



The Private Higher Education Sector in Africa: Current Trends and Themes in Six Country Studies

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Abstract

In Africa, the phenomenon of access to public higher education is under much pressure, and is harnessed by (among others) two privatization forces. These refer to the retreat of the state in terms of the provisioning of public higher education and the global economic rush which have culminated in both an increase in the number and to some extent the range of private higher education institutional types offering diverse course offerings. Although still small in scale and not representing a dominant share of higher education enrolment, their existence signals that they are meeting a social function of access in Africa, albeit limited. In light of this, there are traces of course offerings that suggest a small alignment with the economic and social needs of a modern society. Caught between the interstices of global economic capital and national societal functions, these institutions' mandates and identities are beginning to be stretched to meet modern imperatives. But, in this vortex, they are simultaneously hamstrung by certain sustainable systemic elements that go against the grain of the requirements for traditional higher education. Following this line of argument, the article begins with an overview of six country studies in Africa, including an outline of some of the discursive trends. It concludes by providing a snapshot glimpse into the private higher education sector in South Africa.

Résumé

En Afrique, le phénomène de l'accès à l'enseignement supérieur est sous grande pression et sous le joug (entre autres) de deux forces de privatisation. Ces dernières sont relatives au désengagement de l'Etat en termes de fourniture d'enseignement supérieur public et l'urgence économique mondiale qui a abouti à l'augmentation du nombre et dans une certaine mesure la gamme des types d'établissements d'enseignement supérieur privé offrant une diversité de cours. Leur existence révèle

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qu'ils satisfont à une fonction sociale d'accès bien que limitée en Afrique, même s'ils sont encore en petite échelle et qu'ils ne représentent pas une part optimale des inscriptions de l'enseignement supérieur. Compte tenu de cet état de fait, il existe des traces d'offres de cours qui suggèrent un petit alignement sur les besoins socioéconomiques d'une société moderne. Pris entre les interstices du capital économique mondial et les fonctions sociétales nationales, les mandats et les identités de ces établissements sont entraînés d'être élargis pour répondre aux exigences modernes. Mais dans ce tourbillon, ils sont simultanément paralysés par un certain nombre d'éléments systémiques durables qui vont à l'encontre du brin d'exigences de l'enseignement supérieur traditionnel. Dans cet ordre d'argumentation, l'article commence par un aperçu de six études par pays en Afrique, y compris les grandes lignes de quelques unes des tendances discursives. Il se termine par un aperçu sélectif rapide dans le secteur de l'enseignement supérieur privé en Afrique du Sud.

Introduction

Following previous research (Thaver 2003), this article¹ maps the field of private higher education in six African countries,² drawing on recent empirical data. It seeks to understand whether there have been shifts in the sector in these countries since the start of the 21st century. In light of this, I take up some of the challenges posed by scholars writing on the topic (Altbach 2005; Levy 2005) by trying to make sense of some of the forces at work in these countries from a political economy angle. Thus, the article does not provide specific detail on the cases as most of these are available in a series of reports by Varghese (2006). Instead, it describes some of the general trends as these are reflected systemically, following which it then thematically analyses some of the political and economic forces at work across the six countries. Thus, I can only paint a picture of certain overall tendencies as represented by aspects of the survey data.

An Overview of the Country Case Studies

In seeking to conduct an audit of the size and shape of the sector in these countries, I have been struck by a recurrent theme, concerning the complexities associated with fixing what could be defined as the boundary level for higher education. In other words, one of the difficulties in charting the size of the sector is that the colleges are amorphous in terms of how they function (Thaver 2003). This poses a methodological problem in terms of mapping the size of the field. Given this constraint, it continues to be difficult to get an accurate picture of the size of the field across the countries that form the focus of this study. Consequently, the following figures should be treated cautiously.

Since 2000, the size of the sector in the six country studies appears to have grown, as evident in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of Private Higher Education Institutions, 2000–2007

Region	Country	Colleges		Polytechnics		Universities		Total*		Grand total**
		2000	2007	2000	2007	2000	2007	2000	2007	
West Africa	Ghana	27	0	0	0	4	4	31	4	35
	Nigeria	2	2	1	7	3	4	6	13	19
East Africa	Kenya	0	0	0	0	8	9	8	9	17
	Tanzania	0	0	0	0	10	4	10	4	14
Southern Africa	Uganda	0	0	0	0	6	19	6	19	25
	Zimbabwe	3	0	0	0	4	0	7	0	7
Total								68	49	117

Source: Varghese (2006) and web-based data, accessed 2007.

* The total number of institutions up until 2000 and between 2000-2007.

** The total (overall) number of institutions as at 2007.

In probing for the size of the sector, two broad trends seem apparent. On the one hand, there are countries in which growth is static with Zimbabwe as a case in point; while on the other hand, there are those that are experiencing rapid development. For example, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda show fairly prolific growth. More specifically, Uganda has witnessed the establishment of several private universities since 2004, not all of which are registered (Tumwesigye 2006). This trend of functioning without official accreditation is reflected across at least five of the countries. Thus, while the number of institutions is rising, their official accreditation status is uneven. For example, while Kenya has approximately 17 private universities, only seven are fully accredited, with the remaining ones at various stages of the accreditation process. Notwithstanding these variations in the sector, the growth five years later (at one hundred and seventeen) represents about seventy percent on the original figure of sixty-eight institutions, as shown in Table 1. However, a methodological caveat needs to be invoked here: the key challenge in terms of accounting for the size of the sector arises when those programmes with technical and narrow skills-based focus delivered at colleges and institutes are included as part of the higher education domain. Overall, with the exception of Zimbabwe, the sector is expanding in the remaining five countries. Systemically speaking, what are the trends?

Enrolments

In a previous study (Thaver 2003) I signalled the size of enrolments in the sector as being rather small, a trend that has been corroborated by later studies (Varghese 2006). Current data suggests that the growth continues to be marginal. For example, Ghana has witnessed an increase of just under 5 percent on the original figure of 5,000 student enrolments (Effah 2006), while in Kenya, the growth is proportionately higher, totalling 15 percent on the initial figure of eight and a half thousand (as in 2002). An interesting trend in Tanzania is that over a four year period, at one of the institutions (Tumaini University, Iringa), the enrolments have increased almost fourfold, from 149 in 1999/2000 to 599 in 2004 (Kuhanga 2006). The reasons for this growth in a mainly religious-based institution are unclear. While the enrolments are small and display variations within and across the country studies, it does represent a form of incremental growth. These are manifest through different institutional types.

Institutional Types

Following the increased growth of polytechnic institutions in Nigeria, four institutional types can be found in the private higher education sector: universities, colleges, professional institutes or schools and polytechnics. As evident

from Table 1, five of the countries show a concentrated growth in the university sector, while in one (Nigeria) there is an increased focus in the polytechnic type.

The above-mentioned institutional types are also demarcated on the basis of for-profit and not-for-profit status. Because a correlation often exists between financial status and programme orientation, the not-for-profit institutions tend to have a religious orientation. The latter has already been signalled in a previous study (Thaver 2003), a trend that continues with the recent established ones. This religious phenomenon is coloured in by a wide spectrum of denominations. Clearly, the not-for-profit institutions are used as a vehicle for religious proselytization of various forms and persuasions. Scholars have noted this for Nigeria (Ajayi 2006), Kenya (Abagi 2006), Tanzania (Kuhanga 2006) and Uganda (Tumwesigye 2006).

While religious institutions that have a not-for-profit status predominate, there is increasingly more commercial activity within the sector. In other words, there are more institutions with a for-profit status emerging. These institutions tend to fall into two categories. The first are (tutorial) colleges that are franchisees of foreign providers offering mainly (foreign) programmes leading to the award of international diplomas and professional certificates. The second are those international providers of higher education that offer distance-learning courses inside the countries. These institutions are owned by individuals. This is the case with the majority of Nigeria's polytechnics, four institutions in Kenya and one in Zimbabwe.

Programme Focus: Curricula

The curricula in the institutions in all six countries are characterised predominantly by four fields/disciplines. These are Business Administration; Theology; Commerce; and Information Communication Technology. Furthermore, there are also traces of education and agricultural programmes across the six country studies. Notwithstanding the preponderance of these courses, there are shifts at some of the institutions insofar as small programmes are being offered in natural sciences, law, and psychology and in engineering technology as in the case of one of the Nigerian institutions. The expansion of boutique-type course offerings thus continues. Most of these courses are delivered at undergraduate level, although in Nigeria, two universities currently offer postgraduate courses. These are the Pan-African University and Igbinedion University (Ajayi 2006).

An interesting development regarding the intersection of curricula and government regulation is that in Kenya, since 2000, many private institutions appear to be under pressure to diversify their curricula (Abagi 2006). Besides

market forces (in terms of attracting more students), he notes that diversification appears to be one of the conditions required in order to be accredited. In this instance, the state is playing a direct role in establishing the conditions for the existence of private higher education institutions (Geiger 1988).

Financing

A glimpse into the data available for the sources of finance for private institutions shows that there are two main ways in which the institutions sustain themselves. These are through tuition fees and grants from sponsoring organisations. In some of the country studies there appears to be heavy reliance on one source either in the form of tuition fees or sponsor grants. For instance, in Zimbabwe, the Solusi University receives donations from the Seventh Day Adventist Church in the United States. However, it is important not to generalise on this point, since the exception is the Islamic University in Ghana, where the sources of funding are evenly spread between foreign/donor support and tuition fees. By contrast, in Kenya, the United States International University is fully dependent on fees. In all the country studies, there are attempts at tapping into other sources, such as donations from parent organisations, gifts and finance accrued from charging residential fees. However, in general the revenue sources of the not-for-profit institutions does not display diversification. Tuition fees are clearly the main source and in certain countries such as Ghana, institutions have leveraged fee settlements through government sponsored student loans. Similarly, in Tanzania, the Education Authority provides loans and grants to both public and private universities. In general however, funding from government is very small. It is important to note that where loans are provided to public and private sector students, the system is part of an intricate web of international capital woven by the International Finance Commission (Maas 2001) through national governments.

The levying of relatively high tuition fees is a common feature in all the private universities in the six countries. In Nigeria for instance, Alani (2004) reports that in 2004 students at Covenant University paid US\$1,231.84 which was six times higher than the fees paid by students in the faculties of Clinical Sciences and Pharmacy at Olabisi Onabanjo University (a state university) and about seven times more than the fees paid by new students who enrolled for science courses at the University of Lagos (also a state university).

Governance

As previously outlined (Nwamuo 2000; Thaver 2003; Varghese 2006), the structure of private higher education institutions comprise a board of trustees preceded by university and academic councils. The composition of the structures

continues to be determined by private institutions through the proxy of the Rector/Vice Chancellors. The latter holds key decision-making powers, representing the interests of sponsors and shareholders in the case of not-for-profits and for-profits, respectively. Notwithstanding the influence of religious parent, or corporate trans-national, bodies, there is pressure in certain countries for private institutions to model themselves on national academic systems and structures. In light of this, in both Kenya and Nigeria the idea of uniform and standard criteria for academic governance structures across private and public sectors are advanced. Again, we see the hand of the state seeking to establish the relevant conditions for their existence.

Academic Staff

The institutions continue to be characterized by a strong complement of part-time staff, with several of the part-time staff being full-time employees at public universities and in industry (Abagi 2006; Wesonga et al. 2007). In surveying certain institutions in the six countries, just under half of the staff is employed on a part-time basis (Varghese 2006). For instance, at the United States International University, out of a total of 106 academic staff in 2002, 65 were part-time. In the same year, 58 out of 115 staff at the Catholic University of East Africa were part-time. The profile of the staff's qualifications show much variation.

The academic staff's level of qualifications tends to vary. The number of staff with doctorates is uneven across and within the countries. For example, of the 56 academic staff at Central University College, nine have doctorates. Furthermore, out of the 41 full-time staff at the United States International University in 2001, approximately 50 percent had doctorates (Abagi 2006). By contrast, at Daystar University, out of a total of 84 academic staff, fewer than 10 percent held doctorates (Abagi 2006). The latter trend is replicated in Uganda, with 90 percent of the staff holding masters and bachelors' degrees.

Accreditation and Regulations

Current data show that the private sector institutions continue to be regulated in all the country studies. The form of regulation varies from being weak to extremely rigid (Thaver 2003). In the case of institutions that have been recently established, proposals have been submitted to the relevant accreditation bodies. Thus, at the time of this study, not all the institutions had been granted full accreditation. For example, while the Ugandan case displays rapid growth, with almost eleven universities being established since 2004, under half of the institutions are not licensed (Tumwesigye 2006). Moreover, the conditions under which the unlicensed private universities operate are not clearly defined.

Research

There appears to be limited research being conducted at private institutions. At the expense of not over-generalising, the programme/course offering at institutions in the country studies are primarily at undergraduate level. However, within countries a small number of institutions are offering postgraduate programmes, which then opens up the possibility for research. Examples are two institutions in Ghana and the Pan-African University in Nigeria. It seems though that the primary knowledge focus is either religion or business (as in the case of Masters in Business Administration). In terms of faculty-based research, there is limited data as to whether academics in private institutions are engaging in fully-fledged research projects. In the instance of Zimbabwe, funding constraints and low capacity levels are cited as reasons for academics in private institutions not being able to conduct research (Chivore 2006). Some of the evidence in the country studies suggests that there is limited infrastructural capacity of the standard required to conduct scholarly research. Given the aforementioned trends, what kinds of themes are emerging?

Themes and Overall Tendencies

Debates and reasons regarding the conditions that lend themselves to the proliferation of private higher education institutions in Africa have been made by scholars writing internationally (Altbach 2005; Levy 2005) as well as those writing from within the African country studies (Varghese et al. 2006). One of the key factors cited is the demand-absorption thesis (Geiger 1986; Levy 1986) which culminates in the view that private higher education institutions are meeting the social demand which cannot be provided by public sector institutions. The latter phenomenon, buttressed by the retreat of the state in terms of welfare provisioning globally, is also being reproduced in post-colonial African countries. The question therefore is to what extent are the private institutions meeting this demand? In other words, is it serving its social function? In light of this, I shall address certain thematic issues as these have arisen from the empirical data.

The first point is about the aspect of scale. The nature of enrolments in all the country studies suggests that while it is necessary for meeting the condition (of supply), their small scale suggests that these are not sufficient ones. But, while they represent a small share of the total higher education enrolment in the six countries, this in itself does not rule out a social function, albeit on a limited scale.

It strikes me that that the current growth of private higher education institutions in the six country studies signal possibilities for meeting the mid-level skills required by national economies. The developmental nature of the econo-

mies positioned in the interstices of national priorities and global imperatives, by implication, require a set of skills that are wide-ranging (and at various levels) in order to poise (or catapult) countries into a more modern project. With the recent trend in the under-investment of resources in the public higher education sector (Kiamba 2004) that in all likelihood will place limits on their expansion into more modern forms, this opens up possibilities for private growth. From this perspective, the current data shows that some of the private institutions are beginning to adapt and respond to these market needs, by making small inroads into the type of curricula required of more modern economies. Coupled with the two main streams, namely theological and business administration degrees, there is also evidence of programmes such as law, health sciences. Furthermore, engineering technology is evident in one of the institutions in Nigeria. In addition, in responding to the service sectors of the economy, some of the institutions, more specifically in East Africa, are offering courses in the hospitality industry. This could be a response to the service and tourist sector. Institutions are thus beginning to diversify beyond the narrow theological and business offerings. In fact, in Kenya, as part of a policy framework, institutions are reviewed regularly and curriculum diversification is one of the areas that are assessed in order to remain competitive (Abagi 2006).

Given these possibilities, a key question has to be about the flipside of enrolment, namely, that of throughput. Clearly, any discussion in terms of impact on the employment market has to address outcome factors. It is here that the benign nature of private institutions becomes somewhat murky, as there exists limited empirical data on throughput rates which makes it difficult to effectively assess social/educational outcomes. In light of this, it is important to understand the employment destination points for graduates from private institutions. Given traces of training programmes that are beginning to be aligned with (modern) economic imperatives, it would be important to understand how and where graduates are making a 'dent'. The point made about the need to conduct tracer studies in Uganda (Tumwesigye 2006) is a research challenge applicable across other countries.

For the purpose of this article, therefore, the key issue about private institutions is its relationship to the economy and society in the different countries. In light of this, how do private institutions ensure that their educational project remains rooted in the national soil? This question assumes significance given that most of them are operating within a framework of international capital, either in the form of philanthropic donations or through direct and indirect financial support from international economic institutions. Arising from this phenomenon is one suggestion that even though these institutions are run by

local (national) individuals, their allegiance appears to be either to the international sponsor or shareholder.

Furthermore, the higher education field is also a market for international providers. For example, in the case of both franchise colleges and international providers, these institutions, with strong international capital linkages, have made it easy for the foreign providers to move through the African higher education market at limited cost. The evidence seems to suggest that the colleges (as franchised operations) appear to be a mechanism for foreign providers to expand their market share.³ Thus, the challenge for private institutions is about how to navigate this tension at different dimensions of the system. However, an over-determination of the profit motive could compromise the potential for indigenous knowledge production insofar as course offerings and academic systems (Altbach 1987); these are imported and transplanted without cognizance of local realities. The knowledge linkage thus has the potential to be tenuous, a phenomenon that is further compounded by the tenuous employment status of academic staff in these institutions.

As highlighted earlier, the academic staff profile in private institutions is characterized by a complement of part-time academic staff. Several of the part-time staff is tied mainly to public sector institutions or industry. This means that not all the academic staff have a sense of long-term loyalty to private institutions which effectively then compromises those traditional elements of the academic project. Moreover, the development of an innovative curriculum which is also premised on research principles is thus tested. Besides academic autonomy (Altbach 1987), there are also quality assurance components that are compromised. In Nigeria, Ajayi (2006) reports that a recent monitoring report of private universities showed that with the exception of the Pan-African University, none of them met the National Universities Commission's minimum standards in terms of quality including the required number of academic staff. Furthermore, there is also the difficulty of attracting highly-qualified staff at certain institutions, given that the selection criteria tend to prioritise a commitment to Christianity (Wesonga et al. 2007).

Equity and Access

In the six countries, private higher education, tends to be expensive and beyond the reach of many students. Due to the high fees charged by private universities, access to these institutions is limited to students from the richer segments of society (Munene & Otieno 2007; Alani 2004; Wesonga et al. 2007). Some of the evidence suggests that traditionally under-represented groups remain excluded from private universities. While this is the trend, it is worthwhile mentioning the case of the Kiriri Women's University of Science and

Technology, which is exclusively for women. It would be interesting to further probe how the different groupings position themselves in the private higher education market, by drawing on some of the work in the public sector in Nigeria (see Lebeau 2000).

Financial Dependency

As highlighted earlier in this article, one of the features in relation to the institutions' sources of financial resources is the general reliance on either tuition and/or general sponsorship. This overwhelming dependence on limited revenue sources (in most cases one source) could present these institutions with significant resource dependency complications should there be a problem with these sources. Clearly, the private institutions are operating in an environment characterized by much flux and uncertainty. Thus, one of the key questions is the extent to which for-profit private institutions are able to generate both funding resources as well as, in the case of for-profits, generating a profitable surplus. The Tanzanian cases appears interesting in terms of how low profitability factors experienced by a for-profit institution subsequently culminated in a conversion from its former status to one of not-for-profit. In light of this, evidence suggests that there is 'no private university that has been able to make profits from its academic activities' (Kuhanga 2006). Following this line of argument, 'investors who established their institutions for profit-making have already wound up the business or have changed their original thinking and are now providing higher education as a social service.' This is an interesting case in terms of how institutions transform/convert their status from one of a for-profit to that of a not-for-profit.

Having identified these trends for the six country studies, the following section gives some broad insight into the private higher education sector in South Africa.

A Private Glimpse into South Africa

The rise of the sector in South Africa has been identified as a phenomenon of the mid-1990s (Thaver 2001; Mabizela 2002; Subotzky 2002; Kruss 2002). At this point, private higher education institutions began to mushroom under favourable constitutional conditions. This culminated in a practice whereby local and transnational institutions engaged in twinning and a variety of partnership arrangements. As highlighted, some of this prolific growth was wide-ranging in terms of qualification level, spanning both first and advanced business administration degrees. This growth included a significant concentration (albeit not exclusively) on the cusp of the higher education level. The latter phenomenon has made it difficult to map the size of the sector, which is

estimated to range between 86 and 99 institutions (Mabizela 2006). At the time of writing this article, approximately 25 percent (of the 99 institutions) were either not registered or at different stages in the accreditation process. In terms of institutional type, all of these are primarily (but not exclusively) recorded as for-profit institutions. It is interesting that the institutional type for-profit is marked by a strong corporate/conglomerate presence, with several being listed on the stock exchange.

In a similar vein to the six country studies, there are methodological problems around defining the scale of the sector. In light of this, it is difficult to pin-down the size of enrolments which is compounded by the extensive nature of private/public partnerships. Notwithstanding the latter, the current enrolment figure is at fewer than ninety thousand, with an estimated two-thirds being registered in partnership programmes with public sector institutions. Effectively, private higher education institutions that own programmes (without any partnership arrangements) comprise an enrolment figure of approximately 30,000 (Mabizela 2006). Effectively, it occupies a rather small share (fewer than 5 percent) of the overall higher education enrolment figure in South Africa.

In just over a decade, as private higher education institutions (both local and transnational) sought to establish themselves through '*part-twinning*' arrangements, they were simultaneously subject to the visible hand of the state. Direct regulation and monitoring have taken different forms not least of which has been – paradoxically – a type of restrictive welcoming. Other forms have included the provision of window-periods; de-accreditation of certain masters in business administration programmes; and moratoriums being placed on new partnerships, including the use of the terminology '*university*'. This has culminated in overt tensions between private institutions and government. Yet, the interface has also been characterized by complementarity between private and public institutions, generating relatively productive relationships (Levy 2005; Kruss 2002).

The above-mentioned private/public resource nexus has posed resource challenges for the government. In light of this, a pressing issue has revolved around the extent to which private (i.e. for-profit) institutions 'feed-off' the infrastructural base of public institutions. Some of the evidence suggests that tuition fees are one point of accumulation for the for-profit institutions. Thus, the profit motive appears to be the over-determining one, with accountability resting mainly with those of the shareholders.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion I would like to comment on a recurrent theme which is about the shape and form of the relationship between the private higher education institutions in the country studies and the role of international bodies. There are different ways of assessing this, one of which is to see a direct and linear relationship starting from the (international) centre and then working its way down and across the national contexts (Altbach 1987). From this angle, the higher education domain is perceived as a free market with private programmes being the tradable 'goods'. As I tried to show earlier, the franchise operations provide the mechanism for this trade. In this regard, the corporate owners of institutions (inside countries) are active agents in advancing this trade, subject to the vagaries of the market. Given at times the limited capacities of national governments it becomes difficult to monitor the pace of this type of trade. As I tried to show, this is very evident in the South African case resulting in direct government intervention. This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that private institutions are not fully accountable to the national social system. Effectively, therefore, the social responsibility (on the part of private higher education institutions) towards students (and in turn, society) is compromised and disadvantage is reproduced nationally. At the expense of not entirely discounting this phenomenon, it is also apposite to reframe the relationship as an interconnected web of economic and cultural networks that are wired through pockets within countries. In other words, I am making an argument for how capital both as a commodity and as culture (in the form of religion) works its way through the systems and then subsequently is legitimized inside countries. Whilst one cannot prevent this global rush more especially in the face of limited bureaucratic capacities, it may be worth our while to understand the dynamics and forces that lie beneath the phenomenon which strikes me as a convulsion of modernization. Following this line of argument, therefore, the recent trends in the country studies suggest to me that there are small (modern) inroads being made by these institutions. These modern educational products fall somewhat between on the one hand, the international economic and cultural rush, and on the other, the pressure for increased accountability to national governments (and in turn society). It is worthwhile to mention that their educational advantage is that they do not have the imprint of the colonial legacy in the same way as public sector institutions and as such have a forward-looking orientation. But herein lays the rub.

In their efforts to be more forward looking, the institutions in all the country studies, including South Africa, are constrained by the over-reliance on a cohort of part-time staff. The primary staff complement is one that is tied to public sector institutions, with individuals who 'moonlight' in private institu-

tions. This practice not only undermines institutional loyalty but places intellectual and resource limits on the extent to which they are able to develop and innovate around curricula. In light of this, the split loyalty and time spent by academic staff means that they may either transpose existing and at times outdated curricula from public institutions, or transport certain elements from foreign contexts. Effectively, this cross-cutting practice has implications for the distinction between public and private institutions. It is worthwhile to note that this blurring already operates along the dimension of tuition fees, with countries in the East African region recruiting fee-paying students alongside those that are government-subsidised (Kiamba 2004).

It may be timely to unhook the dichotomy of what constitutes private and public higher education institutions in the existing country studies in order to understand what lurks behind productive and generative higher education institutions. In particular, and for the purpose of this article, further research is necessary to show how specialised, private institutions acting as educational islands in Africa negotiate their way around a contested and convulsive process, mindful of what it takes to expand and organically situate both the knowledge and economic base of Africa.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Gerald Wangenge-Ouma for his research assistance.
2. At the time of the earlier study (Thaver 2003) there had been a paucity of literature and data on the private higher education sector in Africa. Given the comparative nature of the article, it necessitated a follow-up of the existing country studies. Subsequent studies (Varghese 2006) have yielded important data for other countries, which could be the focus for further research. Where the data is available, similar trends appear to be at work.

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