

Editorial:

Private Universities, Moral and Religious Education and the World of Work in Africa.

In the last thirty years, among other things, seven major issues have been at the forefront of African universities-

- Access
- Curriculum relevance/ Curriculum irrelevance
- Funding
- Globalization, demands of donor countries and organizations and international agencies together with the technology revolution
- Quality assurance
- Brain drain
- HIV/AIDS, Sustainable development

In the USA and Western Europe, the history of higher education has been one of continued expansion and access and now in the USA, there is universal access (Trow, 2000). On the other hand, in Sub-Sahara Africa , there is the perennial problem of access in many countries, including Nigeria (Etim, 2009; Okebukola, 2008 ; Okeke, 2009; Olaleye, 2012 and Varghese, 2004). Etim indicated that although the more students are being admitted into Nigerian universities, the issue of access continues to be a problem (p.294). According to Okebukola, the higher education participation rate for Nigeria was less than 10 percent while Okeke pointed out that between 5.2 percent to 15.3 percent of students who applied for admission into Nigerian universities were admitted for the years 1998/99 to 2006/2007. Kanyip (2013) in a study on the situation reported on the corruption and barriers associated with access to Nigerian universities. Data presented by the World Bank (nd), showed that the percentage of tertiary school enrolment for selected Sub- Sahara African countries ranged from one percent in Niger to 12 percent in Ghana and 20 percent in South Africa.

Part of this limited access has led to calls for more universities to help produce the necessary manpower, expand on the educated citizenry to encourage democratization and sustainability and , ensure a less restive youth since they will be in the universities studying instead of on the streets advocating for one thing or the other. One way to open access was to allow private organizations, enterprises and individuals to open and manage universities. According to Arikewuyo (2013), private universities have become popular in several countries including Benin, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Ghana. Varghese (2004) has given some

history of private universities and the continued growth in terms of number by country in sub-Saharan Africa. In many African countries, private universities has become synonymous with access to higher education and opening up opportunities for skill development.

In June 2014, I was privileged to visit and run a workshop and collaborate with colleagues at Ahfad University for Women, a private university in Sudan geared to the education and empowerment of women. Vol 5 of this Journal has two papers related to private universities in different parts of Africa.

The first paper in this issue by Adepoju titled The Millennium Development Goals and Private Sector Participation in University Education : The Case of Nigeria examined private sector contribution in the provision of university education in Nigeria. The paper advocated government support for private sector participation in the provision of university education in Nigeria so that the Millennium Goals can be met. The second paper, The effect of cost of education on choice of private universities in Uganda by Mande and Nakayita, showed that cost influenced the choice of university by international students seeking to attend private universities in Uganda.

In the third paper, An Assessment of Moral and Religious Education in the General Studies Programmes of Nigerian Universities, Makinde appraised the Nigerian National Universities Commissions minimum standards on general studies and the presence or lack thereof of the moral and religious education in the general studies curriculum of selected universities. The author found out that moral and religious education was lacking in the general studies curriculum of many of the universities. The author concluded that the focus in Nigerian universities in terms of the curriculum should not only be on science and technology and entrepreneurship studies but also on moral and religious education. In the final paper in this issue, Mahama in Coping among Young Adults Transitioning out of the University in Ghana: a moderated mediation investigated graduates and their transition to the world of work and postgraduate studies.

These papers touch at least two of the seven areas mentioned earlier- access, and relevant curriculum. The papers also show continued struggle in African universities in providing a relevant curriculum and a competent work force.

Happy reading.

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