

COMMERCIALIZATION OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL IN NIGERIA DWINDLING ECONOMY

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Abstract

The aim of this write-up is to critically appraise commercialization of public universities in Nigeria dwindling economy. Dwindling economy has caused tremendous negative impacts in the nation's economy. Education and in particular university type is adversely affected in terms of goal attainment. University managers are complaining of inadequate funding and the need to improve the quality of education delivery by making funds readily available to them, so they could compete with their counterparts elsewhere in the world. Education is regarded as a fundamental social, economic and cultural right. It is meant to provide knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. It is essential for civic order and citizenship and for sustainable economic growth, reduction in poverty and national development. Argument for and against commercialization of public universities are highlighted in this write-up from literature reviewed concerning commercialization, concept of dwindling economy and its effect, etc. The negative impact of a dwindling economy on students, parents and guardians cannot be overemphasized. Apologists of commercialization of public universities who would always flash the United States and European countries as examples, have failed to appreciate that the playground is not equal in their comparison. Commercialization will smack nothing short of criminality against the poor Nigerian masses for the same dosage of economic remedy to be prescribed for public universities in Nigeria. The only benefit the Nigerian masses could receive from government is education, so no form of reform should deprive kids of the poor from acquiring

university education. The position of this write up and its recommendation that the system should not be commercialised in the present dwindling economy.

Keywords: Commercialization, Dwindling Economy, Public University

University education describes educational level above the secondary education with advanced tools of knowledge and information which assists the recipients to generate, distribute and preserve systematic academic knowledge. University education has a distinctive role in individual development and vocational life. It is also deeply committed in scientific research with results expected to serve for the increase of social welfare. In responding to national aspirations and quest for development, university among other tertiary education institutions, has always struggled for self renewal. The critical issue in a dwindling economy as we have it now is that providing better quality and its massification, comes with a big price which the governments (Federal and States) grants and subventions to public universities, can hardly be sustained. Consequently, the advocacy and attraction of commercialization of university education appears to be the way out.

Finance is a critical resource among other resources of production in any organization or enterprise. University funding is very paramount to the attainment of its goals hence, it must be prioritised and planned for accordingly. Adequate funding among other pertinent issues to a reasonable extent, guarantees university's optimal performance towards production of high quality, knowledgeable and productive graduates for a nation's formidable workforce. Funding of university education in Nigeria is at present very dismal due to the current dwindling economy with its attendant high rates of inflation, unemployment, falling revenues, etc. With the increasing evidence of financial constraints, education watchers, some stakeholders and pundits in financing education, are gradually pushing for commercialization of tertiary education as solution to the funding bottlenecks currently experienced in the system, especially in the area of cost recovery and redistribution of the financial burden of investing in education.

Funding challenges in public universities has no doubt, had calamitous effects on the system's performance indices and, consequently, universities have been forced to embark on income generating projects in order to source for funds. Ayeni (2007) observed that maintaining educational quality in the face of enrolment explosion in Nigeria prompted government to encourage sourcing of additional funds through internally generated revenue. It must be stressed here that there have been important paradigm changes in university education and commercialization, privatisation tendencies and customer-oriented approaches have started to gain acceptance world wide. What stance should Nigeria maintain? This write-up is poised to critically appraise argument for and against commercialization of public universities in a dwindling economy.

Commercialization: Its Meaning

Commercialization according to Webster Dictionary means to use (something) as an opportunity to earn money. From business perspective, it means to make something available to customers. Ogbogu and Caulfield (2015) defined commercialization as the restructuring of an institution owned by government wholly or partially, giving them the right to accumulate profit. The implication here is that profit motive and sustainability are the major driving forces to commercialization of an organization, as a bail out measure to prevent total collapse when faced with managerial and funding challenges.

Zayyad (2004) defined commercialization as the reorganization of enterprises wholly and partially owned by government in which such commercialised enterprises shall operate as profit making commercial venture without subvention from government. He identified the following as the main goal of commercialization:

- To create a more result oriented and accountable management based on performance contracts.
- To strengthen the financial control at the enterprise level.
- To upgrade the management information system of the affected enterprise.
- To ensure financial solvency of the enterprise through effective cost recovery, cost control and prudent financial management.
- To provide enhanced operational autonomy at the enterprise level.
- To remove bureaucratic bottleneck and political interference through clear role definitions between the supervising ministry, the board of directors and the management of public enterprises (pp.4-5).

Commercialization of Education

It is emerging trend in the education industry in some developed countries of the world. It is the reorganization of public education, that is, the reform from education as a common good to education as an economic priority. Commercialization is about how actors profit from the commodification of education. Hogan and Thompson (2018:9) explained that, “while there are many types of commercial activities, the most common are those directed at teaching, learning and assessment, digital and computer technologies, professional development for teachers and principals, and a variety of services designed to support schools administrators”.

Swapnali (2016) noted that commercialization of education means that schools are now competing more on who can provide quality education at a reasonable cost. That education commercialization comes with two different levels known as administrative and instructional. On administrative level, he said it encompasses running the institution like an enterprise, focusing on budgetary cost-effectiveness, seeking resources, products evaluation and corresponding adjustment. At instructional level, he said it connotes focusing on the whole process of teaching and learning, as a step for producing output.

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that commercialization of public university indicates a paradigm shift from the traditional sourcing of fund from government grants and subventions to adopting models, strategies and marketing principles of private industries and business towards meeting funding challenges in order to remain relevant in its core mandate in the 21st knowledge explosion century. This will create the bedrock for public universities to be run on business line. Commercialization according to Foray (2007), propels universities toward investing in fund-generating academic and non-academic ventures.

Foray observed that academic fund-generating ventures are carried out in such areas as research and development for knowledge and technology transfer to industry. Benefits according to him include generating a range of intellectual support that fundamental scientific knowledge provides to applied researchers; link between the profitability of corporate research and development; link between profitability of corporate research and development; the quality of human capital and effective transfer of knowledge and technology from university research laboratories to corporate laboratories are attributable to the circulation of academic research that will feed into the viability of the overall symbiotic system of academic research and industry. These complementarities according to him, will raise the expected rates of return and to reduce the risk of investing in applied research and development.

In universities, technology transfer is possible if every discipline makes their teaching geared toward industry through patent. Knowledge transfer in universities is executed through creative initiatives such as centres for continuing education, post-graduate diploma programmes, certificate, basic and sandwich programmes (Foray, 2007). He noted that some universities have advancement units responsible for coordinating establishment of foundations, alumni, friends of the university, search and teach how to apply for grants from funding bodies among others, with the sole purpose of attracting more funds for the system. He further stressed that these advancement centres in universities could be saddled with the responsibility to re-investing the money realised by setting up lucrative and viable ventures. It is hoped that each of the public universities in Nigeria should only embark in such lucrative and viable ventures where each has more comparative advantage only after a forensic investment assessment, that will generate more fund for the universities.

Dwindling Economy Effects in Public University Education

The impacts of a depressed or dwindling economy in the education sector and university type in particular, is very devastating in fulfilling their core mandate. These negative effects are well documented in terms of quality, performance, international competitiveness and ranking among others. Inadequate funding puts public universities management under stress hence, they are weakened in terms of providing essential services. This has contributed to incessant crisis in universities in Nigeria such as strikes by both teaching and non-teaching staff, shortage of equipment and educational

facilities, violent protest by students due to absence of essential infrastructures like electricity (power), water, conducive learning environment, etc. Dwindling economy manifested in short falls in universities funding also hampers their abilities to make considerable contribution to national development as it cannot intensify and diversify its programmes for the development of higher level manpower in the context of the needs of the nation in relation to making professional course contents reflect the national requirements as stipulated in the NPE (FRN, 2013).

Saint, Hartnett and Strassner (2003) in their study found among other factors responsible for the poor quality of university programmes and graduates, was inconsistent funding efforts by government. Alluding to the findings of the trio scholars quoted above, Babalole (2007) on poor ranking of public universities in Nigeria, said, it was regrettable that as at now, none of the teeming number of the nations universities (public and private), was able to make the list of the best 100 universities in the world. A situation he blamed on poor standards and dearth of infrastructures arising from inadequate funding. Otunuga (2005) observed that the sorry state of Nigeria dwindling economy has not helped matters as the best brains, engineers, historians, and other brains are not at the research institutions, they are not serving as teachers or analysts. That they have migrated to the banks, oil companies, and other places where they are paid at least a little bit more than in educational institutions.

Decline in quality and success rates are bound to hit public universities in depressed economy. Subvention and grant cuts will manifest in declining quality due to reduced expenditure and cut on books and instructional materials, infrastructural facilities such as power, water, classroom furniture, low lecturers morale in terms of payment of outstanding salaries and allowances and workshops. On the students, inability to pay basic statutory tuition fees and sundry charges, will result to some withdrawing, repetition and attrition rates will increase thereby resulting to decline in school success rate among students.

On institutional performance, Saint, Hartnett and Strassner (2007) found that Nigeria's federal university system was performing poorly in the area of teaching and learning. As a way forward towards proffering solutions to funding challenges, they said:

When government funding becomes insufficient to maintain institutional performance in teaching and research, universities elsewhere in the world have sought to supplement their public funding with locally generated income (fees, cost-recovery, business income, investment income, gifts, etc). This is also true in Nigeria. Locally generated income has contributed a relatively constant share of around 15% in recent years, varying among institutions from a low of 4% to a high of 37% (Hartnett, 2000). In spite of active verbal encouragement from government to increase local income generation, it appears that universities capacity to generate revenues in this way may have been reached (pp. 17-18).

The trio scholars stance in the face of funding challenges faced by public universities in Nigeria as they said is that: "The principal untapped source of university financing

remains undergraduate student tuition fees, which government prohibits. Its potential is considerable” p.18.

Impediments and Challenges toward Commercialization

Prominent among bodies, groups, organizations and associations vehemently opposing commercialization and privatisation of education in Nigeria, especially at the tertiary level, are the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS). They have been opposed to government policy reform package in governance/management in application of professional management techniques, strategic vision, more proactive corporate management styles that address problems through innovation, and governance structures that facilitate institutional responsiveness to the wide range of university stakeholders (Saint, Hartnett & Strassner, 2003). They further stated that statement from these groups suggest that their resistance was based more on their fears of a government hidden agenda to commercialise and privatize higher education and less on the substance of the autonomy legislation.

Government’s policy approach towards tuition fee charges has been cautious. The government is neither for or against, here or there and appears to lack the political muscle and will to take a firm stand. The pertinent question to ask now is, how long will it take government to wallow on indecision concerning tuition fee charges, especially at the tertiary level of education.

Odebiyi and Aina (1999) opined that raising income from source outside the government, such as student fees and others, will assist to reduce the cost of education on public funds. They however, admitted that there was a general government embargo on payment of tuition for undergraduate programmes in all federal universities. In this line of thought; Saint, Harnett and Strassner (2003) found that government policy approach with regard to tuition charges has been cautious and carefully conditioned. That cost sharing with students remained highly contentious within the country’s fragile democratic environment. In continuation, they made reference to government stance on the issue that reads:

While student fees and charges remain a legitimate source of revenue for universities in an environment in which they enjoy autonomy, government policy for the time being is that before fees can be re-introduced or charges can be raised the students and their sponsors must be economically empowered to be able to pay such fees and charges. This empowerment entails a visible in the take-home pay of workers as well as adequate scholarship and student loan schemes ... (FME, 2000) p.19.

Politics in education may also be accounting for government apathy and phobia in commercialization of public universities as provision of education is a major campaign tool by all political parties contesting election, for control of power either at the state or central government level. From a social demand approach, provision of education, including the tertiary level, is perceived as the responsibility of the

government, hence, apathy to turn her face the other side, after electioneering campaign promises made to provide education at all levels to the citizenry. Successive governments after the military era have been struggling to wean and convince Nigerians of the over bearing burden of funding education so as to accept privatization and commercialization of the education sector, but to no avail.

Obasanjo government from 1999 fought gallantly to convince the populace to accept commercialization of tertiary education, but failed. Lending credence to this observation, Centre for International Development (2000) in Saint, Harnett and Strassner (2003), in their survey of international businesses working in Sub-Saharan Africa, found that Nigeria is one of the most difficult countries in the world for private business. The survey report further said that on balance, the material conditions for development appear to be available, but that the human and cultural conditions that will enable development to occur were yet not in place.

Oyewole (2006) observed that in spite of the obvious benefits accruable from research commercialization, there were still certain factors impeding the effective commercialization of research in Nigeria. That the problems of what to do with research results or inventions from university stems from certain factors such as:

- The poor quality of research produced in many institutions of learning.
- Inadequate provision of facilities and infrastructures to ease research.
- Undertaking research that do not reflect the needs of the nation.
- The sad trend of producing university research findings that end up in the bin.
- The lack of enabling environment that supports industry involvement.
- Lack of innovation on the part of our scientists and researchers, p.12.

Akpochafo (2009) alluding to the above identified factors impeding commercialization of research in Nigeria, suggested that to translate inventions into finished products to increase revenue to universities, the following should be taken into consideration:

- Viable research results emanating from both private and public universities should be commercialised.
- Linkages among research, inventors, industry and universities should be established for economic sustainability of universities; and
- Promotion of innovation among Nigerian scientists, researchers and inventors, p.16.

Lack of awareness of the benefits of commercialization of university education which includes creation of employment opportunities, economic development, opportunity to face global challenges, personality development, quality of education, social development and many more, constitute the challenges (Swapnali, 2016). In continuation, that commercialization of higher education has been misjudged to having a materialistic outlook. That it is said to make students think of themselves in self centred way and not to think of the development of the nation. He debunked such insinuation as incorrect because all that commercialization of higher education does it to

lessen the financial burden on government and allowing same to focus on developing other critical sectors of the economy.

Atuachene (2011) highlighted the challenges facing university-industry collaboration in Nigeria to include the limit in the research capacity in our higher institutions, difficulties in building research programmes in relevant fields of science and technology that would be of interest to the industry all inhibit a more sustained research role. He equally stated that the lack of confidence on the part of industry in Nigeria universities as potential partners poses as a huge challenge to collaboration. According to him, the situation is worsened by poor infrastructures to ease research, the lack of enabling environment that supports industry involvement and poor governance practices. In similar vein, Caulfield and Ogbogu (2015) observed that researches done in Nigeria lack commercial potential and always end up in the bin. That universities also lack business and commercial knowledge among faculties and departments, as well as inhibitory commercialization policies.

Argument against (Disadvantages) Commercialization of Public Universities

It is a fact that any commercialised enterprise or institution entails a marketing effort. The philosophy behind every marketing effort is profit motive. There is yet to be a complete consensus on what to understand from the concept of customer in education sector which has quite different qualifications from commercial sector (Murat & Adem, 2010). According to the duo scholars, while those who are on the left side of political spectrum, from public interest point of view, argue that the customer of educational institutions is the state, in other words, the state representing the public opinion, those who are on the right side of political spectrum claim that higher education is not entirely open to the public and that some parts of society do not have the criteria of higher education and some others can be out of the system due to financial shortcoming and, for that reason also argue that higher education should not be considered as public interest but as a service needed to be purchased.

Derek in Murat and Adem (2010) claimed that in spite of some useful sides of commercialization since profitability and competitive motives were embodied in it, the damages it gave to academic standards, academic community, and prestige of universities outweighed its useful sides. Other damages listed include:

- The decrease in the importance given to basic researches which have no commercial value but is deadly important for scientific advancement;
- Shaping of academic staff according to their skills of receiving funds from companies; the acceptance of low standard students to universities and departing of student performance assessments from objectivity;
- Causing the students to be deprived of social consciousness because of outweighing vocational courses;
- Not being a good model of an institution, which is making concessions from its own moral principles, for its students and for the society morality;

- Failure of researchers in studying the fields freely they are personally interested in;
- Due to the justification of competition, concealment of the information being expected to be open for the society;
- Objectivity loss of researches because of the private privilege of companies and accordingly the decrease in the prestige of universities in the public opinion, and the experience of conflicts between those who struggle for traditional academic duties and the academics spending most of time by tutoring/consultancy or similar activities, p.7.

Commercialization helps to play the role of eliminating equality of opportunity in education. Friedman in Murat and Adem (2010) argued that for paid education, accepts without questioning that this will cause inequality of opportunity to a great extent since the benefit provided by higher education is not for society but completely for individuals in contrast to the basic education. Evans also in Murat and Adem expressed similar worries about becoming scientific of commercialising universities, pointed out that in the event of meeting of financial sources needed by academics, who are paid money to think, through the sources except public ones, the researchers cannot think freely and they need to think according to the system and in such a condition the understanding of public interest turns into a form describing applications available for commercial use.

Otunuga (2005) in his argument against commercialization of public higher institutions in Nigeria, faulted the Breton Woods Institutions advice package to Nigerian governments the need to reduce government overheads by making Nigerians pay for their education and, the need to improve the quality of education delivery by making funds readily available to schools so they could compete with their counterparts elsewhere in the developed nations of the world to justify commercialization. He consented that the two cogent points raised above need no argument, but that all things are not equal when compared with the socio-economic environment in the United States and European examples apologists of a not-for-free tertiary education would want to flash, to justify commercialization.

He agreed that education in the US is very expensive, and that from tuition receipts schools are able to fund some of their programmes. He went on to say that the tuition receipts form only a fragmentary portion of the funds available to US academic institutions. That the major bulk of the funds come from scholastic endowments, grants, marketing of research outcomes, consulting to private and governmental institutions, etc. He identified some measure of shock absorbers inbuilt into the system of tertiary education for students in the US to ensure that citizens welfare are not compromised in the name of governmental policies and reforms. These are: availability of jobs for students by which they could earn extra money even while in school; through the department of education, students could apply for such benefits as the “Pell Grant”, an income-based tuition-free funding that is available to first time undergraduate students; numerous scholarship programmes that ensure that they pay nothing out of pocket for

their education; offer of sports scholarships to budding athletes discovered through their high school exploits by some colleges; academic scholarships to attend even the most prestigious schools tuition and board free; the Stafford loan scheme by which students could apply for student loan, through the department of education at the lowest interest rates available, etc.

Otunuga (2005) maintained that through the above listed programmes; it becomes easy for the US government to successfully execute its “No Child Left Behind” education programme. Considering the foregoing, the implication is that the socio-economic playground between Nigeria on the hand and the US and Europeans on the other hand we are often compared with, is not level. On this premise he said:

It becomes evident the playground is not level, and it smacks nothing short of criminality against the poor Nigerian masses for the same dosage of economic remedy to be prescribed for the Nigerian education system, as those of say, the US. The only benefit the Nigerian masses could proudly say they receive from the government is education, even in its sorry state. Yes not all persons in a society should/could attend universities/colleges, but the way the governmental reforms is headed, it would drive the majority away from the poor masses, and turning the tertiary institutions into sacred places reserved for only the stupendously rich. As far as education delivery in Nigeria, things could be made a lot better, I agree. Yet, any effort to improve should not be at the expense of the Nigerian masses. Let those who will not benefit from tertiary education do so at their own free volition, not because the government’s reform programme is so lopsided it gives no hope and opportunity to kids of the poor. Poverty is an economic incidence, not a crime, and while it would amount to systematic crime to disrobe the majority of the opportunity to be whatever they desired to be because their parents are poor, it would be a loss to the country to waste the opportunity to breed inventors and geniuses, p.3.

Argument for (Advantages/Justification) Commercialization of Public Universities

It is well documented that education in the developing nations has been greatly underfunded. The 26% budgetary allocation benchmark recommended by UNESCO with a view to promoting quality in education among others, is far from being implemented in most developing nations like Nigeria. Government has shouldered the burden of funding education, especially at the tertiary level as it is considered to be a veritable tool for social engineering and providing relevant manpower training for national development. However, in this era of globalization, public universities have increased in number and are more complex, than in previous times. What this implies is that government alone can no longer provide the huge fund required to provide quality education at the tertiary level.

The ability of public universities toward fulfilling their objectives, are dependant to a greater extent on how well they are funded (Ojule, 2012). The demand for public university education in Nigeria has increased judging from the number of

applicants for admission in the last twenty years (Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2007). Suffice it to state here that the increase in demand for public university education is not in tandem with increased funding of the existing ones. While the managers of public universities complain of inadequate funding, the government argue that other sectors of the economy also depend on the limited available resources to the nation (Ojule, 2012). It is now imperative that if public university education in Nigeria must survive and achieve their core mandate in this era of dwindling economy and vagaries in funding patterns, the providers and managers must articulate and initiate viable alternative funding mechanism like commercialization. In tandem with this line of thought, Regman, Gill, Khan and Karim (2014) posited that the commercialization of higher institutions is inevitable for enhancing efficiency and meeting the diversified demands of consumers through mobilization of alternative resources, especially now that government is unable to allocate more public resources to higher education.

One considerable potential means of confronting public university funding challenges in a dwindling economy is payment of tuition fee. In tandem with this line of thought, Saint, Harnett and Strassner (2003:18) said: "The principal untapped source of university financing remains undergraduate student tuition fees, which government prohibits". Harnett one of the trio scholars under review found that income from student fees (for non-degree, distance education and postgraduate courses only) has risen from 4% to 10% of total income between 1988 and 1998. In their opinion, additional gains are possible if this source is tapped fully. Supporting commercialization, Saint, Harnett and Strassner (2003:18) observed that, "it seems clear to many observers that more creative and adaptable financing strategies are needed in order for Nigerian higher education to offset the likely risks of declining educational quality, resource use efficiency, and learning effectiveness that it now confronts".

A study carried out by Odebiyi and Aina (1999) found among others that majority of the public university managers supported payment of fees/levies, engaging in commercial ventures, and endowments. Load shedding and privatization of universities were considered popular options. Also, majority of the staff interviewed, supported the payment of tuition in tertiary institutions, nevertheless, they expressed their reservation that forcing students to pay tuition fees could be very explosive. In a similar study, Federal Ministry of Education (2009) found that the increasing demand for education on public finances coupled with the fact that government alone cannot carry the burden of education. As it were, education is one of the constitutional items in the concurrent list, hence the responsibility of both Federal and State Governments. However, Federal government has been most heavily involved at the tertiary level (Ojule, 2012).

Support for research in public universities is very much limited from both within and without, a situation that can hardly support university development. Funding is one major challenges. In research programmes, the academics are faced with the challenges in research dissemination, utilization and commercialization. There is that

consensus in the academia that research can only thrive well when these three challenges are squarely faced by the academics. Supporting this position, Abraham (2016) suggested that research findings should be useful for innovation and can be commercialised. Two areas where the push for increased commercialization of university-based research appears particularly evident in Nigeria are in research funding and programme support. When the fund is available for researchers, they will then frame their research in a manner that agrees with the growing view that university education ought to play a critical role in the growth of economies with consideration of national economic priorities (Simons, 2015).

Romanow (2007) in support of commercialization, suggested that universities must conduct research with high value and shed low-value research that does not represent good return on investment. That commercialization is a primary means through which research findings with prospect for industry capacity development reach the market. He also revealed that research commercialization initiatives can, generate interest and investment in emerging areas of institution research, with consequent gains or improved research funding, job creation scope, quantity and quality of innovation, creation, growth and development of industries, and economic sustainability of universities.

Proponents and apologists of commercialization of universities argue that it will help to build university-industry collaborations that are often necessary for the translation of research into useful products for public use, thereby creating opportunities for universities to expand its source of funding. Yusuf and Hassan (2012) contended that the benefits of commercialization of research extend to other areas that have indirectly contributed to increase university funding. The essence of commercialization of universities according to these scholars, is underpinned in funding challenges universities are currently confronted with and which requires practical solution.

Commercialization embodies profitability and competitive motives which enhances their stability and performance. Derek in Murat and Adem (2010) asserted that the profitability could provide important advantages for academic purposes as long as it was not used to fulfil private investors pockets and could increase the quality of education. Commercialization will boost purchase of academic skills responsible for production of information (research results/findings) business establishments want to enhance their products and profit margins. Its acquisition will be perceived and appreciated by both clients and industries as a valuable commodity that can be purchased like any other. Economy in expenditure will be achieved by withdrawal of subventions and grants hitherto expended by government in provision of university education and, channelled to other critical sectors of the economy like health and agriculture. Commercialization will also inculcate in both the institution and students valuing everything in monetary terms which is in vogue in the world today. Commercialization of education often assist students to internalise this utilitarian and

corporate conception of education and incorporate it into their views of themselves and their role in the world (Shubham-Raturi, 2016).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This article made a critical appraisal of commercialization of public universities in Nigeria dwindling economy. Economic meltdown is a major threat to all aspects of the nation's economy, education sector and the university system in particular. University among other tertiary education institutions is pivotal in the production of high skilled manpower requirement for societal development. Funding challenges and the need to improve the quality of education delivery at this level, by making adequate funds readily available to the managers, so they could compete with their counterparts in advanced nations of the world via commercialization, should be treated with utmost caution. Arguments for and against, benefits and effects of commercialization have been canvassed by both protagonists and antagonists, respectively. While making convincing argument for commercialization by the apologists, it must be reiterated here that the basis for comparison is not based on level playground as noted in the developed world. Efforts made to improve and reform the system should not be at the expense of the Nigerian masses. Otunuga (2005) noted that poverty is an economic incidence not a crime and that reform via commercialization would amount to systemic crime to disrobe the majority of the opportunity to acquire university education because their parents are poor. On this note, we recommended that commercialization of public universities in the current dwindling economy should be put on hold, as it would amount to making it elite-oriented one by departing completely from the society. Public universities have the capacity to renew themselves in accordance with social needs hence, they have the potentials of managing any kind of change and challenge in this information age.

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