

# **RE-ENGINEERING HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION: REFORMS AGENDA**

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## ***Abstract***

*This paper focuses on re-engineering higher education through private sector participation. The study sought to investigate how private sector can participate in higher education. Three research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study. Stratified random sampling technique was used in categorizing the respondents into three groups – higher education administrators, general public and private sector managers. Purposive sample technique was used in selecting 100 higher education administrators, 250 private sector managers and 300 members of the general public. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the three research questions, while a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used in testing the null hypothesis. The findings of the study show that there was no significant difference among the three groups of respondents in private sector participation in provision, access, funding, governance and management of higher education. Findings also showed that the private sector needs to participate in the provision of ICT equipment and facilities, offer sponsorship to education workers for international conferences, seminars and workshops, be adequately represented in the governing councils of higher institutions, among others. Schools should offer courses and skills relevant the private sector prevailing labour demand. Implications of the findings were identified. Among the recommendations were: private sector should make a compulsory annual contribution of a specific percentage of their profit before tax to higher institutions, entrepreneurship management (business-like*

*type) should be adopted in higher institutions while entrepreneurship education should be made compulsory to all students of higher learning.*

### **Introduction**

Higher education in Nigeria, like other systems of education worldwide, especially in developing countries, is experiencing millennium challenges. These challenges include competitions and efforts to attain the world-class university status. In today's globalized economy, Nigeria cannot afford to be left behind in the attainment of millennium goals which is highly dependent on the calibre (quality and quantity) of human resources, especially high level of manpower available to the nation. One of the major roles of higher education is to produce the required high level manpower for sustainable economy.

Higher education, especially in developing countries, is bedeviled by various problems, which became a concern to the world since the mid 1990s. As a result, a mandate was given to UNESCO and the African meetings to find a way of addressing the problems of education in Africa (Obanya, 2002). Consequently, the meeting came up with a number of issues, including identification of the benefits of higher education, such as improved socio-economic status, enhanced earnings and awakening of human potentials.

Other benefits, according to Obanya (2002), are the enrichment of the individual through enculturation, acculturation; acquisition of intellectual skills for the pursuit of self-development, development of affective traits, and family inculcation of lifelong learning skills, which involve acquisition activities, habits., etc. that make one develop the spirit of enquiry and long-term thrust for knowledge. It has been agreed all over the world that there is a sustainable rate of return from costs of higher education. Some benefits of higher education identified by Obanya (2002) include acquisition of generic skills, which involve the acquisition of analytical power, communication, problem solving, team-spirit, creativity, versatility, lifelong spirit, information technology, etc.

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These benefits notwithstanding, higher education in Nigeria has been facing various problems, such as lack of continuity in governance, inadequate plan for systematic development which seem to result to incoherent national philosophy of education, frequent disruption of policies and governance and most especially lack of university autonomy, giving rise to interference to the internal running of the university. The above problems gave rise to what Obanya (2002) described as:

*Unplanned expansion, rapid increase in the number of Nigerian higher institutions, increasing duplication of courses and programmes; deterioration of physical facilities; inadequate teaching, learning and research facilities; unpredicted increase in students enrollment; upsurge of social ills; internal and external brain drain, among others.*

In the face of these countless problems, government still funds universities. Although government claims that higher education takes the lion share of the total funds allocated to education, it is clear that in Nigeria, higher education needs greater funding, as the so called lion share is not enough to “wet the appetite of the roaring lion”. Government, on its part, has publicly stated that it can no longer carry the responsibility alone, hence it needs assistance.

The foregoing problems are not peculiar to Nigeria alone. Meagan Van Harte (2006) observed that government supports the view of high rate of return to higher education. As a result, recipients of and those concerned with higher education are now being involved in sharing the costs of the education. This practice has led to the recent revenue diversification and cost sharing in most universities in the world.

Due to the accruing benefits of higher education, there is an increased demand without equivalent supply of higher education. Thus,

social ills, such as examination malpractices and overpopulation in higher institutions, are consequent upon inadequate facilities. Secret cult activities abound in the institutions. All these gave rise to poor quality and low standard of higher education. Higher education in Nigeria currently requires re-engineering, such that the private sector can participate in providing the necessary assistance demanded by government. This implies involving the private sector in higher education administration, such as provision of access, funding, improvement, governance and management.

In support of the above observation, Fagbamiye (2005) asserted that education calls for greater support of all and sundry because education is a private and also a social investment that have to be shared by individuals, employers, government and other groups. In line with the above assertion, Oboegbulem (2001) observed that achieving quality education and greater efficiency in financing higher education, lies in mobilizing greater private resources to sustain the dwindling public resources in the universities.

Private sector in Nigeria include private universities, polytechnics and colleges of education, private companies and organization, religious bodies, individuals, philanthropists, international organizations, professional organizations, and non-governmental organization (NGOs).

Re-engineering higher education involves a number of reform activities which include problem identification, research policy alternatives, evaluation of outcomes, implementation of policies and feedback.

The target of most universities world over is to become world class universities. The framework for assessing world class universities has been identified by EI-Khawas (2001) as flexibility and responsiveness. She identified four areas of this framework as access to quality teaching and learning, financing, management and governance. For the purpose of clarity, the areas of this framework will be discussed and their current position in Nigeria, highlighted.

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Flexibility implies non rigidity and ill-preparedness to change, while responsiveness involves changing to situations. It explores appropriate ways to adapt or change to responsive actions or situations. Access to higher education implies supply of higher education to meet the prevailing demand and attain equilibrium. Studies have shown that Nigeria has not been able to give access to higher education to many qualified students seeking admission to higher institutions. The National University Commission (NUC 2002) indicates that in Nigeria, access rate was above 10% only in 1996/97 session. In 1997/98, it was above 10%, but it fell below 20% in 1998/99 and further to 10% in 2000/2001 session. This indicates that only about 17.2% of candidates were able to enroll in Nigerian universities.

Also, when compared with other countries of the world, Nigeria ranked lowest in participation in higher education per 10,000 inhabitants world over, which was recorded as follows: Europe 3,288, countries in Transition 2,602, South African 1,524; other Less Developed Countries 824, whereas Nigerian participation was far below the others. For instance, in 1998/99, Nigeria recorded 677 per 100,000 inhabitants.

**Table 12.1: Access to Nigerian universities 1993/94-1999/2000**

Year of Admission	Application	Admission	% Admitted	% Denied
1993/94	420,567	64,684	15.4	84.6
1994/95	451,734	71,568	15.8	84.2
1995/96	512,797	37,498	7.3	92.7
1996/97	475,923	79,904	16.8	83.2
1997/98	419,807	72,791	17.3	82.7
1998/99	340,177	78,550	23.1	76.9
1999/2000	417,773	78,550	18.8	81.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,038,868</b>	<b>483,545</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>84.1</b>

Source: Compiled from JAMB Records, Research, and Monitoring Evaluation Department 2001.

The data in Table 12.1 indicate that access to Nigerian universities falls below expectation. The data show that out of the

3,038,868 candidates who applied for admission into Nigerian Universities between 1993/94 and 1990/00 only 483, 545 or 15.9% were offered admission, while 2,55,323 or 84.1% were denied admission.

Although efforts have been and are still being made by government to increase access to higher education in Nigeria, the fact still remains that Nigeria's current stand on access to higher education, falls short of world class standard.

Quality teaching and learning in higher institutions in Nigeria is still a mirage. In addition to poor infrastructure, inadequate teaching and learning materials, Nigerian higher institutions still retain their curricula longer than their counterparts in developed countries. According to Hartnett (2001), the delays in constant reviews and changes in curricula lead to slow adjustment in science and technology. Higher education supervisory bodies, NUC, National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) do re-accreditation of programmes every five years. This implies that existing curricula will not be reviewed until after the accreditation, when the supervisory bodies may have pointed out necessary changes, and where this is not done, the programme continues with the existing curricula till the next accreditation exercise. This implies that in Nigeria the curricula can last for ten years. There is also little or no innovations both in curricula and pedagogy in higher institutions in Nigeria (Hartnett, 2001). Dropout rates range above 50%.

The 1990/91 session NUC accreditation exercise in the universities revealed that only 11% out of 1,185 of the programmes in the universities got full accreditation and in the year 2000 the figure decreased, with only 21% of 830 programmes getting full accreditation (NUC 2002). Based on this, the quality of Nigerian universities was adjudged below standard.

Added to the poor quality of university programme is the supply of inadequate educational product to the labour market. In fact, higher education in Nigeria has been described as being labour-blind.

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It is observed that administrative policies of higher education are not in the interest of individual student's interests, but mainly to the senior secondary school (NECO, WAEC, or NABTED) grade, leading to absence of knowledge coalitions.

It is often said that no education can rise above the quality of its teachers. Higher education in Nigeria seems to lack quality programmes and also quality teachers and so Nigeria may find it difficult to attain world-class university standard in the near future. World Bank (2002) observed that Nigeria ranked least among the world scientists and engineers engaged in research and development. It is sad to note that Nigeria has only very few (15) scientists compared with developed countries, like India having 158, China 459, and USA 4,103 (Task Force, 2000). With very low instrument in research capacity and education, world class research and scientific publications may not easily be increased, if serious policy and administrative changes are not made.

These setbacks have been attributed to a number of factors including brain drain, strikes, lack of employee motivation, weak accountability of education. Efforts to address these problems and attain the world-class standard call for re-engineering and re-positioning of our higher education.

Appropriate funding will lead to increased access and quality of programmes and graduates adequately educated with appropriate careers for the labour market and above all sustainability of the economic development in Nigeria. Unfortunately, funding of higher education has been and is still a big problem due to poor per capital income and consequent low Gross National Product (GNP). Adeniran (2002) referred to the situation as the greatest challenge to education in the millennium.

Currently, higher education in Nigeria is basically funded through government support and students contributions, which is only about 1% of recurrent expenditure (Ade-Ajayi, 2001). Government is responsible for 100% capital expenditure, but has never been able to do so. For instance, from Table 12.2 showing the level of funding in the

Nigerian university system between 1990 and 2001, it could be observed that the amount received was less than what was requested for.

**Table 12.2: *Level of Funding in the Nigerian University System, 1990-2001***

Year	Total requested by Universities (in Naira)	Total amount received by Universities (in Naira)	Amount received as % of amount requested
1990	1,216,601,329.00	734,770,950.00	60.40
1991	1,453,291,051.00	783,816,895.00	53.93
1992	3,663,212,945.00	2,985,237,346.00	81.49
1993	5,075,859,925.00	3,801,529,278.00	74.89
1994	7,342,861,713.00	4,370,880,770.00	59.53
1995	11,328,520,905.00	6,056,784,806.00	59.53
1996	12,442,699,358.00	7,535,594,529.00	53.46
1997	15,820,155,501.00	5,348,173,942.00	60.56
1998	22,767,530,158.00	8,974,631,294.62	39.42
1999	40,884,109,125.00	11,831,294.62	39.42
2000	68,579,997,692.00	30,143,004,497.91	45.96
2001	68,911,759,219.11	31,170,080,668.17	45.96
Total	256,486,598,921.11	113,736,435,248.68	44.34

Source: National University Commission 2003, Report

Between 1990 and 1997, the amount received was less than 82%. Between 1997 and 2001, the amount received dropped to 39.42%. This implies that the level of government funding in the universities has reduced.

The implication is that private sector participation is still very much required to make up for government's short falls. The major contributors were the Education Trust Fund (ETF) and Petroleum Tax Fund (PTF). Other minor contributions included endowments, fees, levies, gifts and international aids (Babalola, Sikwibelle and Suleiman (2000). Chiaha (1998) had earlier warned that, for Nigeria to meet up with the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is very pertinent to encourage private sector participation so as to enable her public institutions attain world class standard. Therefore, the need for private sector participation in higher institutions in Nigeria is currently inevitable.

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Responsiveness requires that higher education management and governance should be more business-like. This is very much operational in developed countries (Clark, 2001). Business-like management or entrepreneurship management involves accountability, quality assurance, and most importantly performance, monitoring and management innovations. Professional management technique is not yet very much in use in higher institutions in Nigeria. The use of Management Information System (MIS), Strategic Planning, e-management, e-learning and e-systems is still in infant stages, if at all. The supervisory bodies and higher institutions still lack enough staff with adequate professional educational management qualifications (Hartnett and Strassner, 2001). This is equally applicable to most officers without or with little training in educational management or similar qualification serving as managers of higher education in Nigeria.

If Nigeria has to attain the world-class university standard within the first quarter of this millennium, there is need for modern management skills of transformational leadership and entrepreneurship management. The foregoing suggest that Nigerian universities are yet to reap the full benefits of higher education that will enable them to join the race of becoming world-class universities.

The current study is designed to find an alternative way of funding higher institutions and attaining the required world-class university standards through the support of government efforts. Specifically, the study is carried out to investigate how higher education in Nigeria can be re-engineered for responsiveness through private sector participation.

### **Purpose of study**

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Investigate ways in which private sector can provide enhanced access to higher education.
2. Find out ways private sector can participate in funding higher education.

3. Investigate ways by which private sector can participate in governance and management of higher education.

### **Research Questions**

1. In what ways can private sector provide enhanced access to higher education?
2. In what ways can private sector participate in funding higher education?
3. In what ways can private sector participate in governance/and management of higher education

### **Hypothesis**

Only one null hypothesis was tested:

HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference among the mean ratings of university administrators, public sector managers and the general public with regard to private sector participation in higher education.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Research Design***

This study is a descriptive survey aimed at investigating the opinions of administrators, proprietors, government officials and public servants on private sector participation in higher education in Nigeria.

#### ***Area of the study***

The study covers universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and public and private organizations in Enugu State of Nigeria.

#### ***Population***

The population comprises 1,000 subjects made up of higher institution administrators (private and public), managers of private organizations and the general public made up of senior public servants, proprietors of private schools, politicians, government official and leaders of religious organizations.

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### ***Sample and sampling Technique***

Stratified random sample technique was used in classifying the various categories according to ranks and positions. For example, administrators were made up of principal officers of universities and deans of faculties, and school proprietors. Managers in private sectors include those in banks, private hospitals and organizations. The general public constitutes the private individuals, public servants, and general public representing other groups.

Purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting 100 higher institution administrators, 250 private sector managers and 300 members of the general public. This gave a total sample size of 650.

### ***Instrumentation***

The instrument for data collection was an 18-item questionnaire arranged under three clusters according to the three research questions. Each cluster has items covering the three major areas under investigation - access, funding and governance and management. The questionnaire was developed on a four-pointed modified likert-type rating scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). The respondents were requested to rate their level of agreement or disagreement on ways private sectors can participate in funding, governance, and management of higher education in Nigeria.

### ***Method of Data Analysis***

Mean scores and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions. A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted as an agreement level for the items.

The hypothesis was tested for the three groups using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Multiple comparisons of the three groups were also done.

### Results and Discussion

The results of this study are presented in Tables 12.3 to 12.6, according to the three research questions and one null hypothesis that guided the study.

Out of the 650 respondents, 100 (16.7%) were university administrators, 250 (38.5%) were managers, and 300 (46.2%) were from the general public respondents.

**Table 12.3: Mean responses and standard Deviation of University Administrators, General Public and Managers on ways private sector can provide access to higher education**

S/N	Items	H.I		G.P		Manager		Grand		Remark
		X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	
1	Not participate in the establishment of transport services	3.3	0.95	3.3	0.89	3.4	0.98	3.32	0.94	Accept
2	Participate in the provision of research and academic material for staff and students.	3.3	0.81	3.2	0.89	3.2	0.89	3.23	0.88	Accept
3	Participate in the provision of courses relevant to the prevailing labour demand.	3.2	0.88	2.8	0.96	3.1	0.9	3.03	0.93	Accept
4	Not be involved in the provision of private hostels for students.	2.7	1.07	3.2	0.9	3.04	1.07	3.08	1.01	Accept
5	Participate in the provision of ICT equipment and facilities	3.3	0.9	3.2	0.8	3.4	0.9	3.3	0.9	Accept
6	Not be involved in the provision of resource persons and facilities for research and teaching.	2.9	1.0	3.2	1.1	2.7	1.1	2.9	1.99	Accept
7	Establishing more private universities	2.9	0.9	2.8	0.9	3.3	0.8	2.9	0.9	Accept
Tot:		3.09	0.39	3.11	0.48	3.16	0.51	3.13	0.48	Accept

X = means

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SD = Standard deviation  
 HI = Higher institution  
 GP = General public

Items 1 to 7 in the questionnaire provided the answer to research question 1. From the Table 12.3, the three categories of the respondents agree that the private sector can participate in providing access to higher education through participating in the establishment of transport services; participation in the provision of research and academic materials for staff and students; participation in the provision of courses relevant to the prevailing labour demand; involved in the provision of private hostels for students; participate in the provision of ICT equipment and facilities; be involved in the provision of resource persons and facilities for research and teaching; and in establishing more private universities.

Table 12.4: *Mean and standard deviation of respondents on ways private sector can participate in funding Higher Education*

S/N	Items	H.I		G.P		Manager		Grand		Remark
		X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	
8	Participate in funding specific projects	3.64	0.55	0.21	0.85	3.42	0.83	3.38	0.82	Accept
9	Be involved in awarding scholarships to students	3.52	0.78	3.31	0.89	3.14	1.11	3.27	0.98	Accept
10	Partnership with higher institutions in income-generating activities	3.06	1.07	3.15	1.94	3.13	0.88	3.13	1.49	Accept
11	Sponsor staff for international conferences, seminars and workshops.	3.36	0.62	3.27	0.7	3.13	0.88	3.30	0.95	Accept
12	Make compulsory annual contribution of a specific percentage of their profit before tax to Higher Institutions	3.02	0.88	3.05	0.89	3.02	0.93	3.03	0.95	Accept
	Grand mean	3.32	0.43	3.21	0.60	3.20	0.52	3.23	1.55	Accept

From the Table 12.4, all the means in items (8-12) are above, the criterion mean 2.50. Therefore, it is accepted that the respondents are of opinion the private sector should participate in funding higher education through funding specific projects awarding scholarship to students, partnership with higher institution in incoming-generating activities, sponsoring staff for international conferences, seminar and workshops, making compulsory annual contribution of specific percentage of their profit before tax to higher institutions.

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Table 12.5: *Mean responses and standard Deviation of respondents on ways public sector can participate in governance and management of higher education.*

S/N	Items	H.I		G.P		Manager		Grand		Remark
		X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	
13	Private sector should be adequately represented in the governing councils of higher institutions	3.02	0.89	2.97	0.88	3.19	0.94	3.06	0.91	Accept
14	Private sector should have representatives in the various governing council committees	2.94	0.93	2.84	1.06	2.75	1.07	2.82	1.05	Accept
15	Private sectors should be co-opted as part of accreditation teams to higher Institutions	2.72	0.94	2.56	0.95	2.87	0.93	2.70	0.95	Accept
16	Entrepreneurship management (business-like type) should be adopted in higher Institutions	2.96	0.92	2.86	0.99	2.90	0.97	2.89	0.97	Accept
17	Private sectors should be represented in the Government Boards of the supervisory bodies of higher Institutions	3.08	0.72	2.97	0.84	3.04	0.88	3.01	0.84	Accept
18	Students should pay fees commensurate with services offered in higher institutions. Grand mean	2.88	0.91	2.88	0.94	3.05	1.04	2.95	0.98	Accept

From the Table 12.5, all the items are above the criterion mean of 2.50. Therefore, it is accepted that the private sector should participate in governance and management of higher education through

representation in the governing councils of higher institutions, being part of accreditation teams to higher institutions, entrepreneurship management, payment of fees commensurate with services offered in higher institutions.

Table 12.6: *ANOVA analysis of mean rating of the respondents with regard to private sector participation in higher institutions*

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	Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F	sig.
Between Group	531	.2	.265	2.078	.126
Within	82.635	647		.1281	
Total	83.166	649			

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The hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level significance. From Table 12.6, it could be observed that the F-calculate (2.078) is less than the F-table (3.00). This shows that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of university administrators, public sector managers and the general public with regard to private sector participation in higher education. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted.

### **Implications of the study**

This study has a lot of implications for education in general and higher education in particular. The findings of the study imply that private sector participation in the area of access, funding and governance will go a long way in giving the Federal Government the much needed support that will help the nation achieve world class standard for her higher institutions. The study has also shown that higher institution administrators, private sector managers and the general public are in support that private sector participation is inevitable in the area of access, funding and governance of higher education in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made:

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1. That private sector should make a compulsory annual contribution of a specific percentage of their profit before tax to assist in funding higher institutions;
2. Entrepreneurship management (business-like-type) of administration should be adopted in higher institutions;
3. That students should pay fees commensurate with services rendered in higher institutions; and
4. The federal government should enact laws and make policies that will enable the private sector participation in higher education;

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