

The Role of Private Higher Education in Sustainable Development

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1.0 Introduction

I feel highly honoured to be invited to address the 14th International Conference on Private Higher Education in Africa, a regular forum for Proprietors of Private Universities; University Leaders; Policy makers; Researchers; Educational Managers; International Development Partners; National, Regional and International Organisations; and other Stakeholders in Private Higher Education in Africa and other parts of the world.

When I attended and co-organised this conference in 2010 as the Secretary General of the Association of African Universities, I noted the tremendous and commendable effort which St Mary's University, Addis Ababa has continued to put into organising this conference. At that time, in spite of several invitations and extension of the platform for collaboration with various major international and African organisations, very few saw the need to partner with ST Mary's and the AAU to organise this annual conference. My excitement therefore knew no bounds when I saw in the invitation letter to me, that other partners including the African Union Commission (AUC), International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to mention but a few, have now come on board. This is as it should be because the issue of education and development is so critical and fundamental, that it should not be left to just one or two organisations.

This conference could not have come at a more opportune time given the resurgence in the foment for the use of higher education for sustainable development, globally and in particular, the continent of Africa. Let me therefore use this opportunity to congratulate the organisers for winning over a number of partners and to extend the same invitation to others who are yet to consider being a part of this forward-looking partnership to support St Mary's University and the AAU in this regard.

2.0 Recent Imperatives on Higher Education and Sustainable Development

Contemporary developments around the world has shown that the future of anyone region is intricately intertwined with the future of the others. No region or country can develop in isolation

and the inhabitants of planet earth have seen the reason, more than ever before, why galvanised partnership to address sustainability from a common front has become more compelling. Education, and lately higher education has been seen as a veritable answer to the sustainable development issues.

In recent times various global and regional agendas have risen up to the challenge of using education for development.

Higher education has receive recognition in recent time as a panacea for addressing climate change, employability, skills acquisition, entrepreneurship, human capital development and capacity building, gender issues, equity and community services. The literature has it that three main issues are attendant to the use of education for sustainable development. These are **access to higher education** (to allow students who would otherwise be denied educational opportunities to gain access to courses), **equivalence and integrity** of the programmes being studied and **excellence** (the quest for excellence in institutions and the services they offer. As the resolution of these issues continue to dominate the theory and practice of education, many countries, organisations and individuals in the world, especially those developing, including those in Africa, are becoming increasingly attracted to higher form of education.

As a result of the above, several initiatives have emerged as solutions to the issues of sustainable development and higher education. These include the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 2015 United Nations Paris Climate Change Conference called the Conference of Parties 21 (COP21); The Continental Agenda 2063 of the African Union Commission produced in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016).

Furthermore, with specific reference to higher education and sustainable development, a 'High Level Policy Forum which held in Pretoria, South Africa in October 2015, consisting of leaders from universities, colleges, regional, transnational and international associations as well as global networks from Africa, Arab countries, Asia, North America, Oceania and South America identified a series of strategic initiatives and actions aimed at addressing, on a regional basis, key challenges to help meet the sustainable development goals recently adopted by the United Nations in Paris in

September 2015'. The Forum pointed to the 'issues of equity in terms of access to and success in higher education, the skills gap and the need for investments in life-long learning as needing urgent and serious attention.

The High Level Policy Forum stressed that "meeting the sustainable development goals requires real investment and innovation in higher education – business as usual will not produce the breakthroughs in social and economic development the world needs. Innovation in how we deliver education as well as what that education is focused upon are needed for all of our futures".

The Forum, which built on previous summits in Bali and Paris and the declarations at Incheon and Qingdao, developed preliminary action plans for each region of the world aimed at leveraging higher education to help achieve sustainable development worldwide. In doing so, The Forum stressed as critical the engagement of higher education in the construction of a global vision and pathway for Education 2030. The Forum further reminded us that 'with societies moving from a post-industrial information society to a knowledge economy, higher education, as a knowledge producer, has become a major force in the emerging global knowledge society.' The conclusions reached at the Pretoria meeting formed part of the Framework for Action Education 2030 adopted by UNESCO in November 2015 and states in part that "a well-established, properly-regulated tertiary education system supported by technology".

Arising from the above, it would be necessary to take a cursory look at the Theme of the conference with a view to unpacking what we really mean by such a heavy duty statement titled **The Role of Private Higher Education in Sustainable Development.**

3.0 Education and Development

There is no gainsaying the fact that Education is the propelling power of any development in any nation or community. Whether political, socio-economic and other forms of development, no nation can make any appreciable progress without recourse to education which is the pivot on which all development sit. History is replete with the account of how nations have used education to directly raise the level of the living conditions of the citizenry of a nation, catered for their economy and drastically improve the other sectors. As succinctly stated by Acemoglu and

Robinson (2012), there is a clear relationship between a country's institutional governance frameworks, economic policies, incentive structures on the one hand, and its economic progress on the other hand as determined by the education offered its people. The lack of appreciable development in Africa as compared with other continents of the world is easily adduced to the low level of attention given to education.

The emergence of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed upon by member states at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which held from 20-22 June, 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (popularly known as Rio+20) is, in my mind, to replace the MDGs which really did not fully solve the problems of Africa. The SDGs, as a major outcome of the Rio+20 Conference, will serve as the post 2015 development agenda of the world. It was decided in the Rio+20 document, *The Future We Want*, to establish an "*inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process open to all stakeholders, with a view to developing global sustainable development goals to be agreed by the General Assembly*".

A 'Common African Position (CAP) on the post-2015 development agenda' has been drawn to be debated in the forthcoming July 2015 3rd International Conference on Financing for Development holding in Addis Ababa. The CAP 'takes into account a blend of finance sources. These include improving traditionally low domestic tax collection rates, staunching the flow of illicit flight capital and recovering stolen assets, tapping global financial markets, stepping up intra-African trade, South-South cooperation and public-private partnerships.'

The Common African Position has as its pillars the follow:

- Structural economic transformation and inclusive growth
- Science, technology and innovation
- People-centred development
- Environmental sustainability, natural resources management and disaster risk management
- Peace and security
- Finance and partnerships

Donald Kaberuka (May, 2015), in his valedictory speech as the outgoing President, to the annual general meeting of the AfDB has perfectly summarised the CAP and how finance and partnerships should interplay in the dreams to fully develop Africa. He says that SDGs will be largely funded

through economic growth and transformation; through trade and investments; through sustained domestic efforts; domestic resource mobilisation; local capital markets; minimising illicit flows; better financial management; leveraging natural resources; and of course, smarter use of aid". The CAP must be used as a veritable instrument for educational transformation of Africa.

Indeed it is on record that, in the 80's, the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programme sold to Africa and other developing countries was for higher education to be relegated to the background or indeed discarded and instead to focus and give priority attention to basic and primary education only. As discussed by Samoff & Carrol (2004) and reviewed by Obanya (2006) the structural adjustment emphasised

- Priority to basic education, as Africa's 'genuine area of need'
- Considerable reduction in funding for higher education, as it has a low level of 'social rates of return'.
- Abolition of all forms of 'subsidies' to higher education, based on the same 'social rates of return' logic.
- Introduction of all forms of 'user fees' , since government must channel its resources elsewhere.
- Structural adjustments within the higher education sector – a check on 'resource-intensive' programmes, rationalisation of staff, students, and facilities, etc
- Decay in facilities, as the foreign exchange to maintain and update them became scarce and as government funding was getting less and less.
- A steady decline in the volume of funding of universities, as government budgets for education steadily declined (public recurrent expenditure per student was reported to have declined from \$6,461 in 1975 to \$2,365 in 1983).

For all the sectors to develop adequately, there must be the abundance of well developed human capital to power them. Education is the manure which fertilises human capital development. Unfortunately, the commentary on education in Africa has not been very encouraging.

In terms of funding in Education and enrolment numbers, African appears to be doing well. For example, The World Bank report of 2009 informs us that between 2005 and 2007, African countries expended more funds on education more than most regions of the world. Enrolment in tertiary education has grown faster in sub-Saharan Africa than any other region over the last four decades. While there were less than 200,000 tertiary students enrolled in the region in 1970, by 2011 the number rose to about 5.1 million.

As reported by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) for tertiary education in Africa grew at an average rate of 8.6% for each year between 1970 and 2008 – compared to a global average of 4.6% over the same period. Out of 26 African countries reported on by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics in 2010, only the Central African Republic reduced spending on education. As a result of these investments, remarkable progress has been made in educational development in sub-Saharan Africa. Between 2000 and 2008, Primary school enrolment in Africa increased by 48% – from 87 million to 129 million – between 2000 and 2008. Enrolment in pre-primary, secondary and tertiary education also grew by more than 60% during the same period. In spite of all these, the educational system in Africa is weak in quality and quantity indicators. Hence the inability of countries in our continent to develop the human capital needed for the emancipation of the continent.

Apart from these gains reported above, Africa is under performing on a number educational indicators. For instance, the region has 43% of the world's out of school children. Nearly 29 million children of primary-school age were not in school in sub-Saharan Africa in 2011, and 54% of them were girls. In sub-Saharan Africa, about 10 million children drop out of primary school every year. It is estimated that 38% of Africa's adults, about 167 million people, lack basic literacy skills. Out of this number 60% are women. While about 1.9 million teachers was needed in classrooms by 2015 to achieve Universal Primary Education in the whole of Africa, 1.1 million of them will be needed in sub-Saharan Africa alone (Obasanjo, 2014).

At the higher education level, the 37th General Conference of UNESCO held in October 2013, while observing an increase in access was grossly dissatisfied with the quality of graduates. A recent UNESCO survey indicated that there are FIVE main factors contributory to the low quality in higher education in Africa. These include depreciating quality of teachers; research capacity deficit; inadequacies in facilities for teaching, learning and research; lack of a regional quality assurance framework and accreditation system; and slow adoption of ICT for delivering quality higher education including distance education.

What goes on in the education sector and at all levels of education does not show that our educational institutions are creating any values at all. Indeed the values which our higher

institutions had between the 60s and the early 80th have long disappeared and all we have is a skeleton of what excellence represented in those days.

Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, has come a long way. From days of colonialism, slavery and slave trade and, zero infrastructural development as per western indicators to a continent with 54 independent countries, regional economic blocks, modest strides in educational development and the economic emancipation of the people.

In spite of all the strides mentioned above, Africa is still far from getting out of the woods. The continent is heavily threatened by economic strangulation; political instability; conflicts and terrorism; fragility of some of our nations; endemic corruption; geopolitical imbalances and hatred; huge capacity development needs; extreme poverty; a preponderance of unemployed, underemployed and unemployable youths.

The data available indicate that as at January 2015:

- over 10 million seek employment annually and that 60 per cent of the unemployed are youths.
- at least half of the 1 billion people are still illiterate. Africa has the world's highest illiteracy rates.
- Sub-Saharan Africa is home to at least 30 per cent of the world's poorest people.
- Africa has at least six out of 10 most unequal countries in the world.

In order to survive the 21st century development imperatives, some of the urgent needs of Sub-Saharan Africa include, but not limited to, the following:

- Building of very strong economic foundation;
- Economic integration regionally and continentally;
- Massive job creation;
- Embarking on effective food security measures;
- Health and environmental provisions;
- Innovations and creativity buoyed by education;
- Energy reforms and directing attention to combating climate change; and
- Massive investment in education, especially tertiary education.

4.0 The Africa We Need:

Africa must pull itself out of the depressing situation of an average GDP per capita of less than \$350 in a world economy where the global GDP per capita is about \$950. Dr Akinwumi Adesina, the President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), has opined that we need a

“new Africa with prosperous, sustainable and inclusive growth; one that is peaceful, secure and united, regionally integrated and globally competitive”.

The African Union Commission/the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)/the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) in a document called, *The Africa We want says* by the year 2063 there should be ‘created an Africa of our dreams that is prosperous, healthy, vigorous, creative and exciting’ (Versi, 2015).

To achieve this, as has been done in other parts of the world, Africa must re-focus on using higher education as the fundamental and virile instrument for continental, regional and national development.

4.0 The Regional Status of Higher Education

According to the World Bank 2015 State of Education in Africa Report 2015, a report card on the progress, opportunities and challenges confronting the African education sector, “Higher education yields significant benefits for both African young people and society, as a whole: better employment opportunities and job prospects, improved quality of life, and greater economic growth. And investments in higher education pay off. Returns to investments in higher education in Africa are 21 percent—the highest in the world. As the world becomes more technological, the school curriculums in Africa need to evolve to provide the right education and training for jobs in today’s workforce. A severe mismatch still exists between the skills of young African workers and the skills that employers need for today’s global workforce”.

But the Status Report on Africa is not at all impressive.

The Report listed the following as plaguing the higher education system in Africa.

- i. Only **6 percent of young people** in sub-Saharan Africa are enrolled in higher education institutions compared to the global average of 26 percent.
- ii. Overcrowding in lecture halls at some Africa universities is becoming all too common. Statistics show that on average there are **50 percent more students per professor** at African universities compared to the global average.
- iii. In 2008, about 223,000 students from sub-Saharan Africa were enrolled in tertiary education outside of their home countries, representing **7.5 percent of the total global number of students** who study outside of their home country.

The cheering pieces of news are that

- iv. that universities in many African countries are experiencing a surge in their enrollment. Between 2000 and 2010, **higher education enrollment more than doubled**, increasing from 2.3 million to 5.2 million.
- v. Private higher education is one of the fastest growing education sectors in Africa. In 2009, there were around **200 public universities and 468 private higher education institutions** on the African continent. Comparatively, there are 1700 public universities and nearly 2500 private universities (4- and 2-year universities) in the U.S. alone. We shall revisit, in detail, the issue of private higher education in Africa as part of the unpacking of the Theme of this conference.

Information on current situation is that we have about 10 million in the various institutions of higher learning but African higher education sector needs about 456,000 teachers by 2020. This, in some way, must account for the less-than-successful achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in relation to Education in Africa.

The role of higher education in the growth and development of Africa cannot be over emphasised.

Higher education

- remains the fulcrum upon which all other developments (be it health, agriculture, and infrastructure, etc) rest.
- is the key to diversify growing economies
- builds the human resource base; produces the employable graduates and professionals; reinforces the platform to combat diseases,
- reduces energy costs and address climate change; and
- provides the compelling argument for seeking greater participation from private sector in the collaborative development of the continent.

However, while all the afore-listed are essential for the effective development of Africa, there are enormous challenges facing the higher education sector in the realisation of the roles itemised above. The challenges

- the need to expand access, improve quality, ensure equity, provide massive access to tertiary education,
- direct serious attention to innovation and creativity,
- rejuvenate the obsolete curricula in higher education,
- replace the old dilapidated/build the new infrastructure, and inject huge funds.

5.0 The Rise of Private Higher Education in Africa

Within the past 25 years, Africa has witnessed a gigantic leap in the expansion of private provision of higher education in sub-Saharan Africa.

Although higher education emerged in Africa during the colonial period, Universities emerged as a symbol of independence, self-reliance and national pride. During the clamour for independence in Africa, there was a strong move towards public universities and a national system of education. But the monopoly of public sector institutions in higher learning came to a halt from the late 1980s to early 1990s in Africa and private sector institutions emerged as viable alternative to higher education. The following reasons are accountable:

- Deregulation policies under the structural adjustment programmes when African governments were advised that the response to the huge demand for higher education should be increased private sector involvement in higher education.
- Fiscal incapacity (lack of funds) of Africa countries to expand higher education through public universities
- Sharp increase in the students' enrolment at all levels and the inability of the public institutions to rapidly respond to the heavy pressure in the demands for more admission places in universities.

- Demand for employment-oriented courses and programmes to support the growth and development of nations.
- The globalisation process and the growth of knowledge economy.
- The effect and spread of technology and the rise of borderless education.

Private universities are universities not operated by governments, although many receive tax breaks, public student loans, and grants. Private universities are subject to government regulations. This is in contrast to public universities and national universities. Some universities are non-profit and some are for-profit.

At present, the private sector, is the fastest expanding segment of higher education in Africa. In terms of numbers of universities, private universities now surpass public universities in Africa. As at 2003, Africa had 63 private universities. In 2015, although the records are not accurate, we had over 250.

According to the 2009 World Bank report *Accelerating Catch-up: Tertiary Education for Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa*, the number of private universities and colleges, including for-profit and not-for-profit institutions, rose to about 468 over the same period. As today, the number of private Universities in Africa stands at around 950. The report also says that about 53 per cent of the students in African private universities are found in francophone countries, with the largest numbers of institutions found in Senegal (41) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (39). In the anglophone countries, South Africa has over 85, Nigeria has about 79, Ghana has about 15. Arguably, East Africa enjoys the fastest rate of growth in Africa even though it terms of numbers, West Africa has the highest number of private universities in Africa.

While the emergence of private universities has increased the proportion of African undergraduates that are in higher education. But their numbers are still far lower than those attending public higher institutions. According to the World Bank 24 per cent of all tertiary enrolments in Africa are in private universities. The United Nations Institute for Educational Planning (2013) observed that “Private higher education has played an important role in expanding the sector.”

In general, the private universities are small in size, and offer market-friendly courses in a limited number of programme areas.

6.0 Type, Ownership, Financing and Management of Private Universities In East Africa

There are basically two major types of private higher education institutions in Africa

- (i) foreign (off-shore model) very well known examples are in Mauritius, Kenya, South Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroun and Senegal, to mention but a few, and
- (ii) national (extension of private sector involvement to provide educational facilities).

Some foreign private universities operate like multinationals, e.g. the American University System or the United States International University (USIS) Kenya.

While some private universities are not-for-profit most of them are for-profit ventures. Also while most of the private universities in Africa are secular, many of them are faith-based. Many of the faith-based private universities are Christian while a good number are established by Moslem organisations. There is the Islamic University in Uganda and at least 3 Islamic universities in Nigeria. Some private universities in Africa are owned by powerful politicians and educational entrepreneurs.

Beyond the initial investment by the proprietors, tuition fees form the backbone of many private universities. For-profit private universities operate like an enterprise generating profit. The for-profit universities levy fees on the basis of cost recovery, and to generate profit. Their fees are sometimes ten times higher than in public universities.

The religious universities, in general, levy a lower rate of fees and are highly subsidised. Fees charged by not-for profit universities are relatively low and affordable by many of their students.

Kenya was one of the few countries where private universities have a longer history and co-existed with public universities. The Kamunge Report of 1988 recommended the establishment of private and Harambe institutions. Senegal passed a law in 1991, Uganda, Benin and Nigeria in 1990s.

Many countries have centralised regulatory and accreditation and qualifications frameworks all universities including private universities must conform with. Private University registration and establishment has well laid down-regulation that are now being rigorously followed in many of the East African countries, and in Africa as a whole.

There are still a large number of private institutions which operate illegally in many African countries.

The courses/programmes offered in private universities in Africa reflect commercial consideration or a religious orientation. In general, the for-profit institutions cater for private business enterprises and offer courses that are market-friendly and in great demand. They offer courses in areas requiring less investment in terms of infrastructure and equipment.

7.0 Contribution of Private Higher Education Institutions to the Development of Education in Africa

1. A major argument in support of the emergence of private universities in Africa is that they contribute immensely to expanding access, thereby tremendously meeting the unmet demands for university education.
2. Produced needed human resources to service some critical sectors of the economy.
3. Many students have lower-level academic profile than those in public universities, but their outcome academic performance, in general, is better.
4. Low drop-out rates and high graduation rates.
5. Highly motivated students and high employment rates.
6. Changed the concept of university education from a supermarket model to a boutique model offering limited but well catered for courses.
7. Ensuring continuity in university work, as there have been no disruptions due to staff and student strikes
8. Going beyond bare academics by dwelling on students' personality development
9. Eliminating cultism among students, thus ensuring peace on campuses.

8.0 People's Concerns about Private Educational Institutions in Africa

While the continent recognises the contributions that private higher educational institutions are making to education and development, many discerning people, groups, organisations and

governments continue to raise issues about the quality, quantity and integrity of these contributions. Some of these issues pertain to the:

1. Inadequacies in the legal provisions for the establishment of private universities.
2. Quality and number of staff and the preponderance of part-time staff who moonlight.
3. Lack of or limited infrastructure and equipment especially for STEM based programmes.
4. High cost of fees making private education unaffordable to a large segment of the population. It creates its own elitism.
5. Academic interest and courses not necessarily motivated by national philosophy but private needs and financial considerations.
6. Courses requiring less investment in terms of infrastructure and other facilities.
7. Emphasis placed on teaching as the main function carried out by many of the private universities to the utter neglect of research.
8. Contribution by private institutions in some countries, to weakening public universities through student and staff attrition/poaching.
9. Rapid expansion of the higher education system which reduces the quality of teaching, research and promotional criteria.
10. Low salaries in public universities as compared with private universities.
11. little evidence of innovation
12. emphasis has been on low-investment and employment-related programmes
13. fees are not affordable to average families
14. the concentration of private universities are situated in the same educationally 'advanced' zone of the country, they seem to be accentuating geo-political educational imbalance
15. Above all, since most of these are small-student-body universities, they have not contributed to expanding access in any significant manner.

9.0 How Private Educational Institutions Can Contribute to Sustainable Development: The Way Forward

Granted that the private universities have made some modest contributions to educational development in Africa, how can they really be regarded as contributing meaningfully to sustainable development when in fact people have doubts and concerns about the quality, quantity and integrity of their contributions? Private Universities are in Africa to stay and no one can wish them away by any stretch of imagination no matter how extensive.

Probing questions, such as the following to pick but a few to illustrate how serious the doubts about private higher education's usefulness in Africa, are being asked across the length and breadth of the continent:

“Are the continent’s for-profits exploiting students or have they helped to widen access?”

Chris Havergal

“Is the growth of the private sector eroding universities’ role in the advancement of the continent?”

“Has the private sector become too prevalent in sub-Saharan higher education?”

“Are standards too poor, and governments too weak to regulate?”

“And can universities that focus on the individual rather than the societal benefits of higher education contribute to the development that the continent so desperately needs?”

Adebayo Olukoshi, Director of the United Nations’ African Institute for Economic Development and Planning)

“Do private institutions, particularly for-profit ones, tend to offer courses that require limited infrastructure investment and are cheaper to deliver?”

“Is the trend of private institutions development likely to provide the knowledge and core skills needed if African nations are to boost competitiveness and growth”.

The World Bank

“Will programmes such as medicine and engineering at public universities be placed in a vulnerable position by the growth in private provision?”

Rajani Naidoo, Professor in higher education management at the University of Bath

My take on this is that we can make them better, more development oriented and more responsive to the needs of the society with a view to making them very useful and productive partners of sustainable development. Several things need to be done by organisations, governments and the private higher institutions themselves. In view of time and space, I would only discuss SEVEN issues that will broadly reflect the views and concerns expressed as stated in Section 8.0 above to indicate how they could be made to contribute to sustainable development in Africa.

9.1 Reclaiming Africa Through Massive Investment in our Youth

Africa has come a long way. As the cradle of human origin and civilisation, the continent went through tough bouts of colonisation, the wanton carting away of its natural resources, slave trade and slavery, partitioning of Africa and the seemingly hidden conspiracy by the world to deny the continent and her people of their rightful place in the global development and access to and fair participation in world matters.

It is bad enough that Africa is suffering from externally invoked obstacles to development and misrepresentation of what and who Africa is. But it is even worse that Africa is also being destroyed through internally imposed debilitating factors such as bad governance, sit-tight politically elected officers, corruption in high and low places, ineffectual economic policies, weak central and coordinating African Union, and the conscious efforts of Africans to plunge Africa into another round of slave trade through human trafficking, unregulated sales of our natural resources, and brain drain.

The good news is that a large, albeit silent majority, are confident that all is not lost. Africa can and shall rise again and rule the world. This is what is quietly scaring the world! But the way out is not going to be easy.

We must all firmly believe and walk the talk with regard to three major robust pivots on which the salvation of Africa sits. First, that education and especially higher education, is the bedrock of all developments in and for Africa. Second, that today and the future belong to the youth of Africa who must take the reigns of their future in their hands. Third, that we should properly harness the strength of our youth and channel them appropriately and effectively towards reclaiming Africa. The right way to begin, from our perspective, is to get our youth to engage in constant conversation about the future of Africa and what we can do within and using the platform of education as a veritable instrument. Unfortunately, cultism is sweeping through our campuses in Africa as fire easily guts thatched huts in our rural communities. There is no future for Africa if organisations of well-meaning African intellectuals do not rise up solidly against cultism. Private Universities must consciously direct programmes towards the needs of the youth and beef up their focus on the total development of the person. Filling the skills gap and tailoring academic

and entrepreneurship programmes to address the massive unemployment of the youth must be on the front burner for private higher education institutions. Graduate unemployment is reaching a pandemic level in Africa and as the British Council Report of 2015 said ‘nearly a quarter of Nigerian graduates of working age were not in a job and it takes five years on average for a Kenyan graduate to secure a job, according to the report, *Can Higher Education Solve Africa’s Job Crisis? Understanding Graduate Employability in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Private Higher education institutions can make a mark by grossly reducing the graduate unemployment issues in Africa.

9.2 Developing a culture of sustainability

Developing a culture of sustainability underlines the importance of balancing economic efficiency, social equity, and environmental accountability. It appears that in this 21st Century everything must have sustainability in it. It ranges from sustainable development to sustainable economic growth, sustainable communities to sustainable energy production.

We must recognise that no form of governance can succeed if there is no common bond between those who govern and those who are being governed. That means the concepts of democracy and sustainability are ‘both absolutely indispensable, and further that one cannot be realized without the other’. However, we also believe that the concept of democracy must be reformulated based on commonly accepted principles, such as freedom, equity, justice, and also sustainability.

To make excellent progress in our race to institutionalise corporate governance in our public sector matters, we must examine the way to incorporate sustainable value creation (as shown in Figure 1) into our journey towards sustainable development goals which the United Nations has recently adopted for global development.

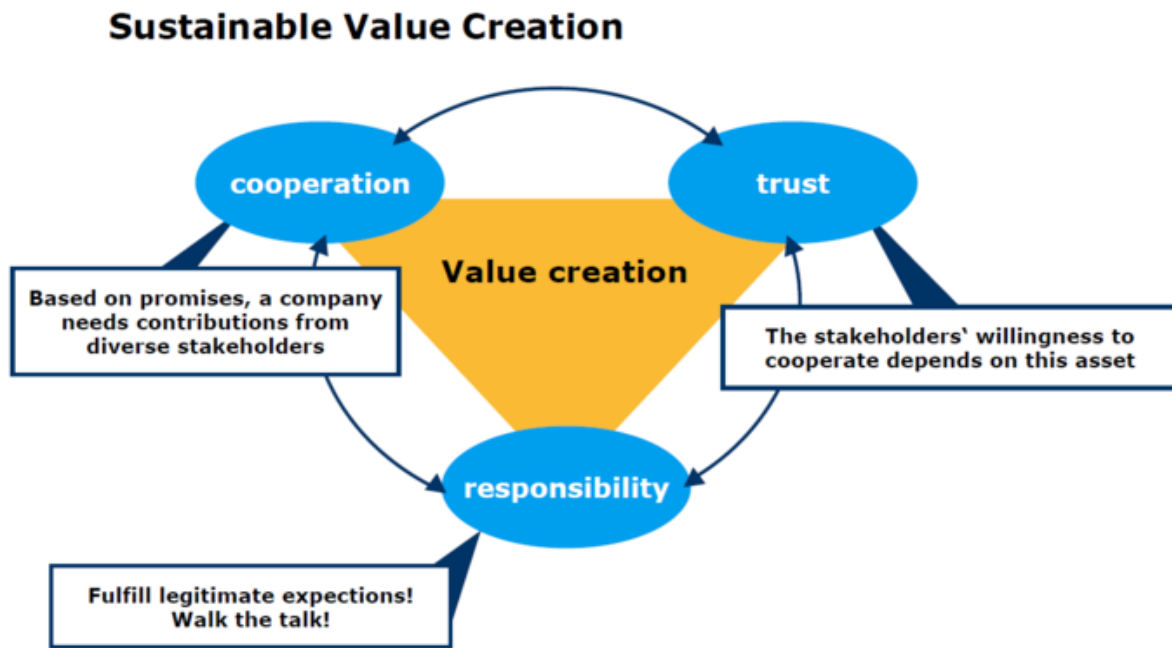


Figure 1: Sustainable Value Creation

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be embraced by private higher institutions as well as the public universities in developing the various curricula to be offered in the universities of the 21st century.

Sustainable development depends on good governance and good governance also depends on appropriate institutions. Formulation of policies cannot ensure effective implementation in the absence of good governance, which in turn cannot be achieved in the absence of appropriate institutions. Hence, sustainable development requires good policies and effective provision of institutions conducive to good governance. Good governance is conditional to achieving sustainability. Sustainability is 'a higher-order social goal or fundamental property of natural or human systems'. It can also be conceived as a fundamental principle to guide human conduct with respect to natural systems, especially as taught in our universities.

9.3 Embed Value Creation in our Higher Education

Given the enormity of the challenges facing education in Africa and the huge investment needed, financing development, as appropriately and sufficiently as it deserves, is the only way to guarantee sustainability.

But the financing requirements of Africa continues to grow very large in the face of disappearing donor support, global economic meltdown and serious crisis, unacceptable dwindling local revenue levels that is punctuated by wanton corrupt, and fraudulent practices.

The only sensible thing to embark upon now by African private universities, is to ensure that we integrate our education, which is a means towards human capital development, with value creation. African private higher education institutions must be entrepreneurial in outlook and must create and deliver something of value that other people want or need at a price they're willing to pay, in a way that satisfies the customer's needs and expectations.

Charging exorbitant fees by private higher education institutions in order to be seen as exortic or elitist can no more be justified in a new system which seeks to pursue sustainable development through meeting the massive unmet demands for higher education in Africa. Private higher education in Africa must be radically transformed into one which seeks to promote:

- Accountability – being answerable for decisions and having meaningful mechanisms in place to ensure adherence to all applicable laws, regulations and standards.
- Transparency / openness – having clear roles, responsibilities and procedures for making decisions and exercising power, and act with integrity.
- Stewardship – enhancing the value of entrusted public assets.
- Efficiency – applying the best use of resources to further the aims of the organization.
- Leadership – promoting an entity-wide commitment to good governance starting from the top.



Figure 2: Value Creation and Sustainable Development

9.4 Enhancing the Carrying Capacity of all Universities especially Private Universities.

Although the private universities claim that they are meeting the unmet demands for higher education, the total number they admit hardly make a dent in the large number seeking to go to higher education institutions. No country's situation illustrates this more than the Nigerian higher education landscape. On an annual basis, a total of about 1,5 million secondary school students sit for the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board examination to gain admission to universities. However, only about 25 per cent of this huge number gets admitted into the 143 universities in Nigeria. This is partially due to what is called the carrying capacity of face-to-face classroom traditional higher education system.

The breakdown of the 2016 JAMB applications is in Table 1 as follows:

Type of Institution	Number of Applicants	Percentage of the Total
Universities	1,557,017	97.78

Colleges of Education	17,673	1.11
Polytechnics	17,584	1.10
NID	31	0.01
Total	1,592,305	100.00

Table 1: Breakdown of 2016 JAMB Applications according to Type of Higher Institution in Nigeria

It should be observed that the percentage of applicants preferring to go to the University instead of the Polytechnic and College of Education is on the increase. In 1996, 69.7 Per cent, 28.1 per cent and 2.2 per cent preferred to go to the University, Polytechnic and College of Education respectively.

There is in fact a worsening situation with the data for 2016 in which 97.78 per cent, 1.11 per cent and 1.10 per cent preferred the University, The Polytechnic and College of Education respectively. Clearly, what the applicants are saying is that almost all of them would prefer to go to the University. If this trend continues, several Polytechnics and Colleges of Education may have to close down. This is unthinkable in a country where we are terribly short of middle level technician and technologists and we are told that we require 1.4 million teachers for the primary and secondary levels.

The breakdown of the 2016 JAMB Applications by Universities is as shown on Table 2 below:

Ranking of Preferences	Type of University				
	Public University		Ranking of Preferences	Private University	
	Name	Ranking of Preferences		Name	No of Applicants
1	University of Ilorin	103,238	1	Covenant University	2,586
2	University of Benin	81,363	2	Afe Babalola University	1,304
3	Ahmadu Bello University	75,383	3	Babcock University	1,248
4	University of Nigeria	65,954	4	Igbinedion University	418
5	Bayero University	64,220	5	Madonna University	370
6	Nnamdi Azikiwe University	61,862	6	Bowen University	329
7	University of Lagos	60,659	7	Al-Qalam University	308
8	University of Ibadan	59,176	8	Baze University	277
9	Obafemi	45,924	9	Bingham	247

	Awolowo University			University	
10	University of Jos	40,366	10	Benson Idahosa University	204
	Total	658,145		Total	7,291

Table 2: Breakdown of 2016 JAMB Applications For the Top Ten of Preferences according to Type of Higher Institution in Nigeria

The Tables above paint a very horrible picture of the top ten preferences (in descending order) in the choice of universities by the applicants who have applied through JAMB to public and private universities. In the Public University category, University of Ilorin is the most sought after while University of the Jos ranks number 10 most sought after. With regard to Private Universities, Covenant University is the number one most preferred university while Benson Idahosa University is the tenth most sought after institution.

In a country of 180 million people with 143 Universities, 95 Polytechnics, 26 Monotechnics and 149 Colleges of Education, the figures of applicants do not reflect that the educational system is taking full advantage of the dividend of demography. The total carrying capacity of all the universities is a paltry sum of 695, 449 (43.67%) of the total admission applications of 1,592,305.

The data in Table 2, indicates that the private higher education institutions hardly admit a total of more than 10,000 students every year whereas, the top ten public universities admitted about 658,145 students. So the question is are private universities actually admitting as much as they should or could? Africa must take advantage of its enormous demography to ensure that every citizen willing and able has unfettered access to higher education. Each private university should be made to double their intake in order to reduce the huge number of students who can't get admitted to universities. This will lead to the development of human capital as well as capacity building on a massive scale. This will no doubt boost their contribution towards the realisation of the objectives of the sustainable development goals.

9.5 Extend the Frontiers of Community Service for Private Universities

Tertiary institutions in Africa have always chorused the tripod of teaching, research and community service. But the community service and research in private universities have very little

to write home about. Private higher educational institutions in Africa should not be allowed to follow their narrow interest which ultimately leads to profit making. They must genuinely engage the community to find lasting irreversible solutions to poverty eradication, people-centred and planet-sensitive agenda to address the universal challenges of the 21st century: promoting sustainable development, supporting job creating growth, protecting the environment and providing peace, security, justice, freedom and equity at all levels.

Economic growth alone is not sufficient to ensure social justice, equity and sustained prosperity for all people. The private universities academic community must pursue transformational agenda that create jobs, develop infrastructure, raise productivity, improve competitiveness and promote sustainable production and consumption. It should tap into the potential presented by a larger, more educated and better skilled workforce, new technologies and innovation, and the expansion of national, regional and global markets. We must abandon analogue thinking and activities in the 21st century of digital development. Unfortunately even among our academic group very many still operate in the analogue environment when our students have transformed themselves into a digital ecosystem.

9.6 Accreditation System to be entrenched in private Higher educational institutions

A handful of African countries have a tradition of centralised regulatory and accreditation and qualifications frameworks all universities including private universities compulsorily conform with. Private University registration and establishment has well laid down-regulations that are rigorously applied in some African countries. Many African countries do not have any accreditation, regulatory and or quality assurance systems in place. As a result many private universities lack proper accreditation and quality assurance by national authorities. The quality of higher education is known to be higher in countries that have an established strong regulatory and accreditation systems. As a rule, in order to efficiently contribute to sustainable development, all private higher institutions must be required to submit their programmes and course to some systems of accreditation and regulation on a regular basis. Even in countries with accreditation and regulatory systems, some for-profit illegal private universities still operate without their programmes and courses being accredited. Nigeria is out to enforce its regulatory systems to the

letter and hence publishes on a monthly basis a list of about 60 “illegal” universities that it had shut down in recent years.

9.7 The Massification and Democratisation of Higher Education as per the African Higher Education Summit

It is obvious from all we have discussed that for sustainable development Africa governments needs to encourage a large-scale mass higher education and to enhanced the open and distance learning system robust enough to allow for a comprehensive and cost-effective use of the infrastructure to be laid. This will guarantee that the massification of higher education and the democratisation of access to tertiary education, as agreed upon by the African Higher education Summit of 2015 are successfully and efficiently implemented.

If we massively open up access to higher education and as mentioned above, all universities (including private universities, are encouraged to become dual mode, they will be seen to be fulfilling the policy thrust of the African countries as stated in the Agenda 2063 document and the High level Forum recommendations.

As far back as 2004, continental-wide discussion on the issue of access to higher education was held at the All Africa Ministers of Education conference on open and distance learning which took place in Cape Town, South Africa. The discussion which was carried on by subsequent Ministers of Education conferences since then seemed to have come to some significant resolutions at An African Higher Education Summit held recently in 2015 in Dakar, Senegal to deliberate upon how to move higher education forward in Africa. The Summit noted an “Unprecedented growth” in enrolment in African higher education institutions which has risen markedly over the last 15 years. It was reviewed that enrolment has grown approximately 170% from 3.53 million students in 1999 (2.25 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 1.28 million in North Africa) to 9.54 million in 2012 (6.34 million in sub-Saharan and 3.2 million in North Africa). In spite of this, the Summit stressed the need to keep pace with the continuing growth in student enrolment in African universities in order to absorb the increasing demand for higher education. In this regard, the massive establishment and use of ODL in higher education becomes a necessity rather than an option for Africa countries. In view of this astronomical development in higher education enrolment in Africa, the Summit strongly suggested that “It is therefore critical to:

- Develop a high quality, massive, vibrant, diverse, differentiated, innovative, autonomous and socially responsible higher education sector that will be a driving force [in achieving the continent’s long-term development goals].
- Produce the human capital required for the continent’s inclusive and sustainable development, democratic citizenship, and repositioning as a major global actor.”

The summit’s action plan, which directly points to the need to embrace ODL, seems to have as its focus the achievement of the goals of the Agenda 2063 which is a collaborative initiative of the AUC, UNECA and NEPAD.

10.0 Conclusion

In a globalised 21st century technology-dependent world, sub-Saharan Africa requires a progressive education that lives on knowledge economy, and an academic community that would enforce national and continental regulatory frameworks including professional ethics. Private higher education in Africa, like their public counterparts, must develop multi-skilled and multi-tasked educated persons who subscribe to advancing their careers through research, within the overall terrain of comprehensive transformation of Africa. The only way to the future is for African governments to engage the private sector and willing individuals and organisations in partnerships to finance higher education.

I agree with the World Bank report (2015) mentioned earlier which states that African countries will reap substantial socio-economic benefits from increased investments in improving higher education and developing strong curriculums for a knowledge-based global economy. A commitment to improving private higher education will give the next generation of leaders an opportunity to create a better future for themselves, their community, and their country.

Finally, the major issue being argued for in this paper is that private universities in Africa should take responsibility for quality enhancement in higher education, both at the institutional and at the systems levels. It is the duty of African governments to support all universities, using whatever formula, with the enabling conditions, including policy and funding. Once these are done, private higher education institutions would well be on their way to contribute to sustainable development on the continent.

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