

MEETING THE DEMAND FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Strategies for sustainable development have long been grounded in developing human resources through tertiary education. For most developing countries, efforts to enhance the quantity and quality of output of higher institutions have resulted in mixed results. This study examines the state of tertiary education in Nigeria by an investigation into; the problems of access and equity, meeting the demands of the labour market in terms of quality and quantity of graduates, long distance learning as a delivery method and the impact of the private sector on the current situation. The study employs data from relevant public sources that provide valuable insight and information into the research questions under consideration. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. The study revealed that the problem of access to candidates from the northern parts of the country, especially females and, low income groups has not been addressed. The quality of graduates and demand from the labour market has also continued to depreciate. The problems of poor Information and Communication Technology infrastructure, poor postal system and preference for institutions that adopt face-to-face approaches by candidates and employers of labour also continue to plague the feasibility of long distance learning methods. However, the private sector has made an appreciable impact in providing more openings albeit for high income groups. Furthermore, web rankings show that private universities in Nigeria have made an encouraging impact in published materials in such a short period of existence. In conclusion, massive injections of funding from both private and public institutions are needed to increase the carrying capacity and quality of output of the system if the country is to meet the manpower needs required to drive sustainable economic development.

Keywords: Access and equity, Quality of graduates, Open and distance learning, private universities, Nigerian tertiary education system

EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

The Nigerian tertiary education system is reputed to be the biggest and most complex in Africa. More than half of the continent's tertiary institutions are located in Nigeria (Bako, 2002). There are currently 123 universities (National Universities Commission), 102 polytechnics and monotechnics (National Board for Technical Education) and 63 colleges of education (National Commission for Colleges of Education in Nigeria) among other tertiary institutions. Tertiary education as stated in the National Policy of Education (FGN 2004) is the education given in Universities, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, and Monotechnics after secondary education including those institutions offering correspondence courses (Ibara, 2011).

The demand for tertiary education in the country is high because it is not only an investment in human capital, but also a pre-requisite for sustainable economic development (Adeyemo 2000) as well as a source of a rich and meaningful life (Owoeye, 2007). Moyer (2005), in a study of over 106 countries reports a strong correlation between university enrolment and gross national income. It is no surprise therefore that the aims of establishing universities in Nigeria have long moved from merely developing middle-level manpower to replace departing foreigners in the aftermath of decolonization to developing resident manpower for sustainable economic development. Therefore one of the highlighted aims of the National Policy on Education (2004) with respect to university education is "to contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training"

The history of university education in Nigeria started with the Elliot Commission of 1943, which led to the establishment of University College Ibadan (UCI) in 1948. UCI was an affiliate of the University of London (Ike, 1976). The college was initially funded from two main sources: the Nigerian Government, which provided 70 percent and the Government of the United Kingdom, which provided 30 percent of the total recurrent cost (Akintoye, 2008). In 1954, Nigeria became a federation of three (i.e. Eastern, Western and Northern) regions and the Federal Territory of Lagos as a result of the adoption of the 1954 constitution and, according to Fabunmi (2005), the regions took advantage of the new constitution to make their own regional educational laws. This led to the establishment of University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1960 by the eastern region government, the creation of University of Ife (*now* Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife) in 1962 by the Western region, the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1962 by the Northern Region and the University of Lagos (1962) by the Federal Government. In 1970, the newly created Midwestern region created the University of Benin. The six universities established during this period 1960-1970 are still referred to as first generation universities (Ajayi and Ekundayo, 2008).

In 1975, with the oil boom and as a response to the increasing demand for higher education, the Federal Government took over the four regional universities (Akintoye, 2008) and established more universities with the third national development plan (1975-1980). The 1979 constitution put education in the concurrent legislative list. This implied that responsibilities and authority in the provision of education was to be shared among the three tiers of government, that is, federal, state and local governments (Fabunmi, 2004). According to Ajayi and Ekundayo (2008), the government established seven more universities in 1975 known as second generation universities. The third generation universities were established between 1980 and early 1990 (Anyamele, 2004) and the fourth generation universities are those established between 1991 and the present date which include more federal and state universities and private universities.

A report by the Federal Ministry of Education (2005) also reveals that many Polytechnics and Monotechnics were established during the colonial era, long before the emergence of universities for high level technical manpower in a variety of technical and professional disciplines. Among them was Yaba Higher College in 1934 (which formed the nucleus for the University College Ibadan) various schools of survey, veterinary medicine, forestry, and agriculture in various parts of the country. Some of them were later absorbed by the first generation universities. Numerous Federal and State owned Colleges of Education (formerly called Advanced Teachers Colleges) also existed in the country as early as the 1960s. The creation of more states in the Federation, and the increasing demand for teachers, due to educational expansion in the country led to the establishment of more institutions in every part of the country (Federal Ministry of Education, 2005).

CHALLENGES AND POLICY INTERVENTIONS IN THE SECTOR

According to Ibukun (1997), the University College Ibadan was saddled with a number of problems. Some of these were rigid constitutional provisions, poor staffing, low enrolment and high dropout rate. This led the Nigerian Government to commission an inquiry in April, 1959, led by Sir Eric Ashby and comprised of three Nigerians, three Americans and three Britons, to advise it on the higher education needs of the country for its first two decades. The Commission reported; an imbalance between one level of education and the other, limited admission opportunities for secondary school leavers, few qualified and certificated teachers and, an imbalance in the development of education between the Northern and Southern regions (Fabunmi, 2004). This report had and still has wide ranging implications. Apart from that it led to the establishment of University of Ife, Ahmadu Bello University and University of Lagos it is also the basis for the catchment area admission policy still in use today in Nigerian universities to address the imbalance of the development of education between the Northern and Southern zones of the country. The Federal Government guidelines for admissions into its institutions of higher learning are based on 45 percent merit, 35 percent catchment/locality and 20 percent reserved for educationally less developed States.

The first generation Universities were all well-funded and most of them achieved internationally acclaimed and respected standards. From 1962-1975, there was no substantial difference each year between the amount requested by the University and the amounts received from the Regional Government (Akintoye, 2008). Okebukola (2002) reports that there were years where amounts received superseded what was requested. Since the 1970s, funding of Nigeria tertiary institutions began to fall and with it, declining quality and access to higher education. In addition, from 1998 to 2008, Universities in Nigeria exceeded their carrying capacity by an average of 11,644 per year and an average of 85.3 percent of applicants were turned away by universities every year between 1978 and 2008 (Moti, 2010). The situation was expected to get worse when the students from the Universal Basic Education schools begin to apply for higher studies (Moti, 2010).

OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The importance of post secondary education in developing the skills and technologies necessary for sustainable economic development was emphasized at the 17th Annual Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CEEM). It is in this perspective that four distinct areas of concern were highlighted for discussion at the 18th Annual Conference of the organisation held in Mauritius on 27th -30th August, 2012. These were Access and equity to tertiary education, expansion

of supply and demand of graduates from the labour market, the effectiveness of long distance learning delivery methods of post secondary education and the role of the private sector in the area of tertiary education.

A number of initiatives have been embarked on to address these problems of the Nigerian university system. Some of these are in the Nigerian National policy on Education (2004), the deregulation of higher education which implied more financial responsibility for beneficiaries, the granting of licenses to private individuals and organisations to establish tertiary institutions, the re-opening of the National Open University and Distance Learning to enhance access to tertiary education, and the Tertiary Education Trust Fund charged with the responsibility for imposing, managing and disbursing funds generated from corporate tax to public tertiary institutions among others. Have these policies achieved the desired impact?

This study attempts to examine the state of the Nigerian tertiary education sector in line with the issues highlighted by the CCEM by addressing the following research questions;

- a. Have the problems of access and equity in the Nigerian tertiary education sector been adequately addressed?
- b. What is the situation in the demand and supply for graduates in the labour market and the probable consequences of inability of the market to absorb the recently educated?
- c. What are the problems, contributions and current situation in new delivery methods like the Open and Distant learning modes in the country?
- d. What are the contributions of the private sector to the current situation of the Nigerian university education system, the quality of output and the relationships between actors in the system?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used existing data from relevant regulatory institutions such as the Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria, Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, The National Bureau of Statistics, National Universities Commission, National Board for Technical Education, National Commission for Colleges of Education in Nigeria, the International Telecommunications Union and the World Wide Web ranking of world universities. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. Journals, newspaper reports and blogs among other sources that provide valuable insight and information in to the research questions under consideration were also utilized.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Access and equity

Access, according to the National Policy on Education implies making it possible for everyone who is entitled to education to receive it (NPE, 2004). Equity in education implies ensuring that all the segments of the society get their fair share of access to whatever educational opportunities provided (Ene, 2005). Table 1 shows the establishment of Universities by year, total number of applications, admissions and percentage of applicants not admitted. As at March, 2012, a total number of 124 universities were licensed in Nigeria. 36 (29%) were owned by the Federal government, 37 (30%) by state governments and 50 (41%) were privately owned. The number of universities tripled from 1999 to 2012 due mainly to the establishment of private universities. This shows that the policy to deregulate university education by encouraging private participation is to some extent a success. However, in Table 2 and 3, which shows the data on polytechnics/monotechnics and colleges of education there has been a lukewarm attitude from private investors. Only 18 (17.6%) and 4 (6.3%) polytechnics/monotechnics and colleges of education respectively are privately owned. This may

be related to the preference of secondary school leavers for university education. The Federal Ministry of Education's Nigeria Education Sector Diagnosis report (2005) reveals up to 77% of school leavers have a preference for university education.

From the data available, the total percentage of applicants denied admission to universities was the lowest (78.1%) in 1988, peaked at 94.8% in 2002 and averaged 85.3% from 1998 to 2007. If previous trends are anything to go by (as there was a dearth of recent data on polytechnics and colleges of education), the percentage of candidates offered admission in polytechnics/monotechnics, as shown in table 4, is slightly higher than in universities and with a range of 21.09% to 28.41% between 1996/97 to 1999/2001 (ratio of admissions to applications ranged between 10.75 to 24.44% in universities for the same period). This implies that the problem of access has not been addressed and the number of established universities and polytechnics is not meeting up to demand. However, Table 4 reveals that the majority of applicants to colleges of education were granted admission as between 75.3% and 95.27% of applications were granted in the 1996/97 to 1999/2001 period. This may be due to fact that universities and polytechnics are generally more preferred to colleges of education.

The Ashby commission identified an imbalance in opportunities to tertiary education in Nigeria between northern and southern parts of the country, stating that the north was grossly underrepresented in higher education. Figure 1 shows the map of Nigeria revealing the 36 states and Federal Capital territory, Abuja. Table 5 reveals the location of universities in Nigeria. Eighteen (50%) of federal and 16 (43.2%) of state owned universities are located in the north. In addition, in Table 2 and 3, 42 (41.1%) and 36 (57%) polytechnics/monotechnics and college of technologies respectively are located in that part of Nigeria. However, only 16%, 11.1% and 25% of private universities, polytechnics and colleges of education respectively are located in northern Nigeria, indicating that private investors are more inclined to set up universities in areas where the demand for education is higher.

Table 1: Establishment of universities by ownership and year in Nigeria

Year Founded	Federal	State	Private	Total	cum	Total Admitted	% not admitted	Total applicants
1948	1			1	1			
1960	1			1	2			
1962	3			3	5			
1970	1			1	6			
1975	7			7	13			
1979		1		1	14	28,213	80.7%	144,939
1980	1	2		3	17	26,808	85.2%	180,673
1981	1	1		2	19	29,800	85.5%	205,112
1982	1	3		4	23	27,373	85.7%	191,583
1985	1			1	24	30,996	85.4%	212,114
1988	5			5	29	41,700	78.1%	190,353
1990		1		1	30	48,504	83.1%	287,572
1991	1			1	31	61,479	84.6%	398,270
1992	2	3		5	36	57,685	83.9%	357,950
1999		2	3	5	41	78,550	81.2%	417,773
2000		4		4	45	45,766	89.0%	416,381
2001			1	1	46	90,769	87.9%	749,417
2002	1	2	3	6	52	51,845	94.8%	994,381
2003			1	1	53	104,991	90.0%	1,046,103
2004		3		3	56	122,492	85.4%	841,878
2005		4	15	19	75	76,984	91.6%	916,371
2006		4	1	5	80	88,524	89.0%	803,472
2007	1		10	11	91	107,320	88.2%	911,653
2008		3		3	94			
2009		3	7	10	104			
2010					104			
2011	9	1	4	14	118			
2012			5	5	123			
Total	36 29%	37 30%	50 41%	123				

Source: Compiled by Authors from National Universities Commission, Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board and Moti (2010)

Table 2: Location and ownership of Polytechnics and Monotechnics

Location	Federal	State	Private	Total
North	21 (47.7%)	19 (47.5%)	2 (11.1%)	42 (41.1%)
South	23	21	16	60
Total	44	40	18 (17.6%)	102

Source: Compiled by authors from the Nigerian Board for Technical Education (NBTE) website

Table 3: Location and ownership of Colleges of Education

Location	Federal	State	Private	Total
North	12 (57.1%)	23 (60%)	1 (25%)	36 (57%)
South	9	15	3	27
Total	21	38	4 (6.3%)	63

Source: Compiled by authors from the National Commission for the Colleges of Education Nigeria website

Table 4: Percentage of Applicants accepted in tertiary institutions in Nigeria 1996/97 – 2000/01

Session	Universities	Polytechnics Monotechnics	College of education
1996/97	14.88%	26.93%	86.19%
1997/98		21.09%	95.27%
1998/99	24.44%		
1999/2000	18.75%	28.41%	
2000/01	10.75%		75.30%

Source: Compiled from the National Universities Commission

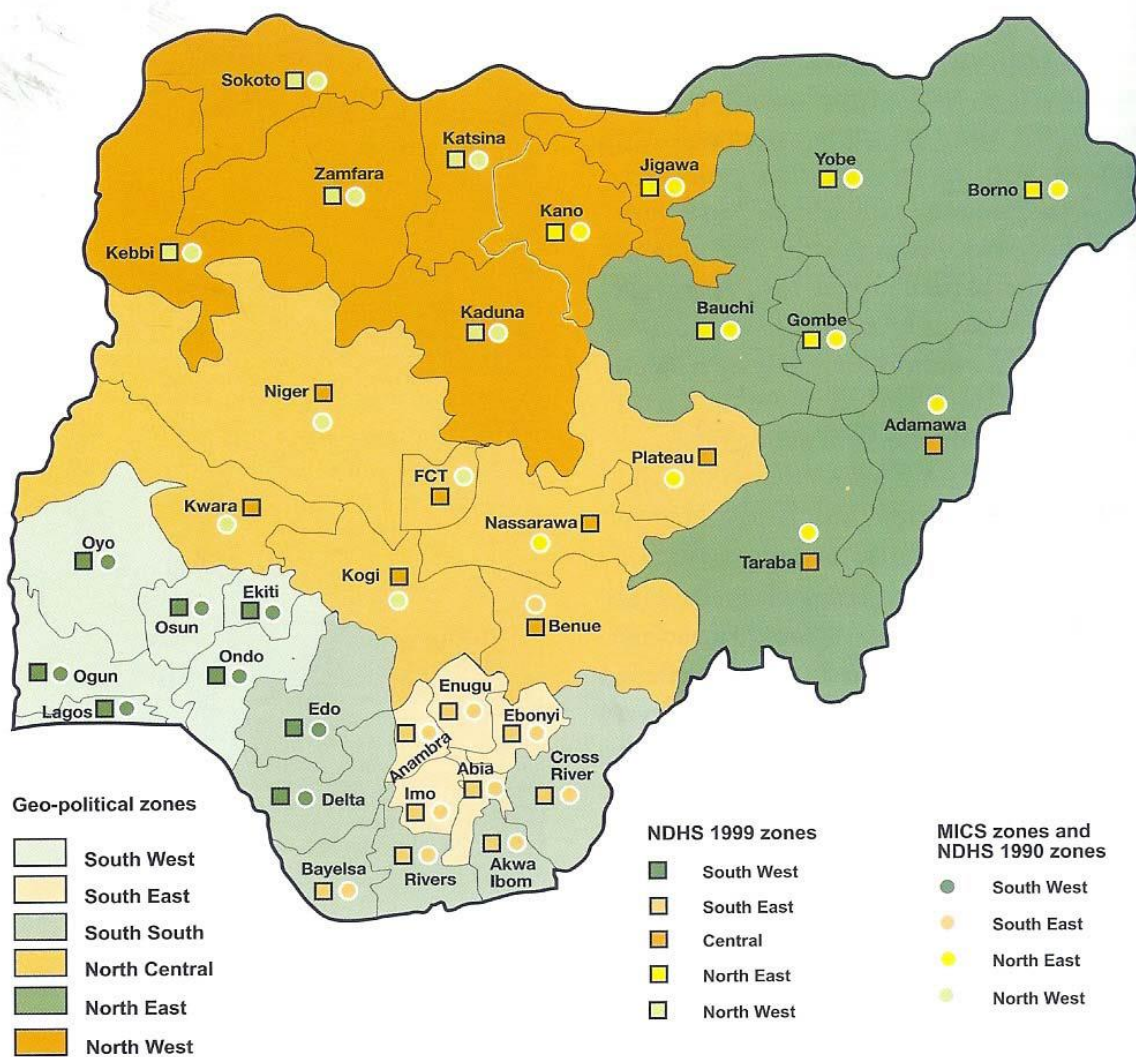


Fig. 1: Map of Nigeria showing the 36 states, Federal Capital Territory (FCT)

Source: Federal Ministry of Education Nigeria (Education Sector Analysis Unit) (2005)

Table 5: Locations and ownership of universities in Nigeria

Location	Federal	State	Private	Total
north*	18 (50%)	16 (43%)	8 (16%)	42 (34.1%)
South	18	21	42	81
Total	36	37	50	123

* including Abuja

Source: compiled by authors from National Universities Commission

Table 6 shows the total applications and admissions in Nigerian universities from 2003/2004 to 2007/2008 sessions by sex and state of origin. The highest numbers of applications were from southern states. Imo state 477,861 (10.07%) recorded the highest number of applicants, followed by Delta 363,078 (7.65%), Anambra 345,465 (7.27%), Edo 292,052

(6.15%), Ogun 256,533 (5.41%) and Akwa Ibom 245,396 (5.17%). Among the lowest were states largely from northern part of the country. Jigawa state 11,459 (0.24%) revealed the lowest number of applicants for any state followed by, Yobe 11678 (0.25%), Zamfara 13107 (0.28%), Taraba 19044 (0.40%) and Kebbi 19513 (0.41%).

Table 7 shows that total admissions also follow a similar trend with the southern states leading in the number of applicants given spaces in universities. This is despite the fact that the population of indigenes of Northern states far supersedes that of the southern Nigeria. Total admissions of southern indigenes in the period, 378,076 (79.6%) quadruple that of Northern citizens, 97,001 (20.4%). The data also reveals slight differences in the rate of admissions to applications between the northern and southern sectors of the country. Table 6 shows that the highest rates of admission were from a mixture of both northern (n) and southern (s) states. Among these were Bayelsa (s) (18.4%), Sokoto (n) (17.6%), Ebonyi (s) (17.5%), Bauchi (n) (16.9%), Adamawa (n) (15.4%) and Gombe (n) (14.7%). The lowest were from Kwara (n) (6.32%), Oyo (s) (7.26%), Osun (s) (7.70%), Ogun (s) (7.70), Delta (s) (8.05%) and Awka Ibom (s) (8.48%). On the average, as shown in Table 7, 10.7% of applications from northern indigenes were granted while 9.8% of southern applications were ceded.

A recent release by the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board Chairman Professor Dibu Ojerinde on the examination held on April 17, 2010 posted on the Nigerian Universities update blog reveals a systematic trend as southern states led by number of applications. Imo state indigenes made a total application of 111, 613 followed by Delta state (86,995), Anambra (83,612), Osun (74,014), Edo (70,764) and Ogun (70, 905). The top trailing states were Zamfara (3,568), Sokoto (4,954), Yobe (5,463), Kebbi (6,194) and Borno (8,296). Therefore, as far as Universities are concerned, indigenes of northern states are grossly underrepresented in university enrolment.

However, data from colleges of education reveal different trends as Table 8 shows that 46.5% of enrolments between 2005 and 2008 were of northern indigenes. Moreover, more males of northern origin (51.3%) were enrolled. It may also be worthy to note in Table 5 that majority (57%) of colleges of education are located in the north. In addition, comparisons of admission standards of Nigerian Universities, polytechnics and colleges of education and its relationship with student performance in northern and southern zones may be the focus of a future study. The proportion of candidates of northern and southern origin who obtained above 180 for the 2011 JAMB UTME is 55.03% and 71.77 respectively.

Gender disparities in enrolment numbers are quite evident in the Nigerian university system, although the government has made efforts to increase female enrolment in tertiary education, particularly amongst communities and regions where the denial of access is steeped in religious or cultural practices, which do not encourage females to participate in educational activities (Moja, 2000). Again, female enrolments in Nigerian universities were higher among indigenes of southern states, indicating a success of government efforts. 52.7% of total admissions of Anambra state indigenes to universities were female. Imo state recorded 50.7%, Abia, 48.7%, Bayelsa, 48.4%, Enugu, 46.6% and Awka Ibom, 45.3%, all from the southern part of Nigeria. Among the lowest female enrolments were indigenes of Zamfara state (18.4%), Jigawa (22.5%), Bauchi (23%), Kebbi (24.1%), Sokoto (25.7%) and Kano (26%), all from the Northern part of the country. Table 7 also reveals the percentage of females admitted to universities in Nigeria. Although Table 7 shows that 199,403 (42%) of the total admissions were female, only 30,405 (6.4%) were female indigenes of northern states and 169,127 (35.6%) were females whose state of origin was from southern states of Nigeria. Table 8 reveals that only 13.8% of students enrolled in colleges of education between 2005/2007 and 2008 were females of northern origin, compared to

22.55% of their counterparts from the south. This shows that efforts to increase access across gender have not been successful in the northern parts of Nigeria.

Table 6: Total applications and admissions into Nigeria universities (2003/2004-2007/2008)

State	Total applications 2003/2004 – 2007/2008 by sex and state of origin			Total admissions 2003/2004 – 2007/2008 by sex and state of origin			
	Male/% of State	Female/% of State	Total/% of national	Male/% of state	Female/% of state	Total/% of national	% rejected
Abia	119,479 50.3%	118,129 49.7%	237,608 5.00%	11,505 51.3%	10929 48.7%	22434 4.72%	9.44%
Adamawa	26,824 65.9%	13,904 34.1%	40,728 0.85%	3796 60.5%	2476 39.5%	6272 1.32%	15.40%
Akwalbom	130,258 53.1%	115,138 46.1%	245,396 5.17%	11394 54.7%	9426 45.3%	20820 4.38%	8.48%
Anambra	153,836 44.5%	191,629 55.5%	345,465 7.27%	19721 47.3%	21926 52.7%	41647 8.77%	12.05%
Bauchi	17,150 77%	5,135 23%	22,285 0.47%	2915 77%	855 23%	3770 0.80%	16.91%
Bayelsa	54,418 60.4%	35,610 39.6%	90,028 1.90%	8392 51.6%	7853 48.4%	16245 3.42%	18.04%
Benue	85,989 65.7%	44,883 34.3%	130,872 2.76%	10805 68.3%	4995 31.7%	15,800 3.32%	12.07%
Borno	17,426 65.5%	9,146 34.5%	26,572 0.56%	2495 64.7%	1358 35.3%	3853 0.81%	14.50%
Cross rive	61,452 59.3%	42,006 40.7%	103,458 2.18%	5766 59.8%	3869 40.2%	9635 2.02%	9.31%
Delta	208,102 57.3%	154,976 42.7%	363,078 7.65%	16979 58%	12245 42%	29224 6.15%	8.05%
Ebonyi	53,973 61.9%	33,177 38.1%	87,150 1.83%	10109 66.2%	5144 33.8%	15253 3.21%	17.50%
Edo	171,608 58.7%	120,444 41.3%	292,052 6.15%	15633 60%	10,366 40%	25999 5.47%	8.90%
Ekiti	88,298 62%	54,059 38%	142,357 3.00%	7911 61.8%	4885 38.2%	12796 2.69%	8.99%
Enugu	112735 50.4%	110942 49.6%	223677 4.71%	14385 53.4%	12525 46.6%	26910 5.66%	12.03%
Gombe	14617 69.8%	6311 30.2%	20928 0.44%	2178 70.7%	902 29.3%	3080 0.64%	14.71%
Imo	218570 45.7%	259291 54.3%	477861 10.07%	25900 49.3%	26588 50.7%	52,488 11.05%	10.98%
Jigawa	8969 78.2%	2490 21.8%	11459 0.24%	863 77.5%	250 22.5%	1113 0.23%	9.71%
Kaduna	42418 65.6%	22231 34.4%	64649 1.36%	3775 66.5%	1898 33.5%	5673 1.20%	8.78%
Kano	43157 73.2%	15824 26.8%	58981 1.24%	4145 74%	1453 26%	5598 1.18%	9.50%
Katsina	17048 74%	5885 26%	22933 0.48%	2059 72.4%	784 27.6%	2843 0.60%	12.39
Kebbi	15614 80%	3899 20%	19513 0.41%	2172 75.9%	689 24.1%	2861 0.60%	14.66%
Kogi	114043 64.6%	62473 35.4%	176516 3.72%	11513 64.7%	6266 35.3%	17779 3.74%	10.07%
Kwara	91744 63.4%	52889 36.6%	144633 3.05%	5873 64.2%	3268 35.8%	9141 1.92%	6.32%
Lagos	86408 57%	65102 43%	151510 3.19%	7155 57%	5361 43%	12516 2.63%	8.26%
Nassarawa	27585 71.8%	10788 28.2%	38373 0.81%	3249 73.8%	1155 26.2%	4404 0.93%	11.47%
Niger	19653 69.2%	8745 30.9%	28398 0.60%	2210 70.4%	925 29.6%	3135 0.65%	11.03%
Ogun	144862 56.4%	111671 43.6%	256533 5.41%	11232 56.8%	8525 43.2%	19753 4.16%	7.70%

Ondo	132330 61.8%	81750 38.2%	214080 4.51%	12693 61.6%	7890 38.4%	20583 4.33%	9.61%
Osun	135949 61.2%	85937 38.8%	221886 4.67%	10287 60.2%	6791 39.8%	17078 3.60%	7.70%
Oyo	113907 61.7%	70414 38.3%	184321 3.88%	8321 62.1%	5064 37.9%	13385 2.81%	7.26%
Plateau	19138 60.4%	12540 39.6%	31678 0.67%	2115 64.6%	1158 35.4%	3273 0.69%	10.33%
Rivers	115489 55.8%	91329 44.2%	206818 4.36%	11,877 55.7%	9433 44.3%	21310 4.49%	10.30%
Sokoto	12846 79.5%	3305 21.5%	16151 0.34%	2118 74.3%	732 25.7%	2850 0.60%	17.64%
Taraba	13567 71.2%	5477 28.8%	19044 0.40%	1369 73.5%	493 26.5%	1862 0.39%	9.78%
Yobe	8993 77%	2685 23%	11678 0.25%	1053 69.4%	463 30.6%	1516 0.32%	13.00%
Zamfara	11005 83.9%	2102 16.1%	13107 0.28%	1417 81.6%	320 18.4%	1737 0.36%	13.25%
FCT	2837 69.8%	1226 30.2%	4063 0.08%	294 66.7%	147 33.3%	441 0.09%	10.85%
	2,712,297 57.2%	2,033,542 42.8%	4,745,839	275,674 58%	199403 42%	475077	

Source: Compiled by Authors from the National Bureau of Statistics - Social Statistics in Nigeria (2009)

Table 7: Total applications and admissions in Universities by region of origin and gender from 2003/04 – 2007/08

Area	Total applications	Total admitted	% of applications admitted	% of females admitted to national admission
North	902561 (19.1%)	97001 (20.4%)	10.7%	6.4%
South	3,843,278 (80.9%)	378076 (79.6%)	9.8%	35.6%
Total	4,745,839	475077		42.0%

Source: Compiled from National Bureau of Statistics Social Statistics in Nigeria 2009

Table 8: Total enrolment in Colleges of Education by region of origin and gender 2005/06 – 2007/08

Area	Male enrolments	Female enrolments	Total	% of females to national enrolments
North	137,545 (51.3%)	57677 (37.9%)	195222 (46.5%)	13.8%
South	130,167 (48.7%)	94381 (62.1%)	224548 (53.5%)	22.5%
Total	267,712 (63.7%)	152,058 (36.3%)	419,770	36.3%

Source: Compiled from National Bureau of Statistics Social Statistics in Nigeria 2009

Expansion and demand from the labour market

The National Bureau of Statistic's National manpower stock and employment generation survey (2010) reveals that the national unemployment rate increased from 13.1% in 2000 to 21.1% in 2010. The report also reveals that there were more unemployed females (24.9%) than males (17.7%). Unemployment rates were Highest in Yobe (39.0), Zamfara (33.4), Sokoto (32.4), Imo (29.9), Bauchi (29.7), Jigawa (28.6) and Delta (27.2). Lagos had the lowest unemployment rate of 7.6, followed by Oyo (8.8) and Ogun (9.9). A further breakdown of the report showed that the rate was highest among B.A/B.Sc/HND holders with a figure of 24.6 percent, followed by those who had primary education (22.7 percent) and those with NCE/OND/Nursing certificate (22.2 percent). Furthermore, the rates were highest among the 15-24 age group 35.9% followed by those within the 25-34 age brackets (23.3%).

The foregoing indicates that three in every ten graduates are unemployed and the chances of employment grow higher with age. Soyibo (2009) claims that many of Nigeria's young people are locked out of the labour market and do not start to generate wealth until relatively late in life. This leaves just thirty years in which they are net contributors to society, four, five and seven years less than their counterparts in Indonesia, India and, China respectively. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development report (2009) claims that Nigerian graduates are not significantly more likely to find work than one with no education at all and many are forced to accept jobs that do not use their qualifications to the full. The report further reveals that the proportion of graduates in technical and professional jobs is falling and many educated men and women can only find marginal employment in sales, agriculture, or manual labour. The National Bureau of Statistics (2010) National Manpower Stock and Employment Generation Survey- Household and Micro Enterprise reveals that the agricultural sector employs 30.5% of current manpower, followed by the trading and automotive repair sector (24.9%) with manufacturing utilizing 11%.

The demand for labour is derived from production and distribution activities in the goods and services sectors. As a result, its size and shape are sensitive to what happens in the national economy (Dabalén et al., 2000). Nigeria remains a poor and underdeveloped country, with the oil sector as its main source of economic activity and very little job opportunity. Other industries like communications, manufacturing and mineral resources are either non-existent or in an infant stage of development. In addition, shrinking industrial capacity utilization, presently below 30%, due to high exchange rate, weak demand and purchasing power, poor infrastructure and the recent global economic crisis have further led to the weak demand for graduates in Nigeria (Ilori, Adeniyi, Sanni, Oyewale and Irefin, 2002). "Nigeria: The Next Generation Report", the result of an online survey of 650 Nigerians and a series of debates held across Nigeria in 2011, convened by the British Council, explores Nigeria's future at a time of rapid demographic, social, and economic change. The report claims that growing numbers of young people in Nigeria are frustrated by lack of employment opportunities. It went further to state that a shortage of jobs is a serious challenge, with young Nigerians taking many years to become productive contributors to society and that if their potential is not harnessed, they may become an increasingly disruptive force.

In addition, disparities in development in the different regions of Nigeria may lead to widely different economic trajectories, which could further increase inequality if measures are not taken to promote social cohesion. Findings of the report further stress that unemployment among young people may lead to de-stabilisation of the society, increasing crime

rate and probability of re-occurring civil conflicts. The report concludes that if unemployment is to be brought to 7% by 2030, the labour market needs to nearly double in size, creating almost 50 million jobs.

On quality issues of university graduates, a survey of managers of 55 public enterprises, private firms, professional associations and non-governmental organizations by Dabalen, Oni and Adekola (2000) concluded that (a) Nigerian university graduates are poorly trained and unproductive on the job, (b) Graduate skills have steadily deteriorated over the past decade and, (c) Shortcomings are particularly severe in oral and written communication, and in applied technical skills.

The study also revealed that not only is the quality of graduates deteriorating; it is doing so very quickly. The authors reported that recent graduates of the Universities of Nsukka and Benin gave a lower rating to the reputation of their universities than previous groups which they claimed was a reflection of the quality of academic staff, learning resources and funding limitations.

A Nigerian Educational Sector Diagnosis report (2005) carried out by the Federal Ministry of Education on the quality of science and education graduates in Nigeria, revealed that most professional bodies rated products of science and technology education in Nigeria with regard to contemporary challenges as average in terms of knowledge gained, 41.2% of professional bodies rated them as good, 58.8% rated them as average. In terms of skills acquired, 70.6% of professional bodies who responded rated the graduates as average while others rated them below average. With regards to on the job performance, Only 17.6% of professional bodies rated graduates of science and technology as good and 64.7% rated them as average and the remainder, below average. Fresh graduates were rated by 47.1% of professional bodies to be below average, 2.5 percent felt that they were good while only 11.8% considered them to be average.

A survey of 225 firms in an unpublished thesis by Owoso (2012) reveals that the “knowing how to learn” skill was rated very adequate among freshly recruited S&T graduates. Others like reading, writing and comprehension, communication, group effectiveness, influencing, adaptability and technical skills were rated fairly adequate but not up to industry’s expectations.

Dabalen et al. (2000) conclude that addressing the problems of inadequate financing, insufficient and irrelevant learning materials (including old and outdated equipment, books and journals), poorly-paid and trained academic staff, outmoded and inflexible managerial structures, unplanned expansion of enrolment leading to oversupply of graduates and, irrelevant curriculum will go a long way in addressing the issue of the poor quality of graduates of Nigerian Universities. Unfortunately, all of the aforementioned still remain the status quo in the sector. Owoso (2012) corroborates this in a survey of 112 academic staff and 119 students from 67 universities and 46 polytechnics that lack of government funding, lecture theatres, laboratories, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities, access to libraries and poor curriculum content, teacher-student ratio and employee emoluments were serious problems militating against the quality of skill acquisition of Science and Technology (S&T) graduates in Nigeria.

Open access delivery methods

The National Open and Distance Education University was founded in 1983 and closed down by the military government in 1985. It was only recently reopened by the Obasanjo civilian administration in 2001. The Open University is expected

to use a combination of web-based modules, textual materials, audio and video tapes as well as CD ROMs for course delivery (NUC).

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is currently the only uni-mode University mandated for Open and Distance Learning in the delivery of university education with six other universities which may be regarded as dual-mode universities with limited capacity to deliver degree programmes by the open and distance learning (ODL) in addition to the conventional face-to-face mode. The National Universities Commission states that ODL programmes shall be predicated on a pedagogy that is led by resources and not reliant on face-to-face intervention, that is, students must be able to register, learn, study, submit assignments, write examinations and receive their grades from anywhere in the world.

The goals of open and distance education in Nigeria are to: provide access to quality education and equity in educational opportunities for those who otherwise would have been denied, meet special needs of employers by mounting special certificate courses for their employees at their work places, encourage internationalization especially of tertiary education curricula and, reduce the effect of internal and external brain drain in tertiary institutions by utilizing experts as teachers regardless of their locations or places of work (NPE, 2004).

Ololube, Ubogu and Egbezor (2007) identify ICT infrastructure as a basic and essential component of the delivery and success of Open and distant education. They add that electricity, internet, computers, telecommunications and postal services must be also developed to levels that can support open and distant education. Yusuf (2006) reports that successful distance education cannot be assured without the use of effective communication and technological tools such as e-mail, fax, Internet, television and radio among others.

Although there is no one method for providing Open Distant Learning (ODL), the pedagogy advanced by the National Universities Commission (NUC), prescribes ICT as the major medium of transmission for the NOUN. This poses enormous problems for the practicality of the Open University program in Nigeria due to poor ICT usage, epileptic electricity supply, poor postal system and the lack of funds to be “network ready” by potential candidates.

A common guide to assessing ICT capability of any country for Open and Distant Education is the “Networked Readiness Index” (NRI) (e.g. Liverpool, Marut, Ndam and Oti, 2010; Ololube et al., 2007). This indicator was originally developed by the Information Technology Group at Harvard University’s Center for International Development. NRI consists of three modules; the environment for ICT offered by a given country or community, the readiness of the community’s key stakeholders to use ICT and, the usage of ICT amongst stakeholders. In the NRI 2009-2010 report, Nigeria ranked 99th out of a total of 133 countries down from 90th out of 115 economies in 2005-2006. Nigeria was behind Sweden (1), USA (5), United Kingdom (13), China (37), India (43), Egypt (70), Brazil (61), South Africa (62), Kenya (90) and Ghana (98). Table 9 shows the proportion of individuals using the internet in selected countries. About 28% of Nigerians use the internet, compared with Sweden (90%), Korea (83.7%) and Ghana (9.55%). Table 10 shows an upward trend through the years from 2000 to 2010 from 0.06% to the present figure (28%). This may be attributed to the burgeoning use of internet-enabled mobile phones in the country and the mandatory use of the internet for almost all forms of registration and examinations in most tertiary institutions, post secondary school examinations, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), voters registration, Automated Teller machines for banking transactions, pensioners registration and, “*Job Search*” among others. On the down side, only 12% of households own a computer and no more than about

half of that have access to the internet. In addition, download speeds of most internet service modems in Nigeria barely reach 8-12 KBPS (Kilobytes per second) compared with up to 100 MBPS (Megabytes per second) (ICT Facts and Figures, 2010) in developed countries. What this implies is that a 20MB file which is about the size of a video clip will take about 28 minutes to download in Nigeria and only 12 seconds using a 100MBPS internet connection. Low speed internet connections also make live program streaming on computer impossible. There are also high costs of internet connection in Nigeria. In 2009, an entry-level fixed (wired) broadband connection cost on average 190 PPP\$ (Purchasing Power Parity) per month in developing countries, compared to only 28 PPP\$ per month in developed countries (ICT Facts and Figures, 2010). However, 74.4% of households have radios and 39.3% have access to television sets.

On postal services in Nigeria, in a study by Kirkman et al. (2002), the average survey respondent in Nigeria scored the post office 1.7 on a scale of one (no trust at all) to seven (complete trust) in response to the question “do you trust your country’s postal system sufficiently to have a friend mail a small package worth \$100 to you? Furthermore, Nigeria’s capability for electric power generation and consumption is estimated at 5,900,000 and 13,415,000,000 kilowatts respectively (NationMaster.com). This is an indication of the enormous challenges posed by inefficiencies in the energy sector in Nigeria. In the April, 2006 edition of the African Review of Business and Technology Magazine, Nigeria was the largest importer of electricity generators, spending \$152 million in 2005 alone, accounting for 35% of Africa’s total imports and 9 times that of the second largest importer, Sudan.

For achieving the desired results of open and distant education in Nigeria, essential services and infrastructure like electricity, telecommunications and postal services must be developed (Common Wealth of Learning International, 2001). Furthermore, Ololube et al. (2007) contend that the impression that distant education in Africa is cheap is an erroneous one as the principle of economies of scale operates from; a base of adequate and quality infrastructure, capital provision and machinery; adequately trained staff, excellent learner support systems and support functions like postal services and telecommunications provision that are reliable, efficient and affordable.

Table 9: Proportion of individuals using internet in selected countries

Country	% of individuals using the internet	% of households with computer	% of households with internet access at home	Radio	TV
Brazil	40.65	32.3	23.9	85.5	97.8
Egypt	26.74	31	25.3	77.2	96.8
Ghana	9.55	5.1	0.3	NA	38.8
Kenya	25.9	5.5	2.2	NA	NA
Korea	83.7	81.4	95.2	NA	NA
Nigeria	28.43	12	6.0	74.4	39.3
S. Africa	12.3	NA	8.8	NA	71.6
Sweden	90.0	87.5	86	NA	NA
UK	85.0	81.2	76.7	NA	NA
USA	74.0	NA	68.7	NA	NA

Source: International Telecommunications Union (ITU): ICT Facts and Figures (2010)

Table 10: Proportion of the Nigerian population using internet (2000-2010)

Year	Proportion of population using internet
2000	0.06
2001	0.09
2002	0.32
2003	0.56
2004	1.29
2005	3.55
2006	5.55
2007	6.77
2008	15.86
2009	28.43
2010	28.43

Source: International Telecommunications Union: ICT Facts and Figures 2010

Other factors hindering the success of open and distant education in Nigeria include absence of teachers trained in computer skills, adequate remuneration for teachers, the high cost of ODL due to its use as a source of internally generated revenue for some universities, high student to teacher ratio, poor public image of ODL degrees and the issue of ‘sorting’ which is a recent coinage in Nigeria for a condition when an academically deficient student ‘sorts’ herself or himself out with a view to wiping out deficiencies (Borisahade, 2007). Furthermore, applications to the National Open University remain very low. Only 107 applied to the University in the 2011 JAMB /UTME examination.

The costs of access to a computer, printer, internet connection, band-width and alternative power supply are factors which should be put into consideration while planning for an ODL course in Nigeria. Olakunlehin and Panda (2011) in a survey of 200 students of B.A English and B. Sc students compared the private costs of education at the National Open University with the University of Lagos, a conventional education mode institution, discovered that although learners at both universities incurred significant private costs, costs for students studying at the NOUN were significantly lower. The authors identified two types of costs; Pre-entry stage costs which include items like registration fee, transportation, caution fee, prospectus, web and emails among others and Entry stage (while studying) costs which comprise of text books, private coaching, audio/video CDs, teleconferencing, project, transportation, project and so on. Pre-entry costs were N48,650 and N25,000, while entry stage costs were N107,000 and N76,500 for University of Lagos and National Open University respectively.

A study by Liverpool et al. (2010) prescribes a model which may be utilized for successful open and distant education. The model addresses key challenges in the Nigerian environment by detailing the experience the University of Jos faced in its six-year effort to implement an e-learning initiative in mathematics courses. The average enrolment for compulsory first year mathematics courses for science based students at the University’s department of mathematics is 1,500. With inadequate staff and lack of lecture rooms to hold the students coupled with inadequacies with current books, office accommodation, and laboratory facilities, the department turned to alternative teaching methods with strategies designed to initiate, sustain and grow e-learning efforts. The authors reported that detailed preparation for ODL, continuous

revision of course materials and training for instructors, provision of modern hardware and software, adequate bandwidth and, innovative grant seeking strategies to secure adequate funding will ensure the success of ODL initiatives

The Impact of private sector tertiary education providers

From 1999 to 2012, the number of privately owned universities grew from 0 to 50 due to the deregulation of the sector. The intention of government was to increase access to university education, transfer the cost of education to the student and create a competitive market that provides better services at lower costs to customers. In 2007 (Table 1) when there were a total of 91 universities (11 of them private), there was no appreciable change in the rate of admissions. 88.2% of applicants were rejected in that year, up from 81.2% in 1999 (although total admissions rose from 78,550 in 1999 to 107,320 in 2007). As revealed in Table 11, the total enrolment for 2005 was 727,740, with private universities absorbing 19,740 (2.72%) of total applicants with 8,808 spaces to spare. The total contribution to capacity of private universities was 5.34%. Due to in-availability of data, the authors estimated the carrying capacity of private universities (as shown in Table 11) as 3,568 per institution. With the current number of 50 registered private universities in 2012, one can assume that private universities may now offer up to 178,400 spaces or more for applicants. Therefore, one can conclude that as far as access is concerned, private universities have played a significant role in providing university admission.

Table 12 shows the undergraduate tuition fees of selected universities in Nigeria. Tuition fees of private universities are the highest, followed by state and federal universities. Private universities depend on subventions from the proprietor, external linkages and internally generated revenue, unlike the others with access to funding from government and the Tertiary education Trust Fund (TETFund). Privately owned universities have also been referred to as ‘for profit schools’ (International Institute for Educational Planning, IIEP, 2000; 2003) and as the appellation implies, private investments are expected to yield interests. Akpotu and Akpochafo (2009) claim that the private school system is one of the most profitable sectors of the sluggish Nigerian economy, readily attracting huge investment from banks, foreign investors and wealthy Nigerians. This may explain the explosion of privately owned universities in Nigeria. Therefore, although private ownership has increased access to education, it has not done so equitably because it is unlikely that low and medium income families can afford the fees of such private institutions.

Due to the lack of continuity of the NUC ranking process, this study turns to “The ranking Web of World Universities” to assess the quality of private and state owned universities in Nigeria. Table 13 shows that the best ranked university in Nigeria is the University of Benin which was rated 1639th in the world. This is a generally mediocre global showing of Nigerian universities in quality and quantity of web publications. In the ranking of the top thirty institutions in Nigeria, there were 16 Federal Universities, 6 state universities and 8 private universities. This is in spite of the fact that no private university existed before 1999. Most of the first and second generation universities, those established before 1975, were ranked 1st to 10th. The 1st private university (established in 2002) and state university (established in 1983) was ranked 12th and 13th respectively, albeit 7730 and 10592 correspondingly in the world. Other private universities were as follows; 15th (2002), 17th (1999), 21st (2007), 23rd (2003), 25th (2002), 29th (2005) and 30th (2005). One can surmise that for such a short period of existence, private universities have been able to make an impact on published materials on the World Wide Web.

Table 11: Carrying capacity of Nigerian universities

Type of university & total number as at 2004	Enrolment (2005)	Carrying capacity (2005)	Difference 2005	Estimated capacity per university
Federal (26)	442,834 (60.85%)	342,049 (64.04%)	+100,785	13,155
State (22)	265,166 (36.43%)	163,585 (30.62%)	+101,580	7,435
Private (8)	19,740 (2.72%)	28,548 (5.34%)	-8,808	3,568
Total	727,740	534,183	+193,557	

Source: Compiled from National Universities Commission by Author

Table 12: Undergraduate tuition fees of some universities in Nigeria

Federal		State		Private *	
Ahmadu Bello Univ. ¹	Free (for Nigerians)	LASU ³	(N238,750, Mass comm)	Bowen University	N650,000
Obafemi Awolowo ⁵	N25,300 (Accounting)	Ekiti State University ²	N122,000 (Engineering)	Covenant University	N640,000
University of Benin ¹	N 34,250 (non-medical sciences)	Osun state ⁴ University	(182,000 Engineering)	Benson Idahosa	N500,000
UNILAG ⁶	N29,200 (Business Admin.)	Olabisi Onabanjo University ⁶	(N134,000 minimum)	Babcock University	N450,000
				Redeemers University	N375,000
				Ajayi Crowther	N350,000
				Fountain University	N320,000

Source: *Vanguard newspapers (17th March, 2012 <http://www.vanguardngr.com>)

¹ University's website

² Nigeria Tribune (21st February, 2012)

³ Vanguard newspapers (22nd December, 2011)

⁴<http://www.nairaland.com/694801/osunstate>

⁵The nation newspapers (<http://www.thenationonlineng.net/2011/>)

⁶Interviews by authors

Private universities have also succeeded where public institutions have failed. Akpotu and Akpochofo (2009) mention that occurrences of high teacher/student ratio, overcrowded classes, poor quality teaching and research, examination malpractice, cultism and incessant strikes of university staff are almost completely absent in private universities Akpotu (2004), claims that a total of 99.55 weeks (3.32 academic years), 11.4 million man-hours and 28.54 million student hours were lost to persistent strikes in Nigeria universities for a period of six years which represents a loss of N49 billion to the

country. He further emphasized that destabilization of the learning process lead to low quality service from lecturers because of their desire to hastily cover lost ground due to strikes, and concluded that more parents and guardians now tend to opt for private universities for their wards. In the long run, majority of applicants still opt for government owned universities, due to cheaper tuition. Table 14 shows the preferred choices of applicants of the 2011 JAMB UTME examination for the top ten federal, state and privately owned universities in Nigeria. Federal Universities top the list with University of Lagos with 99,195 applications available, followed by Ahmadu Bello University (89,760) and, University of Nigeria(88,177). The admission quota allocated by NUC for these top three institutions remain 9,000, 6,068 and 5,970 respectively. Delta, Benue and Nasarawa State Universities top the state owned universities with 36,433; 30,522 and 30,520 correspondingly. Private universities recorded the least applications with Covenant University (3,499), BABCOCK University (1,395) and American University of Nigeria (395) leading the pack. It is the opinion of the authors that tuition fees play a significant role in the choice of universities by applicants.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of the private sector in increasing access to university education in Nigeria has mixed effects. It has increased access by providing additional spaces in the country's university system and reduced the financial burden of government. In terms of quality, private universities have made a positive impact in contributing to the knowledge assets of the country in published materials in such a short period. The absence of industrial disputes and favourable student to teacher ratio also goes a long way to establishing stability and quality in the sector. However, the high cost of tuition in private universities and their concentration in the southern part of the country has not alleviated the problems of equity in the system. Majority of applicants still opt for government owned institutions due to affordable tuition fees. The Open and Distant learning mode also has severe shortcomings due to the lack of know-how and infrastructure for the delivery of low-cost efficient ICT services.

Table 13: World ranking of some universities in Nigeria

University	Owner-Ship	National Rank	World Rank	Date Founded
University of Benin	F	1	1639	1970
University of Agriculture Abeokuta	F	2	2266	1988
University of Ibadan	F	3	2515	1948
University of Nigeria	F	4	3228	1960
Obafemi Awolowo University	F	5	3263	1962
University of Lagos	F	6	3486	1962
Ahmadu Bello University	F	7	3512	1962
University of Ilorin	F	8	4302	1975
University of Jos	F	9	5681	1975
National Open University of Nigeria	F	10	6576	2002
Federal University of Technology Akure	F	11	7124	1981
Covenant University Ota	P	12	7730	2002
Lagos State University	S	13	10592	1983
University of Port Harcourt	F	14	10794	1975
PAN African University, Lagos	P	15	10889	2002
Ambrose Alli University	S	16	11991	1990
BABCOCK University	P	17	12093	1999
Usman Dan Fodio University	F	18	12328	1975
Bayero University	F	19	12680	1975
Ladoke Akintola University of Technology	S	20	13111	1990
African University of Science and Technology	P	21	13317	2007
University of Calabar	F	22	13364	1975
American University of Nigeria	P	23	13633	2003
Nnamdi Azikwe University	F	24	13902	1992
Benson Idahosa University	P	25	14189	2002
Tai Solarin University of education	S	26	14220	2005
Kwara State University	S	27	14460	2008
Delta State University of Nigeria	S	28	14606	1992
Redeemers University	P	29	14670	2005
Ajayi Crowther University	P	30	14726	2005

Source: Compiled by author from National Universities Commission and The ranking Web of World Universities

Table 14: Preferred choices of universities by applicants of UTME in 2011

Federal	Applica-tions	State	Applica-tions	Private	Applica-Tions
University of Lagos	99,195	Delta State University, Abraka	36,433	Covenant University, Ota	3,499
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	89,760	Benue State University, Makurdi	30,522	Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo	1,395
University of Nigeria, Nsukka	88,177	Nasarawa State University, Keffi	30,520	American University of Nigeria, Yola	392
Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka	84,719	University of Ado-Ekiti	29,627	Redeemers University	354
University of Benin	80,976	Kogi State University, Ayingba	26,999	Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti	313
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	70,935	Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba	22,689	Bingham University, Karu	290
University of Port Harcourt	65,731	Niger-Delta University, Wilberforce Island	20,586	Bells University of Technology, Ota	173
University of Ilorin	65, 213	Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma	18,679	Lead City University, Ibadan	128
University of Ibadan	48,281	Ladoke Akintola University, Ogbomoso	18,295	Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin	123
Bayero University, Kano	40, 849	Kaduna state University, Kaduna	19,338	Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo	122

Source: Compiled by author from Vanguard Nigerian newspapers August 4, 2011 edition

Although the number of Nigerians that use the internet has increased dramatically over the years, evidence also reveals that the ODL mode is not the popular choice amongst applicants. Furthermore, the significant private costs of ODL in Nigeria negate the popular opinion that it is a low cost form of tertiary education. The complete absence of face to face instruction in the ODL mode may be quite a long time in coming as most outreach centers have reduced it to weekend sandwich courses for working professionals. Successful models suggest detailed preparation for ODL, continuous revision of course materials and training for instructors, provision of modern hardware and software, adequate bandwidth and, innovative grant seeking strategies to ensure adequate funding. There are also problems of demand, supply and quality in the labour market. There is high unemployment rate especially amongst graduates due to the wide-ranging socio-economic problems in Nigeria. Employers of labour are also not satisfied with the quality of graduates available. Experts also predict intense social upheavals if the problems of unemployment in Nigeria are not dealt with timely and adequately.

The problem of access to previously excluded groups has not been adequately addressed. Efforts to address the disproportion between the educational development between northern and southern indigenes seem to have failed. The north continues to lag far behind in the number of applicants to universities. Nevertheless, almost half of the enrolments in colleges of education in Nigeria are indigenes from the north as it seems secondary school leavers from that part of the country prefer colleges of education to universities. Although there are no palpable gender disparities within the number applicants of southern origin, with females exceeding males in some states, females of northern origin continue to be grossly under-represented in universities and colleges of education.

In conclusion, the Nigerian University system continues to favour applicants from high income groups with the larger majority left to compete for the 45% reserved for merit applications in the cheaper government owned institutions. The government also needs to continue to subsidize tertiary education, especially in disciplines targeted for economic development. Furthermore, more efforts should be made to reduce the negative impact of religious and cultural practices on primary and secondary school enrolment in the northern part of the country.

Contemporary constructs of sustainable economic development include not only economic growth but also social equity. Educational policies need to be developed in cognisance of the socio-economic realities on-ground in the country. Planning for national development comes with adequate preparation for manpower needs, provision of adequate infrastructure for learning and efficient allocation of scarce financial resources. Massive injections of funding are therefore needed to increase the carrying capacity and quality of output of the system. The potential of the ODL mode should be exploited. The imbalance in the educational development between northern and southern Nigeria and issues of gender disparities must also be addressed. The private sector should be given financial incentives to set up tertiary institutions in the northern part of Nigeria. There is also the need to increase the quota for merit admission in state owned institutions for more equitable access in terms of gender and income groups.

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