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## **Private Higher Education in Africa**

**by**

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## Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. From state dominance to private higher education institutions.....	4
3. Privatization versus private sector in higher education.....	6
3.1 Privatization.....	6
3.2 Private sector in higher education.....	8
4. Growth and expansion of Higher education in Africa.....	9
5. Private sector in higher education in Africa.....	11
5.1 Emergence of the private sector in higher education.....	11
5.2 Proliferation of private institutions of higher education (PIHE) in Africa.....	12
6. Ownership of institutions of private higher education.....	15
7. Programmes of study and courses offered by the PIHEs.....	17
8. Teaching staff in private institutions of higher education.....	18
9. Student profile in PIHEs.....	19
10. Quality of education in PIHEs.....	20
11. Financing of PIHEs.....	21
12. Concluding observations.....	23
 References.....	 27

# Private higher education in Africa\*

N.V. Varghese\*\*

## 1. Introduction

Public universities had a near monopoly in providing higher education in countries of Africa until recently. The market-friendly reforms initiated under the structural adjustment programmes, the deregulation policies, and the financial crisis of the state created an encouraging environment for the emergence of the private higher education sector in Africa. The legislative measures initiated to establish private institutions of higher education also helped the entry of cross-border education, which is offered mainly through private providers. At present, the private sector is a fast expanding segment of higher education in Africa, although it still continues to account for a small share of enrolment in higher education. This paper attempts to analyze the growth and expansion of private higher education in Africa.

The plan of this paper is as follows: the next section discusses the transition from a state-sponsored system of higher education to private higher education institutions. Section 3 makes a distinction between privatization and the private sector in higher education. Section 4 discusses the growth and expansion of higher education in Africa. Section 5 deals with the growth and expansion of private higher education in Africa. Section 6 highlights the ownership patterns and orientation of private higher education institutions. Section 7 is devoted to a discussion on the programmes of study and courses offered by the private institutions. Section 8 and 9 discuss teacher and student profiles respectively followed by a discussion on the quality of education provided by the private institutions in Section 10. Section 11 analyzes the sources of financing the private institutions, and the final section makes some concluding observations.

## 2. From state dominance to private higher education institutions

The state played a dominant role in development in most countries during the post-World War II period. The reconstruction phase in Europe and nation-building phase during the period following national independence in the developing countries were led by the state and its public sector units. Although it was initially believed that capital was the 'missing link' in development, it was soon realized that in the absence of human capital, even physical capital could not be productively deployed. During the phase of nation building, many of the countries, especially developing countries, relied heavily on foreign capital and foreign personnel in many of the crucial areas of national development. Recognizing the importance of qualified and trained manpower, especially to manage the economy and to plan and organize their educational systems, most of the countries emphasized the development of higher education.

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The developed countries emphasized the expansion of their higher education sector, while the developing countries followed a dual strategy of establishing universities of their own and sending people abroad for studies to meet the immediate requirements. All of these strategies were funded by the state. In fact, in many countries there was a 'state monopoly on tertiary education' (World Bank, 2002, p.69) during this period. State-funded public universities became the dominant feature of the development of higher education during this phase. For example, in Western Europe, public universities are dominant and nearly 95 per cent of the students attend this type of university. More than 80 per cent of the students attend public universities in the USA. Public universities still continue to be dominant in Africa and South Asia. The period of state monopoly in higher education, especially till the 1970s, was considered to be the 'golden period' in higher education (Balderson, 1979).

Perhaps, the only exception to this trend was some of the countries in East Asia and in Latin America where private universities were well established. Latin America has a tradition of private universities. This region has a good share of the non-university sector, and non-university higher education is dominated by private agencies (Gonzalez, 1999). In East Asian countries such as Indonesia, Japan, Korea and the Philippines, the private sector accounts for a major share of enrolment in higher education. In India as well, undergraduate education is predominantly provided by private colleges funded by the government. India also has self-financing private colleges popularly known as 'capitation fee colleges' that do not receive any state funding.

The developments in the 1980s questioned the state-sponsored model of development. Structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s focused on measures to reduce the fiscal deficit through reduced social sector investment. The political changes in Eastern European countries questioned the role of the state in development. This was a phase marked by the reduced role of the state in development, the ascendancy of market ideology, and the widespread application of market-friendly reforms throughout the world. The dominant trends during this phase indicated a reduced public investment in education in general, and a diversion of public investment from higher to primary education in developing countries in particular. The rate of returns analysis, which showed that returns to primary education are higher than those at other levels of education, justified in terms of economic rationality and allocative efficiency a diversion of resources from higher to primary education (World Bank, 1986, Banya and Juliet, 2001).

The 1980s was a period of decline for higher education in many countries, which was reflected through a decrease in student enrolment in developed countries (Altbach, 1984) and an erosion of facilities and capacities in developing countries (Saint, 1992; UNESCO, 1998). This was reflected in the trends of enrolment. Till the 1980s, both developed and developing countries combined made advances, while in the 1980s and early 1990s, developing countries lagged behind in terms of expansion of the higher education system. For example, in 1980, the developing countries accounted for 85 per cent of the additional enrolment, while in 1995, the corresponding share declined to 50 per cent (Varghese, 2003).

The higher education system in the developed world responded to the declining state support by the withdrawal of subsidies on higher education. Developing countries too began responding to these changes rather late. They introduced various reforms that reduced reliance on

the state for the progress of higher education. Education reforms adopted by most of the countries indicated cost-reduction measures, cost-sharing strategies and income-generating activities (Varghese, 2001). Consequently, more recent trends indicate that the higher education sector is expanding, even in developing countries.

The ascendancy of market ideology together with changes in East Europe provided a smooth transition of the world economy to a process of globalization. One of the most sought-after sectors that led the globalization process was the knowledge economy, which depended heavily on information technology. The national competitiveness in a knowledge economy depended on the availability of higher educated persons. Further, the expansion of secondary education put pressure on higher education to expand, and more importantly, the rates of return analysis, which formed the theoretical basis for diversion of public resources from higher to primary levels of education, indicate higher returns to higher education rather than to the primary sector in certain developed countries (Carnoy, 1999). The higher education sector and higher-educated people became dear again in the knowledge economy (UNESCO-World Bank, 2000) and the state was willing to invest more in higher education in the developed world. In the developing world, market-friendly reforms in the public universities and the encouragement of private sectors contributed to the revival of the higher education sector. In other words, privatization of public universities was a major change in the developed world, while this, together with encouragement and promotion of the private sector in higher education, became a major change in higher education in the developing world.

### **3. Privatization versus private sector in higher education**

#### **3.1 Privatization**

Two trends that characterize major changes in higher education are privatization and the emergence of the private sector in higher education (Varghese, 2004c). Privatization implies applying private sector or market principles in the operation and management of the institutions of higher education while the ownership rests within the public domain. The private sector, on the other hand, indicates the growth of the non-state sector in higher education. In most cases, this sector does not receive funding from the government. And in any case, they do not rely on state funding for its growth and expansion.

One of the important features of the 1990s is the move away from dependence on the state for funding higher education. The reliance on market forces for development, the decline of centrally-planned economies, and the fiscal incapacity of the state to finance education adequately have persuasively encouraged privatization in higher education. Privatization can either be total or partial. Experiences from Asia (Sothorn and Yiibing, 1995) indicate that privatization can imply full pricing of the services with no funding support from state or quasi-privatization with partial funding by the state. The more common case in African countries is quasi-privatization. Even in universities such as Makerere in Uganda, which are very successful in mobilizing resources of its own, a major share of the resources still continue to come from the state exchequer. Privatization has also introduced new vocabulary into the sector. University Vice-Chancellors and Presidents

could be CEOs, principals could be managers, or parents and students could be customers, etc. (Guttman, 2000).

Privatization of public institutions have taken different forms:

- *Privatization of services* in public institutions. Many public utility and support services and student support systems are contracted out to private agencies on a full pricing basis. This also involves the withdrawal of subsidies on lodging and food provided in the student hostels.
- *Privatization as cost sharing*. This is more related to academic programmes. Cost sharing could be of two forms – cost recovery and delayed payment. Cost recovery is effected mainly through levying fees from direct beneficiaries. The issue of delayed payment comes when students are supported through loan scholarship schemes, which they have to repay at a later stage. In the 1990s, the levying of fees has become a very common feature in many countries and student loans have been embraced by many countries including, Ghana, Nigeria, Malawi, etc. Some countries, such as Uganda and Kenya (Court, 1999; Kiamba, 2003) have introduced a system of private sponsored students where the private students pay a high rate of fees, while the government-sponsored students pay a low rate of fees. It is felt, very often, that introducing such reforms in public institutions are more difficult (Varghese, 2004a) than initiating policy changes to permit the operation of private institutions.
- *Public-financed privatization*. The voucher system is an example of promoting competition and private sectors through public funding. It permits parents to choose schools and universities for their children. Some states in the USA, such as Florida, have already legislated on this issue. It is expected that the voucher be implemented in other states in the USA. New Zealand embraced a voucher system on a big scale in the 1990s, but realized after a decade that it led to the widening of educational disparities between groups.
- *Corporatization of universities*. Some universities have established cost units, companies or corporations with operational autonomy. The corporatization of public universities in Malaysia allows them to borrow money, acquire investment shares and enter into business ventures to meet a major share of operating expenses. Many universities in Africa have established cost centres either at department or university levels to regulate income generated from various sources. For example, the Dar-es-Salaam University of Tanzania has created for-profit companies within the university. These units/centers enjoy a high degree of operational autonomy as in the case of private companies and corporations.
- *Private management of public education*: In this case, funding for private institutions is provided by the public authority, but private institutions manage the institution, including the funds. Edison School Incorporated is a good example of this trend. It is a leading company that operates for the private management of public education institutions. In countries such as India, a very high share of colleges are private. These institutions

receive their funds from public sources (Tilak, 1999). In this case, the management of public education is not seen in a corporate style.

### **3.2. Private sector in higher education**

Private higher education is of different types:

#### *i) State-supported private institutions*

Some private institutions of higher education receive funding support from the government. The support can be minimal or substantial. Those that receive state funding are more specifically regulated by public authorities. In some cases, the government regulates even the amount of fees levied by state-aided private institutions. In India, for example, state assistance to private colleges accounts for more than 90 per cent of the total recurring expenditure (Tilak, 1999).

#### *ii) Not-for-profit private institutions*

Private non-profit institutions are owned and operated by trusts that rely heavily on endowments and fees collected from the students. Most of them are self-financing institutions. Some of the best universities in the USA, such as Harvard, MIT, Princeton, Stanford and Yale, etc., are private and have large endowment funds. Some of the private higher education institutions are supported by religious agencies. While the Roman Catholic Church was active in Asia, Europe and Latin America, the Protestant Church pioneered private universities in the USA. Islamic organizations were proactive in countries such as Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, etc. (Altbach, 1999). Christian and Islamic organizations are active in providing private higher education in African countries.

#### *iii) For-profit higher education institutions*

Some private institutions operate and produce profit. They are, by design, seen as institutions established to produce profit. For-profit institutions were not very common until recently. The legitimacy of private for-profit institutions was attained in the 1990s due to the involvement of publicly traded corporations that own and run multi-campus universities, and these corporations traded the stocks and shares of educational institutions (Ruch, 2001). The DeVry Institute of Technology (owned by DeVry Inc.), Strayer University, and the University of Phoenix (owned by the Apollo group) are examples of flourishing for-profit institutions of higher education in the USA. Many of the private institutions of higher education operating in developing countries are for-profit institutions. They mostly rely on student fees as a major source of financing the institutions, offer courses in market-friendly subject areas, and at times are affiliated to universities based abroad.



#### 4. Growth and expansion of higher education in Africa

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education shows that they are the lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa. These countries had a low base in 1980. Despite the progress made, the enrolment ratio still remains at 3.9 per cent compared with a GER of 51.6 per cent in the developed world.

**Table 1 : Gross enrolment ratios (GER) higher education**

	1980	1997
World total	12.3	17.4
Developed countries	36.2	51.6
Least developed countries	1.8	3.2
Sub-Saharan Africa	1.7	3.9
Arab States	9.6	14.9
Latin America & Caribbean	13.7	19.4
East Asia & Oceania	3.8	10.8
South Asia	4.3	7.2

Source: USIS (2003)

The Sub-Saharan African countries have one of the lowest GERs in tertiary education. In 2000, the GER in higher education in SSA was 3.5 per cent only. In 1970, a majority of the countries in SSA had an enrolment ratio of less than one per cent. The situation has changed considerably in the past three decades. No country (for which data are available) has reported an enrolment ratio of less than one per cent in 2000 (*Table 2*). A majority of the African countries in 2000 have an enrolment ratio of less than five per cent. This, no doubt, is positive development and indicates the progress of higher education in this region. However, the distance between African countries and countries in other regions have widened due to the slow progress made in this region. This is reflected in terms of variations in GER. A more detailed analysis will indicate that most of the countries in Africa have enrolment ratios of less than five per cent.

**Table 2 : Gross enrolment ratio for higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa**

	1980	1990	2000
Angola	0,4	0,8	1,0
Benin	1,4	2,7	4,0
Botswana	1,2	3,2	5,0
Burkina Faso	0,3	0,7	...
Burundi	0,5	0,7	1,0
Cameroon	1,7	3,3	5,0
Central African Republic	0,9	1,5	2,0
Chad	...	...	1,0
Comoros	...	0,5	1,0
Congo	5,1	5,4	5,0
Côte d'Ivoire	2,8	3,9	7,0
Democratic Rep. of the Congo	1,2	2,4	1,0
Djibouti	...	0,1	1,0

Equatorial Guinea	5,6	1,8	3,0
Eritrea	...	...	2,0
Ethiopia	0,4	0,8	2,0
Gabon	...	5,7	8,0
Ghana	1,6	1,4	3,0
Kenya	0,9	1,6	3,0
Lesotho	1,0	1,3	3,0
Madagascar	2,6	3,0	2,0
Malawi	0,5	0,6	...
Mali	0,8	0,6	2,0
Mauritania	...	2,8	4,0
Mauritius	1,0	3,5	11,0
Mozambique	0,1	...	1,0
Namibia	...	3,3	6,0
Niger	0,3	0,7	1,0
Nigeria	2,7	4,1	...
Rwanda	0,3	0,6	2,0
Senegal	2,7	3,0	4,0
Sierra Leone	0,8	1,3	2,0
South Africa	...	13,2	15,0
Sudan	1,7	3,0	7,0
Swaziland	3,6	4,1	5,0
Togo	2,1	2,9	4,0
Uganda	0,5	1,2	3,0
United Republic of Tanzania	0,3	0,3	1,0
Zambia	1,5	2,3	2,0
Zimbabwe	1,3	5,2	4,0

Sources: (UNESCO, 1999; UIS, 2003)

The GER in higher education remains low in most of the countries in the region. There are at least nine countries where GER in higher education is only one per cent. In a majority of the countries, only two countries (South Africa and Mauritius) have GERs higher than 10 per cent. This clearly shows the task ahead in these countries to bridge the gap in enrolment between developed and developing countries.

The data on higher education shows that there is an urgent need for countries in the African region to expand their enrolment in higher education. The growth of the private sector is seen as one of the viable alternatives.

## 5. Private sector in higher education in Africa

### 5.1 Emergence of the private sector in higher education

Private higher education is one of the most dynamic and fastest growing segments of post-secondary education at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Altbach, 1999). There are numerous reasons for their emergence on a large scale (Varghese, 2004 b). First, the inability of the public sector to satisfy the growing social demand for higher education has necessitated the entry of the private sector in order to expand access conditions. Second, the changing political view of large-scale public subsidies to social sectors will reduce investment possibilities in the 'productive sectors' and hence the overall growth potentials of the economy. Third, in many countries, the demand for courses and subjects of study had changed and public universities were thus unable to respond to this phenomenon. Fourth, in countries where the public sector is criticized for inefficiency, the private sector is increasingly promoted for its efficiency in operation. Fifth, in many centrally planned economies, the transition from state planning to market forces was also associated with the expansion of the private sector in higher education. In fact, privatization of education – especially higher education – was an integral part of the reform measures and, at times, of the conditionality for receiving external funding support during the transition period.

De-regulation policies and advances in information technology have globalized higher education as a transnational operation. Many of those who provide cross border e-learning facilities are private operators or operate on a full cost basis. Globalization has shaped twinning and franchising arrangements between universities across the globe. E-learning has brought together new alliances in higher education, for instance, the *Universitas 21* (a company incorporated in the United Kingdom with a network of 18 leading universities in 10 countries), and the *Big Four Alliance* (Oxford, Princeton, Stanford and Yale). Columbia Business and London Business Schools have come together to offer joint degrees. Similarly, HEC, Paris, LSE, and London and Stern, New York, have joined hands to offer the *Trium Executive MBA Programme*. The Chicago University has campuses in Barcelona and Singapore. Many Australian universities have twinning arrangements with universities in Malaysia and in other African countries. The franchising arrangements among universities of the developing world are also gaining currency. The AMA International University of Dhaka is a joint venture between Bangladesh and the Philippines.

Virtual universities and for-profit universities have improved access to privatized services to the increasing number of people living in different areas across the globe. The DeVry Institute of Technology of DeVry Inc., Strayer University of Strayer Education, and the University of Phoenix of the Apollo Group (Ruch, 2001) are examples of for-profit universities and on-line providers. Many business firms establish corporate universities essentially to provide continuing education for its staff. Firms such as ABB in Zurich, General Electric and IBM have this arrangement.

Private universities and institutions discussed in this paper are those non-state universities that are self-financing. These self-financing universities/institutions have mushroomed in the 1990s. Private universities could be for-profit universities or not-for-profit organizations. Many

private universities that appeared in the 1990s were for-profit organizations or not-for profit institutions supported by religious bodies.

## **5.2 Proliferation of private institutions of higher education (PIHE) in Africa**

### ***Changing public policy towards PIHEs***

While political thinking favouring the application of market principles in higher education was a debatable issue in the 1980s, it became an operational principle guiding developments in higher education in the 1990s in Africa. Although private agencies were active in the school education in Sub-Saharan Africa (See Kitaev, 1999), the legal framework for the operation of private sector higher institutions did not exist in many of the countries in Africa until the 1990s. This was one of the constraints in the emergence of the private sector in higher education in Africa. The increasing social demand for higher education and the demand for a different type of education (James, 1991) led to initiating policy measures encouraging the private sector in many countries, which used to have a virtual monopoly of public higher education institutions.

Kenya was one of the few countries where private universities has a longer history and co-existed with public universities. In Kenya, the *Kamunge Report* (Presidential Working Party on Education, 1988) recommended cost sharing in education and the establishment of private and *Harambe* institutions. In 1991, the World Bank, in advancing credit assistance, prevailed upon the government to restrict the growth of enrolment of public universities to no more than three per cent per annum up to the year 2017. These developments encouraged the establishment of a large number of private universities and institutions in Kenya. Senegal passed a law in 1991 which enabled the establishment of private higher education institutions. This law was reinforced by another law in 1994. Consequently, many institutions of higher education were established in response to the social demand for professional and technical education. Legal provision for private higher education was made in Benin in the 1990s. A large number of private higher education institutions were established in the 1990s. As of now, there are 27 private tertiary level institutions offering courses mostly in different vocations.

Nigeria had a prolonged history to legislate in favour of private higher education institutions. Although initiated in the 1980s, the aspirations for the establishment of private higher education institutions became legal and authorized only in the 1990s. When the law on private higher education became effective in the 1990s, many private higher education institutions were established (Jibril, 2003). In Uganda too, the legislative measures on private higher education institutions got momentum only in the 1990s. Similar is the case in countries such as Cameroon, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, etc.

An analysis of the developments in Africa point out that there was a strong move towards public universities during the period of independence. The 1990s saw the emergence of private sector institutions in Africa. It can be argued that the de-regulation policies under the structural adjustment programmes, the fiscal incapacity of the state to expand higher education through public universities, and the inability of public universities to respond immediately to household demand for certain market-friendly courses led to a movement towards increasing social demand

for private higher education. The globalization process further reinforced the need to go beyond the public institutions of higher education. Private higher education institutions in many countries operate in collaboration with foreign universities and institutions located in Europe, the United States of America and Australia. This marks a definite shift in the conceptualization of development of higher education from a national public entity to a market-based service to be offered on demand and for a price, and traded with other countries if necessary. The recent workshop on WTO/GATS and Higher Education in Africa (AAU, 2004) illustrates trends in the entrenchment of market principles in the provision of higher education and recognition of the need for compulsions of cross-border education in Africa.

### ***Size and spread of the PIHEs in Africa***

Today, the private sector is the fastest growing segment in higher education in many countries in Africa. This is more so in terms of number of institutions. In fact, the number of private universities outnumber the public universities. However, in many instances, private universities continue to be small and they account for a relatively low share of total enrolment in higher education. The private sector, no doubt, has become an important sector in these economies. The role of the private sector is not confined to universities alone. In fact, the non-university sector is emerging as a good competitor in private sector higher education in many countries.

Initially, Kenya led the establishment of private higher education institutions in Africa. They were soon joined by Benin, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, Mozambique, Cameroon, etc. In general, Francophone African countries lagged behind their Anglophone counterparts in terms of a move towards the establishment of private higher education institutions in Africa (Levy, 2003). As of now, the Sub-Saharan countries have more than 100 private universities, and more than half of them were established in the 1990s. In fact, between 1991 and 1999, nearly 65 private universities were established in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2002).

It is difficult to obtain information on private sector institutions in many countries. *Table 3* provides information on a limited number of countries. The number of private higher education institutions is large in many countries such as Benin, Cameroon, Tanzania, etc. In many countries, the private institutions outnumber the public universities and institutions of higher education. However, in terms of enrolment, the public institutions still dominate the scene in Africa.

**Table 3 : Private higher education institutions and universities in Africa**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Private</b>
Benin	27
Cameroon	17
Ghana	28
Nigeria	13
Kenya	14
Senegal	48
Tanzania	10
Uganda	15
Zimbabwe	4

*Source* : (Teferra and Altbach, 2003) and various documents.

### ***Types of PIHEs in Africa***

There are at least three types of PIHEs in African countries. They are private universities, private colleges, and non-university institutions of higher education mostly in the area of vocational and professional training. Private universities offer courses leading to a degree, while courses offered in other types very often lead to a certificate or a diploma. The duration of courses in the non-university sector institutions is shorter and mostly vocational in nature. These three types of private institutions co-exist in the same country. For example, Nigeria at present has three private universities, and several private polytechnics and colleges of education. In Ghana, private colleges run diploma and certificate level programmes (Effah, 2003). In countries such as Senegal, Benin, Cameroon, etc., non-university private institutions are more common than private universities. Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe have a good presence of private universities. South Africa seems to have a preference for both types of institutions.

Some of the private institutions of higher education (PIHEs) are registered and recognized by public authorities. Some award degrees that are accredited by agencies responsible for accreditation. The status of the PIHEs in this regard depends on the legal provisions created by the country. For example, Kenya has clearly laid down steps or stages in the registration of a private university to recognition and accreditation (Abagi and Nzomo, 2001). In South Africa, all private providers are now required to register their institutions and apply for accreditation for their programmes with the South African Qualification Authority. Zimbabwe has clearly made the conditions for the establishment of private universities. The first private university of Zimbabwe (Africa University) was established by the United Methodist Church and was formally inaugurated by the President of the country in 1994. This is an institution conceived to be an international university, and hence it stipulates that nearly 60 per cent of the students and staff will be drawn from outside the country.

There are also instances where a good number of institutions are not registered and recognized; yet they still operate and attract students. In Cameroon, for example, many of PIHEs which are operating are not authorized since they do not meet the requirements regarding infrastructure, equipment, and staffing stipulated by the government. Many of them are operating illegally (Njeuma, 2003). There are similar cases in other countries also. Many of the recent private institutions are established in response to the market-driven forces and are unplanned in

many ways. Many a time, for-profit institutions operate in legally ambiguous settings. They admit students and teach courses without a right to offer degrees or certificates, which are recognized neither by the government nor by the accreditation agencies (Levy, 2002).

Two factors contribute significantly to this state of affairs. Firstly, inadequacies in the legal provisions for the establishment of PIHEs. This will lead to a lack of clearly defined operational principles and regulatory mechanisms to open and operate PIHEs, and such situations provide fertile ground for the mushrooming of PIHEs. Secondly, the employment market recognizes training provided and certificates issued by PIHEs, even when they are not formally recognized by the public authorities. This happens especially when employment is generated more and more in the private sector, which is the situation in many of the African countries where norms and rules for recruitment can be more flexible than those in the public sector. In other words, the emergence of private sector dominance in creating employment opportunities gives scope for the continued operation of PIHEs even when they are not formally recognized by the public authorities.

## **6. Ownership of institutions of private higher education**

The ownership pattern of private institutions of higher education varies among countries. An analysis of ownership patterns of PIHEs in many countries, including African countries (Varghese, 2004b), reveals that there are the following patterns of ownership: i) some PIHEs operate like multinationals; ii) some PIHEs operate in collaboration with foreign institutions; iii) some are foreign collaborations established through the government or public universities; iv) some are religious organizations; v) some are private firms established by nationals and operating within the national confines; and vi) some establish collaboration within institutions of the same country. Africa has private institutions that combine more than one of these combinations.

### ***Transnational***

Many private universities and institutions of higher education are owned and operated by or affiliated to foreign universities. Most of them produce surplus and many of them have collaborations with foreign institutions. In one of the recent studies in CIS countries (Varghese, 2004b), it was found that institutions such as The Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA) in Georgia is founded as a joint venture with the United States Information Agency, Washington. The European School of Management, Georgia, is a limited liability company with the following partners: the Consumer Co-operative Union of Georgia holding 20 per cent of the authorized capital, Tbilisi Business School holding 60 per cent of the capital, and the European School of Management, Spain, holding 20 per cent of the capital. The International Black Sea University is a collaborative project between the Georgian and Turkish Governments (Sharvashidze, 2001).

Africa has a combination of these ownership patterns. Some of the PIHEs in Africa are owned by organizations or agencies abroad. Malaysia is an example of campuses operated by foreign universities and institutions (Lee, 1999). Several PIHEs in Africa, too, are owned by foreign organizations. For example, Bond University in Australia, Monash University in

Australia, Business School Netherlands in Holland, etc., are examples of foreign-owned private higher education institutions in Africa. The United States International University (USIU), Kenya, was established as a company incorporated as per the code of the State of California, USA. Similarly, Daystar Company in the USA owns Daystar University of Kenya. In South Africa, the government has forced some of them to register as foreign companies (Levy, 2003). On the other hand, the African University of Zimbabwe is established as an international university following national rules and regulations.

### ***Collaboration with foreign institutions***

Some of the PIHEs in Africa operate in collaboration with other universities or organizations abroad. For example in South Africa, there is a rapid proliferation of providers linked to institutions and universities in the UK, USA, and Australia (Subotsky, 2003). Some of the PIHEs offering two-year courses in industrial and professional subjects in Benin are affiliated to foreign universities and institutions located mainly in France. The Solusi University, Zimbabwe, is affiliated to Andrew University, Michigan, in the USA. ENEA in Senegal has collaboration with Suffolk University in the USA.

### ***Collaboration with universities within the country***

Some PIHEs collaborate with universities within the country to facilitate and award degrees. Some of the not-for-profit PIHEs in Ghana offer degree-level courses in collaboration with the University of Ghana. The collaboration and co-operation between Africa University and the University of Zimbabwe is another example of local collaboration, although in this case, degrees are awarded independently by each of the institutions. At times, PIHEs have an affiliation with more than one university. For example, the Arupe College in Zimbabwe started as an exclusive male Jesuit private college and is affiliated to the University of Zimbabwe for certain degrees and to the Gregorian University of Rome for some other courses.

### ***Religion affiliated***

Religion affiliated higher education is a precursor to many of the private higher education institutions in many countries. The religion-affiliated institutions are established either by Christian missions or Muslim organizations. In Africa, a larger number of institutions of higher education are supported or sponsored by the Christian organizations. The Catholic University in Kenya, the Uganda Christian University, the Adventist University in Cameroon, the St. Augustine University in Tanzania, and the Africa University of Zimbabwe are some of the examples of universities affiliated to the church. In fact, each of the countries where private higher education is emerging as an important sector experiences the establishment of several religion affiliated universities. The religious agencies were confined to school level education till recently. However, the PIHEs give scope for religious organizations to extend their influence to the higher education sector.

Daystar Company owns Daystar University in Kenya with one of its objectives as providing academic leadership to the church in Africa. It raises funds from Daystar US and Daystar Canada for awarding scholarships to students in the University in Kenya. The Solusi



University in Zimbabwe is a Seventh-day Adventist university, and the staff and their families are expected to be professed members of the same faith (Maunde, 2003).

## **7. Programmes of study and courses offered by the PIHEs**

The public universities are large organizations offering courses in a variety of subject areas. The academic interest and advances in frontiers of knowledge decide programmes of study and courses offered in public universities in general. The purpose of establishment and orientation of the operation of private universities is different from that of public universities. Since many of them are self-financing and profit generating, they have to offer courses that have a premium both in the education market and on the labour market. The demand for particular courses and their prices (fees levied) in the education market are decided by the employability of the graduates. In this sense, the education market and labour market give signals to the private institutions, and their success depends upon their ability to respond quickly to such responses.

The courses offered in private universities in Africa reflect either a commercial consideration or a religious orientation. It seems the primary objectives of establishing a university are reflected in the curriculum offered by the private institutions. The for-profit institutions cater to the private business enterprises. Needless to add, the PIHEs of the for-profit category and those not affiliated to religious bodies offer course that are market-friendly. Courses in business administration, computer sciences, accounting, marketing, economics, communication, etc., are very common in for-profit private universities.

One of the features of private higher education in African countries, as mentioned earlier, is the presence of the non-university sector in higher education. In countries such as Benin, Cameroon, Senegal, Ghana, etc., the professional and vocational courses are very popular in the private institutions of higher education. These institutions offer selected courses and they are better understood as 'boutique' institutions (Thaver, 2003) as against the super market model of public universities.

In general, the private universities of recent origin offer courses that require less investment in terms of infrastructure and equipment. This is in contrast with some of the private initiatives in other countries, such as India, where Engineering and Medical Colleges, which require a high level of investment in infrastructure and other facilities, are common in the private sector. At times, the courses offered and affiliation of the university with institutions abroad help the universities to increase their fee rates. The trend in PIHEs in Africa shows that they mostly offer courses in subject areas which require lower levels of investment in infrastructure facilities.

The religion affiliated universities offer courses focusing on religious epistemologies – focusing either on Islamic or on Christian beliefs and traditions. For example, the courses offered by the Islamic University of Uganda incorporates Islamic perspectives. The political science curriculum offers a module on Islamic political thought, etc. (Thaver, 2003). Catholic universities in Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Uganda reflect this trend – orientation towards religious studies. The Africa University of Zimbabwe started with two faculties – the Faculty of Theology

and the Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The courses offered and degrees awarded in theology help men and women who would like to join the church hierarchy.

It needs to be noted, however, that even in the church affiliated or Islamic universities, the courses are not confined to religious studies. Most of these universities offer courses in other subject areas too. For example, a majority of students at the Daystar University in Kenya (nearly 85 per cent of students) opt for employment-oriented courses and a small proportion of students seek religion-oriented courses. The same is the case with other universities, too.

It can be seen from the above discussions that the courses offered vary depending on the basic orientation of the universities. Those which are self-financing and profit-generating institutions offer courses closely aligned to the private sector employment, especially in the manufacturing and service sectors. Courses on information technology, management, and business studies are very common among courses offered by these institutions. These are market-friendly courses where the demand will be sufficient to price it high enough to recover the total costs and to generate profits. Moreover, these are courses that are not offered in many traditional universities, and when offered, the number of seats available are very limited. The religion-oriented universities try to offer courses of a general variety, but make a serious effort to link them with theology.

## **8. Teaching staff in private institutions of higher education**

Many of the private institutions of higher education are new and operate with a limited number of staff members. One of the unique features of the PIHEs is that they have very few regular staff. The general trend is that of a large number of part-time teachers and a limited number of full-time teachers employed in PIHEs. In one of the recent studies (Varghese, 2004b), it is found that reliance on part-time teachers is a common feature among private universities irrespective of their location and orientation. Interestingly, there are also instances where private institutions operate without even a single regular staff.

Many private universities in Africa, too, rely heavily on part-time teachers. At times, some of the private universities in Africa are headed by senior professors from the public universities. Most of the teachers in Daystar, Kenya, have a Masters and few have doctorate degrees. In many private universities, there seems to be a positive correlation between the share of part-time teachers and doctor-level qualified teachers. This is mainly because many part-timers are drawn from public universities, and professors in public universities are well qualified. Relying on the teaching staff from public universities is a good mechanism to ensure quality in teaching and savings in expenditure. However, the question on the impact of such a practice on public universities needs to be analyzed.

There are exceptions to this trend of relying heavily on part-time teachers. There are examples of universities that are private and recently established with a majority of staff being regular. There are instances where full-time staff members are recruited from public universities. There are certain universities that are established as international universities where the share of full-time staff members will be high. Arupe College in Zimbabwe has international staff from the

USA, UK, Germany, Tanzania, India, etc. The Africa University of Zimbabwe stipulated that nearly 60 per cent of its staff members should be from abroad. In some of the universities, such as Solusi University, the staff and their families are members of the seventh day Adventist faith. They have to give tithes to the church (Maunde, 2003).

The profitability of private institutions depends on savings made by them on expenditure. Salaries (especially staff salaries) form a dominant part of expenditure of educational institutions in the public domain. Many private institutions make savings by employing teaching staff on a part-time basis or relying on church affiliated staff members.

## **9. Student profile in PIHEs**

Most of the private institutions are self-financing. Student fees form the main source of income for many of the PIHEs. Since they are self-financing institutions, fees charged will also be high. Therefore, in general, the students coming to private institutions are those with paying capacities.

In many countries, the competition for admission to public universities is very high. In general, those who do not get admission to public universities seek admission in PIHEs. In other words, the chances are that the academic profile of the participants may be lower in PIHEs when compared with their counterparts in the public universities. Some of the PIHEs in Africa attract foreign students. The Africa University and Solusi University are examples of institutions attracting foreign students, especially from the neighboring countries. Some of the universities, given their religious orientation, attract students from the same community or denomination. This is the case with students in the Faculty of Theology. In certain cases, the students in the Faculty of Theology are already a part of the church hierarchy.

There is a general belief that many of the private universities attract more male students than female students. The gender balance depends on the subjects offered and fees levied. Courses offered in the Faculties of Arts and Humanities with low levels of fees attract a larger number of female candidates. Courses offered in the Faculty of Theology attract a larger number of male students. Courses such as arts and humanities, communication, community development, and marketing are areas where women outnumber men. However, courses offered in economics, business management, information technology, accounting, etc., attract more male candidates.

In Daystar University, Kenya, female students outnumber male students. They account for 59 per cent of the total. However, at the post-graduate level, the male share is marginally higher. Even in USIS, Kenya, female candidates outnumber the male candidates. This is an interesting trend because the GER of females is half of that of the males in Kenya. In the CIS countries, the participation of females outnumbers that of the males in higher education, and hence this is not a significant finding for these countries. Perhaps the social background of the students may explain this trend in Kenya.

Why do students seek admissions in PIHEs? The first and foremost reason is that they expect to be employed soon after their graduation. That is, investment in education in PIHEs

improves the chances of avoiding unemployment. Further, if the PIHEs are well established and of better academic credibility than the public universities, then students consider that it is an opportunity for them to get into lucrative private-sector jobs, into multi-national corporations, and/or international agencies, etc. This is more so if the PIHE is owned by a foreign university or is operating in collaboration with them. These considerations prompt them to pay high prices for these courses. They are also highly motivated to take advantage of the new opportunities provided to them.

## **10. Quality of education in PIHEs**

It is very difficult to generalize on the quality of PIHEs. They vary widely, depending upon the agency responsible for establishing the university, the legislative requirements for infrastructure, and other facilities, etc. Quality of education institutions could be based on various factors, such as the level of infrastructural facilities, quality of programmes offered, qualification levels of teachers, performance of students in their evaluation while in the university, and their performance once on the labour market.

Many of the countries in Africa have strict legislation on the infrastructural facilities to be provided. Some of them do not comply with these stipulations and are not recognized. Kenya has very stringent regulations for establishing a private university. These stipulations apply to the programme, qualification levels of the staff, infrastructure, etc. In Cameroon, many PIHEs are not recognized since they do not comply with the infrastructural requirements as stipulated in the regulations. Some of the PIHEs are operating with very limited facilities.

One of the features of PIHEs in Africa is that a majority of them offer courses in subject areas which require limited investment in infrastructure. The courses in theology, humanities and social sciences demand less facilities than science, engineering and medical areas. However, it needs to be mentioned that in terms of facilities, some of the PIHEs are better equipped than public institutions in some countries. Similarly, the technology used and the teaching/learning process is better than what one finds within public universities.

Many countries in Africa have already established accreditation agencies and the regulations insist that the courses offered by the PIHEs are subject to close scrutiny by these agencies and are accredited by them. For example, the regulations in Kenya are very strict in this regard. The private institutions in Kenya are formally accredited by the accreditation agencies. South Africa, too, regulates the quality of programmes offered in PIHEs through the accreditation requirements. Some of the private institutions have foreign collaboration, and certificates are jointly awarded or by the foreign university or institution.

Academic qualification of teachers is another important area affecting the quality of education offered. The PIHEs in Africa are better placed in this regard for at least two reasons. Firstly, many of them depend heavily on part-time staff drawn mainly from public universities. Secondly, well-established PIHEs hire qualified teachers, at times doctoral degree holders, as their staff. Daystar University in Kenya is a good example of this trend. Needless to add, the conditionality of scrutiny by the accreditation agency itself acts as a good quality regulating

mechanism. However, the facilities for staff development and research opportunities for staff are rather limited in PIHEs.

It is interesting to note that although many of the students in the PIHEs have a lower level academic profile than those in the public universities and their academic performance, in general, is better. The dropout rates are low and the graduation rates are high in almost all PIHEs. This may be partly due to the fact that due to fees, only those who really want to pursue a study programme seek admission in the PIHEs, and partly due to the fact that the students, in general, are highly motivated and perhaps more motivated than their counterparts in the public universities. Private institutions, very often, monitor student progress more closely than what is being done in public universities.

One important criterion for the success of the private institutions is the employability of its graduates and the employment rate among them. (For a discussion on recent trends in the employment of university graduates in Africa see Al-Samarrai and Bennel, 2003). Data on these are not readily available. However, the indications are that the PIHE graduates find jobs more easily than those from the public institutions. This is mainly due to the fact that the PIHEs are offering employment-oriented courses. They respond more quickly to the changes in the employment market than public institutions do. Moreover, the demand for admission will decline if the unemployment rate among graduates of PIHEs is very high. The very fact that the PIHEs continue to expand indicates that people perceive positively of the PIHEs in terms of offering courses to get a job for their children.

## **11. Financing of PIHEs**

Public universities receive a major share of funding from the government, while private institutions seldom obtain financial aid from public authorities. In some countries, many operate like an enterprise generating profit. Tuition fees form the financial backbone of many private institutions. They must meet their expenditure with what they collect from their students. The total income of private institutions is determined, therefore, by the number of students and the rate of tuition levied. For any given level of tuition fees, these institutions attempt to attract a larger number of students in order to maximize profitability. This is achieved, as discussed earlier, through introducing courses that are popular on the employment market and not offered by traditional public universities.

Studies in Asia have shown that, while patterns of financing higher education institutions are highly diverse in several countries on the whole, in general, student fees seem to be the dominant source of finance in private institutions (Sothorn and Yibing, 1995). The case studies (Alam, 2001; Tasbulotava, 2001; Ikramov, 2001; Ovodenko, 2001, Abagi and Nzomo, 2001) confirm that student fees form the backbone of financing the PIHEs in the CIS countries, in Africa and in Asia.

The PIHEs in Africa derive their income mainly from student fees. In most cases, this is the main source of income. This is more so in case of for-profit PIHEs where fee rates are very high. The religion-based universities, in general, levy a lower rate of fees. The tuition fees do

vary between PIHEs, and at times, the variation is substantial. The for-profit institutions levy fees on the basis of full cost recovery and, if possible, to generate a profit. In Kenya, the average fees levied by for-profit institutions for a year of study is around \$1,800/ and the USIU levies a fee of \$2,800/ from students coming from Africa and around \$4,800/ from students coming from the USA (Njome, 2003). One can see that the level of fees in for-profit institutions is several times higher than the per capita income in the countries. In some instances, the PIHEs affiliated to universities or institutions abroad levy higher fees, and households are willing to pay the higher rate of fees provided the students get a degree from a foreign university.

Fees levied by not-for-profit PIHEs are rather low and affordable to many. For example, the fees charged by the University of Solusi is \$55/ which is one of the lowest, and certainly lower than fees levied by public universities including the University of Zimbabwe (\$272). These religion affiliated universities can afford to retain a lower rate of fees since some of them get subsidies from their parent organization, and at times the staff is drawn from the church hierarchy who may not draw salaries. For example, religion-affiliated universities of Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Zimbabwe, etc., get financial support from their sponsors. However, some universities get support from other sources. Some private universities get a part of their resources from voluntary contributions, supplies in terms of equipment, etc. Some of the universities are engaged in income-generating activities.

The church affiliated universities get support from the religious organizations. In Africa, the majority of the PIHEs are not-for-profit organizations. One of the reasons for this trend is that they are owned by the religious organizations. Daystar Company owns Daystar University with one of its objectives as providing academic leadership to the church in Africa. It receives a larger part of its operational budget from tuitions (95 per cent), but a larger share of its capital expenditure is raised through donations. Similarly, the presence of missionary staff reduces the salary cost. It also raises funds for awarding scholarships to students from Daystar US and Daystar, Canada.

The profitability of private institutions depends on savings made by them on expenditure. Salaries (especially staff salaries) form a dominant part of the expenditure of educational institutions in the public domain. Many private institutions count on this. They make savings by employing teaching staff on a part-time basis. In some of the church affiliated universities of Africa, the people engaged in church activities teach without charging the university any payment or by accepting a lower salary than the market rate. This brings down expenditure and, at times, in the case of not-for-profit PIHEs, the benefits are passed onto students in the form of reduced fees.

The analysis shows that the PIHEs vary widely in terms of their financial arrangements. They do not depend on the public sources of funding. All of them levy fees from students and are the main source of financing their activities. However, the level of fees levied varies among PIHEs. In general, for-profit PIHEs levy higher fees than not-for-profit PIHEs. One can also notice a variation in fee rates among for-profit PIHEs. The religion affiliated PIHEs levy relatively low levels of fees, at times lower than that in the public universities. Some of the not-for-profit PIHEs get funding support either directly or indirectly from the sponsors. The for-profit PIHEs, in general, do not receive any financial support from sources other than the student

fees. Therefore, high tuition fees, market-friendly courses, and part-time staff are common features to many of the for-profit PIHEs that appeared throughout the 1990s in Africa.

## **12. Concluding observations**

An analysis of the developments of higher education in Africa point out that there was a strong move towards public universities and an emphasis on the national system of education during the period following independence. The establishment of a public university was seen as a sign of national pride and a symbol of self-reliance in many countries. However, the monopoly of the public sector institutions in higher education came to an end towards the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when private sector institutions emerged as a viable alternative. It can be argued that the de-regulation policies under the structural adjustment programmes, the fiscal incapacity of the state to expand higher education through public universities, the inability of public universities to respond immediately to household demand for employment-oriented courses created a conducive environment for the emergence and expansion of private higher education in Africa.

The market-friendly reforms initiated under the structural adjustment programmes were reinforced during the phase of globalization. Even when many of the African countries are not yet beneficiaries of the globalization process, the market-oriented reforms took strong roots in certain sectors, including higher education. This change in attitude and understanding helped initiate reform measures going beyond the confines of public institutions of higher education. Consequently, a legislative framework was created for the establishment and smooth functioning of private institutions of higher education. These changes also helped the entry of cross-border education to many countries in the region, as well as a definite shift in the conceptualization of development of higher education from the national domain to the global arena.

At present, the private sector is a fast-expanding segment of higher education in Africa. In terms of number of institutions, they surpass public institutions in many countries. However, in terms of enrolment, the PIHEs still continue to be a small segment of higher education. The private sector operates both institutions, training people in specific vocations, colleges and universities. In general, the PIHEs are small in size and offer mostly market-friendly courses in a limited number of subject areas.

The PIHEs operating in African countries can broadly be categorized into two: those operating for-profit and not-for-profit institutions. In general, the for-profit PIHEs levy high fees, offer market-friendly courses and create a surplus. Many of them are operating in collaboration with foreign universities and institutions located in Europe, the United States of America and Australia. There is a fairly close correlation between the existence of not-for-profit PIHEs and the involvement of religious agencies in the provision of higher education. Most of the not-for-profit PIHEs have an affiliation to a church or to an Islamic institution. They offer courses in theology and related areas. In addition, they also offer courses in humanities, philosophy and in market-friendly areas such as economics, accounting, business administration, etc. Many of them levy relatively low levels of fees, sometimes lower than that charged by public universities.

Operational efficiency of PIHEs should be higher than that of the public universities. The for-profit PIHEs ensure their operational efficiency primarily by increasing the gap between the fees collected and the operational cost of the institution. Staff cost being the major item of expenditure, they try to minimize their expenditure on this count. This is done through relying heavily on part-time teachers. In other words, the level of profit at a given level of fees is a good indication of operational efficiency of the for-profit PIHEs. The not-for-profit PIHEs, especially the church affiliated institutions, rely on staff from the church hierarchy in some of the faculties. In general, the students' studies are more closely monitored in PIHEs than in public institutions. In general, the graduation rate among students in the PIHEs is high and employment prospects are better. Better performance of graduates both in the examinations and in the employment market gives the PIHEs higher credibility and this credibility is an investment in their own future. There is also a social and economic compulsion for the PIHEs to perform better since their existence depends on their capacity to attract more and more students.

The emergence of PIHEs raises issues related to national development from a broader perspective. There are areas of study, which are important for the country but not friendly to the market, and these courses may not be offered by the private sector. The multi-faculty public universities service the society in many of these areas better than a typical PIHE can do. The private universities are changing the conception of a university with multiple faculties, departments and subject areas of study. As pointed out by one of the authors, the conception of the university is changing from a super market model, offering all options to a boutique model where only limited items will be catered to. Many of the PIHEs offer more of training than a deeper understanding of the subject area from a theoretical point of view. Their main function is knowledge transmission rather than contributing to knowledge generation.

Teaching is the main function carried out by the PIHEs. Research is rarely emphasized by the PIHEs. The public universities are engaged both in teaching and research organizations. The PIHEs do not have infrastructural facilities to carry out research. Many of them rely on part-time teachers and do not have regular staff to carry out these responsibilities. It is important to draw implications for national development if institutions of higher education confine only to the teaching responsibilities that too are in limited disciplines. It is important to develop a vision (Mama and Ann-Marea, 2003) of future society and the role of university education in shaping its citizens.

There are issues related to PIHEs and move towards a more equal society. Given the higher level of fees levied by the PIHEs, especially the for-profit ones, private universities will be attracting students from a better social-economic background. This creates a cleavage between those who can afford higher education and those who cannot. Again, since the employment market will be rewarding those who have degrees/diplomas from these institutions, inequalities in opportunities for admissions to these PIHEs will have a negative effect on equity, especially from the long-term point of view. In other words, the application of ability to pay principle in admissions can contribute to widening intergenerational inequalities.

Another issue relates to gender-parity in admissions. In some of the countries, it is found that gender disparities are wider in PIHEs than in public universities. However, this cannot be generalized. Gender parity depends on the level of fees and the type of courses offered. Since



many of the PIHEs are not-for-profit, they are offering courses in women-friendly subject areas. In fact, in some of the universities, such as Daystar in Kenya, women outnumber men in enrolment.

Do private universities contribute to the weakening of public universities? One of the important reasons for establishing PIHEs is to absorb the excess social demand for higher education which cannot be satisfied by the public universities. However, there are instances, especially in Kenya, where enrolment in public universities has declined in the recent past. However, this cannot be generalized since enrolment in many public universities indicates that they continue to grow despite the existence of private universities. Another aspect of the problem is that PIHEs rely heavily on part-time teachers drawn mainly from public universities. There are instances where students in public universities have launched agitation on this issue. This is an area that needs to be approached cautiously, especially in a situation where the salaries of university teachers in the public are rather low. On the other hand, relying on teachers from public universities has a positive influence on the quality of instruction provided in the PIHEs. However, whether such an arrangement negatively affects the quality of education provided through public universities is an issue which needs further discussion.

All of these lead us to think about developing a realistic and sustainable policy towards the expansion of private higher education. State funding was assured and subsidies were provided to promote higher education when the public sector was dominant in development, employing a major share of the university graduates. If the same logic is extended now, the private sector, which employs a major share of the university graduates, should pay for the graduates and their education. The profit from public education accrues to the private sector when they are the major consumers of the product, the graduates. If this principle is adopted, then the alternative is requesting the private sector to pay for the running of public universities. When the private sector acquires physical capital, they are willing to pay for the capital asset and its use. However, when they hire human capital, they pay only for its use. Therefore, there is a case for requesting the private sector to pay for those who are educated in the public universities.

The new realities of the globalization process reinforce the need for expanding higher education. There is a need for the continued expansion of higher education in Africa. The enrolment distance in higher education between African countries and the developed world is increasing. Therefore, there is a need for expanding higher education and a case for seeking alternative arrangements to expand the system, if public resources are not available. Fortunately, there are no conflicts between public and PIHEs in many areas of their operation. The courses offered and the organizational arrangements of provision are different in the two set ups. Therefore, a peaceful co-existence of the two sectors may be a viable and realistic alternative.

Will the PIHEs be able to replace the public sector in higher education? The chances seem to be limited. The public universities make a significant contribution to broader objectives of national development, and this cannot be substituted by private universities. The public universities, in general, provide secular education irrespective of the orientation of the student. However, many of the not-for-profit PIHEs are affiliated to religious bodies – either Islamic or Christian (Thaver, 2003). It is important to establish linkages between religious orientation, national development goals, and social progress objectives.

Markets are reliable to ensure efficiency, but the state is a better protector of equity. Perhaps what is needed is a redefinition of the role of the state, more in terms of a regulator than a provider of higher education. The regulatory role will specify the conditions for the opening and operation of the PIHEs, including infrastructure facilities, quality control, and if possible, the maximum limit for the levying of student fees. In other words, the role of the state continues to be important even when it may not be the dominant partner in funding.

The PIHEs in Africa, in general, contribute to the absorption of excess social demand for and of differentiated demand for higher education, and in this sense, the PIHEs' role may be seen in many instances as complementary to the contributions made by public universities. Therefore, there is a need for a better partnership between the private and public sectors in higher education rather than leaving the sector entirely either to the public sector or to the market forces. What is needed is an increased investment in higher education. Expansion of regulated PIHEs contributes to this objective. Designing a framework and modalities of developing a better partnership between the private and public sector on the one hand, and help developing a socially responsible private sector in higher education will be a more realistic option for the further growth and expansion of the higher education sector as a whole, in Africa.

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