Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.5 No.2 June, 2022; p.g. 1 – 5; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

THE CHALLENGES OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN CONTRIBUTING TO HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Private Universities face different challenges in contributing to national development. The study investigated the challenges faced by private universities in contributing to human capital development in Nigeria, using three selected universities namely Adeleke University, Ede, Bowen University, Iwo, and Fountain University Osogbo, in Osun State. It utilized both primary and secondary data. Qualitatively, secondary data were collected and analyzed to establish the various challenges faced by the selected private universities, while quantitatively, 140 copies of the questionnaire were administered to randomly selected teaching and non-teaching staff of the universities. One hundred and twenty-seven (127) copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 20.0. The study's findings revealed that some of the challenges confronting private universities regarding their contribution to human capital development in Nigeria include insufficient student enrolment, inadequate funding, poor employee welfare, and frequent staff turnover, especially among academics. The study concluded that the development of a strategic plan by the private universities and possible assistance by the government through access to the Education Trust fund (ETF) will go a long way in addressing some of the challenges.

Keywords: Human Capital Development, Private Universities, Challenges, Strategic Plan.

Introduction

The role of education as a channel for promoting the socio-economic, political and cultural development of any nation can never be over-emphasized. According to Abdulkareem (2001) Nigeria is known to be a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. The Nigerian educational system review, which was first done from 1842 to 1959 by the colonial masters, has continually witnessed drastic changes. Higher education in Nigeria is dated back to 1932 with the establishment of the Yaba Higher College. The agitation for more comprehensive higher education made the colonial secretary, Oliver Stanley, set up Asquith's Constitution and Elliot Commission of Higher Education in 1943 (Taiwo. 2006). The result of their report led to the establishment of universities in Nigeria. The University College, Ibadan was established in 1948, as an affiliate of the University of London, and was the only university in Nigeria until 1960 (Jubril, 2003). The Ashby Commission in April 1959 birthed the first-generation universities between 1960 and1970 namely: The University of Nigeria, Nsukka in the Eastern region, the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in the Western region,

Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in the Northern region, University of Lagos, the University of Benin and the University of Ibadan.

Consequently, the second-generation universities were established between 1975 and 1977, this was done in reflection of the 19 states' structure. These include the University of Calabar (1975); the University of Ilorin (1976); the University of Jos (1975); the University of Sokoto (1977); the University of Port Harcourt (1977); and Bayero University, Kano (1977). These universities became federal universities by Decree 46 of 1977 which provided for the Federal Government's take-over of all universities in Nigeria (Jubril, 2003). The 1979 Constitution permitted state governments to establish state-owned universities if they so desired. Based on this, eight state universities were founded between 1979 and 1983. They include Anambra State University of Technology, Enugu; Bendel State University (now Ambrose Alli University) Ekpoma; Cross River State University, Uyo; Imo State University, Owerri; Lagos State University, Ijanikin; Ogun State University, Ago Iwoye; Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti and Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt.

Moja (2000), in her paper titled Nigeria Education Sector Analysis: An analytical synthesis of performance and main issues, affirmed that "Access to higher education and the lack of the capacity of the system to absorb the numbers of students seeking admission to higher education institutions continues to pose a serious problem. This continuous problem brought about the involvement of the private sector in the provision of higher education in Nigeria in 1999 when President Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn in under the democratic government. Since then, private universities have come to stay. As at the time of this study according to Abubakar in his book titled: "The State of University Education in Nigeria", Nigeria has 161 approved universities comprising 43 Federal Universities, 43 State Universities, and 75 Private Universities (NUC, 2020, Abubakar, 2020).

Since one of the factors that determine the quality of human capital of a nation is the quality of higher education, therefore, one of the major objectives of the universities is to produce a competent workforce for the labour market of business and industry, which is an important factor to national growth and development (Obadara& Alaka, 2013).According to Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008), human capital is the innate abilities, knowledge or skills, education, capacity, and attributes of labour that influence productive capacity and earning potential. Makinde (2017) defines development as the process of change, a positive change that is crucial to any developing nation. Therefore, the concept of development in human capital is the means to become more mature, more advanced, more complete, more organized, and more detailed. Thus, the term development connotes an improvement on a previous state.

Private universities have contributed to human capital development to a great extent in Nigeria, most especially in providing admission to students who failed to gain admission into public universities and allowing prospective students and their parents to make choices. They have been able to solve the problem of irregular school calendars, student admitted there can finish their academic programme within the period allocated for the programme without interruption. They have been able to create jobs for the unemployed even though the challenge of retaining employees poses a threat. The majority of these private universities are owned by faith-based organizations and a few by sole proprietorship. The owners of these universities plan development and management strategies before the establishment or commencement

and make an effort to execute them. The management of private universities has always considered human capital development as a major tool in ensuring that staffs, especially academics, are retained to ensure that students that are turned out in these universities can compete with their counterparts from public universities. Despite the relentless effort of private universities in contributing to the nation's development through human capital development, they continue to face challenges that have greatly affected their output.

Against this background, the study examined the challenges which private universities face in contributing to human capital development in Nigeria using three selected private universities in Osun State namely: Adeleke University, Ede, Bowen University, Iwo and Fountain University, Osogbo.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were to

i. examine the challenges confronting private universities in contributing to human capital development in Nigeria; and
ii. recommend policy options to address and reduce the challenges confronting private universities in contributing to human capital development in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Qualitatively, secondary data were collected from journals, Government publications, research papers, and related internet sources. Quantitatively, one hundred and forty copies ofthe questionnaire were administered, random sampling technique was used to select teaching and non-teaching staff of three private universities in Osun State. One hundred and twenty-seven copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and analyzed using Microsoft Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 20.0

Challenges facing Private Universities in Nigeria

S/N	Statement	Yes %	No %	No Response %	Total %
1	Insufficient student enrolment	92.1	4.7	3.1	100
2	Lack of adequate funding	82.7	12.6	4.7	100
3	Failure of parents/guardians to make prompt payment of school fees	78.7	19.7	1.6	100
4	Problem of retaining good academic staff	85.8	11.0	3.1	100
5	Meeting with staff welfare	87.4	11.0	1.6	100
6	Inadequate discipline of students	35.4	59.8	4.7	100

Source: Field Survey 2019

The above table shows respondents' responses on the challenges facing private Universities in Nigeria, 92.1% of the respondents said insufficient student enrolment is one of the challenges, 4.7% said otherwise and 3.1% made no response, majority (82.7%) of the respondents said lack of adequate funding is one of the challenges, 12.6% said otherwise and 4.7% made no response, 78.7% of the respondents also asserted that failure of parents/guardians to make prompt payment of school fees is one of the challenges, 19.7% said otherwise and 1.6% made no response. 85.8% of the respondents also said problem of retaining good academic staff is one of the challenges, 11.0% said otherwise and 3.1% made no response. (87.4%) said meeting with staff welfare is one of the challenges, 11.0% said otherwise and 1.6% made no response. Lastly, 35.4% of the respondents confirmed that inadequate discipline of students is one of the challenges facing private universities in Nigeria, majority (59.8%) said otherwise and 4.7% made no response.

Major Findings

The study found out that, despite the contribution of private universities to human capital development in Nigeria, they are confronted with challenges such as inadequate funding, inadequate professional staff and inadequate infrastructural facilities. Other challenges include insufficient student enrolment, failure of parent/guardians to make prompt payment of school fees, inability to retain competent academic staff as well as problems faced in meeting with staff welfare.

Conclusion

The paper examined the challenges of private universities in contributing to human capital development in Nigeria using three private universities in Osun state, South-West Nigeria as a case study. The study concluded that private universities will overcome most of their challenges if the government assists in easing the financial burden of private universities through the provision of access to the Education Trust Fund (ETF) grants which can cater for infrastructural facilities or generally provide them with logistic support since many of the parents and guardians of children who attend private universities and staff of private universities also contribute to the Education Trust Fund. Private universities can also develop strategic plans that will enhance income-generating revenues like cafeteria, restaurants, mini-marts, bakery, pure water factory, laundry and the like. Furthermore, the study concludes that a coalition of private universities will go a long way in combating the synonymous challenges among them and also, give solutions to individual challenges. Private university education is a worldwide practice; thus, it has won the heart of the people and continuous effort should be made to combat their challenges to maintain and upheld their existence and relevance.

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