

Higher Christian Universities in Sub-Saharan Africa: Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract:

Scholars of higher education in Africa are in agreement the evolution of private universities is an important and critical stride in the development of education in Africa. These private universities emerged either as complementary or in competition (or both) with public universities. Faith-based or Christian higher universities, as part of these private universities, are a continuation of the ideology that prompted the establishment of Christian mission schools in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa. This paper discusses the impact of Christian higher education in Africa and the internal and external challenges this kind of educational institution is facing. The paper argues that as a major contributor to human development, Christian universities in Africa, should be active in debating educational policies in respective counties in Africa for mutual respect, synergy and collaboration. For private Christian universities in Africa to achieve this, they must form a consortium to galvanise their resources to pursue common goals for sustainability of education in Africa.

The emergence of private universities in most African countries is a recent phenomenon. In Nigeria, for example, private universities evolved due to the chaotic situation in public universities as a result of the enormous expansion of students' enrolment from the 1970s with no equal improvement in facilities and infrastructure. Faith Nguru has provided similar reasons for the establishment of private universities in Kenya.¹ The major cause of the crisis in education in most African countries has been funding. In Nigeria, the Federal Government came up with a policy in the 1970s making education free and compulsory at all levels (at primary and secondary levels) and free at the tertiary level. This was the period of the so-called 'oil boom,' but with dwindling oil revenue, lack of proper economic planning (i.e. neglect of agriculture) and corruption, investment in education shrank. This led to constant closure of schools (especially tertiary institutions) due to strikes by staff and students' riots/demonstrations, brain drain of faculties, dilapidation of facilities and infrastructure and falling standards of education. The World Bank policy on education, which stipulated that African countries did not need many universities, compounded the problem, until it saw reasons to revise its stance. According to Akilagpa Sawyerr, this change of heart started with the World Bank's Report:

World Development Report 1998, "which acknowledged the indispensable role of Africa's universities in the revival of her economies, the Bank has now presented perhaps the most persuasive and cogently argued case for the role of higher education in all forms of development, arguing that "it is doubtful that any developing country could make significant progress toward achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals for education-universal enrollment in primary education and

¹ Faith W. Nguru, "Development of Christian Higher Education in Kenya: an Overview", in Joel Carpenter, *et al*, *Christian Higher Education: A Global Reconnaissance*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2014, pp. 46, 47.

elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education-without a strong tertiary education system”²

Again, in spite of the Nigerian government’s inability to provide good and affordable education especially at the tertiary level, it resisted attempts by private individuals and organisations to set up universities to complement government efforts. This was because of the colonial legacy of not only language of instruction and communication but of government monopoly in the provision of university education, thereby insuring limited access to university education.³ Most universities in both Britain and France, the major colonisers of Africa, are in government’s control. Thus, in Nigeria, the attempts to found private universities from the 1980s were frustrated.⁴ This is why the evolution of private universities in a post-colonial country like Nigeria was nothing short of a revolution. Teferra and Altbach have painted a graphic picture of this post-colonial legacy in some other African countries:

Colonial authorities feared widespread access to higher education. They were interested in training limited numbers of African nationals to assist in administering the colonies. Some colonial powers, notably the Belgians, forbade higher education in their colonies. Others, such as the Spanish and the Portuguese, kept enrollments very small. The French preferred to send small numbers of students from its colonies to study in France. Throughout all of Africa, the size of the academic system was very small at the time of independence... In 1961, the University of East Africa (serving Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda) turned out a total of only 99 graduates for a combined population area of 23 million. Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo), for example, reached independence without a single national engineer, lawyer, or doctor. Between 1952 and 1963, French-speaking Africa produced a mere four graduates in the field of agriculture, while English-speaking Africa turned out 150.⁵

The economic realities made African governments to change their attitude to the establishment of the private universities from the late 1980s and 1990s. The number of private universities in some African countries between 1980 and the present were Kenya 17 for full accreditation and 12 interim accreditation,⁶ Ghana 28,⁷ Uganda 38,⁸ Tanzania 18,⁹ Zimbabwe 15,¹⁰ South Africa (22).¹¹ This article examines the prospects and challenges of private Christian universities in Africa. Most of the illustrations will come from Nigeria, not just because the author is Nigerian and has worked in Nigeria all his life but more importantly because Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and also has the highest number of private universities since the door for the founding of such universities was opened in 1999.

² Akilagpa Sawyerr, “Challenges Facing African Universities: Selected Issues,” *African Studies Review*, Vol. 47, No. 1, 2004, p. 43.

³ Dantew Teferra and Philip G. Altbach, “African higher education: Challenges for the 21st Century,” *Higher Education*, 47, 2004, p. 23.

⁴ O. A. Omomia, *et al*, “The History of Private Sector Participation in University Education in Nigeria (1989-2012),” *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 4, No. 18, 2014, p. 154.

⁵ Tererra and Altbach, “African higher education,” pp. 23, 24.

⁶ <http://softkenya.com/university/private-universities/> (accessed 17th May 2016).

⁷ <http://myacadaxtra.blogspot.com.ng/2012/08/list-of-private-universities-in-ghana.html> (accessed 17th May 2016).

⁸ <http://www.unche.or.ug/institutions/private-universities> (accessed 19th May 2016).

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_universities_and_colleges_in_Tanzania (accessed 17th May 2016).

¹⁰ <http://buzzsouthafrica.com/latest-ranking-zimbabwean-best-universities/> (accessed 17th May 2016).

¹¹ <http://www.southafricaeducation.info/Higher-Education/List-of-Higher-Education-Institutions-in-South-Africa.html> (accessed 19th May 2016).

Table 1: Universities in Nigeria

Federal Public Universities	State Public Universities	Private Universities	Illegal Universities	Total
46	40	61	65	212

Source: NUC (Monday Bulletin, 2015)

Table 1 above shows a preponderance of public universities (86 i.e. 58%) as against private universities (61 i.e. 42%). Public universities also enrol more students. This is because public universities charge less school fees, they are older and therefore, have older and more experienced faculties and more expanded facilities. But due to the high demand on higher education public universities in Nigeria hardly meet up to the demand, as table 2 below shows:

Table 2: University Enrolment in Nigeria

SN	Type of University	Current Enrolment	Carrying Capacity	Difference
1	Federal Universities	442,834	342,049	+100,785
2	State Universities	265,166	163,586	+101,580
3	Private Universities	19,740	28,548	- 8,808
	Total	727,740	534,183	+192,557

Source: NUC (Monday Bulletin, 2005)

In 2012, 1.5million candidates applied for university admission, only 25% (i.e. 375,000) of them were given admission. The pressure to seek for admission continues to mount every year.¹²

The Role of Private Universities in the development of Education in Africa

Evolution of private universities in Africa, generally, was brought about by deregulation/liberalisation of university education in many African countries, a departure of colonial legacy of government monopoly of the ownership of university education. In Nigeria, this measure gave, as Ajayi and Ekundayo put it, “a free hand to private participation in the provision and management of education in the country.”¹³ Private universities enrolled many candidates who might not have gained admission into public universities and probably would have been sent to schools outside Africa if the parents could afford the fees. Most Nigerian children go to the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Europe (especially Russia) and South Asia (especially Malaysia). Thus private universities have helped to conserve scarce foreign exchange. Emergence of private universities introduced competitiveness in this sector. In the ranking of universities in Nigeria (both public and private) a private university, Pan African University, Lagos, came second after the University of Lagos in the 2004 session ranking exercise.¹⁴ Parents that have the financial means would readily send their children to private universities because of their stability than send them to public universities. In private universities students know when they come in and when they would graduate as against

¹² Omomia, *et al*, “The History of Private Sector Participation,” p. 159.

¹³ In O. A. Omomia, *et al*, “The History of Private...University Education,” p. 154.

¹⁴ Ezekiel Oladele Adeoti, “The Role of the National Universities Commission in the Development of University Education in Nigeria: Reflection and Projections,” *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, Vol. 2, No.3, 2015, p. 119.

public universities where, as in Nigeria, a student would spend six or more years for a four-year degree programme due to incessant staff strikes and students demonstrations/riots. Private universities are small, as has been shown before, so the number of students in classrooms ranges between 25 to 35, thus making teaching, learning and management of classrooms much easier. A. O. Omomia and others say due to their relatively small size, private universities are better funded compared to public universities that are grossly underfunded.¹⁵

For the Christian private universities, it was not only an opportunity to educate students within a Christian environment and culture but also to integrate learning into Christian convictions. Most private universities in Nigeria are Christian (32) and run by churches, especially Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. The rest are Islamic (3) and secular (26). Christian bodies involvement of training of the young in Christian universities is to make them not only academically grounded but also to be servants of the Lord in a secular society. I think, that is what Nick Latinga describes as “audacious” and “risky” nature of a private Christian University.¹⁶ He says this vision is audacious because it is rested on “the soundness of a specific worldview.”¹⁷ Christian worldview gives a particular perspective of Christian higher education, a perspective that influences curriculum and knowledge delivery in classes; these distinguish Christian higher education from a non-Christian one. And Abraham Kuyper rightly concluded when he asserted that “without a perspective to give coherence, higher education deteriorates into a multiversity, a series of disconnected and often competing interest groups.”¹⁸ Inculcating this worldview makes students of Christian universities go out to change the world through the show of love, the same love that forced Christ to come to earth and to die for wretched sinners. And as Latinga tells us the path of changing the world is full of perils from Satan and the world. Due to the differences in context even within one society, varieties of methods are used in disseminating these changes. In Nigeria, for example, there two different contexts: the Muslim and the Christian contexts.

Challenges that face Christian Higher Education in sub-Saharan Africa

I will limit the discussion in this section to Nigeria because I am more familiar with the happenings there. One of the serious challenges of Christian universities in Nigeria is the accreditation process. The only accrediting body in Nigeria is the National Universities Commission (henceforth NUC), the equivalent of the National Accreditation Board of Ghana, the Ugandan National Council for Higher Education or the Commission of University Education of Kenya. But before the NUC was set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the first accrediting institution in Nigeria was created by the British colonial authority. This accrediting body was called the Inter-University Council (henceforth IUC) just after Nigeria’s first university, the University College Ibadan (henceforth UCI) was established in 1948. Up till 1962 when IUC was scrapped, it carried out regular visitations to the primer university, recruited staff for the university, advised the university on administrative and academic matters and, in conjunction with the University of London, set up academic standards.¹⁹ In addition to all these, IUC performed the following functions as well:

¹⁵ O. A. Omomia, *et al*, “The History of Private...University Education,” p. 159.

¹⁶ Nick Latinga, “Global Christian Higher Education: Audacious, Risky, Diverse,” Paper Presented at the Conference on Christian Higher Education, Queretaro, Mexico, p. 3.

¹⁷ Latinga, “Global Christian Higher Education”, p. 3.

¹⁸ In Latinga, “Global Christian Higher Education”, p. 3.

¹⁹ Adeoti, “The Role of the National Universities Commission,” p. 117.

...in conjunction with the London University and the Colonial Office [IUC] helped to provide colonial training in the United Kingdom for Nigerian students who had completed the pre-medical and pre-chemical course at the UCI. It supported UCI's policy of high standard in staff recruitment, student selection, the protection of examination standard, the appointment of external examiners, facilities for research or library resources and urged that the maintenance of high academic standard must be paramount.

The NUC was, therefore, the successor to the IUC and it came into being in 1962 and was placed in the federal cabinet office. NUC's responsibilities were similar to IUC's, that is, advising government on universities' matters especially as it pertains to funding and the development of university education in Nigeria.²⁰ At this time Nigeria had five universities; apart from UCI (which became University of Ibadan in 1962), there was the University of Lagos, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the University of Ife, Ile-Ife and the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Then in 1974, NUC was reconstituted and made a statutory body with the responsibility of insuring and orderly development of universities and standards. In 1988 more responsibilities were given to the Commission by a decree of the then military government. The decree mandated the Commission:

To advise on the establishment and location of new universities and other degree granting institutions, to estimate and request from government annual grants for the universities and to distribute this in accordance with a set of fromular (sic), to collate, analyse and publish information relating to university development and education in Nigeria, to develop general programmes to be pursued by universities in order to ensure that they are fully adequate for national need and objectives, to recommend the establishment of new faculties or postgraduate institutions in existing universities and to make such other recommendations to the Federal Government or to Universities relating to higher education as the Commission may consider to be in the national interest among others.²¹

The NUC saw its role as providing guidance to universities in the areas of finance, management and academic standards. To fulfil these functions, the NUC created twelve departments. These departments are Academic Standard, Inspection and Monitoring, Management Support Services, Students Support Services, Research and Innovations, Information and Communication Technology, Finance and accounts, Quality Assurance, Physical Planning and Development, Open and Distance Education, Protocol and Special duties and the Lagos office.²²

Curbing the proliferation of private universities (some of them existing on paper alone) is a remarkable achievement of the NUC. As at March 2016, NUC has clamped down 57 'degree mills' and 8 other are under investigation.²³ Ghana followed suit by closing down 53 illegal universities. NUC also organises partnerships in staff development and collaborative research with universities and other research organisations abroad.²⁴ Furthermore, NUC, in its bid to reduce the rate of unemployment of university graduates, directed all universities in Nigeria to mount entrepreneur courses, so that graduates could be self-employed and an employer of labour.

²⁰ Adeoti, "The Role of the National Universities Commission," p. 117.

²¹ In Adeoti, "The Role of the National Universities Commission," p. 117.

²² <http://nuc.edu.ng/departments/> (accessed 19th May 2016).

²³ *NUC Monday Bulletin* Vol. 11, No. 11, 21st March 2016, p. 5.

²⁴ *NUC Monday Bulletin* Vol. 10, No. 30, 27th July 2015, p. 37.

As such the NUC has the sole authority for licensing, accrediting and supervising public and private universities in Nigeria. The licensing of private universities undergo a long process; the process goes from paper work to verification visits (verification of the environment, physical and teaching and learning facilities and equipments and a provision of “concrete and guaranteed source of financial support for the University to the tune of N200 million” [1million USD].)²⁵ Accreditation, which goes on regularly, is based on the NUC’s Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (or BMAS). The BMAS has two components. 1) Needs Assessment Survey of Labour Market for Nigeria Graduates. This assessment involves major stakeholders in Nigerian education particularly the employers of labour. The purpose of this exercise, as the NUC documents put is the “identification of expected knowledge, attitudes and skills for graduates and their ability to fit into the requirements of the new national and global economy.”²⁶ 2) Minimum Academic Standard. This is academic and looks at the curricula activities in the university to ensure they meet the basic or minimum standard set by the NUC. NUC delineate thirteen disciplines and provide standards to measure adherence to set standards in teaching and learning. The prescribe disciplines are Administration/management/Management Technology, Agriculture/Forestry/Fisheries/Home Economic, Arts, Basic Medical and Health Science, Education, Engineering and Technology, Environmental Sciences, Law, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Medicine and Dentistry, Science, Social Sciences and Veterinary Medicine.

Although these processes for accreditation of universities’ academic programmes were meant for public universities, they are used for private universities as well; as such Christian private universities have been forced to become carbon copies of public universities in Nigeria. Programmes, for which Christian universities have no lecturers, are asked to hire part-time lecturers from public universities to teach them. It must be remembered that the philosophies of these institutions are different. The Christian universities are based on a Christian view of knowledge- that all knowledge is of God and for God’s glory. Public universities operate on the secular/humanist philosophy. Public universities disconnect faith from learning. I remember my Professor in Ahmadu Bello University used to say that he was a committed Christian but whenever he was teaching his biology classes his students hardly knew he was a Christian. Some of them were shocked to see him in church. Thus the division between public and private universities in Nigeria is in some ways blurred with this outside interference. I must also add in passing that even theological seminaries in Nigeria that are affiliated to Nigerian universities (so that graduates of these schools can easily gain employment in public service) are made to comply with this Minimum Academic Standard. If this practice continues, I fear, it will not take long before Christian universities in Nigeria (and even other sub-Saharan African countries) become purely secular institutions like Harvard, Yale and Princeton universities in the United States of America; this development has been documented by William Adrian.²⁷

The disconnect between faith and knowledge or post modernism from tradition (‘the Lexus’ and’ the Olive tree’ in Thomas Friedman’s symbolism²⁸), the staple diet of public university education globally has come under serious questions in the spate of rise in religiously motivated terrorism since 9/11 or as Karen Armstrong puts it, as religion attempts to fight

²⁵ *Guidelines for the Establishing Institutions of Higher Education in Nigeria*, NUC (no date), p. 2.

²⁶ *Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards for Undergraduate Programmes in Nigerian Universities*, NUC 2007, p. i.

²⁷ William Adrian, “Christian Universities in Historical Perspective,” *Christian Higher Education*, Vol. 2, No. 1 2003.

²⁸ William Adrian, “Globalization and the Christian Idea of a University (or, the Lexus, the Olive Tree and Higher Education),” *Christian Higher Education*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2007.

back.²⁹ Madeleine Albright, former Secretary of State for the Clinton administration, reflecting on the impact of this religiously driven terrorism argued that the catastrophic resurgence of religion in the public square underscores the danger in neglecting religion by any society, particularly the institution of learning. The Boko Haram, the most dangerous terrorist group in the world began as an anti-secularist group in the University of Maiduguri. The popular account for the birth of this group is the socio-economic explanation, namely youth unemployment due to economic meltdown and endemic corruption or as David Cameron put ‘fantastic corruption’; but this has actually fuelled the insurgency rather than caused it. Most of the early followers of Yusuf Muhamad, the founder of the movement, were drop-outs of the university. Its proper name is Jama’atu ahlis Sunnah Lidda’awati Wal-Jihad i.e. “People committed to the propagation of the teachings of the Prophet and to Jihad.” The “teachings of the Prophet” is what is called *Sunnah*, the path of the Prophet; Jihad is the practicalisation of such teachings. Thus Boko Haram began by agitating for the repudiation of the Lexus and the implanting of the Olive tree in the Nigerian society, to put Friedman’s symbolism in an Islamic way. The group became violent when their leader was killed by the Nigerian security. It is safe to say that Muslims not Christians have resisted and fought against secularism in Nigerian society since the 1970s. This, to my mind is a challenge to Christian universities in sub-Saharan Africa, especially in the light of the debate over the new primary and secondary religious curriculum in Nigeria which not only puts the two faiths together but make the study of Islam and Christianity just one-third of the curriculum; the rest deals with national values and security studies.³⁰

Worst of all, NUC’s accreditation process is marred by corruption – making the whole exercise lose credibility. The first to blow the whistle was the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in 2013. ASUU had cast doubt on the integrity of the NUC accreditation process. It accused NUC of being fraudulent in handling the process as well as transforming itself into a contracting firm. ASUU wondered

“...how the clean bill of health given by the NUC to several public universities could be reconciled with the findings of the Needs Assessment Committee set up by the Federal Government, which found widespread rot in the system. Equally serious is the allegation that the commission awarded severely inflated contracts in respect of new universities which put the cost of each bed space in new hostels for example at 2.143 million naira and each room at 8.571 million naira each. The NUC’s arithmetical abracadabra, according to the university teachers, brought the cost of a room to 1.2 billion naira. Nigerians are left to wonder when a quality assurance institution such as the NUC transformed itself into a tender’s board for the award of hyper inflated contracts”³¹

Finally the Union called for the scrap of the Commission entirely. ASUU’s accusation was not the last. About three months ago a former Vice Chancellor of a private university, the Redeemer’s University and a Professor of Virology and President of Academy of Science, Oyewole Tomori made similar accusations against NUC. In a convocation lecture he

²⁹ See chapter 11 in her book *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*, London: The Bodley Head, 2014, pp. 175-307.

³⁰ See 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum: Religion & National Values (Primary 4-6), Federal Ministry of Education 2012; Teachers’ Guide for Revised 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC): Religion and National Values, Security Education, Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), 2012.

³¹ https://groups.google.com/forum#!msg/usaafriadiologue/KulEILEhp2o/ByjfmacD_gIJ (accessed 20th May 2016)

delivered at the University of Abuja, Tomori, equally questioned the integrity of the NUC accreditation procedure, when “brown envelopes” (a euphemism for collecting bribes), are often doled out to the accreditation panelists by universities.”³² Tomori anticipated NUC response when he asserted “When there are allegations that some of the people who conduct accreditation exercise in the name of (the) NUC receive brown envelopes, the NUC will ask: Are those who give or take the envelopes not your colleagues? But the NUC forgets one thing, that the accreditation bears ‘NUC’s accreditation’.”³³ In its response the NUC parades its credential of “track record of Quality Assurance” and the current chair of the African Quality Assurance Network.³⁴ Then added,

The Commission takes exception to the accusation of the NAS President that NUC officials collect brown envelopes during accreditation exercises. Even though the NAS President was quoted in the publication as having said that NUC alludes to the fact that those who give and take the envelopes are Professors, and that the NUC forgets that the results bear “NUC's accreditation,” the fact still remains that accreditation is a peer-review exercise amongst academics all over the world. The Professor should therefore be bold enough to address the issue, if any, with his professional colleagues rather than point accusing fingers at the Commission.³⁵

This makes the accrediting process a huge financial burden on the private universities who have no grants from government. Take for example, Bowen University, a Christian private university in Nigeria, with its almost 40 courses. If Bowen University pays each panel (members could be up to five) these bribes, it is beyond imagination how much the university would cough out any time it has the accreditation team. Therefore, it is not surprising that private universities are suffocating by huge financial burdens. Some have taken huge bank loans (running into billions of naira) to run their academic programmes. This is why some of them are near bankruptcy. Under this weight of financial crisis, the Vice Chancellor of the Christian private universities, Achievers University, Owo, Tunji Ibiyemi, cried out during the 9th Students’ Matriculation Ceremony that if the Federal Government of Nigeria did not come to the aid of private universities many may collapse. He sounded more alarming when he said, “If the federal government fails to address these issues, many private Universities will soon collapse. This will further complicate the sorry situation in the sector today. The outcome then will be Armageddon for all of us.”³⁶ This is, in spite of the fact that many of the private universities in Nigeria run a small range of courses, particularly market-friendly ones as a means of cutting costs. The bail out from the Federal Government of Nigeria is necessary because private universities as complementary to public universities are making significant contribution to the public good.

It was a surprise that the NUC does not have gender policy in the area of students’ admission, employment and promotion of university staff. From studies done by Teerra and Altbach, Nigeria seems to be behind many countries, like Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Kenya.³⁷ This is the enrolment of undergraduates into all universities in Nigeria in 2009/10 session showing the discrepancy in some courses:

³² <http://www.punchng.com/graft-ridden-varsity-courses-accreditation/> (accessed 20th May 2016).

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *NUC Monday Bulletin*, March 2016.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ <http://thenationonlineng.net/private-universities-may-collapse-soon-vc-warns/> (accessed 21st May 2016).

³⁷ Teerra and Altbach, “African Higher Education,” pp. 35, 36.

Table 3: Undergraduate Enrolment into Universities in Nigeria 2009/10 session

Courses	Male	%	Female	%	Total
Administration	54,124	56	43,124	44	97,248
Agriculture	26,172	59	17,995	41	44,167
Arts	33,067	49	34,525	51	67,592
Dentistry	872	59	609	41	1,481
Education	49,846	53	44,758	47	94,604
Engineering	65,441	83	13,601	17	79,042
Environmental Sciences	19,779	74	6,822	26	26,601
Law	15,191	51	14,829	49	30,020
Medicine	24,923	55	20,417	45	45,340
Pharmacy	3,766	53	3,386	47	7,152
Sciences	106,032	62	64,244	38	170,276
Social Sciences	71,203	64	39,826	36	111,029
Veterinary Medicine	1,824	71	757	29	2,581

Source: Abraham Chundusu, NUC

Although Nigeria does not have gender policy on university undergraduate enrolment like other African countries, the enrolment above shows some fair gender distribution in most the courses offered, except courses such as Agriculture, Dentistry, Engineering, Environmental Sciences, Natural sciences, Social Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, where the female gender is disadvantaged. And when specific universities' admission statistics are checked, particularly in universities in the northern part of the country, the imbalance is even more glaring. For example out of 2,117 students enrolled in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi, to study softer courses like Administration in 2009/10 session, 82% were male and 18% female; also out of 2,290 students enrolled to study Education, 86% were male and 14% female. The same trend is in Bayero University, Kano. Out of an 1,380 intake to study Administration, 74% were male while 26 were female; similarly out of 1,911 students admitted to study various Arts courses, 70% were male and 30 female. According to the Director of Students' Support Services in the NUC, Rukayya Gurin (who is from the far north) attributed the low female enrolment to cultural practices and beliefs³⁸ that undermine the potentials of women. To address this anomaly, NUC is working hard to "domesticate the existing gender policy of the Federal Government in universities' admission, employment and promotion."³⁹ Employment in all the universities in Nigeria according to gender is even worse. Using the less demanding courses, like Administration, Arts, Education, the results show a lopsided employment in favour of the male gender, as the following table shows:

³⁸ Teterra and Altbach, in "African Higher Education," have added "sociological, economic, psychological, historical and political factors" that account for the imbalance in attitude to gender in Africa, see pp. 35.

³⁹ Interview with Rukayya A. Gurin, NUC Secretariat, Abuja, 13th May, 2016.

Table 4: Staff Employment in Nigerian Universities on the Bases of Gender, 2009/10 Session

Courses	Male	%	Female	%	Total
Administration	2,414	63	1,446	37	3,860
Arts	2,018	66	1,042	34	3,060
Education	1,895	58	1,371	42	3,266
Law	510	60	336	40	846
Social Sciences	2,584	67	1,292	33	3,876

Source: Abraham Chundusu, NUC

The Way Forward in Christian Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

Christian private universities in Africa should establish a consortium at Nation level with a strong commitment to uphold a Biblical Christian worldview and Christian core values in their teaching and conduct. The universities would have as their mission statement the goal of changing/transforming society through student and faculty witness. Adrian tells us when American evangelical Christian colleges decided to unite for the cause of evangelism, the whole world was affected.

The missionary spirit has been a hallmark of the Christian college, and it has been increasingly evident in these colleges in the latter part of the 20th century. The earlier image of a narrow, sectarian spirit is belied by the sponsorship and participation of these colleges in a host of broad international service activities ranging from feeding the hungry to medical missions to agricultural reform to literacy and Bible translation. Smith details the involvement of these colleges in such organizations as World Vision, Food for the Hungry, World Gospel Mission, Wycliffe Translators, Evangelicals for Social Action, and many more. The international networks of groups like the Wycliffe Translators have provided opportunities for faculty and students to be involved in cross-cultural experiences to a much greater extent than their counterparts in secular universities.⁴⁰

To concretise this, a strong Department of Religious Studies or Theology should be established in each Christian university to teach the Christian worldview in the context of postmodernism and the Biblical basis for core Christian values. This is one sure way, I think, of making Christian universities in Africa have a, as Prof Andrew Walls puts it, “a sense of Christian vocation to scholarship.”⁴¹ Collaboration of national consortia of Christian universities in sub-Saharan Africa is necessary to share ideas and strategise. This is important because Africa needs committed Christian academics to transform Africa and the rest of the world. Walls, the optimist for the potentials of non-western Christianity writes, “it will be in the non-Western world that the scholarly vocation will begin anew and a new breed of scholars arise who, working in community, will break the chains of Mammon and throw off the impediments of careerism.” This is what IAPCHE and CPCHEA stand for and I hope these noble Christian organisations will continue to strengthen this idea of Christian Higher Education in Africa.

⁴⁰ Adrian, “Christian Universities in Historical Perspective,” p. 26.

⁴¹ In Joel Carpenter, “New Christian Universities and the Future of Christian Scholarship,” Andrew Walls Lecture, Liverpool Hope University, 17th March 2010, p. 16.

Also, consortia of Christian universities in Africa should work towards creating an accrediting council for Christian private universities for each country that has Christian universities. This, in my mind, is the logical outcome of the liberalisation and de-regularisation of the higher education policy of many African governments. In Nigeria, the only accrediting institution is the secular NUC. Thus, by its orientation NUC cannot serve the interest of Christian universities; in fact some of its functions might be at cross-purposes with those of Christian universities. Furthermore, NUC has taken numerous responsibilities upon itself to the extent that it has spread itself so thin to be an effective referee.

Historically, Christian mission schools in Africa (both primary and secondary) had a high academic standard. In Nigeria and many countries in Africa, Christian missions had a monopoly on primary and secondary education for a time before the colonial authorities' intervention in that sector. The missions continued to maintain high standards and competed with public-funded schools until government took them over. The takeover of such schools by the government of Nigeria in 1972 led to the collapse of moral and academic standards the effect of which is suffering from.

Gender balance in admission, employment and promotion should be the goal of Christian universities in Africa.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the potentials of Christian universities in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Nigeria. It also examined some challenges private Christian universities face and tried to offer solutions. Private participation in the provision of universities in Africa will continue to grow, but the task of Christian universities is a marriage of scholarship with Christian conviction and commitment; it is through this route that Christian Higher Education can contribute in national transformation and in the redemption in Africa. Corporation of Christian universities in within countries of African and collaboration with African Christian universities across the continent will form a formidable platform strengthening Christian Higher Education.