The hostility was experienced in the form of male intrusion in areas of responsibility, interruption of meetings run by women managers, political interference and sexual harassment. The hostile work environment in the public university positioned women as 'outsiders within' the university (Onsongo 2005).

One feature that makes the environment in the public university unsupportive to women managers and academics is the conservatism and bureaucracy. One female manager interviewed in 2004 described her experience:

Public universities have very rigid structures, very rigid ways of handling things.... And that sometimes is the undoing of the university management. There is a lot of bureaucracy, which actually does not augur well with the managers within. You find that even though you are given a management role, some of the resources that you require for your staff have to be approved by other people ... who operate within a very rigid structure, which has no room for new innovations... (female manager)

This woman's experience suggests that managers in the public university are given a position without authority. It can be argued that women are disadvantaged when the work environment is not supportive because they are under great scrutiny from the people they manage and they are judged more harshly if they fail to perform their responsibilities or deliver on targets. A hostile work environment has implications for women's participation in higher education as students, academic and management staff. One woman manager from the public university explained the effects of unsupportive work environment on women:

... the environment is not always gender friendly... you may require some financial support, material support and physical support and you find that you are not getting it, this compounds our [women] problem because we are judged by our outputs and whereas all these are hurdles to other people ours are more compounded... we have to prove that we are capable... so when the environment is hostile, then you are not able to do that (female manager).

Feminist research done elsewhere (mainly in the UK, USA, Australia and also South Africa) to document women's experience as managers and academics in universities shows that the university environment is hostile to women. The term 'chilly climate' has been used to describe women's experience of university environment (Sandler and Hall 1986; Sandler 1992, 1993 and Ramsay 1995). Ramsay (1995:92) identifies the chilly climate in universities as the:

...apparently harmless, neutral and long sanctioned actions and activities which are themselves embedded in the institutional climate and which collectively make up its culture.

The *chilly climate* has been found to contribute to women's frustration and some-time high turnover from the academy. For example the sexual harassment of women by male colleagues and senior managers found in Kenyan universities has caused academic career stagnation and sometimes led to some women quitting their jobs (Omale 2001; FAWE 2001; Onsongo 2005). A woman manager from the public university interviewed in 2004 observed that sexual harassment of women was a major factor contributing to the absence of women from senior management positions. She further observed that there was a general belief among Kenyan academic men that women who were occupying senior management positions had been appointed because they had sexual relationships with the men who appointed them.

Sexual harassment has been identified by feminists as the most common form of sex discrimination experienced by women in universities that is rarely acknowledged and reported about (Farley 1978; MacKinnon 1979; Brooks 1995; Cairns 1997; Omale 2000; Hagedorn 2000 and Durrani 2001). Farley (1978:68) defines sexual harassment as:

...unsolicited, non-reciprocal male behaviour that asserts a woman's sex role over her function as a worker. It can be any or all of the following, starting at commenting upon or touching a woman's body parts, repeating non-reciprocated propositions for dates, demands for sexual intercourse and rape.

MacKinnon (1979) argues that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination, which blocks women's achievement of equality with men by supporting the institutionalisation of gender inequality in all its forms. This is because many women who are not strong and determined have no other choice but to handle their sexual harassment problems by quitting or changing jobs. It becomes a significant factor in women's job turnover and slower career advancement. The women from the private universities interviewed in the two studies reported here did not share any experiences of sexual harassment in their work environment.

The work environment in the private university has implications on gender equity in higher education. The women working in these institutions are likely to feel safe and therefore concentrate in the career advancement and job performance because of the support they enjoy from the administration of the universities.

### Conclusion

This article has examined the growth of private universities in Kenya and its implication for gender equity in higher education. It appears that private universities are playing an important role in increasing opportunities especially for women to access university education as students, academics and managers. The opportunities are expanded through flexible admission and recruitment procedures and programmes, providing a supportive work environment for women staff and appointing more women into management positions. As a result of these flexibility there are slightly more female students enrolled in private universities than public universities as students. However, the female students are enrolled mostly in the areas traditionally regarded as feminine. The high number of female students is not reflected in high participation of women in teaching and management positions. The higher rate of participation of female students and women academic and management staff in private universities cannot be attributed to deliberate policies geared towards increasing their participation. In this regard therefore the growth of private universities in Kenya is not enhancing gender equity in higher education. For the private universities to enhance gender equity in higher education, there is need for them to develop policies and strategies geared towards the increased participation of women in universities.

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## Credentials and Mobility: An Analysis of the Profile of Students Studying at Registered Private Higher Education Institutions in South Africa

Glenda Kruss\*

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### Abstract

Analysing the private higher education sector in relation to the public sector is not helpful, nor is aggregating student data to explain trends in private provision across a national system. This claim is illustrated by analysing the student target group identified by institutions, the profile of students enrolled and the perceptions of students of their motivation for studying at private institutions in South Africa. In South Africa, there are two distinct private sub-sectors, which target and attract a specific student base. Providers that claim to meet a demand for ‘mobility’ cater primarily for an historically privileged and newly privileged constituency, while those that claim to meet a demand for specialised ‘credentials’ cater primarily for non-traditional students. A superficial reading of race and gender, of historical advantage and disadvantage, can obfuscate more than it illuminates, because age, socio-economic status, education background and citizenship interact in complex ways. Understanding the patterns of enrolment in distinct forms of provision provides a useful way of understanding what private providers promise to offer, and why students are attracted to them.

### Résumé

Analyser l’enseignement supérieur privé par rapport au secteur public n’est pas très utile, pas plus que le fait de regrouper les données des étudiants pour expliquer les tendances de la privatisation dans un système national. Cette affirmation s’illustre en analysant le groupe cible d’étudiants identifiés par les institutions, le profil des inscrits et la perception de leur motivation à étudier dans des établissements privés

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en Afrique du Sud. En Afrique du Sud, il y'a deux sous secteurs privés distincts, qui ciblent et attirent un type d'étudiant spécifique. Les établissements qui prétendent satisfaire une demande de «mobilité» répondent essentiellement aux besoins d'une composante historiquement et nouvellement privilégiée, alors que celles qui prétendent satisfaire une demande de «qualifications» spécialisées répondant principalement aux besoins d'étudiants non traditionnels. Une lecture superficielle des questions de race et de genre, de l'avantage et du désavantage historiques, peut assombrir plus qu'elle n'éclaire, parce que l'âge, le statut socio-économique, le niveau d'éducation et la nationalité interagissent de façon complexe. Le fait de comprendre les modes d'inscription aux différents types d'institutions permet de mieux connaître ce que les institutions privées promettent d'offrir, et pourquoi les étudiants sont attirés par celles-ci.

### Introduction

The number of private higher education institutions in South Africa expanded rapidly during the 1990s, and there was widespread belief that these institutions began to attract a sizable student base, to the detriment of the public higher education system (Smit 2000; Mabizela 2002). Critical questions were raised about the profile of students, with a popular belief being that these institutions attracted wealthy, privileged students (Vergnani 2000). The first systematic quantitative research on the size and shape of the private higher education sector conducted in South Africa was an analysis of private institutions that were registered with the Department of Education in 1999. This study found somewhat surprisingly that at least 39 percent of students in private institutions were African (Mabizela et al. 2000). The authors claimed that this stark figure is 'higher than might have been commonly expected, given the commonly held assumption that private higher education is beyond the financial reach of many Africans'. They argued strongly therefore that the private higher education sector is not as strongly dominated by white students as commonly believed.

Such an empirical observation raised critical questions about who the students choosing to study at private higher education institutions in South Africa are, and why they have chosen to study at a private institution. Generalising on the basis of dominant trends in other developing countries, we might hypothesize that private providers are meeting excess demand for education, and absorbing in particular African students who cannot be accommodated in the public higher education sector. However, an empirical investigation of the private higher education sector in South Africa suggests that this may be too simple, and that explaining why students choose to attend private higher education in South Africa is more complex and multi-faceted. This paper will argue for the significance of understanding patterns of racial

and gender distribution across different types of private institution, fields and programme levels.

The paper will begin by outlining a conceptual matrix developed to understand different forms of private provision in South Africa. It goes on to describe the target group and admission policy, and then to profile the students who have indeed chosen to study at these different forms of private institutions, examining their motivations and perceptions of their choice. On this basis, it demonstrates the complexity in understanding the choice of private provision and the need for nuanced analysis. Analysing the profile of the student base in different types of private institutions provides a key insight into the dynamics of the private sector in South Africa.

### **The Research Study**

The paper draws on a Human Sciences Research Council study of private higher education conducted in 2002 (Kruss and Kraak 2002). A systematic empirical exploration of the function, governance and finance of private higher education institutions was undertaken (Kruss 2004), drawing on concepts that have been used to analyse private sectors internationally since the 1980s (see Geiger 1986a, 1986b and Levy 1986a, 1986b, 1991, 1992, 1993). Fifteen in-depth case studies of registered private providers were conducted, involving interviews with management and teaching staff, institutional inventories and observation, focus group interviews with students and a student survey. Based on a reading of the emerging empirical trends in private provision (Mabizela 2000; Mabizela, Subotzky and Thaver 2000), four sets of cases were selected to enhance comparability and generalisability. The paper draws specifically on student enrolment figures provided by the institutions themselves, in most cases, based on their annual submissions to the South African Department of Education for the year 2001, as well as the results of a survey of students at each institution conducted as part of the project in 2002.

### **Understanding Forms of Private Provision**

It became evident that the contemporary South African case was distinct in terms of a very different economic, political, social and higher educational context to many earlier comparative analyses of higher education (Geiger 1986a, 1986b; Levy 1986a, 1986b, 1993; Marginson 1997).

There is undoubtedly a great deal of convergence in the focus, mode of operation, staff complement and student base of registered private higher education institutions in South Africa, which arises primarily from their for-profit market orientation, and from the demands for greater access to higher education in South Africa. In a new era of globalisation and commodification of

higher education, these institutions are predominantly (but not entirely) businesses that have identified a market to supply higher education and training in response to a demand for graduates that are directly employable, equipped with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to contribute directly to the workplace and economic growth.

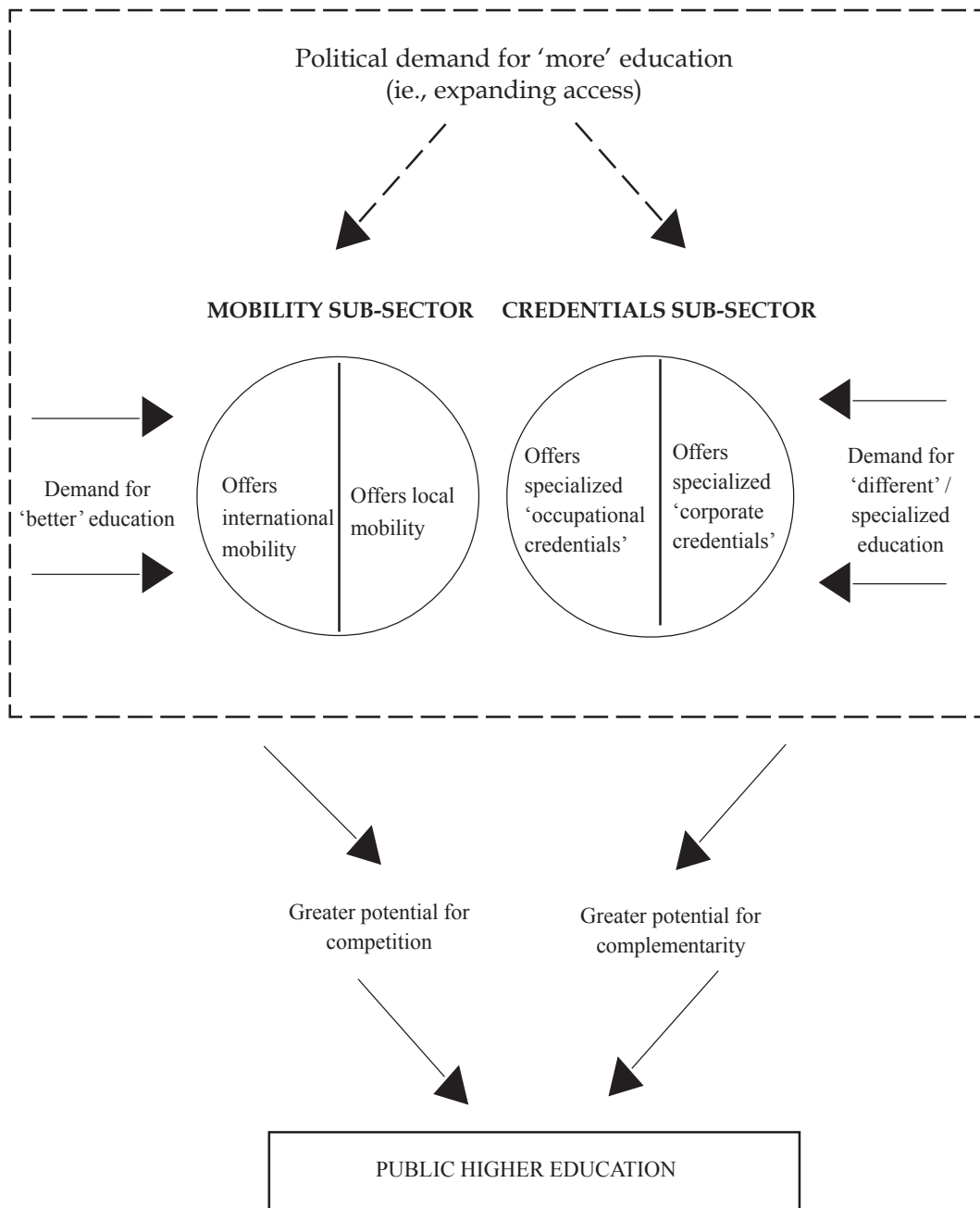
Nevertheless, the HSRC study identifies two distinct private higher education sub-sectors in South Africa, illustrated in Figure 1 (Kruss 2004). The distinction will be outlined briefly here, and will be elaborated throughout the article by comparing the student constituencies of each sub-sector. The mobility sub-sector attracts students by claiming to meet a demand for education that is 'better' than what the public sector can provide, commonly referred to as an 'elite' demand in the comparative private higher education literature. In the contemporary South African context, their qualifications promise mobility: whether in the sense of an internationally recognised and portable degree, or in the sense of a degree that is more oriented to the workplace and offers direct employability, and hence upward socio-economic mobility. This is not to say that these private providers *are* better than the public sector, but rather, that this claim accounts in large part for its appeal to a specific student constituency, as will become clear in Figure 1.

A second form, the specialised credentials sub-sector, claims to meet a demand for education that is 'different' to what the public sector can provide. In the international literature, this has tended to mean a religiously or culturally distinct education, but in the contemporary South African context, it tends to mean education that is occupationally specialised. These institutions hold out the promise of offering specialised credentials, accredited qualifications that prepare students to be directly employable in an occupational niche, or offer specialised programmes tailored to the needs of business corporations.

Unlike most developing countries, private provision in South Africa did not arise on a significant scale in response to excess demand, given sufficient capacity in the public higher education sector. However, alongside the demand for 'better' or 'different' education, there is a small and intertwined element of such a demand for 'more' education underpinning the appeal of a small number of private institutions (Kruss 2002).

The paper will demonstrate how these distinct forms of provider, arising in response to distinct forms of demand, attract very different profiles of students, and it will highlight the complexity of these profiles. It will do so by considering three sources of data from the 15 case studies. First, it will describe and compare the target group and admission policy of private institutions in each of these two sub-sectors. Second, it will analyse the complexity

**Figure 1.** Private higher education sub-sectors in South Africa



of the demographic profiles of students enrolled in each sub-sector. Third, it will add a final layer to the analysis by describing student articulations of demand, comparing the perceptions of students in the two sub-sectors, of their choice to study at a private institution.

### **Target Group and Admission Policy**

In the majority of cases, only those who can afford the generally high fees can choose to study at a private institution. Nonetheless, there are significant differences evident in the target group, reflected in institutional admission policies, in the providers' promotional literature and student prospectuses. This section will compare the admission policy and target group of the private providers that claim to offer mobility, and those that claim to offer specialised credentials.

#### ***Targeting a (Relatively) Privileged Constituency***

The providers that claim to respond to a demand for mobility primarily aimed to attract those in privileged socio-economic positions, or those aspiring to be in privileged positions. Some targeted school leavers and others, senior and corporate managers. There was one provider in the HSRC study that explicitly targeted those who have been 'previously disadvantaged', particularly women. However, in offering high-level MBA programmes, it was effectively targeting those professionals who are potentially upwardly mobile, currently in relatively privileged socio-economic positions.

Thus, formal entrance requirements were comparable to those of public universities, namely, a matriculation exemption (twelve years of schooling) for undergraduate degrees, and a Bachelor's degree plus experience for the MBA. So, for instance, at one of these private institutions, some 94 percent of the students surveyed claimed to have matriculation exemption. There was evidence of flexible entry criteria, both in formal policy, but particularly, in practice, which often diverged from the procedures and regulations stipulated formally in institutional policy. For example, one institution had a formal policy of accreditation of prior formal and experiential learning on the basis of a screening process, but the experience reported by some students suggested that these rules were somewhat flexibly applied, in the face of the market need to fill intake quotas. Only 62.5 percent of post-graduate MBA students at this institution claimed to have matriculation exemption, with a relatively high 25 percent having Grade 12 without exemption, and 12.5 percent having completed their schooling outside of the South African school system. This suggests that some of these private providers may be admitting those who may not

have qualified for admission to post-graduate study at public higher education institutions.

Nonetheless, there is little evidence that these private providers aim to broaden access to university level education on any significant scale. Analysis of their promotional brochures and advertising suggests that they aim to attract a (relatively) privileged constituency, more likely to be able to meet the formal requirements for entry into public higher education, and thus able to make an active choice to attend a private institution.

### ***Targeting a Non-traditional Constituency***

In contrast, those private institutions that respond to a demand for specialised credentials are distinctive in their stated aim to attract those who have not traditionally entered higher education. Key target constituencies are those who have been unable to gain access to public higher education in the pre-democratic South African past because of a range of racial, socio-economic and educational barriers. A number of examples will illustrate this claim. One institution claimed to have admission strategies to break through racial barriers to create a more representative student body, driven partly by a recognition that 'the most important stories South Africans have to tell are likely to be told by Black South Africans'. Another targeted historically disadvantaged school leavers who were not able to gain access to public higher education because they do not have the required entrance qualifications. Yet another case explicitly targeted 'previously disadvantaged individuals' promoted to supervisory and management positions in corporations.

Flexibility has been built in to the admission policy of most of these providers. For example, at one institution, the formal admission requirement of two years post-matriculation education plus ten years experience is flexibly applied, with the option of entry onto a lower level course, recognition of prior learning, or provisional admission conditional on satisfactory performance. There may also be internal differentiation, with programmes at different levels attracting different kinds of students, from entry level to those in senior positions, to facilitate progression and articulation. One provider had a system of recognition of prior learning through 'formal or informal and non-formal learning and work experience', and recognised its own Further Education and Training programmes for admission to its higher education programmes.

Unlike the private providers in the mobility sub-sector, private providers in this sub-sector aim to attract a non-traditional constituency, of potential students more likely not to meet the formal entrance requirements for public university level study. More significantly, they aim to attract students *making a*



*different kind of choice* than university study; that is, to obtain occupationally-related credentials that will directly enhance employability.

### **The Complexity of Student Profiles**

What became apparent from an analysis of the demographic profile of the students who choose to attend private institutions is that a superficial reading of race and gender, of historical advantage and disadvantage, can obfuscate more than it illuminates. Indicators other than race and gender, such as age, socio-economic status, education background and citizenship interact in complex ways, and need to be taken into account in the contemporary South African context.

### ***A Degree of Convergence***

There is a degree of convergence in the demographic profiles of students enrolled for study in both sub-sectors, which again may be explained by the profit orientation of the majority of providers, but is also related to the fact that higher education is a positional good (Jonathan 2002). That is, all students attending higher education share the potential to be upwardly mobile and enter relatively well-paying professional employment by virtue of their educational achievements, particularly under the new global economic conditions. However, this opportunity is not available to all citizens equally. Indeed, the opportunity to enter higher education is related to prior socio-economic and educational advantage. Historically, participation in higher education in South Africa has been racially skewed in favour of privilege, with a predominance of white students. Since the late 1980s, pressures for massification of higher education have seen the implementation of strategies to meet national equity goals, defined in terms of racial and gender equity. There has been a steady increase of black students in the public higher education sector. In 2001, African students constituted 59 percent of the total headcount enrolments in public higher education institutions. Despite the strong demand for higher education, the participation rate of African students in public institutions remains a low 12 percent, compared with a participation rate of 47 percent of white students (Asmal 2002:14). Female students currently represent slightly more than half of the total national enrolment in public higher education. The presence of privileged students, and those who aspire to privilege, in all forms of private higher education institutions must be interpreted in this light.

Nevertheless, despite this degree of convergence, there are distinct patterns of differentiation evident between students in each of the private sub-sectors. Students at those institutions claiming to offer mobility are more likely to be historically or newly privileged, while students at the institutions offering spe-

cialised credentials are more likely to be non-traditional. Some examples of each will suffice to illustrate the divergence, in all its complexity.

### *New Forms of Privilege*

Institutions that promise ‘international mobility’ typically offer the MBA as their flagship and, in some cases, the only programme. There has been an increase in both demand for and supply of MBAs in South Africa over the past few years (Financial Mail survey 2001), and a large growth in the number of degrees awarded by both local business schools and, increasingly, international providers.

The typical full-time undergraduate student at one such ‘international mobility’ type institution would be a young white school leaver, from a private school<sup>1</sup> and from an extremely affluent family; an exemplar of a highly privileged private student profile. The institution has 60 percent of its students enrolled for full-time under-graduate studies in an accelerated two-year programme (instead of the usual three years), and 40 percent enrolled part-time for post-graduate studies, the MBA. When asked why students had elected to study there, one student, in frustration at the tailored responses of other students, exclaimed

Let’s face it! We are all from affluent families. We’re all from private schools. We’re the same kind of people and that makes us comfortable. We all know where we are going and we plan to get there. Fast!

Academic staff who simultaneously taught in public institutions stressed the difference in privilege, arguing that for those students they teach at the private institution, ‘higher education is a right, not a privilege and the lecturers are there to help them fulfil this birthright’. These students know what they want from life, and they have made sure that they are equipped to get there: at a privileged pace, in a privileged educational environment.

In contrast to this youthful profile, the typical student in formal certificated programmes at another such provider would be part-time, a white male in his mid-30s, in a senior management position in the financial services and banking sector, sponsored by his employer. There are few women or black students enrolling in the formally-certificated MBA programmes, but according to academic staff interviewed, the demographic profile in short courses run on-site for companies is very different, as many black students are enrolled in line with companies’ equity development plans.

At a third case offering ‘international mobility’, there is a similar demographic profile, but given their stated commitment to enrol ‘previously disadvantaged individuals’, the student body reflects a slightly greater degree of

racial and gender diversity, attracting those who are ambitious and upwardly mobile in their professional life, in newly privileged socio-economic positions. As one manager at this institution described their typical student:

They are all managers with jobs, some are company sponsored, older than 26... Race is not high in my mind, but about 50 percent are black people...there are a growing number of women, but still more males.

When it came to the decision to study at a private as opposed to a public institution, these students identified the international stature and credibility of the institution as the key factor, along with the workplace practice oriented programme and pedagogy, especially given the policy of recognizing prior learning as a means of entry without a first degree.<sup>2</sup>

One of the cases that offer 'local mobility', catering primarily for young school leavers, appeared to differ from this pattern, in the racial profile of student enrolments. In 2000, some 60 percent of students were estimated to be African, with some 33 percent white and 7 percent Indian. However, new forms of socio-economic privilege come into play here, reflected in management's claim that the shift

...has to do with emerging wealth among our black population. I expect percent 95 percent growth rate among Black students by 2005.

Moreover, the high proportion of African students needs to be interpreted with care. Most students at this institution were drawn from the urban areas around Gauteng, but there are many students from South African Development Community (SADC) countries, especially Botswana, Angola and Swaziland, as well as from Taiwan, Japan and other Asian countries. Analysis of survey data revealed that at this institution, only 68 percent of the students are South African citizens and that a relatively high 14 percent of the total student body comes from Botswana. A cross-tabulation of race and citizenship revealed that just over half, 58 percent, of the African students were South African citizens, with a high 27 percent being Botswana citizens.

Further investigation showed that the institution is one of a number that has been selected to enter into an official agreement with the neighbouring Botswana government to provide higher education to its citizens. The Botswana government sponsors its citizens' fees and accommodation for study in South Africa, in the light of the limited capacity of their own national higher education system to absorb the demand for high-level skills. Effectively it is a means of extending wider access to higher education for Botswana citizens, by using the public and private resources of another country.

This pattern highlights that equity concerns need to be widened beyond superficial counts of students' race, and beyond the equation of race with disadvantage. Clearly here, the sizable group of Botswana citizens may not be categorized as historically disadvantaged candidates in the South African higher education context. They are privileged citizens, in that they are selected and funded by their government to contribute to future development in their own country.

Further analysis of the educational background of the students at this provider revealed a relative degree of prior educational privilege. Analysis of the school system in which students in the survey sample had been educated revealed that 40 percent had attended former Model C schools, schools reserved for whites that had integrated to a limited extent in the period of transition, before 1994. A further 39 percent had attended private schools, and only 3.5 percent claimed to have attended former Department of Education and Training (DET) schools, those formerly reserved for Africans. Moreover, students tended to come from families with relatively high levels of education, with almost two thirds of parents having post-school qualifications in the form of certificates, diplomas or degrees.<sup>3</sup> Students strongly emphasized the secure environment as critical to their choice, citing the small campus size in a safe location, the small classes, individual attention and approachable staff leading to their preference of this institution over public universities, which were seen to offer the opposite.

A similar pattern of an internally differentiated, newly and historically privileged student body was also found at another such 'local mobility' case that primarily offered the programs of a public distance university. The students have relatively privileged education backgrounds, with almost half of the students surveyed claiming to have attended former Model C schools (48 percent) or private schools (38 percent) with 5.5 percent having attended foreign schools. There is a degree of informal segregation, where different campuses cater for distinct student constituencies, based on self-selection determined by socio-economic status, reflected in ownership of cars or reliance on public transport, as unwittingly highlighted by the founding manager:

Mainly at that time (1991–93) you had a varied student body with a lot of white students and very few black. At the moment the situation has turned around especially since opening other branches. Here, because it is closer to African townships and directly on the taxi route – you find students here are mainly black. Those students who have cars settle for the other campuses.

Most of the students study full time and are primarily enrolled for their first post-school qualification, but some reportedly chose to study part-time even though they were not working, as it was cheaper. Here too, migration across national boundaries in Southern Africa, from countries such as Angola, Mozambique and Democratic Republic of Congo, into private institutions, appears to be a small but significant dynamic shaping the nature of the institution in recent years, but as management remarked of their students, 'they want what they want and they demand what they want'.

The intersection of race, socio-economic status and education is evident in an emergent trend, of a newly privileged African student body that has been educated in Model C or private schools, coming from families with relatively high levels of education. The analysis of student profiles reveals that these students are more likely to be enrolled in private institutions that claim to offer mobility. The pattern of attracting young people from Southern Africa, both those supported by their own governments and those with private means to study, is a small but significant trend. It is evident that not only those who have been historically privileged, but also those who are relatively privileged in new socio-economic and political conditions, tend to be more strongly attracted to study at private providers in the mobility sub-sector.

#### *Non-traditional Students*

Analysis of the demographic profile of the cases in the private sub-sector offering 'specialised credentials' provides a contrasting set of trends and patterns.

The typical student at one case is likely to be mature, in full-time employment in positions ranging from shop floor to middle management, and to have progressed from foundation level to National Qualifications Framework Level 5 programmes, the level of certificates and diplomas. The majority of students attend contact classes part-time, either in the evenings or on Saturdays. The racial profile of students suggests that there have been attempts to train Africans and coloureds<sup>4</sup> but that positions of leadership at all levels in production manufacturing and operations are still dominated by white males. The majority had attended public schools and many are the first to attend higher education in their families<sup>5</sup>, corresponding with the stated aim of the institution to cater for non-traditional students. The consensus is that students choose this institution because it offers a unique differentiated programme in innovative partnership with industry, where the private institution provides core skills, and companies provide industry specific technical training. As one manager explained:

Our offerings allow people into Higher Education via our Skills programmes. Furthermore, we don't just teach general literacy but quite specialized numeracy programmes demanded for the industrial work place, with specific examples coming from these particular environments.

Students clearly articulated a demand for specialized education and training in a career-oriented occupational niche. The private institution primarily offers the opportunity to obtain formal credentials at a recognized higher education provider.

Likewise, at one of the cases offering 'specialised corporate credentials', the majority of students were part-time, mature, sponsored by employers, technically educated but new to managerial positions, and predominantly male.<sup>6</sup> In line with attempts to meet the equity and human resource development requirements of corporations, just over half the students were white and just over a third African.<sup>7</sup> Again, closer inspection revealed that a significant proportion of the African delegates are Botswana citizens. While these students do not come from families with post-schooling qualifications, about a third of the students themselves have first degrees, usually in a technical area.

At another institution, the majority of students have progressed through its own Further Education and Training programmes, but here a very different constituency is attracted. Higher education programmes were only introduced in 2001 at 10 branches, and make up a very small percentage of the total student complement of 5,840, some 4 percent as compared to 84 percent enrolled in Further Education and Training programmes at this institution. There was a perceived need articulated by management to offer students registered at Further Education level an opportunity to continue to higher education, to offer students 'a one-stop shop', and develop the educational 'brand'. The majority of the higher education students are young African school leavers, with a relatively high enrolment of women, who had attended public schools and were the first in their families to enter higher education, with only a third of the students surveyed having a matriculation exemption. These students were not able to gain access to public higher education because of educational disadvantage, and clearly had far less choice than students at other cases in the study. For instance, students claimed that they enrolled at this private provider because it was too late to register at public institutions, or because the points system of some public providers acted to exclude them, given their low levels of attainment in school leaving examinations.

The majority were enrolled in Certificate programmes in Information Technology or Business Administration, which they believe enhance their opportu-

nities to enter the workplace. However, the exchange value of such credentials is not established. It was evident that students would have preferred to have been registered at a public institution, both for recognition and a perceived, better, cheaper and higher quality provision. Academic staff cited the fee pricing and rejection by public providers as the main reasons for students selecting the institution, and the bulk of enrolment took place in the period at the end of February, when most students were either refused entry or were too late to register for public institutions. Thus, while this institution primarily claimed to offer specialized, occupationally-oriented credentials, in terms of student perceptions and in practice, it also has elements of demand absorption, meeting a demand for access to higher education on the part of those experiencing educational barriers, directly related to historical disadvantage.

The exchange value of another institution that attracts young school leavers to prepare for the film industry appeared to be high. In contrast, this institution has made specific efforts to attract a student body that reflects the demography of South Africa, and although white students still predominate (69 percent), they have managed to attract students from other racial groups, with some 27 percent African students. A relatively high 33 percent of the students surveyed had attended private schools, with 25 percent of the African students having attended private schools and a low 10 percent of African students having attended former DET schools. It thus appears that African students are also drawn from an emergent socio-economic strata, with relatively high levels of education, most from families familiar with higher education.<sup>8</sup> This educationally privileged African segment of the student body is preparing to enter new non-traditional occupational fields that were closed to black people in the past through formal and then informal job colour bars.

Students spontaneously highlighted the distinctive, specialized nature of the institution, and its real-practice orientation, where they were learning real, useful skills in a formally certificated programme faster than through working. They articulated a strong demand for career-oriented, practical professional formal qualifications that equips students for the workplace, personally, academically and socially.

A similar case was found at an institution with a predominantly white (90 percent), Afrikaans speaking, and female (99 percent) student base, drawn from all over the country. The gender skewing is in keeping with the general vocational field and clientele of the health and beauty profession. Most of the students were enrolled in NQF Level 5 certificates and diplomas. There was reportedly a 50 percent black student enrolment on a one-year certificate programme that was cheaper, did not require matriculation exemption and that was reported to be less demanding than the other courses. The perception of



lecturers was that this programme equipped those who are content with working for others, in less responsible positions, rather than owning and managing their own salons. Perhaps differences of individual ability or achievement led students at this institution to seek other kinds of higher education opportunities.

The element of demand absorption was strongest at one case in this sub-sector. In line with its stated aim to cater for 'the poorest of the poor', the enrolment pattern reflects that it attracts non-traditional students in the sense that they are not able to gain entry to public institutions because of financial constraints. Significantly, this provider operates not-for-profit, and students pay nominal fees. Students are drawn from poor, often rural communities and as part of the admission requirements, need to show that they are 'sponsored' by their community. All students are full-time, young African school-leavers, with approximately 60 percent being female. The majority is the first in their families to enter higher education, but almost 70 percent have matriculation exemption. The admission policy was quite clear that students should have matriculation exemption, and that 'bright and deserving' candidates should be particularly targeted, but the current enrolment patterns reveal that here too, students who do not have the educational requirements to enter the public universities are being catered for.

Students at cases with a religious orientation also tended to be young school-leavers in full-time study. In one case, students were predominantly white and male, from a relatively well-educated family background. Another case attracts an international residential student body through its church networks. Significantly it too, has attracted a sizable group of Botswana government-sponsored students. This has meant a shift for the first time from a student body consisting predominantly of white members of the denomination to a more diverse, predominantly black and non-denominational student body.

The notion of 'non-traditional' students in these cases responding to a demand for credentials and a 'different' education thus has a range of meanings, reflecting the complex intersection of race, class, gender, education and citizenship. In some cases, 'non-traditional' relates to those students in employment, often predominantly male, and increasingly black, who have extensive experience, but do not have formal education qualifications. In other cases, 'non-traditional' relates to those black students, perhaps relatively well-educated and from relatively well-educated families, who have in the past not had access to specific occupations, particularly in new kinds of service industry, and for whom broader opportunities are now opening up. In yet other cases, the meaning of 'non-traditional' student in higher education is closely linked

historically with vocational education and training, those students, black or white, often female, who are not academically inclined, who seek occupational credentials. And finally, 'non-traditional' relates to those students, often women, perhaps the first in their families to aspire to higher education, who have not been able to gain entry to public institutions because they lack the required entrance qualifications, but nevertheless, desire credentials that will enhance employability.

The analysis of the profiles of students enrolled in the cases thus reveals both a degree of convergence, but equally, a clear distinction between the relative privilege of students enrolled at providers in the mobility sub-sector, and the 'non-traditional' nature of students enrolled in the credentials sub-sector.

### **Analyzing Student Articulations of Demand**

A further layer of complexity is added to the analysis by considering students' own perceptions of their choice to study at a private institution<sup>9</sup> in more detail.

#### ***Student Perceptions of Choice: Mobility from sub-sector institutions***

Some students have chosen to study at a private institution that promises to offer them internationally-recognised, quality programmes in a secure environment that will enhance employability. Again, the proviso must be stressed, this is not to claim that institutions indeed fulfil that promise. At the heart of this choice, lies an emphasis on education that will prepare young people for future mobility.

An internationally recognised qualification was typically venerated, simply *because* it is international and not South African, and thus seen to be more valuable and open up greater global opportunities than local accreditation. A sense was gained from young school leavers preparing to enter the world of work that they are clear about what they want from the future, and are making sure they are equipped to get there. For those already in the workplace, in post-graduate programmes, the workplace relevance and 'real life' practice orientation was stressed strongly during focus group interviews as the motivation for selecting the institution. One student summed up the point that was typically expressed, when he commented that the programmes 'add value to what I was experiencing, to take theory and translate it into something substantial'. Flexible modes of learning that accommodate employment needs were stressed, to equip these students for greater career mobility. A privileged, exclusive educational environment, characterised by opportunities for individual attention and personal safety, was seen by all students interviewed as critical to enable focus and quality.

In students' perception, they have chosen a private provider because of a promise of international mobility, closely linked to the opportunity for career mobility promoted in the workplace orientation and flexible modes of entry and provision, and to ensure upward socio-economic mobility. As students at one college in the mobility sub-sector phrased it, these providers 'prepare students for the world' and 'get you going where you need to go'

***Student Perceptions of Choice: Credentials from sub-sector institutions***

Other students have chosen to study at a private provider that offers them a different kind of specialised, niche-driven credentialing, oriented to the workplace. At the heart of this choice, lies an emphasis on specialised credentials.

Their choice was motivated by a strong desire to 'get the tickets', to obtain recognized formal credentials, in order to increase opportunities for employability. The private provider was seen to offer specialised credentials to prepare for specific occupations that are not offered at other institutions, particularly universities. The expressed concern was not for ensuring mobility. Rather, a formal, certificated preparation for the labour market, a career and practice orientation were all commonly stressed. As one student reflected

I have chosen (this provider) because it offers me the opportunity to reflect on what I have been doing every day for many years, and I am therefore going to come back to proceed with a Diploma after finishing this Certificate course.

The combination of formal credentials and the practice orientation, of 'learning real, useful skills', were seen as a route to acquire skills and ensure the future more effectively, to equip students for the workplace personally, socially and academically. For students at institutions offering corporate specialised credentials, the primary emphasis was on formal credentials to develop specialised job-oriented skills that will contribute to the corporation as well as the individual.

For those providers with an element of demand absorption, there was a slight variation. Students at one case clearly had less choice, and had made their choice based on more pragmatic reasons, that the fees are affordable, and that the flexible modes of learning and time can accommodate family and personal needs. In contrast, students at the non-profit case felt that given their life circumstances, 'we did not choose, we were chosen', and expressed appreciation for the financial opportunity afforded them to study further.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, they shared the understanding that they were being prepared for employability.

For the private providers with a religious orientation, the strongest motivation articulated related to 'the Christian environment', to the comfort of the company of other Christians and that spiritual needs are taken care of.

The strength of all the students' belief that private providers can prepare more effectively for employability is thus evident, whether it is the belief of relatively privileged students that the qualification will ensure mobility or the belief of non-traditional students that the credentials will ensure employment.

### Conclusion

Talking of the private higher education sector in relation to the public sector is thus not helpful, nor is aggregating student data to explain trends in private provision. The cases illustrate that in South Africa, there are distinct forms of private provision, and relative to the public sector, providers target a specific student base, and attract a specific profile of students, with a distinct set of motivations. The mobility providers cater primarily for an historically privileged and newly privileged constituency, while the credential providers cater primarily for non-traditional students. This is evident in their admission policies and target audience, in the demographic profile of enrolled students, and in students' articulated demand. What was also apparent from an analysis of the student profiles is that a superficial reading of race and gender, of historical advantage and disadvantage, can obfuscate more than it illuminates. Understanding complex patterns of enrolment in different forms of provision provides a more useful way of understanding what private providers are offering, and why students are attracted to them.

### Notes

1. A high 82 percent of students surveyed at this institution reported that they had completed their schooling at a private school.
2. It was estimated that about 12 percent of students enter this institution through this route.
3. About 53 percent of the fathers of students at this institution had a degree, and 15 percent had a certificate or diploma, while 28 percent of the mothers had a degree and 38 percent had a certificate or diploma.
4. Institutional figures were not available but 56 percent of students surveyed at this institution were white, with 31 percent African, 10 percent coloured and 3 percent Indian.
5. Some 78 percent of parents of students at this institution had matriculation or lower as their highest educational level, and only 11 percent had degrees.
6. In 2001, 71 percent of those enrolled in the higher education programmes of this institution were male and 29 percent female.

7. In 2001, 56 percent of students at this institution were white, 35 percent were African, 5 percent were Indian and 4 percent coloured.
8. This was evident in that 73 percent of parents of the students at this institution had post-school qualifications.
9. This section relies on an analysis of items on the student survey that explored why students had chosen to study at a specific institution. Students were asked to rate a set of 16 reasons commonly cited in the international and South African literature, on a scale of 1–5, where 1 was very little influence, and 5 was strong influence. Means and standard deviations were calculated in order to compare the relative ranking and strength of the reasons cited. What stands out is that students at some institutions are much more emphatic on the factors that influenced them to study at a private institution, rating more than half the factors 4 or above on average. Here students appear to have made an active individual choice for study at a private institution for clear reasons. At other institutions, students were more equivocal, suggesting that they had less active choice. The trends emerging from the survey were triangulated with an analysis of focus group interview data that attempted to identify why students value higher education, and why they had selected their specific institution, aiming to identify the motivations spontaneously articulated by students for choosing to study at a private institution.
10. Management claimed that in 2000, some 10,000 potential learners had applied for 1,000 places, in response to word-of-mouth advertising.

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## Grand Endeavours and Economic Realities: Managing System-wide Structural Changes to Ugandan Higher Education in the Face of Private Expansion

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### Abstract

Uganda's higher education system has undergone a number of dramatic changes in recent years as part of a three-pronged effort to accommodate rapidly-expanding enrolments, improve the system's economic efficiency and provide education opportunities that are better matched to the nation's labour market needs. This paper examines these key developments in light of the country's rapidly-expanding private higher education market. The economic rationale for government regulation of private providers is discussed along with a cost/benefit analysis of three key private higher education related issues that we believe will need to be addressed in the coming years. At the end, we consider how applicable the Ugandan case is to the broader debate and policies associated with private expansion in other developing systems.

### Résumé

Le système de l'enseignement supérieur en Ouganda a connu un certain nombre de changements spectaculaires au cours des dernières années dans le cadre d'un triple effort pour accueillir des effectifs en pleine expansion, améliorer l'efficacité économique du système et d'offrir des possibilités d'éducation qui sont mieux adaptés aux besoins du marché du travail de la nation. Ce document examine les principaux développements à la lumière de l'enseignement supérieur privé qui est en pleine expansion dans ce pays. La raison économique de la réglementation des

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établissements privés par le gouvernement est examinée avec une analyse (coûts/avantages) des trois principales questions liées à l'enseignement privé qui à notre avis devront être abordées dans les prochaines années. En fin, nous examinons comment le cas de l'Ouganda est applicable au plus large débat, et nous examinons aussi les politiques qui découlent de l'expansion du privé dans d'autres systèmes en développement.

### Introduction

Ugandan higher education has long been subject to the whims of political forces, in effect leaving the State economically depressed and, importantly, almost a generation of Ugandans without access to higher education. Since the late-1980s though, much has been done to strengthen the country's education infrastructure. After a turbulent fifteen years that began with Idi Amin (1971–79) and ended with Obote II (1980–85), the economic recovery policies instituted under Museveni have worked to reduce poverty by restoring fiscal discipline and monetary stability (Liang 2004). Now, at the onset of the twenty-first century, ambitious steps have and are currently being taken to ensure that all qualified Ugandans receive not only a quality higher education, but one that will help meet the country's diverse labour market needs and generate economic growth.

The path to achieving such goals however has proven difficult. Decades of low public funding coupled with a nearly tenfold increase in tertiary education enrolments since the mid-1970s has raised concerns about declining education quality, as do projections of double-digit enrolment growth for at least another decade. Over-production of social science and humanities graduates has led to a dearth of qualified labour in areas believed to be critical for economic growth. The expansion from a single public university in 1988 to a diverse collection of universities and non-university but tertiary providers, the latter of which consists mainly of legally-established private providers and new private providers seeking State recognition is also generating conflict. Private owners are frustrated by what they see as excessive regulation and public higher education officials fear the explosion of new privates are primarily exploiting ill-informed education consumers for their own financial gain. Though publics currently enrol more students, widespread agreement that private higher education will become the country's dominant provider in the not-too-distant future (National Council for Higher Education 2004) is forcing the Ugandan government to restructure its higher education system in order to better manage its expansion, increase efficiency and foster economic growth.

Change is taking place rapidly. The past four years have seen the passage of the first tertiary education act and the establishment of a national council tasked with ensuring that the components of the act are effectively implemented. In

some areas like institutional licensing and accreditation, policies have already been put into practice. In others, such as an assessment of the labour market's needs, the development of macro-efficiency criteria or the creation of credit accumulation and transfer mechanisms, background studies and consultations with key stakeholder groups are actively underway. Before the end of the decade, a number of substantial and far-reaching changes in the regulations guiding the higher education sector are expected to be implemented.

What is occurring in Uganda today reflects parallel shifts from elite to mass higher education and from a model of central planning to one that is more market-oriented. Unfortunately, striking an appropriate balance when managing the two shifts is difficult; options and strategies that seek to capitalize on the strong points of one tend to produce dilemmas and tradeoffs that adversely affect the advantages brought about by the other (Salerno 2005). Given the fragile state of Uganda's higher education system, a more rounded analysis of the consequences stemming from the recent and wide-ranging changes, particularly as they relate to private providers, would be beneficial on several levels. From a theoretical standpoint, it would improve researchers' understanding of the economics behind private higher education provision in developing countries, an area that has received less than proportionate attention.<sup>1</sup> From a practical standpoint, it would do much to help ensure that policymakers' intentions are not countermanded by unforeseen policy consequences.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The next section provides a brief background on the growth and key developments in Ugandan higher education over the past twenty years, paying particular attention to the growing private higher education market. Section three discusses the economic rationale for government regulation of private higher education and then considers the benefits and costs, from an economics perspective, of three key private higher education-related issues that we believe will need to be addressed in the coming years. In the concluding section we consider how applicable the Ugandan analysis is to the debate and policies associated with private expansion in other systems.

## **Background<sup>2</sup>**

Like many African countries, Uganda has witnessed dramatic growth in the demand for education at all levels. The Universal Primary Education initiative more than doubled primary education enrolments (from 3.1 to 7.3 million) between 1996 and 2002 (Avenstrup et al. 2004: 14). At the secondary education level, the nominal figures are less impressive but the growth itself certainly is not. Government-aided secondary schools enrolled some 37,000 students as of 1980. By 1996 that figure had increased by almost 6,000 percent to more than 256,000 students (Musisi 2003: 612).

Today, the benefits of primary and secondary-education investments are doing much to drive the country's surging demand for post-secondary education. In 1970 the higher education sector enrolled approximately 5,000 students. By 1980 that figure had doubled and over the next twenty years increased six-fold. Since 2000 alone, enrolments have again nearly doubled from approximately 68,500 to over 108,000. Much of the growth has taken place in the university sector<sup>3</sup> and specifically at the country's premier institution, Makerere University, which has seen its enrolments increase from around 2,500 students in the late-1970s to more than 32,000 by 2003.

The rapid growth in the demand for higher education has been met by an equally impressive supply-side response. As late as 1988 the university 'system' still consisted of a single institution (Makerere), yet by 2004 there were three more public universities and some twenty-three private institutions.<sup>4</sup> Alongside the university sector, Uganda also maintains a large number of non-university tertiary education providers that focus on teacher training, technical trades and commerce as well as schools for agriculture and fisheries. In 1970 there were two such institutions. By 2004 that number had climbed to 127; two-thirds of which were privately controlled.<sup>5</sup>

Though private higher education providers have made serious inroads into Uganda's higher education landscape, they resist detailed characterization. The frequency with which such institutions open and close, coupled with limited public monitoring and data reporting, makes it difficult to create a precise picture of the scale and scope of their activities. What is known is that the sector includes a mix of for-profit and non-profit providers, the latter of which includes both non-secular and philanthropically founded institutions. In general most are small (often enrolling between 40 and 400 students) and have only been established in the past four to five years. The courses they tend to offer are primarily in professional fields, especially business and computer science. In some cases their capacity to provide higher education (e.g. capital infrastructure, libraries, computing resources and instructors' credentials) parallel that of the public universities. Most however are sharply criticized for having sub-standard resources and offering courses that are better characterized as post-secondary education at best and more likely as little more than secondary education (Kasozi 2005). Nevertheless, both the number of institutions and their enrolment levels continue to expand. In 1999 they were estimated to enrol approximately six percent of all tertiary students (3,600); by 2003 their share had increased to more than ten percent (11,889).

Until recently the system's expansion was not supported by any substantive national planning, coordination or policy implementation. The introduction of

three additional public universities and the opening up of the higher education market to private providers took place hastily in order to absorb the rapidly increasing demand. As per-student public funding declined<sup>6</sup> and concerns about both public and private universities' education quality grew, it became clear that Uganda's nascent tertiary education sector looked and behaved more like the disjointed collection of institutions that it was rather than as an actual system. The mode of public financing did little to encourage efficient resource use. Under-funding created a shortage of qualified academic and administrative staff while low pay encouraged public university faculty members to 'moonlight' at the private providers in order to augment their incomes. The absence of credit accumulation and transfer policies meant that students who stopped out of programs, for financial or other reasons (or who could not afford to pay for sitting exams), had to re-enrol and take courses over again. Humanities and social science programs experienced an enrolment boom while the technical and exact sciences, areas believed to be necessary for economic growth, saw dramatic declines.<sup>7</sup> Finally there was growing concern that the hordes of newly-established private institutions were not so much absorbing excess demand as they were profiting from ill-informed individuals by selling an inferior education product at an inflated price.

Since 2000 a number of important policy developments have taken place, the most important involving the development and implementation of system-wide coordination mechanisms. A *University and Tertiary Education Act* was passed in 2001<sup>8</sup> and was subsequently followed (in 2003) by the approval of the country's first Higher Education Strategic Plan, which will run until 2015. The focus now is overlaying structure on the burgeoning yet nascent system and working to increase its economic efficiency: from streamlining institutional management to reducing program duplication to better meeting the country's labour market needs. Today Uganda's National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) is working diligently to implement the mandates of the Act. It has commissioned both a graduate tracer study and labour market expectations survey. Credit-transfer and accumulation policies are being developed to facilitate student mobility, discourage program duplication and encourage more efficient resource allocation. It is also working to ensure that the degrees that students receive have some economic value, both within and outside Uganda, by developing requirements for the establishment of institutions and maintaining standards through a national quality assurance system. In all cases accommodating the nature, role and growing influence of the private providers continues to play a central role.

### **Economic Theory and Private Provision**

As a good, education shares many characteristics with other goods that are produced and sold in markets. Thus understanding private provision of higher education is probably best answered by posing the opposite question: under what circumstances is public investment or coordination warranted? There are, in general, four commonly invoked answers, two of which justify public *funding* for higher education and two that justify public *regulation or coordination* of public and private providers in the market (Salerno 2005).

First there is the 'public good' rationale. Education provides individuals with substantial private returns, mostly in the form of higher lifetime earnings, but it also generates social returns in the form of lower crime rates, better health and a more productive labour force. Since society reaps part of the benefits, from an equity standpoint, it is fair that it bears part of the cost burden. Second, public investment ensures the provision of culturally or socially important, yet costly to produce, knowledge. Native languages are the most representative examples but so are programs in the physical and biological sciences, particularly in developing countries. In the case of the former, low consumer demand cannot generate sufficient revenue to justify producing the good but the program itself is necessary for ensuring that unique cultural capital does not die out as a result. In the case of the latter, significant demand may exist but excessively high production costs make it difficult, if not impossible, for consumers to bear the full cost.<sup>9</sup>

The third is a need to ensure the system's macro-efficiency. Market competition requires multiple producers but in the case of education, where the production costs and purchase price are expensive, limiting the number of producers is sometimes more efficient in that it can make it possible for the remaining producers to educate more students at a lower cost and with a higher quality (i.e. to realize scale and scope economies). The fourth has to do with information asymmetry. Unlike commodities such as corn, cola and stereos, things that consumers can immediately value at the point of purchase, it is not possible for individuals to know the value of the education they purchase until long after it has been consumed (Winston 1999).<sup>10</sup> Instead, they must somehow estimate the value of obtaining an education in a particular field and at a particular institution based on various market signals like other graduates' job opportunities and salaries. The rub is that education providers have a much better idea of the quality and value of the education they are selling. This information asymmetry gives providers a strong incentive to short-change or 'shirk' consumers in the exchange process.<sup>11</sup> In the absence of regulation, the fear is that private higher education institutions will charge students a higher price and then sell them a cheap (i.e. lower-quality) education in order to reap profits.

In sum, government subsidization and coordination of education markets takes place because, left to their own design, a purely private market will often fail, either through producing different goods than society wants, doing it inefficiently or by short-changing students. At the same time, public intervention generates its own tradeoffs. Whereas centrally planned (and funded) systems can promote macro-efficiency and help to ensure labour market supply in key areas, they also limit students' freedom to choose what they would like to study (Jongbloed 2003). Moreover, a small system that is dominated by public institutions that are evenly distributed (geographically) may create a system of local monopolies, thus stalling technological progress or hindering education quality (Salerno 2004). Somewhat ironically, these concerns are normally redressed by introducing market-driven systems that provide individuals with more freedom and flexibility to study what they want and competition from private providers, which forces public providers to constantly innovate and better cater to stakeholders' interests. Clearly, government and market provision are not complementary.

Nearly all higher education systems implicitly recognize the tradeoffs between the two and attempt to capture the benefits of both centrally-planned and market-oriented systems though the introduction of strategic steering mechanisms like imposing barriers to entry, regulating the supply of academic programs and using incentive mechanisms that encourage students to take courses in socially-productive fields.<sup>12</sup> Barriers to entry, like institutional licensing or accreditation and quality assurance, make it difficult for unscrupulous new private institutions to enter the market or persist. By ensuring that new privates have enough physical space or qualified educators and minimum standards in areas like degree examinations, curriculum structure and student rights, the government is capable of preventing disreputable providers from taking advantage of ill-informed consumers and work to ensure that the degree students eventually obtain has some value. The supply of academic programs is usually regulated by national program registers wherein both public and private institutions must obtain permission to operate a new program. As a rule, programs that generally duplicate those offered by another geographically close provider are likely to be rejected on the grounds that they are macro-inefficient. The Netherlands, which has a system composed mainly of private higher education providers, has long engaged in this practice. Finally, financial incentives are frequently used where there are mismatches between what students want to study and what the labour market needs. In countries where financial aid is important, like the United States or Russia, governments may offer to pay off students' loans if they take up studies in certain fields. From a human capital perspective,<sup>13</sup> strategies like these may reduce the net cost of taking up education in certain fields and thus possibly



sway some individuals to pursue academic studies in areas they may not have previously considered.

The problems and conflicts between private higher education providers and governments in developing countries like Uganda fit nicely into the ideas presented above. Centrally planned systems with low funding that have had to shift towards mass higher education usually cannot match the soaring demand with a commensurate increase in supply, especially when the shift takes place rapidly. The solution is to let private providers absorb the excess demand, which from a financing standpoint makes good sense. Where public funding is scarce, it is more cost-effective to partially subsidize private providers<sup>14</sup> or to set up and maintain an accreditation/quality assurance system than make long-term capital and labour investments.

Yet the NCHE has found, like many before them, that private higher education is a cat that is not so easily put back in the bag once it has been let out. The model of responding to the demand shortage first and then considering the consequences afterwards has put private providers in Uganda and elsewhere<sup>15</sup> on the offensive. To them, unclear *ex post facto* regulations are seen as overly burdensome and contradicting. As a result, many see the move as purposive limiting of their ability to expand or enter the lucrative, growing market for education even though the Ugandan government, and particularly the NCHE, claims their concern is that the proliferation of private providers is not alleviating the existing problems but making them worse. In the struggle between the two it would seem that the privates are, at the moment, winning. Mounting criticism over low public funding, declining numbers of publicly-available study places, poor quality in the public higher education institutions and relatively vague standards put in place by the NCHE have allowed private providers to successfully challenge the NCHE at many turns.<sup>16</sup>

When evaluating government regulation of private higher education, the pertinent question is whether barriers to entry are so excessive that they are discriminatory to privates in general and more specifically, those that can be cast as legitimate providers. From our analysis of the NCHE's regulations and through interviews with NCHE officials and high ranking officials at both public and private Ugandan universities, this does not seem to be the case. The accreditation mechanisms and emerging quality assurance policies apply to both public and private institutions and the standards set cannot be considered overly burdensome. In reality, the fundamental problem is that minimum resource requirements for producing a quality education are independent of an economy's ability to provide it. To a developing country like Uganda, meeting such requirements involves a more substantial *relative* investment, on behalf of private providers, than it does in other countries. Because publics enjoy some level of state support



the differential between the two can easily be mistaken for public favouritism rather than for the economic reality that lies behind it.

Nevertheless, the devil is in the details. A finer examination of the situation shows that the processes and procedures that the NCHE uses or is planning to use still have economic consequences, some of which may actually offset the initially expected gains. Below we look at three such issues as they relate to Ugandan higher education and discuss their more detailed costs and benefits vis-à-vis the government's broader higher education objectives.

### *Private Closures*

The NCHE's current licensing procedures allow private universities to begin offering education programs while in the process of seeking accreditation (or to become chartered as it is called in Uganda). Once an institution begins enrolling students, it has until the first cohort completes their studies to become accredited.<sup>17</sup> This process for introducing new private higher education institutions has become the norm in a number of countries, especially across Central and Eastern Europe (Schwarz & Westerheijden 2004).

The problem arises when institutions' licenses are revoked or they do not receive accreditation. As it works now, when this occurs, the institution in question is simply not allowed to enrol any more students but they can (and are effectively obligated to) continue educating those students that are currently enrolled. This has two obvious and deleterious effects. First the education that still-enrolled students receive has little or no economic value. Employers have no reliable signal of the individuals' increased productivity; in fact it may be counter-productive to list one's enrolment at the institution on a job application form since the denial of a charter implies that it effectively offers sub-standard education.<sup>18</sup> Second, it allows defunct privates to continue charging students tuition fees even though they know they are providing their students with little or no value. However, as long as these privates can reassure their students that accreditation will come, evidence of which can be seen in the number of privates that have had their licenses extended, then they can essentially engage in the exploitation practices that legislators seek to curb through the implementation of barriers to entry.

There are at least two alternative way of addressing this dilemma. One is for the government to make arrangements between the publics and new privates so that if a license is revoked or accreditation is not granted then the institution's students are guaranteed placement at another university. This is promising, partly because it has been employed in other countries, yet complicated because of the lack of uniformity across Ugandan institutions in terms of their degree structures and program requirements. Until the credit accumulation and transfer strat-

egies being developed by the NCHE come into force, it is difficult for the publics (or possibly even the accredited privates) to evaluate whether some or all of the student's prior coursework is transferable or if the student's capabilities will allow them to successfully do the academic work wherever they transfer to. This solution also raises an additional problem related to geographic mobility. Because most institutions, public and private, are located in the central part of the country, transferring may require a student to move and thus incur substantial additional costs (more on this in the next section).

A second and perhaps more preferable option would be for the NCHE to require newly established privates to partner with existing universities during their probationary period. In this 'mentoring' scheme the accredited institution would confer the new private provider's degrees during the licensing phase. The main benefit is that it provides new privates with more time to build up their capacity. It would also facilitate the establishment of new institution's programs (because the mentor institution's have already been approved) and facilitate credit transfer and accumulation because programs would be built on the basis of multiple institutions' experiences. What is more, such an option introduces incentive-based efficiency. Because the mentor institution is actually conferring the degree it has a vested interest in making sure that the new institution does not shirk on quality. Finally it does not force students to move or incur other transaction costs like the solution above.

### ***Geographic Imbalance and Student Choice***

The majority of Uganda's population resides largely in the greater Kampala region; not surprisingly, so too do most of the country's higher education institutions. Accurate figures are difficult to come by but at last count there were seventy post-secondary education institutions located in the central region (including three of the four public universities and most accredited private universities), 37 in the West, 32 in the East and only 16 in the North. These figures, coupled with others showing the diversity in educational infrastructure and school-going population across regions make clear how unequal the enrolment rates are, geographically.

The implication is that it is quite difficult for Ugandans outside of the greater Kampala region to find access to quality higher education. In some ways the expansion of the private sector helps to alleviate access concerns but in other ways it actually exacerbates the problem. Privates' offerings are largely limited to professional programmes and are regarded to be of a lower quality than publics; hence they seriously limit the educational opportunities of individuals living outside the capital region. Even though the country is geographically small, the transaction costs are high. The income of individuals living outside of Kam-

pala is much lower and makes it financially difficult (on both the students and their families) to simply up and move. What is more, this structure has an additional adverse effect on women who, for cultural reasons, often do not leave home to attend university (Musisi 2003). The imbalance not only harms access on the basis of need, but also when it comes to merit. This is driven less by the emergence of privates and more by the historic mode of public financing. Because the government does not channel funding directly to the student (it only subsidizes study places at public institutions on the basis of merit), academically talented students living away from Kampala must either move or pay the full cost for their education.

The problem is not one that can be easily rectified. Typical solutions used in other countries are not likely to work in Uganda largely because of insufficient funding. Establishing small public satellite institutions is not feasible because one, they would only offer limited academic offerings, which does not enhance individuals' freedom of program choice, and two, they would simply siphon off scarce public resources from the already inadequately-funded public institutions. The government partially subsidizing private providers in outlying areas so that they can offer a wider range of academic programs is limited again by where such funding would come from. It also raises a host of other questions about the divide between public and private offerings housed under a private provider's domain. Even the least intrusive option, providing academically talented students with grant funding that they can take to either public or private institutions, suffers from having the resources to do it.

### ***Balancing Society's and Students' Needs***

Currently, one of the NCHE's primary tasks is to oversee the completion of a labour market tracer study and graduates' expectations survey. As Uganda's economy has continued to expand, much attention has been given to the high rate of unemployment in general and among university graduates in particular. The available evidence (Kirumira & Bateganya 2003) supports what the NCHE and many others believe to be a key structural problem in Ugandan higher education: the mismatch between the education universities currently offer and the skills needed by business and industry. Only a small number of graduates are currently coming from the exact sciences while an overwhelming number are completing studies in the humanities and social sciences. The hope is that the findings from these studies can be used as a starting point for assessing the higher education system's current capacity to meet the country's labour market needs. Subsequently it will be used to shape the allocation of public funding, the structure of course curricula and to either reduce or expand institutions' programme offerings.

The expansion of the private sector has partly contributed to the imbalance since most of their programs are in a small number of professional fields. The problem here, however, is how a system that is becoming increasingly private can be persuaded to be more responsive to both state and labour market needs. By nature, private providers in market-driven systems will offer the programs and course offerings that are demanded. Since practically all of their income is generated by tuition fees, their program offerings are based jointly on cost-minimization and revenue-maximization.<sup>19</sup> This is why many privates tend to offer programs in professional fields like business and computer science and not in more academic fields like physics or biology: they are relatively inexpensive to offer and generally in high demand. To the NCHE and even the public universities, this revenue-driven model based on cheap programmatic offerings is precisely why privates are seen as greedy and exploiting a growing population of individuals seeking higher education for their own gain.

Hence the need for some degree of central program planning, even for the private sector, is necessary or else Uganda runs the risk of continuing to produce a glut of graduates in fields that are not necessarily conducive to advancing the needs of the local, regional or national economy. At the same time, dictating to private providers what they can and cannot offer is counterintuitive to the very purpose of opening up a higher education market.

Regulating program supply can be effective (the Dutch do it, for example) but the practice still runs counter to the notion of limited government invention in order to redress market failures. The logical option is to consider what types of incentive mechanisms can be used to entice private providers into providing programs that better meet society's needs. Human capital theory tells us that individuals will invest in education as long as the discounted value of the future benefits exceed the discounted value of the current costs. As stated earlier, one way to encourage individuals to take up programs in fields that society deems important is for the government to manipulate these benefits and costs through incentive schemes. Guaranteed employment in the public sector, for example, reduces students' uncertainty about their future income and hence may change their decision about what program to invest in as do scholarships and government repayment of student's education loans.

The lack of scholarships and grants in the private sector of the system means that the best students attend public universities. This further exacerbates the inequity between the two types of providers and is difficult to redress since funding follows the student and the program they apply to. An alternative national (or even institutional) funding scheme where socially-relevant programs receive disproportionately greater funding could help strengthen such programs and possibly increase their enrolments. Another option would be to partially

subsidize privates that are willing to provide such programs. This has been done with some success in the United States and in Germany and, like we pointed out earlier, would also help to resolve the equity problems that stem from the geographical imbalance of public and private institutions. Still another alternative would be the establishment of a grant/scholarship scheme that allows students to take the funding to the private sector as long as they enrolled in government-approved programs.

### Conclusion

The worldwide expansion of private higher education is here to stay and in the case of developing countries, is probably likely to do so at a much faster rate than in other countries. As higher education costs continue escalating even wealthier nations are finding it difficult to match the sector's resource needs with public support alone. In places like Uganda the expansion or possibly eventual domination of the sector by private providers makes good economic sense, in light of scarce public resources, even if it does present other difficulties.

Uganda is not alone in the problems it faces or in having to contend with a growing population of private higher education providers. Sub-Saharan Africa has seen remarkable growth in terms of both new institutions (Teferra & Altbach 2004) and enrolments (Banya & Elu 2001). The number of private higher education providers has grown as well, from less than twenty in the mid-1980s to more than eighty-five by 2002 and in all cases, the rationale for their new-found place remains the same: increasing consumer demand, declining capacity in the public sector, external pressures on governments to cut public services and growing demand for highly skilled labour. Like their Ugandan cousins, privates throughout Sub-Saharan Africa are generally small, professionally-oriented and expensive. They enjoy far less competition from the public sector the further they are from capital cities (Sawyer 2002), are more likely to be staffed by part-time instructors and generally seen by the public to be of much lower quality than the elite public universities that were founded in an earlier age and on different principles (Beverwijk 2005). To that end, the issues we explored in this paper are of practical relevance beyond the Ugandan case.

In the final analysis, the question really is whether the proposed changes will indeed help reach the nation's specific goals. Many of the activities and strategies being implemented by the NCHE will do much to strengthen the overall system's capacity to provide quality graduates and to better serve both individuals' and society's needs. At the same time, these choices will have both intended and unintended consequences that may dampen the gains many hope could be realized. In the desire to find a balance between market and government control, the only clear observation is that a balanced system is preferred to either of the

extremes. Today the NCHE and the country's higher education providers are working hard to find that balance under the realization that both sides have little experience with the challenges ahead. If history and other countries' experiences is any guide then both sides will reach some compromise to ensure that each gets what they are seeking.

### Notes

1. See the Program for Research on Higher Education's (PROPHE) for a bibliography of literature on the topic. <http://www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe>.
2. Unless otherwise noted, all figures and percentages come from internal NCHE documents that were provided to us.
3. As of 2004 universities enrolled 58 percent (63,811) of all post-secondary education students.
4. Of the latter, 13 were fully accredited while 15 were licensed and in the process of gaining accreditation.
5. The non-university tertiary sector is distinctly different from the universities and in the Ugandan context cannot be seen as higher education in the typical sense. Because of this we will not discuss these institutions in the rest of the paper.
6. Before 1992 all students at public institutions were fully funded. In the wake of a white paper published that year, Makerere and eventually the other public institutions shifted part of the cost burden to students. As Court (1999) reports, while public expenditures on primary education doubled between 1995 and 1999, public expenditures for higher education declined, in real terms, by 7 percent.
7. In 1999–2000 it is estimated that only 13–15 percent of students enrolled in science-based programs (Musisi 2003: 613).
8. In practice the Act primarily did three things: 1) clarified the government's intention to regulate the establishment and management of higher education institutions, 2) equated the qualifications of academic awards from different institutions, and 3) established an independent body with the legal authority to make such changes.
9. While this type of public investment is beneficial from a program provision view, as Wolf (1993) points out, whenever there is a differential between who pays for the good and who receives it, there is a tendency for 'government failures' to emerge that can also produce various types of inefficiency.
10. Indeed, an individual can only put a precise value on their education when they have finished their career.
11. Estelle James (1981; 1978) and James and Rose-Ackerman (1986) have written extensively on shirking in education provision, particularly in the context of non-profit providers. In many ways the problem is comparable to purchasing used cars or insurance. In the case of the former the seller knows the value

- of the automobile but the buyer does not. The car dealer then has considerable incentive to charge more than the fair price. In the case of the latter the individual knows how healthy he/she is and the insurance company does not. Here the individual has an incentive to tell the insurance provider that he/she is healthy in order to get a lower premium than a fair one.
12. Public higher education institutions are generally subject to similar rules and regulations, not for market failure reasons, but to encourage a level playing field in the competition between public and private providers. Because such institutions are established by the state, subsidized by public funding and subject to government oversight the concerns about market failures arising do not necessarily hold.
  13. Human capital theory (Becker 1964) basically states that individuals will invest in education as long as the discounted value of all future benefits derived from it exceeds the discounted value of all the education's costs.
  14. The state of Pennsylvania in the United States employs such a strategy. As the state does not operate a public university in the city of Philadelphia, it offers the privately-run University of Pennsylvania limited public subsidies to their medical school because there is no publicly-run university medical center in the state's largest city.
  15. See, for example, Teixeira et al. (2004) for a good analysis of private expansion in Portugal.
  16. In 2005 alone at least two private universities have taken the NCHE to court, demanding that their revoked licenses be reinstated. In both cases, the privates' licenses were reinstated and the time needed for obtaining accreditation lengthened (Mukisa 2005).
  17. This is implied since by law only chartered universities have the legal authority to award degrees.
  18. This is not as clear-cut as we make out. There is no concrete evidence to support the screening hypothesis (Vossensteyn 2005) and a recent study by Kirumira and Bateganya (2003) suggests that unemployment rates in Uganda do not differ greatly between individuals with a university degree and those with some university education.
  19. The exception would be those privates that are organized as non-profits.

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## Private Provision and Its Changing Interface with Public Higher Education: The Case of Kenya

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### Abstract

Like the rest of the continent, Kenya has a relatively long history of public provision of higher education. Policy reforms in the 1980s resulted in the legitimate recognition of the private sector. Emerging competition has forced both sectors to adopt specific coping strategies, and foster different types of provision such as: traditional setting up of private institutions; privatization of public sector institutions; franchising and other forms of partnerships; and internationalisation. Private universities are also venturing into alternative modes of delivery like evening programmes. On the legal front, intense regulation of the private sector is leading to evident seriousness, but at the same time is giving the public sector an undue advantage over the private, as it remains largely unchecked.

### Résumé

Comme le reste du continent, le Kenya a une histoire relativement longue en matière d'offre publique d'enseignement supérieur. Cependant ; les réformes politiques dans les années 1980 ont abouti à la reconnaissance légitime du secteur privé. La concurrence émergente a ainsi contraint les deux secteurs d'adopter des stratégies d'adaptation, et de favoriser différents types d'offres, tels que la mise en place traditionnelle d'établissements privés, la privatisation des établissements du secteur public; le franchisage et d'autres formes de partenariats, ainsi que l'internationalisation. Les universités privées se lancent aussi dans d'autres modes d'enseignement tels que les programmes dispensés le soir. Sur le plan juridique, la réglementation intense du secteur privé lui donne une importance manifeste, mais en même temps cela donne au secteur public un avantage excessif sur le privé car il reste largement incontrôlé.

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### Introduction

Africa inherited an education system that reflected the practice in Europe, with a history of public provision. The trend continued after independence. Despite the pioneering work of private religious institutions, public provision still dominates higher education in Africa. But its interaction with private provision reveals paradoxes and changing fortunes. It is a paradox of public domination in enrolment and private prevalence in numbers of institutions; of earlier private institutions overshadowed by later privileged public ones; of a high number of non-university tertiary higher education institutions (NU-HEIs) overshadowed in popularity by the few (public and private) university institutions; and of the public sector institutional reforms to challenge the private sector institutional initiatives, ultimately inviting private sector counter reforms to compete with public. Competitive dynamics are raising the popularity of the NU-HEIs in yet another reconfiguration as public universities franchise private NU-HEIs to raise the stakes against private universities. The franchising of NU-HEIs by public universities benefits both sides: public universities are expanding their reach and generating more income as the NU-HEIs raise their status. This form of collaboration is not new. It is indeed part of the 'academic drift' - the attempt of the non-university sector to achieve the much higher status of the university sector (Huisman and Kaiser 2001). The end result is a competitive turf for both public and private institutions. The public-private relations then become more complex, even intertwined, with the status of one player increasingly being affected by the policies, measures and practices pursued by the other player. The benefits are mixed, and opportunities are open to both. In the end, public and private institutions behave more or less the same, except for a few distinctions.

This article discusses these changing dynamics in private and public provision<sup>1</sup> of higher education in Kenya. The discussion is structured in three parts. The ensuing section lays the historical foundation of higher education in Kenya. Regulatory issues are discussed in part two. Part three is devoted to types of private provision and its changing interface with public higher education.

### Historical Overview

In East Africa, higher education development is traced back to 1921 when a technical school opened at Makerere Hill in Kampala, Uganda. In 1922, it was renamed Makerere College and mandated to offer certificate courses in technical education, gradually being elevated to offer diploma courses in 1937 (Bogonko 1992). In 1949, it was elevated to the University College of East Africa. In 1963 the University of East Africa was inaugurated with two constituent colleges in Nairobi (Kenya) and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania). The parent university in Makerere offered medicine and agriculture with Dar es Salaam offering law

while Nairobi offered engineering, veterinary medicine and architecture. In 1970, the University of East Africa was wound up and Makerere University, the University of Dar es Salaam and the University of Nairobi (UoN) were inaugurated. This marked the beginning of independent development of public university education in each of the three states.

Private, mainly religious, provision also started during the colonial era: St. Paul's United Theological College (1930); Kenya Highlands Bible College (KHBC) (1953) and Scott Theological College (STC) (1962). The first secular private university, the United States International University (USIU) was started in 1969; Daystar University in 1974; the University of Eastern Africa in 1978 and the Catholic Higher Education Institute of East Africa (CHEIEA) in 1983. The Church therefore played a leading role in setting up higher education institutions, like in other parts of the world. However, unlike in Latin America where Catholic Church played a pivotal role in establishing universities (Levy 1986), Catholics were not the pioneers in establishing higher education institutions in Kenya, or even East Africa. Protestant Churches took the lead. Currently, the region has 46 universities (Kenya, 23 (6 public and 17 private (Table 2)); Uganda, 13 (2 public and 11 private), and Tanzania 10 (3 public and 7 private). The total number of higher education institutions in Kenya stands at 130 (KIPPRA 2004) while Tanzania has 28 (10 universities, 7 university colleges and 11 NU-HEIs) (Mkude, Cooksey and Levey 2003).

This brief background reveals specific attributes of public and private provision. The former was regional and secular, the latter religious and country specific. One aspect though that does not change over the years is ownership: public institutions are owned by the state and private institutions are owned by Churches, wealthy individuals and international foundations private consortia. Later, we see how new circumstances dictate shifts in some of these features.

### Reasons for Growth

The impetus for rapid growth globally is attributed to an unprecedented increase in the demand for higher education, coupled with strained capacity of governments to support public higher education (Altbach 1999). In Africa, the factors for growth coalesce around three related factors<sup>2</sup>. First, reduced government funding of public universities meant that the expansion of the public sector was limited. Second, the broader economic reorientation under structural adjustment policies that African countries implemented from the late 1980s and 1990s. This involved economic liberalisation, limiting the role of the government and allowing more private sector participation in the economy. It is at this time that most of the policies that allowed private higher education growth were enacted. A third factor relates to the high number of (mostly religious) private institutions

before liberalisation. The institutions simply applied for university status upon the enactment of the enabling legislation. The steep rise in the number of private universities has, therefore, had less to do with the setting up of new institutions but more with the upgrading of the existing ones, in as much as new institutions emerged in the 1990s. Upgrading meant lower start-up costs because the basic infrastructure was in place.

The policy environment resulting from these measures has therefore played a crucial role in the expansion of private universities. The number of institutions rose from one in 1969 to 17 in 2005. Over 80 percent of private institutions have a religious sponsor, curriculum, or affiliation. Growth patterns in private university education in Kenya reveal that the mostly elite (secular) institutions have had a much faster growth than the purely religious ones mainly because of offering a more diversified curriculum. The secular USIU holds the largest share of enrolment. Other religious universities are also expanding but mostly after secularising their curriculum. Those that do not, like STC, despite being in the 'elite' club of chartered institutions, comparatively have the lowest enrolments. A different aspect to the world trend is that private universities in Kenya are not demand-absorbing institutions. This sets Kenya apart from the global trend of low-quality private universities, especially among many countries that have a similar length of history of private sector institutions.

### **Enrolments**

Public universities still dominate in enrolments, even though there are more private institutions (Table 1). The total enrolments of self-sponsored students (Module II) at UoN in 2004/2005 was more than the regular full-time students and also higher by 7,687 students than the enrolment in all private universities. Enrolments in the self-sponsored programmes are actually higher since many students are integrated (attend the same classes as regular students, as opposed to mainly evening and school-based study) in full-time study. What this attests is that public universities have been able to increase their internal capacity much faster than the private universities. The part-time, private programmes are responsible for this increase, since there is stagnation in the number of regular students being enrolled in public universities. For the past (1990s) decade, new admissions never exceeded 10,000 students.

**Table 1:** Student enrolments in Kenyan public and private universities, 2000/2001–2004/2005

Institution	2000/2001		2001/2002		2002/2003		2003/2004		2004/2005	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<i>Public universities</i>										
<i>Nairobi</i>	10,532	4,302	15,426	9,270	16,200	9,486	16,991	9,720	21,268	11,706
Full-time	8,383	3,331	8,724	4,450	9,163	4,428	9,603	4,406	9,987	5,250
Part-time	2,149	960	6,702	4,820	7,037	5,061	7,389	5,314	11,281	6,456
<i>Kenyatta</i>	5,942	4,010	6,831	4,984	10,737	4,998	10,753	5,023	11,252	4,403
Full-time	4,510	3,019	5,384	3,983	4,972	3,329	5,221	3,495	4,313	2,887
Part-time	1,433	991	1,447	1,001	5,765	1,669	5,532	1,528	6,939	1,916
<i>Moi</i>	4,753	3,766	5,469	3,869	6,275	4,549	5,804	4,643	6,796	5,214
Full-time	4,046	3,163	4,066	3,179	4,086	3,195	4,107	3,211	4,304	3,195
Part-time	707	603	1,403	690	2,188	1,354	1,697	1,432	2,492	2,019
<i>Egerton</i>	6,629	2,356	6,816	2,284	6,975	2,387	6,908	2,444	6,351	2,246
Full-time	5,981	2,127	6,161	2,053	6,307	2,151	6,207	2,196	5,540	1,960
Part-time	648	229	655	232	668	236	701	248	810	287



**Table 1: (Continued)**

Institution	2000/2001		2001/2002		2002/2003		2003/2004		2004/2005	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<i>JKUAT*</i>	2,992	1,288	2,565	1,115	3,184	1,404	3,203	1,454	4,315	1,959
Full-time	1,301	520	857	339	1,442	613	1,373	624	2,201	999
Part-time	1,691	768	1,708	776	1,742	791	1,829	831	2,114	960
<i>Maseno</i>	2,596	1,538	2,531	1,518	3,505	2,130	3,429	2,178	3,413	2,168
Full-time	1,994	1,155	1,922	1,132	2,885	1,736	2,777	1,765	2,660	1,690
Part-time	602	383	608	386	620	394	651	414	753	478
Sub-total	33,444	17,260	39,637	23,040	46,875	24,957	47,088	25,462	53,394	28,097
<b><i>Private universities</i></b>										
Accredited	3,093	4,050	3,122	4,089	3,476	4,163	3,650	4,371	3,796	4,546
Unaccredited	876	472	949	511	748	742	763	757	801	907
Subtotal	3,968	4,521	4,071	4,600	4,224	4,905	4,412	5,128	4,597	5,453
Total	37,412	21,781	43,709	27,640	51,099	29,862	51,500	30,590	57,990	33,551
Grand total	59,193		71,349		80,961		82,090		91,541	

**Source:** Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2005. \* Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

The private share of total enrolments is currently only 12.1 percent, from a high of 20 percent before the onset of privatisation (Otieno 2002). The rapid growth of the public sector universities, especially through Module II programmes, largely explains the reduced private share. Public sector enrolments in 2004/2005 reflect a growth of 80.5 percent (or 16.1 percent annually) over 2000/2001. In contrast, the private university growth is 18.4 percent (3.7 percent annual) over the same period. The growth pattern reflects the changing fortunes of public and private institutions. The privatisation gains by the former create hurdles for the latter. For the private universities, stringent accreditation<sup>3</sup> requirements played a great role in the initial growth, but less stringent regulation (or the lack of it) now largely explains the public surge. We examine this aspect of regulation in some detail in the ensuing section.

### **The Regulation of Public–Private Provision**

Much of the pace, direction, type and level of private provision is influenced greatly by regulatory policies. Literature attests to the rigid regulation of private as opposed to the public sector. Gupta (2004) shows that in India, current growth is facilitated by the absence of a ‘restraining’ centralized national government. Implied in this observation is that centralised national regulation can slow down private growth (Levy 2003). In Japan, private universities are complaining of government interference via accreditation policies (Yonezawa 2005). The East African experience is not different from the rest of the world. At the height of initiating private colleges in the mid 1980s, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania established accreditation agencies to regulate the provision of higher education. Kenya was the first to establish the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) in 1985. Tanzania followed with the setting up of the Higher Education Accreditation Council (HEAC) and Uganda with National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). Other than nomenclature, all these bodies concentrate more on the private than public institutions. Evidence suggests that accreditation bodies can be tough, and enforce regulations with zeal. Gupta (2004) cites cases that have ended up in courts in India<sup>4</sup>. In Uganda, NCHE revoked the license of one private university in April 2005 for ‘lacking the capacity to effectively deliver higher education’. Three others were given one year to upgrade to charter status while a fourth was given three months to demonstrate its ‘viability’ or close down (*The East African*, June 2005, p.28). In keeping with this international trend, Kenya’s CHE forced the Australian Universities Institute (AUSI) to drop the ‘university’ tag because it had not been registered as a university in 2003. In 2005, it moved to stop a graduation ceremony of a little known private institution<sup>5</sup> in partnership with Newport International University, which is neither ac-

credited in Kenya nor in the United States. Though the partner institution in Kenya defied the order and held the graduation ceremony, the CHE later declared the ceremony null and void, the degrees bogus, and the university illegal, meaning that the degrees are not recognised. The rigour is also attested by the high number of institutions still in the 'registered' category for more than 15 years (Table 2). Mostly, these institutions have failed to diversify their curriculum and upgrade facilities.

**Table 2:** Categories of accredited private universities in Kenya by 2002

Accreditation	Institutions in category	Year of level/ category accreditation
I. Chartered Universities (granted own charter)	University of Eastern Africa, Baraton	1992
	Catholic University of Eastern Africa	1994
	Daystar University	1994
	Scott Theological College	1997
	United States International University	1999
	African Nazarene University	2002
II. Registered (issued with letters of registration after fulfilling the 1989 Rules. Registration a recognition of existence)	East African School of Theology	1989
	Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology	1989
	Nairobi International School of Theology	1989
	Pan-Africa Christian College	1989
	Kenya Highlands Bible College	1989
	St. Paul's United Theological College	
III. The Letter of Interim Authority (LIA) authorised to prepare for the implementation of proposal accepted by CHE including admission of students	Aga Khan University	2002
	Kabarak University	2000
	Strathmore University	2002
	Kiriiri Women's Univ. of Science & Technology	2002
	Kenya Methodist University	1997

**Source:** Commission for Higher Education Records, 2005.

A fact not often given much attention is the reason for CHE's concentration on policing the private and not public universities, despite being empowered by the Act. Part of the reason is the failure to harmonise the CHE Act with the Universities Act. Second is the initial suspicion of private universities on quality grounds. It is doubtful whether some public universities would be accredited if

they were subjected to the same regulations applied to private universities, notwithstanding that they have some of the most qualified staff. Also questionable is the quality of their private partners.

There are three legal instruments guiding the public-private provision in Kenya: (i) the Universities Act (1985); (ii) the 1989 Universities Rules on Establishment of Universities (Standardization, Accreditation and Supervision); and, (iii) the 2004 Universities Rules on Coordination of Post-Secondary School Institutions for University Education. The 1989 rules provide that upon becoming operational, no university would operate in Kenya without the express authority of CHE or any other person competent to grant such authority under the Universities Act of 1985. These rules apply to: (i) private universities (ii) public universities other than those established by an Act of Parliament (iii) foreign universities; and, (iv) any agency operating or intending to operate as or on behalf of such university within Kenya. The 2004 rules provide for the validation of academic programmes and granting authority to post-secondary institutions to collaborate with other institutions in offering academic programmes.

There are two notable ambiguities in the legal framework. One is a narrow definition of public and private universities. According to the law, ‘a “private university” means a university established with funds other than public funds’, while ‘a “public university” means a university maintained or assisted out of public funds’ (Kenya 1989:90). Second, public universities are set up under specific Acts of Parliament while private universities are accredited under the CHE Act. But the CHE Act is itself established under the Universities’ Act as Chapter 210B of the Laws of Kenya. It is not an independent statute. The Acts establishing universities give them the freedom to run their programmes without prior reference to the CHE, unlike the chartered private universities<sup>6</sup>. The Acts also provide that the heads of these universities be appointed by, and be answerable to, the State president as the Chancellor.<sup>7</sup> Under the CHE Act, the Chief Executive of that body is appointed by a minister who is an appointee of the president. Public university heads argue that, technically, they are direct appointees of the president and not answerable to an appointee of a minister (that is, the CEO of the CHE), who is also an appointee of the president.

The failure to harmonise the Universities’ Act and the CHE Act is therefore one of the major shortcomings of the regulatory regime in Kenya. The practice of hiring public university staff to evaluate proposed programmes of private universities also places undue demand on the private universities to meet public university standards, including the curriculum. In turn, this narrows the scope of programmatic diversity in the private universities, as the public universities personnel appointed to evaluate programmes of private institutions view programmes

from the perspectives of their public university background. Private universities also feel constrained that public university personnel dominate the accreditation agency, and see the laws and its enforcement as a calculated move to perpetuate their insubordination to the public. The bone of contention seems to be that the law is not applied uniformly, and that it inhibits private provision while, by omission, it leaves the public sector unencumbered. Kenya is not alone in this. Such concerns are also evident in Japanese higher education (Yonezawa 2005).

### **Types of Private Provision and Changing Dynamics with Public Provision**

#### ***Principal Manifestation of Private Provision***

The common manifestation of private provision is setting up private institutions. In countries like the United States, Japan, the Philippines and South Korea, private provision has flourished (Altbach 1999). In Kenya, the pace of growth of private institutions has been fast since the establishment of CHE in 1985. Before then, there was no legal framework guiding the establishment of private universities. The first private university was accredited in 1992, with two more being accredited in 1994. By this time, there were four public universities with a student population of about 40,000 (Kenya 1996). Currently, there are 6 public compared to 17 private universities. Compared to the public sector universities, there has been a faster growth in the number of private universities. Though enrolments have been growing, it has grown at a slower pace compared to public universities (refer to Table 1).

There is a close concentration of enrolments in a few universities. The chartered/accredited private universities have the bulk of private enrolments in Kenya. Three of them: Daystar, USIU and CUEA, account for about 74 percent of the private sector enrolment. This attribute is shared with public universities, where three universities (Nairobi, Kenyatta and Moi) dominate with 74.4 percent of the public sector enrolment. The unaccredited ('other private' – those having letters of interim authority and registered universities) category have very low enrolments, constituting just about 13.7 percent. Inter-sectorally, public universities dominate higher education, but intra-sectorally, the few, elite chartered institutions dominate private university enrolment. A notable feature of the table is the dominance of USIU, which has the single highest institutional share. USIU is striking not only for its secularity and elitism, but also for being the most expensive institution. The only member of the elite chartered club with low enrolment is STC – the only one not to have secularized so far. Secularism reflects the changing shifts in institutional attributes engendered by competition. On the one hand, secularism is a feature of the popular public universities which private

counterparts now find attractive to embrace. On the other hand, competition from private providers now brings efficiency in public institutions, with regard to utilisation of resources and facilities and dependence on tuition income unlike a few years ago.

### ***Public Privatization***

Private provision by public universities, often in the form of privately-sponsored, full fee-paying students is increasingly becoming the dominant mode of public privatisation. In Eastern Africa, Makerere University was the pioneer in offering Module II programmes. Privatisation of public university programmes was a direct result of the decline in public resources the need to generate income to supplement the diminished state support. The state therefore encouraged public universities to diversify their sources of finances and programmes. Being income-generating programmes, tuition in Module II programmes are as high as those in the private universities and, in some cases, even higher. Enrolment in a single Module II programme could be as high as total enrolment in a private university. For instance, total enrolment at USIU in 2002/2003 was 2,931 while those enrolled in commerce under module II at the University of Nairobi (UoN) alone was 2,683. This figure is equivalent to 92 percent of enrolment at USIU. Overall, UoN had 53 percent of its students in these programmes. In 2002/2003, the university raised a total of Ksh 1,209,512,592 (US\$ 15,914,639) from these programmes.

The upshot is that while the public universities continue to increase their enrolments courtesy of privatisation, and despite there being three private universities for every one public university, the private university share of total university enrolment is declining, notably in the last five years from 20 percent in 1999 to 16.4 percent in 2001 to a low of 13.0 percent in 2003 and 12.1 percent in 2005. Privatisation of public universities therefore diminishes the private share of enrolment, even though the private enrolment continues to grow in absolute numbers. Private universities are also launching both evening and distance learning modes to offset the dominance of the public programmes. The terminologies may be different, but the principle remains the same. Notably, however, while Module II public university programmes are much more expensive than the regular, the trend is reversed in the private universities, where the alternative modes tend to be cheaper. This is a deliberate move to enlist more students. Private universities realise their disadvantage and have been keen to make up for it by competitively pricing their product.

In summary, while the public universities are the originators of alternative modes of delivery, private universities replicate them in order to remain attractive. The public sector institutions/universities began to privatise in order to

compete with the private, of course driven by a need to increase their funding base, but the private sector institutions now copy the public to compete. An important dynamic in public-private provision relevant to the theme of this special issue concerns the rebound effects of public privatisation. A general assumption initially was that public universities provided quality education, and private institutions were regarded with some level of suspicion. Debate is now shifting to the quality of private programmes in public universities. Public universities are accused of 'worshipping at the altar of intellectual quantity (but wishing away quality', leading to the production of 'half baked graduates' (*Daily Nation*, 24 July 2005, p.5). Reports indicate that in 2004, 84 (32.1 percent) out of 261 privately-sponsored students in medicine at UoN failed in their examinations, compared to only 10 (3.4 percent) out of 262 in the regular class. Such developments mar the reputation of private programmes offered by public universities. Private institutions may be losing out on numbers of students, but developments like these might just enable them to gain the advantage they have lost to the public competitors, especially on quality grounds.

### **Partnerships**

Partnerships or franchise arrangements are becoming increasingly popular in the provision of higher education. Partnerships have been both engendered and fostered by competition. Public universities have been more aggressive in franchising their programmes to local public and private NU-HEIs. Leading is Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) that has franchised to 21 colleges so far (Otieno 2004). Moi University has similar arrangements with a number of institutions, the most popular of which is the partnership with a private business college, Kenya Institute of Management (KIM). Kenyatta University's most known partnership is with a commercial college, the Nairobi Institute of Business Studies (NIBS), among others. Public university partnerships with private NU-HEIs seem to be purely motivated by the need to raise additional income, since they are a feature not seen before the current financial crunch facing public universities. Not surprisingly, private commercial colleges located in major urban centres and therefore having the potential of enrolling more students appear to be popular with public universities in forging partnerships. Notably, bigger public and private institutions with more marketable programmes like UoN and USIU have been less enthusiastic in franchising. They are fairly well centrally located and have some of the most marketable programmes. On the other hand, some of the leading institutions in franchising are disadvantaged in being located far from the capital city and it is especially difficult to attract non-resident students. Principally, partnerships entail a university allowing a college to offer programmes in its own (college) campus but



certification is done by the franchising university. In most cases, some of these programmes are drawn by the university, sometimes solely while in other cases in consultation. In return, the franchised college remits a specific portion of funds accruing from such programmes to the university. The specific amount or proportion of funds remitted would depend on the memorandum of understanding between the two institutions.

The current public push for partnerships with commercial private colleges contrasts sharply with only a few years ago when they were merely tolerated. The private university challenge is mostly responsible for this changed public perception of private university education. Notable also is that the regulating authority is not questioning or vetting the public university initiatives, in stark contrast to its strict policing of the private. Another important point to note is that these colleges are private but find it convenient to affiliate to the public. But the public universities realise that the best way to tap the 'private' market is through private colleges that have a long tradition in specific disciplines, that are known to charge economic fees, and that are generally patronised by the working class or those focusing on the private employment sector.

Rarely would a private university partner with a public university – since they are in direct competition – but a private university would partner with a public college (though this is also mostly rare) as a public university partners with a private NU-HEI. In this latter arrangement, the private entity is motivated to gain the status, prestige and, in some cases, access to certain privileges restricted to public institutions, or simply to enhance its own competitiveness. This is a common practice in most of the world (Levy 2003).

### ***Internationalisation in the Provision of Higher Education***

Internationalisation in education could be analysed from two fronts: the framework of General Trade in Services (GATS), and local conditions and initiatives that attract international students and faculty (even before WTO). Drawing from the Kenyan experience, this article analyses three forms of internationalisation: international studentship, foreign campuses, and establishing consortia.

#### ***a) International Studentship***

Much has been written on international studentship (United States [Altbach 2004], Russia [Smolentseva 2004], Australia [Burn 2000], Kenya [Kigotho 2001]). The concern of this article is the broader picture of international studentship in public-private provision, and specifically the flow of international students to public and private institutions. Though the wider picture is not known, Deloitte and Touche (1994) found a large proportion of foreign students in private institutions. A later study (Wesonga et al. 2003) reports that private universities

enrol more foreign students than public universities where they constitute 12 percent and 6 percent at CUEA and Daystar respectively. USIU attracts students from over 40 nationalities across all the five continents. The presence of international students at USIU is largely explained by the patronage by diplomatic community and other international organizations based in Nairobi. Even in the religious institutions, foreign students dominate. At the Pan-African Christian College, foreign students accounted for up to 67 percent of all students while at the Nairobi International School of Theology, the figure was 25 percent. The overall proportion of foreign students in these two universities is 9 percent. This proportion is more or less similar to that established in South Africa (Subotzky 2002) at 9 percent for private institutions/providers and 6.55 percent for the overall higher education sector in that country.

The number of foreign students in the public universities, though largely not documented, is much less by comparison to that of foreign students in the private higher education sector. Explanations for the difference in the number of foreign students in public and private universities could be attributed to three factors. First is the efficiency of private institutions, suggesting that the instability such as caused by strikes that characterize public universities discourages foreign students from seeking admission there. Second, the ownership (both international and regional) and affiliations of private institutions pull foreign students into Kenya. CUEA is owned by the Association of Member Episcopal Conference of Eastern Africa. As such, its rectors and other officials are appointed regionally. This predisposes it to attracting many international students. The same can be said of UEAB, Daystar, and other private universities. Foreign ownership gives institutions a high profile in attracting foreign students. At USIU, there is a notion that one can have an American-type university education in Kenya, while admission at AUSI is an automatic guarantee for eventual studies in Australia. This is one unique advantage that private universities seem to have over the public, and which the public may never possibly attain.

Third, foreign students in local public universities typically pay more than nationals for the same education, making it not much different from the private universities. It is therefore understandable if students prefer the private universities, where in any case there are already more foreign students and therefore a more internationalised environment than the public, besides of course, the lure of completing their studies faster than they would in the public, given the frequent interruptions at the latter.

#### *b) Foreign campuses*

There are three offshore campuses in Kenya. Some like AUSI operate independently. Others (University of London and Technikon South Africa – now merged

with the University of South Africa) both collaborate with a local private institution, the Kenya School of Professional Studies while others (like Free State University, South Africa) franchise semi-autonomous public institutions, for example Kenya College of Communications and Technology. A few facts are noteworthy. First, foreign institutions opt to collaborate with NU-HEIs, mostly because they (NU-HEIs) have a need to enhance their profile in a market that is becoming highly competitive. Second, most institutions are private. Currently, no fully public institution serves as a campus of any foreign university. Third, foreign campuses constitute only a small proportion of tertiary institutions in Kenya, and also enrol a minority. This is a typical private feature in Kenya. Fourth, most of the offshore campuses, as typified by AUSI, rely on courses in high demand, a trait shared with the elite USIU. An additional pertinent observation is the intense engagement of private NU-HEIs by both public universities and foreign (public and private) institutions. The NU-HEIs are thus in a uniquely attractive position. They can offer programmes leading to a local public university certification, a foreign private university certification or a foreign public certification. This further enhances their competitive edge over the local private universities that are mostly missing in this mode of provision. Their association with public universities also enhances the public edge over the private.

*c) Consortia*

In a move aimed at bolstering their penetration and accessing the East African educational market, two groups of universities in Britain have formed two competing forums, the Northern Consortium of British Universities and the British Universities in Africa Group. Notable is that most of the British universities are public, but competing for students from Africa<sup>8</sup>. These consortia organise joint recruitment of students from East Africa. They do not collaborate with either private or public universities. These consortia are a common international competitor to both public and private universities for local fee-paying students who would either opt for local public or private university education. Thus, instead of seeing just the local public and private universities, students find a third alternative.

More worrisome for local universities is that these groups are formulating new strategies to secure the East African market. The Northern Consortium of British Universities launched a foundation course at one of the high-cost private schools in Kenya (Braeburn) meant to specifically prepare students for further education in Britain by bridging the gap between the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) and university entry requirements in Britain. The students are thus tied to join specific universities within this consortium upon completing their studies.

### ***Sectoral Issues in Private–Public Provision***

#### *a) Finance*

Other than ownership, the other distinguishing characteristic that makes institutions public or private is the source of finance. Public universities are funded directly by the state. Private universities generate their own funds from sponsors/owners or tuition fees. In Kenya, another key distinction is drawn from the law, which defines them in terms of sources of funds. The legal definition of a public and private university in Part II of the Act implies that private universities cannot access public funds and vice versa. The practice in Uganda is different, as the government directly supports private universities from the public funds, though minimally compared to the public institutions. Kenya has not managed to provide funding to private universities directly but students in accredited private universities now receive publicly-funded student loans. This is a significant victory for private universities. Whereas before, most of the finance would be guaranteed for the public universities, there is now a competition for funds between students in private and public universities. It means that less is going to public universities than before. Access to funds encourages potential students to head to the private sector institutions/universities since they are certain of getting at least a component of tuition paid. Notably, this is leading to greater differentiation in access to private university education, as less affluent students access the institutions. As students from the less privileged backgrounds access the private universities, the institutions gain from an improved image, in contrast to the previous notion of being exclusive clubs for the rich. To improve their image further, some institutions are combining access to the loans with student aid facilities to pull more students to enrol and enhance their 'corporate social responsibility' image in the eyes of the wider public and therefore win more recognition and claim legitimacy. The reconfiguration in financing is thus aiding the private university sector to entrench itself more than before. It is significant that up to 15 percent of all students enrolled/registered with private universities are accessing publicly-funded loans, while they constitute less than 13 percent of the university population (Otieno 2004).

Apart from the publicly-funded student loans, public and private universities have benefited from bursaries from private foundations, the most notable being the Rattansi Educational Trust. The funds from this trust are now shared between public and private universities almost equally. These developments mean that public universities now have to compete for both public and private resources unlike ten years ago. It is therefore not just the private universities that have to adjust to compete with the public universities: the public have to wake up to new realities of private challenge.

*b) Curriculum*

Granted, public institutions have had a much more diversified/secularized curriculum compared to the private institutions. Three factors seem to determine the programmes offered in these universities: tradition, i.e. original objectives for which the universities were set up; cost; and market demands (Abagi, Nzomo and Otieno 2005). It is hard for institutions with a strong theological foundation to survive in a competitive, secular market. Pressure from two sources has been on the private institutions/universities to diversify. One is market forces that largely demand secular programmes. The other is the regulatory requirement that private institutions diversify their curriculum by introducing programmes other than the religious ones. In doing so, however, the private universities are disadvantaged because the public universities have longer traditions in offering programmes other than religious programmes. They have the facilities, the resources, including the personnel and academics (in numbers and quality), and, therefore, the tradition. Private universities have resorted to 'poaching' lecturers from the public universities, or, where they cannot succeed, to use them as part-timers. For this reason, a number of undergraduate programmes in both public and, especially those in an urban location, private universities are taught by the same faculty. Before private universities mount programmes, the curriculum for the new programmes are scrutinised by the CHE, which in most cases hires personnel from the public universities. Invariably, the hired public university staff equate the proposed programmes to their own, so that there is really no difference between public and private university curriculum content for some programmes. In fact, to be able to pass the CHE scrutiny easily, a number of private universities hire public university lecturers to write their proposals and design their programmes. Four of the elite private universities planned a number of new programmes (Table 3).

All the programmes (in general) offered by private universities are being offered by at least one public university, with the exception of theology. The University of Nairobi is offering all the programmes offered at the private universities. The attempt to diversify curriculum at the private universities is a direct response to the challenge of Module II programmes in public universities. The new programmes are therefore an attempt to address an inherent and historical disadvantage the private universities have faced.

**Table 3:** Planned courses at USIU, Daystar, UEAB and CUEA

University	Planned Programmes in 2004
USIU	Environmental Science, Physics, and Electronic/Telecommunications Engineering
Daystar	MBA, MSc (Management), French, Management Information Systems (MIS), Special education, postgraduate diploma in Education, Law, Public Relations, Electronic and Chemical Engineering and Bio-Chemistry
CUEA	Bachelor of Pharmacy, Bachelor of Medicine, B.Sc. (Chemistry & Biological Sciences)
UEAB	MA (Religion), Master of Divinity)

**Source:** Wesonga et al. (2003).

In a nutshell, there has not been much in terms of innovation by private universities, except to replicate the programmes already being offered by the public universities. Private universities have avoided programmes that are capital-intensive like medicine, even when they are in comparatively advantageous positions. For instance, CUEA has ignored medical courses even though its sponsor, the Catholic Church has one of the biggest and better equipped hospitals in the region which could be used as a teaching hospital, and several other hospitals in the country that could be used for internships. Lack of innovation on the part of the private universities therefore puts the public university at a fairly competitive advantage. Students conscious of this advantage would naturally tilt to public universities. As already demonstrated, total enrolment in Module II/private programmes in public universities is more than the total enrolment in all private universities. Public universities have therefore taken the lead in expanding access to higher education through the Module II programmes. Because of these programmes, private share of total university enrolment is now only 12.1 percent. Lack of diversity in private university curriculum, besides other factors, explains the private decline.

*c) The Not-For-Profit/For-Profit Distinction*

Generally, public higher education is non-profit (and still is, legally, even though the practice is different). Even in private higher education, much of the enrolment remains in non-profit institutions (Levy 2003). In Kenya, neither universities (both public and private) nor NU-HEIs are expressly for-profit, though, in practice, the for-profit behaviour is openly exhibited by private NU-HEIs.

There is a general aversion to for-profit institutions in Kenya for two reasons. First, they are perceived as low-cost, commercially-driven and merely demand-absorbing. Second is the lack of official recognition of for-profit institutions. But there is no law that bars for-profit operations in the provision of higher education, in as much as there is none that defines what they are or stipulates how they are to be set up and governed. Some institutions are for-profits but disguise their practices and intentions. Daystar University is an example. While its Charter indicates that it is a church-based institution, ownership is by a registered private limited company. Other seemingly philanthropic institutions like CUEA also exhibit for-profit behaviour. At CUEA, every late tuition fee payment is subjected to a 5 percent surcharge. Analysis of financial records of some universities revealed that they do register surpluses that are in many cases not ploughed back into supporting needy students (Wesonga et al. 2003). Public universities also make profit from their Module II programmes, but they would rather use the term 'income' even where they register surpluses, and are therefore logically profit-making.

### Conclusion

The transformation of the Kenyan higher education landscape has been rapid, and the terrain more diversified than a decade ago. The Kenyan case typifies the rest of East Africa, and indeed, African experience. There are more higher education institutions, more programmes, increased enrolment, and greater diversification – both in programmes and types of institutions. A strong competition between public and private institutions forces both to adopt coping strategies, which, invariably, entails copying attributes of the other. The result is a blurred boundary between what is purely public and what is purely private, save for the legal definitions, ownership and funding. Many private universities shed off their initial religious tags with the realisation that competition is only viable with a secularised curriculum. Indeed, secularism is enabling the predominantly religious/Christian institutions to mount a viable alternative to the public sector. This further changes the landscape from the public monopoly of yesteryear.

Arising from the competitive dynamics, the transformation is unavoidable, and reflects the practice in most parts of the world where a private sector emerges in the midst of an entrenched public sector, and where both face the challenges of market pressure and financial need. The observed trend in such situations is a convergence of behavioural patterns among public and private institutions (Kraak 2003). The global tendency that Kenya is currently exhibiting is for public institutions to be more entrepreneurial, with the adoption of private sector attributes. Such situations would breed more expansion, diversification and innovation. Besides an increase in the number of institutions, there is also internal expan-



sion of institutional capacities to cater for more students, in most cases, being more than double (especially for the public universities) the capacity before privatization.

The replication of public university programmes by private universities contrasts sharply with the intense diversification by the former, particularly with regard to reaching out to both the urban and rural, fringe locations and introducing new programmes. In a sense, the peripheral public universities have also replicated programmes in the more urban, bigger and more popular universities, meaning that competition is not just between public and private but also between the public themselves, further reflecting the inevitable outcome of inter and intra-sectoral diversification.

How much the private university sector would respond to effectively counter the emerging public dominance in private provision is hard to predict. As much as the (accredited) private universities have tried to diversify by introducing programmes popular in public universities to attract more students, they have retained specific niches: USIU remains a mostly elite institution with a specialty in business studies; Daystar remains popular for communication studies; UEAB is the leading private in nursing and automotive technology studies; and CUEA retains a niche in education among private universities. Public challenge does not therefore necessarily result in the degeneration of serious institutions into mere demand absorbers that attract remnants left out by the prestigious public. But like in other parts of the world, specifically South Africa as observed by Mabizela (2003), private higher education in Kenya is very much on the shadows of the public – which provides the leadership in virtually all areas, perhaps with the exception of private behaviour. But even then, the public sector universities have adopted these behaviour characteristics and use them to out-perform, and compete in, the private market with tremendous success. As the public perfects private attributes with the franchising of NU-HEIs, it is popularizing these colleges even to the extent of posing a challenge to the private universities. The private is therefore left to compete with its own kind from one angle, and, from another, with the public; thus raising more hurdles for private universities. This development provides a serious agenda for researchers on private-public provision, with particular attention to the legal implications of unfettered public franchising of post secondary institutions while private universities reel under public heavy regulation. Such partnerships seem to provide a shortcut for the middle colleges to circumvent regulation and offer degrees that their current status does not otherwise allow. But the strict public regulation of the private sector in Kenya is very much in keeping with international trends. The difference in Kenya is the positive result of making the institutions truly serious rather

than mere demand absorbers. Why Kenya stands out starkly in this regard provides yet another possible area of study.

A study of public–private provision is thus one of diversity and duality. However, it could still be argued that duality is what engenders diversity or differentiation. But differentiation is in itself both an imperative and an outcome of competition, so is convergence of patterns as sectors exhibit each other’s traits in diverse ways and at different times. In the end, there is less diversity/differentiation but more similarities. The Kenyan case thus typifies global trends in higher education development, as revealed in Levy’s (1999) analysis of the ‘limits to diversity’.

### Notes

1. Other than changing dynamics, a core consideration in discussing public-private provision is whether such discourse can be theoretically grounded. There is no theory *per se* but a volume of literature does exist, which could not be reviewed here due to editorial requirements and limitations. Some are indeed old, attesting to the much earlier interest in the subject, while some deal with only aspects, e.g. funding. See Eicher and Chevillier (2002), Sontheimer (2001), Altbach (1999), Johnstone (1986), Smith (1937), and Strumilin (1924), among others.
2. The generalisation of these factors into three major ones is takes cognisance of country specific and even institution-related factors. Country-specific factors for Kenya would include the generally liberal development approach it adopted since independence compared to her neighbours, the relative stability that attracted providers and even immigrant students, rapid population growth and consequent expansion of lower levels of education and concomitant demand for higher education. Institution specific factors relate to programmes offered, distance and cost, among others.
3. Broadly defined, accreditation is a process of external quality review and means by which institutions of higher education are established and continuously assure and improve quality. In the Kenyan context, accreditation means public/state acceptance and confirmation evidenced by either the creation of a university through an Act of Parliament or a grant or award of a charter that a university meets and continues to meet the standards of academic excellence set by CHE in accordance with the provisions of the Universities Act, Chapter 210B and the relevant Rules and/or Guidelines developed under the Act. Accreditation is done by CHE and includes inspection and verification of academic programmes, physical facilities and equipment as well as staff establishment.
4. Governments enforce regulation of private institutions to ensure compliance with standards, not because institutions necessarily offer low-quality education (though many do), but because of a persistent suspicion that left unchecked

this is what they will do. As a result, in some instances, private institutions are sometimes resistant to regulatory regimes, especially when there are clear signs of unequal treatment between public and private institutions. Even when they have cannot resist as effectively as in Kenya, they remain critical even when they comply.

5. The action by CHE is aimed at guarding against the proliferation of low-quality higher education institutions that might aim at merely absorbing excess demand. The institution in question, Wiseman Consultants and Trainers, is neither registered with the CHE nor is it with the Ministry of Education. Instead, it is registered under the Companies Act of the Laws of Kenya. The action also reveals the pitfalls that the openly for-profit institutions face in Kenya: difficulties with accreditation; operating outside the legal framework of higher education provision; and engaging in partnerships with largely unknown foreign institutions.
6. The 'autonomy' of public universities makes it possible for them to enter into partnerships with NU-HEIs without the approval of the CHE, while the intended partner NU-HEIs are required to seek approval of the CHE in accordance with the 2004 Universities Rules. Ironically, such institutions would not be required to seek the authority from CHE if the partnership is initiated by a public university. All that would be needed is for the senate of the public university to approve the linkage and programme. NU-HEIs can therefore circumvent this requirement by asking a willing public university to 'initiate' a partnership.
7. The current State president has delegated this responsibility, but the law has not been changed.
8. The Northern Consortium of British Universities comprises: University of Manchester, University of Bradford, University of Huddersfield, University of Leeds, Leeds Metropolitan University, University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University. Other members of the group are the Manchester Metropolitan University, UMIST, University of Salford, University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University. On the other hand, members of the British Universities in Africa Group include University of Newcastle, University of East Anglia Norwich, University of Bath, Oxford Brookes University and Kingston University London.

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## A Recent Echo: African Private Higher Education in an International Perspective<sup>1</sup>

Daniel Levy\*

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### Abstract

Africa is a very recent arrival to the world scene of rapidly growing private higher education but it strongly echoes historical and contemporary patterns elsewhere. This is evident in each major category of analysis that merits our attention. It is evident in causes of growth, forms of growth, types of institutions, finance, governance, status, and roles played. Of course, such a broad generalization must not obscure significant differences and variation. Regions have their own salient characteristics and Africa is no exception. However, one does not adequately understand African private higher education without seeing it in a global context. In turn, the understanding of global context is enriched by incorporating Africa in the analysis.

### Résumé

L'Afrique est tout récemment entrée sur la scène mondiale de l'enseignement supérieur privé qui connaît une croissance rapide, mais elle reprend considérablement des modèles historiques et contemporaines d'ailleurs. Cela est manifeste dans chaque grande catégorie d'analyse qui mérite notre attention. Cela est évident pour des raisons de croissance, de formes de croissance, de types d'institutions, de finance, de gouvernance, de statut et de rôles joués. Bien entendu, une telle large généralisation ne doit pas masquer les différences et les variations qui sont considérables. Les régions ont leurs propres caractéristiques et l'Afrique ne fait pas exception. Toutefois, on ne peut pas bien comprendre l'enseignement supérieur privé en Afrique sans le voir dans un contexte mondial. En retour, l'intégration de l'Afrique dans l'analyse permet aussi de mieux comprendre le contexte mondial.

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### **Late But Recognizable**

Perhaps the most striking reality about African private higher education in an international perspective is that it is simultaneously a late yet largely conventional arrival. Particularly since the 1990s, the region has witnessed a surge of private institutions and enrolments. These same recent years have witnessed continued private higher education growth in most of the world but notable growth there was already manifest in prior decades, sometimes further back historically. By the time Africa started to move significantly into private higher education, almost all of Latin America, the great bulk of Asia, and of course the United States, had major private sectors. Closest to Africa in initiation time was Central and Eastern Europe, with the fall of Communism in 1989.<sup>2</sup> Western Europe remains the sole major region with limited private higher education, although exceptions there increase and considerable privatization of public universities has occurred.

If one were to hypothesize salient characteristics of African private higher education just by drawing on international precedent and the literature analyzing it, one would be well on the road to sketching the African reality.<sup>3</sup> This article will bear that out with regard to causes and patterns of growth, types of private institutions, and governance. To exaggerate in order to impress the point: a remarkable feature of African private higher education is how unremarkable it is. What may seem startling inside Africa often does not appear so remarkable in comparative terms.

Of course each region has its own characteristics and contexts, however. One can hypothesize logically but one must then be attentive to empirical reality. The same can be said of cross-national research within a region; we will find considerable variation across African countries. Yet we are impressed by the important similarities between Africa and other regions, given the enormous historical, political, economic, and social differences, including Africa's extreme poverty and low overall higher education enrolments. It is after all a major rule in comparative analysis that similarities are especially notable where they emerge across radically different terrain.

These private higher education similarities allow this article to have a coherent theme with unifying modalities within which to interpret the various country-based articles in this special journal issue. Otherwise, we might have expected limited cohesiveness, for the study of African private higher education is so recent and scant that a call for papers could not prudently specify much focus beyond that submissions deal with private higher education in the region. This permitted considerable variety in the foci of the various submissions. It is the concepts, methods, and findings from the wider literature on global private higher



education that allows this article to pull together important aspects of otherwise scattered articles as well as to place the whole into broad international context.

This article has dual, tandem purposes. One is to use global knowledge to understand African reality. The primary audience in this respect is African. The other purpose is to add African reality to our global knowledge. Here the main audience is more global and diffuse.<sup>4</sup>

Our geographical focus is Sub-Saharan Africa. Were North Africa included, we would see both more historical precedent and still greater robustness in contemporary private growth. Dealing with the Sub-Saharan region is challenge enough, including considerable diversity. Our analysis draws largely but not exclusively on the articles in this special journal issue. *It cites them merely by author name* (whereas other citations are shown with year as well as name). The analysis does not summarize the articles in this issue.

### **Emergence, Size, and Scope of Expansion**

*Data ambiguity.* New rarely means completely new when it comes to private higher education. Country authors correctly point to roots and precursors. These include missionary ventures. As Naidoo, Singh, Lange and Onsongo and Mabizela (2001) note for Kenya and South Africa, religiously-oriented colleges could precede independence and be linked to churches or colonial powers' home institutions. Otieno (2005) notes the frequency with which institutions began as affiliates of more established institutions in the metropolises, especially in the case of former British colonies, then evolving to become national universities of the newly independent states. By the mid-twentieth century South African private institutions, becoming public institutions by the mid-twentieth century, were giving vocational higher education to blacks.

Such roots and precursors point to one reason it is difficult to give precise figures about contemporary African private higher education. What, first of all, qualifies as 'higher education?' What then qualifies as 'private?' These questions are common internationally but usually alongside a now much more formidable, clear private higher education sector. Similarly, the prevalence of scattered small private institutions makes inclusive, firm counting difficult. As Salerno and Beverwijk further note for Uganda, counting is undermined by the rapidity with which private institutions spring up and close as well as by the double-counting of enrolments where there are various forms of private-public partnership. They also note that much private presence lies in non-universities, many of which are arguably not really higher education.<sup>5</sup> Whereas the fuzzy borders between higher education and lower levels plague counting in higher education in general, they are typically more problematic when it comes to the private sector, which is typically disproportionate in the non-university sphere. The same

is true on the fuzzy border between higher education and related forms of vocational or professional training (sometimes in for-profit institutions not under the education ministry).

Other common problems in getting reliable numbers for private higher education are also especially strong in Africa. There is sometimes ambiguity as to whether to count un-registered but functioning institutions. The same may hold for units that are affiliated to recognizable higher education institutions. Then there is obviously the weakness of some African bureaucracies, ministries, and research records in general. In very few African countries has government gathered comprehensive data on private higher education and even the gathering has not insured transparency and open access. Finally, a logical inverse correlation between recency of growth and ample reliable data presents special problems for Africa, as the region where private growth is latest.

*Causes of growth.* A major finding about earlier private higher education emergence has played out in the most recent regions, Central and Eastern Europe and Africa: surprise or at least the absence of a centrally-planned process (Levy 2006c). Rarely does initial emergence and robust growth emanate mostly from government deliberation and initiative. Much more common is uncoordinated action by dispersed actors. This is what Salerno and Beverwijk find for Uganda and what Obasi (2006) pointedly ties to the global literature for Nigeria.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, we will see that some governments (e.g., Kenya) promote private growth, often hand-in-hand with regulation.

The most commonly reported major cause of private emergence, whether in Africa or elsewhere, is the surge of demand for higher education. This surge usually cannot be accommodated within existing public institutions. While the expansion of these institutions and creation of new public ones is common, they remain insufficient, at least where government financial capacity is strapped and there are ample constraints on increasing the size of public sectors in general. The Nigerian government would eventually bar the creation of further federal universities, though not of further state ones. Study abroad is one alternative and the arrival of foreign institutions offering local courses is another, but both tend to be expensive and limited.<sup>7</sup> As demand exceeds supply a much more common response is private growth. If there is enrolment 'massification,' it typically involves a major private component, as in Uganda (Salerno and Beverwijk as well as Kasozi 2002). We must be clear on terms, however. 'Massification' is a heavy word for a continent where enrolment remains so limited, and the private share of the enrolment remains comparatively low.

One might draw up an extensive list of additional causes or might emphasize the inter-relatedness of most. Fitting our theme, none of the causes is unique to Africa. Major shifts toward market economies are important, as in the Ugandan

case, starting 1988. In India, as in Brazil and many other cases, private higher education development is greatest in the most economically-developed states and regions, just as in Nigeria's Southwest. Although not matching the reality of Latin America in the 1960s and beyond (Levy 1986), African public university disorder has been a factor. Kenyan strikes have been a particularly potent force as they extend the length of study at public universities, and contribute to uncertainty (Otieno and Levy forthcoming). Indeed, private institutions in Africa, as elsewhere, are largely free from disruptions common in public counterparts: student, faculty, or union (Konings 2002; Anugwom 2002). Private institutions commonly sell themselves as efficient, safe alternatives. They also sell themselves as job-market oriented, pointedly plunging into new fields that involve high demand from a 'marketizing' and globalizing economy and sometimes benefiting from public universities' reluctance to similarly commercialize their orientations (Banya 2001). They sometimes pursue attractive training collaborations such as that of Mozambique's Higher Education Institute of Science and Technology with the Southern Mozambique Hotel Association. Kruss shows how certain South African private institutions offer specialized job-oriented options, sometimes especially for blacks and the new emerging elite.

Commonly private higher education is an option for the relatively well-to-do within the potential higher education population. Kenya is a documented case. The big qualification, as in Central and Eastern Europe and much of Asia, is that the most privileged are highly represented among the secondary school graduates who have the best chances for the most prestigious universities, which remain public. Related to well-to-do private representation is the preponderance of private institutions in capital and other leading cities.<sup>8</sup> Again Kenya is one of many examples, with three-fourths of private enrolment packed into Nairobi and its periphery (Abagi, Nzomo, and Otieno 2005). Over time, other regions show greater dispersion but of course African private higher education has not yet had much time.

It is instructive to see how the enrolment of women buttresses and extends our understanding of growth factors. The Onsongo article on Kenya takes the lead in gender focus. An inhibiting factor is that families tend to value male over female education so that funds are more readily available to males, at both the secondary and higher levels, a constraint obviously relevant to fee-charging institutions. On the other hand, female enrolments were notably low so that the general point about private growth through rising demand for higher education is especially potent. So is the concern over disorder and safety and thus the choice for women and daughters of religious or other private alternatives. Similarly, we see a convergence of two common global tendencies: private concentration on commercial fields and female concentration in such fields. In Kenya,

a stark gender reality is how limited female representation is in the difficult terrain of entry into science fields of top universities, while communications epitomizes the attraction for women. Whereas women account for only a third of Kenya's public enrolment, they account for a (slight) majority of Kenya's private higher education enrolment. Tanzanian private enrolments are 38 percent female, versus just 24 percent for public enrolments (see also Kwisiga). Overall, Sawyerr (2004) finds that women tend to comprise one-third to one-half of African private enrolments versus just one-fifth to one-third of public ones (Wesonga et al. forthcoming). Although these African contrasts are much larger than is typically found internationally, women do tend to concentrate disproportionately in private higher education.

*Country concentration and tendencies.* The most ambitious data compilations and estimations of African private higher education enrolment to date (Sawyerr 2004) indicate the region's startling private growth. From perhaps 7 private universities in 1960 and then still fewer than 20 in the mid-1980s and 27 in 1990, there would be around 71 by the turn of the century and soon 84.

A striking feature of African private growth is how concentrated it is in Anglophone Africa, and how much weaker it is in Francophone Africa. (This partly explains this special issue's full devotion to the former, not as a matter of design but probably as a reflection of where private higher education has been powerful enough to demand scholarly attention.) One macro factor that is surely in play is that the British Empire had important roots in much less centralized, governmental, single institutional type systems than was the case for the French and Portuguese empires. In any event, it is principally in East Africa and Southern Africa where private higher education has had its major roots and present enrolments.<sup>9</sup>

Also importantly, there is cross-national variation within sub-regions (Teferra and Altbach 2003: 7-8). Kenya led within East Africa. After having just 7 universities at the point of independence, by 2005 Kenya had 6 public and 18 private universities. Total enrolment reached 91,000 by 2006, with a peak private share around 20 percent but then falling to just over 12 percent (Otieno), largely due to strong growth of privatized modules within public universities, as these modules now are larger than the rest of the university.<sup>10</sup> By the 1990s, Tanzania came to the fore, pushing to 11 private universities, as Uganda, from its 1988 inception, had more than 10 (Sawyerr 2004; Kasozi 2000). Elsewhere, the 1990s saw private universities first emerge, reaching 4 in the Congo, 3 in Senegal, and 4 in Brurundi. By 2001, Ghana had 7, and soon 21 registered, 8 in operation (Sawyerr 2004). Other countries noted in Eisemon's early analysis were Zaire, Rwanda, Ivory Coast, and Mozambique (Eisemon 1991).

Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe were the earliest African countries to accredit private institutions; by 2006 Nigeria would have 24 licensed private universities along with its 52 public ones. Tanzania, whose private sector began only in 1997 (other than a 1961 Catholic precursor) had by 1999 19 institutions under accreditation review and 7 already registered. By 2002 privates accounted for roughly 8 percent of total enrolment. Ethiopia's private sector opened in 1998, though with precursors back to 1991. Before long it constituted perhaps a fourth of total enrolment.

Nonetheless, it is important to note major limitations on Africa's private higher education growth. Among our significant African cases we see that even Kenya saw a low of 80 percent public and is now 88 percent public, Uganda appears to be almost 90 percent public, South Africa and Ghana around 95 percent public. Probably the major qualification comes where there are sizzling privatized modules in public universities; combining these with the private universities, roughly 60 percent of Kenyan enrolment could be identified as private. Perhaps no African country has a private share that matches the world average, loosely estimated at 25–30 percent. Certainly, the region has no parallel whatever for the majority private enrolment shares seen in Korea, Japan, Brazil, Colombia and elsewhere, the first two near four-fifths and the other two not far behind.<sup>11</sup> What is most striking about African private higher education is not its gross size so much as its notable and often fast-growing presence in recent years.

If we were to focus on shares of institutions, the private presence would look much more ample. This is almost always the case; very few countries anywhere have higher private proportions of enrolment than of institutions. Put another way, the average private institution tends to be smaller than the average public one, often by a great deal (Levy 1992). And Africa appears to be comparatively high in the number of private institutions with fewer than one thousand students. The average (non-seminary) religious institution is comparatively larger and one expects that over time the typical private size will grow, resulting from the collapse of some small private institutions and the merger of others.

And what of future growth? It behoves us to consider not just the major causes of private expansion to date but also the factors that restrain it and which could conceivably become more potent. For one thing, private growth will depend largely on public higher education. To date, private growth has been part of overall growth, fuelled by some overlapping factors. Salerno and Beverwijk report that Uganda's public Makerere University jumped from roughly 2,500 enrolments in the late 1970s to some 32,000 by 2003, while 3 additional public universities were established. Were any African government to appear very favourable to higher education growth and unfavourable to private activity, the private share could fall. Or, as the Kenyan case has shown, competitive inter-

sectoral dynamics involving a privatizing of the public university, can also bring such a fall (Otieno and Levy, forthcoming). A related point is how an unaccommodating government could implant extensive and rigorous regulation or unfriendly tax policies. Such policies have precedent in placing tuition caps, setting difficult accreditation criteria, and so forth. India stands as one national example of where government policy can rather rapidly switch in ways that threaten private growth (Gupta, Levy, and Powar in progress). Additionally, as we shall see below, some powerful privatizing forces for higher education can have their outlet not just in the growth of private institutions but in the partial privatization of public ones. As Otieno's study of Kenya demonstrates, public universities pursuing extra revenues and demand may open job-relevant modules that directly compete with the most attractive features of private higher education.

But for the most part, African prospect would seem on balance to favour further private growth, not just in absolute but also in proportional terms. The closest analysis of prospects is Obasi's (2006) on Nigeria and it is rather optimistic for the private sector, though Otieno's speculation on Kenya is quite different (Abagi, Nzomo, and Otieno 2005). The main reasons for expecting continued growth would be precisely those that have spurred private growth in recent years. Market economies, rather right-leaning economic and political models, globalization and strong private-centred international influences are all at play. And Africa remains the region with the lowest cohort enrolments, allowing ample room for overall growth through a demand outstripping public supply, all against the background in which Africa has a private higher education sector proportionally smaller than other regions do. In contrast, the other region with the latest private higher education emergence, Central and Eastern Europe, joins Japan, Portugal and other developed places where the demographics of declining birth rates can pose grave dangers to overall higher education growth and to private sectors in particular.<sup>12</sup>

### **Types of Institutions**

No major private sectors of higher education are homogeneous. In all regions they encompass a variety of institutional types. Conventional categories in the global private higher education literature, mainly religious, elite, demand-absorbing, and commercial, find echoes in the African case. As elsewhere, the search for suitable categorization must not be aimed at tight, mutually exclusive and thoroughly inclusive categories, let alone ones that hold up evenly across countries. Intensive country cases should indeed play off such broad categorizations to launch analysis of mixes and variations; this issue's most concentrated effort in that direction is Kruss's on South Africa.



*Religious.* A striking finding of the global private higher education literature is the potent presence of religious institutions in early development. Since African private higher education is still in its youth, we might expect a strong religious presence, and that is what we find. As noted, religious institutions counted prominently among the continent's precursors, including in Kenya, South Africa, and Uganda. Although Kenya's first private university (US International University) was secular, the next 2 were religious. Fourteen of eighteen Kenyan private universities are religious. Fifteen of Nigeria's twenty-four are religious.

In the past, in the era before Africa had major private higher education, outside the United States religious generally meant Catholic.<sup>13</sup> For many decades this was the rule without almost any exception throughout Latin America (Levy 1986). Of course there were and remain significant variations among Catholic institutions. But the Catholic near-monopoly is dissipating in Latin America and elsewhere. And Africa epitomizes the new plurality of religious types. Alongside Catholic and Protestant institutions are Muslim institutions. Uganda's Islamic University opened in 1988 (Kasozi 2000). Nigeria has 3 Catholic institutions, 3 Muslim ones, and 9 Pentecostal.

The small Catholic share of religious higher education is a rather unusual feature of Africa. It is the Pentecostal institutions that are ascendant, with a variety of Christian institutions early on. Of Kenya's 14 religious universities, only 1 is Catholic, one Adventist, and the rest are Protestant (Pentecostal).<sup>14</sup>

Historically and geographically, religious institutions can have more or less religious fervour and distinctiveness. Both have tended to decline over many decades. But the Pentecostal example moves in the other direction, and so it is one dimension that appears to make religious a vigorous force in African private higher education. While Kenya's Daystar University does not proselytize students, it does require that faculty and especially administrators are members of Pentecostal churches. Ugandan faculty and students must commit to their universities' basic mission of promoting Christian values. A 'compassionate' tone can be noted for Nigeria's Pentecostal institutions, notwithstanding their primal capitalist hue. Generally, Africa's religious higher education has an explicit mission of character-building, but this need not mean a vague religious mission. A sharp religious mission is evident at some institutions; Kenya's Kabarak University aspires that all hear the call of Jesus Christ as Lord. In Kenya, all the religious universities have explicitly Christian content.

Character building and religious emphasis fits in with prior points about attractiveness for women (including a degree of *loco parentis*) and lack of political disruption. Eisemon (1991) concluded that such a mission was the prime



factor that distinguished the region's religious from other higher education institutions.

On the other hand, religious higher education has often had characteristics linked to broader tendencies of their time. The modern era has generally involved a heavy dose of commercialism in higher education. Expansion and financial viability have often meant that universities cannot be too stringent in religious requirements and that they add many secular courses to the curriculum. These courses have typically been in high demand areas, most notably in job-oriented fields. Furthermore, a widespread and potent association has often existed, now prominently for Africa, between Pentecostal institutions and business orientations. As in Latin America, one sees the urge to have ample offerings in management, business, applied technology, tourism studies, and the like. For institutions emphasizing normative orientations more, as with Uganda's Martyrs University, fields like ethics and philosophy and anthropology are joined by fields like management. Some of the business-oriented institutions in Africa, as in Latin America, assume rather high socioeconomic profiles and perhaps a rather elite role in some business-oriented studies.

*Non-religious.* Most of the recent worldwide private higher education growth has had a major demand-absorbing component. By this the literature has referred to the excess of demand over public supply but also with a connotation of something other than high academic or social standing. To some extent, this subsector has been marginal in worth and legitimacy, raising questions about fraud. To another extent, however, the sub-sector may be depicted as commercial, a category we return to below. Much of the subsector tends to copy or pretend to copy public institutions while another part seeks some distinctiveness, often a niche distinctiveness alongside the emulation, and the niche is commonly commercial or religious (Levy 2006b). Based on information at hand, it is difficult to weigh these tendencies in the African context. An impression is that the demand-absorbing sector may account for a smaller share of the private sector than is the case elsewhere, though still a significant share. Certainly, Kruss is correct in drawing the comparative point that South African private growth has had a much less stark demand-absorbing component than we often see in developing regions.

This does not suggest, however, that academically elite private higher education is at all common in Africa. Instead, Africa fits the strong global non-US pattern of only a limited or even absent elite sub-sector. Thus there is a contrast, as outside the region, between socioeconomic elite status and the lack of academic elite status. Research, graduate education (at least outside business fields), full-time faculty and other staff, scientific and other expensive and demanding fields of study, ample laboratories and other facilities, and attractiveness as the

number one choice for the most capable of secondary school graduates: all this is rare for African private higher education.<sup>15</sup> It is unclear why wealthy churches, such as some of Kenya's Catholic ones, have not attempted to found elite universities.

Yet, also as in much of the world, the lack of private elite universities does not preclude the existence of solid or even 'semi-elite' universities. These are often Church-run, sometimes foreign-affiliated. Here research, science, full-time status and the like are not so uncommon. We often therefore see a private top that holds a position in the pecking order mostly below the top public universities but well above most other institutions, public or private. The point is especially apt for accredited private universities.<sup>16</sup> Private-sector Ethiopian students appear to regard their institutions as solid, comparable to public ones, even where they could not gain admission to public ones. Kenya is a good example as it is a good example of intense competition between good private and public universities, most notably where the latter open fee-charging, market-oriented modules (Otieno and Levy); competition for top professors is a good illustration, with top privates out-paying public universities. Moreover, many leading private universities in Kenya, Ethiopia (e.g. Unity College), and elsewhere have a major full-time faculty presence, a marked contrast to Latin America historically (even for public universities). Additionally, these private universities may escape the facilities' deficiency, even showing less congestion than public counterparts in matters such as library access (Otieno 2004). A major question for African private higher education is the future size of this formidable subsector and whether part of it can substantially elevate itself toward a more academic elite standing.

Finally, though it overlaps religious, semi-elite, and commercial categories, we can add a word about transnational institutions. Africa is a target for several reasons. On the one hand, there is the high demand to supply ratio domestically, in turn creating a potentially profitable market for overseas institutions, the high cost of study abroad, the fact that although most Africans are poor a share of the higher education population can afford to pay, and the thirst for status or quality associated with more developed regions. On the other hand, countries such as Nigeria and South Africa have sometimes been very restrictive based on wariness and nationalism; transnational ventures principally from Australian and British universities occupy only a small share now of South African enrolments, after initial promise (Naidoo, Singh, Lange). A particularly interesting phenomenon, which echoes many of these logical tendencies, is intra-African penetration (Mabizela and Otieno forthcoming; Eisemon 1991). More developed countries are not only receivers of poorer countries' students going abroad (with a number of private universities particularly keen for this market), they have also seen the opportunity to open campuses in those poorer countries, often neighbouring ones.

Looking at South Africa alone, we see markets involving Botswana, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. Additionally, some private African universities aspire to a regional presence, beyond their home country. Kenya's Daystar and other universities include non-Kenyans on their governing boards and the U.S. International University is composed mostly of Americans, with less than 10 percent of enrolments.

In many cases, private universities have students of more diverse national backgrounds than do the public universities. Several Kenyan private universities attract many nationalities. For religious universities, this is due partly to the nature of ownership, while for the non-religious it has to do also with the semi-elite status and appeal. A Kenyan university that is owned by nine member countries of the Association of the Member Episcopal Conference of Eastern Africa enrolls students from all nine (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe). Indeed there is increased intra-Africa competition for markets that have been mined by British and Australian universities. Uganda's Kampala International University is an example.

*Commercial and for-profit.* Where private higher education is pointedly commercial in its mission and pursuits, it often resembles for-profit higher education. In fact, the perception that even legally non-profit institutions are for-profit in operation is very widespread, at least outside the United States (Kinser and Levy 2005). Nigeria's Igbinedion University is a good example, with the university denying that it is a for-profit. Salerno and Beverwijk report similar common perceptions for Uganda. Often cloudy African and other higher education law allow much by the lack of proscription that it does not expressly sanction; in other words, regulations have to catch up with reality. Generally, non-profit institutions, whether in higher education or not, are permitted to generate income and enjoy most characteristics of profit; what they are not allowed to do is to distribute those profits to owners. In practice, however, disguised profits are common, notably including in family-run private institutions where salaries or perks can be inflated. All this seems true for at least Anglophone Africa. For-profits and quasi-for-profits are roundly criticized for 'extreme market' orientations, as they commonly are internationally (Sawyer 2004).

South Africa is an exceptional case where the majority of private higher education institutions are legally for-profit (Levy 2002). A variety of for-profit forms includes publicly listed companies and proprietary limited organizations. In fact, the South African case is exceptional not only for Africa but beyond. Many countries explicitly disallow for-profit higher education; others at least do not explicitly allow it (e.g., Kenya, where Daystar registers as a private limited company). Among non-African cases where for-profit is an important (but usually

not dominant) part of the private sector are the United States, Brazil, Peru, Jordan, Georgia, and Ukraine.

The overlap of non-profit commercial and for-profit is reflected in the preponderance of programs and enrolments in job-oriented education or 'training'. This is what we find through Salerno and Beverwijk for Uganda, Onsongo for Kenya, and others for countries like Ethiopia (e.g. Unity College in accounting). If private institutions make inroads into fields not inexpensive to offer it is usually because the individual rates of return are perceived to be so high that those who are able will pay. Indeed in many countries these institutions market themselves to students who are already in the workforce. It appears that some private institutions have been agile in this respect but also that some public ones now introduce modules to compete on this front. Then too, as is also common in historical precedent in other regions, the aspiring solid universities, often religious, try to balance their commercial fields with fields upholding a more academic (as well as religious) mission.

Overlap also manifests itself in tuition dependence, as in Ethiopia. Although Africa follows the global pattern of tuition and other fees being by far the major source of private institutional income, all the more for for-profit and other commercial subsectors, quite a few institutions have substantial alternative income.<sup>17</sup> Abagi, Nzomo, and Otieno (2005) report gifts, trusts, alumni giving, and religious donations in Kenya. Government funds appear to remain scarce in the region, as is more often than not the case in other developing regions, and even if it is offered there is some question about private institutions' enthusiasm to receive, fearing debt and perhaps increased government control.<sup>18</sup>

For Nigeria, Obasi (2006) reports a tuition high of almost \$3,300 at Igbinedian University. Similar costs have been reported for South Africa's Monash and Uganda's Martyrs University. Tanzania's private charges range from \$1,400 to greater than \$8,000 annually. Yet high tuitions are often merely similar to that which privileged groups pay for private secondary education and in a few cases, even in primary education, another common cross-regional finding. And they can be similar to some privatized modules in public universities, as in Tanzania and Kenya.

Finally, overlap between for-profit and nonprofit commercial is stark where nonprofits are heavily engaged in the business sector. Although all religious institutions are legally non-profit, especially many of the Pentecostal universities fit this business point.<sup>19</sup>

### **Governance**

*Hierarchy.* In governance too, perhaps even more sharply, African private higher education follows global precedent. A crucial and widespread component is hi-

erarchy. Private university students lack much institutionalized power and the basic logic of the private sector weighs against latitude for pressure and strikes. Where students wield a kind of power, which is more common in the U.S., is as consumers. For-profit and other commercial institutions claim this as a virtuous reality, promoting markets, choice, and accountability to the client. Even the faculty is limited. The limitation is especially potent insofar as professors are part-time, spending most of their work time and energies away from the university. All this can be a stark contrast to the faculty and student role at public universities, at least in the absence of heavily repressive military rule. As is the case outside Africa, faculty and students may have more power at some religious than at other private institutions. The strong generalization remains that the 'bottom' of the governance structure is weak at private higher education institutions.

It is the 'top' that is notably strong. Private institutions tend to be more vertically run and less flat than is the case at public institutions. A very common feature of the privates, and not the publics, is a board of trustees, a notably U.S. feature. Boards routinely appoint chief executive officers (Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors). An important role may also exist for management councils. These contrast with traditional professor-based councils or senates. How far down the hierarchy's control reaches is variable. At the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, bishops and other religious leaders may play a role in admissions.

One interesting tendency has a kind of anti-hierarchy thrust. Women are more represented in authority positions in private than in public universities, though this contrast speaks less to equality at the former than to persistent hierarchy at the latter. Explanations of the private openness include international religious influence (though there are few women leaders in small religious institutions and there is reticence from the Catholic hierarchy), the partial flexibility of new over traditional institutions, perhaps a merit-based competitive approach, and the fact that females can shift from public to private university for these opportunities. Thus, Onsongo found that in Kenya only private universities had female Vice-Chancellors, three by 2005, when finally one public university joined the group. Compared to 18 percent in public universities, females comprise 28 percent of management position in chartered private universities.

*Government.* Whereas intra-institutional governance patterns worldwide, and in Africa, show strikingly repetitive patterns of hierarchy, governance issues concerning the role of government vary more. Government preferences and actions regarding private higher education have ranged from hostile to facilitative.

In fact, the extreme has been proscription of private higher education. Far from the exception, this was the rule until the latter part of the twentieth century.

It is now far from the rule. Yet permission has often come with severe restrictions as to requirements or as to what type of institutions would be allowed, as where only non-universities are permitted. Even where operational policy is not restrictive, government may present a frowning face, at pains to note its concern for the public interest, standards, and the like. How much the motivation is conviction versus how much it is good politics, especially under pressure from public universities, varies. Often, government is divided, friendlier in financial ministries than in the education ministry. Similarly, the government posture may vary notably across states in a federal system. That is the case in China, India, and the United States for example. It can be an important consideration for a country like Nigeria, where half the public universities are state-owned, and where the governor of a state has strongly endorsed private higher education, highlighting its access and quality roles. Also as elsewhere, governments may be on the whole more favourable to private expansion than are their public universities, which often are preoccupied by a competitive threat or by genuine concerns over quality and the public interest.

Scattered information gives the impression that African governments have followed the global pattern of variability across countries, yet probably toward the more positive side. Without doubt the primary motivation is increased access with minimal public expenditure. A related consideration is to support private growth in fields lacking public coverage, as Mozambique has done. Several governments in North Africa have been more pointedly pro-private, backing their words with money or at least facilitating international arrangements favourable to private growth. Something akin to this is the case for several Asian countries, whereas ambivalence is also found. Our surest ground for assessment is Latin America, where politics, populism, European public traditions, public university pressure and the like often made governments wary of openly supporting private growth. For decades there were virtually no official statements as supportive as some heard now. However, the official Latin American stance has shifted notably in recent decades and even prior the opposition was often more normative and rhetorical than operational.<sup>20</sup>

Logically, there is some correlation between African government pro-market regimes of the Right and advocacy for private growth in higher education. Senegal has worked with the World Bank and is a case where public funds annually go to private institutions. Uganda is another example. Zimbabwe, in contrast, issued a report (1989) quite emphatic on the problems of private higher education. The absolute extreme of favourable government appears in Nigeria, where private secular universities are owned by the politically powerful, including the president (Olusegun Obasanjo) and vice-president of the republic! The president's home state (Ogun) has more private universities than any other. Kenya's



Kabarak University was licensed before its owner left the presidency; critics decried a conflict of interest while defenders asserted that all the requirements had been fulfilled.

Nigeria is also a striking case of how regime change has affected private higher education (Obasi 2006). After friendliness under the democratic regime of 1979-83, allowing private emergence, and a supportive Supreme Court ruling on legality, a short-term military government closed the private higher education sector but from 1985 a new military government laid a supportive framework. The present democratic regime, of course, is quite friendly, even cosy.

*Regulation.* Unsurprisingly, then, regulation varies across countries and time, as it has outside Africa. A precise regional assessment is impossible whereas it is possible to identify a few salient facts. One is that regulation was initially quite limited: the demonstrable rule internationally. The private sector's emergence was typically sudden and surprising. It was born into a regulatory vacuum. Equally demonstrable, as in Central and Eastern Europe, has been the growth of regulation after a period of shock, with concern over fraud and quality (Slantcheva and Levy 2007). If other regions are a guide, the likelihood is that on the ground regulation remains weaker than government rhetoric or private university complaints might suggest. Yet, in Uganda and Kenya, for example, enforcement appears tough enough to produce bitter private university complaints.

Yet the regulatory rise is palpable. As is the case globally the rise is prominently tied to quality criteria. A perceived lack of quality may lead to de-registering, as has happened to 4 colleges in Zimbabwe, where there is increased supervision through a Higher Education Examination Council. Quality assurance often means licensing and accreditation requirements. Sometimes (e.g. Uganda) these are system-wide, for public and private simultaneously, sometimes they are targeted or tailored to the private side. As in Nigeria, East African quality assurance mechanisms aim system-wide, not just at private institutions. For a 2006 East African agreement on common regulatory standards for the region's higher education institutions, a key spur was the proliferation of private institutions, because of genuine concern over quality and because private institutions have lacked the aura that has protected public counterparts from review. There are often long delays in approval, a particularly sensitive point for private institutions that pride themselves on rapid innovation, sensitivity to the job market, and the like. Academics are slow, markets are fast, they might note. Nigeria's last 7 approvals of private universities (2005) came after years of review. In accord with practice outside the region, tuition regulation has its temptations, sometimes spurred by lobbying from parents, sometimes from residual hostility to elitism or the idea of business practices or 'profits'.



Uganda, despite a delayed start (Kasozi 2000), has engaged in major regulation (as Salerno and Beverwijk detail), sometimes to the private institutions' chagrin even though the regulations aim system-wide. There have been many closings, though also flexibility to allow classes to start while the institution engages in accreditation review. The government has published a list of the institutions truly authorized to grant degrees. Private institutions are admonished not to charge excessively when the quality of their infrastructure and faculty is weak. One problem with punitive governmental action, however, is that students themselves may be punished when institutions continue to collect fees while assuring students that licensing will be regained.

On the other hand, as found previously in non-African countries (Slantcheva and Levy 2007), and as is often the case for regulation, there can be welcome effects for private institutions. Key is legitimacy, a stamp of approval, evidence of standards met, hurdles surmounted. This has been the case with the South African 1998 Further Education and Training Act. Similarly, where regulations make private more like public institutions, they make the former less vulnerably different, though, in turn, the lack of distinctiveness risks crippling the rationale for the private places.<sup>21</sup> Also legitimizing are private–public institutional partnerships. Sometimes the partnerships are with foreign institutions but Kenya has public universities that franchise private colleges and South Africa has an elaborate sweep of private–public partnerships. In fact, most of the country's private higher education enrolment lies in institutions that are so partnered. Logically, a common pattern is partnership between private colleges and public universities. The former typically provide access and fee generation, the latter legitimacy, academic and physical infrastructure, faculty, course materials, and access to licensing. Something of this pattern has been unfolding in China and elsewhere.

### Summing Up

African private higher education has not been a mostly planned development; its emergence and patterns have not conformed to a blueprint. Yet many of the principal characteristics might have been predicted by the shape of private higher education elsewhere, prudently combined with consideration of the special features of African development. Aberrant for the recency of private development, as well as for its small higher education size and low level of development, Africa nonetheless parallels much about private higher education elsewhere. Thus, in terms of comparative method and analysis, the similarities (in private higher education between Africa and other regions) are especially noteworthy given the sharp differences in surrounding educational, economic, social, and political context. Of course, to highlight parallels to other regions is hardly to

paint a precise portrait, for there is considerable variation across regions, countries, time, types of institutions, and so forth.

Private higher education growth has come late to Africa when gauged against its year of emergence in other regions, though not late when gauged by the level of public higher education at the moment of private emergence. That is, total higher education was still small when the private sector started. Compared to most of the world, the private share of enrolment remains on the low side, but this fact does not negate the drama of the surge. As is the case in most of the world, the growth has had to do largely with the rapid increase in demand for access to higher education while the supply of public higher education has risen more slowly. Additionally, Africa's private growth has depended on a variety of factors not uncommon elsewhere. Where private higher education rapidly expands due to demand outweighing supply, it often is largely tied to classes and groups less advantaged than those already in higher education and less prepared for high-level academic study. On the other hand, such growth may well expand access. All this is true in Africa. Yet the private growth is not limited to basically demand-absorbing institutions. Many are viable second-choice institutions; though one's top choice is the more established and higher status public university, one's second choice may be a serious private university above a non-leading public university. In other words, there is considerable private-public overlap in access, status, and socio-economic background.

Moreover, numerous private institutions have defined academic, social, political, and economic pursuits. Academic ends sometimes relate to a belief that public universities are slipping, whether from their own faults or from crippling contexts such as inadequate funding. Socially, and again with strong parallels outside Africa, there is a belief that public universities have slipped in discipline and order. Politically, there is the belief that they have slanted heavily leftward. Economically, the critique proceeds, they are often too marginal to the job market. These factors gain currency as governments move rightward in terms of marketization and global opening. The factors are reflected in the rationale underlining many of the region's religious universities.

So whereas Africa again parallels international context in that a high proportion of private higher education institutions are 'non-universities' in a classically high-level academic sense, many are not simply weak institutions, even when they are largely commercially oriented. As in the international sphere, many pursue serious niches, emphasizing effectiveness and efficiency. The leading private universities endeavour to expand their base of full-time faculty but, as is the case globally, part-time status is especially characteristic of the private sector.

Most of what we find about both finance and governance is empirically and logically intertwined with our findings about the growth and types of private institutions. Finance is massively dependent on consumer payments, and tuition. However, there is also religious co-sponsorship (as well as international aid). Religious institutions naturally are run basically by the religious groups. Indeed there is a sharper religious profile in Africa's private higher education than is generally the case today outside Africa.

With all this, private institutions, like their counterparts outside Africa but particularly sharply, govern themselves hierarchically, top-down. Where there are serious pursuits (beyond just the pursuit of what amount to profits) they involve accountability to the paying families and to eager employers. In turn, this reinforces tendencies toward specialization in subject offering. Autonomy is a tricky private-public comparison because public universities have sometimes been allowed major autonomy. What is clear is that the regulation of privates is rising; as in other regions as well, this often manifests itself in the accreditation arena.

A host of internationally common arguments are produced on both the positive and negative sides in relation to African private higher education. Several of the pieces in this journal issue give expression to these arguments. Our mission here is not to credit one side or the other as much as to see how many of the arguments logically link to essential characteristics of private institutions. Private universities are charged with low quality, elitism, fraudulent behaviour, preoccupation with profits, ties to non-indigenous currents, non-participatory governance internally, obedience to the job market, harm to national unity, and so forth. They are praised as bringing increased finance, access, order, efficiency, practical ties to the job market, responsiveness, competition, and representation of different currents in civil society. Many of the criticisms in fact largely coincide with many of the claimed advantages.

### Notes

1. The author is grateful particularly to co-editors Mabizela and Otieno and to Isaac Obasi for their comments on earlier drafts.
2. The collapse of Communism had an impact beyond Europe, into Africa. African countries that had espoused socialism with its state monopoly in public education led to an opening, introducing changes in the legal regimes that allowed private sector participation in higher education, as in Tanzania.
3. Key broad sources on international private higher education include Levy 2006a; Levy 1992; Maldonado et al. 2004; Altbach and Levy 2005; Geiger 1986; Levy 1986; Altbach 1999. Also see <http://www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/>,

the website of Program for Research on Private Higher Education (PROPHE), a global research project and network on private higher education.

4. These purposes quite parallel those of a piece on Indian private higher education in international perspective (Levy forthcoming). Despite the importance now of Africa's private higher education, very little of the leading literature on African higher education notes it.
5. In South Africa too, private higher education is mostly non-university. However, the university share is high in some African countries. This may be an arbitrary matter of how easily 'universities' are defined or it may be a reflection of norms and requisites. All of Kenya's private institutions are universities as are most in Tanzania. Our data (and legal information) on Tanzania come from <http://www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/data/data.html> based on research by Johnson Ishengoma and, except where otherwise noted, he is the source of our information on Tanzania, via personal communications as well as PROPHE data.
6. Among other Nigerian realities Obasi ties effectively to the global literature on private higher education growth are the early importance of religious institutions, the impact of political-economic change, and public university disorder. For another account of causes of private growth in Africa, see Blair 1998.
7. Bamba notes how devaluations in the 1990s led to steep increases in the cost of study abroad, thus spurring private higher education growth at home.
8. Tanzania is an exception as just 13 percent of its private enrolment is in the capital compared to 77 percent for public enrolment.
9. But Nigeria and Ghana are major Western African private higher education homes and Cameroon is not majority Anglophone. In any case, whereas the British Empire encouraged some importing of their educational forms, the French pushed assimilation, including advanced study in France. Within the British Empire higher education growth was stronger in colonies such as Kenya than just protectorates such as Tanzania. Thaver (2003) deals with six countries with comparatively good data and finds note with more than a 10 percent private share.
10. For private university shares to hold or even grow, reform initiatives might include reduction of fees, curriculum expansion, and geographic expansion. Some of this could involve emulation of public universities. These speculations are from Wycliffe Otieno, in personal communications.
11. Central and Eastern Europe has no country with over 30 percent of enrolment in the private sector. This might suggest the parallel to Africa of only recent private emergence. Yet further proportional growth seems much less likely in Central and Eastern Europe than in Africa.
12. Public sectors will have to become more protective of their own enrolments, possibly leading to harsher lobbying against private institutions and intensified competition for extant demand.

13. Religion has been a proportionally less potent force in Asian private higher education but this has depended upon country and era. Obviously it is nearly absent in today's private surge in China.
14. Kenya's Catholic university did not start until 1983, whereas the Protestant Daystar began in 1973, the Adventist institution in 1978. Notably, there is no Muslim university in Kenya. In Tanzania marked competition among varied denominations has spurred private growth.
15. Tanzania, however, shows private-public similarity: just 3 percent of private enrolments in graduate education, yet only 5 percent of public. Compared to leading countries of Latin America, not to mention the developed world, African higher education overall lags markedly. Looking to Northern Africa, Egypt's Arab Academy for Sciences Technology and Maritime Transportation would be an exceptional institution.
16. The first 6 accredited Kenyan private universities were the University of East Africa, Baraton, Catholic University of East Africa, Daystar University, Scott Theological College, and US International University. Ethiopia's first 5 were Unity College, Micro Link Information, Technology College, Higher Institute of Distance Studies, Ethiopian Adventist College, and Agro-Technical Training College, the first 3 accredited in 1999.
17. Eisemon (1991) reports similar total costs between private and public institutions but this was written when most private institutions (like public ones) were residential and on average probably higher quality than is the case today, after years of proliferation. Tuition dependence is the norm in Uganda, despite hopes to escape that; only three universities have some core funding (Kasozi 2000). Some African countries charge tuition in their public universities, as has Cameroon since 1992. Sawyerr (2004) reports fees in fields like accounting.
18. In some cases where direct government funding is not feasible, the only form of state support is the student loan programs that may be open to private university students. However, only a small proportion of private university students receive such loans, and when they do, the loans do not cover a major proportion of education costs, being pegged to public university tuition and other fees.
19. 'Corporate Colleges' operate where corporations run their own institutions and here too the definition of higher education is blurry (Fehnel 2003).
20. Support has been greatest in finance ministries and where regimes have been oriented to conservative, free-market economics and globalization. This raises the question of prospects as a number of countries, including Bolivia and Venezuela, have taken populist, nationalist swings in recent elections. In Africa too government policy can change over time. In South Africa the attitude toward private higher education took a more negative turn after the initial post-apartheid years. A more laissez faire approach yielded to more planning based

on notions of the appropriate size and shape of the private sector (Naidoo, Singh, Lange).

21. A couple of considerations limit the public-private legitimacy gap in Africa. One concerns the problems of quality and disorder in the public universities. Another, intriguing in comparative-historical perspective, is the short time period between Independence with public universities and the emergence of private universities. In much of Spanish America the period was roughly a century and a half. In Africa (much more as in Brazil) it has been a matter of just two-three decades, so that the public sector has had less chance to develop a deep-seated advantage in legitimacy, politics, and so forth. On the difficult standing of Africa's public universities see Rinsum (2002) and Kerr (2002).

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