

The Phenomenon of Private Higher Education: A Review of the Rationale, the Merits and Demerits

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Abstract: Expansion of enrolment has been the central higher education reality for the past half-century all over the world. Literature is rich with reasons that ignited the global emergence of private universities. This article reviews the rationale, merits and demerits of the emergence and the expansion of the private universities in a bid to boost the continuity of the private higher education discourse. In this review, it has been noted that growth in private higher education provision was mainly fuelled by the growth in people's demand for higher education access due to the failure of supply by public universities especially in African countries. Scholars have pointed out the ability to create jobs, extend higher education opportunities to many students left out by public universities' selections in Africa and providing stable academic calendars as the major merits of the existence of private universities in the countries. Nevertheless, numerous weaknesses were also revealed. According to some studies, due to their focus on profits, they were contributing to the degradation of higher education quality, propagating inequality in the society and were limited and selective in the study programmes they offered. Several studies also revealed the inadequacy of resources in terms of human, physical and infrastructure as another weakness that likely compromised the quality of education provided. From this review, it has been noted that many studies had been done in many African countries related to performances and challenges of private universities. Nevertheless, there is still a need for more studies to be done focusing on quality assurance and control.

Key words: Private universities, Malawi, accreditation, higher education quality.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is seen as a way of enlightening people in society all over the world. According to Suleiman et al. (2017), education, especially higher education, is considered as the foundation for a successful life. Even though returns in education cannot be quantified in all outcomes, it is always believed that investment in education has unique returns both financial and non-financial to the investors. Amongst the globally trending realities in higher education in research in the 21st Century, apart from issues of expansion of enrolment, the rise of Asian countries such as China as international academic centres and the global economic crisis and its effect on higher education, are issues of the world emergence of private higher education (Altbach & Salmi, 2011). It is interesting to note that many scholars around the world have agreed that private education has become to be the most important aspect of global education (e.g. Suleiman et al., 2017; Mwebi & Simatwa, 2013; Amponsah & Onuoha, 2013; Mbirithi, 2013; Mwebi & Simatwa, 2013; Onsongo, 2007; Ochwa-echel, 2016; Garwe, 2015; Ajadi, 2010; Akpotu

& Akpochofo, 2009). Generally, private provision of education at all levels has become to be a global reality that has been accompanied by globalization. Akpotu and Akpochofo (2009) observe that the wind of globalization and market reforms even influenced the administrative centrally planned countries of Eastern Europe, France, Germany, Russia, China, Mongolia and Tanzania to embrace the culture of private ownership of educational institutions, a concept that has been alien to these countries' administration cultures in the past. As it is with every good story, the global phenomenon of private provision of education has its good tidings as well as strives that have been presented by many researchers from all walks of life. This article reviews the emergence as well as the rationale for private higher education provision at the world level before proceeding to review the merits and demerits of this kind of education with particular reference to Africa.

II. THE GLOBAL EMERGENCE OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION

Expansion of enrolment has been the central higher education reality for the past half-century all over the world. The 20th Century scholars already predicted the 21st Century global phenomenal emergence and fast-growing of private university education (Altbach, 1998; Altbach and Salmi, 2011). This prediction has surely started being manifested as it is clear that the rate at which private universities education is growing is at an accelerated rate and is overtaking the public university education. In only ten years (2000 – 2010), the global annual enrolments in higher education increased from 100 million to well over 150 million worldwide, private universities claimed the bigger portion (Altbach & Salmi, 2011). According to Maruyama (2008), 20% of students were enrolled for higher education in private universities in the United States America by 2008. Canada National Library Reports (2001) cited in Ajadi (2010) also reported that more than 30% of all school students were enrolled in private schools in Australia, 67% in Columbia, 60%, in Belgium, 30% in Spain and more than 25% in France.

This expansion in private higher education has not left a region. Private universities have also been reported to have a strong effect in former Soviet Block and Asian countries. Altbach and Salmi (2011) indicate that private higher education provision dominated much of East Asia for generations especially in countries such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines and Taiwan, which educated between 60 and 80 per cent of their students in

private universities. In India, there were 229 privately managed universities in 2016 (Shankar, 2016). Furthermore, Maruyama (2008) reports that more than 75% of students were studying at the 582 private universities across Japan as compared to the 25% studying at 163 national and public universities in the country in 2008 (Maruyama, 2008). In China, Shen et al. (2017) report that there were a total of 727 private degree and certificate awarding institutions in China in 2014; which included five universities granting graduate degrees, 315 colleges awarding four-year bachelor's degree, and 307 institutions granting three-year certificates. This trend was also reported in Cambodia and Bangladesh (Leng, 2010; Mazumder, 2014). This just shows that private institutions of higher learning have become, in the words of Xiaohao (2004, p.5), "a more and more non-negligible force for the development of higher education" all over the world

In Africa, Suleiman et al. (2017) observe that most of the developing African countries woken up from slumber and realized the need for the total involvement of all stakeholders in the education system. In most African countries, private higher education policies were made as a way of enabling university education accessible to many people hence serving as an alternative to public universities in the region which for a long time had failed to satisfy the higher education need of the ever-growing population (Badat & Sayed, 2014; Suleiman et al, 2017). Before the 1960s, there were only seven public universities in Africa with none being privately owned (Mwebi & Simatwa, 2013). However, by 2005 there were 85 private and 316 public universities in the continent (Kihara, 2005). Today both public and private universities' numbers have multiplied in many African countries, but private universities are still the fastest growing in number. For example, in Kenya, access to university education was for a long time a preserve of some selected few individuals who managed to outstandingly pass the national secondary school education examinations (Mwebi & Simatwa, 2013). The competitive nature of the examinations locked out many candidates who qualified from pursuing a university education; hence the coming of private universities provided a reprieve that was long overdue to many students. In Nigeria, the first attempt to establish private universities in the country was in 1979 after the Supreme Court ruling in favour of private universities. This followed their ban and closure in 1983, and later the lifting of the ban in 1991 (Ajadi, 2010). In Uganda, it was in the 1990s when the country started experiencing the emergence of private universities, and they grew rapidly in terms of institutions and student enrolments (Mugabi, 2009; Mande, 2006). In Ghana, Amponsah and Onuoha (2013) indicate that students in private universities made up 10% of all university students in the country in 2013. Ghana's accredited private universities moved from 3 in 1999 to 52 by December 2009 registering a percentage increase 1733% in a decade (Amponsah & Onuoha, 2013: 257). In Zimbabwe, private universities emerged in 1992 with the granting of the private university charter to Africa University

in response to the need to fill in gaps in access to higher education. (Garwe, 2015).

In Malawi, until the early 1990s, Malawi had one public university; the University of Malawi which was established in 1965. This was followed by the establishment of another public university, Mzuzu University in 1994 which started its operations in 1999 (Chivwara, 2013). The Government of Malawi liberalize the higher education market in 2000s to ease its demand among the citizens. This formally allowed private universities to operate in the country. By 2009, four private universities were operating in Malawi (World Bank, 2009). In 2019, the National Council for Higher Education in Malawi announced the registration of 26 private universities in Malawi and the subsequent accreditation of only 13 of them (NCHE, 2019). In 2020, the council released two lists of study programmes of various tertiary institutions in Malawi which passed and failed the recent accreditation. It was noted that 155 programmes offered in 14 private universities were accredited, while 68 programmes existing in nine private universities failed the accreditation (NCHE, 2020).

III. THE RATIONALE FOR THE GLOBAL EMERGENCE OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Scholars have cited many reasons that ignited the emergence of private universities as well as their expansion and growth in various countries in the world and the reasons that led governments to legalize and accept private investment of higher education in their countries.

3.1 *The Growth in Demand for Higher Education*

Growth in private university education provision was fuelled by the growth in people's demand for higher education access. Altbach and Salmi (2011) opine that the worldwide expansion of private higher education was fuelled by demand from an ever-growing segment of the population seeking to obtain degree certificates which are believed to hold the promise of greater lifetime earnings and opportunities all over the world. For example, Onsongo (2007) observes that the growth of private universities in Kenya was amongst other factors contributed by the increase in the number of qualified secondary school graduates seeking higher education which was triggered in part by the massive expansion of primary education. The same was also observed by Ochwa-Echel (2016) in Uganda where private universities expansion was accelerated by, among other factors, the population growth that was not matched by the capacity of the only public university existing then, Makerere University, and even the country's construction of new public universities did not fully help in filling the gap. In Kenya, public universities were admitting about 10,000 students annually out of over 50,000 qualifying secondary school graduates before 2005 (Onsongo, 2007). Garwe (2015) observes that the unprecedented demand for university education compelled public universities to increase enrolments without corresponding increase in facilities, infrastructure, and adequate competent staff in Zimbabwe and other African countries. In Nigeria, the

population explosion in the country made activists advocate for the inclusion of private universities in the country to cushion the high demand of higher education in the country of which it was obvious that public universities alone could not cater (Ssewamala, 2014; Suleiman et al., 2017). The private universities, therefore, came into existence due to the inability of the public universities to absorb some university-qualifying students in many African countries.

3.2 To Augment the Governments' Efforts in the Provision of Higher Education

One of the most important roles of private universities in countries is that of partnering with governments in education financing. In many countries where economies were centrally planned, the transition from a state-controlled economy to market forces was also linked with the development of the private sector in higher education which formed a fundamental part of the reform measures. To many developing countries, the privatization of higher education was sometimes part of the conditionality for receiving external financial support during the period of transition (Amponsah & Onuoha, 2013). Altbach (1998) agrees to the above sentiments as he attributes the appearance of private universities to "the logic of today's market economies and an ideology of privatization" (p. 2). This was even cited by some African Presidents when they were asked why they encouraged the establishment of private higher institutions in their countries recorded by Owusu-Dankwa (2009) as cited in Amponsah and Onuoha (2013). Amongst the reasons that these states leaders indicated were that private higher education is helping in addressing the problem of who pays for higher education in the new millennium and that private investment in higher education by individuals and non-state organizations was helping the countries to vividly being seen as responding to the universal call for privatization, free-market economy and individual ownership of establishments (Amponsah & Onuoha, 2013). Mande (2006) and Ochwa-Echel (2016) observe that in Uganda, the liberalization policy instituted by the Government of Uganda which was part and parcel of the structural adjustments policies required by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as a condition of borrowing money by Sub-Saharan African countries partly made it possible for private universities to emerge in the 1990s because, before this policy, university education was holistically a monopoly of the state.

3.3 Took advantage of the deplorable state of some public institutions

Failure of public universities to keep up with the provision of quality education to their country masses contributed to the expansion of private university institutions. This has been prevalent in African countries. Ahemba (2006) attributes the expansion and tremendous growth of private universities in Africa to the failure of Africa's once glorious public universities. According to him, the conditions of public higher institutions in Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Kenya and Uganda as

well as in many other African countries were in deplorable state with crumbling facilities and campuses, overcrowded lecture halls and hostels and depleted libraries and laboratories which just evidenced the inadequacy of funding in those public universities. Amponsah and Onuoha (2013) added that many talented lecturers were persuaded to leave their countries for the prospect of better salaries outside hence dragging down the academic standards of the continent's once renowned 'alma maters'. Saint (1992) and Ajadi (2010) also agree that the public universities in Africa failed to plan and accommodate the increasing rates of enrolments in their institutions of higher learning which were often faster than their capacities which resulted in over-crowding of students, shortage of learning materials and laboratories, worsening conditions of physical facilities, the tension on administrative systems, and reduced staff performance. Blair and Jordan (1994) also add the lack of retention of academic staff as one of the reasons that led to degradation of the quality of education offered in public universities which encouraged individuals and organization to consider offering higher education in private institutions (Amponsah & Onuoha, 2013).

3.4 Tertiary education spaces pressure by the compulsory free primary policies

The implementation of the compulsory free primary school education policies by various countries resulted in extreme pressure on all education levels including higher education hence its expansion through private universities. This was a result of the world educational financing model shift from manpower planning model to the economic rate of returns. With this new model, the understanding was that the rates of return were the highest on primary school educational level than at any level of education. This was embraced by the World Bank as "short policy menu" guiding the bank's developmental funding and assistance to countries thereby influencing many countries to largely focus on making primary schools free and compulsory (Heyneman & Stern, 2015:5). The consequent declaration of free and compulsory primary school education by most African countries in the 1980s and 1990s put a lot of pressure on the secondary school as well as higher education years later (Ochwa-Echel, 2016; Mwebi and Simatwa, 2013; Browne, 2002). According to Ochwa-Echel (2016), the Government of Uganda's decision of introducing universal primary education in 1997 doubled primary enrollment from three million in 1998 to six million in 1999, and this high enrollment trend continued to increase in 2005. As if this was not enough, the subsequent introduction of universal secondary education in 2006 further increased the number of potential applicants for university entrance. The enactment of these two policies meant a substantial increase in the number of university applicants, by the time the beneficiaries of these programmes reached university entrance. Mwebi and Simatwa (2013) and Wamba and Momezulu (2014) in agreement also cites Kenya and Malawi as other good examples of countries in which the rapid growth of primary and secondary levels of education

caused by the introduction of free primary and secondary schools education programmes led to the increased enrolment in higher education.

3.5 *Religious Groups' Desire to Educate Members and Prospective Leaders*

The emergence of private higher education was also instigated by various religious groups' desire to provide higher education to their members and prospective leaders of their religious organizations. According to Altbach and Salmi (2011) at a global level, Roman Catholic universities and other religious institutions have long been key providers of higher education and most of the time serving as the best institutions providing quality higher education in many countries, with Roman Catholic Church alone operating around 1,900 private colleges and universities worldwide. Altbach and Salmi illustrate this by giving an example of the United States of America where there were 217 Catholic higher education institutions in 2011 which accounted for 20% of enrollment of all private higher education enrollment totals. In Africa, Onsongo (2007) observes that most of the private universities in Africa are established and run by religious organizations. According to him, seven out of eight private chartered universities in Kenya which were already established in 2006 were sponsored and managed by Christian organizations. Moreover, all five registered private universities in that year were also sponsored and managed by Christian organizations. Most of the Christian-sponsored private universities started by offering courses mainly geared towards training church ministers. Nguru (1990) observes that the major aim of these church-affiliated private universities was the same as it was with the earlier missionary schools, namely, to promote the spread of the Christian gospel. However, these religious sponsored universities expanded their programmes to include secular courses. In Malawi, out of 13 accredited private universities in 2019, eight were owned by religious organizations; two of them by the Roman Catholic Church (NCHE, 2019).

3.6 *Their Efficient Management as Compared to Public Institutions*

Private universities are expanding very fast because they are successfully and efficiently run by their owners since they are seen as private investments that must be efficiently and effectively run to produce profits (Suleiman et al., 2017). Most private investors work towards making their institutions favourably competitive amongst their fellow private universities and even public counterparts to attract more students (Obayan, 2006). A good example could be American universities. In America, the establishment of private universities is seen as a business venture in which commercial organizations and industries are greatly involved to provide access to quality higher education to the people. Some of the world best universities in America such as Harvard University, Cornell University, Yale University, Catholic University and Bridgeham University are privately owned

(Suleiman et al., 2017). Suleiman et al. (2017) also add that many countries such as Australia, France, Korea, and Spain also have good private universities offering quality higher education. This just shows that, apart from the fact that private universities are primarily established by owners to get returns on their investments, some private universities do offer quality higher education to the people.

IV. MERITS OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION PROVISION

Many scholars have written a lot on the merits of private universities to the country as well as to the individuals in comparison with public universities.

4.1 *Provide uninterrupted education services due to their stable academic calendars*

Suleiman et al. (2017) observe that a stable academic calendar is one of the strengths of private universities which had been there for a long time. Amponsah and Onuoha (2013) agree with Suleiman et al. on the point that private universities are indeed good at providing uninterrupted educational calendars throughout the year. This leads to the smooth running of school programmes without any distractions. This was in comparison with public universities especially in Africa where there are many interruptions as related to issues of students' demonstrations, academic staff strikes and many more which often disrupt their academic calendars. In their study done in Nigeria, Suleiman et al. report that all private universities established in Nigeria were running their academic calendars without any obstructions. According to them, their informants agreed that stable academic calendar is assured in private universities in Nigeria giving assurance to students as to when their programmes will be completed, unlike their public universities counterparts who are normally not sure as to when they will complete their studies because of a lot of disturbances especially due to numerous staff members and students strikes and demonstrations.

4.2 *Create Job Opportunities for both Academic and Non-Academic Staff*

The establishment of private universities has created many job opportunities to potential academic as well as non-academic staff in many countries. When an organisation has been established it surely needs manpower to enable it to achieve its objectives successfully. In their studies done in Nigeria and Malawi, Suleima et al. (2017) and Kajawo (2019) found out in their respective studies that creation of numerous jobs was a major strength of private universities in African continent since many people were employed in private universities either as academic or non-academic staff hence assisting in reducing unemployment rates in the society (Abubakar, 2005). Suleima et al. (2017) found that private universities absorbed both skilled and unskilled man-power into their universities hence assisting in reducing the rate of unemployment in Nigeria. Kajawo (2019) also noted that private universities provided employment opportunities to

many Malawians employed and working in those institutions ranging from teachers, administrators as well as support staff such as office clerks, cleaners as well as guards.

4.3 Adjust to Organisational Changes and Innovations Efficiently

Private universities organizational flexibility in management and administration makes them more efficient in adjusting to organizational changes and innovations. Kitaev (1999) observes that private universities usually do not have unnecessary bureaucracies in their management and administrative activities and are less rigid to organizational regulations. They also have more flexible arrangements for teaching and learning conditions which make them easy to respond to new changes and innovations more quickly as compared to most public universities which are more bureaucratic organisations with the tall chain of commands because of their hugeness. The greater management flexibility in the private universities enables them, as compared to public institutions, to introduce curricular and programme innovations, improved assessment methods, and modern teaching methods easily. Private organizations can also avoid unnecessary restrictive employment laws as well as rigid and out-dated pay scales that limit the ability of public institutions to hire appropriate staff (Suleiman et al., 2017). According to Amponsah and Onuoha (2013), the use of more flexible procedures for staff management enables private institutions to be economically efficient usually through the use of many part-time teachers from public institutions to save on teacher wages and benefits.

4.4 Assist in the Countries' Human Resource Training and Development

Private universities assist in the country's manpower development without or with less dependence on public funds. People who support private investments assert that the development of education should not be in the hands of government alone, but rather individuals willing to invest in the education sector should be allowed to assist the government (Obayan, 2006; Psacharopoulos, 2014). Private universities have their funding sources such as fees paid by students, donations and endowment investments, which are usually independent of government funding. Mugabi (2009) observes that the biggest strength and contribution of private universities to the higher education provision is their ability to provide higher education at a no or minimum public cost especially in African countries where private universities rarely receive public funding. Through mobilisation of external funding that otherwise, would not be available to higher education, private universities widen funding sources for the system and as such, provide a solution to the dilemma of widening higher education access for a growing number of students without significant increases in public expenditure. Levy (2006) also agrees to this as he argues that private universities absorb enrolment growth without having state expenditures expand further.

4.5 Extend Higher Education Opportunities to Students not Enrolled in Public Universities

Private universities extend higher education opportunities to students who could not otherwise be enrolled in public universities due to stiff universities entry competition. This was noted in a study conducted by Kajawo (2019) in Malawi in which more than 90% of the respondents (n=132) were of the view that private universities were extending higher education opportunities to students who could not otherwise be enrolled in public universities due to stiff public universities entry competitions. Mugabi (2009) argues that private universities enrol a significant number of students including those who would otherwise be unable to be enrolled at selective public universities due to the quality of their grades and other reasons hence they widen students' access and choice in higher education. For instance, in 1999 private universities and colleges enrolled a large group of students in Latin American and East Asian countries, more than half in Brazil, Colombia and Indonesia and over three quarters in Korea and the Philippines (World Bank, 1999 cited in Rose, 2002).

4.6 Produce More Ethical and Disciplined Graduates

Some authors have argued that some private universities produce more ethical and disciplined graduates than those produced by public universities especially in Africa. According to Amponsah and Onuoha (2013), privately run universities have a record of producing more ethical and disciplined graduates as compared to public universities, especially in African countries. Kajawo (2019) also found the same in Malawi. More than 90% (n=132) of the respondents in his study indicated that students in private universities were unlikely to engage themselves in barbaric activities such as violent demonstrations against the universities administrations, acting uncivil to the members of public as well as using swear language on campus and sports trips of which was the order of the day in the public universities. This could be because most of private higher education institutions in Africa are not as big as public universities hence students' management is easier than in public universities which enable student offices to monitor and supervise all students' behaviour with easiness.

4.7 Provide Relevant and Quality Education to the People

Private universities provide relevant and quality education to the people in the society. Some quarters of the society believe that private universities provide quality education to the people in the society. Suleiman et al. (2017) give the justification to the claim that whatever the money one expends on education, one can rest assured that it will have value for it than in public institutions. The reason could be that private universities owners would be willing to adjust and adapt to current changes and innovations in higher education administration and could be flexible in programmes of study and courses being offered to suit the society's needs to remain

in competition hence being very efficient and effective. According to Obayan (2006), private investment in higher education could be a good mechanism for raising both the efficiency and quality of education delivery. For example, in the study done by Leng (2010) in Cambodia, many student respondents reported that their private universities had knowledgeable and experienced teaching staff and that they were well resourced with learning materials such as updated textbooks, as compared to public universities which were marred with many problems that included insufficient funding the government and shortages of learning resources. Besides, Mazumder (2014) reports that in Bangladesh, private universities have an economic advantage that enables them to use state of the art equipment and flexible curriculum in their efforts to maintain higher quality simply because they charge tuition fees which is usually higher if compared to public institutions' fees.

In China, EP-Nuffic (2015) also reports that private higher education institutions offer very popular study programmes and majors such as English, computer science, international economy and business and that the quality of education is not compromised since it is closely monitored by Ministry of Education hence they provide quality education just like their public institutions' counterparts. In Malawi, Kajawo (2019) found that private universities provided some relevant study programmes which were on the job market demand, which were scarce in public universities such as community/rural development, HIV and AIDS management, and business-related courses. This just shows that private universities can provide quality higher education since they strive to implement best practices in pedagogy, curriculum, instructional methods and necessary resources which are unequivocally significant to maintain relevance in the market.

V. DISADVANTAGES OF THE PROVISION OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION

Despite the undeniable enormous contributions that private universities were providing in the higher education sectors, some schools of thought have pointed out numerous weaknesses of private universities in particular countries.

5.1 Degradation of the Provision Quality of Higher Education

Many scholars have argued that the emergence of private higher education provision has posed a serious threat to the education quality. Suleiman et al. (2017) argue that private universities are threatening the provision of quality education that most public universities are known to provide especially in African countries. According to them, quality is affected because the main goal of private universities is to make profits disregarding the quality of services they are offering (Obayan, 2006). Buzindadde (2000) argues that quality education in private universities is sometimes affected by the over-enrollment of students without considering the resources that are available for their academic wellbeing. According to him, private universities are sometimes overwhelmed by a

large number of applicants, a situation that attempts institutions to admit students beyond their intake capacity which in the end affect quality delivery. As a result of this, Mwebi and Simatwa (2013) noted that education offered in some of these kinds of institutions did not nurture problem-solving and analytical skills required for innovation since students rely too much on lecturer notes and presentations instead of exploring knowledge by on their own using universities' resources.

Gogo (2010) also observed this problem in private universities in Kenya. According to him, there were flaws and weaknesses in the security and control of the examinations at some private universities in Kenya to the point that unwritten examination papers were found around the universities. Sometimes students' theses, assignments, semester papers and projects were done by others at a fee by the agents. Mwebi & Simatwa (2013) also adds that a lot of assignments were reported just downloaded from the internet and due to lack of time to scrutinize these effectively, students ended up passing courses they never fully studied. This forced some employers to demand a high school certificate in addition to the degree certificates in Kenya. In agreement to this, Leng (2010), found that due to these private institutions' customer-oriented approaches, the some private universities in his Cambodian were not reactive towards the maintenance of quality education since even the rules of examinations were not followed as students could be found cheating with no consequences. Students were also always absent and habitually late but the authorities did not care as long as they were paying their tuition fees. The same was also reported in Zimbabwe and Nigeria (Garwe, 2015; Suleiman, et al., 2017).

5.2 Enhance Education Inequality in Society

Private universities tend to enhance education inequality in the society since they are mostly targeted on the rich who can afford to pay their exorbitant fees. Findings of the study done by Suleiman et al. (2017) in Nigeria showed that most respondents were of the view that private universities were not meant for poor people. According to them, they were meant for the sons and daughters of rich people in the society who could afford to pay the exorbitant tuition and other fees that these institutions demand thereby restricting access of some groups of people (Shankar, 2016). This view is also supported by Obayan (2006) who also observe that the antagonists of the private universities investment criticize these institutions as being discriminative since they leave out the poor who cannot afford to pay for their service hence enlarging the gaps in terms of educational accessibility between the rich and the poor.

According to Checchi (2005), in higher education financing, financial markets are very likely to work imperfectly due to the reason that some groups of people can pay for the education of their siblings using their private funds and sometimes through lending in financial lending institutions. But this opportunity is not available to some groups of people

in the same society who neither have money to pay nor have any possibility of providing collateral demanded by the financial lending institutions. Public universities can correct this market failure through their affordable fees schedules, scholarships and government loan opportunities. Checchi (2005) notes that without public intervention to correct this market failure, differential access to education could persist across generations since poor families would fail to finance the education of their offspring, who in turn would obtain less education, earn less and will also fail to finance the education of their children hence enhancing vicious circle of poverty. Thus the expansion of private higher education could be responsible for persistent inequality, both in education and in the income of people in society.

5.3 Inadequacy of the Required Qualified Academic Staff

Private universities are prone to having shortages of the required academic staff. The study done in Nigeria by Ajadi (2010) revealed that the obvious weakness of private universities in Nigeria was the shortage of qualified academic staff in the courses offered by various faculties. It was observed that the number of full-time academic staff in private universities was usually very small because they preferred employing teaching staff on a part-time basis. Moreover, most of the academic staff members recruited for full-time at these universities were unqualified, thereby contravening the requirements set by governments. This was also noticed in Zimbabwe in the study done by Garwe (2015). According to him, most of the academic staff members of private universities in Zimbabwe were employed on part-time basis who were full-time employees elsewhere, especially in other public universities. According to this study which was done in 2009, 90% (n=29) of academic staff at the Catholic University and 65% (n=62) of academic staff at the Women's University Africa were working on part-time basis. Garwe also observed that the public universities in Zimbabwe also had more PhD degree holders among their academic staffs than private universities.

5.4 Inadequacy of the Required Educational Physical Structures and Equipment

Inadequacy of physical structures was another weakness that was found with most private universities in Africa. Operating an institution of higher learning requires considerable investment in infrastructures, facilities, and equipment. This is a little bit easier for public universities since they are constructed and largely supported by governments and many other international and national stakeholders. For private universities, the investors have to put their money for the availability of all resources required for particular programmes of study which becomes a challenge. This invariably and adversely affects the quality of education being offered. Garwe (2015) observes that the inadequacy of physical structures has become to be a common feature of private universities in Africa. According to him, some of the private universities do not have adequate physical facilities

befitting an institution of higher learning in line with international standards such as lecture halls, theatres as well as laboratories as compared to public universities which are partially resourced in the same countries. In a study conducted in Malawi by Kajawo (2019), it was concluded that the quality of higher education offered at some private universities left a lot to be desired particularly due to lack of adequate resources and good academic infrastructures such as libraries, laboratories and internet connectivity. Suleiman, et al. (2017) writing in the context of Nigeria observes that most of the universities do not have the financial resources to construct, establish and sustain the right physical structures required for quality learning in their institutions, which results in compromising the quality of the education being offered.

5.5 Selectiveness and Limitedness in the Study Programmes Offered

Most private universities are selective and limited in the study programmes they offer. In contrast with the public universities of which they are particularly established to provide education as a public good for the social benefit, hence they offer a wide range of programmes in humanities, law, science, theology, business and many more, private universities usually only focus on study programmes that are on the demand in the market and those that their costs of running are likely to be small in terms of teaching and learning materials, equipment and space they would require. Garwe (2015) lists the degree programmes offered in private universities in Zimbabwe as putting emphasis is on business management, humanities, social sciences and theology. According to him, programmes such as engineering and medicine were not offered by private institutions since they required a lot of expensive equipment. He cites an example of certain universities which attempted to respectively offer law and health sciences but the programmes were discontinued after failing to meet quality assurance requirements. He, therefore, agrees that, to a larger extent, the courses that are offered in private institutions are not as diversified as those in public universities in Zimbabwe.

VI. CONCLUSION

Many studies had been done in many African countries related to performances and challenges of private universities in various countries especially in Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, Ghana, Malawi and in many other Western and Asian countries. It has been noted that the global emergence and expansion of private universities was mainly caused by the growth in people's demand for access to higher education all over the world, hence private higher education provision had been relevant since was extending higher education opportunities to students who could not otherwise be enrolled in public universities due to stiff universities entry competition. It has also been noticed that studies across the world have revealed demerits of private universities in various countries, especially in Africa as a result of numerous challenges reported being faced by these private education

institutions. Although the private provision of higher education can be looked at with the negative lenses, they still have a very big role to play in complementing governments' efforts in the provision of higher education due to the increased demand for university education, especially in most African countries. Nevertheless, governments, especially in Africa, need to strengthen and tighten their quality control and assurance efforts to check against any compromising actions in the provision of higher education, especially private institutions. The national councils or agencies responsible for higher education need to put strong measures in their accreditation processes so that they do not tolerate institutions that fail to meet set standards. This can be enhanced by a strong legal system backing the efforts of quality assurance and control. For example, in Malawi, there is a provision in the Laws of Malawi which prohibit higher education institutions from admitting students or commencing operations in Malawi before they are duly registered and accredited which is enforced by an imprisonment sentence to the defaulter. It is better to have few universities that are qualified to operate as universities instead of many degree-mills masquerading as universities. From this review, even though it has been noted that many studies have been done in many African countries related to performances and challenges of private universities, there are still some gaps in literature especially in issues of internal and external quality assurance and control in private universities. Hence more studies in this area are recommended.

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