

# The Christian Missions and the Development of University Education in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic, 1999-2021: A Historical Analysis

Samson Adesola ADESOTE\*

Sunday Adekunle AKANDE\*\*

Fayigbe Bimpe OMOLOLA\*\*\*

## Abstract

The main thrust of this paper is to historicise the role of the Christian missions in the development of university education in Nigeria in the Fourth Republic. While the year 1999, marked the birth of the Fourth Republic as well as the second attempt towards the involvement of the private sectors (Christian missions inclusive), the year 2021 was when the last batch of private universities were granted provisional licences of operation by the Federal Government through the National Universities Commission. There is no doubt that the history of educational development in Nigeria has its origin in the activities of the private sectors, that is, the Christian missions. Meanwhile, their involvement in the development of western education in the country between the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was mainly confined to the provision of primary and secondary education. Up to the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999, the provision of university education in the country was exclusively the responsibility of both the Federal and the State governments. Although an attempt was made during the Second Republic, 1979-1983, to encourage private sector participation, this eventually failed. The paper argues that availability and accessibility to high-quality university education can be meaningfully achieved through public-private collaboration as seen in the developed countries such as the United States, United Kingdom and Western Europe. Active involvement of non-state actors would help the government to mobilize financial resources to meet more pressing public service needs. The methodology adopted for this work is historical, qualitative and quantitative, utilising materials from both primary and secondary sources.

**Keywords:** Christian Missions, Nigeria, university education.

---

\* Ph.D., Department of History & International Studies, Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria. Email: solaade2007@ymail.com

\*\* Ph.D., Department of History & International Studies, Osun State University, Osogbo. Email Address: yokunde4ever@yahoo.com

\*\*\* Department of General Studies, Federal Polytechnic, Ukana, Akwa Ibom. E-mail: bimbefayigbe@gmail.com

## Introduction

The history of western education in particular and university education in general in Nigeria was a function of change and continuity. Generally, the evolution of western education predated the formal establishment of colonial rule over the whole of Nigeria. Its evolution was a function of two major attempts. While the first attempt was pioneered by the Portuguese Missionaries in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but was not fully successful, the second attempt which was started by the Wesleyan Methodist Mission and later complemented by other Christian missions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was largely successful. Between 1842 (when the first primary school was established in Badagry, Lagos by the Wesleyan Methodist Mission) and 1975 (when the military regime of General Yakubu Gowon took over the control and management of schools) the activities of the Christian Missions with respect to western education was confined to the provision of primary and post-primary or secondary education in the country.

The evolution of higher education was traced to the role of the colonial government. As argued by Osoba and Fajana, the provision of higher education by the colonial government to the Nigerians was not a deliberate effort. It was characterised by the need to satisfy the British colonial needs as well as the agitations of the Nigerian nationalists (Osoba & Fajana, 1980, pp. 570-600). First, an attempt towards the evolution of tertiary education during the colonial period was facilitated by the educational reforms introduced by Mr. E.R.J Hussey, who was appointed as the Director of Education for Nigeria in 1929. In 1930, Hussey came with new Policy on Education, which centred on all the levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary). With the arrival of Hussey, the need to expand Nigeria's educational system took a new dimension. This development was said to have been facilitated by serious agitations of few educated Nigerian nationalists, who saw unwillingness on the part of the colonial government to embark on a programme of educating Nigerians beyond post-primary education level. Thus, Mr. Hussey came up with a proposal geared towards the review of

Nigeria's educational programme. This proposal led to the establishment of Yaba Higher College, Lagos in 1932, but officially opened in 1934 (Falola, et al, 1991, p. 42), which was the first higher institution in Nigeria. Although this development was a major milestone in the history of tertiary education in colonial Nigeria, its establishment met strict criticisms from the Nigerian nationalists on the ground that it failed to meet their demand of quality higher education. They argued that the creation of Yaba Higher College by the colonial government was to serve colonial ideology, through producing Nigerians as playing subordinate roles rather than stepping into the shoes of the top European officials in government and commerce. (Osoba and Fajana, 1980, p. 579) In spite of the criticisms of the Nigerian nationalists, mostly from Lagos and other parts of the South, the College remained the first higher education in the country up till 1948 when the first university was set up.

In the 1940s, the Nigerian nationalists began an intense campaign for the Africanization of the colonial civil service and the provision of more and better educational opportunities for Nigerians. These demands constituted a part of the global movement in the British colonial empire for the indigenization of the key institutions of government and the provision of appropriate educational facilities without which indigenes who did not have requisite training would find it difficult to take over the running of their countries from the colonial officials and other expatriates. Thus, the colonial government under the leadership of Oliver Stanley as the Colonial Secretary was forced to set up two different commissions geared towards university education in West Africa in particular in September 1943. These two commissions were the Asquith Commission and the Elliot Commission. While Asquith Commission was set up purposely to look into university education in the British Empire (West Africa inclusive), and the Elliot Commission was constituted mainly to look into the problem of university education in West Africa. The two commissions submitted their recommendations (which were similar) explaining that

all colonial territories able to support university institutions should have them, provided that their standards were comparable to those of British universities. With respect to Elliot Commission, there were two reports, namely majority report and minority report. While the majority report recommended that two universities be established in Nigeria and the Gold Coast (now Ghana), and that Fourah Bay College be developed into a third with limited objectives, the minority report recommended only one university in Ibadan, Nigeria to serve the whole of British West Africa (Osoba and Fajana, 1980:581). The Colonial Office eventually accepted the minority report. Its acceptance led to the establishment of University College, Ibadan; and University College, Legon, Ghana in 1948. Both university colleges were affiliated to University of London (Adeyemi, 2021, p. 3). The two higher institutions continued to provide limited tertiary education to Nigerians during the colonial period.

However, owing to intense agitations by the Nigerian nationalists for the appointment of Nigerians to posts in the Government Senior Service, which required higher qualification, the Colonial government was again forced to set up another commission in April 1959, known as Ashby Commission, headed by Sir Eric Ashby. The commission was charged with the responsibility to conduct an investigation into Nigeria's needs in the field of post-School Certificate and Higher Education over the next twenty years (1960-1980). With respect to higher education, the commission, which submitted its report in September 1960, observed dearth of trained teachers in the secondary schools in spite of the obvious increase in demand for their services. Thus, it recommended the opening of universities; institution of undergraduate degree in Education (B.A (Ed); B.Sc (Ed); and B.Ed); and the training of more teachers for Nigeria's secondary schools (Taiwo, 1980, p. 4). The report of the commission provided a good foundation for the development of degree programme in teacher education in some of the tertiary institutions that were set up in immediate post-independence Nigeria (Fafunwa, 1974, p. 10). In spite of the submission of

the report, the University College Ibadan, remained the only university in Nigeria up till the attendance of political independence in 1960.

The post-colonial Nigeria marked a new phase in the history of the development of university education in Nigeria. Between 1960 and 1979, several universities (which were both conventional and specialised) were established by the federal and regional governments. For instance, while the University of Nigeria, Nsukka set up by the Eastern Regional Government on 7 October 1960, in 1962, both the Western and Northern Regional Governments founded their own universities, namely University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife), and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria respectively. In the same year, the Federal Government established her own university known as University of Lagos (Omolewa, 1986, p. 220), which was cited in Lagos, being the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria then. Nigeria, having become a republic in 1963, the Federal Government decided to upgrade University College, Ibadan to a full-fledged university (now known as University of Ibadan). Up till the birth of the Second Republic in 1979, all the universities were owned, financed and managed by the Federal Government. By implication, the federal government was the only one responsible for the provision of university education in the country (Osokoya, p. 1994).

However, with the return to civil rule in 1979, leading to the birth of the Second Republic, the provision of university education took a new dimension. With the birth of the republic resulting in the introduction of the 1979 Constitution, the provision of university education was from the Exclusive List to the Concurrent List. By this constitutional provision, the State Governments as well as private individuals and corporate organisations were granted the constitutional right to set up their own universities. This led to the emergence of both state and private universities in Nigeria (Yusuf, 2017, p. 33). Meanwhile, while that of the State continued to exist after the collapsed of the Second Republic in 1983, the private ones were abolished by the regime of

Major General Muhammadu Buhari through Decree 19 of 1984 (Osagie, 2009, p. 15). The situation remained until the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999, when the second attempt at promoting private sector participation in the provision of university education was given a place. The Christian Missions utilised this opportunity to contribute significantly towards the provision of university education to Nigerian citizens. This would be examined in detail later in this paper.

**Conceptual Clarification:** There are two major concepts that require clarification. They are Christian Mission and University

**Christian Missions:** There are different categories of Christian missions in Nigeria. Basically, Christian missions in Nigeria can be grouped into the following: Mainline or Orthodox Churches (such as Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Baptist); Pentecostal Churches (such as Redeemed Christian Church of God, Deeper Life Bible Church, The Apostolic Church, The Apostolic Faith, Living Faith Church and so on); and African Indigenous Churches (such as Aladura Churches, Christ Apostolic church, Celestial Church of Christ and so on) (Achunike, 2004). Each of these categories of Christian missions contributed greatly to the development of university education in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic by establishing its own university.

**University:** This is a major concept that requires adequate conceptualisation. With respect to the ownership of Nigerian Universities, universities can be categorised mainly into two, namely publicly-owned universities and privately-owned universities. First, publicly-owned universities are the universities established, financed and managed by the governments (both Federal and State). In other words, there are Federal and State Universities in Nigeria. Secondly, privately-owned universities are the universities established, financed and managed by private individuals or corporate organisations. Basically, Private Universities in Nigeria can be

categorised mainly into two, namely Faith-Based Universities and Non-Faith Based Universities. While Faith-Based Universities are the universities established, financed and managed by religious bodies, non-faith-based universities are the universities established, financed and managed by private individuals, entrepreneurs and corporate bodies. The Faith Based universities can sub-categorised into two, namely Christian Faith Based Private Universities and Muslim/Islamic Faith Based Universities. Here, our focus is on the Christian Faith Based Private Universities, which were established by different Christian Missions between 1999 and 2021.

### **The Christian Missions and the Evolution of Western Education in Nigeria, 1842-1975: An Overview**

The evolution of western education in Nigeria was a function of several developments. While the Christian Missions laid the foundation of the evolution of western education in Nigeria, their efforts were later built on by the Colonial government, and subsequent governments that emerged in the country between 1950s and 1970. Importantly, there are three major forms of education in Nigeria. They are traditional or indigenous education, Islamic education and Western education. Each of these forms of education evolved at different times in Nigeria. The first form of education to evolve in Nigeria was traditional education. Fafunwa argues that indigenous system of education, which is as old as man himself in Africa was prevalent in different societies in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general prior to the arrival of foreign religions (Islam and Christianity). He further explains that every society in Africa, whether simple or complex has its own system for training and educating its youth (Fafunwa, 1974, pp. xii & xv). The main cardinal goals of traditional African education include physical training, development of character, respect for elders and peers, intellectual training, vocational training, community participation and promotion of cultural heritage (Fafunwa, 1974, pp. 6-7). While the Islamic education was not formally

established in Nigeria until the 14<sup>th</sup> century, western education, which was brought by the Western Christian missionaries, was firmly entrenched in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Fafunwa, 1974, p. 7). Although the advent of Islam and Christianity had influenced Nigerian education in no small measure, leading to the emergence of Islamic and western-type of education, the indigenous education still persist till today.

The evolution of western education in Nigeria was traced to the role of the European Christian missions. There were two major attempts towards the introduction of western form of education into Nigeria. The first attempt was traced to the activities of the Portuguese Catholic Missionaries in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The activities of these missionaries during this period were limited to Benin and Warri axis of Southern Nigeria. In Benin, the missionaries were sent to convert the then Oba of Benin (Oba Ozolua) and his subjects to Christianity. Although this attempt was not fully successful, a school was set up at the Oba's palace in 1515 (Obidi, 2005, pp. 163-164). Also, the Portuguese missionaries made deliberate efforts at establishing western education to the Itsekiri Peoples in Warri. For instance, between 1651 and 1713, the Capuchin Missions from Spain and Italy made practical efforts at introducing western education to the Itsekiri people (Obidi, 2005, p. 164).

The second attempt at introducing western education into Nigeria, which began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was not only largely successful, but also not limited to Southern Nigeria alone. The impact of this second attempt was felt both in Southern and Northern Nigeria. Another significance of the 19<sup>th</sup> century western education enterprise was that it involved the participation of different European Christian missions. The Methodist Mission pioneered the evolution of Western education in Nigeria during his period. In 1842, Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, a Methodist Missionary and Mr and Mrs de Graft arrived Badagry, where they started a mission and built the first primary school. The effort of the Methodist Mission was later complemented by other Christian Missions such as the Anglican Mission, the Roman

Catholic Mission, the United Presbyterian Church of the Scotland, Qua Iboe Mission among others in different parts of the country (Lewis, 1965). Between 1842 and 1914, the Christian Missions established primary, secondary and technical and vocational schools in difference places both Southern and Northern parts of Nigeria such as Lagos, Abeokuta, Calabar, Bonny, Lokoja, Ibadan, Ogbomoso, Iseyin and so on (Osokoya, 1989 & Ahmed, 2014, p. 269). For instance, by 1912, there were ninety-one missions aided by the government in Nigeria. While the Roman Catholic Church had 36 Primary Schools, Church Missionary Society (CMS) (Anglican Mission), had 27 primary schools, the United Free Church of Scotland had 19 and Methodist had 6 (Fafunwa, 1974, p. 98). Also, while CMS had 4 (CMS Grammar School, Lagos, 1859; Abeokuta Grammar School, 1908; Ibadan Grammar School, 1913, Ijebu-Ode Grammar School, 1913), RCM had 2: (St. Gregory's College, Lagos, 1876; St Mary's Convent, 1913), Methodist Mission had 2: Methodist Boys' High School, Lagos 1878; Methodist Girls High School, Lagos, 1879; the Baptist mission and the Church of Scotland had one each, namely Baptist Boys High School, Lagos, 1885 and Hope Wadell Institute, Calabar, 1895 respectively (Fafunwa, 1974, pp. 98-100).

The efforts of the Christian Missions with respect to development of western education were first complemented by the colonial government through provision of grants-in aid to schools, enactment of Education Laws, established of government schools in areas not reached by missionaries and establishment of Department of Education (Abdulrahman, 2018:182). Prior to this time, the colonial government paid little attention to education. The commencement of colonial government intervention in western education began in 1872 when the British Colonial government gave a grant of 300 pounds to the three leading missionary groups to assist them with the management of their schools. These Christian missions were Church Missionary Society, the Roma Catholic Mission and the Wesley Methodists. Each got 100 pounds. This

government intervention was followed by the introduction of educational laws among which were 1882 Education Ordinance, 1887 Education Ordinance, 1903 Education Code, 1908 Education Ordinance, 1916 Education Ordinance and Code, 1926 Education Code, 1948 Education Law, 1956 Education Act (Nwagwu, 1993, pp. 10-17).

With the birth of the regional government in 1951, Nigerians became involved in the development of education. In this regard, the Western Regional Government, under the leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo as the Premier, led the way by launching Universal Free Primary Education in 1955. This was followed suit by the Eastern Regional Government in 1957. The Northern Regional Government equally imitated this educational idea. Even with the involvement of government in the development of western education in Nigeria in the post-colonial period, the Christian missions were still in control of their own schools. Both the Missions' schools and government-owned schools co-existed until they were forcefully taken over by the military administration in 1975. With the intervention of the military into the politics of Nigeria, the ownership and control of western education, which was hitherto in the hands of both the Christian missions (private) and the government (public), was solely in the hand of the military. In 1975, the military regime of General Yakubu Gowon promulgated a decree tagged "The Government Take-Over of School Validation Decree 1975" (Abdulrahman, 2018, pp. 179-100), which forced the government to take over the control and administration. This development resulted in the centralization of western education in the country. By implication, education was put under the Exclusive List, in which the responsibility and authority to provide western education for the citizenry in the country was vested only in the Federal government. Thus, the Christian missions ceased to take active role in the provision of western education in the country. This continued until the birth of the Second Republic in 1979, where the provision of western education in the country was put in the Concurrent List, based on the 1979 Constitution.

## **The Evolution of Christian Missions Participation in the Provision of University Education in Nigeria, 1979-2021**

The Christian Missions constituted one of the private stakeholders that actively involved in the development of university education in Nigeria. The history of private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria was traced to the post-colonial period. During this period, two major attempts were made. While the first attempt which occurred during the Second Republic, 1979 was unsuccessful, the second attempt started during the Fourth Republic (which began in 1999) and has been largely successful. The involvement of the private sector in the development of university education in the country was made possible through the 1979 Constitution. Prior to this time, the provision of university education in the country was the exclusive responsibility of the Federal Government. However, with the birth of the Second Republic in 1979, leading to the introduction of the 1979 Constitution, the provision of western education (primary, post-primary/secondary and tertiary education) was put in the Concurrent List (where powers were shared by both the Federal and State Governments). This development gave the private sector the opportunity to participate actively in the provision of western education to the Nigerian citizens through the establishment of schools and colleges. Although the Christian missions were unable to take over the initial primary and secondary schools set up by them, some of them went ahead to establish new ones. However, since the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999, some states in the South West geopolitical zone such as Lagos, Ogun, Ekiti and Ondo States had returned some of the mission schools to their original owners.

Significantly, there was a major transformation with respect to the role of the Christian Missions in the provision of western education in Nigeria in the post-colonial period. Following the birth of the Second Republic and coupled with the introduction of the 1979 Constitution, the Christian missions shifted their attention from the provision of

primary and secondary education to that of tertiary institutions. Although the involvement of the private sector in the provision of tertiary education was short-lived during the Second Republic, 1979-1983, the republic marked the first phase of private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria. Of the 26 Private Universities that were established in different parts of the country during the republic, some of them were set up by the Christian Missions such as Theological College (sponsored by the Christian Association of Nigeria-CAN) and Pope John Paul University, Aba, Imo State (Catholic Mission) (Osagie, 2009, p. 14). The republic collapsed as a result of the military take over led by Major General Muhammadu Buhari on 31 December 1983. Having taken over the reins of power, the military regime of Major General Buhari promulgated a decree known as Decree 19 of 1984, which led to the abolishment of the 26 private universities (Ige, 2013, pp. 41-50).

The second attempt towards the involvement of the private sector participation in the provision of tertiary education began during the Fourth Republic. Although the foundation for the involvement of the private sector as a major stakeholder in the provision of university education for Nigerians was laid by the regime of General Abdulsalam Abubakar, which granted Provisional Licenses of operation to three universities, namely Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo, Ogun State, Igbinedion, University, Okada, Edo State and Madonna University, Okija, Anambra State, they commenced fully with the emergence of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the first civilian President of Nigeria in the Fourth Republic. The licenses of operation initially issued to three universities were later validated by the administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo on 30 September 1999. This development enabled the three universities to commence academic activities (The Punch, 2022). The active participation of the private sector in the provision of tertiary education to the citizens during this republic was made possible by the 1999 Constitution. The Provision of western education in the constitution is on the Concurrent List. With this

development, the Christian missions exploited the opportunity to become major stakeholder in the development of university education in the country through the establishment of their own universities.

Occasioned by the liberalisation of tertiary education Decree 9 of 1993 (which was not implemented until 1999), which sets strict standards to be met before the National Universities Commission (NUC), a federal government agency charged with the responsibility of monitoring, receiving and processing applications for the establishment of universities in the country (both public and private), several private individuals, religious organisations, corporate bodies and entrepreneurs in the country submitted their applications, which culminated in the approval of their universities by the Federal Executive Council. Between 1999 and 2021, the Christian missions of different denominations set up their own universities. During this period, Nigeria was governed by four different civilian administrations, namely Chief Olusegun Obasanjo administration (1999-2007), Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua Administration (2007-2010), Dr. Goodluck Jonathan Administration (2010-2015), and General Muhammadu Buhari (retd) Administration (2015 till date). The administration of these four civilian presidents could be grouped into two distinct political parties, namely People's Democratic Party (PDP) administration (which comprised Chief Olusegun Obasanjo administration, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua Administration and Dr. Goodluck Jonathan Administration) and All Progressives Congress (APC) administration (which involved General Muhammadu Buhari (retd) Administration). While the PDP administration lasted between 1999 and 2015, the APC administration began from 2015. It is imperative to point out here that during each civilian administration, a number of private universities were approved. Aside the initial three private universities, that their licences of operation were validated by the administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the administration approved additional twenty-eight (28) universities, while the administration of Alhaji Umaru Musa

Yar'Adua granted approval to nine (9) private universities, the administration of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan granted approval to twenty (20) private universities. Between 1999 and 2015, a total number of sixty (60) private universities were approved by the PDP administration (which was in power for sixteen years) in Nigeria. On 29 May 2015, President, Muhammadu Buhari of APC took over the reins of power. Having taken over power, he continued with the policy of liberalisation of tertiary education in the country. Between 2016 and 2021 of the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, thirty-nine new

private universities were approved by the Federal Executive Council in different parts of Nigeria. Thus, within the space of twenty-two years of the birth of the Fourth Republic, a total of ninety-nine private universities were established by private individuals, corporate bodies and religious organisations. Of these 99 private universities, 32 of them were set up by the Christian Missions of different denominations. The table below shows the list of approved private universities owned by the Christian Missions as at 2021.

**List of Approved Private Universities by Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1999-2021**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Names of Universities</b>	<b>Ownership by Christian Missions</b>	<b>Year of Establishment</b>
1	Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo	Seventh Day Adventist Church	1999
2	Bowen University, Iwo	Baptist Mission	2001
3	Covenant University, Ota	Living Faith Church	2002
4	Benson Idahosa University, Benin City	Church of God Mission International	2002
5	Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo	Anglican Mission	2005
6	Bingham University, New Karu	Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA)	2005
7	Caritas University, Enugu	Catholic Church, Enugu Diocese	2005
8	Redeemer's University, Ede	Redeemed Christian Church of God	2005
9	Crawford University, Igbesa, Ogun State	The Apostolic Faith	2005
10	Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji, Osun State	Christ Apostolic Church	2006
11	Salem University, Lokoja, Kogi State	Salem International Christian Centre	2007
12	Veritas University, Abuja	Catholic Church	2007
13	Wesley University, Ondo, Ondo State	Methodist Church	2007
14	Rhema University, Owerinta, Abia State	Living Word Ministries International	2009
15	Paul University, Awka, Anambra State	Anglican Communion	2009
16	Godfrey Okoye University, Ogwuomu-Nike, Enugu State	Catholic Church	2009
17	Landmark University, Omu-Aran, Kwara State	Living Faith Church	2011
18	Samuel Adegboyega University, Ogwa, Edo State	The Apostolic Church	2011
19	McPherson University, Seriki Sotayo, Ogun State	Foursquare Gospel Church	2012
20	Evangel University, Akaeze, Ebonyi State	Assemblies of God Church	2012
21	Hezekiah University, Umudi, Imo State	Living Christ Mission	2015
22	Augustine University, Ilara, Lagos State	Catholic Church	2015
23	Mountain Top University, Ibafo	Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries	2015



24	Kings University, Ode-Omu, Osun State	Kingsway International Christian Centre	2015
25	Anchor University, Ayobo	Deeper Life Bible Church	2016
26	Clifford University, Owerrinta, Abia State	Seventh Day Adventist Church	2016
27	Dominican University, Ibadan, Oyo State	Catholic Church	2016
28	Spiritan University, Nneochi, Abia State	Catholic Church	2017
29	Precious Cornerstone University, Oyo State	Sword of the Spirit Ministries	2017
30	Dominion University, Ibadan, Oyo State	Victory International Church	2019
31	Ave Maria University, Piyanko, Nasarawa State	Catholic Church	2021
32	Claretian University of Nigeria, Nekede, Imo State	Claretian Missionaries of Catholic Church	2021

Source: <https://www.nuc.edu.ng>. Accessed on 10 March 2022 and Personal Research

The above table shows the list of private universities established by various Christian missions in different parts of Nigeria between 1999 and 2021. Although there were other private universities established by individuals who are Christians, they are not captured in this table. The focus of the paper is on private universities financed and managed by entirely by the Christian missions. From the table, the Seventh Day Adventist Church was the first Christian Mission to establish private university in Nigeria during the Fourth Republic. She was followed two years later by the Baptist Mission. From 2005, number of Christian missions that established universities increased from two in 2002 to five. As at December 2021, 22 Christian Missions established 32 Private Universities in Nigeria. In terms of number, the Catholic Mission had the highest number of private Christian universities in Nigeria during this period. She had seven private universities, which were located in three geo-political zones of Nigeria (namely South-East, South West and North-Central) and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. She was immediately followed by the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Anglican Mission and Living Faith Church, each with two universities, which were located in different areas in Nigeria. Other Christian Missions had one private university.

### **Socio-Economic Contributions of the Emergence of Private Christian Universities; A Preliminary Assessment**

Having briefly interrogated the involvement of the Christian missions in the evolution of private universities in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic, it is imperative to provide a preliminary assessment of their socio-contributions during this period. Evidences through primary and secondary sources revealed that the socio-economic contributions of the emergence of private Christian universities in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised.

One of the major social contributions of the emergence of private Christian universities in Nigeria could be seen in area of accessibility to and provision of university education to prospective Nigerian students. The emergence of private Christian universities in Nigeria since 1999 had helped to provide additional opportunities to prospective Nigerian students seeking undergraduate and postgraduate admissions, who could not gain admission into the public universities (federal and state) due to limited spaces and other factors. There is no doubt the fact that there is a huge demand for university education in Nigeria. This demand could be seen in the total number of candidates sitting for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) being conducted yearly the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board Examination (JAMB). The table below shows the breakdown of total number of

candidates that participated in the UTME between 2016 and 2020 as well as those that were eventually admitted.

**Table 2: Breakdown of Candidates that participated in the UTME and those Admitted in all the Nigerian Universities, 2016 and 2020 (Selected)**

S/N	Year	Total Application	Total Quota	Total Admitted	Unused
1	2016	1,557, 017	-	405, 467	-
2	2017	1,687,551	-	418, 391	-
3	2018	1,558,686	575,687	445, 318	130,369
4	2018	1,808,334	560,613	444,947	115,666
5	2020	1,855,072	601,775	422,453	179,322

**Source:** Oloyede, I.O. 2022. State Ownership Dynamics, University Councils and the Need for a New Social Contract between Society and University. A paper presentation the 6th Biennial Conference of the Committee of Pro-Chancellors of State-Owned Universities in Nigeria, by Tuesday, March 22, 2022

The above table revealed the total number of applicants as well as those that were eventually admitted into various Nigerian Universities (both public and private) between 2016 and 2020. From the table, one could see vividly that not all those who sought for admission into various Nigerian universities were eventually admitted. Besides, virtually all the universities did not meet up with their yearly quota. This could be attributed to a number of reasons such as problem of fund as well as challenge of incomplete

results and other admission requirements on the part of the admission seekers.

Further justification of the contribution of the private Christian universities to the provision of admission to prospective Nigerian students could be seen in table 3 below, which provides detailed statistics of degree admission offered to prospective undergraduates by both public and private universities between 2010 and 2022

**Table 3: Degree Admission by Ownership, 2010-2022**

	Federal Universities	State Universities	Private Universities	Total Figure
Figure	2,579,054	1,334,536	273,982	4,187,572
Percentage	61.5%	31.87%	6.57%	100%

**Source:** Oloyede, I.O. 2022. State Ownership Dynamics, University Councils and The Need for a New Social Contract between Society and University. A paper presentation the 6th Biennial Conference of the Committee of Pro-Chancellors of State-Owned Universities in Nigeria, by Tuesday, March 22, 2022

The above table revealed the total number of candidates admitted into all the three main categories of universities in Nigeria (federal, state and private) between 2010 and 2022. From the table, one could see vividly that all the three main categories of Nigerian universities offered admission to the prospective Nigerian undergraduates, though in

varying number and percentage during this period. It is evident from the table that while the federal universities took the lead with 2,579,054 (61.5%), and was immediately followed by the state universities with 1,334,536 (31.87%); private universities took the least with 273,982 (6.67%). Arguably, if there were no private universities (Christian private universities

inclusive) in the country during this period, the total of 273, 982 candidates admitted into various programmes or courses of study in those private universities would have been deprived of admission. Thus, the existence of private universities, Christian private universities in particular in Nigeria had helped to salvage the problem of deprivation of admission to prospective Nigerian students whose parents could afford high school fees being paid in those universities.

Improvement in the standard of university education in Nigeria was another major social impact of the existence of private Christian universities in Nigeria since 1999. One major area of measuring standard of university education in the world was through the Webometric ranking of world universities. Webometric ranking of world a university, which is an initiative of cybermetrics Lab, a research group of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) located in Madrid, started in 2004. The main aim of the webometric ranking is to improve the presence of the academic and research institutions on the web and to promote the open access publication of scientific results (<https://www.webometrics.info>). In fact, some private Christian universities in Nigeria have distinguished themselves for the maintenance of high standard in the provision of university education to Nigerian students in the country. Notable among these universities are Covenant University, Redeemer's University, Babcock University and Bowen University. For instance, according to January 2022 Webometric ranking of Nigerian Universities, Covenant University emerged as the Second Best University in Nigeria in particular. Of the 100 Nigerian universities that were ranked in 2020, twenty (20) of the universities were private universities, occupying various positions. In fact, some of the private Christian universities were ranked ahead of most public universities in the 2020 Webometric ranking such as Covenant University (2<sup>nd</sup> position), Landmark University (37<sup>th</sup> position) and Redeemer's University (45<sup>th</sup> position). These universities were ranked ahead of Kwara State University (46<sup>th</sup> position), Michael

Okpara University of Agriculture (47<sup>th</sup> position), Abia State University (48<sup>th</sup> position), Federal University, Dustin ma (49<sup>th</sup> position), Edo University (50<sup>th</sup> position) and so on (<https://www.webometrics.info>).

In terms of availability, quality and utilisation of learning resources cum availability of well, safe and conducive learning environment to achieve quality university education in Nigeria, some private Christian universities have made their mark. A good example of them is the Redeemer's University, Ede. In 2014, African Centre of Excellence for the Genomics of Infectious Disease (ACEGID) was established at Redeemer's University. The ACEGID Centre at the university was instrumental in containing the outbreak of Ebola in Nigeria in 2014 when the first case of Ebola was discovered in the country. Since 2014, the centre has been responsible for diagnosing and containing deadly infectious diseases such as Ebola, Malaria, Lassa Fever and COVID-19. Also, with the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, ACEGID Centre in Redeemer's University was named by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and African Centre for Disease and Control (ACDC) as an African reference laboratory for genome research. It was not just a Nigerian Centre, but also one of the regional repositories and bioinformatics centres in the continent of Africa. The centre was one of the laboratories that were launched by WHO and ACDC for the purpose of reinforcing genome sequencing of the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the virus that causes COVID-19 in Africa. This international recognition given to Redeemer's University was attributed to the availability of qualified academic staff and learning resources cum conducive learning environment in the university. The Centre, since its recognition, has been sharing information with Nigerian public on how to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 as well as mapping the first African SARS-CoV-2 genome sequence within Africa.

The contribution of the private Christian universities to the provision of manpower development needed for the development of Nigeria cannot be overemphasised. As argued by Okoroafor,

education and training are the major components of human capital development (Okoroafor, 2010:71). Erluwua explains that human capital development as a process of increasing human knowledge, enhancing human skills in vocational and technical education for the purpose of increase in productivity and stimulate resourcefulness of trainees (Erluwua, 2007, p. 116). Hence, the promotion of human capital development in any country requires the development of different educational programmes such as the establishment of tertiary institutions for the training of skilled manpower rather than relying on foreign expatriates. Since the active participation of the Christian missions as major stakeholders in the provision of university education in the country, the number of skilled labour (such as lawyers, scientists, doctors, engineers, nurses, academics, accountants, mass communicators, architects) had continued to increased yearly. As argued by Olukoju, some private universities have succeeded in carving a niche for themselves in certain specialist disciplines, where the concentrations of funds and facilities have produced some noteworthy results. He further explains that the performance of graduates of Bowen University in the Nigerian Law School Examinations was good illustration (Olukoju, 2019, p. 82). Evidence from oral interviews conducted revealed that some members of academic staff, who are lecturing in some public universities in Nigeria today, obtained their doctorate degrees from the private Christian universities such as Babcock, Bowen, Covenant and Redeemer's Universities.

The promotion and maintenance of high moral standard among students was a significant impact of the private Christian universities in Nigeria. The responsibilities of university in particular and tertiary institution in general go beyond academics (teaching, learning and research). Universities are supposed to be important centres in forming social morality. This belief is premised on the ground that for any graduate to be awarded a degree, he or she must have been found worthy of "character and learning". Thus, the university's greatest potential for influencing the moral development of students is in the

contribution that it can make to their intellectual development (Terrance, 1991). Although formal education is, but one influence among many, affecting character development, it is in our society the chief instrument of intellectual development. In this regard, the private Christian universities have continued to make their mark. Without doubt, a modicum of decency and civility underpinned by faith-induced ethical values is being instilled in students in most faith-based private universities (Olukoju, 2019, p. 82). In fact, most parents prefer to send their children to faith-based private universities, not minding the cost, to public universities due to issue of moral decadence in most public universities such as indecent dressing, drug abuse, cultism, violence among others. Although there are rules and regulations against these immoral behaviours in public universities, these social vices continued to thrive. The situation is different in most faith-based private universities. Rules and regulations against social vices are not just put in place; they are enforced and appropriate sanctions are meted on the culprits. One major faith-based private university notable for strict maintenance of high moral standard among students in Nigeria is Covenant University. One major advantage that faith-based private universities in particular have over the public universities in the promotion and maintenance of high moral standard among students is that they operate purely residential university system unlike the public universities, which operate residential and non-residential. This has helped the private universities in ensuring close monitoring of their students.

Provision of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) also constituted major social impact of the existence of the private Christian Universities in Nigeria. In this regard, the Christian missions complemented the role of the government at all levels in the provision of social and economic infrastructures to communities in Nigeria. According to Kolter and Lee, CSR is a commitment to improve community well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources (Kolter and Lee, 2005:5). Most of the private Christian universities contributed immensely to the provision to social and

economic infrastructures to their various host communities. These social and economic infrastructures ranged from construction of road, bridges and drainage; construction of town hall, provision of pipe borne water and electricity; accessibility to free quality health services; and so. Oral interviews concluded with some residents of some selected host communities of private Christian universities in the South West geo-political zone of Nigeria in particular such as Seriki Sotayo, Ogun State; Ilisan-Remo, Ogun State; Ode-Omu, Osun State; Iwo, Osun State; Ondo, Ondo State and Ibadan, Oyo State revealed that they benefitted immensely from the presence these universities in their communities. For instance, in Seriki-Sotayo, the community which before the establishment of McPherson University had no access to public electricity now has access to it through the university (Oladapo, 2022 & Adegboye, 2022).

The growth of small-scale businesses within and round the university environment in the host communities was another major economic contribution of the emergence of private universities. While in some of the universities such as Covenant, Bingham, McPherson, Bowen Universities among others constructed shopping complex, mini marts, cafeteria and malls, which were given as rent to residents to carry out different business activities such as barbing, sewing, food and catering, and laundry services and so on, in the others such as Joseph Ayo Babalola University, some residents of the host communities, were given opportunity to construct their own shops within the university environment. Also, there were some small shops and kiosks constructed by residents of the host communities outside the university environment for various business activities. These shops and kiosks were being patronised by members of staff and visitors to the universities.

Finally, the growth of transport service industry was another major economic contribution of the emergence of private universities. The commercial motorcycle operators (popularly known as *Okada* riders) are the major beneficiaries of this development. This is because it is the readily

available, easiest and fastest means of transportation to the various locations of most of these private Christian universities, which are mostly at the outskirts of the main towns. Thus, *Okada* business in some of the host communities of these universities received considerable boost. In some of the universities, *Okada* parks were located directly opposite the universities. The effect of this development in most of the host communities in particular and Nigeria in general was that it helped to reduce the high rate of unemployment among the youth. Information obtained through oral interviews with some of the *okada* riders in some of the host communities of the universities revealed that they were happy with the establishment of the universities in their area. For example, according to Mr Adebisi, the establishment of this university helped to boost our *okada* business most especially whenever the university has one programme or the other (Adebisi, 2022).

## Conclusion

The foregoing discourse has provided a detailed historical analysis of the evolution and development of participation of the Christian missions in the development of university education in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic between 1999 and 2021. It argued that the first major attempt at promoting private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria was traced to the Second Republic, which lasted between 1979 and 1983. During this first attempt, which was unsuccessful occasioned by the abolition of the twenty-six private universities by the regime of Major General Muhammadu Buhari through the promulgation of a decree in 1984, the Christian missions equally made their contribution. The situation remained in force until the return to civil rule in 1999. Although the military regime of General Abdulsalam Abubakar initiated the second attempt towards the promotion of private sector participation in the development of university education in Nigeria by granting licenses of operation to the first batch of three private universities in Nigeria in May 1999, they did not commence operation until the emergence of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo

administration, which later validated their licenses of operation in September 1999. Between 1999 and 2021, successive civilian administrations that emerged in the country took frantic efforts towards encouraging private sector participation in the development of university education in country by granting provisional licenses of operation through the recommendation of the National Universities Commission. Numerically, private Christian Universities increased from one (1) in 1999 to thirty-two (32) in 2021. By implication, the Christian missions have emerged as major stakeholders in the

provision of tertiary education in Nigeria. They have transformed from being the providers of primary and post-primary education to the providers of university education. Through this, they have succeeded in contributing to the socio-economic development of their host communities in particular and Nigeria in general. These socio-economic contributions were identified and discussed. This study is a major complement to existing body of knowledge on the history of western education in Nigeria in general, most especially university education.

## References

Abdulrahman Y. M. (2018). Education and school administration in the Nigerian History: The Colonial and post-colonial characteristics. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management*, 6 (4), 182.

Achunike, H.C. (2004). *The influence of Pentecostalism o Catholic Priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*. Onitsha: Africana First Publishers Limited.

Adeyemi, O.P. (2021). Private Universities and their host communities in Osun State, 2001-2019. Unpublished M.A dissertation, Department of History and International studies, Osun state University, Nigeria.

Ahmed R. M. (2014). *History of the Spread of Islam in the Niger-Benue Confluence Area: Igaland, Ebiraland and Lokoja, c1900-1960*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

Erluwua, H.E.O. (2007). Skills acquisition: A tool for youth empowerment for economic growth and development. *Journal of Business And Management Studies*, 1(2), 116.

Fafunwa, A.B. (1974). *History of Education in Nigeria*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Falola, T., Mahadi, A., Uhomobhi, M., Anyanwu, U. (1991). *History of Nigeria 3: Nigeria in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*. Ibadan: Longman Nigeria Limited.

Ige, A.M. (2013). Evolution of Private Universities in Nigeria: Matters Arising on the Way forward. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 8(2), 41-50.

Interview held with Mr. Oladapo Adewale, aged 56 at Sotayo village on 2 April 2022.

Interviews held with Mr Adegboye Ojo, aged 62 at Sotayo village on 2 April 2022.

Interview held with Mr. Adebisi Michael, aged 36 at Ikeji-Arakeji on 10 August 2022

Kolter, P., & Lee, N. (2005). *Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Activities*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Limited

Lewis, L. J. (1965). *Society, Schools and Progress in Nigeria*. London: Pergamon Press.

Nwagwu, N.A. (1993). Historical Development of Educational Laws in Nigeria, 10-27. In Yoloye, E.A Ed. *Education and the Law in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Claverianum Press, Printers and Publishers.

Obidi, S.S. (2005). *Culture and education in Nigeria: An Historical Analysis*. Ibadan; University of Ibadan Press.

Okoroafor, C. (2010). Human capital development and vision 20:2020. A perspective on tertiary education. *SBMT Nekede Conference Journal*, 1, (2), 71-80.

Oloyede, I.O. (2022). State Ownership Dynamics, University Councils and the Need for a New Social Contract between Society and University. A paper presentation the 6th Biennial Conference of the Committee of Pro-Chancellors of State-Owned Universities in Nigeria, by Tuesday, March 22, 2022.

Olukoju, A. (2019). Private universities and National Development: Reflections on the Nigerian experience. In Siyan Oyeweso and Sola Akinrinade. Eds. *Perspectives on higher education and good governance in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Noirlledge Limited.

Omolewa, M. (1986). *Certificate History of Nigeria*. Lagos: Longman Nigeria Limited.

Osagie, A.U. (2009). *Change and Choice: The Development of Private Universities in Nigeria*. Benin City: Rawel Printing Press.

Osoba, S.O and Fajana, A (1980). Educational and Social Development during the twentieth century. in Obaro Ikime. Ed. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*.

Osokoya, I.O. 1989. History and Policy of Nigerian education in World perspective. Ibadan. AMD publishers and Osokoya, I.O. (1994). *History and Policy of Education in Nigeria*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan.

Taiwo, C.O. (1980). *The Nigerian Educational System: Past, Present and Future*. Thomas Nelson Nigeria Limited.

Terrance, S. (1991). The Moral Responsibilities of Universities. In D.L Thompson. Ed. *Moral values and Higher Education*: Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University.

The Punch online: Interview with Prof. Kayode Makinde, Foundation Acting VC of Babcock University (1999/2000) and substantive VC, Feb.2006-Dec.2015 on 3 March 2018, by Samuel Awoyinfa on 15 February 2022.

Yusuf, M.A. (2017). Historical-Chronological Emergence of Universities in Nigeria: The perspectives in Colomilicivilian periodization. *Historical Research Letter*, 41.