

Private Sector Participation and the Development of University Education in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic, 1999-2021: A Historical Analysis

ADESOTE Samson Adesola¹

¹Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria

Corresponding author e-mail: solaade2007@ymail.com

Article History: Received on 16 November 2023, Revised on 10 February 2024,
Published on 20 February 2024

Abstract: The main thrust of this paper is to historicize the involvement of the private sector in the development of university education in Nigeria in the Fourth Republic. While the year 1999, marked the commencement of the birth of the second batch of private universities in Nigeria, the year 2021 was when the last batch of private universities were granted provisional licenses of operation by the Federal Government. History of educational development in Nigeria has its origin in the activities of the private sectors, that is, the Christian missions. Their involvement in the development of western education in the country between the late 19th and 20th centuries was mainly confined to the provision of primary and secondary education. Up to the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999, the provision of university education in the country was exclusively the responsibility of both the Federal and the State governments. Although an attempt was made during the Second Republic, 1979-1983, to encourage private sector participation, this eventually failed. However, with the return to civil rule in 1999, the country witnessed the emergence of the second attempt towards private sector involvement in the development of university education. The paper argues that the active involvement of the non-state actors in the delivery of university education in Nigeria since 1999 has helped in improving efficiency in delivery, expanding service coverage as well as increasing manpower production. The methodology adopted for this work is historical, qualitative and quantitative, utilizing materials from both primary and secondary sources.

Keywords: Development of Nigeria, Private Sector, University Education

A. Introduction

The importance of the provision of quality university education has been recognized as central to the promotion of national development in any society. There is no doubting the fact that access to high-quality tertiary education enriches people's lives, increases their employment opportunities and helps to build a productive skills base to drive economic growth. Every responsive and responsible government wants relevant and efficient tertiary education that meets the needs of students, the labour market and the economy. Therefore, the need to work towards developing and

implementing changes to how the educational system is funded, regulated and managed should be vigorously pursued. Hence, the effectiveness of tertiary education in achieving this vision depends largely on the quality of provision and the responsiveness of providers (Public and Private).

It is imperative to point out here that, in a rapidly changing social and natural environment, higher education plays a varied and complex role in societal development. Thus, without adequate higher education and research institutions providing a critical mass of skilled and educated people, no country can ensure genuine endogenous and sustainable development. Higher education has been given ample proof of its viability over the centuries and of its ability to change and to induce change and progress in society (Osborne, 2000).

Over the years, the responsibility of managing, funding, and supervision of university education in particular and tertiary education in general has solely been that of the government; first, with the Federal government, and later both Federal and state governments. This development has caused a number of problems for the Nigerian tertiary education in general, such as poor quality, poor funding, problem of equity/access and inefficiency of the system. These challenges have contributed to some of the reasons why none of our public universities has ever been rated among top best universities both in the world and in Africa. In most developed countries such as United States, Britain, Canada among others, the provision of university education is not a sole responsibility of the government. Both the government and the private sector are major stakeholders in the provision of university education. In other words, they had embraced the strategy of public-private partnership in tertiary education for a very long time (Patrinos, 2010:4-5). Most of the world best universities are private universities, which are found in these developed countries. Notable among them are Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Brown University, Brigham Young University and so on.

It is against this backdrop that this discourse intends to interrogate private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, 1999 and 2021. The paper is divided into five major sections. Section one is introduction; section two deals with an overview of the evolution and development of university education in Nigeria between 1948 and 1999; section three focuses on the history of private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria between 1999 and 2021; section four interrogates the impact of private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria; while section five is the conclusions.

B. Methods

This is library research. The main thrust of this paper is to historicize the involvement of the private sector in the development of university education in Nigeria in the

Fourth Republic. While the year 1999, marked the commencement of the birth of the second batch of private universities in Nigeria, the year 2021 was when the last batch of private universities were granted provisional licenses of operation by the Federal Government. History of educational development in Nigeria has its origin in the activities of the private sectors, that is, the Christian missions.

C. Results and Discussion

Evolution and Development of University Education in Nigeria, 1948-1999: An Overview

The history of university education in Nigeria was a function of change and continuity. Its evolution and development during this period of study were attributed to the roles of both the colonial government and the post-independent government. While the contribution of the colonial government to the evolution of higher education in Nigeria was not a deliberate effort, that of post-independent government was a deliberate one (Osoba & Fajana, 1980:570). First, history of university education in particular and tertiary education in Nigeria could be traced to the colonial period. An attempt towards the evolution of tertiary education during the colonial period was facilitated by the educational reforms introduced by Mr. E.R.J Hussey, who was appointed as the Director of Education for Nigeria in 1929. In 1930, Hussey came with new Policy on Education, which centred on all the levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary). Prior to this time, the provision of western education, which was exclusively in the hands of Christian missions was restricted to primary and post-primary (secondary) education. With the arrival of Hussey, the need to expand Nigeria's educational system wore a new garment. This development was said to have been facilitated by serious agitations of few educated Nigerian nationalists, who saw unwillingness on the part of the colonial government to embark on a programme of educating Nigerians beyond post-primary education level. Hussey proposal on the review of Nigeria's educational programme resulted in the establishment of the first institution of higher education known as Yaba Higher College, Lagos in 1932, but officially opened in 1934 (Falola, et al, 1991:42). Although this development was a major milestone in the history of higher education in colonial Nigeria, its establishment met intense criticisms from the Nigerian nationalists on the ground that it failed to meet their demand of quality higher education. The creation of Yaba Higher College by the colonial government was seen by the Nigerian nationalists as serving colonial ideology, through producing Nigerians as playing subordinate roles rather than stepping into the shoes of the top European officials in government and commerce (Osoba & Fajana, 1980:579). In spite of the criticism of the Nigerian nationalists, mostly from Lagos and other parts of the South, the College remained the first higher education in the country up till 1948 when the first university was set up.

The campaign for the Africanization of the colonial civil service and the provision of more and better educational opportunities by the Nigerian nationalists took a new

dimension in the 1940s. These demands were said to have constituted a part of the global movement in the British colonial empire for the indigenization of the key institutions of government and the provision of appropriate educational facilities without which indigenes who did not have requisite training would find it difficult to take over the running of their countries from the colonial officials and other expatriates. As a result of this, the colonial government under the leadership of Oliver Stanley as the Colonial Secretary, was forced to set up two different commissions geared towards university education in West Africa in particular in September 1943. These two commissions were the Asquith Commission and the Elliot Commission. While Asquith Commission was set up purposely to look into university education in the British Empire (West Africa inclusive), and the Elliot Commission was constituted mainly to look into the problem of university education in West Africa. The two commissions submitted their recommendations (which were similar) explaining that all colonial territories able to support university institutions should have them, provided that their standards were comparable to those of British universities. With respect to Elliot Commission, there were two reports, namely majority report and minority report. While the majority report recommended that two universities be established in Nigeria and the Gold Coast (now Ghana), and that Fourah Bay College be developed into a third with limited objectives, the minority report recommended only one university in Ibadan, Nigeria to serve the whole of British West Africa (Osoba & Fajana, 1980:581). The Colonial Office eventually accepted the minority report. Its acceptance led to the establishment of University College, Ibadan; and University College, Legon, Ghana in 1948. Both university colleges were affiliated to University of London (Adeyemi, 2021:3).

The two higher institutions continued to provide limited tertiary education to Nigerians during the colonial period. However, owing to intense agitations by the Nigerian nationalists for the appointment of Nigerians to posts in the Government Senior Service, which required higher qualification, the Colonial government was again forced to set up another commission in April 1959, known as Ashby Commission, headed by Sir Eric Ashby. The commission was charged with the responsibility to conduct an investigation into Nigeria's needs in the field of post-School Certificate and Higher Education over the next twenty years (1960-1980). With respect to higher education, the commission, which submitted its report in September 1960, observed dearth of trained teachers in the secondary schools in spite of the obvious increase in demand for their services. Thus, it recommended the opening of universities; institution of undergraduate degree in Education (B.A (Ed); B.Sc (Ed); and B.Ed); and the training of more teachers for Nigeria's secondary schools (Taiwo, 1980:4). The report of the commission provided a good foundation for the development of degree programme in teacher education in some of the tertiary institutions that were set up in immediate post-independence Nigeria (Fafunwa, 1974).

The development of university education in post-independence Nigeria, especially between 1960 and 1999 could be interrogated under different historical political phases, namely First Republic, 1960-1966; First Phase of military rule, 1966-1979; Second Republic, 1979-1983; and Second Phase of Military rule, 1983-1999. During the First Republic, university education in Nigeria witnessed major development. Between 1960 and 1966, there was expansion of university education in Nigeria from one university to five. The period witnessed the establishment of regional universities beginning with University of Nigeria, Nsukka set up by the Eastern Regional Government on 7 October 1960. In 1962, both the Western and Northern Regional Governments founded their own universities, namely University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife), and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria respectively. In the same year, the Federal Government established her own university known as University of Lagos (Omolewa, 1986:220), which was cited in Lagos, being the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria then. Nigeria, having become a republic in 1963, the Federal Government decided to upgrade University College, Ibadan to a full-fledged university (now known as University of Ibadan). These five universities were referred to as the First-Generation Universities in Nigeria. Following the demise of the First Republic and the emergence of military rule in 1966, the provision of university education was put under the exclusive list. By implication, it was only the Federal Government that had the authority to establish university in the country. Thus, between 1966 and 1979, which was the First Phase of military rule, eight universities were set up in different parts of Nigeria, namely University of Benin (1970), University of Jos, University of Maiduguri, University of Port Harcourt, University of Calabar, University of Kano (now Bayero University, Kano), University of Sokoto (now Usman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto and University of Ilorin. These universities were referred to as Second Generation Universities in Nigeria (Osokoya, 1994).

With the return to civil rule in 1979, leading to the birth of the Second Republic, the development of university education wore a new garment. The birth of the republic was made possible through successful introduction of the 1979 Constitution. The constitution removed university education from the Exclusive List to the Concurrent List. By this constitutional provision, the State Governments were granted the constitutional right to set up their own universities. Thus, between 1979 and 1983, there was the emergence of both Federal and State-owned Universities. The first State-owned University to be established in Nigeria was Rivers State University of Science and Technology (RUST) (now known as Rivers State University), set up in October 1980. It was formerly known as Rivers State College of Science and Technology established in 1972, but upgraded to the status of a university by Governor Melford Obiene Okilo, who was the first civilian governor of old Rivers State (now made up of new Rivers State and Bayelsa State). Other civilian state governors equally set up their own Universities during this period. These state-owned universities were Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, 1980; Abia State University, Uturu, 1981; Ogun State University, Ago-Iwoye, 1982 (now Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye; and Lagos State university, Ojo, 1983. Also, the Federal Government of Nigeria under the

leadership of Alhaji Shehu Shagari equally set up its own universities, which were specialized universities in the defunct three major regions of Nigeria (North, West and East). The universities were Federal University of Technology, Owerri, 1980 (Eastern Region); Federal University of Technology, Akure, 1981 (Western Region); Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola, 1981 (Northern Region); and Federal University of Technology, Minna, 1982 (Northern Region) (Yusuf, 2017).

It is imperative to point out here that during this republic, attempt was made towards the establishment of the first batch of private universities in Nigeria. This became possible through the 1979 Constitution, which provided individuals, private entrepreneurs and organizations to establish and fund universities in Nigeria along with Federal and State Governments. Consequently, about twenty-six private universities were established in different parts of Nigeria during this period. Notable among them were Imo Technical University, Imo State; Akoko Christian University, Akungba Akoko, Ondo State; God's University, Umuezena, Anambra State; Feyson University, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State and so on (Osagie, 2009:14). However, following the collapse of the Second Republic occasioned by the military take over of power by Major General Muhammadu Buhari in December 1983, the regime promulgated a decree in 1984 (that is, Decree 19 of 1984), which led to the abolishment of the private universities (Osagie, 2009).

The second phase of military rule, which began in December 1983 and lasted till 29 May 1999, was another important phase in the history of the development of university education in post-independence Nigeria. During this military rule, both federal and state-owned universities were founded by different military regimes. In 1985 for example, the military regime of Major General Muhammadu Buhari established the Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna. Also, the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993) initially established three specialized universities in the defunct three regions of Nigeria between 1988 and 1992, namely Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (1988) Western Region; Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi (1988), Northern Region; and Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (1992), Eastern Region. The regime further founded new four universities, namely Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi (1988); University of Abuja (1988); University of Uyo (1991) and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (1992). There was also the emergence of state-owned universities during this period. Notable among them were Ladoke Akintola University, Ogbomosho (1990); Benue State University, Makurdi (1992); Delta State University, Abraka (1992) and Imo State University, Owerri (1992) (Yusuf, 2017:30-53).

Although the military regime of General Abdulsalam Abubakar did not set up government-owned universities, it initiated the process that led to the birth of the second attempt at establishing private owned universities in Nigeria. The regime (which lasted between June 8 1998 and 29 May 1999), granted a Provisional Licenses of operation through the Federal Executive Council on 20 April 1999 based on the

recommendation of the National Universities Commission (a federal government regulatory agency charged with the responsibility of monitoring, supervising, maintaining quality academic activities among others in all Nigerian universities) to three private universities. On May 10 1999, the proprietors of the three universities were presented with Certificates of operation. These three private universities were Babcock University, Illisan-Remo, Ogun State; Madonna University, Okija, Anambra State; and Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State. However, these three private universities did not commence operation under the regime. They became operational under the civilian administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who was sworn in on 29 May 1999, which marked the birth of the Fourth Republic (The Punch, February, 2022).

Historicizing Private Sector Participation in the Development of University Education in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, 1999-2021

Generally, there were two major attempts at promoting private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria. While the first attempt began during the Second Republic and was unsuccessful, the second attempt started during the Fourth Republic and has been largely successful. The year 1999 marked the genesis of the second attempt at promoting private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria. As argued earlier, the foundation for the involvement of the private sector as a major stakeholder in the provision of university education for Nigerians was laid by the regime of General Abdulsalam Abubakar, which granted Provisional Licenses of operation to three universities. The licenses of operation of the three universities were later validated by the administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo on 30 September 1999. This development enabled the three universities to commence academic activities.

Over the past decade, the globalization and governing of education through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) have generated considerable debate as to their meaning, purpose, status and outcomes (Wang, 1999:12). This debate is particularly heated in the education sector because of the widely-held view that education is a complex social and political activity that should remain largely, if not wholly, in the public sector serving public interests. The rapid expansion of Public Private Partnership in Education (PPPE), which increasingly involves private actors in a range of public sector education activity, including more and more of the traditional arenas of public education systems: policy making/formulation, curriculum development, education provision, inspection/supervision/monitoring and management has been well documented in the literature (Hatcher, 2006:599 and Ball, 2007). While some observers, argued that PPPE is simply a newer, friendlier, face on a longer-standing 'privatization of education' agenda (Hatcher, 2006:599 and Ball, 2007), others posited that it is an innovative means of financing education that draws upon the best of the public and the private with the potential to resolve deep systemic problems in education systems, such as access, quality and equity Hoxby, 2003). Therefore,

whatever the veracity of either positions, PPP, which was initially restricted to other sectors, has become a major educational initiative adopted by both developed and developing countries since the birth of the new millennium. For example, the adoption of PPP by the United States, United Kingdom and Western Europe in the 1990s in the education sector in particular was geared towards bringing in the management practices of the private sector into the public sector and improve competitiveness and increase efficiency. The understanding was that it would make public expenditure more effective and, in some cases, would attract financial investment from the private sector. It was also believed that partnership in education would bring in more finances to run the ailing educational system as well as improve the quality of provision through raising management standards in educational institutions. (Hoxby, 2003 and Ball, 2007).

Given the significant educational challenges confronting developing countries' tertiary education and the potential need to increase access, quality, efficiency and accountability of the sector, the adoption public private participation in tertiary education became imperative. The need to explore this innovative way of financing and delivering quality university education efficiently and effectively to Nigerians was given adequate attention by the Federal Government of Nigeria following the birth of the Fourth Republic. This could be noticeable in the increase in the number of private universities from three (3) in 1999 to ninety-nine in 2021. This increase was attributed to the frantic efforts of successive civilian administrations that came into power during this period. Owing to the liberalization of tertiary education by Decree 9 of 1993 (which was not implemented until 1999), which sets strict standards to be met before the National Universities Commission, several private individuals, religious organizations, corporate bodies and entrepreneurs in the country submitted their applications, which culminated in the approval of their universities by the Federal Executive Council. Between 1999 and 2021, Nigeria was governed by four different civilian administrations, namely Chief Olusegun Obasanjo administration (1999-2007), Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua Administration (2007-2010), Dr. Goodluck Jonathan Administration (2010-2015), and General Muhammadu Buhari (ret'd) Administration (2015-2023). The administration of these four civilian presidents could be grouped into two distinct political parties, namely People's Democratic Party (PDP) administration (which comprised Chief Olusegun Obasanjo administration, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua Administration and Dr. Goodluck Jonathan Administration) and All Progressives Congress (APC) administration (which involved General Muhammadu Buhari (ret'd) Administration). While the PDP administration lasted between 1999 and 2015, the APC administration began from 2015. It is imperative to point out here that during each civilian administration, a number of private universities were approved. Aside the initial three private universities, that their licenses of operation were validated by the administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the administration approved additional twenty-eight (28) universities, while the administration of Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua granted approval to nine (9) private universities, the administration of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan granted approval

to twenty (20) private universities. Between 1999 and 2015, a total number of sixty (60) private universities were approved by the PDP administration (which was in power for sixteen years) in Nigeria.

On 29 May 2015, Nigerian democracy witnessed a major political transformation from the then ruling party (PDP) now opposition to the then opposition party (APC) now ruling party. This became possible as a result of the success of the 2015 Presidential Election in which the then incumbent President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan (PDP candidate) was defeated by now incumbent President, Muhammadu Buhari of APC; and successfully handed over the reins of power on 29 May 2015. Having taken over power, he continued with the policy of liberalization of tertiary education in the country. Between 2016 and 2021 of the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, thirty-nine new private universities were approved by the Federal Executive Council in different parts of Nigeria. Thus, within the space of twenty-two years of the birth of the Fourth Republic, a total of ninety-nine private universities were established by private individuals, corporate bodies and religious organizations. The table below shows the list of approved private universities by the Federal Government of Nigeria as at 2021.

List of Approved Private Universities in Nigeria, 1999-2021

S/N	Names of Universities	Year of Establishment
1	Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo	1999
2	Igbinedion University, Okada	1999
3	Madonna University, Okija	1999
4	Bowen University, Iwo	2001
5	Covenant University, Ota	2002
6	Pan African University, Lagos	2002
7	Benson Idahosa University, Benin City	2002
8	American University of Nigeria, Yola	2003
9	Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo	2005
10	Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin	2005
11	Bingham University, New Karu	2005
12	Caritas University, Enugu	2005
13	Al-Qalam University, Kastina	2005
14	Redeemer's University, Ede	2005
15	Crawford University, Igbesa	2005
16	Lead City University, Ibadan	2005
17	Bells University of Technology, Lagos	2005
18	Kwararafa University, Wukari	2005
19	Crescent University, Abeokuta	2005
20	Novena University, Ogume	2005
21	Renaissance University, Enugu	2005
22	University of Mkar, Mkar	2005

23	Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji	2006
24	Caleb University, Imota	2007
25	Fountain University, Osogbo	2007
26	Obong University, Obong Ntak	2007
27	Salem University, Lokoja	2007
28	Tansian University, Umunya	2007
29	Veritas University, Abuja	2007
30	Wesley University, Ondo	2007
31	Western Delta University, Oghara	2007
32	Achievers University, Owo	2007
33	African University of Science and Technology, Abuja	2007
34	Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti	2009
35	Rhema University, Owerinta	2009
36	Nile University of Nigeria, Abuja	2009
37	Oduduwa University, Ipetumodu	2009
38	Wellspring University, Evbuobanosa	2009
39	Paul University, Awka	2009
40	Godfrey Okoye University, Ogbuomu-Nike	2009
41	Adeleke University, Ede	2011
42	Baze University, Abuja	2011
43	Landmark University, Omu-Aran	2011
44	Samuel Adegboyega University, Ogwa	2011
45	McPherson University, Seriki Sotayo	2012
46	Elizade University, Ilara-Mokin	2012
47	Southwestern University, Okun-Owa	2012
48	Gregory University, Uturu	2012
49	Evangel University, Akaeze	2012
50	Summit University, Offa	2015
51	Edwin Clark University, Kaigbodo	2015
52	Michael & Cecilia Ibru University, Orode	2015
53	Ritman University, Ikot-Ekpene	2015
54	Hezekiah University, Umudi	2015
55	Augustine University, Lagos	2015
56	Chrisland University, Abeokuta	2015
57	Mountain Top University, Ibafo	2015
58	Hallmark University, Ijebu-Itele	2015
59	Kings University, Ode-Omu	2015
60	Christopher university, Mowe	2015
61	Kola Daisi University, Ibadan	2016
62	Anchor University, Ayobo	2016
63	Crown Hill University, Eiyenkorin	2016
64	Coal City University, Enugu	2016
65	Clifford University, Owerinta	2016

66	Arthur Javis University, Akpoyubo	2016
67	Legacy University, Okija	2016
68	Dominican University, Ibadan	2016
69	Admiralty University, Ibusa	2017
70	Spiritan University, Nneochi	2017
71	Precious Cornerstone University, Oyo	2017
72	PAMO University of Medical Sciences, Port Harcourt	2017
73	Atiba University, Oyo	2017
74	Eko University of Medical and Health Sciences, Ijanikin	2017
75	Skyline University, Kano	2018
76	Greenfield University, Kaduna	2019
77	Dominion University, Ibadan	2019
78	Trinity University, Yaba	2019
79	Westland University, Iwo	2019
80	Al-Istiqama University, Sumaila	2021
81	Anan University, Kwall	2021
82	Ave Maria University, Piyanko	2021
83	Capital City University, Kano	2021
84	Claretian University of Nigeria, Nekede	2021
85	Edusko University, Bida	2021
86	Havilla University, Nde-Ikom	2021
87	James Hope University, Lagos	2021
88	Karl-Kumm University, Vom	2021
89	Khadija University, Majia	2021
90	Maranathan University, Mgbidi	2021
91	Maryam Abacha American University of Nigeria, Kano	2021
92	Mewar University, Masaka	2021
93	Mudiame University, Irrua	2021
94	NOK University, Kachia	2021
95	Philomath University, Abuja	2021
96	Thomas Adewumi University, Oko-Irese	2021
97	Topfaith University, Mkpatak	2021
98	University of Offa, Offa	2021
99	Ahman Pategi University, Kwara State	2021

Source: <https://www.nuc.edu.ng>. Accessed on 10 March 2022

Importantly, the establishment of private universities in Nigeria during this period became a major competition between indigenous entrepreneurs on one hand, and religious organizations on the other. As a result of this development, there emerged two major categories of private universities in Nigeria, namely faith-based private universities and non-faith-based private universities. While Faith-based private

universities were the universities established by religious organizations, non-faith based private universities were the universities established by private individuals and private entrepreneurs. Faith-based private universities could be sub-divided into two, namely Christian Faith-based private universities and Muslim Faith-based private universities. The Christian Faith-based private universities were the universities established by different Orthodox and Pentecostal Missions, which included Babcock University (Seventh Day Adventist Church), Ajayi Crowther University (Anglican Mission), Bowen University (Baptist Mission), Wesley University (Methodist Mission), Redeemer's University (Redeemed Christian Church of God), Anchor University (Deeper Life Bible Church), Samuel Adegboyega University (Apostolic Church) and so on. The Muslim Faith-based private universities were the universities set up by different Islamic organizations such as Fountain University (Nasrul Lahi L Fathi Society-NASFAT) and Al-Hikman University (AbdulRaheem Oladimeji Islamic Foundation-AROIF). Also, the non-faith-based private universities could be sub-divided into two main categories. They were universities established by private individuals (who were either Christians or Muslims) such as Lead City University, Caleb University, Afe Babalola University, and Edwin Clark University; and universities established by private entrepreneurs such as Elizade University and Oduduwa University.

The impact of the Private Sector Participation on the Development of University Education in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic: A Preliminary Assessment

Having briefly historicize private sector participation in the evolution and development of university education in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic, it is imperative to critically analyses their impact on the development of university education in Nigeria during this period. Evidences through primary and secondary sources revealed that the private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Between 1999 and 2021, the private sector impacted positively on the development of university education in Nigeria in no small measure.

One of the major impacts of the private sector participation on the development of university education in Nigeria could be seen in area of accessibility to university education. The existence of private universities in Nigeria since 1999 had helped to provide additional opportunities to prospective Nigerian undergraduates who could not gain admission into the public universities (federal and state) due to limited spaces. There is no doubt that there is a huge demand for university education in Nigeria. This demand could be seen in the total number of candidates sitting for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) being conducted yearly the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board Examination (JAMB). The table below shows the

breakdown of total number of candidates that participated in the UTME between 2016 and 2020 as well as those that were eventually admitted.

Table 2. Breakdown of Candidates that participated in the UTME and those Admitted in all the Nigerian Universities, 2016 and 2020 (Selected)

S/N	Year	Total Application	Total Quota	Total Admitted	Unused
1	2016	1,557,017	-	405,467	-
2	2017	1,687,551	-	418,391	-
3	2018	1,558,686	575,687	445,318	130,369
4	2018	1,808,334	560,613	444,947	115,666
5	2020	1,855,072	601,775	422,453	179,322

Source: Oloyede, I.O. 2022. State Ownership Dynamics, University Councils and The Need for a New Social Contract between Society and University. A paper presentation the 6th Biennial Conference of the Committee of Pro-Chancellors of State-Owned Universities in Nigeria, by Tuesday, March 22, 2022

The above table revealed the total number of applicants as well as those that were eventually admitted into various Nigerian Universities (both public and private) between 2016 and 2020. From the table, one could see vividly that not all those who sought for admission into various Nigerian universities were eventually admitted. Besides, virtually all the universities did not meet up with their yearly quota. This could be attributed to a number of reasons such as problem of fund as well as challenge of incomplete results and other admission requirements on the part of the admission seekers.

Further justification for the contribution of the private sector to the provision of admission to prospective Nigerian undergraduates could be seen in table 3 below, which provides detailed statistics of degree admission offered to prospective undergraduates by both public and private universities between 2010 and 2022.

Table 3. Degree Admission by Ownership, 2010-2022

	Federal Universities	State Universities	Private Universities	Total Figure
Figure	2,579,054	1,334,536	273,982	4,187,572
Percentage	61.5%	31.87%	6.57%	100%

Source: Oloyede, I.O. 2022. State Ownership Dynamics, University Councils and The Need for a New Social Contract between Society and University. A paper presentation the 6th Biennial Conference of the Committee of Pro-Chancellors of State-Owned Universities in Nigeria, by Tuesday, March 22, 2022

The above table revealed the total number of candidates admitted into all the three main categories of universities in Nigeria (federal, state and private) between 2010 and 2022. From the table, one could see vividly that all the three main categories of

Nigerian universities offered admission to the prospective Nigerian undergraduates, though in varying number and percentage during this period. It is evident from the table that while the federal universities took the lead with 2,579,054 (61.5%), and was immediately followed by the state universities with 1,334,536 (31.87%); private universities took the least with 273,982 (6.67%). Arguably, if there were no private universities in Nigeria during this period, the total number admitted by them would have been deprived of admission due to limited spaces in the public universities. In fact, as argued in table 2, virtually all the universities did not meet up with their yearly quota of total number of candidates that were to be admitted. Therefore, the presence of private universities in Nigeria had helped to salvage the problem of deprivation of admission to prospective Nigerian undergraduates whose parents could afford high school fees being paid in those universities.

The provision of quality tertiary/university education was another major impact of the presence of private universities in Nigeria since 1999. Quality tertiary education is being determined by three main pillars, which are availability of qualified academic staff, availability, quality and utilization of learning resources and availability of well, safe and conducive learning environment. One major area of measuring the presence of these three pillars was the Webometric ranking of world universities. Webometric ranking of world universities, which is an initiative of cybernetics Lab, a research group of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) located in Madrid, started in 2004. The main aim of the webometric ranking is to improve the presence of the academic and research institutions on the web and to promote the open access publication of scientific results (<https://www.webometrics.info> on 30 March 2022). Although not all the existing private universities possess these pillars, some of them do. In fact, some private universities in Nigeria have distinguished themselves for the provision of quality university education in Nigeria. They are Covenant University, Redeemer's University, Babcock University and Bowen University. For instance, according to January 2022 Webometric ranking of Nigerian Universities, Covenant University emerged as the second best University in Nigeria in particular. Of the 100 Nigeria universities that were ranked in 2020, twenty (20) of the universities were private universities, occupying various positions. In fact, some of the private universities were ranked ahead of most public universities in the 2020 Webometric ranking such as Covenant University (2nd position), American University of Nigeria (31st position), African University of Science and Technology (35th position), Skyline University of Nigeria (36th position), Landmark University (37th position), Redeemer's University (45th position). These universities were ranked ahead of Kwara State University (46th position), Michael Okpara University of Agriculture (47th position), Abia State University (48th position), Federal University, Dustin ma (49th position), Edo University (50th position) and so on (<https://www.webometrics.info> on 30 March 2022).

In terms of availability, quality and utilization of learning resources cum availability of well, safe and conducive learning environment to achieve quality university

education in Nigeria, some private universities have made their mark. A good example is the Redeemer's University. In 2014, African Centre of Excellence for the Genomics of Infectious Disease (ACEGID) was established at Redeemer's University. The ACEGID Centre at the university was instrumental in containing the outbreak of Ebola in Nigeria in 2014 when the first case of Ebola was discovered in the country. Since 2014, the centre has been responsible for diagnosing and containing deadly infectious diseases such as Ebola, Malaria, Lassa Fever and COVID-19. Also, with the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, ACEGID Centre in Redeemer's University was named by the World Health Organization (WHO) and African Centre for Disease and Control (ACDC) as an African reference laboratory for genome research. It was not just a Nigerian Centre, but also one of the regional repositories and bioinformatics centres in the continent of Africa. The centre was one of the laboratories that were launched by WHO and ACDC for the purpose of reinforcing genome sequencing of the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the virus that causes COVID-19 in Africa. This international recognition given to Redeemer's University was attributed to the availability of qualified academic staff and learning resources cum conducive learning environment in the university. The Centre, since its recognition, has been sharing information with Nigerian public on how to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 as well as mapping the first African SARS-CoV-2 genome sequence within Africa.

Human capital development/manpower development constituted one of the impacts of the existence of private universities in Nigeria. According to Okoroafor, education and training are the major components of human capital development (Okoroafor, 2010:71). Erluwua sees human capital development as a process of increasing human knowledge, enhancing human skills in vocational and technical education for the purpose of increase in productivity and stimulate resourcefulness of trainees (Erluwua, 2007:116). Therefore, the achievement of human capital development in any country requires the promotion of different educational programmes such as the establishment of tertiary institutions for the training of skilled labour. Since the active participation of the private sector in university education in Nigeria, private universities had contributed to the increase in the number of skilled labour (such as lawyers, scientists, doctors, engineers, nurses, academics, accountants, mass communicators, architects) being produced yearly in the country. As argued by Olukoju, some private universities have succeeded in carving a niche for themselves in certain specialist disciplines, where the concentration of funds and facilities have produced some noteworthy results. He further explains that the performance of graduates of Afe Babalola University and Bowen University in the Nigerian Law School Examinations was good illustration (Olukoju, 2019:82). Although the numbers of manpower being produced yearly by all the private universities in the country do not match with their public counterparts, their immense contribution to human capital development in many areas of national need remains seminal. Evidence from oral interviews conducted revealed that some academic staff, who are lecturing in

some public universities in Nigeria today obtained their doctorate degrees from the private universities such as Babcock University and Igbinedion University.

The maintenance of a stable academic calendar in Nigerian university was another impact of the existence of private universities. As argued by Olukoju, private universities have succeeded in demonstrating to the whole world that the implementation of five-year strategic plans, which used to be the norm in Nigerian public universities up to the 1970s and are commonplace in other countries can be re-instituted in Nigeria (Olukoju, 2019:84). This is one of the advantages that private universities have over the public universities, which have resulted in their frequent patronage by even people of middle class in spite of their exorbitant school fees. This could be corroborated with the submission of Olaide that the maintenance of stable academic calendar was the initial selling point of private universities in Nigeria. He further explains that they had promised and consistently guarantee their students would matriculate and graduate within the stipulated time frame of their course of study (Olaide, 2018:1-2). The maintenance of stable academic calendar has become a mirage in most public universities. This challenge was attribute to incessant strikes (which could be warning or total) being embarked on by different unions within the public universities such as Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU), and National Association of Academic Technologists (NAAT). Although the unions should not be blamed for embarking on strikes because strike constitutes one of the strategies by which the governments (both federal and state) are being forced to carry out their obligations on public universities, the incessant strikes being declared by the unions had contributed largely to frequent disruptions of university academic calendar.

The existence of private universities in Nigeria has resulted in the emergence of two major important voluntary associations geared towards the development of university education in Nigeria, namely Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Registrars of Nigerian Private Universities (CVCNPU) and Committee of Pro Chancellors of Private-owned Universities (CPCPU). Each of the Committees appoints its own Chairman on rational basis for the period of two years. For instance, while Prof. K.A Adeyemi (VC, Lead City University, Ibadan) is the current Chairman of CVCNPU, Prof. Tunde Adeniran, the Pro Chancellor of Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti is the current Chairman of CPCPU. The establishment of these two independent associations was facilitated by the Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities (CVCNU). These two associations are major stakeholders and voices in university education in Nigeria. They have continued to play important role with respect to the maintenance of high academic standard and excellence in private universities in order to compete relatively with public universities in Nigeria in particular and other universities in the world in general. The voices of the two associations were well pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic in which all universities (both public and private) as well as other educational institutions were

shut based on the directive of Federal Ministry of Education through National Universities Commission (NUC) on 23rd March 2020. In a separate communique, each of the association wrote to the NUC by providing suggestions and guidelines to enable private universities to re-open. Their communique was based on well-articulated reasons that showed that private universities have put in place all requirements in compliance with the protocols of the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 to ensure that the universities can re-open in a safe and secure environment (The Punch, 18 August, 2020).

The promotion and maintenance of high moral standard among students was a significant impact of the private universities in Nigeria. The responsibilities of university in particular and tertiary institution in general go beyond academics (teaching, learning and research). Universities are supposed to be important centres in forming social morality. This belief is premised on the ground that for any graduate to be awarded a degree, he or she must have been found worthy of “character and learning”. Thus, the university’s greatest potential for influencing the moral development of students is in the contribution that it can make to their intellectual development (Sandalow, 1991). Although formal education is, but one influence among many, affecting character development, it is in our society the chief instrument of intellectual development. In this regard, the private universities, most especially the faith-based universities, have made their mark. Without doubt, a modicum of decency and civility underpinned by faith-induced ethical values is being instilled in students in most faith-based private universities (Olukoju, 2019:82). In fact, most parents prefer to send their children to faith-based private universities, not minding the cost, to public universities due to issue of moral decadence in most public universities such as indecent dressing, drug abuse, cultism, violence among others. Although there are rules and regulations against these immoral behaviours in public universities, these social vices continued to thrive. The situation is different in most faith-based private universities. Rules and regulations against social vices are not just put in place; they are enforced and appropriate sanctions are meted on the culprits. One major faith-based private university notable for strict maintenance of high moral standard among students in Nigeria is Covenant University. One major advantage that faith-based private universities in particular have over the public universities in the promotion and maintenance of high moral standard among students is that they operate purely residential university system unlike the public universities, which operate residential and non-residential. This has helped the private universities in ensuring close monitoring of their students.

D. Conclusion

The foregoing discourse has provided a detailed historical analysis of the evolution and development of private sector participation in the development of university education in the Nigeria’s Fourth Republic between 1999 and 2021. It argued that the first major attempt at promoting private sector participation in the development of

university education in Nigeria was traced to the Second Republic, which lasted between 1979 and 1983.

This first attempt was unsuccessful occasioned by the abolition of the twenty-six private universities by the regime of Major General Muhammadu Buhari through the promulgation of a decree in 1984. The situation remained in force until the return to civil rule in 1999. Although a decree on liberalization of tertiary education was issued by the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida in 1993, it was not implemented until 1999, when General Abdulsalam Abubakar became the 8th military head of state of Nigeria. He initiated the second attempt towards the promotion of private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria by granting licenses of operation to the first batch of three private universities in Nigeria in May 1999.

The licenses of operation of these three universities were later validated by the civilian administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in September 1999. Between 1999 and 2021, successive civilian administrations that emerged in the country took frantic efforts towards encouraging private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria. This was justified in the fact that there was no administration during this period that did not grant approval to the applications from private individuals, corporate bodies and religious organizations presented before it through the agency of the Federal Government, that is, National Universities Commission. As a result of this, the number of private universities increased from three (3) in 1999 to ninety-nine (99) in 2021. By implication, the total number of private universities doubled the total number of public universities in Nigeria, which is 98 (while the total number of Federal universities is 45, that of State Universities is 53). The impact of private sector participation in the development of university education was critically identified and discussed. The study specifically interrogated the social impact of the existence of private universities in Nigeria between 1999 and 2021. Major social impact of the existence of private universities highlighted and discussed included provision of accessibility to university education, provision of human capital development, maintenance of high moral standard among students, maintenance of stable academic calendar and so on.

The study concluded that though private universities during this period were confronted with some challenges such as inadequate funding, low enrolment, inadequate academic staff among others, the private sectors have remained major stakeholders in the provision of university education in Nigeria. In all, this study is a

complement to existing body of knowledge on the history of private universities in Nigeria.

E. Acknowledgment

We thank to all stakeholders who have helped me in this article.

References

- Adeyemi, O.P. (2021). Private Universities and their host communities in Osun State, 2001-2019. Unpublished M.A dissertation, Department of History and International studies, Osun state University, Nigeria
- Ball, S.J. (2007) Education plc: Understanding Private Sector Participation in Public Sector Education. New York: Routledge
- Erluwua, H.E.O. (2007). Skills acquisition: A tool for youth empowerment for economic growth and development. *Journal of Business and Management Studies*, 1 (2):116-123
- Fafunwa, A.B. (1974). History of Education in Nigeria. London: George Allen and Unwin
- Falola, T; Mahadi, A; Uhomoibhi, M and Anyanwu, U. (1991). History of Nigeria 3: Nigeria in the 20th century. Ibadan: Longman Nigeria Limited
- Hatcher, R. (2006). Privatization and sponsorship: the re-agenting of the school system in England, in *Journal of Education Policy*, 21 (5), pp. 599-619
- Hoxby, C. (2003). School Choice and School Competition: Evidence from the United States. *Swedish Economic Policy Review*, 10, 9-65
- Okoroafor, C. (2010). Human capital development and vision 20:2020. A perspective on tertiary education. *SBMT Nekede Conference Journal*, 1 (2):71-83
- Olaide, L. (2018). We matter too; the role of government in financing private varsities. *Arts and Social Science*, 9 (4):1-4
- Oloyede, I.O. (2022). State Ownership Dynamics, University Councils and The Need for a New Social Contract between Society and University. A paper presentation the 6th Biennial Conference of the Committee of Pro-Chancellors of State-Owned Universities in Nigeria, by Tuesday, March 22, 2022
- Olukoju, A. (2019). Private universities and National Development: Reflections on the Nigerian experience. In Siyan Oyeweso and Sola Akinrinade. Eds. *Perspectives*

- on higher education and good governance in Nigeria. Ibadan: Noirledge Limited, 80-97
- Omolewa, M. (1986). Certificate History of Nigeria. Lagos: Longman Nigeria Limited
- Osagie, A.U. (2009). Change and Choice: The development of private universities in Nigeria. Benin city: Rawel Printing Press
- Osborne, P. (ed.) (2000). Public-Private Partnerships: Theory and Practice in International Perspective. London: Routledge.
- Osoba, S.O and Fajana, A. (1980). Educational and Social Development during the twentieth century. in Obaro Ikime. Ed. Groundwork of Nigerian History, pp570-600
- Osokoya, I.O. (1994). History and Policy of Education in Nigeria. Ibadan: University of Ibadan
- Patrinos, H. (2010). Private Education Provision and Public Finance, Policy Working Paper 5185, World Bank, Washington, DC, pp. 5-8.
- Sandalow, T (1991). The Moral Responsibilities of Universities. In D.L Thompson. Ed. Moral values and Higher Education: Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University.
- Taiwo, C.O (1980). The Nigerian Educational System: Past, Present and Future. Thomas Nelson Nigeria Limited.
- Wang, Y. (1999). Public-Private Partnerships in Health and Education: Conceptual issues and options, paper prepared for Manila Social Policy Forum: The New Social Agenda for East, Southeast and Central Asia, Joint ADB-World Bank Conference, November 9-12
- Yusuf, M.A. (2017). Historical-Chronological Emergence of Universities in Nigeria: The perspectives in Colomilicivilian periodization. Historical Research Letter, Vol.41.33-43