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Taming the Turbulence? Leading Issues in the Emergence and Challenges of Private Universities

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Protocols

Acknowledgements



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Introduction



Something about “turbulence”

- Notion
(upheaval,
disturbance,
disorder, etc) =
uniquely
captivating
- Underneath
the chaos,
there is order!





Take-off point:

- Discourse of “turbulence in university education in Africa” takes on a unique resonance, considering the life of

“The African Child”



Born into...

- Sub-Saharan Africa which **harbours 33 of the first 50 poorest countries** in the world (15 in West Africa)
- **Food insecurity with** 60 million Africans at risk and 37% of peers (children) stunted
- More than 50 percent of Africans who suffer from **water-related diseases** such as cholera and infant diarrhea.



- A land where:
 - every 30 seconds another African child dies of malaria—more than one million child deaths a year.
 - 1 child in 12 dies before fifth birthday



Unpredictability!

Noble
Professor?

Died
before 5?

Political
pain?

Died from
malaria?

Educated to
what level?



Lived below
poverty
line?



If Education is the Predictor...



“the **Quality of Life** of any Nation cannot be expected to be more than the **Quality of the [Higher] Education** of her Citizenry and the intentional investment in the Education System”.
(Oby Ezekwesili, 2013).



Higher education...

- The **most powerful instrument** for growing the wealth and harmony:
 - lays a foundation for sustained economic growth and development
 - generates and adapts knowledge
 - produces qualified human capital
 - promotes international cooperation, and
 - improves competitiveness in the global knowledge based economy.



Contextual Turbulence



Lack of appreciation

“A quick look at the world... shows that ALL the developed countries have massive and strong educational institutions while the under-developed [especially Africa] are bedevilled with perennial lack of the appreciation for the need to take Education serious”
(Oby Ezekwesili, 2013).



Lack of appreciation

Several facets, particularly in the 1980s & 1990s. E.g.:

- Low political priority
- Disempowering political control
- Resource (public funding) starvation



Low political priority

- World Bank/UNESCO orthodoxies (in structural adjustment programmes era):
 - Avoid public funding of tertiary education
 - Focus on early childhood, primary and secondary education.
- Many Govts in Africa began to explore 'cost-sharing schemes' for tertiary education



- The orthodoxy changed in favour of tertiary education, more clearly from 2005

World Bank has incorporated High Education within its Africa Action Plans: building capabilities for growth and competitiveness – particular, technological catch-up).



Disempowering political control (Nigerian example)

- Centralisation of authority
- Arbitrariness in decision without consultation
- Block funding through National Universities Commission
- Weakening of academic freedom



Resource starvation

“State funding: race to the bottom”





“Africa is the **only region** in the world that has experienced a [disturbing] **decrease in the volume of current public expenditure per student**”

(World Bank, 2010)



Africa: decline illustration

Public expenditure per tertiary student:
% of GDP per capita (World Bank, 2015)

Year	Gross Amount	No of Countries	Average	% Decline
2000	3229.4	8	403.7	-
2005	3732.0	15	248.8	39.4
2010	3400.6	18	188.9	24.1
2013	1371.3	11	124.7	34.0

Total % decline (2000-2013) = 69.1



Consequences

Staffing:

- Universities - finding it increasingly difficult to maintain adequate teaching staff

“Across Africa and disciplines, on average, only 60-70% of the required faculty positions are filled, and in some departments this is only about 30-40%”



... mainly, because lecturers with PhDs (ideal capacity) are limited!

**“About 60 % of lecturers don’t have PhDs and we reject it.”
2012**





Teaching staff-student ratios

Sampled Universities	Ratios
Lagos State University	1:144
University of Abuja	1:122
Kenyatta University	1:65
Moi University	1:47
University of Nairobi	1:36
National University of Singapore	1:12
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	1:9
Harvard University	1:4
Cambridge	1:3



Infrastructure

- Buildings are falling into disrepair
- Teaching equipment is not replenished
- Lecture halls are **overcrowded**

Time wasting

- Staff strikes distort academic years.
 - Nigeria: cumulatively, 33 months were lost in 10 years (2003-13) to **strike action** by university lecturers.
 - Malawi, Kenya and Swaziland: 10,000 lecturers went on strike in 2012.



Convergence of all these?

- Transparency and integrity deficits
- Very weak development-oriented higher education in Africa
 - Low Science, Technology & Innovation
 - Mismatch/inadequate preparation of graduates for market/industry
 - High graduate unemployability, unemployment, underemployment



- Criminality and decadence = rife.

Criminals in the Temple of Learning!!!

“All [except a few?] have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one” (Psalm 14:3)



- The high priests and guardians of our temples are crying out so loud about the desecration of the icons and the values they represent...
- They too, contribute to the malaise
(adapted from Okigbo, 2001)



- Staff and students:
 - present forged certificates, commit admission/exam malpractices, steal, plagiarize, commit cultic racketeering and terrorism
- Administrators:
 - award inflated/phony contracts, rent hit-squads, secure false accreditations, etc)



- Universities in Africa ceased to be true to their own [purpose]
- They became an enclave for criminals (corruption-mongers, touts, terrorists, or miscreants) in academic garbs

Centres for the production of non-leaders and misfits.



They stultify
growth and
development!

There is
TURBULENCE!!!



Taming the Turbulence

Private Intervention



- Private intervention in higher education is not new.
- Has long pedigree in most of the continents
 - Bologna, Oxford, Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, Yale, etc
 - West Africa: Timbuktu University – started as Sankore Madrasah - funded by a wealthy Tuareg woman to **breed leaders that are God fearing, just, honest, trustworthy and of excellent moral character**
 - Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone by Christian Missionary Society



- But, lost momentum to the public system
 - E.g. in 21st Century, of about 15,000 universities worldwide, only about 2070 (13.8%) are private
- Post-Independence **Nigeria**: private intervention struggled for space.
 - 1st generation – abolished by the Military Government in the 1980s
 - Prohibition legislation (Decree) passed
 - Supreme Court ruled in favour of private intervention (Dr Nkaegbu's case); but the **body language** of the Govt was clearly **against** it.



Cinderella met Prince Charming

- Babangida Military Govt lifted the embargo of the previous Government
- Longe Commission Report favoured establishment of private universities under strict minimum standards
 - The first the private universities (Igbiedeon, Babcock and Madonna) took about 7 years to process for approval.
- 1998 National Policy on Education allowed “voluntary agencies, individuals and groups” to establish universities.
- Under President Obasanjo, number of private universities rose from 3 to 41. Today it is **61**.



Performance re the driving forces

“We did not make a mistake”
(Obasanjo, 2015)

- Quality: huge impact, generally
 - Beware of (mis)use of statistics
- Mentoring: reverse re-engineering especially with regard to moral rebirth
- Access: “minimal” but critical



Illustration

Salem University Under My watch



Quality

- University driven by PURPOSE
- Dared to be Different: privileged QUALITY over QUANTITY
- 100 per cent accreditation (full & interim) in the first outing



Mentoring

- Indirect: Support of the National Universities Commission
- Intra-University: E.g. Senate participation for young Academics
- Encounter with a first generation public University
 - “You are to mentor us, not we mentoring you”



Access

- 1st year, admitted over 300 students
 - University College, Ibadan: 104
 - University of Nigeria Nsukka: 220
 - Ahmadu Bello University: 426 (most near graduation with London University degrees)
 - University of Ife (now OAU): 244
- Do not despise humble beginning!



Assessment during ICPC University Systems Review

“Highly impressed with the ‘A’ grade take-off and efforts to lower/eliminate corrupt practices ravaging other universities. We urge the Chancellor and the other officers of the University – Chairman BOT, Chairman Council, and VC to keep up the good work”
(Professor Peter Okebukola, 2012).



Private Intervention

Not Yet Uhuru



Challenges

- Aligning with regulatory regime
- Proprietary engagement
- ‘Publicanisation’
 - Trending towards public university malaise
- Resourcing (funding, faculty, equipment, etc)
- Production of industry-fit graduates



Going forward

- Regulation to be: more standardisation, less 'uniformisation'
- Respect for basic university traditions in the context of private operation discipline
- Checkmate return to moral degeneration
- Political support:
 - tax breaks, mobile student grants, etc (e.g. Australia, Botswana)
- Foster University-Industry Linkages



Going forward

- The Turbulence is Tamable
- A Healthy Private University Sector is Definitely a Potent Factor
- It's about complementing, not dysfunctionally competing efforts



**Thank you for your
attention!**