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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 provision¹ 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 Institutions	Total Enrolments at Private Enrolments	% 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	5) 11%
Mozambiq	ue 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 Afric	ea 23	742,000 (2005)	96	85,000 (2003)	10%
Tanzania	11	51,652	21	12,400 (2006/0	7) 19%
Uganda	4	96,000 (2003)***	23	17,060 (2004)	15%
Zimbabwe	7	38,000 (2004)	5	1,797 (2003)	5%

Notes

- 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' 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 metropoles. 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 metropoles. 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 enrols 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 Lusophone³ 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 empirical study conducted by the CHE concluded that transnational institutions lacked quality, based on the reasons stated by the authors, which do not include the forprofit 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-àvis 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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