

# **Neoliberalism and the University: An Analysis of Patterns of Transformation within Nigerian Private and Public Institutions**

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## ABSTRACT

*This study explores the dynamics surrounding neoliberal transformation of higher education in Nigeria. Chapter Through this study, I apply an analytic framework that focuses on the introduction of market-based principles and practices across three key dimensions (governance structures, pedagogy and curriculum, and student and staff expectations), and highlight the differences and similarities between public and private universities. The observed dynamics show an overarching similarity in patterns of neoliberalisation across public and private universities, but a few crucial differences. Overall, neoliberalisation of higher education in Nigeria broadly coheres with visions presented in existing scholarship of ‘the neoliberal university’, albeit with national characteristics. These findings extend understanding of the university within the neoliberal context by highlighting similarities across private and public sector transformations, and the importance of existing institutions and structures in shaping national varieties and pathways of neoliberalisation.*

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**ASUU:** Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities

**FGN:** Federal Government of Nigeria

**IMF:** International Monetary Fund

**NEPA:** National Electric Power Authority

**NITEL:** Nigerian Telecommunications Limited

**NUC:** National Universities Commission

**PHCN:** Power Holding Company of Nigeria

**UNICEF:** United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*This is dedicated to my parents. Without your support none of this would have been possible. I love you both so much.*

## AUTHOR DECLARATION

*I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work, and I am the sole author.*

*This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other university. All sources are acknowledged as references.*

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 Introduction

This study provided conceptual and empirical contributions through the exploration of higher education transformation in Nigeria. Empirical extensions were derived through detailed characterisation of higher education transformation in Nigeria. In terms of headline empirical findings what we see is an individualisation of costs, an application of market-based principles to programme and curriculum design, and an application of market rationality to institutional expansion that fits with existing visions of the ‘neoliberal university’ in existing literature. These findings hold broadly across public and private institutions studied, although amongst the differences the greater use of market-based principles to shape curriculum and institution expansion in private institutions is noteworthy. We also see in the case of private institutions, a prominent incorporation of religious authority and cultural practices, which demonstrates the importance of existing institutions and contexts in shaping variation in higher education neoliberalisation.

When one looks at the existing literature on neoliberalism, we are confronted with a significant body of extremely prominent research exploring the theory and practice of neoliberal transformation at a high level of abstraction. We also have a number of detailed studies of sector-level transformation focused on education and higher education. However, while there is an acknowledgement that the African continent has seen significant economic transformation in recent decades (Stiglitz, 2002) there is relatively little engagement with the details of sectoral neoliberalisation across this space. In line with this dynamics, neoliberalisation in Nigeria has yet to attract

sustained scholarly attention; therefore, this study significantly addresses this lacuna.

The study generated new insights into the nature and extent of neoliberalisation in Nigerian higher education and offer reflections on its influence on Nigeria. The term higher education is used to refer to public and private universities, and in exploring the higher education system, the role of broader governance structures is inclusive. In line with these parameters transformations within other institutions of higher learning such as polytechnics and colleges of education will not be explored (Cruickshank, 2003).

Throughout the thesis, attempts were made to engage with literature from the fields of politics, education studies, and history to structure the study. Drawing on these foundations, the research study on neoliberalisation in Nigerian higher education focussed on three dimensions in particular: governance structures, pedagogy and curriculum, and student and staff expectations. As explained in later sections of the thesis, 'neoliberalisation' is broadly defined as the incorporation of market-based principles and processes and its spill over effects. The overall conclusion from the thesis is that in relation to governance structures; the election of management, the involvement of student unions and the incursion of corporate practices has altered the management of higher education institutions in Nigeria. In relation to pedagogy, we see for profit incentives influencing the introduction of new texts and a lopsided permeation of technological practices. In relation to student and staff expectations, we learn about the staff remuneration experience and the housing condition of students (Teferra & Altbach, 2003). Through the study of microcosm of higher

education, a broader reflection on the role of the macrocosm of neoliberalism as a framework for transforming society is proffered in the closing sections of the thesis.

This thesis took a different view in describing the category of nations. The vestiges of imperialism and the long shadow of the cold war have given rise to terminologies such as ‘developing’ and ‘third world’ and these are holstered on certain countries, usually on the receiving end of rampant exploitation in the past and some might argue, even in the present. This is often juxtaposed with titles of ‘advanced countries’ and ‘first world’. Such is up for debate and justification, and attempts were made to advance this debate on terminology and perceptions through non-use of certain terms in this thesis. In short, following Claude Ake and Immanuel Wallerstein’s contention that there is only one world defined by proximity to the modes of production and this distinction should be placed on the pedestal of nations at the ‘core’ and nations on the ‘periphery’. These terms are used when exploring national varieties of neoliberalisation while narrating my contribution (Wallerstein, 1979; Ake, 1981).

Overall, the thesis is divided into two parts. The first five chapters helped to locate and explain the thesis, by focusing on how neoliberalism has been explored previously. Through these first parts, the mechanisms by which the thesis gains analytical traction is explained through the overview provided of the methodological framework, the background to the case and aims of the study, and the introduction of the reader to the contested definitions and concepts explored in the literature. The final five chapters focus on analysing the results of the fieldwork undertaken, which comprises a survey of staff and students from across twelve public and private universities, in addition to supporting interview materials. In this first section of the

Introduction, attempts have been made to give a snapshot of what this thesis explores and ultimately the contributions to academic debate on neoliberalism and neoliberalisation of higher education. From the foregoing, a brief background to the Nigerian state and its shifting role within the higher education system will be provided.

### **1.1 The Formation of the Nigerian State**

A central question the reader may be asking at this point is why Nigeria? What makes a country on the western coast of Africa a useful springboard for understanding the nature and impact of neoliberalisation? Nigeria is the most populous nation on the African continent with over 160 million people. It was also one of the earliest nations to gain independence from colonial pressures in Africa, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and since then the transitions within the country have been cited as a beacon for understanding the dynamics of the broader continent. Nigeria also offers the crucial mix of internal and external factors to explain the impact of neoliberalism. The country allows one to appreciate how crucial the structures of today are influenced by macro phenomena and extrapolate which other factors are to be held responsible. According to Ekanade (2014), Nigeria offers a good example for understanding neoliberalism as it presents an opportunity to understand the effects of a state moving from practicing substantive welfarism in its nascent years under successive military governments to a full-blown market economy brought upon by the structural adjustment policy prescriptions of the latter stages of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and amplified during the democratic period of the noughties. Bourne maintains that the early history of political history of Nigeria was indeed a turbulent one, riddled with the uneasy thawing of colonial relations and the emergent indignation of citizenry within a new political sphere (Bourne, 2015). The country came about as a result of the

amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates by Lord Lugard for budget deficit concerns amongst others - such as the incursion of the French around the neighbouring Cameroon, and above all the advancement of the British imperial agenda. By the 1960's the country was a firmly independent territory embroiled in a bitter civil war termed 'the brothers war' by St. Jorre. The country eventually blossomed into a full-fledged military oligarchy, dictated by the whims and caprices of men, badges, and foreign policy prescriptions (St. Jorre, 2012).

Historic studies of the political economy of Nigeria tend to focus on changes as experienced across transitions through analytically and temporally distinct republican eras and periods of military rule. For the purpose of this study, the first three republics, which broadly cover the period 1960-1993, provides a salient background to help understand the current fourth republic (1999-present). What then is a republic? How does it fit into the national consciousness of Nigeria? Arguably, one can explain the modern state of Nigeria by segmenting it into the republics and military regimes. According to Bohn, a republic is a system of government where the nation is a matter of public concern. That is to say, the nation is not led by unelected officials (Bohn, 1849). The primary method of attaining power in a republic is through democratic methods. The primary progenitor of this school of thought is Plato in his influential work *The Republic*. David Sachs argues that the vital role for a republican state is the maintenance and promotion of 'justice'. According to Sachs, 'a very important use of justice is rendering every man his due'. At the core of this is the 'principle of non-intervention'. In such a situation 'various parts [of the state] are working together in mutual harmony and friendship' (Sachs, 1963: 141-158). Whenever there is a break in this transmission by an unelected coterie of leaders, there we have the end of a republic. For instance, following the

French revolution and the dissolution of the monarchy, the First French Republic was founded in 1792 and this lasted until political power was seized by Napoleon in 1804, thus ending the First French Republic. Similarly in Nigeria, since becoming independent, a series of breaks have been precipitated by military incursions, with the first republic beginning in 1960 and ending in 1966. As at today, Nigeria is currently in its fourth republic, which is a key area of interest for the study (Doyle, 1999). A further introduction on the ethos of the Nigerian state and its peculiar political structure is given in the next few points.

At this juncture it is necessary to explain the various Nigerian republics as this knowledge is pertinent for understanding the makeup of modern Nigeria. The first Nigerian republic began with huge financial expenditure set aside for higher education. There were competing visions expressed in the major political parties on how universities should be regarded. The Action Group (AG), The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) were all very nationalistic and socialist in disposition. They were not averse to the incursion of private capital, but the belief in providing superior public goods to the populace was a key thread flowing through all parties. The major exportation staple of the country was groundnuts, cocoa and palm oil which were scattered across the three major regions of the country (Olayiwola, 1987). The First Republic was dominated by a huge increase in government expenditure. Towards the end of its existence there are numerous charges of corruption and mismanagement, and inflation hedges up the cost of living across the country amidst a series of civil unrests. At this juncture in the history of the country, a military coup occurs in early January of 1966, and then another military countercoup in July of the same year. Both coups are bloody and lead to various instances of violence across the country.



Following the countercoup, the prevailing military junta prosecutes a brutal Civil War to bring back a recalcitrant region back into the union of Nigeria. This war lasts for 3 year and leads to death of over two million people, primarily from starvation. The junta prevails and reunites the country. They will stay in power for a decade, a time of unprecedented oil boom following the 1973 oil crisis. In 1975, its leader General Yakubu Gowon was ousted while on a trip to an Organisation for African Unity (OAU) summit in Kampala. He was replaced by General Murtala Muhammad in a bloodless palace coup, who in turn leads the country for barely a year before he himself is assassinated. Thereafter, General Olusegun Obasanjo takes over in 1976 and issues proclamation for an election to take place in 1979. The election takes place albeit with hitches, and a winner is announced. The civilian Shehu Shagari is elected and assumes office as President in the same year. The second republic begins.

The second republic transforms into an American style democracy, shedding its British parliamentary structure in favour of the three arms of government model. The years were dominated by an increased reliance on crude, there was also a huge surplus in the budget and the government embarked on new development plans aimed at reconstruction, following the severe destruction of the war. By 1980, the second republic's constitution calls for a mixed economy, but President Shagari helms an administration, in which those in power maintain absolute control of the oil sector and the rents accruing from that. The global recession, combined with a sharp drop in oil prices in 1981 puts immense pressure on the economy and a period of stagflation follows, this is the beginning of a period of hardship for many Nigerians. By 1984 Shagari is overthrown by another military coup and the Second Republic collapses. He is replaced by a staunch socialist junta which defiantly

refuses to devalue the Naira and introduces border and exchange controls, this is headed by General Buhari. In 1985, General Buhari is overthrown, and he is replaced by General Babangida. The period of Babangida's reign is one of the most studied eras of Nigeria's socio-political and economic history. It is referred to as the era of Structural Adjustment. For certain scholars this marks the very first introduction of neoliberal model to the Nigerian context.

Babangida presses on with this economic agenda and The World Bank supported adjustments are launched, with an emphasis on economic discipline, deregulation, and austerity. The measures include devaluing the currency, reducing public expenditure, and reducing import tariffs. By 1993, Babangida resigns after a series of riots following a highly contested electoral process places the country on the brink of another civil war. He is replaced by an interim civilian leader, Ernest Shonekan. The short lived third republic begins. Around this time the SAP collapses under the weight of severe currency devaluation and dramatic surges in inflation and the cost-of-living skyrockets. There is an increase in crippling external debt and a cutback of public expenditure, particularly on higher education. At this point, Nigerian scholars and students begin to move abroad, bemoaning the lack of quality within the Nigerian university system, which at this time is still dominated by the public universities (Jega, 1995).

In the same year, the military takes over once again as Ernest Shonekan is toppled by his Minister of Defence General Abacha. His rule is despotic and filled with vicissitudes, but the national coffers swell due to increased oil prices. He also adheres to control of monetary policy and there is a deepened neglect of public goods provision. Abacha dies suddenly in 1998, and in 1999 Olusegun Obasanjo runs

for office as a civilian contender and emerges President later that year. He becomes the first elected president of the Nigerian fourth republic (Omotola, 2010).

He enacts policies aimed at privatizing state-run businesses, reducing government spending, and opening the country to foreign trade. By the beginning of the millennium privatization of state-owned assets is ramped up across the country. Since then, the Nigerian state has had three further presidents with increased liberalisation of sectors, particularly the university sector which was initially viewed as sacrosanct. The central reason for the above description is to give the historical backdrop underpinning the politics of the Nigerian state. It is also to highlight what exactly is going on socio-politically and economically in Nigeria today, and in what ways the doctrine of neoliberalism is influential within the average Nigerian's disposition (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

This study holds the view that to do this effectively one cannot just examine the country as a whole, it is wise to pick a sector and in the case of this thesis, it is the university sector. To restate concisely, the central thrust of the thesis is to analyse the patterns of transformations observed in the Nigerian university sector since the permeation of neoliberal principles within Nigeria. To do this, the private and public universities will be juxtaposed, and their differences and similarities will be highlighted, against the backdrop of the current academic understanding in the field. Hence, the thesis seeks to contrast its findings with what is currently obtained in the dominant literature on the neoliberal university. The discourse above has shed some light on the socio-political and economic positions of Nigeria, and this thesis intends to extrapolate from this as it engages with changes occurring in Nigerian universities today.

There is therefore the need to examine the relationship between ideological position and the state, and how such is fashioned within the furnace of higher learning institutions. This will further highlight why the Nigerian case is of critical importance. The choice of university education could be viewed as a peculiar choice for analysing neoliberalism, when more inviting sectors such as manufacturing, health, or crude oil may present themselves. However, the choice of higher education as the fulcrum of the study is indeed a delicious one. In essence, understanding the politics of higher education is vital because this singular sector is arguably the most important pressure cooker for the society that we live in (Cantwell et al, 2018). Hence, the issues of higher education, its impact on society, the people who inhabit the walls of government, and its influence on societal regulatory frameworks makes it a vital arena to enhance academic understanding. In the next section, I will highlight the importance of Nigerian higher education on the individuals inhabiting the state.

## **1.2 The Formation of Higher Learning Institutions in Nigeria**

The first higher learning institutions in Nigeria were founded in the early half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The introduction of formal higher education arguably introduced the defining narratives of the last century, namely: decolonisation, self-rule and the quest for dignity. Though many countries like Nigeria are comprised of various sub-groups, with Nigeria having over 250 languages spoken within its boundaries for instance. These thorny issues, unfolding in the halls of learning, would go on to characterise the political attitudes of the emerging individuals exposed to the ivory towers within Africa ( Emeka-Nwobia, 2015). The century was marked with mass protests and widening political participation by individuals exposed to higher education. The legacy of this persists across the continent. Recent examples of this

are well documented; an example is the mass protests that occurred at the beginning of South Africa's academic year in 2019, which brought campuses to a standstill. The protests were galvanized by requests for the government to take another route by adopting the carefully researched and argued suggestions that some academics, civil society and others made to entrench the right to education as a public good. Such agitations have strong antecedents and they have had strong and broad implications for many African countries. African universities were the principal driving force for determining the nature of their post-colonial societies. They trained an entire new class of individuals and imbued them with the zest for deciding the existing narrative of state operation and this sometimes led to violent clashes. For instance, a battle between radical leftists and staunch believers of the role of Islam in society took place at the University of Khartoum in the late 1960's and this led to fatal clashes (The Conversation, 2019).

Another instance is the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961, which was viewed as an original sin by many students. This led directly to the adoption of leftist views by many of the students, who then embraced the values of Marxist-Leninism going forward (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2011). Scholars of higher education and political attitudes have previously narrowed their gaze on students who studied in western universities and went home to influence political direction. For better or for worse, all that is up for political debate. These include leaders like Julius Nyerere of Tanzania who studied in Edinburgh and Leopold Senghor who studied in Paris. Sure, their narratives and its legacies are very important, however by focusing on the present, this study seeks to open up new pathways of thinking of the significance of higher education. In acknowledging attitudes towards the dominant ideologies of our age. In the Nigerian case, there is some literature on this; however, as previously

alluded to, the academic understanding regarding this tends to focus on the significant event of the structural adjustment programs and its implications. This is because it offers an event one can point to and say this happened. Another angle is to take into cognisance the trade unions, and labour societies. Speeches, manifestoes and policy prescriptions of individuals, incessantly referred to as 'comrade' saturate academic works and policy prescriptions. Nonetheless, on the question of what is happening, right now, in the Nigerian space, there is very little to satisfy the curiosity. It is baseless to possibly argue against the impact of university education in forming the opinions of individuals that exist within its political structures, particularly when these opinions are further shaped by the doctrines of neoliberalism, that many scholars maintain is coiling around such institutions and the individuals that inhabit them.

Education determines the nature of society and society determines the nature of education. Paulo Freire is of the view that education is 'the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it'. (Freire, 1970: 87). He is of the opinion that this is what education ought to do, create individuals to transform society. He argues that the education systems that have developed today are heavily influenced by passive consumption models of learning and deliberately do not do this. In other words, the forces of the market have come to define what education is, and in so doing, further define the narratives that accrue to anyone or group of people who have access to it, depending especially on where they gain this access. In essence, the nature of educational provision has been influenced by the market in recent years and this in turn has influenced the individuals it churns into society (Willott, 2011). Hence, this is why higher education is a critical fulcrum to understanding the effects of neoliberalism upon society, and how this is perceived.

By analysing these emergent narratives one can, with a hint of trepidation, but with a burst of excitement engage in research that seeks to understand how it is unfolding, and by so doing offer intriguing insights on the nature of changes that have actually occurred within the system. This could have further implications in understanding those who exist within this system, and who in turn go on to shape the political processes and policies of the most populous African nation on earth. In the case of this research however, this will be done by utilizing a two-track analytical structure to analyse the nature of changes by examining the attitudes of individuals existing within the public and private university to these perceived changes. To further understand the rationale behind political explorations of the influence of neoliberal transformation on higher education principles and policies, Furthermore, the evolution of higher education in Nigeria and touch on its intersection with politics will be highlighted.

In 1914, the southern and northern protectorates were amalgamated into a single entity and christened Nigeria by Lord Frederick Lugard, of course he was acting on the recommendations of the Colonial Office and the dictates of the Peel Commission, but the image of Lugard as a lone ranger is etched into the Nigerian national consciousness. By 1930 there was some presence of post high school institutions, typically focused on specific expertise such as agriculture, veterinary science and railways in Jos, Ibadan and Zaria respectively. However, the first institution of higher learning was not established till 1934 at Yaba in Western Nigeria. The founding of the Yaba Higher College was a culmination of agitations by nationalist sentiments and was spearheaded by Nigeria's director of education E.R.J Hussey. It was established to train indigenous Nigerians for tasks and duties which were still practised by Europeans in Nigeria but were already taken over by other indigenous

peoples across the British Empire. Hussey's idea was for the institution to gradually evolve to the standard of a British University, the likes of which had been established in Malaya (1905) and Hong Kong (1911). In 1945 the British colonial government received the reports of the Asquith and Elliot Commissions 'to consider the principles which should guide the promotion of higher education, learning and research and the development of universities across the empire' (Ejiogu & Sule, 2012: 2-8).

Both reports agreed that the development of university of education in Western Africa should be treated with great urgency but they differed on the nature and number of institutions to be established. According to Okoli, Ogbondar & Ewor:

The majority report (Elliot report) signed by the members of the Conservative Party and West Africans on the commission recommended the immediate establishment of three university colleges in West Africa which were to be sited at Ibadan, Nigeria and Achimota, Gold Coast (now Ghana). Meanwhile, the minority report was signed by members of the Labour and Liberal parties recommending only one West African University College at Ibadan, and four territorial Colleges to be sited at Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Gambia and Nigeria to serve as feeders to the main institution in Ibadan and should provide intermediate courses (Okoli, et al, 2016: 60-73).

With the end of the Second World War and the loss of the conservative party at the polls, the Labour party came into power after the British general election in 1945, and 'the government adopted the minority report and rejected the majority report'. However, there was a conciliation of positions and this led to a compromise agreement for the establishment of the University College at Ibadan (UCI) and another in the Gold Coast. Thus, in 1947 the first entrance examinations were



conducted, and in 1948 the University College of Ibadan began life in Nigeria as an affiliate college of the University of London. The bulk of its 13 staff and 104 students were all previously students at the Yaba Higher College (Okafor, 2001).

The University in Ibadan remained the sole institution of higher learning until the establishment of the University of Nigeria (UNN) in the Eastern region on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1960. The arguments put forth to justify its founding were the colonial hangover underpinning the governance of Ibadan. Its strict European nature was also touted as an issue of concern. Hence, UNN was founded with American style values; its founding was championed by the first president of Nigeria Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe who coincidentally studied in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) in the United States of America. Additionally, around this point, the manifestoes of political parties and public opinion also clamoured for the formation of a sort of proper Africa university, and a decolonisation of the university setup process by the emerging political parties, and this further influenced how universities were set up (Ejiogu & Sule, 2012). In anticipation of an independent Nigeria there was palpable discourse surrounding the need for an educated work force in the country. Hence, the Ashby Commission was set up in 1959 to ascertain the post-high school certificate needs. Its recommendations were the establishment of a university in the East, North, and West and the capital city of Lagos.

Following this, in 1962 the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) began operations in Northern Nigeria. University of Lagos (UNILAG) was then established in 1963 and in 1970 the University of Benin (UNIBEN) was founded, and the University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) was established in 1962 outside the purview of the Ashby recommendations, completing what is today known as in Nigeria as the

first-generation universities. In terms of governance, the University College Ibadan which then became the University of Ibadan in 1963 and the University of Lagos were managed by the Federal Government while the (UNN, ABU and OAU) were managed by their respective regional governments (Livsey, 2017). Nduka Okafor in *The Development of Universities in Nigeria* (1971) considers that these institutions were founded on the ethos of nationalist agitations and their philosophy was governed by such principles while Babs Fafunwa in *A History of Nigerian Higher Education* (1974) believes they were constrained by the Anglo centric historical nature from which they emerged. It is argued that this could be seen in the architecture and foundational layout of all the universities. Obanya however suggests that as time went on, they wholeheartedly accepted and were guided by the ethos of being true to the Nigerian context. In other words, they embraced the unique time and place where they developed as institutions of learning (Obanya, 1974).

By 1977 institutions of higher learning were established in Jos, Maiduguri, Calabar, Sokoto, Illorin, Port-Harcourt and Kano and these were collectively referred to as second generation universities' By February 1976, the nineteen state structures were created by the Federal Military government (Oreva, 2017) and approval for the establishment of universities in the newly created states was granted. From 1975-1980, Universities of technology were set up in the new states. These include Owerri, Enugu, Anambra, Imo, Ekiti, Ogun and Bendel. Then crucially, in 1979, the Nigerian government asserted in Section 36 sub sections 2 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 'every person shall be entitled to own, establish, and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions.' (FRN, 1979, 1989 and 1999). Consequently, additional political entities other than the Federal government were granted the power to establish universities. Around this point the

issues surrounding public education began to make its way to the forefront of public discourse within Nigeria. This included poor funding, decline in the intensity of research, incessant strike actions, cultism and disorderly conduct of students, faculty exodus, and lack of adequate infrastructure.

According to Yoloje private higher education began to take root in Nigeria at this point and by the 1990's additional laws were promulgated to ease the establishment of private higher institutions in Nigeria. Their study points out that between 1990 and the mid-noughties, 20 privately owned universities had been granted license by the National Universities Commission (NUC), the regulatory body for universities in Nigeria (Yoloje, 1986). Around this time, Nigeria's longest operating private universities were founded, namely: Igbinedion University, Okada and Madonna University, Okija. Today, there are over 45 private universities in Nigeria, though it is however maintained that private universities are not novel ideals. It was first entertained during the civilian administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari (1979-1983), who was the first democratically elected President in Nigeria and plans were underway for significant private investments in education, but their hopes were dashed by the coup d'état in 1983 which proscribed such plans. In 1985 another military coup occurred, and the plans were granted dignified light once again, especially within the euphoria of structural adjustment policies (SAP). By 1991, following the report of the Longe Commission the idea of private universities was for a second time acknowledged and widespread implementation began (Babalola, 2017).

According to Okunola & Oladipo, Nigeria is a nation of over 160 million people where '1 million candidates apply for admission to Nigerian higher institutions annually

with only 13% of that number being offered admission into the available vacancies in the existing tertiary institutions'. They observe that;

Out of 1,046,940 candidates that applied for admission into Nigerian Universities in 2003/2004, 10.30% were offered admission. In 2004/2005, 838,305 candidates applied, 13.42% gained admission. While in 2005/2006, out of 917,960 applicants, 8.39% were admitted. Out of 912,350 candidates in 2006/2007, 12.94% were offered admission and in 2007/2008, 1,034,083 applied while only 4.59% were offered placement. There are one hundred and seventeen (117) universities, comprising thirty-six Federal, thirty-six states and forty-five private. Specifically, in 2011/2012 academic session, University of Lagos was the most preferred first choice with 99,195 applicants but [only] 6,106 (6.15%) were offered admission. This was followed by Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria with 89,760 applicants and admitted 6,068 (6.76%). University of Nigeria, Nsukka trailed with 88,177 and 5,970 (6.77%) were offered admission. [In addition] there are also 63 Colleges of Education and 75 Polytechnics in all (Okunola & Oladipo, 2012: 2-7).

It is contended that public universities are not suitable for the educational needs of the nation and private institutions evolved to fill this void. One thing highlighted appropriately is the idea of the word 'private' being a broad concept and encompassing religious, nongovernmental organization-run, community-financed and for-profit institutions. This is because though provision of private education by for-profit organisations in higher education is new, the other components have been part and parcel of the bedrock of the entire Nigerian primary and secondary education framework since pre-colonial and colonial times. However, in the current

situation within the tertiary environment they are generally indistinguishable, as profit mixes freely with religiosity in the Nigerian context. A case in point is Babcock University, which is founded on strict Seventh Day Adventist Christian values. This evolution of university education in Nigeria offers intriguing avenues, alongside neoliberalism, for highlighting key religious narratives shaping the current system in Nigeria, and I will explore this in detail.

### 1.3 Aims and Objectives

Moving on from higher education in Nigeria, it is arguable that neoliberalism replaced the Keynesian philosophies that emerged in the post-war order and these new set of economic processes led to a situation whereby tax cuts, elimination of trade barriers, privatisation, and the gradual annihilation of the power of trade unions became ingrained, and through certain agents of modern globalisation such as the International Monetary Fund and The World Bank Group were popularised (Klein, 2008). Scholars characterize neoliberalism as an aggressive expansion of capitalism that has gained an elevated eminence in the corridors of power and has led directly to the largest transfer of wealth in national proportions to a class of people, deeply widening the already existing inequality. Overall, this thesis seeks to engage with this scholarship on neoliberalism by exploring contemporary neoliberalisation of Nigerian higher education and reviewing perceptions of actors within these higher education settings regarding the form and influence of neoliberalisation on their respective institutions. Overall, the aims of the thesis are to address the following overarching questions:

- i) To what extent has neoliberalism shaped the reform of higher education in Nigeria?

- ii) What are the core similarities and differences in the reform of higher education across public and private universities in Nigeria?

These pertinent questions are my guiding light as attempts are made to explore and explain these concepts throughout the thesis. This will take us on a journey across the three key dimensions of transformation, namely: governance, pedagogy, and faculty experiences, and by so doing the understanding of the reader is broadened to comprehend the nature of such transformations within the Nigerian space.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 Neoliberalism: Setting the Context

#### 2.1 Introduction

Through this chapter, an overview of major strands of scholarship on neoliberalism is provided. The purpose of the chapter is to contextualise the thesis as a whole to understanding the neoliberalisation of higher education in Nigeria. Overall, through the chapter I show that much scholarship on neoliberalism operates at a high level of abstraction, leaving significant room for clarification and extension through empirical detail.

In this chapter, attempts will be made to derive a broad definition of neoliberalism around which to orientate this study, which conceptualises neoliberalisation as the process of extending market-based principles and processes to shape behaviour and outcomes across aspects of the socio-economic world. Prominent dimensions of neoliberalisation highlighted in existing scholarship include moves from collective to individualised payment for public goods and services, reduction of state involvement in and regulation over the supply of public goods and services, and the creation of institutional structures to encourage (managed forms of) competition between providers of public goods and services. This conceptualisation and these dimensions of neoliberalisation will be adopted throughout later chapters

In deriving these insights, this chapter is organised to explore four prominent strands of scholarship on neoliberalism in turn. Firstly, scholarship that provides an overview of neoliberalism as an intellectual framework of ideas. Secondly, scholarship that espouses neoliberalism as an economic paradigm, and lastly, review works that

foregrounds neoliberalism as an externally imposed political imposition, before finally considering studies focusing on sectoral transformation.

## 2.2 The Intellectual Evolution of Neoliberalism

This entire chapter focuses on the literature surrounding the term neoliberalism; it attempts to explain how the term neoliberalism came to be, and how it has been further deployed, defined, and utilized by scholars over the past few centuries and in recent times. To do this, it encapsulates understanding of the concept within four pillars, namely academic, economic, political and transformational. It then goes on to analyse the impact of neoliberal transformation on higher education in core and periphery nations, and then within the Nigerian state. It concludes by highlighting the relationship between higher education and attitude formation contained within the literature. It is important to state that the literature surrounding the term is diverse and fluid and is contained in a litany of various accounts ranging from newspaper articles, white papers, government reports, scholarly journals and tomes. The scholarly works on neoliberalism can be broadly distributed into four main pillars as stated above. They include: neoliberalism as an academic paradigm, as an economic development model, as a political imposition, and finally as a process of exploring sector-specific transformations which this study deals with specifically. In recent times major academic works have fallen under the banners of pure critique, in such cases neoliberalism is analysed and pulled apart to unveil its perceived ugly characteristics. This is exemplified in the works of David Harvey in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005), Noam Chomsky's riveting account in *Profit over People - Neoliberalism and Global Order* (1999) and Saad-Filho & Johnston's



compilation in *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader* (2005). In these texts, the scholars extrapolate various debates and starve the term of the adoration it receives in certain quarters. They do not however locate the term within a single framework and they further try to utilize it as a rallying point to describe the entirety of the socio-political and economic failings of the social order existing within today's global context.

This part of the study is concerned with the evolution of neoliberalism as an academic paradigm. It charts the intellectual evolution of the term and seeks to bring the clashing notions of the term under a cohesive narrative. A good majority of the literature suggests that neoliberalism is a burgeoning phenomenon, however recorded usage of the term 'stretches back to the very end of the nineteenth century' when it appeared in the write up by the French Charles Gide to describe the economic principles of the noted Italian economist Maffeo Pantaleoni. A man described as the intellectual forerunner of the modern public choice theory together with fellow Italians Vilfredo Pareto and Antonio de Veti de Marco (Gide, 1898). The article was an expansive critique on his views surrounding the corporatist movement of the time. Subsequently in the early half of the twentieth century; scholars used the term sparingly to describe new additions to the understanding of political theory and this was mostly concentrated in notable academic journals of the time. For instance, the work of Barnes published in 1921 in the *American Journal of Sociology* analysed some contributions to the nature of political theory and this work highlighted certain evolving connotations surrounding the term 'liberal' in academic discourse at the time (Barnes, 1921). It is contended however that the first monograph dealing with neoliberalism was a doctoral thesis by Jacques Cros in which he analysed the reinvigoration of liberalism in the period just before and right after

the Second World War and it was around this period that term was born and nurtured in earnest (Thorsen & Lie, 2006).

Birch contends that neoliberalism is a sort of rebooted liberalism, that began subsequently after the Walter Lippman Colloquium (a foremost gathering of intellectuals) held in Paris the year before Germany invaded Poland (Birch, 2017). In varied accounts of the evolution of neoliberalism the colloquium is usually held up as a pivotal moment in its evolution as it featured many prominent scholars and individuals that would go ahead to advance its ideas and teachings. It is further christened the dawn of the neoliberal academic understanding, and the crucial topics such as the relationship between the roles of the market in a self-effacing democracy were extensively discussed there (Reinhoudt & Audier, 2018). The colloquium is also seen as the corner stone of the Mont Pèlerin Society founded just a few years later in 1947 where self-avowed liberals were convened at a Swiss resort at the invitation of Frederich Hayek to debate matters such as the post-depression society, the sweeping communist rhetoric, and usurping the precedence of Keynesian ideas in circles of governance (Schulz-Forberg, 2017). Among the attendees of the colloquium and delegates to the latter society were Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek, very important figures in the academic literature surrounding this field. In 1944 *The Road to Serfdom* by Hayek and *Bureaucracy* by Mises were published respectively and in their works they argued against government intervention and called for a greater role for individualism in the economy.

The evolution of neoliberalism as an academic paradigm is not that linear and according to Arnaud Brennetot the term was also mainly used to refer to certain publishing houses and certain avant-garde writers associated with advancing the

liberal agenda in Western Europe. By the 1950's the term was then absorbed to describe the German Ordoliberalism which was a certain strand of ideas advocating strong markets and equally strong states to protect against competition, It is maintained that these ideas were the major forerunner to the current framework of the European Union and contributed to the theoretical understanding of the term in the period. According to Monbiot in his influential piece *Neoliberalism: the idea that swallowed the world* the academic framework for this emergent thought process began to take root in institutions and a 'series of think tanks' most of them founded in the 1970's. They brought together policy makers, businessmen, academics, politicians, from across the Atlantic to understand and promote the growing ideology. Examples of such institutions include but are not limited to: 'The American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, the Institute of Economic Affairs, the Centre for Policy Studies and the Adam Smith Institute' (Monbiot, 2017: 34-35). He further maintains that they also financed academic positions and departments in certain American institutions that would go on to train many of the advocates of neoliberalism around the world. Scholars generally agree that despite this it still remained at the margins. This was because the economic ideals of near-full employment, provision of social security and certain safety nets was still widely appreciated in most quarters, up until the 1970s when what was termed neoliberalism assumed its current form. David Kotz asserts that 'in the 1970s the old religion of classical liberalism made a rapid comeback, first in academic economics and then in the realm of public policy' (Kotz, 2000: 64-79). However one can contend that this new phenomenon seized on the inflation and stagnation crisis of the era and became synonymous with rapacity as it was gradually adopted by academics who advised governments in their respective countries

(particularly the United States and the United Kingdom) and in international organisations across the world who in turn advised the government of other nascent nations.

When the term is used today it is usually associated with the Chicago school of economics, but it is important to remember that preceding this are the fundamental underpinnings of neoliberalism which are rooted in neoclassical economic thought and classical liberalism, after all the term neoliberalism merely means new liberalism. The intellectual foundations of liberalism rest on the writings of John Locke and it generally espouses a range of views such as freedom of speech, press freedom, separation of church and state, and an indefatigable belief in the power of individual choice. It was laid down in his *Two Treatises* (1689) and provided a complete departure from the principles of divine rule of the monarchs guiding societal relations put forth by Robert Filmer in *Patriarcha* (1680) and the social contract theory of Thomas Hobbes postulated in *Leviathan* (1651) according to which, citizens were accorded certain privileges but also gave up some of their rights in order to live under an overbearing state that guided all economic and social interactions for the benefit of all. The writings of David Hume were also quite influential, a famous work of his titled *History of England* (1754-61) focused on the evolution of libertarian thought in Britain from the time of the Romans to the present day. However, he is most revered for his epoch-making *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) which was a thorough analysis of the reasoning governing the conduct of human beings and it became a key text in the field of moral philosophy and in the understanding of liberalism.

Another seminal text guiding subsequent engagement with liberal ideals was *On Liberty* (1859) by John Stuart Mill published during the bustling times of the industrial revolution. In this work Mill sought to prescribe a standard for the relationship between power and people in relation to authority and liberty. He itemized his own views regarding government presence and the role of the individual in the economic engine that is man's society. At around the mid-eighteenth century the adhesive upon which philosophical, political and economic thought rested then began to fracture and liberalism from an economic point of view gained an elevated foothold. The most important intellectual underpinning of the neoliberal movement was laid down by Adam Smith in his Magnus opus an *Inquiry into the Nature and the Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). Smith carried out an analysis of the contributions of various economic philosophical thought that had preceded his ideas, such as that of the physiocrats and the mercantilists. For Smith the role of the state should be reduced to the barest minimum, more so in critical areas such as defence and justice where individual enterprise could not take hold 'given that in these matters, profit would never be enough to return monies spent' He is also widely acknowledged for his concept of the invisible hand and a furtherance of the notion that it is not by the benevolence of the baker that bread is available to all, but by his individual selfish interest and such interest creates an advantageous and efficient avenue for the distribution of resources. Nevertheless, according he also makes some statements that 'neoliberals of today would find extremely irritating' and according to Adam Smith:

English businessmen frequently, complain about the high level of wages in their country. They say that this high level is the reason why they cannot sell their goods at prices that are as competitive as in other countries. But they

remain quite silent about their high profits. They complain about the high profits of others but are very quiet about their own. In many cases, the high profits made by capital are much more to blame for price rises than are exorbitant wages (Smith, 1776).

Another key academic theory that provided a foundation for the neoliberal movement was that of Jean-Baptiste Say in 1803 called *Say's Law*. Widely ascribed to Say was his stance that 'supply creates its own demand' hence the crisis of overproduction is believed to be non-existent as consumption is readily available, of course the unsustainability of this was highlighted with events succeeding his period and in the writings of other academics such as Thomas Malthus. In 1817, David Ricardo added his theory of competitive advantage to the economic liberal framework - advocating for international division of labour and free trade. He argued that countries that have 'comparative advantage' in certain areas would do well to focus on that and import from geographical areas where they have developed advantages in other areas of production. In a widely acknowledged example of this 'Ricardo shows that if Portugal is more efficient than England in the production of both wine and fabric, it should abandon the latter if its price advantage in wine production is greater. Inversely, England should specialise in the production of fabric, where its handicap is the least great' (Ricardo, 1817). This example provided the internationalist framework guiding labour and trade that became the bedrock of the neoliberal ideology.

Apart from the scholars above that towered above the rest some other academics provided varying levels of inspiration for the ideology such as Jevons in his *The Theory of Political Economy* (1871) and Walras in *Elements of Pure Economics* (1874)

where they advanced understanding of the concepts of value, price, and equilibrium. Together the above neoclassical ideals laid the foundations for liberal economic theory but the theories of John Maynard Keynes would arrive to shake them to their very core. Though Keynes identified as liberal, economically and politically, he did not share similar sentiment regarding the absence of state in economic affairs and in his *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936) he laid a new path for the organisation of society that differed from all who had come before him. He argued for aggressive state investment to boost consumption, maintain employment, and boost revenue distribution in a more egalitarian fashion (Toussaint, 1998; Harvey, 2005). According to Cassidy he sought to totally redesign economic understanding and on New Year's Day in 1935, he mailed a letter to his friend George Bernard Shaw, where he wrote:

I believe myself to be writing a book on economic theory which will largely revolutionize – not I suppose, at once but in the course of the next ten years – the way the world thinks about its economic problems. I can't expect you, or anyone else, to believe this at the present stage. But for myself I don't merely hope what I say – in my own mind, I'm quite sure (Cassidy, 2011).

The neoliberal agenda then regained its foothold within academic circles with the collapse of Keynesian thought in the 1970's as a direct retaliation to the teachings of Keynes. It sought to re-invigorate the teachings of the liberal forbearers but this time on a more advanced and practical scale. It widened the proportions of acceptable thought put forth by the neoclassical economic school of thought thus creating its own neoliberal thought. Though there are other schools of thought to describe modern society in economic terms, the one dominant school of the

neoliberal thought process however is the 'Chicago School'. It is a body of work emanating from the University of Chicago with the foremost arguments against the Keynesian interventionist ideals and possesses an overwhelming emphasis on efficiency guaranteed by the free market. A notable proponent was Milton Friedman who argued in *A Monetary History of the United States* (1963) that a laissez-faire system was more advantageous to society than a strong central government and he further expounded his views in *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962) where he deemed individual economic freedom as a necessary prerequisite for political freedom.

A scholar identified within this school of thought is Ronald Coase who expanded on the importance of firms in the economy arguing in his work *The Nature of the Firm* (1937) extrapolating from his research that it would be less efficient and profitable for individuals to engage in large scale enterprise due to transactions costs. Additional scholars such as George Stigler who wrote extensively on government regulation in a bureaucracy and its impact on business and society also belong to this school. Stigler is also widely recognised for his widely cited essay in the *Journal of Political Economy* which places considerable emphasis on the importance of information in a market economy (Stigler, 1961). Additionally, we have Robert Lucas within this fold, whose work outlines that the processes by which a firm and a government are run should not differ, as he is of the belief that the issues are similar and indeed all cut from the same cloth. He asserts that the driver for prosperity in both cases is simply the role of the right mix of expedient monetary policies (Lucas, 1977). The Chicago school has produced twelve Nobel laureates in economics and its scholars, and their points of view generally regard the free market as paramount. It could be argued that their ideas are an important fulcrum for understanding neoliberalism from an academic standpoint and were prominently involved in



shaping the thought process in many other academic arenas across the world. Hence, analysing neoliberalism from an academic standpoint allows one to evaluate the changing nature of the debate within Nigerian higher education today. We could then advance understanding of the role of markets by charting the changing nature of views surrounding this crucial phenomenon. This is particularly useful for policy makers in the university sector, particularly in Nigeria and broader African countries where information asymmetry is dominant. The above provides an appreciation of the intellectual evolution of the idea from the industrial revolution to the present times and seeks to provide a foregrounding for scholars who seek to understand the intellectual underpinnings of neoliberalism. The thesis will also touch on this, by investigating how this debate has evolved within the Nigeria context, further highlighting the dominant narratives in contemporary discourse. The next point will elucidate the economic angle.

### **2.3 Neoliberalism as an Economic Paradigm**

This part of the literature seeks to highlight the thought process surrounding neoliberalism as a synonym for the current development agenda. It is concerned with explaining how this aligns with the activities of the Development Financial Institutions, particularly with regards to the prescription of Structural Adjustment Programs. An avenue by which neoliberalism is understood within the literature is as an economic development model holstered by the ruling elite of the international development community on other nations. Since the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century these sets of policies are described by the catch all term ‘Washington Consensus’. This term was coined by John Williamson in an influential 1989 essay *What Washington Means by Policy Reform*. In this he analysed the consensus regarding certain economic advice and models holstered on Latin American nations. It is

contended that ‘Williamson’s aim was to codify that part of the neoliberal analysis that have become commonly accepted within development theory and particularly in the circles of big developmental institutions (primarily the IMF and the World Bank) seated in Washington. In Williamson’s own words in the introductory part of his codification of what would widely come to be known as the ‘Washington consensus’, he says: ‘Statements about how to deal with the debt crisis in Latin America would be incomplete without a call for the debtors to fulfil their part of the proposed bargain by setting their houses in order, undertaking policy reforms, or submitting to strong conditionality.’ Thus, the question he set out to outline was ‘what such phrases mean, and especially what they are generally interpreted as meaning in Washington’ (Mavroudeas & Papadatos, 2005: 251-264). These conditional ties are concerned with the structural adjustment policies (SAP’s) of the 1980’s and 1990’s prescribed by nations at the core to majority of the periphery countries suffering from the debt crisis. It offered a new path to economic development, and they were labelled as a worthy structure for economic advancement (Adedipe, 2016).

This affected the very fundamentals of a lot of societies as it required a reduction in spending in key public utilities. The idea was to focus on specific conditions such as promotion of deregulation, on the supposition it would lead to efficiency and effectiveness and thus enable debt repayment and furthermore to use this as a springboard for thorough economic reforms (Hickel, 2012). In the write up Williamson itemises the prescriptions into ten broadly categorized policies. This is further simplified by Cohen-Setton below:

1. Fiscal Discipline.

2. Reordering Public Expenditure Priorities.
3. Tax Reform.
4. Liberalizing Interest Rates.
5. A Competitive Exchange Rate.
6. Trade Liberalization.
7. Liberalization of Inward Foreign Direct Investment.
8. Privatization
9. Deregulation
10. Property Rights (Cohen-Setton, 2016: 1)

Williamson realised later on that the idea surrounding his definition had evolved and addressed it further in a later article. According to Williamson (2004) cited in the publication *International Relations* 'there are [now] at least three distinct meanings' and they are outlined below:

*1). A list of ten specific policy reforms, which I claimed are widely agreed in Washington to be desirable in just about all the countries in Latin America, as of 1989...*

*2). The set of economic policies advocated for developing countries in general by official Washington, meaning the international financial institutions (the IFIs, primarily the IMF and World Bank) and the US Treasury'.*

*3). Critics' beliefs about the set of policies that the IFIs are seeking to impose on their clients. These vary somewhat by critic, but usually include the view*

*that the IFIs are the agents of 'neoliberalism' and therefore are seeking to minimize the role of the state.*

The debate on the notion could be divided into the camps of the critics and the proponents. Certain scholars espouse the ideas of the Washington consensus. According to Ricardo Hausmann the policies provide a framework for policy makers to utilize the market rather than seek to dominate it, and this generally leads to benefits for all (Eichengreen, 2016). In a study, a scholar who reviewed Nigeria lauded the role of the process in bringing about reforms in the civil service and adjacent public departments in the country. This is because the cost-cutting measures adopted by the government led to uncomfortable changes for staff, particularly those in academia. However, he also noted the lack of any long term benefit of the process (Adedipe, 2016)

In addition, a recent longitudinal study done by Jonathan Ostry, Prakash Loungani, and Davide Furceri emphasised the relationship between its policies and the elevation of millions out of poverty. They highlight its impact on dismantling information asymmetry and increasing standards of living in the nations located at the periphery (Ostry *et al*, 2016). Charles Wyplosz also sits within this camp, arguing that a sudden transition to the forces of the market for any nation are well within right to guarantee prosperity as far as structural reform is adhered to and the budget deficit is not immediately eliminated, he goes on to argue that indeed many of the actions contained within the consensus 'have been proven right' (Wyplosz, 2000: 37-64).

The IMF also holds these policies in good light arguing the policy simply promoted self-sufficiency in nations that received support from itself and its sister

organisations and it would be difficult to assess empirically what other occurrences would have played out if other routes were selected (Mbah, 1999; IMF, 1999). The debate surrounding the consensus is a broad one and it is interesting to note that this is not one where we have Marxists on one side and anarchists on the other, but it is usually by scholars, individuals and institutions who have an implicit belief in the power of the markets and a complete distrust of centrally planned economies. In the early days of the collapse of the Soviet Union the policies were vehemently admonished by the influential economist Jeffrey Sachs in his book *End of Poverty* where he argued against such impositions. He points out the complete disregard shown towards protecting infant industries and the inconsistency surrounding capital controls (Sachs, 2006). In addition, the birth of the millennium ushered in new voices opposed to it and a call for a Post-Washington consensus championed by scholars such as Joseph Stiglitz who argued economic policies should not be mechanical and should seek to achieve broader aims and focus on improving the living standards of the people.

A similar critique is embodied in the work of Charles Gore where he bemoans the ahistoricism of the policy prescriptions and its narrow focus on performance, instead of maintaining that the power of history and precedence is as important as any economic metric in analysing and providing a path towards economic growth (Gore, 2000). The Nigerian scholars Okonkwo and Ononihu are also quite against the consensus and they provide a thorough assessment of Structural Adjustment. They contend that:

SAP in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s was characterised by poor economic performance. African investment declined, and the continent's share in the

world exports also fell by more than one-half between 1975 and 1990. Also, the share of Africa in agriculture and food exports dropped from 21% to 8.1% of developing countries' exports and in manufactured goods exports from 7.8% in 1980 to 1.1% in 1990. Therefore, some critics pointed out those liberalisation policies and such policies as the elimination of subsidies for fertilizers had a negative impact on agricultural productivity and output. Price reform promoted export crops over traditional food crops. Others argued that export crops contributed to indebtedness or that adjustment programmes exacerbated unequal land distribution, promising that efficient land markets would replace traditional tenure systems, while encouraging de-industrialisation through wholesale privatisation and unfettered market (Okonkwo & Ononihu, 2018, pp. 3-15).

David Ellerman also scrutinizes the fate of former countries behind the Iron curtain who adopted such policies and declared the consensus the harbinger of a more aggressive kind of privatisation (Ellerman, 2002). The same views are shared by Paul Krugman, cited by Naim in his essay, who was also vehemently opposed to the actions of the IMF and World Bank in Asia during the financial crisis of 1997. He asserted that 'instead of trying to prevent or even alleviate the looming slumps in their economies [Asian countries] were told to follow policies that would actually dampen those slumps' (Naim, 2000). Hence, one can appreciate how this catch all term advertising aggressive capitalism came to be associated with neoliberalism and is widely simultaneously used in much of the literature by various scholars to connote a path towards economic development imposed by outside forces upon the post-colonial world. This study will seek to analyse the perception of neoliberalism as a development paradigm within today's context in Nigeria and the African continent,

particularly with the varying views by different global players embodying their own ideals of economic progression. What is the perception of neoliberalism as a pathway to sustainable prosperity in Nigeria today, by speaking with individuals in the university sector and analysing the divergent narratives we can pick apart the consensus or lack of regarding this crucial angle within the discourse of neoliberalism. This contribution of the thesis will assist scholars of the future who may seek to further understand how this process unfolds. The next point is on the perception of neoliberalism as a political imposition.

#### **2.4 Neoliberalism as a Political Imposition**

This section of the literature review explores the description of neoliberalism as an imposition of certain political values. An important aspect of neoliberalism within the literature is scholars who view neoliberalism as utilized as simply a liberal political imposition - a systemic and radical imposition of the liberal agenda in nations where communist ideals might otherwise have been pursued. They argue that it is a revitalized form of imperialism and the championed policies of the core countries (usually former imperial powers) is simply a way to further arrest sovereignty from nations located within the periphery. Another political argument aimed at neoliberalism is the tendency for its policies to hide under the cloak of globalisation and a race towards shared values despite its propensity to denigrate certain traditional attitudes, especially those in the periphery nations and in turn simultaneously propagate political approaches usually advantageous to core nations which are then ascribed to be universal. In other words, neoliberalism is simply a robe for the stamping of hard and soft power upon post-colonial nations by the stronger nations within international society (Collier, 1979). The locus of such

academic conclusions begins with the end of The Second World War and interpretations of political decisions during the Cold War.

According to Richard Niblett 'Since 1945 Western policymakers have believed that open markets, democracy and individual human rights would gradually spread across the entire globe'. The emphasis was then placed on building international systems, spreading norms, and ideals that would not just nudge nations towards economic development but also ensure liberal political dispensation and 'the best hope for that, they contended, lay in free markets' (Niblett, 2017). For Hickel, the Bretton Woods institutions comprising of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which later became the World Trade Organisation were indispensable in this process. He points out that 'none of these institutions are democratic. Voting power in the IMF and World Bank is apportioned according to each nation's share of financial ownership, just like in corporations. Major decisions require 85% of the vote, and the United States, which holds about 17% of the shares in both corporations, wields de facto veto power' (Hickel, 2012: 171-180). Klein also argues that the questions surrounding sovereignty are more crucial today than ever because neoliberalism as made the world a playground for the upper echelons by uprooting political cages and creating seamless economic interconnectivity (Klein, 2008).

In Nigeria today, we have a situation where the issues surrounding funding and support for higher education has sometimes come under the direct purview of the international organisations. This is because the domestic state government apparatus has neglected and upended its responsibilities surrounding this process. For instance, it is argued that World Bank and other donor agency's policy changes



toward financing of higher education have adversely affected these institutions. The recommendation is that the unique context of each state play a role in higher education financial policy formation and implementation (Jega, 1995; Banya, 2010). Furthermore, Babalola argues that foreign aid has made education loans less attractive to Nigerians. “In spite of this, the government still sees World Bank lending as an attractive financial mode to revitalize its financially strained education system. He further argues that the World Bank primary education book project was an example of foreign aid as an up-front input financing that was made to coincide with the onset of international agitation for democracy in Nigeria” (Babalola, 2002, pp. 1-4). I also contend that second level World Bank projects were instruments used to pre-empt a shift in attitude towards policies favourable to the organisation. In 2000, there was some resistance by the Nigerian academic community to the World Bank’s Nigerian Universities System Innovation Project. Rather than take onboard the concerns of the committee, the donor simply stopped the reforms and the ensuing projects, and committed to other arenas with less resistance (World Bank, 2000).

For certain scholars, treating neoliberalism as a political project and apportioning the transference of political power away from elected officials upward to internationalist agreements maintained by analysts and nameless elites is quite farfetched. According to an editorial ‘I think we’re supposed to understand elite as roughly synonymous with neoliberal... If you think your [neoliberal] political theory generates a ‘self-sustaining politics’, you’re kidding yourself’ (The Economist, 2011). Wikan argues that nations that followed neoliberal policies were not influenced by any grand standing ideology but simply followed policies geared towards privatisation and liberalisation because it was the ‘pragmatic response to the

economic difficulties of the 70's and the need to reduce government expenditure' (Wikan, 2015: 1-4). Additionally, it is maintained by Therborn that globalisation has not penetrated the fabric of periphery societies and the cultural features it upholds in any reprehensible way. Arguing further that globalisation itself has been a regular feature of mankind as different cultures have influenced themselves in areas as diverse as erudition, technology, diplomacy and in culinary delights (Therborn, 2000: 153-159) thus it cannot be collated into a single narrative as it occurs organically.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that authoritarian regimes adhering to liberal economic systems and liberal democracies are also viewed as being part of the neoliberal order. According to the US non-profit Freedom House, cited in Nesbitt: 'the number of democratic governments increased from 44 in 1997 to 86 in 2015 accounting for about 68% of global GDP and 40% of the world's population' and since its dawn Nesbitt argues that rulers that fail to align with the prescribed neoliberal pathways for political stability are surrendering themselves as candidates for the forfeiture of their sovereign right to rule. Hence, political freedoms of the people in periphery countries are subservient to the adoption of the neoliberal agenda (Nesbitt, 2017). For Naomi Klein it is a phenomenon that demonstrated its ability to wrestle political control in Latin America; according to *The Shock Doctrine* nowhere else was this more evident than in the state of Chile where immediately after the coup of Augusto Pinochet the majority of American corporations recouped the favourable disposition they lost under the brief rule of Salvador Allende (Klein, 2008). For various scholars this is most evident in Africa. The assertion remains that there has been a deliberate policy by western nations to impose their political will utilizing neoliberal policies to maintain a coterie of indigenous elite who have a vested interest in preserving the status quo undisturbed.

According to Odd Arne Westad in *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times* (2006) this promoted heavily interventionist policies in nations where communism was seen as a threat and guided the western world's incursion into Congo, Korea, and Vietnam to name a few. For John Young, too many historians focus on the 'third world as some kind of afterthought however the most important aspects of the [neoliberal age] were neither military nor strategic, nor Eurocentric, but intimately intertwined with the political and social development in what was referred to as the third world (Young, 2006). Hence, the fascination of scholars with neoliberalism as a political project has also heavily influenced the literature surrounding the terminology. This strand of analysis further allows one to appreciate how discourse on neoliberalism has been framed within discussions on conceived notions of power structures. It highlights how certain scholars locate it within the global and local structural arrangements, coining the 'glocal' terminology. The notion of who is in charge; could it be the government in power or the economic opinions of those in far flung places has been one that characterized the recent decades within the African continent. However, even more crucial is the introduction and sustaining of western style democracy in nations existing within the periphery, particularly Nigeria. This study deals precisely with this, as it focuses its analyses on the longest democratic dispensation in Nigeria's history, the fourth republic. The thesis will seek to offer intriguing insights from Nigerians regarding their disposition towards this perception of neoliberal transformation. To what extent is the current political agenda accepted by Nigerians as a viable path. The study will now move on to explore neoliberalism and its widely touted impact on key public service structures and sectors.

## 2.5 Neoliberalism and Sector Transformation

This part of the thesis deals with market transformations in sectors ranging from health, transportation manufacturing, telecommunications and finally education, which is the fulcrum of this study. In other words, areas that were historically supported by the government and have now been subsumed by the market. There is a body of work that locates its analysis of neoliberalism inside the framework of transformational power in certain sectors and within and across geographical entities. Historically, the largest of all industries were regulated by bureaucratic state machinery and in many cases this was inefficient and lethargic, however it also provided the bedrock of subsistence for majority of the population and it upheld the social contract to the people. This is because service was at the centre of government obligation. Conversely, critics of such point to its inefficiency, lack of innovation and its degradation of social welfare in the long run. As ever the academic debates and key arguments on both sides are extensive and varied (Umezurike, 2012). In the specific Nigerian case, private investment has also provided some notable sectoral changes in the education sector. It is argued that the enrolment of females provides greater access to funding, partnerships, and resource mobilisation. Some of these initiatives had been bolstered by projects surrounding the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) and provided a framework and direction for other NGO's looking to make an impact within this space. For instance, in 2003 ActionAid Nigeria introduced an initiative called Enhancing Girls Basic Education in Northern Nigeria (EGBENN). The project was aimed at promoting access to education and enhancement of education governance at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The initiative was supported by Oxfam Nigeria and initially spanned three North-western states before progressing throughout the thirty-six states of the country. It

was designed to strengthen communities to demand for increased female enrolment, and to provide awareness on budgetary allocations for similar broader initiatives. It is noteworthy that in its 'first three years EGBENN increased girls' enrolment in its schools from 25% to 43%'. Enrolment was also expectedly targeted at private secondary schools and universities as a result of the lack of bureaucracy involved in their admission process. This also boosts the argument that neoliberal sectoral transformation has strengthened the capacity of individuals to challenge the existing status quo and increased enrolment of females across the country (Lowe et al, 2017). This paper will now utilize case studies to describe neoliberalism and its impact within a sector and specific geographic location. A crucial case in point is healthcare, according to McGregor in *Neoliberalism and Healthcare* scholars must 'broaden our analysis of health care by understanding and challenging the neoliberal mind set', she argues that this 'mindset' is the emphasis placed on consumerism. Tiffany Joseph is of the view such policies that confine healthcare to the realm of business and not as a necessary provision ultimately creates major imbalances in society, thereby entrenching boundaries and stratification across ever evolving identification markers (Joseph, 2017: 217-289). Eleanor Horton further argues that any pecuniary gains accrued from such a method of approaching a fundamental service is at the detriment of 'greater inequality in income and social power - the typical effect of neoliberal reformation' (Horton, 2007: 1-7). Although this describes the situation in the USA, the prevailing situation is descriptive of situations in nations as diverse as Nigeria and Argentina and scholars have fervently opposed its predatory nature on the populace. Agreeing with this premise is Lynch who argues that one could capture the term neoliberalism within the harness of globalisation and marketisation, and

they also argue that they are often used interchangeably and thus mean the same thing for many practitioners and policy makers of today (Lynch, 2006).

On the other hand, the so called 'Iron Law of Regulation' championed by J. Scott Armstrong and Kesten C. Green asserts that general provision of goods and services are disadvantageous to individualism and eventually leads to collective loss of social welfare (Armstrong & Green, 2012: 192-197). Adam D. Thierer also contends that 'there is no justification for continuing to promote government ownership' further stating that 'states are erecting protectionist and discriminatory trade barriers to advance their own interests at the expense of national competition' (Thierer, 1998). An example utilized to advance this neoliberal thought process is the airline industry. For instance, 'In the 1960s and 1970s, the Civil Aeronautics Board set strict regulations for the airline industry in the USA. It managed routes and set fares. In return, it guaranteed a 12% profit for any flight that was at least 50% full. As a result, airline travel was so expensive that 80% of Americans had never flown'. However, in the summer of 1978 the 'Airline Deregulation Act' was implemented, and safety was the only priority retained by regulatory bodies. It led to increased competition, better service offerings, innovation in processes and 'more people took to the skies' however one can also point out that it can lead to price volatility, excessive risk taking, and curtail sustainability initiatives (Amadeo, 2017, p.2).

Furthermore, contained within the literature is the impact across geographical locations where other interesting dynamics emerge. For example, some scholars argue that there is a deliberate ploy within wealthier nations to impose privatisation policies on poorer citizens in order to reap extraordinary profits. An assertion characterized as profit over people by Noam Chomsky. Another instance, according

to Jenkins is that of the global garment industry, and its impact in Taiwan. Historically these areas had enjoyed comparative advantage in the production of the finest of linen up until they were indoctrinated into the 'global garment commodity chain' and their production was streamlined to favour specific garments sought after by multinationals and foreign enterprises. It is contended by Saad-Filho and Yalman that this led to a narrowing of the skill gap as more workers were compelled to focus on satisfying such needs; hence the design quality of other garments began to reduce. As the practice intensified and increase in better working conditions and wages were demanded, the multinational corporations simply moved to other nations to champion the benefits of privatisation; however, this was simply another pathway to access cheaper labour and this saw companies constantly shifting production to reap this benefit, hence the transnational movement of the garment industry to nations such as Bolivia, China, and Sri Lanka. It is argued that this then led to the destruction of an economic way of life for people within the Southeast Asian country of Taiwan (Saad-Filho & Yalman, 2009). Thus, this has been condemned by certain scholars as an effect of neoliberal policies championed by core nations and unfair international trade agreements.

According to the World Bank in a chapter of a white paper titled *Privatization and Deregulation: A Push Too Far?* 'Privatization has been beneficial when viewed as a whole' stressing its enhancement of better living conditions for indigenous populations which scholars such as Armstrong & Green certainly agree with. Nevertheless, one must caution that the 'manner' under which it occurs require set guidelines to prosper. In addition, another example is the fishing industry in North America which was transformed by policies propagated in the 1970's. According to a report by Sol Sinclair, cited in Pinkerton 'if the economic objective of a decent

living for fishermen is to be achieved it seems that the common-property nature of the fisheries will have to be changed to a private property status', this then led to a commodification of fishing licenses that were further propelled by the 'creation of the extended economic zone in 1977' which mandated that 'a nation fully exploit its own fisheries before it could exclude other nations from its 200-mile territorial waters'. The Canadian government subsequently responded by focusing on improving the 'efficiency' of fishing and this then led to disastrous effects on the sustainability of the salmon population in Quebec and the Maritimes (Pinkerton et al, 2014: 302-312). The above description is described as one of the major consequences of neoliberal policies across geographical boundaries and the inconsiderate regard of such policies on issues devoid of profit (Tar, 2008). At this juncture, the study has highlighted the four pillars by which neoliberalism is highlighted within the literature, starting with its evolutionary academic understanding, the notion of neoliberalism as an economic development model and a political imposition and finally the literature focused on its transformational abilities across sectors and boundaries. It is precisely within this last strand, that the thesis aims to advance major understanding. Such contribution to knowledge would have implications not just for Nigeria, but for those who engage with the continent, and particularly for policy makers active within the higher education space. The study will now move on to the exploration of literature on neoliberal transformation within three contexts: the core countries, the periphery countries, and then the focus of this study which is the Nigerian state.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, a structured review of prominent scholarship on neoliberalism has been presented. Overall, through this review, attempts were made to derive a broad



definition of neoliberalisation around which to orient my thesis. Specifically, this thesis adopts an understanding that highlights the four strands by which neoliberalism is defined, understood, and engaged within the dominant academic literature.

Nonetheless, a broad definition of neoliberalism has been derived around which to orientate the study, which begins with the historical evolution of the term, since the time of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, up until the present-day Chicago economists. Thereafter, an exploration of prominent dimensions of economic neoliberal understanding, and the role of the Bretton Woods Institutions and their impact on reduction of state involvement in public goods and services. Afterwards, Furthermore, the institutional structures that have precipitated modern understanding, issues like the cold war and the supposed position of the global south in international hierarchy were interrogated alongside the thought process on sectoral transformation and the processes by which it has influenced key sectors, and the resulting academic discourse surrounding this.

In conclusion, the study explored four prominent strands of scholarship on neoliberalism. Firstly, the intellectual evolution that underpins the set of ideas that are now collectively referred to as neoliberalism, then progressed to scholarship on neoliberalism as an economic paradigm and highlighted the centrifugal and centripetal forces in the local and global ecosystem that have come to be associated with the term. Lastly, review works that foregrounds neoliberalism as an externally imposed political imposition following the reduction in dominance of the Keynesian school of thought in western capitals, before finally considering studies focusing on sectoral transformation and exploring certain sectors such as the airline and garment

sector, a crucial avenue by which neoliberalism is comprehended, and the central thrust of the thesis because its own focus is on sectoral transformation in Nigerian universities.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 The Neoliberal University in Core and Periphery Nations

#### 3.1 Introduction

In these chapter, attempts were made to explore neoliberalism and its transformation of higher education across a range of national contexts, though segmented between the core and periphery. From existing scholarship on neoliberalisation of higher education across a range of national contexts, three core focuses of analysis were identified which was subsequently deployed to organise the study: governance structures within universities and across the higher education sector, curriculum and pedagogy, and staff and student experience. After deriving these dimensions from existing scholarship in this chapter on core and periphery countries, and the following chapter on Nigeria, the study focused on the use of these dimensions in the organisation and exploration of neoliberalisation in Nigerian public and private universities.

To reprise from earlier content, neoliberalisation is operationalised to refer to the incorporation of market-based principles and practices, including through moves from collective to individualised payment for the provision of higher education and associated services, reduction of state involvement in and regulation over the supply of higher education and associated services, and the creation of institutional structures to encourage managed forms of competition between providers of higher education and associated services.

In the first half of this chapter, an exploration of the core nations was undertaken and in the latter parts those of the periphery nations. The commodification of education and the gradual transformation of research output, management

procedures and teaching processes as a result of neoliberalisation of the system was examined. Thereafter, the issues around pedagogy and teaching practices in the modern university age were considered. In the latter chapters, the reductionist role of the academic situated in the periphery due to structural constraints like funds to travel for conferences and paywalls for journals, as well as its impact on curriculum formation, and how it permeates all aspects of social justice within these societies were highlighted. A detailed discussion on the various submissions is now presented.

### **3.2 The Rise of the Neoliberal University in Core Countries**

In the previous chapter, an overview of the main engagements with overarching literature on neoliberalism have been provided. From this overarching literature a broad conceptualisation of neoliberalism to guide the studies of Nigerian higher education transformation was derived. Through this chapter, attention has been turned on more specifically to literature on neoliberalism and higher education, across both core and periphery countries. The subsequent chapters will then provide an overview of scholarship on the rise of the neoliberal university in Nigeria. The overall purpose of this is to derive a framework of analysis to organise the study, and to highlight additional focuses of interest and contention from existing scholarship.

The literature is broadly categorized into three main sections. We have scholars who situate their analysis within a broad platform, such as the university as a commodity, its impact on teaching, and the research experience. The literature sits within a comparative framework. This distinction is pegged to the world system theory, which is an approach to world history and social change for analysing the world as a

single entity. According to Wallerstein, the world is divided into core and periphery countries. According to Ake, the major difference here is power, which occurs as a result of proximity to capital and technology for core countries and remoteness from these two vital ingredients for innovation, in the periphery countries. The thesis utilises the distinction of core and periphery simply as a method of identifying distinctions between the 'developed' and 'developing' countries. It is interesting to note that the theory has been employed by many scholars in diverse fields to highlight many other intriguing phenomena, but this study will situate it within discourse on the neoliberal university (Wallerstein, 1974; Ake, 1978). This section of the thesis provides a holistic exploration that considers geographic spaces that often remain segmented in existing literature. The study will now advance to highlighting the impact of neoliberal transformation on core countries within the various strands that predominantly feature within the literature.

### **3.2.1 The Commodification of University Education**

This section of the study focuses on the literature surrounding neoliberal transformation and higher education in core countries. It focuses predominantly on pedagogy, the university as a commodity and the changing nature of the university experience. This situation is referred to as the growth of private initiative, and all across the core countries there has been reinforced ideals on academic research, teaching, the nature of management, the goal of publications, and a general shift in discourse on the role of academia as a result of neo-liberal regimes and their pro-market policies (Haque, 1999). Scholars point out that this has been evident for quite some time while other scholars suggest it is a more modern introduction (Weland, 2004; Larroulet, 1993). The influence of this system is what the thesis will

now seek to elucidate below, by utilising the different scholarly opinions existing within the literature.

A large critical literature has developed on the university as a commodity. This school of thought argues that the university is increasingly being portrayed solely as a vehicle for gaining economic advantage. This commodification of higher education has been principally explored by Henry and Susan Giroux (2014). Their work takes an all-encompassing view of the phenomenon; and one could characterize their work as a leftist call to action rather than an objective account of its impact on the individuals that populate the institutions. Nevertheless, it does capture the broad discussions that articulate the impact of neoliberalism on higher education in the western hemisphere. Another set of scholars who have written extensively on the matter includes Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades (2004), but they do not profoundly offer any new narratives, they merely describe the overarching situation, particularly with focus on the steady climb of tuition costs for students and the price of accessing research grants for academics within the neoliberal structure. Saunders further proclaims that this new world of higher education is dominated by the product of higher education rather than the worthy intrinsic benefit of the pursuit of knowledge that governed earlier generations (Saunders, 2007).

A further analysis of this is located in the collaborative work of a certain group of scholars based at the University of Leuven, in Belgium . They discuss the impact of such goals on the wellbeing of individuals who exist within this system. They argue that students that place a strong emphasis on these goals of higher education tend to gravitate towards low self-esteem, lower psychological wellbeing, depression, anxiety, and have more conflicting dispositions towards the wider society. They also

argue that higher education has been reconceptualised by certain elements in power and any thought of pulling back to what used to be the norm would be seen as a step back for the advancement of higher education (Vansteenkiste et al, 2004). In addition, researchers at UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute working with the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) have done a substantial longitudinal analysis of the evolution of educational motivation over the past 40 years in American universities. They offer a bird's eye view of the neoliberal transformation, though their study offers this information dispassionately and does not seek to equate the information it provides with the rise in neoliberal dominance (Kandinko, 2010). Another area covered by researchers is that of racial and minority group access to higher education within the age of neoliberalism. Benjamin Baez and Gerson Sanchez offer a new perspective on the issue of affirmative action within this environment of marketization. The authors reflect on the evolution of neoliberal education, particularly in the light of the 'Fisher vs University of Texas' ruling of the Supreme Court of the United States of America in 2016. They contend that:

Affirmative action was 'saved' by neoliberal rationalities, framing the issue in terms of outcomes. That is, affirmative action, historically and ostensibly addressing racial injustice, now appears to justify practices furthering global competition, and thus it offers a good example for understanding the contradictory ways that neoliberal projects seek to shape the conduct of both institutions of higher education and their individuals (Baez & Sanchez, 2017).

However, scholars such as Michèle Lamont and Joseph Guay disagree with the above statement and they argue that the positioning of the university as a commodity is a threat to civil rights in the United States. They opine that 'as these policies influence

our worldviews; market principles may serve to justify racial antipathy and cause us to turn a blind eye to structural restraints that often marginalize vulnerable minority communities'. By highlighting narratives of neoliberal universities entirely based on 'equal competition for prosperity' then the structural frailties of the global and domestic social system will be exposed. It is then maintained that 'it is thus prudent that while we commemorate the legislation that has opened the door politically for millions of minorities here in the United States, we also contemplate the role that our economic beliefs can have in hampering that political progress in the days to come' (Lamont & Guay, 2014). This is an issue that touches on social mobility, especially within heavily income stratified societies. Additionally, a British government white paper set forth its policy for exploring this issue. It set the government target of increasing the number of black and minority ethnic students (BAME) in higher education by 20% in 2020, noting that students within this demographic are less likely to explore the current financing option. Though, the paper also highlights the point that British universities are eager to retain a certain level of fiscal buoyancy and hence it will situate its efforts on attracting more students eager to embrace the current student finance model (BIS, 2015).

In Australia it is argued in an extensive study that neoliberal transformation is pursued by certain organizations and key policy makers, such as the councils and not by universities themselves, with the argument that the neoliberal agenda will definitely produce interesting cities. These citizens would be more robust and able to tackle the competitive economic landscape in the only core country to avoid the 2008 financial crisis. Hence, policy makers are keen to sustain the neoliberal approach to higher education. It is also argued that this is evident in Malaysia. It is further opined that public universities previously dominated simply because the



ruling regime viewed access to higher education as a means of restructuring Malaysian society and eliminating the identification of ethnic community with economic functions. However, dwindling resources and the impact of the 1997 Asian financial crisis led to the introduction of market forces. A situation characterised as reform driven by financial considerations (Berman, et al, 2003: 391-396) which is spearheaded by elites and political decision makers in the Malaysian political hierarchy. These attitudes have come to define the agenda of core countries for quite some time and another set of researchers who have furthered academic discourse on this emergent agenda within higher education include Les Levidow at the Open University and Michael Apple at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Levidow's work takes a more anthropological stance as it focuses on the role of the university in today's rapidly changing world. He touches on how students came to be purveyors as well as victims of the neoliberal movement within education. However, he does not touch on what this means for students of today who exist within this neoliberal structure. Like most works on neoliberalism, we are still left wanting regarding the ongoing impact of such transformations (Levidow, 2005).

On the other hand, Apple takes us through his views on the subject in very clear terms, pointing out how the classroom is being transformed from a haven of critical thought and sound debate to a more cautious back and forth of regurgitation on both sides. Apple further looks at the concept of motivational directions. What drives a young individual to seek the four walls of a university to spend his formative years? For Apple, this is chiefly down to the realities of the economy, either brought upon by the conditions of the parents or the conditions of the students themselves. He asserts that, one only look at recent surveys to understand why individuals choose certain colleges and for him the answer remains clear; that the neoliberal hegemony

has permeated the general consciousness, and the educational, economic and social world we see becomes the major motivation for university admissions (Apple, 2004). Hence, he argues that competition has evolved as the dominant characteristic within higher education today. Tinto (1993) and Wolters (1998) take the discourse on motivation a step further. They argue that motivation plays a fundamental role in the intensity that students bring to their respective institutions. If for example, a student situates his choice on league tables and gets on a course they want but not the university they want, then this would definitely affect the intensity by which they engage with the institutions. This is because they would link their higher education provider to their self-worth, potential human capital, and future social status, which arguably could decide their salary scales, and even the choice of a future spouse. The works of these scholars shine a disparaging observation on the evolution of the cost-benefit approach increasingly applied to many aspects of the university, in the core nations.

Additionally, the role of philanthropic efforts within university education now plays a very pivotal role. The debates on this feature stakeholders as diverse as recipients of scholarships, academics, governing boards of charities, partnerships departments of universities, politicians, businessmen and families of all strata and income levels. Despite this, there isn't an extensive amount of academic consensus on this. The literature is dominated by studies commissioned by charities and trusts. Notwithstanding, independent scholars have added to the body of knowledge in this critical area. Frederick M. Hess and Jeffrey R. Henig, in their book *The New Education Philanthropy: Politics, Policy, and Reform* focus on large organisations such as the Gates Foundation and the Walton Trust, they posit that such organisations are usually strategic in how they use their funds. They draw upon the

divergence of the old notions surrounding the new types of philanthropy that underpins the traditional goals and values of philanthropic action. Some scholars take it a step further and engage with the reason why organisations and more specifically individuals do this. The goal is to seek out the best students and remove all financial inhibitions that could render their time at university unpalatable, however by exploring the dataset on downturns and periodic tax law changes in the United States specifically the American Association of Fundraising Counsel's annual reports on philanthropy from 1960 through 2005, and the Council for the Aid to Education's Voluntary Support of Education database, including the reports from Moody's Investors Services and the Aspen Institute. With this, they were able to determine the causal relationship between recessions and federal tax policy, particularly the tax cuts that occurred under the Reagan Administration and the accompanying relationship with donations. They maintain that further tax concessions are granted to those who donate, and this is especially useful to wealthy individuals in a downturn. For certain leftist scholars, this increasing reliance on external private funding by modern universities jeopardises sustained government funding. It also threatens academic independence, because of the clauses attached to certain university grants. However, for those who side with this it is maintained that 'the ambitions of universities to create new knowledge and skills for a better future exceed the ability of governments to pay for them' (Gasman et al, 2007). It is contended that such alternative and complementary funding is not just important but ultimately necessary, though the caveat of ensuring that such crucial source of funding does not distort universities missions and practices is added, it is characterized as lip service by voices who argue against it.

According to the World Economic Forum ‘universities are amongst the world’s most enduring institutions’ and there is a long history of many universities sustained and even kick-started by wealthy individuals. The major European universities in the middle ages such as the University of Oxford, Cambridge, Bologna and Malta relied heavily on fundraising from wealthy individuals. Indeed, as far back as 1643, Harvard University in the United States had a major fundraising campaign. This occurred at a time where such fundraisers were majorly aimed at funding wars, circumnavigation and imperial expansion. This infusion of private funds within university education is exemplified by how many major institutions are littered with their eponymous benefactors, ranging from names such as Stanford, Carnegie and Rockefeller. Hence, one can easily see that this practice is quite ubiquitous. However, the current neoliberal age has led to dissenting opinions on this practice. Nevertheless, it was observed by Clark Kerr of the University of California, Berkeley that:

Of all the institutions that were established in the western world five centuries ago, only 85 persist today. This tiny group includes the Catholic Church, the Parliaments of the Isle of Man, Iceland and Great Britain, several Swiss cantons and, most strikingly, 70 universities. Philanthropy has supported the longevity of universities and if they are to continue their role at the forefront of social, technological and economic transformations, as epitomized by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, philanthropy will become more significant than ever (World Economic Forum, 2018).

A study conducted in 2012 for the National Bureau of Economic Research shows that philanthropic efforts and donations in the USA ‘contributed more than \$4 billion annually to operations, endowment and buildings devoted to scientific, engineering

and medical research. This has added to the debate on teaching, governance, and student experience that proliferates the literature on neoliberal influences in universities. The factors governing these donations vary amongst core countries and are dependent on different national trends and issues. It is argued that socio-demographic factor is now a stronger indicator of giving than ever before. An instance was the recent donation by Billionaire Robert Smith to Morehouse College for the eradication of student debt amounting \$34million dollars. In contrast with major factors of the past such as personal disposable income which has remained stable in the United States at 2.1% of disposable personal income, since 2014 (Bloomberg, 2018).

Technological Innovation has also pushed giving in a totally new direction. The mobile platforms, social media penetration, and crowdfunding platforms have increased the propensity of funds channelled towards university education. It is very intriguing that online giving is now 8% of all donations to universities, a significant amount. In addition, from 2016 to 2017, total online giving increased by 12% (Blackbaud, 2018). It is important to highlight that philanthropic funding is of great importance to academic and innovative enhancement, in areas where government may be reluctant, individuals step in and support speculative advanced research and this has led to incredulous results. Nevertheless, one could also appreciate the other side of the argument and the rationale for government to still play an active role in financial sustenance of universities. Majority of funding is directed at buildings, auditoriums and lecture centres, which are critical at enhancing student experience. Hence, this influence upon the university experience is worthy of exploration by scholars seeking to highlight the impact of neoliberal transformation.

Dugan also argue that another effect of market principles on higher education is a gradual leaning towards hierarchically placing different courses (Dugan, 2004). Science, technology, engineering and mathematics receive more attention from management, as well as a host of certain courses like finance and business that are marketed towards international students to maintain and increase profitability. One can argue that such academic consumerism is restructuring the perception of value accorded to different degrees. They argue that such transformations are rapidly changing the relationship between universities and the stakeholders in the wider society (Gumport, 2007). This stratification occurs within departments as well, as certain courses are treated with more priority because of their weight on the university bottom-line. This then leads to much more fragmentation among staff, and this could lead to surprising results as evidenced in the work of certain scholars on female integration in academia. It is contended that neoliberalism leads to clustering of academics that are similar in style and substance. It is further argued that one repercussion of neoliberalism in higher education is that large proportions of certain contingent faculty due to pecuniary concerns.

For Slaughter and Leslie (1997) such concentration is inimical to the flow of interdisciplinary ideas that provides the foreground for ground-breaking research. However, they maintain that research on the attitude of students towards this clustering is largely unexplored. Another issue explored by scholars is the adoption of business world practices to define the academic corridors. In today's terms, they argue, universities have created hierarchies where a small core group of academics receive higher pay and benefits because of how much they attract to the university. In addition, an emphasis has shifted to hiring managerial style executives to oversee certain aspects of departments, faculties, colleges and schools. Furthermore, this

change cannot be divorced from the commodification of the role of an academic. This they warn will be contrary to the true nature of the university environment. The above has explored the broad literature that characterizes the changing role of the university as a commodity. It highlighted the issues of citizen outcomes, student motivation, minority access to the commodity and the growing discourse on the influx of business managerial tendencies to higher education. The study will now proceed to discuss the literature dealing with the rise of an input and output culture within teaching, management, and research.

### **3.2.2 Pedagogical Transformations in Core Countries**

The rise of the audit culture in higher education is also heavily explored within the literature. In many cases, it is criticized by the dominant academics, but writings in government reports usually stand in favour of it. The permeation of this culture is meant to ensure that academics deliver more measurable impact. It is charged that the intent is to place faculty as service providers for the product that is higher education. The emphasis is placed on experiences of academics that exist within such a system, a situation they define as becoming and not necessarily resisting. The research of Kamler and Thomson (2006) focuses on how the current academic climate is altering the supervisory relationship between students and academics. It highlights certain skills students learn by being in proximity with their supervisors and within institutions, and how this is being altered by a gradual reliance on technological avenues. Sarah Dyer at University of Exeter argues that this is disrupting the synergy between academics and their students. Further issues such as the values and behaviours of the students are subservient to the instructional reason for the existence of a module. This has led to the incorporation of part-time staff to fill departmental demands, particularly within big name universities in the United

States of America. It is argued that the value of teaching has been reduced and focus has shifted to metrics, which is a source of displeasure to certain academics. This further leads to the interesting point that 76% of all academic staff in the United States of America will not be tenured within their career (Dyer et al, 2016). This has led to students and teachers viewing their role purely on a contractual basis and has led to students viewing themselves as consumers of the thought process of academics. The above has now led to a situation described as the major revolution of the modern age. This is none other than the invention and evolution of massive open online courses (MOOCs). A report on the situation in 2013 argued that that:

For universities to remain efficient market actors, they need to change by embracing new technology, such as MOOCs, and by branding themselves to fit 'niche' markets in a context where people return to learning during their career, to reskill. It is claimed that this niche marketing will entail the unbundling of functions with many universities focusing on delivering teaching in a limited number of areas rather than trying to teach all disciplines. [This] vision of higher education is thus one of students as customers making consumer demands on universities that compete in niche markets to attract investment from customers. To survive, universities must adopt new market rationality and unbundle (Barber et al, 2013).

According to researchers at the University of Portsmouth it presents a real opportunity for expanding the reach of higher education, particularly the work of top tier teachers. It also provides teachers and learners with autonomy and creates a situation for both parties where one gets what they put into it. However, they also find that 'the more autonomous, diverse and open the course, and the more



connected the learners, the more the potential for their learning to be limited by the lack of structure, support and moderation normally associated with an online course, and the more they seek to engage in traditional groups as opposed to an open network' (Mackness et al, 2010: 266-275). Their research proved inconclusive on the question of what this means for the traditional courses with allocated credits. They argue that a longitudinal study would be more beneficial in evaluating this.

There are certain scholars who believe that MOOC's have advanced the role of the lecturer and seminar tutor and improved their relevance in a hyper connected world. They argue that the model provides effective content delivery and the feedback occurs within a level of flexibility that makes it more beneficial for all involved in the process. According to a recent government white paper, published by the United States Department of Education. It was stated that experiments concluded that such instructional models are more advantageous to academics. The research touches upon key areas like the course design and the improvised nature of the content. However, the renowned scholar Leonard J. Waks based at Temple University disagrees. For him the phenomenon of MOOCs and its impact on academics should be critically evaluated and curtailed. His work is a key feature of the Palgrave pilot project entitled *The Cultural and Social Foundations of Education*. The aim of this compilation is to understand educational practices around the world through new interpretive lenses. Waks touches upon the work of John Dewey (1859-1952) and inculcates this into current realities of technological innovation and he highlights the impact on what some may consider is the backbone of the university environment, which is teaching. This leads nicely to the work of Lucas who asks the question 'what do Borders, Kodak, and Blockbuster have in common with American higher education?' He then goes on to assert: 'I do not believe that all U.S. colleges

and universities will disappear as a result of new technologies, but clearly some will. If higher education institutions embrace the status quo, they will no longer be in control of their own fate'. His work focuses on the fate of the academic within higher education in the advent of this gradual evolution. This arguably suggests that the gradual reduction of the sacredness of teaching within the neoliberal climate is inevitable (Lucas, 2013).

The term MOOC was coined in 2008 and *The Times* called 2012 'the year of the MOOC'. It was termed this by Stephen Downes and George Siemens who developed the title to refer to their course on connectivity at the University of Manitoba. 25 students attended in person and a further 2300 joined from across the globe. By 2012, most Ivy League schools began offering theirs and in February of the same year Udacity was founded. By 2013, Thrun was disparaging his own product and he re-tuned its model to vocational teaching as certain teaching needed to occur in a certain context. In recent times, the percentage of institutions offering a MOOC seems to be levelling off, at around 14% while suspicions persist that MOOCs will not generate money or reduce costs for universities and are not sustainable. However, the consensus among academics is there is still so much to learn in the context of ever-changing web services, though it provides a new ground for teachers and students to engage in novel ways (The New Yorker, 2014). Figures from the Babson Survey Research Group's annual survey (2014) based on a survey of over 2,800 academic leaders tracked opinions on education initiatives online and found that 28% of respondents believed MOOCs were sustainable while 51% think they are not with the rest falling in the middle (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2015). The reasons ranged from viewing them as generation leads, important publicity points for universities, to the immaturity of the concept. Nevertheless, a substantial part

of the literature deals with how this has altered the relationship between teachers and learners in the current neoliberal environment.

Another key feature of the influence of neoliberalism upon universities is the gradual shift to satellite campuses. According to Marta Lee there has been ‘an increasing number of academic institutions that have built satellite campuses and developed online courses to meet the needs of distance learners’ and these developments have altered the nature of academic institutions, ranging from library services to dissertation supervision (Lee, 2004: 65-78). No doubt, these changes were brought about by the increasing demand for university education by working people. A review of this practice in Australia suggests that many satellite campuses have a different kind of management and their needs are ‘linked to their market locations and profiles’ (Fraser & Scott, 2015: 692-707). Graham Moodie writing in *The Conversation* suggests that international campuses exist at great reputational and financial risk for the industry. Notwithstanding, ‘universities have established an average of 13 international branch campuses annually over the last few years’ and as of this decade the world is populated with around ‘233 international branch campuses’ (Moodie, 2015).

It is argued that satellite campuses are really important in expanding university education to many under-represented groups at traditional university settings. Scholars argue that they widen access and participation for many individuals who are worried about accommodation, transportation, and living costs at the areas where traditional campuses are sited, and this aids many workers with families to achieve their goal of attending university. In addition, it is also highlighted that satellite campuses have lower dropout rates amongst students of a certain median

age. However, there are detrimental effects such as the limited research and innovative practices that exist within such universities. The emphasis is on teaching and marking, though lecturers usually get paid more, the situation offers no incentive for them to engage in ground-breaking research. The major focus is anchored on boosting local productivity and increasing economic contribution. Their incorporation into the lives of far-flung areas usually changes the economic climate of the region as many businesses adapt to fulfil student needs (Rossi & Goglio, 2018: 34-54). This usually affects the cultural and entertainment output of the cities they exist in. Though, usually not at the same rate or level as their traditional counterparts, and the practice of satellite campuses has been adopted strongly by British and Australian universities. For instance:

Universities with strong international campuses are the University of Nottingham whose Ningbo campus has 5,500 students and whose Malaysia campus has 4,500 students, the University of Liverpool whose joint campus with Xi'an Jiaotong University has 7,400 students, RMIT University whose Vietnam campus has 6,838 students and Monash University whose Malaysia campus has 6,757 students. Each of these universities has a high proportion of international students enrolled at their home campus and has had a long, deep, broad and well-informed internationalisation strategy (Moodie, 2015).

This phenomenon is also referred to as International Branch Campuses; but is captured by the catch all term of transnational education and this is buttressed by the point that there is only a limited number of students willing to come down to OECD countries to study. In addition, when they do come down, they tend to study

courses which offer the highest rate of return (Vincent-Lancrin 2007). This transnational model is thus geared to compete for the international market of students who are not mobile enough to travel abroad and attend certain institutions. The leverage of prestige is what sets them apart from their domestic counterparts.

According to Slaughter and Leslie (1997) another consequence of neoliberalism within higher education is the research funding focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). They state that the effect of this varies across national and institutional contexts. Nevertheless, the scope and impact on institutional priorities is quite self-evident and this is also because a lot of this funding is derived from industry and in some cases this drives the research of entire faculties. Hence, this impedes on the autonomy of academia in carrying out spontaneous research for societal benefit as such investments by corporations are expected to bring profitable results. In certain cases, the knowledge obtained during such research is sold directly to these businesses. This occurs most prevalently in the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Furthermore, it has led to universities creating spin off companies stacked with consultants to harness the results from patentable research. Levin further maintains that this has transformed the contemporary university to revenue seeking entities, for them the institutions are transformed into commodities that are to be sold on the open market, which leads to an emphasis on competition, measurement, assessment, and an unyielding focus on money (Levin, 2006). An instance of the above is the WMG at Warwick University kick-started by Professor Lord Bhattacharyya with full support from the university management to research, develop, advise, train and collaborate; with businesses and organisations across the globe, large and small, to solve their challenges. The centre is an academic

department of the University of Warwick and employs over 600 staff including industrial seconders. Its work cuts across seven research and education centres at the University. It also advocates research partnerships that cut across seven countries. It is home to 2,200 Master's students and 250 Doctoral students and attracts around £200m (industrial and in-kind support) annually from over 1000 global companies. Though founded just a few decades ago, to date, over 35,000 students have studied at the centre from over 75 countries (WMG, 2019).

It is noteworthy to mention that such a phenomenon does have its intrinsic benefits especially for young researchers who are provided with the opportunity to carry out wonderful research that would have otherwise been denied to them by funding constraints. However, the critical analysis of the nature and impact of this phenomenon persists within the literature. In the United Kingdom a review of the seven research councils was undertaken by a committee chaired by renowned scientist Sir Paul Nurse in 2015. The review was in favour of retaining the current research councils and complementing them with a new overarching organisation to coordinate research strategy. The committee advocated the creation of an interdisciplinary common research fund to bolster research on grand challenges within the humanities landscape. Nevertheless, the committee advocated for increase in STEM funding and argued that individuals could have access to a loan for a second degree if it was a STEM subject while such provisions were not provided for the humanities. Though it expressed support for the Haldane principle which says researchers rather than politicians should decide its use, there is concern that this would be diverted to humanities only when government seeks to research socio-political issues surrounding economic issues such as migration (Cruickshank, 2003).

The next section will highlight the literature on university experience in core countries.

### **3.2.3 The Transformation of University Experience**

On the university experience front the literature broadly highlights the experience of students within the faculty. The objective is to put the student, essentially a customer, at the heart of a price mechanism, and this invariably offers its challenges. It has long been debated that the shift to the student-as-consumer model drives up quality. Certain academics argue that this enforces a passive relationship between the students and their degree process (Molesworth, et al, 2009). Hence, we have scholars arguing vociferously on both sides (Levine & Cureton, 1998). Additionally, it is maintained that the situation leads to a condition where students have little interest in what is being thought but are focused on getting the degree and harnessing ways to weaponise the degree in order to prosper in a difficult job market, thereby making the educational process a vilified one. This definitely has an impact on academic guidance, perceptions of assessments, university offerings and the rankings framework (Hiller & Resnick, 2014). Also, the shift to fees and loans-based funding, value for money has become a high-profile issue in higher education and this leads conveniently to the issues of student satisfaction surveys and teaching excellence frameworks. This may lead to reduced academic standards as academics clamour for popularity rather than rigour in an effort to sit with the current trends (Lesnik-Oberstein 2015). The widely covered area is usually university fees, and the outsourcing of non-academic functions which has increased the burden on the disposable income of students. For instance, canteen costs in the last decade have increased on campuses across the core countries and with more universities

opting to outsource their accommodation the burden has fallen on students considerably.

Accommodation and tuition fees have tripled in the past 10 years and according to Choate these have altered students voting patterns in the United Kingdom with some looking towards the Labour government who advocate an abolishment of tuition fees. The advocates for the fees cite the future benefits of those who will repay the loans and state that government will incur unnecessary deficits if this is abrogated now (Belfield & Bailey, 2017). Although the argument for the market is that it increases choice and quality on the contrary, it is maintained that funds have been diverted away from the seminar room and towards marketing and recruitment, as the appearance of good teaching becomes more important than good teaching itself. The issue of choice has further challenged students to choose safe courses that will give them safe jobs to provide further safety from the claws of the market. Though there are mechanisms in place like the Teaching Excellence Framework and the Student Surveys in British universities, the exorbitant fees have transformed the way that many students view these procedures (Doyle, 2010). Edmond speaks about the entrepreneurialism of self which defines the current student and how a student today cannot just be a student but must seek to actively engage with self-promotion while conducting their studies.

Though this is appreciated by certain students it differs considerably with past practices. This is derived from the work of Michel Foucault who touches considerably on how social and biological factors have been influenced by the neoliberal age. This model advocates the ethos of the entrepreneur. It then hinges on a range of indicators and schemes that call on the students to take initiative and excel. Hence



it is maintained that ‘departments, students, teaching programs and researchers are encouraged to take risks and need to permanently compete for funding and recognition. Evaluation of student outcomes and teaching is largely based on output and thoroughly externalized while leading to continuous cycles of booms and busts between departments and programs’ (Edmond, 2017: 71-85). Another critical issue is that of the inequality that this logic promotes. It creates a situation where access to more money provides access to the better education and this could lead to a plutocratic society (Wueste & Fishman, 2009). According to researchers at the University of Sussex the current university climate seeks to produce apolitical students. Hence, it shines a light on issues of student values that they contend are becoming relegated (Odysseos & Maia, 2018). This is because the underlying logic does not promote inclusivity but advocates a certain strain of elitism. This is wrapped in marketing slogans for attracting students who can fork out the cash, and the challenges this poses for unity in future societies is worthy of note (Palacios, 2002). These sections have focused on the prevalent literature on neoliberalism and university education surrounding core countries. It explained its understanding as a commodity, its input and output culture and the impact on faculty experience. It will now move on to its impact on periphery countries across the globe.

### **3.3 Neoliberal transformation in periphery countries**

This section looks specifically at the role of neoliberal transformation on higher education in periphery or countries. The literature surrounding the permeation of market principles in determining university education in periphery countries, largely in Africa, South America, parts of Europe and parts of Asia is quite intriguing, as it

encompasses major scholars within diverse academic fields, ranging from anthropology to development economics. The nuances surrounding research on private education in periphery countries features a variety of ideological considerations, policy positions and contexts which inevitably could have an influence on the nature of conclusions reached by various scholars. At the heart of the literature is that marketization of higher education in these parts of the globe is seen as an efficiency and equity debate. In addition, one has discovered that attitudes towards the modern process cannot be divorced from the dominant political narratives within these countries and regions: this is because the degree to which private or public university education is entrenched is dependent on the nature of the dominant historical narrative and the governance framework in that society. According to Paulo Freire provision of education is basically a political act, as the act of learning is a political act in itself (Freire, 1970). By exploring this part of the literature, I have further understood that there is no one direct path towards marketization in these countries as it unfolds in a myriad of ways. These include but are not limited to:

- 1) The outsourcing of specific state activities (research grant provisions) to private providers
- 2) The introduction of market-based or other self-regulatory governance instruments sometimes involving some forms of deregulation of the education sector
- 3) The provision of universities, either partially state-funded and in compliance with public regulations, or independently (Pedro et al, 2015)

The pathways to economic liberalisation of higher education are quite similar and also quite dissimilar. Dave Hill explains that in countries where resistance to western sentiment is historically very strong, such as those with an ingrained class consciousness and strong organisational capacity, the government finds it quite arduous to engage in far-reaching privatisation and marketization efforts (Hill, 2016). Osokoya further explains this influence of history, by asserting that at the time of independence in post-colonial Africa; higher education was viewed as a tool of social integration by the leaders, thus the goals of education were not just viewed as a means to plug the skills gap in various sectors such as medicine, accounting, and law to name a few, but to inculcate into the emergent generation a new political consciousness (Osokoya, 2009). Assie-Lumumba further argues that these ideologies spanned the entire African continent and extended from Tanzania at the horn of Africa, to Botswana down south. He states that it ranged from pro-western liberal ideology and capitalist systems in (Botswana & Cote d'Ivoire) to Marxist-Leninist ideology in (Benin, Zimbabwe) and African socialism in (Mali, Tanzania)' (Assie-Lumumba 2004: 71-83). However, this educational policy stance began to fragment with the debt crisis of the 1980's which shook post-colonial nations and prompted 'market-friendly reforms initiated under the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) leading to the emergence of the private sector in higher education in Africa' (Varghese, 2004). The study will now go on to highlight below, the various angles by which the phenomenon is predominantly analysed within the literature surrounding periphery countries.

### 3.3.1 Transformation of access in periphery countries

The impact of neoliberalism on access and higher education in periphery countries can be understood in a myriad of ways, but there are two critical ways that are highlighted in the literature. The first is the point of view of students and how they engage with the arduous process of gaining entrance into higher education institutions. It also touches upon the issues surrounding access to current standards when they gain this access. The second is the point of view of the academics and the challenges they face when knowledge production and dissemination is involved. This includes access to key journals and opportunities to attend international conferences which can be quite expensive. It is argued that university education within the periphery countries was previously a strong beneficiary of government largesse. A paper titled *Neoliberalism and University Education in Sub-Saharan Africa* states that the governments became the principal proprietor of subsidy in the educational sector. They did this by providing travel expenses for conferences, accommodation for staff and students complete with meal plans, suitable healthcare, and good transportation links to all those who were deemed qualified. Greatly reducing the strain on the academics in the system. The universities were viewed as critical in developing the agenda of the government, both on the academic and student front (Ochwa-Echel, 2013). Siddiqui argues that in recent years a number of Latin American countries have abandoned the neoliberal model and slightly revived the model described above. The aim is geared towards propagating domestic needs and interests to create citizens and academics in tune with the challenges of the country. The view by such governments is this bolsters more individuals to engage with, and have access to higher education, and for the academics to produce research disseminated to a welcome audience. His focus was

Ecuador and Bolivia and his research offers intriguing perspectives on the topic within the Latin American situation, chief of which is the subject of academic events and the role it plays for students and academics in higher education (Siddiqui, 2012).

A pre-eminent part of the life of any academic is attendance of conferences. It introduces attendees to important networks, new ideas and techniques, and gives early career researchers the platform to reach out to key audiences in their field (Parsons, 2015; Halligan, 2008). Today, according to Nicolson, conferences have become neoliberal commodities that render it out of reach to many academics working tediously in the global south. His work reflects on his experiences within the health sciences. He assesses crucial questions on the purpose of academic conferences within this age of glaring inequalities (Nicolson, 2017). Haythem Guseml states in article for Africa is a Country that in the field of African studies:

Africa-based academics face insurmountable difficulties to attend important African studies conferences, which are often held in western capitals of New York, London, or Berlin. These challenges include issues of air travel funding and registration fees, the dreadful process of visa application, and the rise of hostile immigration policies, which made it frequent for requests of academic visas to be denied (Guseml, 2018).

The appeal of certain topics on Africa in academic discourse has led to interesting directions in research. This is dominated however by academics with strong institutional funding and exposure, who then go on to shape the methodological focus and narratives surrounding the discourse. It crowds out the academics that inhabit the spaces analysed who could offer even more intriguing processes to go about researching the situation. This spills into the areas of public intellectualism

where academics operating on the continent are often excluded from the broader media discussions surrounding climate change for instance. It also manifests itself in research and student supervision as the output of PhD's is quite low. An instance is that 'in 2014 it was reported that South Africa produced fewer doctorates than a single university in Brazil, although the two countries have comparable economies'. This shortage of properly qualified staff leads to poor research output. As at 2014, Africa, a continent with 15% of the world's population produces only 1% of the world's leading research and generates 0.1% in advanced scientific patents (Mohamedbhai, 2018: 94).

In 2004, the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) commissioned a survey to ascertain the status of library digitization in sub-Saharan Anglophone Africa in order to chart a course for future developments and investments. It focused on the University of Botswana in Gaborone to highlight the levels of information gathering, the areas of study and its impacts on research behaviour and the departmental provisions. It relied on descriptive surveys and found that 'internet access was rated the most crucial source of most of the academic information required' and yet it was not omnipresent at the university. Data gathering covered 'aspects of digital librarianship, including library automation, information and communication technologies (ICT) facilities, electronic resources, local content, finances, management and training, user education and future plans.' The questionnaire involved over 107 libraries in 20 countries across the continent. The interviews and visits to the sites occurred in countries as diverse as Ghana, Tanzania, Malawi, Uganda and Zimbabwe. A focus group discussion also took place in Oxford with librarians from Kenya, Malawi, Uganda and Zimbabwe. In total, there were '68 completed questionnaires returned, giving an overall response rate of 72%

returns came from 18 of the 20 countries surveyed'. The results revealed some intriguing findings. It was gathered that 85% of all the university libraries had less than 1 computer system for every 100 students and only 30% of universities in the study had a university wide network for staff, management and student intra-communication (Ajiboye & Tella, 2017: 40-66). It is further argued that though journal support for key regional publications were free to access, the lack of computers and strong internet connectivity contributed to poor engagement. This could have a detrimental effect on student engagement with evolving concepts in their disciplines.

Gender and class segmentation is also explored extensively within the literature on neoliberal transformation in core countries. Raduntz (2007) argues that neoliberal universities usually exist in a situation of broader neoliberalism within any given country as privatized utilities such as the railway system, and water supplies makes it even more difficult to assuage the rampant inequality in higher education access that exists in nations on the periphery. This gives rise to elitism and nepotism. A recent report by Brookings Institute reveals that non-existent financial aid and rising inflation and associated costs is limiting access to individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. An analysis of enrolment levels maintains that:

Those in the top wealth quintile do better in tertiary education enrolment than those in the poorest and middle quintiles. Across regions, South and Central African countries perform worst in enrolling students from the poorest and middle quintile of households. Similarly, changes in post-secondary enrolment across a number of countries between 1998 and 2012 [has advanced differently] within the top 20% and bottom income quintiles. During

this time, the enrolment ratio for the bottom 80% increased 3.1% whereas the top 20% saw a 7.9% increase. Interestingly, the report also finds that enrolment disparities by income are larger in francophone African countries and that disparities have grown at a faster pace in those countries than Anglophone ones (Brookings, 2018).

This was highlighted at the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in 2009 which placed its emphasis on higher education in these regions. Though there has been an increase in enrolment as it has increased from 5 million in 2008, to 12 million as at 2017, putting it in the context of the overall population it is barely a dent in the wall. It stands that 'the gross tertiary enrolment ratio for Sub-Saharan Africa, which was about 6% in 2008, has barely reached 10% in 2018, which is unacceptably low and remains by far the lowest figure than in any other world region'. This is further supported by a recent evaluation at Chatham House that the levels of access would invariably increase the access gap for future generations. More than half of the world's population growth by 2050 is projected to occur in periphery nations, particularly within Africa. As the skills and challenges evolve for job seekers, the enrolment levels and quality of education moves unevenly, as a result of uneven government investments and increased private stakes in the structures of the sector (Chatham House, 2018).

For scholars the recent changes to the nature of higher education is apparent to many governments across the periphery world (Ogbogu, 2011) The rising cost of secondary education, the increasing labour fluidity, and the decreasing average returns of schooling has led to a downsizing of significant investment in the sector. However, it has hit hardest at the countries where people do not even have any kind



of government support. Though some welcome the introduction of cheap government supported student loans some view it as a colonial indenture. For instance 'in South Africa many students object to the loan component of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) because it saddles them with debt. Even the government seems to have lost confidence in its loan scheme. Recent reforms have increased the bursary component of NSFAS and undermined its recovery ratio' and a recent study also examined the application of student loans in Indonesia, they found that 'loans did little to ease financing burdens or improve access and equity'. Another issue was that banks lacked the data and facilities to enforce payment of these loans, and the rate of default was very high. Therefore, the loan scheme was cancelled (Tooley, 2000: 4-7). Student loans are widely considered to be the most efficient way of rolling out much needed investments to universities, improving access to higher education, and improving quality. This model exists in well over fifty countries across the globe and is the principal method of enhancing access in core countries. Most student loan processes are government backed and are administered in tandem with grants, bursaries, scholarships and certain quota-based restrictions. However, the steady job market to absolve students in order to offset these loans is not available in many periphery countries (Woodhall, 1992). In addition, the low level of trust associated with government would lead to a scepticism surrounding such a policy. The idea for many is that government does not take care of many other things; the least they could do is provide access to higher education. For students the primary issue could be on the state of good and bad debt. Good debt is used to finance investments that are expected to appreciate in value and produce future income, for instance:

If total debt exceeds annual income, the borrower will struggle to repay the debt and will need an alternate repayment plan, like extended repayment or income-based repayment, to afford the monthly loan payments. These repayment plans reduce the monthly payment by increasing the term of the loan. But this increases the total interest paid over the life of the loan. It also means that the borrower will still be repaying his or her own student loans when the borrower's children enrol in university (Edvisors, 2018).

If the access to jobs, in short, the platform for the re-payment of this debt does not exist, then to what extent is a student loan a good debt for a student in a periphery country? For policymakers the goal is to think flexibly about options for providing higher education access. Therefore, the regulation of private education and the increase in investment is important, in order to create an enabling environment and encourage participation across all levels. A major concern here is not the involvement of private higher educational institutions per se, but the nature of distortion in access to higher education within nations in the periphery.

In recent years the public universities have also adopted certain neoliberal models to increase access and this will be explored further within the study. This is the introduction of Distance Learning Institutes and online postgraduate courses like the MBA program at the Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria (Odejide et al, 2006). This is targeted towards the working population in the society, and enrolment initiatives for recent post-secondary graduates have dwindled. It is vital that, that there is a concentrated effort to meet with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and increase overall access to higher education (World Bank Group, 2017). This section has highlighted the issue of access within higher education literature on periphery

countries. It highlighted the impact on research and training, access to library and information services by students and what this means for students and academics. When academics engage with neoliberalism they usually touch upon the issues of social justice and how this is affecting higher education on the continent, and this will now be explored further below.

### **3.3.2 Curriculum formulation in periphery countries**

The influence of neoliberal transformation on the development of the curriculum is explored by different academics. The narrative is that this leads to stagnancy in curriculum development in periphery countries. This is because research initiatives, the methodological procedures, the general advances that feed into new teaching methods and practices are dominated by the forces of market and supply, and the preponderant influence of the core countries on the process. Hence, cries to decolonize higher education curriculums are often paraded by academics based in western countries that are not faced with ‘paywalls, ruthlessly expensive access, and publication fees’ (Guseml, 2018). It is argued by Mamadani that neoliberal incursions can impact access to curriculum variations, and lead to a lopsided curriculum structure, which paves the way for an entrenchment of views propagated by scholars in core countries (Mamdani, 1998). This manifests itself in textbook publishing and the adoption of key texts by huge publishing conglomerates that effectively lobby academic management, and arguably ‘can have a strong effect on curriculum and student experiences’ (Lincove, 2009: 474-484). Therefore, why exactly does such endure and how is its influence on curriculum in periphery countries further represented in the literature (Oghuvbu, 2011)

A curriculum is usually developed to fit the needs of a given geographical entity. The modules, research focus, and areas of interest that govern this development are regularly found amiss when periphery countries are brought into the centre. It is proposed by Mazrui that there should be 'three strategies for development of African university education: domestication, diversification, and counter penetration'. In domestication, he argues that knowledge production should be situated under local practice and seeks to influence the student on the surroundings that affect him, as opposed to a mindless copying of values and contexts that do not interact with his essence, the goal is to root out dependence. Diversification is the process of adapting a multiplicity of knowledge. There should be no dominant culture of advancing knowledge as scholars should utilize advances from all corners of the globe and in the process develop autonomy. His final point is that of counter penetration which is when the knowledge produced takes charge in defining modernity from an African perspective and in turn seeks to then influence other corners of the world. He also contends that the poorer continents should seek the contribution of their diaspora. In Africa, Mazrui refers to these people as the 'Global Africa' and his argument is they have the capacity to reformulate the trajectory of curriculum development. Mazrui evokes the Pan-African ideals of elevation of black thought process. He hearkens to the days when scholarship across the Caribbean, Africa, and the Americas reverberated around the world. However, he concludes by issuing a stern proclamation on the forces that have derailed evolution in curriculum formulation across the continent, he states:

The imposition of the neoliberal agenda, which treats university education as a commodity to be purchased by those who can afford it, has reduced the universities in Africa to serving the needs of the market rather than the public

interest. It is therefore imperative that university education be reformulated as a public good that can contribute to the development of the region and the well-being of its populace. The region also needs to challenge and question the existing principles underlying the neoliberal agenda that sees university education as a mechanism to achieve economic growth and not development, as well as a private good for a privileged few (Mazrui, 1975).

For Assié-Lumumba, the notion of fusion is more applicable, which is taking into cognisance what is already on ground and imputing the subtle differences that make the African context different. By so doing, one creates an original curriculum, and this will influence even more original thought processes. The argument takes it a step further, by situating it in an atmosphere of embracing inheritance. Therefore it is contended, 'although Africa did not initiate the coming of the Europeans and the transfer of their institutions to the region, to make a new paradigm work, Africa must embrace this inheritance, and make use of what is most relevant for the continent's development and ground it firmly to its culture to have a sense of direction' (Assié-Lumumba, 2005). Juma further argues that many of these universities will need to change from being conventional sources of graduates to becoming engines of community development by working directly in the communities they are located in (Juma, 2005). Therefore, these scholars whose focus is on Africa generally espouse the belief that curriculum creation should be grounded in the thought process and reflections of the areas they inhabit.

In Latin American countries, the design and implementation of curriculum standards is particularly intriguing. This is because as is established, they have important consequences for what and how students learn. Despite this, large scale revamping

of curriculum and learning models are political policies, and usually take the students and staff unawares. It is maintained that 'curriculum defines objectives for what students should know, do, and believe, making it both a powerful and a contested feature of education' (Astiz et al, 2002: 66-88). At the beginning of the 1990's there was a seismic shift in curricular formation across Latin American countries:

Reforms included the partial decentralization of curricular decision-making power from national to regional or local control; the development of national standards; the shift toward competencies rather than discrete knowledge as the primary learning goal; and the emergence of national assessment systems. One of the most important ways in which the new curricula established in the 1990s differed from earlier curricula was the effort to decentralize curricular control. In general, the new model gives the central government the responsibility to set curricula broadly, through standards, guidelines, minimum contents, or goals. It then allows for adaptation of the broad curricular framework and setting of more specific curricula at the regional and local levels (McEwan & Trowbridge, 2007: 61-76).

Within such a model, the actors operating at the local level basically take the cue from the central government and adapt to the needs of their respective regions. It is important to contextualise the importance of the barriers of geography. Many of these countries in Latin America operate in very large land masses, and the ability to ensure greater efficiency, a certain level of autonomy, and still ensure basic quality and equity is important for the nation as a whole (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2003: 60-71). There have been certain evaluations of impact contained within

studies by Watson and West (2004). One can use examples to illustrate this, for instance there are two programs in Latin America, that is Chile and Uruguay, which are Chile's Full School Day (FSD) program and Uruguay's Full-Time School (FTS) reform. They attempt to show the relationship between changes in curriculum and its impact on learning, and they show that there is a positive relationship between times spent in school and certain learning outcomes. For Chile's program, there was a 'small but positive impact on learning outcomes, with greater gains in language than in math' (Foley & Valenzuela 2005: 217-234). The program was created and rolled out in reaction to evidence that Chilean students spend more time in classes than their other Latin American counterparts. In Venezuela, 'it was instituted concurrently with other reforms focusing on teacher professional development and compensation for poor schools, among others. According to the scholars who analysed this project, the FTS program led to even more impact than the FSD. This leads one to conclude that government intervention in curriculum is possible and does offer its benefits. This is because for government, the focus extends to household-level differences, community participation, and an implementation of curriculum to impact the greater whole, as opposed to the neoliberal models that permeate higher education in many periphery countries today. However, according to Ferrer, in practice, 'curricular decentralization in Latin America has been problematic'. The coordination needed to distinguish roles; the acceptance of local adaptations and the ever-changing nature of tasks have led to unnecessary squabbles and it has proven difficult for many Latin American countries (Ferrer 2004: 45-61).

The final issue is that of standardized national assessments across periphery countries. These pose a significant challenge to policy makers, as there are often important 'disconnects between exams and the actual curricula implemented' for

external major exams. The major issues with this, is that they require a broad-based reforms strategy amongst many stakeholders, ‘including parents, regional governments, and teacher unions, and political consensus across incoming administrations’ (Montero-Sieburth 1992: 175-193). Therefore, in certain situations like in West-Africa where there is a broad exam for post-secondary entry called West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASCCE), there is sometimes a disconnect in certain aspects of the exam, therefore some parts of the assessment would be reserved for Gambia, and another reserved for Ghana for instance (WAEC, 2018). In periphery countries as a whole curriculum development is based on building competencies and implementing something that can easily scale across their respective countries. The focus for teachers and key stakeholders is then the establishment of standards, the focus on skills, and the adherence to national assessment systems, though to varying degrees. The neoliberal influenced reforms that permeated certain countries at the beginning of the 1990’s continue to be faced with a myriad of challenges. There is the weak alignment between the curriculum and textbooks, exams, teacher education. There is also ‘the absence of hospitable environments for curricular reform, including broad political consensus, appropriate educational context, and accompanying educational reforms alignment’ (Braslavsky, 1999: 23-36). However, it should be noted that major curriculum changes usually require major changes in many aspects of a country as a whole. Therefore, the role of curriculum is a very crucial one in generating and sustaining a society that takes into cognisance the role of its resources, the problems associated with timing and efficiency, and the ever-present interests of multiple stakeholders, and varying political consensus. Thus, existing scholarship argues that neoliberal transformation



has challenged the alignment of curriculum with what was previously considered as important reasons for teaching and learning.

### **3.3.3 Social justice and education in periphery countries**

Social justice and the quest for an equitable society has been a central focus for many researching the impact of neoliberal transformation on countries existing within the periphery. According to Zajda, Majhanovich and Rust it can be understood in the simple context of ‘how can we contribute to the creation of a more equitable, respectful, and just society for everyone’ (Zajda et al. 2006: 9-22). This frame of understanding is important as it puts the concept of higher education within the broader context of the social ramifications that feed and sustain the system itself, which are the individuals and the ideals that guide them in any given society. The major questions covered by the literature surround the issues of what higher education does for the achievement of an equitable society? According to Geo-Jaja the relationship between higher education and society is simply the quest for a better life for all (Geo-Jaja, 2018). For scholars at the University of Cape Town the phenomenon is wrapped in ‘complex causality’ and she argues that the ‘ideological function is to produce graduates who will critically question the status quo, yet this privilege is only offered to a portion of society. Even in countries with near-universal participation, higher education becomes a mechanism of dominant elites as a result of stratification’ (Jawirtz & Case, 1998: 235-240).

Over the course of reviewing the literature, it is increasingly evident that a number of scholars view the study of social justice as the study of gender discrepancies. A consistent angle according to Mairead & Yusuf in their paper *Transformation and Equity: Women and Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa* is simply that the

participation of women within the current educational system is quite limited as a result of cultural impediments. Their research focuses on the degrees women within the periphery end up going for. It opens up broader questions of pre-determined choice for women, as a result of economic concerns, which is further influenced by cultural reasons (Mairead & Yusuf, 2002). According to Torobian this occurs predominantly in South Asia and North Africa, and he further states that in certain cases, such is even backed up by legislation (Torabian, 2018). Wilson further argues that this is as a result of the poor ways by which approach to empowering women is presented, stating that 'parallels and continuities between colonial representations of women workers and today's images of micro-entrepreneurship within the framework of neoliberal globalisation' is a key reason for such manifestation (Wilson, 2011). Gouthro employs a critical feminist stance to analyse the impact of neoliberalism and the home to analyse the role of women. For him educational discourse for women is shaped by dominant ideas in individual households but also by neoliberal influence that emphasizes competition, individualism, and connections to the marketplace. He situates his critique within three frames namely the home place, identity, and relationships, and juxtaposes it with the private and public ideas of the role of women in societies on the periphery (Gouthro, 2009).

In certain academic papers, the current higher educational system in many countries on the periphery is as a result of the policies and prescriptions of the Development Financial Institutions. It is argued that their policies are tied with certain strings of conditionality, and this has led to the rapid displacement of the government's role in maintaining a society filled with equity and social justice. It is maintained that 'neoliberalism thus offers a market view of citizenship that is generally antithetical to rights, especially to state guaranteed rights in education, welfare, health, and

other public goods' (Morrow & Torres, 2000). The citizen is viewed as a purely economic tool that is only capable of making market-oriented choices, and the state's role is merely one of a guide, which is to prepare the bedrock for transactions to take place. It is also argued that in this model the choice to access education is actually a luxury, because intertwined with the concept of access and choice is the core aspect of education which is quality. It is argued that the neoliberal model has tremendous implications for poor countries because the rationalization is that it provides people with choice, yet there is overwhelming evidence that in economically unequal societies only those with sufficient resources can make choices and those who are poor have no choices at all (Giroux, 2014).

Hence, in this dispensation, access to higher education is solely dependent on the ability to pay. According to Lulat 'World Bank lending to poor countries was mostly geared towards economic and infrastructural development such as roads and bridges. The World Bank did not provide loans for university education for several years during the postcolonial period' (Lulat, 2005). The rationale is that higher education institutions drained 'a disproportionate amount of scarce resources' and they were rather inefficient and exhibited low fiscal prudence. However, for other scholars the organisations did what they were supposed to do, which is providing the adequate loans to increase productivity and a favourable balance of payment, but higher education as the ultimate boost to future productivity was not factored as the major concerns were short-term considerations (Hill & Kumar, 2009). For instance, the IFC, which is the for-profit arm of the World Bank recently funded a project to improve access to higher education in Brazil. The description reads 'Duoc is a non-profit, private Chilean vocational TEI founded in 1968. It has 16 campuses offering two-year technical degrees and four-year professional degrees. Duoc UC

now has 88,000 students, of whom three-quarters are from the lowest three income quintiles. In 2007, Duoc created a student loan facility in partnership with IFC and Banco de Crédito e Inversiones. Students can take out a maximum loan of \$4,500 per year and must repay the loan within a period of years commensurate to their study period' (IFC, 2019). The university's major objective was to introduce the loan program to increase enrolments, but with the program being rolled out in one of the poorest parts of Chile, the question then can be posed, is access to this institution now truly a matter of choice? And to what extent is the university just an enterprise for reaching new customers. These are the sort of questions that bubble to the surface when the issue of social justice is highlighted within literature on countries in the periphery.

For certain academics and policy makers, to write about social justice is to explore social mobility and the barriers associated with that. One could present it in terms of the stages of growth. It is argued that many countries within the periphery are at the second stage of enhancement which is the era of industrialization. A recent paper reviews the current state of knowledge regarding the effects of industrialization upon systems of social stratification. He takes society as the unity of observation and uses the level of industrialization and the patterns of stratification, then puts linkage of constructs between them. Social mobility is usually measured by a variety of ways, but it is primarily a study of discrepancies between generations. The key ingredient here being educational attainment and this can be measured in a variety of ways such as individual earnings, social class, and occupational status. It is argued that most individuals socio-economic outcomes are strongly related to those of their parents, this means that children from a poor family are likely to be relatively poor as adults and consequently that inequality will

perpetuate. This has implications for economic efficiency if the talents of those from poorer families are under-developed or not fully utilized, as those from poorer backgrounds will not live up to their productive potential (Blanden & Macmillan, 2016). In this case, information about GDP growth and per capita income is a good proxy for earnings and social mobility across most countries

Thomas Bossuroy and Denis Cogneau at the Paris School of Economics compiled a large amount of data from enquiries conducted between 1985 and 2005, and it represents a cross section of ideas on intergenerational mobility across five countries within the periphery. The key fact is although there is much 'economic and sociological literature comparing intergenerational mobility, in relation to income, education or profession. However, the available comparisons rarely include the developing countries and almost never include African countries. The emphasis was placed on a transition across five decades, and the authors concluded by asserting that geographical factors are as influential as education within Madagascar and Uganda, especially in the public sector (Bossuroy & Cogneau, 2009). Hurd and Johnson in *Education and Social Mobility in Ghana* focus on the primacy of the occupational structure and its influence on social mobility rather than on just access to higher education. The research is focused more on the evolution of the economic factors compared with the peculiar evolution of the education sector within Africa. Different scholars have different opinions and methodological procedures for addressing social mobility but within the periphery another issue is that of indigenous cultures being suppressed by neoliberalism and western education.

In Latin America where higher education is still seen as exclusive for indigenous people, who represent the most disadvantaged segment of the population despite

their wide presence within the region. For instance, the mayor of a town in Chile said when it comes into correcting such social injustice ‘everyone expresses willingness, but this isn’t put into practice, in a municipality, 685 km south of Santiago, located in the region of La Araucanía, home to nearly half of the Mapuche population, the country’s largest indigenous community. A recent study by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) stated that 8.3% of the population within the Latin America region - 45 million of a total of 605 million people - is indigenous. This includes over 826 native groups in the region, of which Bolivia has the highest proportion, followed by Guatemala, and then Peru, where 24% of the population is indigenous, and Mexico, where it is 15%. A World Bank report suggests that indigenous people ‘continue to be confronted with glass ceilings and structural barriers that limit their full social and economic inclusion’. Though university education access has increased in recent years, due to activities of some governments, challenges of making it culturally appropriate and multilingual still persist (World Bank, 2018). Such manifestations present another angle for understanding the relationship between social justice and neoliberalism’s effects on higher education within such societies. These sections of the literature review have focused on the relationship between higher education and neoliberalism within countries on the periphery and will now advance to highlight the literature on neoliberal transformation and its impact on the country of focus of the study, which is Nigeria.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

Through this chapter, I’ve reviewed scholarship on neoliberalisation of higher education in core and periphery. Overall, this scholarship highlights the importance of governance structures, curriculum and pedagogy, and staff and student

experience of sites of neoliberal transformation. Supplementary focuses of analysis flagged within this scholarship include the permeation of private sector style management in higher education, the heightened for-profit motives surrounding academic dissemination, and the revamped nature of access to a decent experience, based on pecuniary concerns alone. From this review of scholarship on the emergence of the neoliberalisation of higher education, I derive a framework of analysis for my own study that focuses on governance structures, curriculum and pedagogy, and staff and student experience as key sites at which to evaluate the incorporation of market-based principles and practices, as a means of gaining analytic traction over the neoliberalisation of Nigerian higher education. I also carry the supplementary focus on how this affects the peculiar Nigerian environment through later chapters of the thesis.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 The Neoliberal University in Nigeria

#### 4.1 Introduction

This part of the literature review focuses on the literature surrounding neoliberalism and higher education in Nigeria. Unlike the previous two chapters, this chapter focuses on the dominant literature surrounding neoliberalisation in Nigeria alone. The first section of the review focuses on the transformation of pedagogy in Nigeria, and the nature of staff present within institutions. Then it advances to discuss the organisational structure of Nigerian university management, and the novel ways this has changed in recent times, and finally it highlights the discourse surrounding university experience, ranging from student satisfaction to faculty disposition. The study will now explain in detail what has been briefly highlighted in this introduction.

#### 4.2 Transformation of Pedagogy in Nigeria

A critical issue flagged in existing scholarship relates to the impact of private education is the state of the curriculum and the learning methods and practices. One can argue that the way and manner students in Nigerian private tertiary institutions learn is quite different to their public counterparts in Nigeria. According to Meador the curriculum of public higher institutions is governed by what he sees as common core standards which quality mechanisms that are put in place by the state. It is noteworthy that these curriculum and pedagogy benchmarks are quite stagnant compared to the ever-changing standards of private schools (Meador, 2017). One can argue this could be due to the level of accountability in the private universities. Obadara also maintains that private tertiary institutions in Nigeria have



state-of-the-art facilities that are the envy of students in public universities where there are dilapidated infrastructural facilities. He however states that the 2006 accreditation report of the NUC made some positive comments regarding the state of facilities in public universities in the larger cities of Nigeria (Obadara, 2012). Scholars also expresses satisfaction regarding the nature of experiments carried out within private universities he evaluated. Highlighting the laboratories, classrooms, architecture studios, and internet coverage on campus as significantly better than what is obtainable within public institutions (Oyekanmi & Nwabueze, 2006). Recent studies also argue that the state of libraries and educational resources obtained from departments and faculties are of significantly higher quality than those within public institutions.

An intriguing development within Nigerian private universities is the growing emphasis on entrepreneurial studies within traditional courses such as engineering. For example, there is the introduction of the Entrepreneurial Development Studies (EDS) in Covenant University which the university terms 'a custom-built programme'. The programme is designed as an 'all semester programme and compulsory for all students of the university irrespective of the student's chosen field of study'. It also has a start-up development, incubation, and acceleration space. The aim of the centre is to give an advantage to students of the university and put them within reach of the necessary resources they may need to excel. These are curriculum and facility features that are non-existent within the public university space (Edukugbo, 2011). However, an issue worthy of mention is the declining quality in the calibre of teachers across all universities, particularly private universities. For instance, the lack of PhD qualified individuals holding teaching jobs across private universities is highlighted by Erinosh. He observed in a comprehensive study of three Nigerian

private universities, that there is '1 doctorate degree holder to 46 students at Babcock; 1 to 49 at Bowen and 1 to 134 at Igbinedion'. This perceived lack of quality of research personnel, prestige of departments, and access to government funded research funds, across private universities also affects how they are perceived by students seeking access to higher education. It is interesting to point out the geographical spread of these three universities as they are located in Ogun, Osun, and Edo states respectively, thereby defeating the geographic arguments regarding immobility of teachers across universities, that is the notion that teachers are unwilling to uproot themselves to other areas within Nigeria to take up teaching and research jobs (Erinosho et al, 2008).

Kelly is also of the view that private schools maintain 'much greater leeway' in the curriculums and assessments they utilize. She debates the notion of standardization, stating that private higher education providers operating away from the purview of government can create their own educational principles far removed from the ingrained acceptable norms. For example, there is the highly contested issue of being 'biblically consistent' in many private schools owned by different church denominations in Nigeria. Kelly argues that private universities may incorporate religious curriculum into their schools whereas public schools cannot. She states that 'most private schools are founded based on religious principles, so this allows them to indoctrinate their students with their beliefs [while] other private schools may choose to focus more on a specific area such as math or science, whereas a public school is more balanced in their approach'. The consensus verdict on the above occurrence is yet to be rendered by scholars and policy makers, but this is an issue that is hotly contested in general discourse within Nigeria. In 2012, there was a well-publicized incident involving 200 students punished by expulsion for not attending

church, an incident the school described as ‘disregard of paramount core values’ (Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009). The governing authorities were unruffled by the issue despite the issue challenging the very notion of what constitutes teaching and learning in a Nigerian university setting. A central aim of the thesis is to understand how the existence of conducive lecture halls and apparatus on one hand, and the imposition of certain norms prevalent in the university on the other can impact the attitude of individuals towards their respective institutions.

#### **4.3 Transformation of University Governance in Nigeria**

Governance of education is a topic of great interest within academic circles in Nigeria. This is because the issue of autonomy has been a key issue behind the constant face-offs between the Federal government and Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). It has led to incessant strike actions and industrial movements as lecturers accuse the government of politicizing appointment of top posts such as that of the Vice-Chancellor. They maintain that independence of universities will sure up accountability and improve performance of management and they also observe a growing base of self-governing institutions across the world in the last decade. For Nigerian public universities however government control remains quite strong and the ability to make certain decisions are constrained, thus impeding the capacity for innovation and progression. Basically, management of university education can be analysed from two dimensions, the external and the internal levels. The external is the national controlling body of the federal government called the National Universities Commission (NUC); it is the body in charge of higher education management in the country.

The aims and objectives of the NUC are the ensuring of adequate financing and maintaining law and order within the system. They also perform the following functions:

- i. Accreditation of courses
- ii. Approval of courses and programmes
- iii. Maintenance of minimum academic standards
- iv. Monitoring of universities
- v. Giving guidelines for setting up of universities
- vi. Monitoring of private universities
- vii. Prevention of the establishment of illegal campus.
- viii. Implementing appropriate sanctions (Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009).

It is argued by Olaiya that for a long time the body did not perform its duties adequately because of the politicization of some of the above objectives. He clearly states that ‘the NUC is staffed almost entirely by long time public servants. Most of its 600 staff has received no professional training in the management of higher education or in technical aspects associated with the NUC’s mandates, such as quality assurance, policy analysis, or expenditure effectiveness’ but this began to change with the introduction of democracy in 1999 and the accompanying enthusiasm of private universities to demand more responsibility and accountability. Arguably the introduction of private universities strengthened the work of the commission and enhanced its respectability (Olaiya, 2015)

On the other hand, the internal management of universities is represented by a defined organogram. According to Adegbite there is the Visitor who is usually a head of state or important government personality. Then there is the Chancellor who

presides over the convocation ceremonies. Finally, the key management bodies are the governing council headed by the Pro-Chancellor; this body regulates all administrative functions of the university ranging from budget approval to liaison activities. Then there is the Senate headed by the Vice-Chancellor and Registrar or the Dean of Admissions as Secretary; this body regulates academic activities in line with the guiding principles provided by the NUC (Adegbite, 2007). Though private universities tend to mirror the organogram of their public counterparts they have significantly influenced the nature of management practices and the composition of boards and key posts in the general Nigerian university system.

According to William Saint 'one clear contrast in governing board practice between private and public universities lies in the process whereby board members are selected'. In the past public universities tended to focus on the appointment of traditional rulers and former government officials in key posts such as that of the chancellor and members of the governing board. However, though the eventual decision in public universities is imposed by the external bodies, the tide is shifting towards individuals with proven business credentials, in line with the practices of their private counterparts (Saint, 2009). For example, in 2015 the Federal Government appointed the businessman Dr Umar Musa Mustapha as Pro-Chancellor and Chairman for the Governing Council of the University of Ibadan. He took over from General Adeyinka Adebayo (Rtd) a member of the erstwhile military establishment (Adepoju & Fabiyi, 2007). Therefore, this highlights how neoliberal transformation is explored within the literature on the governance process internally and externally, in the Nigerian higher education system, and the effects of this on the individuals within the system will be explored by the thesis in the subsequent chapters.

#### 4.4 Transformation of University Experience

Much of the literature on changes in faculty experience as a result of neoliberalism within the Nigerian context is centred on the fate of the girl child within a growing private university culture. According to a comprehensive study of the issue in Western Africa a reason for low female educational attainment at the university level could be attributed to ‘early customary marriages, teenage pregnancy; unfavourable school environment such as poor sanitary facilities, and lack of female role models’. These issues place focus on the cultural and religious attitudes towards the girl child in Nigeria, particularly that of arranged marriages. According to Amu:

Despite being one of the leading economies in Africa, Nigeria has more girls out of school than any other country. Girls complete an average 6.7 years of schooling compared with an overall average of 7.85 years. The poorest girls only complete an average of 11 years. In 2015, 32% of 15-23 year-old girls lacked basic literacy skills compared with 23% of boys the same age (Amu, 2016).

For a study conducted by the United Nations Children’s Fund in conjunction with the Campaign for Female Education, it was discovered that 65% of its respondents blamed early marriage and teenage pregnancy as the cause of their dropout. In the case of Nigeria, these issues of adversity during their school years significantly affect the proportion of girls who apply to university. For instance, a comparison of male and female pass rates at the 2006 and 2009 West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) show that in all subjects taken at the Senior High School entrance examinations, male students outperformed their female counterparts. Admission to the higher education institutions in Nigeria is dependent on success in

this examination; therefore, this has affected the rate of girl child enrolment (Daddieh, 2003; Odetunde, 2004). Although one can point out that circumstance like background, educational attainment of parents and socio-economic conditions also come into play.

This is because female children from poorer backgrounds tend to support their parents in petty trading and taking care of the rest of the younger children. Nigeria is a patriarchal society and this reflects itself in the disposition of society towards the university system. However, Mama also argues that another reason for this is the Victorian values that characterized the operation of universities by early British pioneers of university education in Africa. She contends they prioritized the education of men for the administrative tasks of the day, neglecting provision of university education for women and such standards were maintained (Mama, 2003). Whatever the argument, it is agreed by various scholars that increase in private universities has equally provided a broadened pathway for access to university education for the female child. However, it also throws up a conundrum because the 'bigger the surface, the more unequal the educational distribution and, the larger the inequality' (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013).

It is also stated in a World Bank report titled *Girls' Education in the 21st Century: Gender Equality, Empowerment, and Economic Growth* that private universities in Nigeria have elevated the emphasis on staff accountability. This is because of heightened parental concerns involving female children. Hence private schools are 'better able to attract and retain girls than are [public] schools'. According to the study female children in private institutions had higher enrolments, attendance, participation and even test scores. This could be as a result of the increased

facilities, better atmosphere and enhanced teaching conditions. These situations offer opportunities for the girl child to bolster her performance and ‘evaluations find that these programs help children of excluded groups stay in school and raise their achievement’. Therefore, we can appreciate the impact of private investment in providing increased access for the female child. Though viewed as for profit private entities, one can appreciate the inevitable social impact they provide not just for Nigeria of today, but for future generations. Hence, this will be explored within the thesis as well, to ascertain the points of view of the females involved in the study (Tembon et al, 2008; Aina, 2002).

According to Saint, the introduction of private universities initially was greeted with scorn and ridicule by Nigerians but gradually they are usurping the public institutions and are providing greater access to university education. The steps taken include ‘introducing an admissions quota system to address regional and class imbalances, launching a scholarship program for 50,000 needy students and the establishment of the National Open University (Saint et al, 2004). These steps have led to a gradual diversification of a standardized process within the Nigerian public university system. The importance of these changes is supported by the fact that it improves the propensity for equally diverse future workforce environments and leads to greater innovation. The issue of quota-based admissions requires further highlighting. The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board is responsible for the general admissions process. A situation where private universities have more leeway than their public counterparts, as at today in public universities:

The Board reserves 30% of a university’s admissions for residents of its immediate geographical or ‘catchment’ area, and a further 20% for



educationally disadvantaged students. Some 10% of university admissions were made at the Vice-Chancellor's discretion. Only 40% of students were admitted on the basis of the merits of their academic performance.

In the evaluation of these policies it was discovered by Adeyemi that 'although Nigeria's quota-based admissions policy may have made university access somewhat more equitable, it did not necessarily broaden the possibilities for academic success among those admitted. As a result, although access has increased, university responsiveness to the varied needs and abilities of a more diverse student body produced by rising enrolments has been limited' and this has prompted members of the stronger part of the dichotomy to seek education within the private establishments and abroad (Adeyemi et al, 2009). In addition, a study of the labour market unveiled that most employers take the view that '[public] university graduates are poorly trained and unproductive on the job' they further maintain that 'shortcomings are particularly severe in oral and written communication, and in applied technical skills'. It is also argued that there is a mismatch in allocation of students to the needs of society. The demands of the labour market are 'centred largely in engineering' and 'health services' but '49% of the supply of graduates produced by federal universities are concentrated in Arts, Education, Law and Social Sciences'. The issue is such findings suggest the need for adaptive university responses which the private universities have duly adjusted, hence the gradual shift in the tide. Today private universities in Nigeria have grown in stature and their graduates are considered more employable. Even the government employers such as the civil service itself consider 'the quality of public university graduates to be inadequate' (Dabalén et al, 2001).

Furthermore, a study encompassing four African countries conducted for three years shows that ‘employment is important, but so is contributing to society’ and with public education ‘opportunities are still not equal’. A private university student was interviewed and asked about the challenging nature of the job market in South Africa which mirrors that of Nigeria in many ways. According to her ‘I’d say that for us, we are a bubble, we know privileged people, we have seen and met people who will say, ‘call me after graduation’ we are in that sort of circle’. The study concluded that ‘students from regular universities struggle, even when they have the same skill-set and determination are also strongly aware of the advantages brought by personal connections. [Thus] of the factors considered as barriers to employment, lack of networks and lack of family connections were seen to be the most influential across all of the countries’. Therefore, this is another important aspect of understanding the influence of private universities and neoliberal transformations in shaping the Nigerian condition explored within the literature (McCowan, 2015). Due to the socio-economic backgrounds of student in private universities they are provided with benefits like ‘extracurricular activities and work placements necessary to equip themselves for this [challenging employment] landscape’ and in many respects are absolved from the realities of the majority of Nigerians in public universities and this has implications for the emerging Nigerian society.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Through this chapter, a review of scholarship on higher education transformation in Nigeria has been provided. Within this literature, there is a particular concern with shortcomings in the quality of provision, the potential embedding of inequalities through the extension of the private university provision, and on the challenges of ensuring that the higher education system as a whole combats gender-based and

socioeconomic inequalities. Across the scholarship as a whole, we see that there is a focus on changes to governance structures, e.g. introduction of governance structures not subsumed by the state, curriculum and pedagogical changes such as religiosity infused into the educational process, and staff and student experience affected by the whims and caprices of those who establish new private institutions. An empirical advance to this literature has been provided by structuring the analysis using the three-dimensional framework to probe the extension of market-based practices and principles across governance structures, curriculum and pedagogy, and staff and student experience.

Therefore, a conceptual refinement and engagement with conceptualisations of neoliberalism that remain generally absent from this literature have been espoused. For instance, the literature shows a broad divergence in the nature of higher education provision in both public and private universities, and particularly demonstrates that governance norms, pedagogical practices, and living conditions are guided by religious principles in certain private institutions, whereas the public universities maintain their secularity. This is a crucial example highlighting neoliberalisation with Nigerian characteristics that are worthy of note while exploring the dominant literature, and the goal of the research process is to shed more light through the field research. Through the following chapter, case study findings are outlined by providing an overview of methodological decisions that underpin the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 Methodology

#### 5.1 Research Framework

This chapter will describe the research design and methodology used to assess the nature and extent of neoliberalisation in private and public Nigerian universities. The methods of primary data gathering were questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. In addition, archival research was conducted at the National Library of Nigeria. Overall, the research can be characterized as a mixed methods approach. In the paragraphs below, the survey and interview methods employed are discussed and sampling issues and analytic approach highlighted. In concluding the chapter, the challenges and limitations experienced were reviewed.

The target population sought to achieve a representative sample of the Nigerian population. The study was limited to staff and students of public and private universities in Nigerian universities, Due to Nigeria's unique history there is a heavier concentration of universities in the south. Each university teaches in English and collectively teach a wide range of courses, ranging from comparative literature to cell biology and genetics. The research adhered to the geo-political split of the nation into six geo-political zones. These are the South-West, South-Central, South-East, North-West, North-Central and North-East. Interviews were also conducted with high-ranking officials of the Academic Staff Union of Universities in Nigeria, and the Nigerian Universities Commission, a body tasked with regulating the universities in Nigeria. Questionnaires were used in this process. According to Collis & Hussey 'a questionnaire is a method for collecting primary data in which a sample of respondents are asked a list of carefully structured questions chosen after

considerable testing with a view to eliciting reliable responses' (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Questionnaires can be administered in a wide range of settings, but for this research the pen and paper fill format was employed. The questionnaire included the background information section, 20 multiple-choice likert scaled questions, and 4 open-ended questions. It was successfully administered to over 690 respondents, comprising staff and students of one public and private university in each geopolitical zone. Questionnaires were distributed to as many individuals as possible, and it has been suggested by Fincham that taking this multi-mode approach to questionnaire data application will yield greater response rates and it did (Fincham, 2008). In addition, it is maintained that their work received an average high response rate with such an approach; hence this research utilized this method. It is maintained that response rates are received by dividing the number of respondents by the subjects in the sample (Draugalis et al, 2008). An evaluation report by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention by the United States sets out a few guidelines for increasing response rates to questionnaires. They highlight procedures such as contacting potential participants as many times as one can, their recommendation was 'four times' and they also emphasise that this contact should always include a 'personal touch'.

That is, in each communication, the researcher should endeavour to explain the purpose, importance and rationale for the research in a way that puts participants at ease. The researcher should also go on to explain how the research will be used and above all stress confidentiality. This research process utilized such processes as a framework for the operationalization of its fieldwork process, and this was particularly useful within the context that is Nigeria, as the participants had to fill the questionnaire manually. Certain studies on methodological process view

response rates as a crucial reflection of the weight of the study. However, the ability to measure the relation between nonresponse and the eventual accuracy of the research was viewed as cumbersome and expensive, thus 'few rigorously designed studies provided empirical evidence to document the consequences of lower response rates until recently' (Backstrom & Hursh 1963). In recent years such studies have now been conducted. A very good instance of this is the study by Curtin et al (2000), in their research on the estimates of the Index of Consumer Sentiment (ICS). They analysed the impact of respondents who refused to cooperate, respondents who required more than five calls to participate and those who required less than two calls to participate. They found no adverse effect on the current estimates when compared with previous yearly figures. Nevertheless, in spite of such findings, a higher response rate is much more preferable, from a point of view of satisfaction for the researcher, and the reward of more satisfaction in highlighting what the results reveal.

There is the possibility of a negative effect on reliability and validity should there be a low response rate to the questionnaires. This occurs when potential respondents overwhelmingly have a non-responsive bias which would then challenge the strength of the entire process. However, in the case of this study responses were very forthcoming, though it required a proactive approach on the part of the researcher as previously alluded, with just over 1000 questionnaires sent out, over 700 surveys were returned, representing a response rate in the region of 70 percent. In relation to the baseline expectations set out this rate represents a high level of respondent engagement with the process. To generate this response rate, active measures were undertaken including knocking on office doors and using respondents' informal tea and coffee breaks as opportunities to request survey completion. It is also quite key

to point out that the literature does not actually set an actual ‘minimum acceptable response rate’. In a recent study, Draugalis, Coons and Plaza (2008) reviewed and examined journal articles in a certain discipline from 2005 to 2006 and their conclusion highlighted that ‘35% of survey research papers had response rates less than 30%, with 30% having response rates of 31%-60%, and 35% with response rates of 61% or greater’. This is particularly interesting to note, because Cook et al also maintain that ‘response representativeness is more important than response rate in survey research, (though) response rate is important if it bears on representativeness’ (Cook et al, 2000). Representativeness is a particularly key issue, because it refers to the range of the sample size and just how well the questionnaire compares with the general population of interest. Within this study it can be stated that the population of interest is well represented based on comparisons of the demographics of the participants which were reported (Location, Age, Gender, Geo-political zone) in this study. There was a proper geographical spread encompassing the length and breadth of the entire country.

Semi-structured interviews are a second core aspect of the research methodology for this study. Using interview style techniques, a person or group of persons discuss their opinions on certain topics with a researcher. It is defined as a method ‘used to gather data relating to the feelings and opinions of a group of people who are involved in a common situation or discussing the same phenomenon’ (Collis and Hussey, 2014). The purpose of an interview is not to obtain data which can be generalized about a whole population but rather to obtain as full a range of perceptions about a specific phenomenon. This is very useful in research with a narrative bent, a question or inquiry reliant on the narrative of human beings is classified as qualitative research. The total number of participants interviewed was

42 persons. This included government officials, professors, and students. The interview aimed to provide intriguing insights on the research questions, and this it did, with answers and observations ranging from amazing facts, off tangent stories, which invariably led to confirmation or dismissal of prior assumptions, and overall buttressing of the intended thesis contributions.

An interview guide is prepared beforehand which is why a semi-structured interview has been described as ‘conversation with a purpose’ the characteristics of which include open-ended questions, usually in a certain order, but providing ‘opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail’. This interview process allows a researcher to pick up on cues and influence the process as it unfolds. This flexible structure allows a researcher to prompt and encourage in an attempt to capture what cannot be quantified, because not everything that counts can be counted. According to Lisa Given the purpose of a semi-structured interview is for a researcher to use an interview guide and attempt to get feedback on the ‘tentative conceptual model of the phenomenon that underlies the research’ (Given, 2008). She argues that semi-structured interviews are ‘especially useful in research questions where the concepts and relationships among them are relatively well understood’. The overall relevance of the data is dependent on the ability of a researcher to collate and analyse the information in a way that enhances understanding for the type and feature of the specific research inquiry. Buckley and Chiang (1976) argue that qualitative methods are complimentary to the quantitative as opposed to the notion of incompatibility that is held in certain academic quarters. They further state that qualitative research is very suitable when a researcher tries to ‘ascertain and theorize prominent contemporary issues’ which is what this thesis seeks to accomplish.



It is also important to adhere to certain guidelines in the process of conducting a semi-structured interview. These include curiosity, focus, and rational observation. It is important to have the research questions guide you as a researcher and then identify the sampling strategy which will be touched on later, unlike quantitative approach the goal is an in-depth conversation as opposed to a ticking of views. Different scholars have their views on how to go about such selection but for semi-structured interviews the sample should depend on the aim, homogeneity of the sample and interview quality. In addition, respecting and acknowledging the power imbalance with the interviewee is especially vital in extracting crucial information during the interview process, this also includes a complete respect and strict devotion to confidentiality. Participants are also advised that they can skip certain questions, also because recording usually takes place and it is important for a rapport to be sustained. Discussions occurred primarily in English and on campuses within Nigeria, in certain cases telephone interviews occurred. As with all data collection methods, interviews have some potential problems which a researcher must be aware of. One such problem which can occur is social desirability bias, whereby participants will answer in the way they feel a researcher would like them to. Another common problem with interviews is having one participant who is overly dominant with assumptions, which could then creep into the research (Balogun, 2021). The role of a researcher here is vital in firstly explaining the way in which the interview will be conducted to participants prior to its commencement and secondly by maintaining control of the discourse and encouraging a balanced assessment throughout.

## 5.2 Sampling Approach and Description

This section will outline the inclusion criteria for survey and interview participants and provide a detailed account of the steps taken during the recruitment process. The sampling technique used was multi-stage sampling technique, while purposive sampling was used for the semi-structured interviews.

1. The first stage was a stratified random sampling used to segment the universities into strata. In this case, the stratification used was the 6 geo-political zones. A private and public university was then selected randomly within each geo-political zone. Geographical coverage within sample was necessary to secure for adequate representativeness.
2. In each of the selected universities, simple random sampling was also used to select 2 faculties. In each of the selected faculties, 100 staff and 100 students were purposively targeted to fill the questionnaire. The staff members were encouraged to distribute the questionnaires to students at the end of lectures or seminars, which greatly assisted the study in gaining large numbers.
3. The focus was placed on undergraduate students in their penultimate and final years because they are better situated to give an account of the insight gained within their universities. In addition, only academic staff at the lecturer level, usually with at least 3 years-experience received questionnaires, and non-academic staff did not feature in the study.
4. Following up with the questionnaires, the interviews were then conducted by approaching staff and students interested in further speaking on the study, consent was then granted for interviews and a schedule was agreed. Purposive sampling was then further utilized to seek out more interviews. Further criteria included:

5. Be 18 years of age or older: It is possible that one could be 18 years or younger at this level of education in Nigeria.
6. Government officials and members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities were also purposively selected, though interviews were more tedious to arrange as they had to gain consent from their respective directors before they could speak to the researcher.
7. Speak English: It was important that participants spoke English, even though over 250 languages are spoken within the borders of Nigeria, the medium of instruction and communication was English. This is because, it would have been expensive to pay for a translator and meanings can be lost or misinterpreted through translation. Participant's ability to speak English was determined by how well they communicated with the researcher.

### **5.3 Data Analysis**

The questionnaire data was analysed using descriptive statistics. Data from the questionnaires were tested using non-parametric tests depending on the variables being analysed. In certain instances, the normality assumptions may not be established, this usually occurs when the sample means have a skewed distribution pattern. Non-parametric tests can also be used to analyse ordinal and categorical data, though they may fail to detect a significant difference when compared with a parametric test (Nahm, 2016). The first methods utilised were the frequency tables and bar charts, this was by far the most extensive and all-encompassing quantitative analysis procedure for this study. According to Salkind 'frequency is a measure of the number of occurrences of a particular score in a given set of data'. A frequency table is a process of transforming data from its raw state into a compact series of meaning. This could be either in ascending or descending order and could be in the

form of percentages or ratios. Included within a 'frequency table are typically a column for the scores and a column showing the frequency of each score in the data set' and they were subsequently represented pictorially by the bar charts, showing a comparative breakdown of responses (Salkind, 2010). However, like any method it has its advantages and disadvantages. Little & Rubin argue that they are a good approach if one is preoccupied with confidentiality for the participants.

This is particularly interesting because frequency tables are widely used for showing the results of censuses, opinion polls and company surveys. They further maintain that the features of frequency tables allow a researcher to use more intriguing variant methods such as 'rounding, variable values, variable recoding, perturbation and post-randomisation' (Ezzati-Rice et al, 1993; Afolabi, 2021). In addition, grouped frequencies can be used to measure 'discrete variables' as well, especially when one is faced with arranging too many scores that within the data, which in certain cases may arrive in an ungrouped format. The main drawback of using frequency tables however could be the loss of detailed information for individual cases, because the emphasis is on understanding groups and the patterns enclosed within a collation of numbers. The major advantage of employing frequency tables for the data analysis is that 'data are grouped and thus easier to read'. Hence, they allow the researcher and anyone else reading the results to pick out the major narratives of the results, as one can 'immediately notice a series of characteristics of the analysed data set' which would be impossible when using other methods that stress looking at variables individually (Salkind, 2010). Another test used in the analysis is the Mann Whitney Test which is an alternative to the T-test. The Mann-Whitney test is the 'nonparametric equivalent to the independent t-test' and is considered the most appropriate analysis to compare differences that come from a

data set with two independent groups when the dependent variable is not normally distributed and ordinal (Leech, et al, 2005). Additionally, a research question like the relationship between salaries and education levels would be best understood through this approach (i.e., your dependent variable would be 'salary' and your independent variable would be 'educational level'). The test allows one to draw different conclusions from the data such as the differences in the groups, and even the median ranges of the further sub-groups. The above approaches were used for analysing the quantitative datasets of the study by juxtaposing private and public institutions.

On the qualitative front the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Through this process, the researcher became more familiar with participant voices and was allowed the opportunity to understand the discussions with a new perspective. It draws on a researcher's ability to extract depth and meaning in context. Such a system is explored over time descriptions and thematic segmentation. Thus, one of the approaches utilized was the narrative inquiry which believes that storytelling is essential to understanding people lives and that all people construct narratives as a process in constructing and reconstructing conceptual identities (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Stories are gathered from conversations within the interviews. A researcher conducts all of the interviews because of the familiarity of the topic and the ability to steer the conversation across several terrain; it is cost efficient and allows for the development of understanding with the stories behind the stories that participants discuss. Although it is possible to conduct analyses from the audio recordings themselves or from notes, it is not ideal. However, transcription can be extremely time consuming and can be costly'. Instead, the researcher relied on actively listening and note taking of the core take-away from the conversations. This

involves applying descriptive codes and condensing them into observable patterns of understanding to infuse into bits of analysis and strengthen the write up. It also allows one to attach further meaning to the results of the quantitative research. That highlights the fact that ‘when presenting the results of interview analysis, a researcher will be sure to include multiple perspectives and presenting findings in a report requiring the integration of quotes into a more traditional written format’. In doing this one must also refrain from bias in the analysis process to reinforce the reliability of the entire process to the participants.

#### **5.4 Research Justification and Constraints**

The justification for the use of mixed methods will be expanded upon. Often with studies such as these, the sample size can be an issue of concern. But to understand a significant topic significantly it is important to aim for a thorough process. The term “mixed methods” refers to an integration of quantitative and qualitative processes within a single research procedure. The basic foundations of this is that it allows for a more complete utilization of data analysis. It is maintained that “mixed methods research originated in the social sciences and has recently expanded into the health and medical sciences including fields such as nursing, family medicine, social work, mental health, pharmacy, allied health, and others” (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013) Therefore, the first reason I decided to take this route is due to the interdisciplinary nature of my thesis. It looks at neoliberalism, higher education, government processes, and a whole host of issues, and it does this across a territory with varying degrees of understanding surrounding the state. Hence, it was pertinent to further operationalise the research and instil rigour by having a quantitative element. It was also key to use narratives to explore the nuanced nature of the topic, and hence qualitative procedures were quite necessary. In the initial stages, I believed that

picking one or the other would be good but speaking with colleagues and other researchers I realised that a mixed methods approach would present a more balanced analytical framework and is a far better approach. In addition, questionnaires were utilized across the six geo-political zones because the focus of the quantitative aspect was on effective representation. I also created the questions to understand the peculiar nature of changes within the higher education system in Nigeria. For instance, “lecturers at my university are compensated favourably for the teaching and research” and “tuition fees are the most important factor when choosing universities to attend in Nigeria”. These questions were analysed using frequency tables and the mann-whitney test. A key reason why the mann-whitney test was used as opposed to the t-test is because the data gathered is an ordinal set, it is an unstructured set. Also, the semi-structured interviews were specifically decided on because of the nature of the topic being investigated, and this provided key insights from participants across all strata. The questions asked ranged from the nature of research to the process of teaching. It was important to speak to core figures in the field in order to get narrative points to further strengthen the thesis.

Furthermore, the nature of the research necessitated me to embrace the community stakeholders. The key stakeholders ranged from staff, students, management officials to government officers. It was necessary to speak with them and take their narratives seriously, but to also quantitatively assess the final outcome of their thought process. The two types of data provide validation for each other and also create a solid foundation for drawing conclusions about the intervention as both approaches were done simultaneously. According to Mertens “mixed methods studies are complex to plan and conduct. They require careful planning to describe all aspects of research and is often a challenging phase for many researchers”

(Mertens, 2009). It was this challenge that also drew me to utilize both types of analysis.

Finally, a very important reason this approach was utilised is the principle of triangulation. According to a recent study “a researcher, for instance, aims to obtain a more valid picture about a research issue by directly comparing the findings drawn from one method (qualitative or quantitative) to those obtained from another (quantitative or qualitative) for convergence and/or divergence” (Teddlé & Tashakori, 2009) Therefore, by employing this approach I could then confidently say that this is what the literature says we should be seeing, the quantitative data agrees with this, and in discussion the issue is also extensively highlighted, allowing one to further appreciate the findings. This further tightens the effectiveness of the research outcomes and allows it to become a solid foundation for future scholars to build on. Thus, data triangulation leads to a well-validated conclusion and also promotes the credibility of inferences obtained from one approach (Ventakesh et al., 2013).

That being said, I will now move on the constraints of the research process. The goal of aiming for representativeness and reliability was quite thorough and the terrain of Nigerian universities was properly captured by the sample size of this study. With all research more can be done with more funding, but the constraints could also have arisen from the nature of the data collection. For instance, a lot of the interviews were conducted in a time restricted boundary. Many people were keen to give me half an hour, but beyond that, glances at the watch and the door were the order of the day. It is possible that my persistence was a key factor in getting the interview in the first place. However, it could also have been a constraint



as sensitive topics were discussed in a tone that one could characterize as clandestine. This presented itself in circumstances where issues surrounding governance, funding and the student living conditions were discussed. It is also possible that a staff member or representative of the student body could easily have answered in other ways if we were discussing under a different dispensation. Notwithstanding, the trust in the process was evident and sufficient information was freely discussed, however I sometimes wonder about instances where they could have gone a bit further and told me more.

The timing was also an issue as it was a few weeks before the summer holidays. Industrial action had also severely disrupted the calendar in public universities, and private universities were just about to begin exams or enter a period of long vacation when the researcher arrived on the scene. This is also the period where academics double down on chasing journals on the article submission process or embark on finishing monographs. This did not severely affect the study, because a good number of students and staff were still around at the time, and I began speaking to people at the various universities in Nigeria. The financial challenges were also considerable. In addition, money is probably the most important ingredient for any research undertaking; this could range from the purchase of necessary equipment for a study, to hire people for data collection, to purchase specific statistical software or to simply reward participants with products or giveaways for having participated in the study. When there is scarcity of resources, the entire process is compromised. However, budgeting tools were quite helpful as the research carried one to all the corners of Nigeria. Another constraint was convincing participants to take part in the study during the initial stage. Also, though many students were very keen to take part, it was still a big challenge to set up the meetings, because of the

challenges of find a good location to sit and discuss, unlike staff who have air-conditioned offices. Another challenge was the state of insecurity in the country, which made travelling around a bit challenging to say the least. In addition, there were challenges around gaining access to universities and government agencies. This led to major disruptions in the planning process, especially when the researcher went to Abuja, the capital city to discuss with high-ranking members of the National Universities Commission. This chapter of the study has explained the methods and process for the study; it will now go on to next chapter which is the analysis of collected data.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6.0 Analysis of Survey Findings in Private and Public Universities

#### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, an overview of quantitative findings from the survey of students and staff in Nigerian higher education institutions is presented. Responses cover perceptions relating to the three core dimensions of higher education neoliberalisation introduced earlier in the thesis: governance structures, curriculum and pedagogy, and staff and student experiences. The responses display largely similar perceptions across public and private institutions.

While there was evidence of a fairly high acceptance for the role of market-based organisations and principles in orienting higher education provision, there remained strong support for a continued role of the government in ensuring access to higher education. In communicating these findings, the frequency tables showing categories of responses are presented, and then bar charts itemising this, and finally the Mann Whitney test which is a non-parametric measure which translates ordinal data using sum of ranks. Overall, responses indicate that, across both public and private universities, there is a perception that a balance should be maintained between government and market, rather than a more heavily state or market-based approach.

## 6.2 Private Universities in Nigeria

**Table 6.2-A: Identification Section**

	Variable	Frequency	Frequency ( %)
1	University		
	Public	467	
	Private	283	
	Total	750	100%
2	Status of Respondent		
	Student	184	65%
	Staff	99	35%
	Total	283	100%
3	Gender		
	Female	123	43%
	Male	160	57%
	Total	283	100%
4	Geo-political Zone		

North-West	14	4.9%
North-Central	46	16.3%
North-East	4	1.4%
South-South	69	24.4%
South-East	84	29.7%
South-West	66	23.3%
Total	283	100%

Table 6.2-A is a frequency distribution of respondents according to their status in the university (staff or student), gender and geo-political zone. A geo-political zone is a geographical area of relative cultural and linguistic affinity and Nigeria has six which are recognized officially. A total of 284 persons responded fully to the questionnaire, out of which 184 (65%) were students while the rest were staff. With regard to gender, more males (57%) responded to the questionnaire than females (43%). The three geo-political zones in Southern Nigeria accounted for 77% of the respondents from private universities. This is explained by the fact that there are few private universities in the Northern Nigeria and fewer still met the threshold set by the study.

**Table 6.2-B: Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statements on Governance**

Q/ N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	U	TOTAL

2	Government should take the lead in providing access to university education	F	183	69	10	17	4	283
		%	65%	24%	4%	6%	1%	100%
3	Private sector should take the lead in providing access to university education.	F	61	82	39	72	29	283
		%	22%	29%	14%	25%	10%	100%
10	The university management should be in sole control of the staff and student experience	F	104	92	29	34	24	283
		%	37%	33%	10%	12%	8%	100%
15	Lecturers at my university are compensated favourably for the teaching and research.	F	56	84	72	46	25	283
		%	20%	30%	25%	16%	9%	100%
16	The government is the most important actor in providing quality university education	F	136	75	26	32	14	283
		%	48%	27%	9%	11%	5%	100%
18	The school authorities decide the staff and student norms and experience	F	95	135	27	20	6	283
		%	34%	48%	10%	7%	2%	100%

Table 6.2-B presents summary of responses on governance in private universities. Most of the respondents (89%) are of the view that government should take the lead in providing access to university education. They are also of the view that university management should be in sole control of the staff and student experience. However, many of the respondents (51%) did not agree that private sector should take the lead in providing access to university education; similarly, half of the respondents did not agree that lecturers in their universities are compensated favourably.

**Table 6.2-C: Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statements on Pedagogy**

Q/ N	Questionnaire Item		SA	A	D	SD	U	TOTAL
5	Government takes steps to improve the curriculum of the universities.	F	101	102	38	36	6	283
		%	36%	36%	13%	13%	2%	100%
7	The government to support research and conferences at universities.	F	175	88	11	9	0	283
		%	62%	31%	4%	3%	0%	100%
8	The private sector to support research and conferences at universities.	F	106	115	23	28	11	283
		%	37%	41%	8%	10%	4%	100%
13	My university collaborates with the private sector to improve teaching methods	F	56	89	62	60	16	283
		%	20%	31%	22%	21%	6%	100%
17.	The government provides adequate grants, scholarships and quotas to students and staff of universities	F	42	59	56	73	53	283
		%	15%	21%	20%	26%	19%	100%
19	My university prepares students adequately for the Nigerian workforce	F	71	121	29	42	20	283
		%	25%	43%	10%	15%	7%	100%

Table 6.2C shows that most of the respondents (93%) agree that government should support research and conferences at the universities and that government takes steps to improve the curriculum of the universities. However, a greater proportion of respondents (65%) do not believe that government provides adequate grants and scholarships to students and staff of universities while only 51% agreed that their

universities collaborate with the private sector to improve teaching methods. The respondents (78%) support the view that private sector should support research and conferences at universities and many of them (68%) agree that their universities prepare students adequately for the Nigerian workforce.

**Table 6.2-D: Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statements on University Experience**

Q/ N	Questionnaire Item		SA	A	D	SD	U	TOTAL
4	Tuition fees are the most important factor when choosing universities to attend in Nigeria.	F	116	87	15	46	19	283
		%	41%	31%	5%	16%	7%	100%
6	The university provides quality accommodation for students.	F	74	103	24	49	33	283
		%	26%	36%	8%	17%	12%	100%
9.	When it comes to the quality of the university experience, students generally get what they pay for.	F	48	74	40	77	44	283
		%	17%	26%	14%	27%	16%	100%
11	Private businesses operating within my university made my experience much better	F	72	116	47	33	15	283
		%	25%	41%	17%	12%	5%	100%
14	University experience prepares me adequately for engagement with the private sector.	F	82	119	49	23	10	283
		%	29%	42%	17%	8%	4%	100%



Table 6.2-D revealed that most of the respondents (72%) believe that tuition fees are the most important factor when choosing university to attend in Nigeria and that their universities provide quality accommodation for students. They claimed that university experience prepares them adequately for the private sector and that private businesses operating within the universities contributed to the effort. However, more respondents (57%) do not believe that students generally get what they pay for regarding university experience.

### 6.3 Public Universities in Nigeria

**Table 6.3-A: Identification Section**

	Variable	Frequency	Frequency ( %)
1	University		
	Public	467	62.3%
	Private	283	37.7%
	Total	750	100%
2	Status of Respondent		
	Student	278	59.5%
	Staff	189	40.5%
	Total	467	100%
3	Gender		
	Female	243	52.0%
	Male	224	48.0%

	Total	467	100%
4	Geo-political Zone		
	North-West	33	7.1%
	North-Central	54	11.6%
	North-East	10	2.1%
	South-South	107	22.9%
	South-East	161	34.5%
	South-West	102	21.8%
	Total	467	100%

Table 6.3-A shows that a total of 467 persons responded fully to the questionnaire, out of which, 59.5% were students, while the rest were staff. With regard to gender, more females (52%) responded to the questionnaire than males (48%). The three geo-political zones in Southern Nigeria accounted for 79% of the respondents from private universities. This is explained by the fact that although there are many public universities in the Northern Nigeria, a few met the threshold set by the study because most of them were established few years ago to enhance the educational advancement of Northern Nigeria.

**Table 6.3-B: Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statements on Governance**

Q/ N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	U	TOTAL
2	Government should take the lead in	F 332	100	8	21	6	467

	providing access to university education	%	71%	21%	2%	4%	1%	100%
3	Private sector should take the lead in providing access to university education.	F	58	110	78	160	61	467
		%	12%	24%	17%	34%	13%	100%
10	The university management should be in sole control of the staff and student experience	F	132	186	52	71	26	467
		%	28%	40%	11%	15%	6%	100%
15	Lecturers at my university are compensated favourably for the teaching and research.	F	56	120	128	108	55	467
		%	12%	26%	27%	23%	12%	100%
16	The government is the most important actor in providing quality university education	F	192	149	51	49	26	467
		%	41%	32%	11%	10%	6%	100%
18	The school authorities decide the staff and student norms and experience	F	104	227	70	49	17	467
		%	22%	49%	15%	10%	4%	100%

Table 6.3-B shows that most of the respondents (92%) agree that government should take the lead in providing access to university education. However, a proportion of respondents (73%) believe that the government is the most important actor in providing quality university education. The respondents (68%) support the view that the university management should be in sole control of the staff and student experience, with (71%) agreeing that the school authorities should decide the student norms and experiences

**Table 6.3-C: Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statements on Pedagogy**

Q/ N	Questionnaire Item	F	SA	A	D	SD	U	TOTAL
5	Government takes steps to improve the curriculum of the universities.		163	168	59	50	27	467
		%	35%	36%	13%	11%	6%	100%
7	The government to support research and conferences at universities.		275	135	33	16	8	467
		%	59%	29%	7%	3%	2%	100%
8	The private sector to support research and conferences at universities.		146	187	74	41	19	467
		%	31%	40%	16%	9%	4%	100%
13	My university collaborates with the private sector to improve teaching methods		63	123	129	103	49	467
		%	13%	26%	28%	22%	10%	100%
17.	The government provides adequate grants, scholarships and quotas to students and staff of universities		59	94	80	146	88	467
		%	13%	20%	17%	31%	19%	100%
19	My university prepares students adequately for the Nigerian workforce		75	191	71	84	46	467
		%	16%	41%	15%	18%	10%	100%

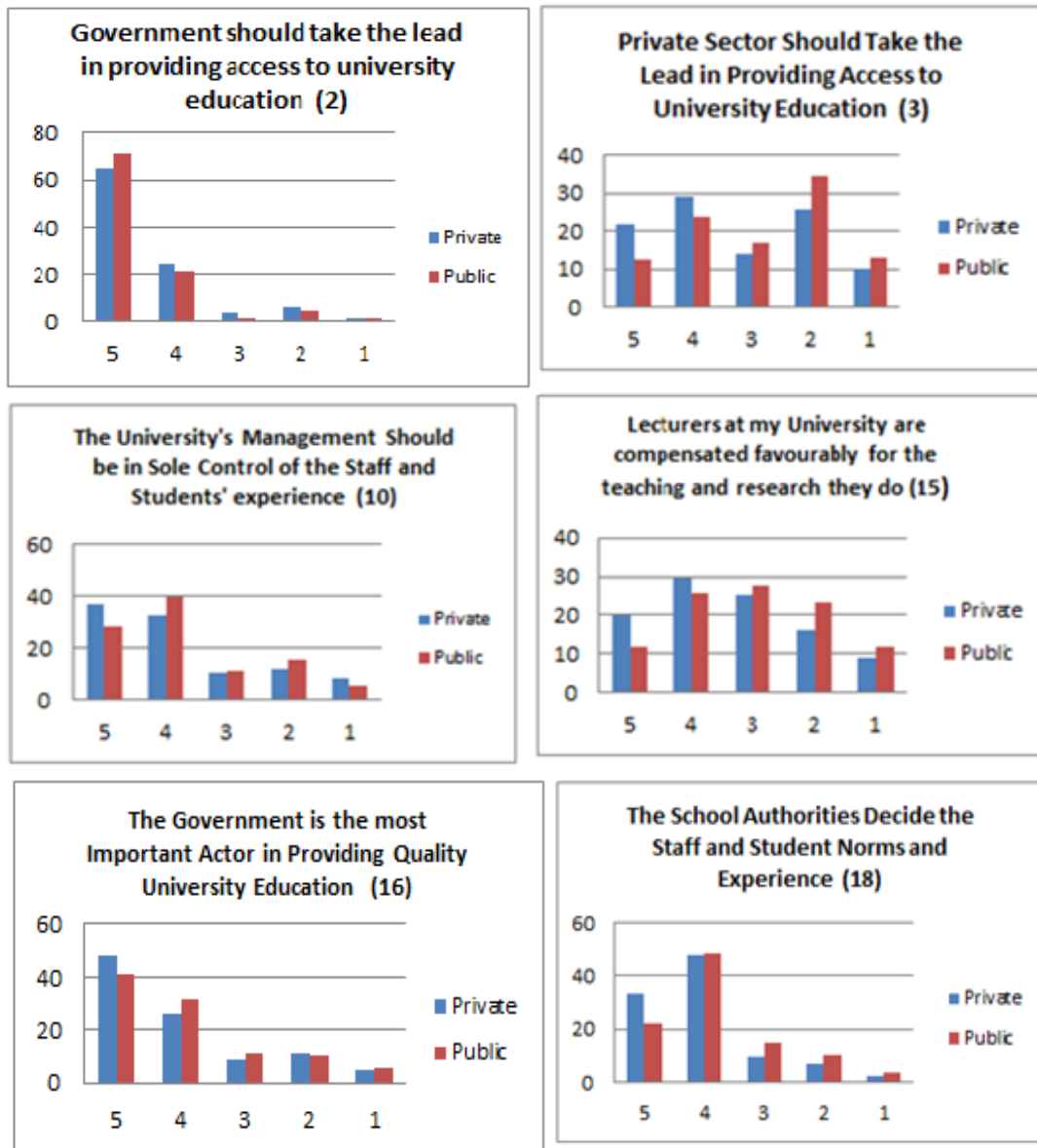
Table 6.3-C shows that most of the respondents (71%) agree that government should take the necessary steps to improve the curriculum of the universities. However, a proportion of respondents (39%) believe that their university collaborates with the private sector to improve teaching methods. The respondents (88%) support the view that the government should support research and conferences, with just (33%) agreeing that the school provide adequate grants, scholarships and quotas to students and staff of universities.

**Table 6.3-D: Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statements on University Experience**

Q/N	Questionnaire Item		SA	A	D	SD	U	TOTAL
4	Tuition fees are the most important factor when choosing universities to attend in Nigeria.	F	142	153	35	101	36	467
		%	30%	33%	7%	22%	8%	100%
6	The university provides quality accommodation for students.	F	83	76	60	138	110	467
		%	18%	16%	13%	30%	24%	100%
9.	When it comes to the quality of the university experience, students generally get what they pay for.	F	36	101	68	156	106	467
		%	8%	22%	15%	33%	23%	100%
11	Private businesses operating within my university made my experience much better	F	76	193	92	76	30	467
		%	16%	41%	20%	16%	6%	100%
14	University experience prepares me adequately for engagement with the private sector.	F	109	195	68	62	33	467
		%	23%	42%	15%	13%	7%	100%

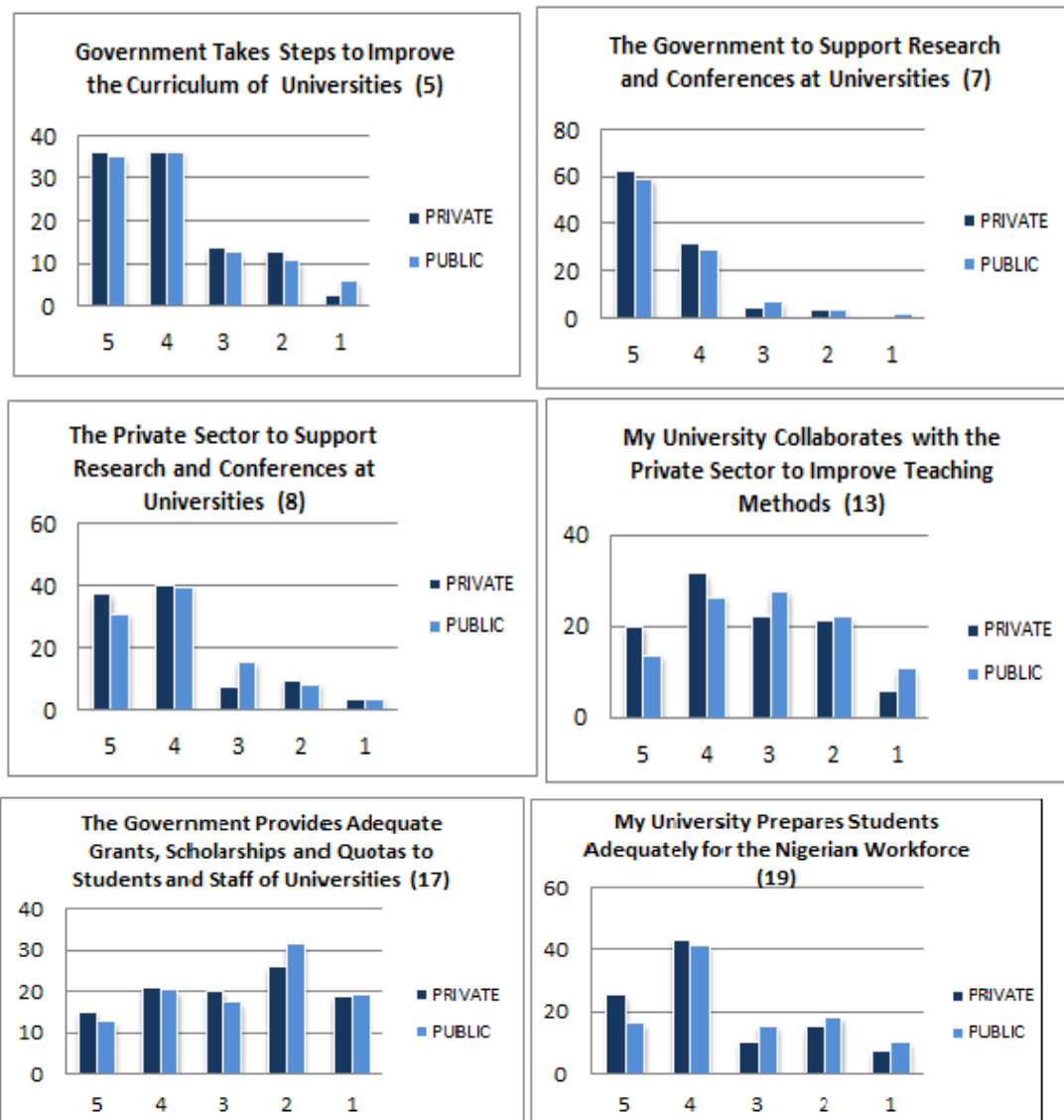
Table 6.3-D shows that most of the respondents (61%) agree that tuition fees are the most important factor when choosing universities to attend in Nigeria. However, a proportion of respondents (65%) believe that their university prepares them for engagement with the private sector. The respondents (57%) support the view that private businesses operating within their university made their experience much better, with just (34%) agreeing that the university provides quality accommodation for students.

## 6.4 Bar Charts Showing Comparison of Responses of Private and Public Universities



**Figure 1: Frequencies of Responses on Governance: A Comparison of Private and Public Universities**

In the Bar Chart Above. The Blue Colour Represents the Private While the Red Colour Represents the Public Universities.



**Figure 2: Frequencies of Responses on Pedagogy: A Comparison of Private and Public Universities**

In the Bar Chart Above. Deep Blue Represents the Private Universities While the Light Blue Represents the Public Universities.



**Figure 3: Frequencies of Responses on Experiences: A Comparison Private and Public Universities**

In the Bar Chart Above Green Colour Represents the Private Universities While the Yellow Colour Represents the Public Universities.



## 6.5 Comparison of Responses from Private and Public Universities

### Using Mann-Whitney Statistical Test

The objective of this comparison was to find out whether private and public universities responded similarly to each of the variables, or one was more positive than the other in responding to any of the variables. Although initial comparisons were made using bar graphs and percentage frequencies, statistical tests yield confirmatory results and therefore present more valid comparisons. Mann-Whitney U Test [alternatively called Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test] is the non-parametric test used to compare the responses of the two groups, private and public universities with to variables of Governance, Pedagogy and University Experience.

**Table 6.5-A: Comparison of Private and Public Universities Responses on Governance**

Variable	Mean Rank (Private Universities) [A]	Mean Rank (Public Universities) [B]	P-value
2. Government should take the lead in providing access to university education	359.49	385.20	0.053
3. Private sector should take the lead in providing access to university education.	413.81	352.28	0.000
10. The university management should be in sole control of the staff and student experience	389.13	367.24	0.161
15. Lecturers at my university are compensated favourably for the teaching and research.	410.95	354.02	0.000

16. The government is the most important actor in providing quality university education	389.01	367.31	0.158
18. The school authorities decide the staff and student norms and experience	413.08	352.73	0.000

**Table 6.5-B: Comparison of Private and Public Universities Responses on Pedagogy**

Variable	Median Rank (Private Universities) [A]	Median Rank (Public Universities) [B]	P-value
5. Government takes steps to improve the curriculum of the universities.	380.08	372.72	0.636
7. The government to support research and conferences at universities.	386.55	368.80	0.211
8. The private sector to support research and conferences at universities.	394.18	364.18	0.052
13. My university collaborates with the private sector to improve teaching methods	406.01	357.01	0.002
17. The government provides adequate grants, scholarships and quotas to students and staff of universities	386.18	369.03	0.281

19. My university prepares students adequately for the Nigerian workforce	408.17	355.70	0.001
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**Table 6.5-C: Comparison of Private and Public Universities Responses on University Experience**

Variable	Mean Rank (Private Universities) [A]	Mean Rank (Public Universities) [B]	P-value
4. Tuition fees are the most important factor when choosing universities to attend in Nigeria.	401.32	359.85	0.008
6. The university provides quality accommodation for students.	440.17	336.31	0.000
9. When it comes to the quality of the university experience, students generally get what they pay for.	417.79	349.87	0.000
11. Private businesses operating within my university made my experience much better	405.83	357.12	0.002
14. University experience prepares me adequately for engagement with the private sector.	399.18	361.15	0.012

Mann Whitney rank Sum test is appropriate test because the data are ordinal data and so do not qualify for parametric tests (such as t test or Z test). The test ranks observations in the pair of data being observed and tested. Mann-Whitney Rank Sum Test is a nonparametric equivalent of the t-test for comparing two populations. The study had to use nonparametric comparison test because the data collected was ordinal in form of codes (scores) assigned to responses on; Strongly Agree assigned code 5, Agree with code 4 and so on.

This type of data set does not possess the properties of a normal distribution required for a t-test. The null hypothesis is that the two-sample data came from the same population. In other words, both private and public universities had similar opinion on the variable whose responses were being tested. While the alternative hypothesis is that one group had a more favourable opinion of that variable than the other.

To accomplish the task, the test first ranks all the scores in the two groups as a single data set but notes the ranks that belong to scores in each group. Next, the sum of ranks for each group is obtained and the system uses these sums of ranks to obtain a test developed by Mann-Whitney. The test produces a P-value which the researcher utilizes to accept or reject the null hypothesis. That is the hypothesis that the two groups had a similar opinion on the variable. If the null hypothesis is rejected, the system also calculates two mean ranks which can readily show the group that had a higher mean rank and consequently a more favourable opinion.

Following from the above, questionnaire item 2 in Table 1 states that “Government should take the lead in providing access to university education” was the first to be tested on Table 1. The P-value of the test is 0.053 which is greater than 0.05. The

null hypothesis should be accepted. (The null hypothesis is to be rejected if the P-value is less than 0.05. The value 0.05 is the level of significance for the test. In Table 3, questionnaire item 6 states that “The university provides quality accommodation for students”.

The P-value of the test is 0.000 which is less than 0.05. The null hypothesis should be rejected. In rejecting the null hypothesis, what we are rejecting is the claim that private and public universities have similar view that private sector should take the lead in providing access to university education. A look at the mean rank columns shows that private universities had higher mean rank which implies that they have more favourable view of the variable than public universities. In accepting the null hypothesis, what we have accepted is that private and public universities have similar view that Government should take the lead in providing access to university education.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the quantitative understanding of the Nigerian university in the neoliberal context, by extrapolating from responses that criss-cross the private and public institutions have been presented. The chapter began by analysing the frequency of responses to questions posed in the surveys. By so doing, we drew out the percentage breakdown surrounding key questions such as government interference and the stance on tuition fees, it then itemized these using charts, and finally analysed the ordinal data using Mann Whitney test for a more incisive analysis. As related previously, this chapter observes the effects of neoliberal university is defined by the three fundamental areas: governance practices, pedagogy and staff

and student experience. These features will now guide the next chapters of the thesis, as we delve into participant views to highlight the narratives surrounding neoliberal transformation of universities in Nigeria.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### 7.0 The Neoliberal University in Nigeria: Patterns of Transformation in the Governance of Private and Public Universities

#### 7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, an overview of general scholarship on neoliberalism and specifically on the university in the neoliberal context and presented the quantitative expression of these transformations have been provided. From the review of the literature, the study established expectations regarding dynamics of change in three areas. These areas are, namely, governance structures and processes, pedagogy and curriculum content, and staff and student experiences and views, and these parameters also guided the quantitative presentations. Through this chapter, an overview of research findings on changes to governance structures and processes will be presented. As related previously, this chapter observes the effects of neoliberal university as defined by four features in the realm of governance practices. These four features are namely internal and external governance, normative structures, access to university education, and oversight functionalities, the chapter below covers each dimension in turn.

To foreshadow core findings from this review of governance structures within public and private universities and the wider higher education sector in Nigeria, the

researcher demonstrates first, in relation to culture and norms, that universities are widely characterised by an adoption of market-based norms that privilege financial considerations within governance processes. Second, in relation to universities decision-making processes, there have been significant centralisations of power. Third, the relationship between individual institutions and government is defined by formal autonomy, but with the construction of significant mechanisms for performance monitoring from government agencies. Fourth, there is a focus across the sector on ‘market power’ as the key tool for student influence. Through the sections below, I systematically review patterns of transformation in relation to these four dimensions. These sections focused on the qualitative data extracted from interactions with staff and students involved with both the private [Institution Pv(A-J)], public [Institution Pb(A-J)], government [Government Gv(A-C)] participants, and Archives [Archive Ag(A-C)]. The study makes use of inferences from the data gathering and interviews to inform and support the argument of the thesis. Overall, it showed that respondents from private institutions suggested that across this sector there has been a good level of transformation in line with neoliberal dictates. Governance norms are reported to be significantly infused by religious principles, and while we do see a centralisation of power internally, relations with government are not structured around performance monitoring structures, and there is a limited focus on student consumer power as a mechanism of influence. To public institutions, we see a broadly similar pattern being reported. This chapter engaged with the perceptions that dominates the academic discourse and slot in observations that either accede or depart completely from accepted conclusions within the preponderant literature on transformations within the neoliberal university. The

study will now go on to highlight the influence of neoliberal transformation and the senior management processes.

## **7.2 Neoliberal Transformation and Senior Management Processes**

In this section, the governance of Nigerian universities and the relationship between the governance of these institutions and the Nigerian government were explored. We view the internal and external transformation surrounding governance across both sets of institutions. This section sheds light on the selection of management, the rate race culture permeating the jostle for management positions, and the granting of autonomy to public universities. It then goes on further to elaborate on a peculiar transformation of the governance of private institutions and that is the causal links between development considerations and the granting of private university licenses by government officials.

Now on to patterns of transformation observed in the internal governance of these institutions. As a result of migration towards neoliberal principles, there has been a lot of changes to the overall governance set up of higher learning institutions in Nigeria. One of the main themes recognised while discussing with my participants in public universities is that there has been a dramatic shift in the selection of vice-chancellors, members of council and the senate, and heads of department. The principal organs responsible for the management of the university. According to a staff interviewed, 'You know before the position of vice-chancellor was by military imposition. I mean they would take the advice of senior professors, but they had their candidate and that was that' (Institution PbC, Management, ii). This is no longer the case, with certain members of staff stating that there is less government interference with the happenings occurring within Nigerian public universities. A



member of middle-level management at a public university in south-east Nigeria said ‘government has left us to our own devices. To your tent o Israel, and this has led to the rise of demagogues within the university system’ (Institution PbE, Management, i).

In recent times, one of the main issues highlighted by members of staff interviewed is the shift towards electioneering, the dominance of money in the discourse, and the atmosphere of managerial competition that has crept into the running of public universities. This was a focal point for certain people surveyed. A participant stated ‘there is now a strong politicization of the governance structure in the university system. The dynamics of local and national by participant politics has entered the system and it is not good because these are very serious challenges for the university’. He further opined that ‘we have many people at the top who are not meant to be there’ (Institution PbD, Staff, iv). The views expressed here highlight the changing tides in management selection that has entered the Nigerian academic experience. The reoccurring focus by participants on the changes is highlighted by another participant, who said ‘back in the day, you came into the university to do research and impact knowledge, now no job outside again so people come in here and they see it as just a job. They see their friends in banks rising and they want to rise too. Their friend is answering manager inside bank, and they want to answer head of department’ (Institution PbF, Staff, iii).

In public universities today such changes have elicited different reactions. I was informed by a member of staff in one public university that the electioneering to become Vice-Chancellor ‘can be very fierce’ (Institution, PbA, Staff, ii) with battle lines often drawn across tribal divides. A lecturer in a public university in the South-

South said: 'You will think to be Vice-Chancellor is one very big thing the way they go about it here' (Institution, PbD, Staff, i). Despite this, one professor counter-acted this prevailing thread of views by stating: 'I will say it is good for the university community when we choose within ourselves'. The researcher enquired about his thoughts on private universities, and he said 'some of them are good and some have done a good job at checkmating us, they have good budgets and infrastructure so they can offer a certain kind of experience but still many of them are just business centres' (Institution, PbG, Staff, iii). This staff insight suggests that essentially what we can observe is a competitive streak hitherto restricted to the private sector that has now come to dominate the management process selection in Nigerian public universities. This is in line with expectations observed from the literature. It is argued by scholars like Apple (2004) and Saunders (2007) that a new kind of competition hitherto restricted to the private sector has crept into the academic sphere. Observations from the research further substantiate this by highlighting the position within the Nigerian context, and that is that there is a fundamentally altered method of management selection in public institutions, in line with private sector practices. Hence, this section has briefly highlighted the views surrounding the transformation of governance processes surrounding the selection of leadership within Nigerian universities and the permeation of the rat race culture in university management. The next thing participants discussed widely within public universities is the issue of autonomy, and in the next paragraph the highlights participant voices surrounding this issue will be presented, and this will no doubt bring to the fore the transformation surrounding external governance issues (Nongo & Ikyanyon, 2012).

Autonomy from the Federal Government is an issue that was widely discussed by staff and management participants. When the question of governance was

introduced to the discourse, a good number of public university staff touched on it. A member of staff said: ‘the government does not really care about anything, so they don’t make efforts to make a change in the universities. It is good that they have given us some leeway to manage ourselves’ (Institution Pbl, Staff, ii). Another member of staff who is a senior lecturer within a science faculty argued that the grants and funding accruing to them has dried up over time. This insight generated from a participant interview illustrates the relationship between funding processes and research output across public universities. [Hence] ‘the fact that university management can raise some money to take care of things like lab materials is a plus. Just imagine if like before they could not generate money and had to wait for government help to do little things’ (Institution PbA, Staff, i). Though some remain unperturbed about these nascent developments, the researcher requested a member of staff in the education department of a public university in the southwest of Nigeria about her views on autonomy, she said: ‘there have been no changes at all. Okay, we can now put our people in positions of authority but there have been no changes within the university, instead it has gone down’ (Institution PbG, Staff, i). The attitude towards autonomy and the positions of staff and management have evolved all across campuses in Nigeria. One major observation was that participants stopped shy of fully including the current administration of their university within the critiques they offered, preferring to speak in broad terms. The issue of autonomy has been of great concern for members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities and has been at the forefront of many collisions with the government. The researcher requested the views of students about this occurrence too, but they seemed to have no concrete opinions on the subject of autonomy and the evolving managerial practices within their respective universities. Most staff interviewed held

favourable views on the day-to-day affairs of their university, believing they are managed by individuals existing within the university, who understand the peculiar characteristics involved in managing a university. This is a big contrast with what was obtainable in the past, when the military government had a greater say in who emerged as leaders of these academic institutions. According to Edith Olorunsola, a central issue within the Nigerian context is ‘the ability to decide on overall student number and decide admission criteria as fundamental aspects of institutional autonomy. The number of study places has great implication on [public] universities that are always under the pressure of the politicians’ (Olorunsola, 2018: 2-6). Therefore, a central influence of the changing times is the relaxation of policies and a certain *laissez-faire* attitude expressed by the Nigerian government towards the management of public universities.

In private universities however, their relationship with government institutions has gone beyond just accepting their license and conducting affairs as a university. One can argue that it has become a sought of symbiotic economic relationship. In Nigeria today, private universities have become a huge source of jobs and taxable revenue for the government, at all levels of political administration. The level of government direction imposed on their activities is absent in many quarters, and this has been repeatedly challenged by many sections of people within academia and the wider Nigerian society. One argument many citizens hold is that the transformation of higher education has led to a growing under-appreciation of the role of elected officials. In many parts of Nigeria today, the universities have contributed in no small measure to the level of infrastructure and overall economic development. They are involved in maintaining roads, attracting stable electricity, and putting in place potable water for the communities they inhabit. Majority of these universities are

built in areas where land is very affordable, which means a huge chunk of them occupy huge tracts of land in the sparsely inhabited and economically excluded rural areas (Udoekanem et al, 2014).

These places are generally viewed as being omitted from the national dividends of democracy. I argue that the proliferation of licenses to private universities is an effort by the government to extricate itself from its responsibilities of providing social amenities in certain regions. Prior to the wide establishment of private universities in recent times, this was not an option they had, and this is an observable phenomenon demonstrating changes in governance procedures at the national level, which in turn directly influences the governance process of these private universities, as they are seen as the harbingers of development in many rural areas, and act accordingly (Abiodun-Oyebanji, O., 2011). Hence, the siting of a university in such areas is usually championed by governors, members of the national assembly, chiefs, and traditional rulers because of the economic benefits, and this then reduces the government burden within the area. This is because certain responsibilities are removed from the remit of government, with elected officials maintaining the position that the university will automatically bring 'development' to the area. Therefore, the emergence of private universities is arguably a very favourable proposition for those within regional and local governments, and in certain cases there is extensive lobbying to attract private universities, and this is a fundamental peculiar development within the Nigerian case that shows a transformation of external governance processes surrounding the private universities.

Notwithstanding, different students attending different private universities were in agreement over this, a student said: 'If not for this university I don't know what majority of the people here will be doing because it's because students are here that people here are even surviving' (Institution PvF, Student, iv) and a student from a private university said 'I wouldn't say the university is the only reason activities came to this area, but I'm sure it's because we're here that all this okada and keke drivers are plenty' (Institution PvC, Student, ii). This insights ranged across interviews and survey data and they showcase that the role of universities as forerunners of economic possibilities around the entire country, and the transformational role of the university itself within the Nigerian socio-political context. This is not a view that was expressed in the literature, this is one that has been birthed by this research and as such is a notable contribution to the literature on the neoliberal university, as it could further throw up interesting arenas of inquiry surrounding the peculiar relationship between governments, university management principles, and nation states, not just on the continent of Africa, but globally.

However, the question remains. Why is such a thing a possibility in Nigeria, what creates such a dynamic between the university 'as a factory' and 'government using it to bring development to the area'. Arguably, this is because the population of that location is ushered into a marginally higher standard of living because of increased economic activity by students and staff. This ranges from food, petty trading, bars, entertainment centres, to housing and transportation. This shifting attitude towards private university is viewed as a major reason for the Federal Government's sudden reversal of policy on the granting of operational licenses to private universities in the early noughties. Certain scholars believe this has promoted and indeed inflated the lack of oversight on the granting of licenses and the general governance of the

private universities, and this observed relaxation of government input. This is exemplified by the increase in private university numbers highlighted below, with a vast majority located in rural areas.

Out of forty (40) applications received in 1999 [to establish new private universities], only 3 of them met the requirements and were granted operating license. They could be referred to as the pioneer of private universities in Nigeria. They are: Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State, Babcock University, Ilisan Remo, Ogun State, and Madonna University, Okija, Anambra State. Since then till March 2009, 34 private universities have been licensed. This means within a space of 10 years, there are more private universities than either the federal or state governments owned universities (Ajadi, 2010: 15- 24).

According to Ajayi and Ekundayo (2007: 342-347), the lack of funds allocated by the national government is 'abysmally very low'. They opine that it is a deliberate effort by the government to shift the encumbrances of supporting the tertiary education sector to private enterprise. They argue that higher education is now considered and expense on the part of the government, instead of a long-term investment for state stability. They further argue that 'Nigeria is currently witnessing a period during which education and professional development at the university level are in increasing demand'.

A final year student interviewed at a public university said 'our family house is around Ota, and that place is now bustling compared to when I used to go there as a young boy, and that's because of the university, but I still think government should regulate how they charge fees, if not what is now the point of government'

(Institution PbC, student, iii). As witnessed in many countries across the world the provision of tertiary education has led to huge budgetary constraints for governments. Therefore, the role of private enterprise, individuals, and for-profit entities has been encouraged and perpetuated by governments in order to shift the burden away from the taxpayers. However, the study supports the academic stance that the onus should be on elected officials to ensure that standards are not conceded, and citizens are not subjugated and taken for granted, and in the Nigerian case this is certainly not the case anymore. The forces of the market have been left to grow tentacles across the higher education system. Precisely because the levers of government see the backlash surrounding exorbitant fees as a small price to pay for the amenities that these private universities bring to the rural areas.

However, a Vice-Chancellor of a private university that I interviewed had this to say:

Generally, I believe education is expensive. Government is subsidising it consistently, but if you look around the public universities you can see the true cost of this. The task of university education cannot be left in the hands of government alone, look at the United Kingdom where you're coming from you see how much people pay, and how much universities are willing to invest in education. That notwithstanding, we are still regulated by the government and everything we do has to meet certain standards (Institution PvJ, Management, i).

All universities in Nigeria fall under the remit of the National Universities Commission (NUC) which 'represents the voice of government' and they are solely responsible for the granting of licenses, accreditation process, and general oversight activities of universities, most especially the private universities. They are



responsible for shutting down, discrediting, and even prosecuting private universities that do not meet the set criteria. In 2019, the NUC announced that ‘we have identified degree mills in the country, and they are currently facing prosecution by the law enforcement agencies’. In a recent address, The Executive Secretary of the NUC, Professor Abubakar Adamu Rasheed, min, MFR, FNAL, while presenting the lead paper titled, ‘Regulating Private University Education Delivery in Nigeria: The Role of the National Universities Commission’ highlighted that the Commission was ‘currently processing well over 300 applications for the establishment of private universities’. He further stated that ‘the Commission would scale down its requirements on land acquisition to enable prospective proprietors with less than the required 100 hectares invest in the sector’ (NUC, 2019).

Because of instances like this, certain sections of the Nigerian populace are not happy, particularly when it comes to the NUC and their oversight functions, and this also brings into question the thorny issues of exorbitant fees. I interviewed an NUC Deputy Executive Secretary in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria and he had this to say:

Many of these people are establishing universities for the joy they have for education, and they spend so much money. This man (name redacted) spent over 1 billion naira to build that university in Ado-Ekiti, even with the fees I can tell you that he has not and may never recoup his investment, so what are we talking about’ (Institution GvA, Management, i).

Generally, what we see today in the Nigerian context is that the internal governance and external governance of the Nigerian universities have been irrevocably changed by the current system. Internally, we see a permeation of electioneering and fierce democratic battles for academic leadership across all cadres of governance. We also

see the gentle shift in narrative, as Nigerian academics across both public and private universities view their position purely as an economic action, and there is weighty comparison with the activities of their counterparts in the private sector and this has introduced the 'rat race culture' hitherto reserved for other sectors into these institutions. Externally, I argued that autonomous public universities have emerged with mixed results. In addition, we see government officials relaxing its supervision of license issuance due to the perceived economic benefits of siting universities within their constituencies for development purposes. The next section will look at the transformation of norms.

### **7.3 Norms and the Neoliberal University**

In this section, the relationship between the governance of these institutions and the normative structures is presented. This section highlights the heightened fusion of religiosity, particularly Pentecostalism in the Nigerian private universities. The research highlights that in public universities the norms surrounding governance engagement have been altered, particularly within the student union process, but overall, it still maintains a secular bent when compared to private universities. Essentially, a deep religiosity now governs normative practices of major private universities within Nigeria, a practice that would have been totally uncommon before the proliferation of these institutions across the country. The detailed discussion on these findings is presented.

One of the most prevalent revelations from my findings is the interesting nature of norms set by the governing authority within the Nigerian private universities. Majority of the successful private universities in Nigeria are run by religious organisations and this leads to emphasis placed on certain ethical standards hinged

on religious practices. Therefore, because of this, university management in certain private universities is observed to be usually strict. Efforts of management are focused on making absolutely sure that students and staff adhere to certain dress codes, hairstyles, and in certain cases curfews. In many instances, it is compulsory to attend religious functions of the university. For certain scholars that focus on the Nigerian private universities this is an important arena of neoliberal transformation. It is also an interesting influence of the power of the market in perpetuating new normative processes within modern Nigerian universities. As previously alluded, Nigeria is an interesting case, particularly when issues surrounding religion are thrown to the foreground (Ibrahim, 1989). The codes of conduct set out by a good number of private universities in Nigeria challenges the secular ethos that Nigerians are accustomed to, particularly when they are juxtaposed with many of their public university counterparts, who still operate on a secular footing. Certain students the researcher spoke to in one public university had strongly held beliefs about this. In conversation, one said 'I can't go to a university where I'll have to be wearing uniform (suit and tie) what kind of nonsense is that' while another participant said, 'the whole place is like secondary school'.

Another said: 'That place that I can't even use phone in peace because they have revos (student police)'. (Institution, PvA, Students). According to Ebenezer Obadare, the 'muscular Christianity' imbued in Nigerian universities by their governing bodies is reflective of the broader circumstances in Nigeria. It was a deliberate attempt by the private university authorities to preserve an atmosphere of sanctity which should be separated from the corruption, insouciance and mismanagement that characterized many parts of Nigeria at the time these universities were being founded, and some would argue that such is still reflective of Nigerian society till

this day. In the past, primary and secondary education had been governed in similar fashion and ‘the transition from colonial to post-colonial Nigeria in the 1950s and 1960s gave birth to a new generation of indigenous [Christian] educators (Onwuegbuchulam, 2018: 250-301). However, this incursion of evangelical beliefs into the Nigerian university set up is a nascent incidence brought about by neoliberal transformation.

For scholars ‘the growth of Pentecostalism in most African countries has been phenomenal’ and the present socio-economic realities laid a foundation for the contribution of churches to the makings of the modern Nigerian society. In Nigeria today, Pentecostal churches are at the forefront of the discourse on university formation and governance. However, this isn’t entirely new, because the impact of Christianity on the broader Nigerian education system has been around since the pre-colonial period. According to Akanbi and Beyers ‘when we note that it is with the Christian missions in Nigeria that the institution of press and journalism began in the country’. The growth of this situation has led to a broader discussion surrounding the presence of the gospel and Christian teachings as agents of transformation, renewed vigour, fluorescent growth and a regurgitation of vitality. For many older Nigerians these emergent tertiary institutions are an embodiment of these virtues and if the goal of neoliberal transformation and the preponderance of capital is necessary to bring it to fruition then so be it. Furthermore, the goal is that ‘a new generation is being instilled with Christian values, [with the aim of] strengthening the moral fibre of society (Akanbi & Beyers, 2017: 2-11).

This insight illustrates at an everyday level the relationship between normative structures and the universities, and was represented across interviews and data

gathered. It is interesting that this crucial pattern of transformation is largely absent from the dominant literature on the neoliberal university. Scholars such as Slaughter and Leslie (1997) solely focus on the changing nature of management in line with private sector principles. Their focus when management is highlighted is to look at organograms and how they have been altered in academic settings to better reflect major corporations. Issues such as the increased impact regarding religious normative penetration is not part of the dominant discourse in the literature and this is a critical contribution of this study. Hence, within the Nigerian context religiosity has been observed to be a major yardstick for the governance of institutions, and it is now entrenched itself within governance principles, all occurring due to the neoliberal environment. Enunciating further, according to Carpenter the 'last two decades have seen a brisk growth in Christian universities in sub-Saharan Africa and this phenomenon exists at the intersection of two of the most dynamic social trends on the continent: the rapid rise of Christian adherence and the volatile growth of higher education'. The rapid rise encapsulates the importance of this growth of evangelical propensity on the governance of this sector in Africa, and particularly in Nigeria. In the 1950s, there were only 41 higher education institutions and 16,500 students on the whole continent of Africa. By 2010, 5.2 million students had enrolled in 668 higher education institutions. According to Joel Carpenter:

This rapid growth has been far from smooth. Steep increases in demand coupled with cuts in state higher education funding left a gap that has been filled by the private sector, and increasingly by Churches. State and church are now educational partners, but there are some tensions inherent in this relationship (Carpenter, 2017).

Participant voices of students existing within private universities conjure up a range of views. According to one student, 'I like it here to be honest. They monitor us but at least it makes you focus on why you are here in the first place' (Institution PvF, Student, iv). Another student said 'I did not like wearing tie when I first got here. You have to wear it every day and if you don't wear you will stand out, but now I think I don't mind the look' (Institution, PvC, Student, i). Despite this, it is not all peaches and rainbows with some students expressing disgust for the adherence to certain norms. 'People stab church regularly but me I don't want any trouble I just go steady. It's really annoying because there are some kind Sundays you just want to relax but you never know who is watching so I just dress up and go' (Institution PvG, Student, iii).

Such strict enforcement of cultural practices and norms does lead to issues from time to time. In June 2019, an issue hit Nigerian general discourse, The Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC) accused Adeleke University of persecuting Muslim students in the institution. This was contained in a statement by the Director of MURIC, Professor Ishaq Akintola. It stated: 'Adeleke University is a serial violator of fundamental rights of Muslim students. This institution forces Muslim students to attend church on Sundays. It makes it mandatory for students living in the hostel to attend church every Wednesday and Saturday'. Arguing that these are 'Islamophobic practices' and they are not disclosed until the students 'have paid the exorbitant school fees and can no longer withdraw' (Daily Post, 2019; The Independent, 2019). It is essential to stress that these papers are one of those that report with a sensationalist bent and typically engage in yellow journalism.

Nevertheless, such instances occur in many private universities across Nigeria. This is brought about by the peculiar style of management adopted by certain Nigerian private universities, and it is particularly important to highlight this as a critical influence of market principles dictating the governance of the university, because religion is a huge topic in Nigerian socio-political issues, and it plays a central role in the general psyche of the Nigerian society. A student interviewed, who does not identify with the faith doctrines of their university had this to say. 'If you don't like how certain things are done, then don't apply, that's just it' (Institution PVA, student, ii) A staff interviewed at the same university also said that 'for me, students should dress a certain way when they're in the university' (Institution PVA, staff, iii). A good percentage of private universities operating within the Nigerian fourth republic are founded on strong evangelical principles, where the ethical and moral light are provided by the teachings of the Bible, but in the Nigerian context it is slightly different. This is because the dictates of the General Overseers and Head Pastors is equally elevated to a position of eminence. The men who founded and run mega churches, and subsequently acquired licenses to establish private universities usually double as chancellors or pro-chancellors of these institutions and infuse their own peculiar narrative into the governance process, in addition to their own personal interpretations of the bible. Hence, the attitude of students and staff existing within this environment is shaped by the shadows of unique religious authorities, and this is one of the biggest transformational changes observed as a result of the emergence of private universities.

In public universities the norms and practices governing daily interactions are not as dogmatic. The bureaucratic elements governing the public sector are at the fulcrum of decision-making. However, there is one area that students and crucially not the

staff were quick to point out when asked about any changes to governance practices within their universities of recent. That is the issue of student governance. According to a student ‘the student union government is not as important as they used to be. I guess the university administration did not want their trouble anymore’ (Institution, PbF, Student, i). Another student in a public university expressed his views on this by saying the ‘students union government is there for the rights of the students’ (Institution PbE, Student, v). A student however said ‘most students don’t really care about all that anymore’ (Institution PbC, Student, iv). In a university the SUG activities have been completely banned and a member of staff was quick to denigrate the activities of the SUG by saying ‘they were hooligans’ (Institution, PbH, Staff, i). This insight illustrates the nature of governance and its changing relationship between student and management across Nigerian universities. Such insights featured prominently across the interviews. This situation can be perplexing because it throws into question how a university could be properly governed without the voices of students represented. The student union governments were avenues for dialogue and discourse between management and students. Their role is the identification of student issues, and the communication of solutions to aid the dynamics surrounding campus life. This could take different forms on a university campus where different opinions and freedom of speech is the order of the day. However, the few members of staff I engaged with were keen to point out that this opportunity was misused by their respective unions. A member of staff at a prominent public university said ‘they turned into something else. There was a particular episode where they led a protest that led to a huge destruction of university property and that was when we banned them here’ (Institution PbF, Staff,



ii). Another member of staff stressed that ‘they became a haven for illegal activities on campus’ (Institution, PbB, Staff, iii).

Student union governance is a very critical area that has been completely transformed in recent times. In certain quarters, it is argued that the perception and activities of the student unions was not instant but changed over time, especially with the emergence of market-oriented policies. Thus, one can effectively argue that the answers could lie in the gradual changes that have eaten deep into the public institutions during the present neoliberal era. It is maintained by Sylvester Odion-Akhaine that many student unions adhered to Marxist-Leninist ideals and this was in conflict with the new state sanctioned processes being rolled out for the governance of universities, during the post structural adjustment era. He writes that ‘the student body propagated and spread the ideology of Marxism on Nigerian campuses’ (Odion-Akhaine, 2009: 427-433). It is contended that this was in contrast with what was perceived as better management principles. According to Attahiru Jega, since the Structural Adjustment era:

Unions and their leaders found themselves forced by circumstances to make demands for urgent resolution of conditions which make working and living in the tertiary institutions very difficult indeed. No matter how sympathetic and committed an administrator of a tertiary institution may be to dialogue, he/she is profoundly constrained by the economic circumstances in dealing with these issues. Hence he/she takes the heat of the incessant demands and pressures, and the ensuing conflicts. But these demands should not, on the other hand, be perceived as unreasonable or irrational. They are rooted in

the nature and character of the economic situation that has engulfed Nigeria (Jega, 1996: 61-63).

Examples of these conflicts have played itself out in numerous public universities across Nigeria. An instance occurred at the Obafemi Awolowo University, where the introduction of an acceptance levy led to mass protests that were very quickly suppressed by university authorities. Following this 'more than twenty union activists were rusticated at the slightest provocation; three union leaders including the president were rounded up and detained without any sensible allegation, for between four to seven months, while the administration sponsored divide-and-rule tactics to decimate the ranks of progressive student activists' (Ibrahim, 2014). There have been attempts to revive the unions by different interests and factions. This usually occurs after some infractions such as hikes in bus fares and course materials. However, this is merely a symptom of the gradual issues that have come to dominate the governance process within public universities in Nigeria. Student unions are viewed as vestiges of a past where profit was not part of the vocabulary of university management (Arikewuyo, 2009). Why is this important? I argue that because of reduced budgetary allocations and heightened fees to increase revenue generation the public universities have evolved new normative procedures for governing and interacting with student views and by so doing they have side-lined views they are not comfortable confronting. Hence, these student unions have been systematically eroded across universities in Nigeria, and this is a key pattern of transformation not observed within the existing literature.

In this section I have engaged with the discussion on norms in Nigerian universities. In conclusion, this section touched on the role of religiosity and Pentecostalism in

private universities, the cultural practices of students in private universities such as a ban on certain dress codes, and the suppression of student governance that has come to characterize the normative structure in public universities. The section highlighted the role of market supremacy in forming, guiding, and imposing a distinct behavioural governance process within Nigerian universities today. The next section will look at the issue of university access and how it has been gradually altered.

#### **7.4 Neoliberal Transformation and Access to University Education**

In this section, the governance of Nigerian universities and the relationship between the governance of these institutions and access for prospective and resident students is presented. This section highlights the introduction of arbitrary exams and fees within public universities, while in private universities it explores the fee structure imposed by management. It also sheds light on the role of technology and its role in creating disparities between private and public institutions. It further highlights how it has led to the introduction of new policies that are sustained by the administrative heads, largely due to budget constraints. In the past such things would not have taken place but guided by an introduction of market principles, they have come to transform the governance of these institutions.

A member of staff described ‘increase in number of students given admission’ as the biggest change to the Nigerian university experience since he began lecturing in 1998 (Institution, PbB, Staff, iii). In Nigeria today, access to university education is a straining and tedious process for youth in the twilight of secondary school, and for those who have long finished secondary school and still yearn for university admission. The major exam for entry into any university in Nigeria is the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Exam (UTME), colloquially referred to as JAMB which is an

acronym for the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board, the body responsible for administering the exams. Passing this exam is the sole criteria for getting into universities and this is for both private and public. The admissions process for certain courses is usually very high, with students needing to score over 280 out of 400 to get into certain choice disciplines. However, for private universities many critics argue that the process is a bit relaxed compared to their public counterparts. It is argued that in public universities, entrance exam determines access. In private universities, combination of entrance exam and ability to pay determines access, a very crucial and observable difference. Moreover, requirements to admit heavy fee-payers acts as a downward pressure on entrance criteria.

Such criticisms have become one of the principal arguments against the presence and formation of Nigerian private universities. This is not necessarily the case as these universities do have a certain criterion for admissions and they do maintain certain standards. On the other hand, the public universities have altered access by introducing extra exams levied solely for the purpose of making more money. It is important to state that both private and public engage in these practices due to the harsh economic climate and the dwindling budgetary allocations from government. Nevertheless, this sort of arbitrary fees imposition is highlighted by Dugan (2004) as a necessary precondition for pinpointing neoliberal transformation, and this study identifies this in the Nigerian context (Chuta, 1998)

To highlight this, a conversation the researcher had with a student who had applied to study engineering at a Nigerian public university but did not meet the cut off mark is presented. With the same score he applied to a private university and instantly got in, he said 'I know if I wasn't here now I wouldn't be studying

engineering'. He further probed and asked him if he acknowledged his privilege, and he agreed. 'I thank God my parents could afford to send me here, if not I would have written JAMB again, in fact my dad doesn't really like private universities, but my mum was the one that insisted I shouldn't stay at home again for one year' (Institution PvF, Student, ii). This insight illustrates at an everyday level the relationship between individualisation of costs, access to higher education, and private universities. The student-generated insight was expanded upon in staff interviews. For example, a member of staff was also of the opinion that: 'let them allow these private universities because it has allowed more people to go to school, because public universities will just be carrying shoulder, but there's really nothing to show for it' though he also interjected by saying 'I also think private universities can do more to reduce the cost, I heard they do this with some of their church members that's the one owned by some of these big churches' (Institution PbD, Student, vi). For certain students the private universities are actually very ideal, with one student stating: 'I wrote JAMB like three times. I put this university as first and second choice. Thank God I'm here now but it would have made sense if I just went straight to one private university, I'll be in year three by now' (Institution, Pbl, Student, ii).

According to some scholars, the presence of private universities harnessing the forces of the market is a step in the right direction for fostering fairness in Nigeria. They maintain that for so long the Nigerian Federal government has maintained the quota system which has disenfranchised people from certain regions and ethnicities. The measures put in place were arguably put in place for a more harmonious union, but they argue that they have been unfair, unjust, inequitable and have actually led to a more divisive state of affairs when access to university education is concerned.

The Nigerian Federal Character Commission allocates entry spaces in public universities based on certain criteria. 'It allotted 45% merit for the student's enrolment, 20% for less developed educated, 25% for catchment areas and 10% for prudence of vice-chancellor'. The recommendation of this body is actually enshrined by law. It is further argued that the 'quota system is highly disadvantageous in the case that if a student from north who even scored less would get the enrolment instead of the student of south who even scored 300 in JAMB'. Thus, universities are hindering the brightest students because of the quota system and it could also have a huge impact on university efficiency (Akpan & Undie, 2007: 75-83).

Therefore, this leads us conveniently to highlight the major issue, which is the cost of Post-UTME. This exam was previously non-existent and was introduced by public universities at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to streamline the number of students it could admit. Inadvertently it became a source of revenue and has remained so ever since. This area of inquiry was brought up by two members of staff I encountered. One of the participants said 'It is important that we test them'. Another colleague of his said 'this university cannot accept everybody that met the cut-off. It is not possible' (Institution PbG, Staff). A student described the experience of waiting for his results after post-UTME 'I was just praying because I did well in the exam, but I heard they are going to divide this and subtract that to get your final score' (Institution Pbl, Student, i).

The debates around the exam have led to house hearings and have been used as political capital by different sections of the polity. One Federal member of the House of Representatives Rep. Ademorin Kuye sought the house to mandate a committee on tertiary education and services to call for a joint sit down with the National

Universities Commission, The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board and the Ministry of Education to develop a central post-UTME examination. The lawmaker noted that ‘payment of fees for the screening exercise conducted by the institutions was not backed by any law and the proceeds therefore are not accounted for’. He further argued that these exams occur ‘after payments and undergoing rigorous registration and examination processes. The said higher institutions subject students to another internal examination/test called post-UTME on payment of yet another fee without any consideration for indigent parents and students’ (Median, 2019).

Despite this, the debates on this have polarised members of the political and academic community. According to Professor James Williams of the Department of Sociology at the University of Jos ‘this screening test gives each tertiary institution ample occasion to evaluate the kind of students required by specific programmes approved by each university senate, the highest academic body which regulates all programmes’. This is further supported by arguments that the government should be advised to increase levels of funding before curtailing available avenues for revenue generation. There has of course been pushback by the governance cadre of Nigerian universities. The committee of public university Vice-Chancellors also points to clauses in the law that support their sustenance. In section C (ii) states that ‘the guidelines have been approved for each tertiary institution to fine-tune the admission process as it deems fit within the guidelines set up by JAMB’ (Fatunde, 2019). Therefore, the post-UTME debates and the emphasis on revenue generation is one that has come to define the access to university education in recent time.

One can opine that the carrying capacity of the Nigerian public universities is woefully inadequate. As the population of Nigeria has increased, the investment in

public universities to meet and sustain demand has depreciated. Despite this, a lot of public universities still admit a lot of students, though they turn down more than they could possibly admit in a year. For instance, speaking with a member of faculty at a public university, the researcher was informed that in one faculty over 70,000 candidates passed the university admission test but only 6000 got admission because of the carrying ability, 'where are we going to put all of them?' she said (Institution PbC, Staff, iv). This has led to private universities filling this gap, and charging fees widely viewed as too mighty for the average Nigerian. To highlight this:

The American University of Nigeria (AUN), in Yola, founded in 2003 leads the pack of Nigeria's most expensive private universities. Engineering students pay ₦2.70 million each academic year and other students pay ₦1.90 million per session, AUN is followed by Baze University, Abuja, founded in 2011, where Law students pay ₦2.50 million per session while those in the faculty of management & social sciences pay ₦2.25 million. At the bottom of the pile in prices is the Adeleke University, in Ede, Osun State which charges students an average of ₦700, 000 per session. The school was founded in 2011, and finally the Babcock University, at Ilishan Remo in Ogun State bills on average of ₦568, 807 for per session. It was founded in 1999, another old private university in Nigeria (Business Day, 2019).

Why is this important and how does this further highlight evidence of neoliberal transformation? Nigeria's growing middle-class parents have propelled the rise of these institutions and with the costs of foreign education increasing many are keen for their children and wards to study at home in Nigeria. According to a student interviewed, another reason for their popularity with parents is the supposed



‘discipline’ that is instilled in private universities by the governance framework. A student interviewed said ‘I really wanted to go abroad but my parents believed I should stay here, and they liked the fact that these schools were strict, they said I’ll go abroad and spoil’ (Institution Pvd, Student, i). Notwithstanding, the high cost of these universities is the source of ferocious opposition and this is one of the fundamental reasons why parents, large sections of the public, and individuals existing in both private and public universities abhor the emergence of private universities who charge exorbitant fees and the introduction of even more arbitrary fees in the public universities.

Hence, there is a huge moral and academic stand for and against the wanton use of market forces to satisfy the peculiar problem of access to university education in Nigeria. For certain scholars it challenges the levelling concept of university education, and it raises fears for what a future Nigerian society may look like. The major reason for this argument against is the general level of poverty in the land, ‘with 70.2% of Nigerians living under a dollar a day, which means a good many people can’t afford to pay for their children’s education’ (Mahabub, 2014: 2-5). Therefore, private educational institutions are not accessible to the majority of Nigerians, and only individuals of high socio-economic backgrounds can attend such universities, while for others it frees the people from the chokehold of government ineptitude and this is propelled by a shifting governance stance across both the private and public universities.

In conclusion, I have outlined, using participant voices and existing debates on the influence of neoliberal transformation on the Nigerian experience by exploring the introduction of Post-UTME exams intended to increase the coffers of public

universities. I have also highlighted the exorbitant fees of private universities and expatiated on the stratification it introduces into Nigeria, further exacerbating an already deeply unequal society. Hence, as a result of this section can grasp the impact on neoliberal transformation on access to university education in Nigeria.

### **7.5 Oversight Functions and Neoliberal Transformation**

In this section, the governance of Nigerian universities and the relationship between the governance of these institutions and oversight is explored. This section highlights the incursion of questionable private sector involvement from the Nigerian political class, the corporatisation of the Nigerian university, and the inclusion of certain courses in the curriculum as a result of profit motives and concludes by exploring the revamped role of government and management in private and public institutions. In addition, this section touches on the deliberate lack of oversight surrounding the proliferation of business practices within Nigerian universities, from the precarious funding structure of private universities to the propagation of new enterprises by public universities.

It is established that many of the top Nigerian private universities are owned by individuals with strong political leanings, with American University of Nigeria owned by a former Nigerian Vice-President, Bells University of Technology owned by a former Nigerian President, and a host of others owned by businessmen with strong alliances with the ruling party, retired generals, and much more owned by pastors of mega religious organisations (Akujieze, 2019: 240-279). For certain people, this brings into focus the policy of the government towards the public universities in the Nigerian fourth republic. It is argued that they are starved of funds so private universities can blossom and become proper investment vehicles for maintaining and

increasing wealth for a select favoured few persists. Speaking with a student at a private university, he said: 'it doesn't really concern me who owns the university, as long as I'll do my four years and go'. I asked two other students in the same institution and their responses were similar to this one (Institution PvJ, Student, iii). An examination of private universities in Nigeria revealed that 'around 50% are wholly-owned by a variety of interests ranging from business partnerships to private individuals' (Ahunanya & Osakwe, 2012: 695-701).

According to activist and politician Femi Falana 'Have you ever heard of that anywhere in the world that the former leaders own a university? None of these guys worked outside the government. One was a customs officer, the others were soldiers; their pension cannot establish a primary school, not to talk of a university' (The Cable, 2017). Another critique highlights other important institutions in Nigeria involved in the ownership of universities. For instance, 'Admiralty University of Nigeria (ADUN) established as a public-private partnership through the joint efforts of Nigerian Navy Holdings (a subsidiary organisation of the Nigerian Navy) and Hellenic Education Partners (a private international consultancy)' (Mogaji, et al, 2019). These individuals and organisations have been funded by government finances, and for many Nigerians this brings the concept of private universities into contention; how could anyone tolerate a state of affairs which others could call a clear conflict of interest? The concept of funding and oversight challenges the dynamics of who owns the centres of knowledge production. The question brings up novel questions surrounding public resource accumulation, funding, and the lack of intervention in public utilities during the Nigerian fourth republic. However, Huber and Solt (2004) who have researched the neoliberal university in Latin America

highlight that such practices are equally prevalent in the region. Therefore, this is not one peculiar to the Nigerian region.

When I asked a member of staff what they thought about this, he said ‘many people are now just chasing money and the zest for creating something solid is no longer there (Institution, PvH, Staff, i). Another student at a private university had this to say: ‘The guy that owns this university comes here once in a while. It’s actually interesting because everybody will just be shaking’ (Institution PvC, Student, ii). A registrar at a recently started private university said ‘funding for the university comes from our owners and the more students we get the more we can re-invest into the university. For now, we are focused on building infrastructure. If you go out now, just walk around and see how everything is brand new’ (Institution PvE, Management, i) A member of staff who spoke to me afterwards said ‘what we don’t want is the tokenisation of the university. I spent almost 15 years at a state university before coming here and I can tell you that here everything is done properly’ (Institution, Pvl, Staff, iii). A vice-chancellor of a private university said ‘what we are eager to do here is to blend the town and gown, and our resources allow us to that’. The above illustrates that the running of private universities is dictated by those who provide the capital, and the goal is to keep the university afloat as a platform to provide employment for staff and the revolving door of paying students. The students and staff then become mere appendages for the generation of profit. One can argue that the days of academics creating certain departments to boost the citadels of learning are fast changing because the courses offered are dependent on the amount of funds they can attract and sustain. Therefore, certain departments such as Classics, Botany, and Psychology simply do not exist in many

Nigerian private universities. The focus is placed on setting up courses that attract paying students such as Law, Engineering and Finance.

Furthermore, the phrase blending the 'town and gown' is a phrase the researcher heard quite often amongst senior members of staff in both private and public universities. The point is the university is meant to co-exist and reflect the happenings and inner workings of the broader society. It is in this vein that public universities began to find newer methods for improving their bottom-line. This has led to public universities, particularly those in the south-west of Nigeria, taking their place as purveyors of industry, manufacturing, and general service provision. They have gradually shifted away from just the printing presses universities are famous for and incorporated businesses like water factories and bakeries. Speaking with three members of staff at a prominent public university brought up some interesting discussions. One lecturer said: 'The purpose of this university is learning and research and that should be the primary focus and it is our primary focus. But funding has become a constant issue and anything the university can do to encourage revenue generation should be welcomed'. Another member of staff said 'they make it affordable for staff and students on campus; I think it is a good development'. A lecturer who was keen to stress that he is also a pastor said 'Everything is working in accordance. The teachers are still lecturing, and it is a separate arm. In fact, it is handled by professionals and not members of staff' (Institution PbF, Staff, ii). However, this further highlights the reduced oversight provided by the overarching bodies in charge of superintending the public universities. Basically, they know the universities are not supposed to engage in such economic activities, but they also know they need this to maintain their budget or risk imploding, hence it is a double-edged sword conundrum for the government officials.

A member of management in charge of academic planning at a renowned public university had this to say:

The funds provided by the Federal Government for the running of this university are grossly inadequate. For instance, last year we received N75m meanwhile just the bill for electricity within campus is around N70m. Therefore, there is a yearning gap for university management to fill. We have to look internally on what we can do to raise money. The suggestion of pure water actually came from the Chemistry department. They used to do water treatment for factories in the city and they recommended it because it was easy to start. In all, I will say it was a child of necessity (Institution PbC, Management, ii).

A lecturer who stressed anonymity said ‘the university should focus on making money in the area of research like they do around the world. Instead of dabbling into such things they can study the different ways and means they are produced and offer new ways of thinking on how they can be produced in a safer and cheaper way. They can then make patents and franchises that could be sold to those that can develop it, like the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SME’s) across the country’ (Institution PbH, Staff, iii). In addition, one elderly professor I spoke to that was quick to begin his answers with ‘in those days’ argued that he disagreed with the new route the university is taking. Stating that the situation has ‘taken a life of its own’ and today the main thing occupying the minds of university management is the generation of internal revenue, and thus the oversight function provided by university management has been eroded. Though he added ‘it’s not all of them’. He went on to say ‘I remember one time the university would be packed every weekend with

wedding people that rented halls on campus. No movement anywhere. I could not even send my boy to go and buy newspaper at the gate and come back quickly because of traffic. Though they were making a lot of money from it the Vice-Chancellor at the time stopped it. He said the place was getting too rowdy and it is important to preserve the serenity of the environment' (Institution, PbA, Staff, iii).

Furthermore, the established attitude towards private university ownership as a profitable project rather than the major critical institutions they are is in direct correlation with the neoliberal transformation of university education. Such institutions are seen as businesses only, and this has already had repercussions for students on the continent. For example, there is the burgeoning phenomenon of failed private universities across certain countries in Africa: In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), there was a case of the founders of two private universities requesting the state to take over the institutions due to bankruptcy issues. Furthermore, in southern Africa, 'In Zimbabwe, the Great Zimbabwe University, sponsored by the Dutch Reformed Church, failed and the government had to step in to distribute its students among the country's public universities. Against this background, it would make sense for governments that encourage private participation in the higher education sector to be proactive in taking steps to prevent failure' (Vanguard, 2019). A similar situation occurred in Kenya where 'one private university has been ordered to close by regulators, owing to financial insolvency, while two other private universities have two years to clear all their debts or face a similar fate'. The issues ranged from being unable to allocate funds for basic operating expenses like payment of salaries, utilities and statutory contributions, including income tax and pension funds (University World News, 2019).

However, according to the Chancellor of Lead City University Ibadan ‘students still prefer public universities because of low tuition they pay in federal and state-owned institutions. Unfortunately, many do not realise that the government pays a lot as subsidies for the students to pay less in public universities’ (Babalola, 2019). In Nigeria, it is arguable that the rate of growth in university demand will not plateau, it will actually increase as population growth gallops, despite certain measures put in place by the government to highlight vocational learning and skills acquisition, the allure of a university degree will be hard to combat. Despite this, due to the enormous costs associated with this, it is guaranteed that many Nigeria students will stick to the winding circle of public universities, especially because of the prestige currently attached to public universities, and this could alter the nature of demand particularly as economic growth is not growing in tandem with population. On the other hand, the possibility that we could have more universities declaring bankruptcy is not far-fetched at all. There has been a gross reduction in oversight functions from the government and from the governance structures within Nigerian universities (Ajadi, 2010).

In conclusion, this section has highlighted the shifting role of government oversight and the precarious nature of funding attached to those in charge of governing universities today. This has led to fundamental changes for the Nigerian universities in terms of financial culpability. This has permeated the ownership of Nigerian universities, and the capacity for owners of Nigerian universities to treat them solely as enterprises, opening and possibly shutting them down like newspaper houses at the sight of financial difficulty, further underestimating the weighty nature of these institutions. In recent times, this is one of the more profound transformations that



university education has undergone in Nigeria due to the permeation of neoliberal ideology.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

Conclusively, evidence of patterns of transformation within the Nigerian contemporary university, focusing particularly on management, norms, access, and oversight have been provided. In each of these areas, we see some prioritisation of market-based mechanisms. First, in relation to management, the university is defined by a relegation of student voices and a privileging of financial considerations. Relationships between universities and government are defined by increased autonomy, with private universities in particular being granted independence under establishing licenses. It is widely acknowledged that new universities can catalyse economic development in their locale, displaying a significant market-based imperative behind their establishment. Second, in relation to universities own decision-making processes, we have a situation in which private universities in particular have incorporated significantly religious authority and cultural practices. This dynamic represents a clear example of national and cultural characteristics shaping the nature of sectoral transformation that encompasses many neoliberal tendencies. Thirdly, the introduction of ad hoc and arbitrary fees and exams to alleviate budgetary constraints at the expense of the students is viewed in both sets of institutions; an individualisation of costs in response to shortfall. Finally, the introduction of past leaders and captains of industry into the sector has led to a steady corporatisation of the concept of the university. Overall, there is a focus across the sector on 'market power' as the key tool for determining governance decisions.

In essence, it is observed that there are key similarities and differences between public and private institutions. In both sets of institutions, we see that the role of the Nigerian Universities Commission has been transformed. The introduction of increased fees either overtly or covertly is viewed in both instances, and the relegation of the introduction of new products to alleviate budget constraints either by certain facilities or the inclusion of certain courses is the order of the day. However, there are crucial differences. The fire brand religiosity is not a feature of the public institutions, there is a wider adoption of management advances from the corporate sector in the private universities, and both institutions adoption of student governance has been lopsided with public universities ironically taking a lead in the relegation of this feature of governance.

Through this chapter as a whole, the study has shown that local and national dynamics have led to significant divergence between Nigerian higher education institutions and the governance model of the university under neoliberal principles, and the manifestation of patterns of transformation in the Nigerian context is in certain cases a complete departure from expectations put forth by existing literature. In the next chapter, insights into the ways in which patterns of transformation have emerged in pedagogy practices will be provided.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### 8.0 The Neoliberal University in Nigeria: Patterns of Transformation in Pedagogy and Curriculum in Private and Public Universities

#### 8.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, an overview of general scholarship on neoliberalism and specifically on the university in the neoliberal context and presented the quantitative expression of these transformations have been provided. From my review of the literature, I established expectations regarding dynamics of change in governance. Through this chapter, findings relating to the second of these dimensions - pedagogy and curriculum content will be provided. The particular dynamics relating to satellite learning, research, teaching, and curriculum formation, which demonstrate significant elements of marketisation are highlighted.

To foreshadow core findings from this review of governance structures within public and private universities and the wider higher education sector in Nigeria, It is pertinent to demonstrate firstly, in relation to distance learning adoption that market-based norms guide students, management and faculty in structuring what is taught and how it is taught. Second, in relation to academic research, due to the lack of a variety of government funding bodies there has been a marked reduction in research output. Third, the relationship between academics and their institutions has been characterised by job insecurity and as such moonlighting has become more prevalent. Fourth, there is a focus across the sector on the sale of handouts and textbooks to supplement income and serve as a conduit for curriculum formation. Overall, the study makes use of inferences from the data gathering and interviews to inform and support the argument and respondents from private institutions agree

that corporatisation of their institutions has led to key benchmarks regarding research output and a reduction in autonomy, but a heightened infusion of technology into teaching practices. Turning to public institutions, we see a broadly similar pattern being reported. We see a heightened disregard for student teaching satisfaction, a permeation of profit motives surrounding curriculum formation and teaching, and a maintenance of prestige due to the presence of academics with advanced degrees, compared to their private counterparts. Through this chapter as a whole, I engage with the perceptions that dominate the academic discourse and slot in observations that either accede or depart completely from accepted conclusions within the preponderant literature on transformations within the neoliberal university.

This chapter adequately highlights the impact of the neoliberal ideology on the approaches to teaching and research that constitute learning in Nigerian universities today. The focus is placed on four thematic avenues, which include: distance learning, changes surrounding distant learning, research culture, commodification of academics, and the impact of teaching practices. The first explores the issues of distance learning and its role in the teaching process today, and the second is on the current research culture within Nigerian universities, then the commodified nature of the teaching process for academics, and finally the lopsided impact of technological innovations. By exploring these themes, I will be offering insight into the ways in which pedagogy has been transformed by neoliberalisation in Nigerian universities today.

## 8.2 Neoliberal Transformation and Institutional Expansion

In this section, the relationship between pedagogical practices and neoliberal transformation will be presented. This section highlights the introduction of satellite campuses and distant learning, it also explores the peculiar role of government within this space. Crucially, it shows that there are fundamental differences in distant learning adoption guided by market concerns within the private and public universities. By so doing, it highlights the avenues through which has transformed university practices in contemporary Nigeria.

According to a public university management official ‘one of the major sources of funds for this university is definitely the distance learning institute. It has been a great benefit to the university. Not just the tuition they pay but the money they pay for getting the form [to write the entrance exam]’ (Institution PbC, Management, ii). Another member of staff said ‘the traditional ways of teaching usually restricted students. Today students have more freedom on when and how they can learn’ (Institution PbA, Staff, i). Another lecturer noted that ‘the world is moving online and we are all moving in that direction’ (Institution PbF, Staff, ii). The idea that this shift is inevitable because it is the next logical step, just like the act of moving from stone to paper in the past, and the belief that it affords students greater control of their learning process is the dominant narrative I perceived from staff within public universities. However, members of staff in senior management I had discussions with were more forthright in saying that it is fuelled by financial needs, though they also held similar views with their colleagues. However, present within academic discourse is staunch opposition to it. Baez and Sanchez (2017) argue that this situation has led to a sustained prognosis of reduced satisfaction on the side of the

students and researchers. This briefly highlights that Nigeria's neoliberal pattern in this case, is in line with the dominant view in existing literature

According to certain scholars the intellectual harvest from distance learning in Nigeria is quite sub-par. It is maintained that 'there was significant difference in the academic performance of students enrolled in the on-campus versus outreach-based, part-time programmes in selected disciplines' (Adeyemi & Osunde, 2005: 1-3). They argue that such situations are inherently propagating poor teaching and learning. For instance, they point that the issue of access to Wi-Fi, the learning facilities and the admissions process are inferior to the standard learning methods. According to Nwezeh 'with the increasing popularity of distance education, focus has turned to the role of libraries in the distance learning process. The library is an important tool for individuals' intellectual development' (Nwezeh, 2010: 102-115). Nwezeh highlights the very important role of libraries in the process and the role of an academic community in enhancing teaching and learning. He concludes by pointing out that within this key area, the role of distance learning is insufficient. Hence, an influence of neoliberal transformation on the academic community and the whole process of acclimatizing as a student have been altered and influenced by a new process in which students are now simply viewed as customers of higher education. Consequently, the goal is to make sure that access to the product that is higher education is accessible.

Students however had favourable positions on distance learning in general. A student narrated his opinions on this, he stated 'I started a degree in marketing in another university because to get into accounting in this university is not easy, but I decided to stop that one and go through distance learning. It's not been easy so far, let me

tell you my brother, but at least when I finish I will get a degree from here' (Institution PbJ, Student ii). This highlights the evolved nature of student relationship with the degree process. This was noticed across participant data and interviews. For example, I asked another student about the challenges surrounding exams and he said 'we usually write our exams on campus. It happens when all the regular students are on holiday then we move into the hostels and have a few weeks with our classmates and then straight to exam' (Institution PbC, Student vi). The assumption in Nigeria is that distance learning is for older individuals, those who have been shut out of the process earlier on. Despite this, a student I spoke to said he was a teenager and praised the flexibility of the program. I asked him why he decided to go through the route of distance learning and he said 'I work at [a Fast Moving Consumer Goods Company] as a sales rep. We sell toothpaste, soaps, butter and so on. I tried the normal route of entering and it didn't work out, I'm glad there was this option because I can't write JAMB again and diploma is too expensive, only thing is I heard that they'll put distance learning on your certificate' (Institution PbD, Student, v). He also noted that he has two other colleagues who are around the same age in his finance module, though the rest are quite older. Therefore, the resolve to balance working and learning and bypass the major socialisation process that is a key part of learning within the academic community is a great consequence of the influence of neoliberal thought processes on pedagogy in modern Nigerian universities.

Interviewee responses on the topic of suggests that in Nigeria today the quest to earn money has become the dominant narrative, as there is no safety net provided by the Nigerian government. One student, though registered in the program, had her reservations by stating 'these people are just scamming us, you know how much

I pay for my younger sister that went in through JAMB, it's like N15,000 and I'm paying over N120,000 here, the same lecturers oh' (Institution, PbH, Student, i). Essentially, the public universities are aware of their prestige in Nigeria and they gainfully capitalize on this. Basically, such predatory behaviour was brought about because of the current overarching neoliberal situation. The university does not exist in a vacuum and as clamour for money became the guiding principle within Nigerian universities primarily because of state neglect, then these institutions deepened and expanded this process of teaching and learning simply to carve out novel avenues of profit. And profit has become the guiding process for the expansion of distance learning. Another outgrowth of this is the satellite campuses which the Federal Government recently banned. A recent article explaining the current Nigerian situation highlights that:

Failure of existing tertiary institutions to absorb the rising number of qualified candidates seeking admission yearly is no justification to desperately patronise operators of study centres and satellite campuses. However, government should fix problems bedevilling tertiary education sector through adequate funding of tertiary institutions and expanding their facilities to accommodate more qualified students. It is better to take care of existing institutions to enable them meet Nigeria's human capital development needs in critical sectors of national economy in-line with international best practices in order to reduce drastically, levels of unemployment and criminality (The Independent, 2019)

The directive was issued through the Inspectorate Division of the State Ministry of Higher Education and thus it became illegal for universities to operate such satellite



campuses. On the part of government, the creation of satellite campuses was seen as just another avenue to get more students to study and attain degrees from the public university and for such universities to make extra profit. It was also a way to lure prospective students to the distance learning model. However, the government directives were flouted and loopholes for their continuous operations were put forth. Eventually, they resurfaced prominently when government enforcement was relaxed, but in recent times the government has taken a more stringent view. I was told of an interesting story of a former Vice-Chancellor and foremost professor of law who ‘bypassed the senate and established a satellite campus in Korea and it is what led to his downfall’ (Institution, PbC, Management ii). The stance of the government is that it is to curb corruption, however critics argue that is guided by envy from key stakeholders in government. The argument is that they do not like that public universities earn from these ventures, and the constant dance surrounding regulation is a way to keep university administrators in check (Obasi, 2006)

In private universities however the role of distance learning is a bit muted. Speaking with a director at the Nigerian Universities Commission, he said: ‘many of them barely meet their admission quota and you know the private universities are dominated by a few big names’ (Institution GvA, Management, ii). The concept of distance learning is widespread, but it is not one of the largest avenues of teaching and learning in Nigerian public universities today. Traditional teaching methods are still favoured and therefore it is barely a feature of private universities. Public institutions have turned to distance learning as a way of monetising their reputation, whereas private universities with lower prestige have engaged less with Distance

Learning. This crucial difference between private and public institutional approach shows a peculiar unfolding of neoliberal transformation within the Nigerian context.

The moves to expand of revenue streams through distance learning and incorporation of third-party providers are observable transformations not captured in the dominant literature and is a key contribution of this thesis. I postulate that this is driven by public institutions with constrained resources and prestigious reputations that have the potential to be monetised. And this has created concerns in government over quality that are partly reflected in interview responses. This is interesting, and peculiar because one would expect the private universities to capitalise on this pathway for increasing intake and cultivating alumni, but they have not.

The reason being that they barely meet their demand threshold compared to their public counterparts and in addition the private universities have to justify their price tags through the direct offshoot of infrastructure on ground. Another reason is bureaucracy, during the course of my research I discovered that only eleven universities in the whole of Nigeria have obtained the license for distance learning, with just one being a private university. It is contended by Babatunde Ipaye that ‘most officials would prefer a more student-centered model and an open approach with a larger number of students by making access open to all. However, institutional controls and the demands of the National Universities Commission, NUC, dictated a more institution-centred [approach]’ (Ipaye, 2007: 2-6). Thus, one can appreciate that the process of neoliberalisation is uneven, and it is shaped by a complex constellation of factors in the Nigerian context, and this includes national regulation, the role of the NUC, and the peculiar characteristics of the market that

pushes public and private universities to maximise profit seeking in peculiar ways, as a result of the different Nigerian context.

I asked a member of staff at a private university his thoughts on distance learning, and he said ‘e-learning is a very welcome development for any university. I am not so sure how it’ll go but I believe it’ll be a key part of many Nigerian universities in a few years’ (Institution PvJ, Staff, ii). A member of management in another private university simply said ‘It is a step in the right direction, but for now we are still trying to grow our base. Once we have certain things in place, we will look seriously at it. I can tell you categorically that it is something the vice-chancellor is really looking at’ (Institution PvH, Management, i). While a student I spoke to highlighted that he knew about the practice in public university but highlighted that ‘I don’t think it’s going on here. At least I haven’t seen any student like that’ (Institution PvB, Student, iii). I further argue that the government’s lackadaisical attitude towards granting license for distance learning is also to preserve and prosper its own creation, the National Open University (NOUN), which generates funds for the federal government, and does not actually go on strike, a clause written into federal law. According to a recent newspaper interview with pioneer director of NOUN:

The problems confronting distance education in Nigeria are multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. But the main ones relate to lack of serious advocacy, unacceptable public perception of distance learning as a poor cousin of face-to-face formal learning system, excessively and unnecessarily expensive broadband internet connection, unstable communication networks, unreliable power situation, lack of appreciation even by academics and other academic institutions of the rigour that establishing and managing distance

learning requires and ineffectual personal discipline by students in coping with the demands of studying on their own (The Guardian, 2020).

This institution embodies the private and public model. And to be fair to it, it is much lower priced in tuition compared to the other public universities (Okon, 2018) The institution was initially founded in 1983 and closed down a year after that. In 2001, at the beginning of the Fourth Republic it was revived by President Olusegun Obasanjo. I spoke with a member of staff from a private university, and he had this to say about it, ‘the open university is an interesting place. The way they teach there is just give and take. You cannot compare it to the support that students receive here. But it is also a good thing, because like us it offers another option for people to get access to university education and that is good’ (Institution PvE, Staff, iii). In conclusion, I have explored the changing nature of learning via the distance learning route. I highlighted its impact on students and staff, particularly with issues surrounding affordability and prestige, I also highlighted issues surrounding the open university, political intrigues surrounding this topic, and its impact on the proliferation of licenses. Overall, it has touched on the overarching influence of neoliberal transformation in ushering and fostering concrete changes surrounding distance learning and satellite campuses within Nigerian academic environment.

### **8.3 Neoliberal Transformation and Academic Research**

In this section, the relationship between pedagogical practices of these institutions and neoliberal transformation will be explored. This section highlights the role of the funding bodies, the lack of support academics face, the dwindling stock of general research output. However, it also explores how this has been transformed within the private universities due to the imposition of metrics based pedagogical

practices. By so doing, it highlights the avenues through which has transformed university practices in contemporary Nigeria.

The role of research in universities is one of utmost importance. It is the bedrock of academic and institutional advancement. In Nigerian universities today however, the nature of research has been influenced by the prevailing neoliberal environment. In Nigeria, there are few bodies responsible for handing out research grants and funds. Grants are generally individual efforts on the part of the researcher. It usually involves a lot of cross border collaboration on the part of the researcher. However, in 2011 the Nigerian government established the Tertiary Education Trust Fund, abbreviated as TETFUND. It was created to supervise, manage, and disburse grants for research activities. This insight illustrates at an everyday level the relationship between the trust funds and tetfund and is wholly observed across data gathered.

One can contend that academic research feeds into curriculum development, by so doing; it then creates novel methods of understanding that further influence teaching practices. The researcher asked a high-ranking official at the National Universities Commission (NUC) his thoughts on research today, he said: 'mediocrity has taken over' (Institution GvA, Management, i). Another member of staff said 'research is now largely self-funded especially for us in the humanities. It is not like abroad where somebody can just walk up to you and say oh boy what are you working on, take this money and let me fund you, because they know the value' (Institution PbD, Staff, i). A Head of Department the researcher spoke to had this to say about the Nigerian situation and the role of the private sector in funding research, he said:

The whole concept of private sector when applied to Nigeria is nebulous. We all say we exist in a capitalist system but how can there be capitalism when

there is no capital. The whole of the private sector is infested with rent seekers, just preying on their relationship with the government. Because if you are not into proper production of wealth then what do you need infrastructure for? What do you need research for? The whole concept of research is to provide new insights to aid productivity. But these people are just leeching of the state. They are more like foreigners than Nigerians because once they get the money they fly abroad. They leave us in this concept called Nigeria, which I say, because the Nigerian state is a working question mark (Institution PbE, Management, ii).

It is widely maintained that the performance of a university system is dependent on the volume and impact of scholarly research publications. A recent publication suggested that in the Nigerian case this is quite low. Though they also cautioned that ‘the empirical evidence that are needed for objective analysis, evaluation, and ranking of universities based on this factor are often not readily and freely accessible’ (Afolabi et al, 2019: 1097-1106). In their paper, they analysed the volume of publications over a recent ten-year period and highlighted yearly percentage growth to arrive at their conclusions. In addition, a recent work by two professors of engineering argues that ‘more telling is the number of scholarly outputs undertaken with corporate organisations. With Nigeria producing just 24% of Egypt’s total, and 10% of South Africa’s, even though the nation’s economy is larger than these two countries: 60% larger than Egypt’s and 7% larger than South Africa’. They further argue that:

The quintessential requirement of a university is that its research informs its teaching. This then underpins excellent learning for its graduates, whilst

generating intellectual property and knowledge for innovation. Any nation that falls short in its applied research, we would argue, is extremely unlikely to play a leading role in developing the technologies, medicines, etc., to support and grow its economy and help ensure social mobility for its students (Mba & Elechukwu, 2019).

The findings above vociferously highlight the question why has there been a steady decline in overall research within Nigerian universities? But they draw up no concrete reasons. A member of however had this to say: ‘How can you expect people to busy themselves conducting major research when they have not finished ensuring how they will take care of themselves and their families’ (Institution PbG, Staff, i). This insight illustrates at an everyday level the relationship between individualisation of costs, access to higher education, and private universities. The student-generated insight was expanded upon in staff interviews. For example, another participant said ‘When I finish this interview with you, I’m going to Victoria island for a meeting. They want me to come and train their staff. Is it after entering that traffic that I’ll come back to start drafting paper that a lot of people don’t care about’ (Institution PbF, Staff, ii). Another had this to say ‘Everyone you’ll speak to knows the mantra of publish or perish, but everybody has to be okay first. I myself have this longitudinal study I’m looking at doing but I had to pause my proposals because it’s almost December and I’m thinking of going to the village’ (Institution PbD, Staff, ii). A senior member of staff and veteran professor gave me his views, he solemnly said: ‘The members of staff at this university are very aware of the importance of research, we emphasize that all the time, but we also acknowledge that things are not as they used to be back in the days’ (Institution PbC, Staff, iii). Arguably, in Nigerian public universities today the role of research has been largely neglected for

pecuniary concerns. Many lecturers are more preoccupied with facing and conquering the hardship that is so prevalent in Nigeria. The major concerns are taking care of themselves and their families and the importance of research to their role has been more or less hampered by a desire to chase money and be comfortable. Their views on the pertinence of research have been altered by the transformation of their society into a neoliberal enclave. One can further argue that this also places a significant strain on the quality of teaching.

Therefore, the contemporary issues that drive and inform new ways of solving government and corporate problems are not adequately researched, and do not ultimately inform curriculum development. Despite this, a member of management had favourable things to say, he said: ‘A lot of our lecturers are really involved in ground-breaking research. The other day one of our lecturers in the faculty of science was awarded a huge grant by The World Bank. Change does not happen overnight, and we are seeing that a lot of young lecturers are keen to go out there and engage, and of course this informs how they conduct themselves in class. It gives them confidence, that confidence a lecturer carries as they walk into class’ (Institution PbA, Management, iii).

However, the view that many of the lecturers are keen to engage but there are a few bad apples that do the barest minimum is the dominant narrative from the members of management that the researcher spoke to. Interestingly though, one member of management at a major public university did give the government some praise. He further said ‘One of the things established recently that has been really good is TETFUND’ (Institution PbA, Management ii). As previously stated, The Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) is a scheme established by the Federal



Government of Nigeria in 2011 to disburse, manage and monitor funds to public universities. It was touched on in discourse with two members of staff in a public university, they mentioned it, and one of them highlighted that it is available, but it is 'highly political' (Institution PbC, Staff, iii). These funds are meant to enhance the academic standing of staff and improve research quality and output, but in certain instances, when it does arrive, it is diverted by management, to build structures such as lecture halls, auditoriums, and hostels. These institutions are already much starved for funds and the development of university infrastructure usually takes precedence when such funds are released to the university by the government. Crucially however, these funds are not open to the private universities (Akporhonor, 2005)

In private universities the situation is a bit different. The research output is still low overall judging from the studies above, but in recent times there has been a gradual resurgence of private sector research output. The researcher spoke to a member of staff at a private university and he said 'the university has its targets when it comes to that' (Institution PvD, Staff, ii). Another participant said 'it is something we take very seriously' (Institution PvE, Staff, iii). In addition, a member of management of a highly regarded private university also stated 'research output is a very important metric for any university. For us, we hope to compete not just in Nigeria but globally and that is why we treat it with all seriousness. And the facilities and environment we provide are there for lecturers to take advantage and excel' (Institution PvB, Management, ii). The research culture in Nigerian private universities is dictated largely by the nature of the academic environment the researchers exist in. As has been said, these are run like corporations and like any corporation certain parameters come to the fore.

Hence, the issue of research is one that lecturers who hope to remain within the system and thrive treat quite significantly. Therefore, one can maintain that there are intriguing pecuniary reasons why there is a different culture existing within the private universities. According to researchers at the University of Calabar ‘this is often reflected in a strong relationship between research productivity and rewards such as pay rises, tenure and promotion’ (Usang et al, 2007: 103 - 108). This further suggests that the rewards of research such as promotions, pay increments and rapid promotion are more accurately reflected in private universities than in public universities where political considerations, tribal sentiments, and the general Nigerian ‘wait-your-turn’ factor is more pronounced and is the prevalent culture. Again, we see unevenness between the public and private sectors. But it earnestly highlights that research is being driven and neglected because of the overarching shift of the Nigerian state, and the nepotism and corruption that governs the state of affairs (Odeyemi, 2014)

Consequently, according to certain scholars ‘when there is a high quality of teaching staff and students, universities will attract grants, endowments and fellowships needed to promote scholarship and sustain excellence in private universities in Nigeria’ (Adetunji et al, 2017: 1-8). The situation in private universities makes it more welcoming for capital and funding initiatives. Therefore, these universities have become more favourable for institutional organisations and corporate bodies, who are fleeing the perceived rot in the public system. Notwithstanding, there are voices who disagree with this notion. A member of staff of a public university said ‘If you look at what is being taught. You will see that a lot of the key texts we use are by professors in our universities. For instance, in this department, there is a man down the hall from here who wrote a famous text on contract law, and there is no

Nigerian who studied law that has not read it' (Institution PbD, Staff, iv). This statement highlights the traditional nature of staff culture in Nigeria, and this was observed across the entire data gathered. I further argue that this particular statement by this professor is one couched in an argument that is reliant on past glory. Many older academics existing in public universities speak with a strong sense of nostalgia, particularly about things like this. It is notable to state that many of them laid the groundwork for the entirety of the current system and their research, journal articles and books still permeates the curriculum and the rudiments of teaching and learning in Nigeria, but the evidence suggests that is gradually being eroded.

This is eloquently put by a young lecturer, who until the previous year was a graduate assistant, he said: 'I just finished my doctorate this year and was confirmed full time, after how many years. My friend started with me and left to a private university and finished on time. You're asking me about research when ordinary project these people don't care, it's only to frustrate you that they know' (Institution Pbl, Staff, iii). Hence, existing scholarship is suggestive of lower research performance amongst public relative to private staff. These findings are reflected by interviewee reflections on the comparative strength of public and private universities. It is noteworthy to state categorically that these institutions do not exist outside the purview of the Nigerian state and the general national neglect has permeated the general system. One lecturer said 'have you gone to the National Archives in Ibadan or Kaduna. Have you seen the state it is in? The government is not helping matters at all' (Institution PbH, Staff, i). A recent paper that analysed the nature of research output amongst Nigerian universities reached an interesting conclusion, according to the study:

Economic crises, poor libraries and information centres in Nigeria could no longer subscribe to current journals. Consequently, Universities could no longer keep pace with developments in their faculties, and many academics stopped publishing in reputable journals (Ogbuiyi & Okpe, 2013: 30-33).

Therefore, one can appreciate how the general academic environment which should create fluid conditions for senior academics to mentor younger academics, thereby assisting them to develop critical skills has been replaced by a new and uneven system. This insight illustrates at an everyday level the relationship between individualisation of costs, access to higher education, and private universities. The student-generated insight was expanded upon in staff interviews. For example, the belief in showing younger academics the way and introducing them to journals, recommending them for travel visas to attend international conferences, or creating spaces for them to begin with book reviews has been replaced by mistrust and a general winner takes all mentality. This is a direct result of the broader neoliberal conditions that lecturers find themselves in. The competitive spirit found in profit chasing organisations has gradually filtered into Nigerian academic circles and this is changing the nature of relationships amongst staff. This exists in both public and private, but more so in the public universities. Subsequently, the diversity of thought and the introduction of systems such as a general platform for the dissemination and propagation of research activities and the encouragement of undergraduates who show academic promise have been replaced by the need to protect one's own position. To conclude, in this section, the influence of neoliberal transformation on Nigerian universities in the fourth republic have been addressed. Moreover, the changing narrative within lecturers on the role and need for research have been explored (Udoh, 2008). The role of the TETFUND, the nature of promotions and

its role on academic research output, and above all the nature of private universities within the neoliberal structure have been documented. In addition, the prevailing conditions that create and sustain such an atmosphere in Nigerian universities has been highlighted. The commodification of teaching will now be discussed.

#### **8.4 Neoliberal Transformation and Academic Marketability**

In this section, the relationship between pedagogical practices and neoliberal transformation will be presented. This section further highlights the moonlighting of lecturers, the erosion of academic autonomy, and the rise in job insecurity within the profession. Fundamentally, it highlights that there are very weighty transformations in in how lecturers conduct themselves within the private and public universities, as a result of neoliberal transformation. By so doing, this section highlights the avenues by which it has transformed university practices in contemporary Nigeria.

The role of academics has been gradually altered within the current neoliberal dispensation. Their role has evolved in line with the dictates of market fundamentalism. Academics today are expected to do much more, for ever lesser pay, particularly within the Nigerian university system. One member of staff said ‘Nigerians are incredibly talented people. The situation we all find ourselves in just stifles them beyond recognition. When you go to private universities, you will meet lecturers that teach from year one to year four. How can one lecturer carry such workload? But what is he going to do, will he say he doesn’t want the job’ (Institution PBJ, Staff, iii). Another participant said ‘lecturing has become a very individual effort. In most cases you find that the professor that owns the course and sets the exams is not around because he is consulting somewhere. Then you have junior

lecturers doing everything and the students may never even see that professor till they graduate' (Institution PbD, Staff, ii). While a member of management was of the opinion that 'if I tell many of the students that just enrolled that before they even enter the university gate or start the course, they can take their degree certificate, how many do you think will stay for the knowledge?' (Institution PbE, Management, ii). Such views are quite interesting, and they allow an appreciation of the changes occurring within Nigerian universities today. It is also noteworthy that these views are in line with the dominant literature on the neoliberal university, and it is argued that such changes are now prevalent in many universities across the globe. Therefore, this study provides definitive evidence of such manifestations and confirms that Nigerian transformation in this regard is in line with the prevalent scholarly discourse. For Nigerian lectures today, the act of lecturing is a marketable skill that can and should be used to better their own living conditions. It is not financially enough to just exist in one university. Lecturers in Nigerian universities teach in more than one university, and they are expected to balance this with research and general family life. One could categorise this as a rise in job insecurity as a result of neoliberal transformation.

One can further highlight the influence of neoliberal marketization and its impact on the commodification of the role of the academic by examining the views of students. From this, we get a greater appreciation of these manifestations, and we start to see even more interesting bits of insight. One student spoke of how they are expected to buy the handouts of their lecturers; he said 'it is basically compulsory. If you like don't buy it's like you want to fail' (Institution PbB, Student, ii). This illustrates at an everyday level the changing relationship between staff and students across the entire spectrum. Another student said 'many of them are just annoying. I

can't even stop by to discuss what was taught in class because they are never around, even on the days they put as their consultation time. The other day I was standing at one lecturer's door for like two hours'. A student also complained about the conditions of learning 'how can we be over 500 in a class meant for 50 people, and when there's no light they can't use the PA system, who is going to learn anything in such an environment' (Institution PbF, Student, ii). A member of staff and professor at a prominent public university in Nigeria put it this way:

Many of my colleagues teach at private universities, that is where they can see something handsome and steady. They go to Benin today and tomorrow they are in Port Harcourt, teaching everywhere. It is very stressful but if you just stay here and wait for government salary then you are on your own. Even the ones that have strong head and say they don't like private universities, you see that once it is time for sabbatical, they'd rather spend it at a private university as a visiting lecturer or if God smiles on them, they go to Abuja and enter one government agency, because that is where they can find something tangible (Institution PbF, Staff, ii).

There are divergent views when such topics like this are discussed by scholars, but one can argue that when it comes to this issue there is an atmosphere of convergence within critical discourse. For instance, according to Fabian Cannizio 'neoliberal political rationalities have transformed not only national policy agendas, but also the strategies that individuals adopt to navigate their everyday lives; sometimes described as everyday neoliberalism'. His argument centres on the changing nature of national higher education policy reforms which have led to new dynamics surrounding academic autonomy and efficiency. The struggles have created uneven

spaces for academics to simply exist as purveyors of knowledge while ignoring that their role has made their students better adapted to tap the rewards of society while they navigate increasing displays of irrelevance towards their contributions to society. This is beautifully summarised by Cannizzio as the ‘tactical struggles over the means by which academics evaluate their selves and their labour’ (Cannizzio, 2018: 77-91). Additionally, it is maintained that such expectations of super-humanism that is hoisted on lecturers has taken an unprecedented toll on their lives. The commodification of their labour necessitates that they wear many hats within their respective academic institutions without the requisite compensation.

Trembath further highlights the plight of a lecturer that was ‘teaching 418 students and needed to mark their work within a 20-day turnaround. To meet that deadline, he would have needed to work approximately 9 hours a day without food or toilet breaks, for 20 days straight, and not do any other kind of admin work during that time. Practically impossible, given he was also a human being, with a home life, and physical needs like food, in addition to work responsibilities’ (Trembath, 2018). Therefore, lecturers in Nigeria public universities today are basically orienting their focus towards selling their critical resource, their knowledge, peddling this about like wears in an open air market. In such systems, the other key facets of academic life that make it so worthwhile ultimately crumble. Hence, one can appreciate this core pattern of transformation and how it has penetrated and transformed the higher education system within Nigeria and altered the very foundations of the ivory towers.

In private universities however, it gets even more interesting. For academics operating in Nigerian private universities their role is often a herculean task. They



have to navigate the stringent norms that govern the universities, the corporate structures that define them, and the constant pushback between autonomy and institutional directives. A few highlighted the joys of teaching, though they were a bit more guarded with their utterances than their public counterparts. One of the participants said ‘a lot of people have been employed because of private universities. It is not possible for the public institutions to take everybody’ (Institution PvA, Staff, ii). Another participant said ‘as much as possible we work towards a nexus between what we teach and the future roles of our students in industry. We try as much as possible to bring the town and the gown together harmoniously’ (Institution PvJ, Staff, i). A member of management at a private university stated that ‘when many of the public university students go for IT they have to learn from scratch but our students fit right in because of how we go about things here’ (Institution PvD, Management, iv). Such views create the impression that the teaching at many of these institutions is top quality and the students are better prepared. However, it also highlights that the rationale is to make sure that students are better adapted to compete out there, in the neoliberal world. The researcher asked some students their views on the academics in their universities. The researcher specifically asked one student how many they call ‘Mr’ and ‘Dr’ and he said: ‘a few of them answer Dr while the rest answer Mr but they generally prefer to be called Engr’ the other, a friend to the previous student, also said ‘some of them have very interesting classes and you are allowed to use your tab though you can’t use phones’ (Institutions PvF, Student, i & ii).

The researcher was perplexed and gently pointed out that such a thing did not make any sense, a tab basically can do everything a phone can with the sole distinction of not having a sim card. Anyways, despite this, there are opposing views expressed by

certain academics within public universities on what takes place in private universities. One lecturer said ‘there you can’t fail any student anyhow, who born you? Even if they fail, they come back in the summer to write it again. You can’t try such here if you fail it is automatic carry over, so students know that they have to sit up’ (Institution PbE, Staff, i). A member of management at a public university narrated a compelling story of a situation that occurred a few years ago. ‘There was this girl that failed a course in law and her father was a government minister, so the minister called the vice-chancellor (VC) and told him. The VC found out that it was (name redacted) taking the course. The VC could not tell the professor to pass this girl, it is just not done, so they called the younger lecturer taking the course and he said the professor is in charge of giving the final score that they should speak to him. That’s how the girl failed the course and had to take it again. If it was a private university do you think that would happen?’ (Institution PbC, Management, ii).

Therefore, one can appreciate how the neoliberal market dynamics has influenced the role of the academic in Nigerian private universities. The little autonomy that is by and large still enjoyed by their public counterparts has been stripped away in the private universities. In addition, what is being taught is geared towards preparing students for the job search, for companies, for the globalised world. Furthermore, it is argued that majority of academics within the private universities are unqualified, and the universities would not exist without the moonlighting that public university lecturers do consistently. It is this thought process that guided a former Vice-Chancellor of Usman Dan Fodio University, to state, in an interview with News Agency of Nigeria in Ilorin, that ‘honestly speaking, you find out that the private institutions in this country are mostly driven by the workforce in the public sector. He said such situation existed because the institutions had difficulty in

attracting quality staff. The professor of biochemistry, however, said private universities had more stable academic system because of governance structure'. Additionally, a Commissioner of Education of Anambra state said there is 'need to continually monitor the private universities through accreditation and reaccreditation to ensure that the standards are not compromised' (Premium Times, 2016). This demonstrates the detail of transformations and reflects on the extent to which observed dynamics match existing scholarship on the neoliberalisation of higher education in Nigeria. Such views are also shared by a former Executive Secretary of the Nigerian Universities Commission:

If you don't have a PhD, you cannot teach. It has been an old regulation in the university system. If you graduate with a First Class or Second Class Upper, we take you as a graduate assistant. You are a trainee fellow. You are not a lecturer. When you earn your masters, you become an assistant lecturer. You are still not a lecturer. A lecturer is an examiner. The day you obtain your PhD, even if you have never worked before, your first appointment is lecturer grade two (Fatunde, 2008).

Majority of the staff at private universities do not have doctorate degrees and this is an issue of concern, particularly when it comes to questions of quality teaching. And it is this that led a member of staff at a private university to say 'I do not believe in private university, they are pay as you go'. However, a Vice-Chancellor of a private university I spoke to disputed some of these concerns. He stated quite eloquently that 'private university lecturers have contributed immensely to the Nigerian education system. Yes, some of our staff do not have advanced degrees but I can tell you that all are currently in the process of completing their program. I can

also tell you that there are checks and balances in place, and every member of staff is adequately supervised by erudite professors' (Institution PvB, Management, iii). This insight illustrates at an everyday level the nature of private universities as opposed to their private counterparts, and is highlighted prominently within the literature and across the survey data and interviews.

In this section, the commodification of the role of academics that occurs in Nigerian universities have been highlighted. In public universities it is dominated by the moonlighting and a clamour for avenues to make a living. In addition, there is the practice of loose hiring due to the lack of individuals with advanced academic degrees amongst other patterns of transformation, in line with expectations from the dominant scholarship. Hence, one can then appreciate how this would influence what is being taught at these universities and how it is being taught, and the nature of the teaching process being subservient to market fundamentals. Consequently, the next section will be looking at the curriculum and the transformation of that process.

### **8.5 Neoliberal Transformation and Curriculum Formation**

In this section, the financialization of curriculum production, the importance of material incentives in shaping the allocation of set texts, and the reliance on globally enshrined texts and resources have been highlighted. Furthermore, the lopsided adoption of technological innovation within teaching practices across private and public institutions are documented. Each of these dynamics have been accelerated within the public universities due to widespread shortage of financial resources.

The curriculum of a university system is essentially the guiding light on what is considered worthy of learning by academics and the departments they inhabit. It is

the platform of intellectual interaction between staff and student. In this section, the influence of neoliberal marketization on curriculum formation as well as how curriculum development in Nigeria nowadays is indicative of the influence of neoliberal marketization on the current process have been explored. Furthermore, this section will be touching on various issues, which include but are not limited to the permeation of teaching aligned with western principles, the commodification of curriculum creation, and the exclusionary role of technology adoption in the learning process. In Nigerian public universities, there were different opinions expressed on this issue. One professor stated ‘I set what I teach my students and we use books written by Nigerian scholars’ (Institution PbF, Staff, ii).

Another senior lecturer said ‘the curriculum in this department is determined by us of course, but we exist within the traditions of the giants that came before us. Let me give you an example, there is the Ibadan school of history which is a framework of historiography that we teach in this department, and all historians trained in Nigeria and Nigerian history departments teach it’ (Institution PbJ, Staff, iii). While a member of university management was of the opinion that ‘the curriculum is always changing, we evolve with the times’ (Institution PbC, Staff, ii). It was interesting to listen to the thought process of students on this issue, with one saying ‘the other day I lost my note and I was looking for where to get the note and my friend said I should go to the printing place. The baba there actually had the complete note and he even said that he is sure it will be the exact same note for the next set of students’ (Institution PbC, Student, vii). The idea that the curriculum is stagnant, and privileges western models is the dominant narrative expressed by students, with a student saying ‘the average Nigerian lecturer just takes what they give us and teach it’ (Institution PbD, Student, ii). Students generally expressed that

they believed lecturers were lazy and usually used the same lecture notes they themselves were taught with.

At this juncture it is important to highlight why this is important. Neoliberalisation as an ideology is hinged on making sure nations within the periphery remain within the orbit of western dictates, it may not seem like an important aspect of neoliberal transformation within this context, but it was included here because it was a key thing that was constantly brought up by the participants. For students, particularly those within the humanities, the question of why their studies was always aligned with the prevailing view in the global north, even when it does not correspond with the problems surrounding their own peculiar conditions was an opinion that they were keen to voice. This could arguably be due to the clamour for stability within academic departments in public universities, rather than any nefarious reasons. A member of staff would not want to shake the tree too much in order to progress through the ranks comfortably. They would teach what is prescribed and stick to the department's point of view, and this is usually what came before they joined the department. To challenge this would be to invite problems to yourself.

Another occurrence highlighting an interesting influence of neoliberal transformation on the curriculum is lecturers writing books and making it compulsory for purchase, this then forms a minute part of what they decide to teach and set in the exams. This serves the dual purpose of establishing a solid base of revenue for the lecturers and the introduction of novel introductions into the curriculum. A member of staff voiced support for this in conversation by saying 'It is important to introduce books to students. If I just say go and read this because it will increase your knowledge nobody will read it, but the fact that they know it may come out in

the exam is what makes them go and buy it. Nobody writes a book and makes it compulsory' (Institution PbB, Staff, iii). Despite this, monographs and tomes by members of staff in public universities do not stray too far from the traditional curriculum. This is evident in the humanities because the curriculum is determined by the ideas of generally agreed scholars of importance, and new theories and postulations just join the critical discourse, and if good enough they join the canons and get to further influence the field.

However, for students who exist in the STEM fields in Nigerian public universities the curriculum is hinged on even stauncher rigidity. An architecture student complained about the neglect of local technical know-how in their curriculum and the disregard for local materials, artistic inputs, and concepts of space. According to her lecturers 'are more interested in what is going on abroad and using new computer packages than looking around themselves to teach us'. We then had a lively discussion about the sciences in general. I argued that the sciences are based on laws and these laws create the base for further experimentation which produces new additions to the existing body of knowledge. These disciplines are comprised of certain concepts that represent the foundations of the course. The law of gravity is true in any part of the world and without knowledge of gravity one cannot engage in practical activities like building a rocket. Is this any less true because it originated from an English man, I asked. She argued that I had misconstrued her point and said 'I'm not saying that but certain things like the fact that the field of vibrations is heavily influenced by Ayodele Awojobi is not something included in our curriculum I had to learn that on my own. We don't also look at the way our ancestors did things. My friend in faculty of arts is the one that told me of Mbari Architecture, me that is studying the course I did not know' (Institution PbG, Student, iii). Another student talked about the

efficacy of certain plants that are used by herbalists but are shunned by botanists in his department because it does not fit into the prescribed narrative, he said ‘it’s until these big companies come and say this thing can do this, that is when we will take it seriously’ (Institution PbA, Student, iii). Another participant simply expressed nonchalance and said ‘me I just want to do what I have to do and graduate. For some lecturers if you don’t use the exact method they taught you they’ll fail you, even though there are newer methods online they just want it how they taught you’ (Institution Pbl, Student, ii).

A recent study looking at neoliberal influence on curricular in African universities suggests that ‘hegemonic discourses connected to neoliberal agendas re-privilege Western-oriented values and perspectives and impact the curriculum changes in African higher education institutions’ (Gyamera & Burke, 2017: 450-467). Additionally, it is maintained by Glenn Savage that ‘utility of the curriculum in terms of preparing students with skills and competencies required for participation in the global knowledge economy has become the criterion based on which curriculum is being reshaped and evaluated’ (Savage, 2017: 142 - 163). To further expatiate on this, we will explore the changes occurring within private universities in Nigeria. The members of staff at private universities were quite expressive on this topic. One member of management said ‘we have certain standards that we follow thoroughly and the lecturers set the curriculum in line with what is taught all over the world’ (Institution PvE, Management, i). While a senior member of staff at a prestigious private university was a bit more introspective and folksier with his response saying ‘the question of curriculum is interesting, I can say we follow our own path upstream, but the course of the river is decided by the work of global scholars, the



days where we had lecturers in this part of the world setting the agenda is behind us' (Institution PvD, Staff, iii).

One thing that was interesting to me about private universities is the increasing influence of technology in guiding and deciding what is taught across different departments, something the public universities do not have. A participant said 'we always seek to blend the town and gown and if you go out there technology is guiding everything in society so why not in the ivory towers. If you speak to some public university students some of them cannot even send emails' (Institution PvH, Staff, i).

Another critical point is that in many public Nigerian universities today the technological interface that curates the courses and facilitates constant dialogue between learning via text and the screen is non-existent. For private Nigerian universities however, it is a crucial part of the learning process. The lecturers in private universities are encouraged to use videos, engage via emails, use online resources, and are more transparent with the course outline. Students also have an influence on the process because they are more likely to come across new content online and suggest this to lecturers, thereby inadvertently creating new avenues of curriculum formation. Practices that on par with processes found in western countries. In addition, they have facilities like projectors and steady internet connection, a luxury for their public counterparts. Moreover, one can take a step further and say these patterns of curriculum formation occur in this setting because of the socio-economic make-up of majority of students in these universities. The number of students that could afford a tablet or a laptop and the constant data costs is a very small number in public universities.

For public university students their major engagement with a technology infused process occurs during their Computer Based Tests such as General first year courses. In these cases the university provides a computer hall where everyone can write the exam and this takes place over several days. Conversely, one private university student talked about how ‘you can email the lecturers anytime. I had this lecturer who taught us programming by going through videos online and my cousin said for them they just copy note in their university’ (Institution PvB, Student, vi). Another was of the opinion that ‘I like that we are encouraged to bring our laptops and type in class. It gives you an edge because by the time you get a job you can use Microsoft office quite well’ (Institutions PvJ, Student, ii).

This influence of technology is highlighted by Steve Keirl, he says in such scenarios ‘curriculum ceases to be a thing, and it is more than a process. It becomes a verb, an action, a social practice, a private meaning, and a public hope. Curriculum is not just the site of our labour; it becomes the product of our labour, changing as we are changed by it’ (Keirl, 2015: 13-34). This leads us further to the end goal of every curriculum which is assessment. The nature of assessment in private university differs considerably from their public counterparts. One can suggest private universities realise the process of learning is more important than the actual grade one graduates with, a metric that is highly prized by public university lecturers, with one saying ‘these private universities are just producing first class graduates like factories’ (Institution PbB, Staff, ii). This notion is supported and highlighted eloquently by certain academics; they argue that in such highly marketised university environment like Nigerian private universities:

Success and excellence are not isolable qualities but instead are part of larger economies that encompass them. As both a concept and a process, "success" both requires and conceals the opposite that is part of its very structure. In systems of educational assessment, competition, and credentialing, as well as in the larger logic of social life under capital, "success" means the privilege of a triumph against that which negatively constitutes it, namely "failure." Failure is the necessary condition of success, not simply as it happens, but as the essential anatomy of the idea (Bourassa, 2011: 5-16).

This is epitomised by the opinion of one member of staff at a public university who said 'you can't fail them in private schools now, the grades are marketing tools. They students know that no matter what they do somebody will be there to push them. They can always come back during the holidays to re-write the exam' (Institution Pbl, Staff, ii).

This sentiment was supported by his colleague who also said 'They are just a business to the person who run them and that is why they are not popular with the masses' (Institution Pbl, Staff, iii). However, this school of thought was not supported by a student I spoke to who said 'many of these lecturers in public universities just like to glorify suffering. Why should it take five years to study engineering, and you'll finish and its only calculations you know? Your peers abroad that are in year two have a better understanding of how to build a bridge than you do' (Institution PvF, Student, ii). In conclusion, the influence of neoliberal transformation on curriculum formation in Nigerian universities have been explored. The study highlighted how certain introduction of new subject matter into the curriculum occurs through a commodified avenue and discussed the role and nature of globally accepted thought

processes within curriculum formation in Nigeria. In addition, the role of technology in private universities in curriculum formation and the impact of neoliberal transformation on the overall assessment of students in Nigerian universities have been presented.

## **8.6 Conclusion**

In the sections above, evidence of patterns of transformation within the Nigerian contemporary university have been provided. From the review, expectations regarding dynamics of change in four areas were established. These areas are satellite learning, research, teaching, and curriculum. Through this chapter, an overview of research findings on changes to pedagogy structures and processes have been highlighted. As related previously, this chapter observes the effects of neoliberal university is defined by four features in the realm of these practices. First, in relation to satellite campuses, the university is defined by an adoption of distance learning and a discrepancy in fee structure with the regular programs. Second, in relation to research, the neoliberal university features a reduced research output. Thirdly, the commodification of lecturers has led to increased workload and moonlighting within academia. Finally, profit motives have led to the financialization of curriculum production. Overall, there is a focus across the sector on 'market power' as the key tool for determining pedagogy decisions.

There are key similarities and differences that characterize these institutions. In both sets of institutions, we see that quota system influences how both sets of institutions conduct themselves, we also see how a general lack of academic funding has stunted research output, and an increased workload has led to a total overhaul of recruitment practices. However, there are crucial differences. The private

universities are run based on metrics infused systems, and have a stricter leash on their productive capacity, while the public universities have evolved a complex textbook purchase structure, further influencing spending habits of students. Through this chapter as a whole, I show that local and national dynamics have led to significant divergence between Nigerian higher education institutions and the governance model of the university under neoliberal principles, and the manifestation of patterns of transformation in the Nigerian context is in many cases, in complete adherence with expectations put forth by existing literature.

Through this chapter, many transformations across public and private institutions that fit with existing characterisations of the neoliberal university and higher education sector have been provided. In particular, we have seen that institutional expansion and the creation of ‘satellite’ providers have been shaped by concerns over resource maximisation, with private institutions particularly displaying these tendencies. Curriculum content, too, has been shaped by judgements over the market value of content, with again private institutions displaying this tendency to a higher prevalence. Resource constraints across the sector provide an important factor in catalysing these neoliberalisation of curriculum content and pedagogic practice across Nigerian higher education. The study will now move on to highlight neoliberal transformation of staff and student experience

## CHAPTER NINE

### 9.0 The Neoliberal University in Nigeria: Patterns of Transformation in Staff and Student Experience in Private and Public Universities

#### 9.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an overview of general scholarship on neoliberalism and specifically on the university in the neoliberal context and presented the qualitative expression of these transformations. expectations regarding change in pedagogy and curriculum formation, presented findings related to dynamics surrounding satellite learning, research, teaching, and curriculum formation, which demonstrate significant elements of marketisation have been established.

This chapter focused on the changes in Nigerian universities in the area of university experience. Taking a broad approach to university experience, emphasis was focused particularly on welfare, financial fees and remuneration, industrial action, and 'cultism' (secretive student societies that can be linked to criminal activity). The former three dimensions are conventionally covered in existing scholarship on higher education experience and transformation, and the latter represents a more particularly Nigerian feature.

Overall, the study makes use of inferences from the data gathering and interviews to inform and support the argument of the thesis and it is maintained that challenges to welfare were high across both public and private universities, and that 'value for money' type concerns with tuition fees were higher amongst students in private institutions and concerns over equity in remuneration higher amongst staff in public institutions. Increased constraints on industrial relations autonomy were expressed by staff particularly at private institutions. While these themes are

commonly explored in scholarship on neoliberalisation of higher education, the significant prominence of cultism represents a notable feature of the Nigerian sector. The findings relating to welfare, financial fees and remuneration, industrial action, and cultism will now be outlined.

## **9.2 Neoliberal Transformation of Welfare Packages**

In this section, the governance of Nigerian universities and the relationship between the staff and student experience of these institutions and neoliberal transformative practices will be discussed. This section highlights the poor accommodation provisions, the reduced role of subsidy and government support within catering and printing provisions. It also explores how private universities have used this to drive recruitment due to the provision of better standards of welfare as a result of the fees they charge. By so doing, it highlights the avenues through which neoliberalism has transformed university and government practices in contemporary Nigeria.

The transformations in student accommodation is closely associated with the neoliberal environment. In the Nigerian case, we see that in private institutions, these dynamics have in the main been reproduced. In contrast, in public institutions, quality of accommodation remains notably low in quality. The significant differences in institutional revenue streams means that while private institutions have developed substantial capacity to provide high-quality accommodation and deploy accommodation as a competitive tool to attract students, public institutions have had less capacity to do so. We see, therefore, a stratified transformation along this dimension. Furthermore, in their first year of study, it is common for students in private and public universities to reside in accommodation that is owned and run by their university. However, the standard of accommodation varies significantly. Two

prevailing patterns of transformation have generally been observed over recent decades. First, as universities have entered a more overtly competitive environment, new-build student accommodation has become an increasingly prominent component of the 'offer' used to attract students to a university. Second, and closely related, rents levied for this accommodation has risen significantly above their historic levels. In the paragraphs below, findings confirm the manifestation of this pattern within the Nigerian higher education space (Anonaba, 2015)

One significant evidence of neoliberal transformation on the university experience is the issue of general welfare. This is a very important issue in Nigerian universities, particularly the public universities. In this section we shall be looking at the nature of changes that have occurred within this space, and how it is experienced by staff and students, particularly with accommodation, catering, and printing. According to one member of management at a public university 'the standard of living in this country has reduced but the costs have gone up. This is a very expensive city and landlords overprice their houses and it puts a strain on not just the students but on lecturers as well' (Institution PbE, Management, ii). A member of staff said 'If you step into any hostel you will be wondering where you are. It is really an eyesore; I don't even know how those students do it' (Institution PbC, Staff, iii). While another member of staff stated 'I remember when I was looking for a place around here after I finished my doctorate, I had to stay in my supervisor's boys quarters for a while before I went to the outskirts of town to get a place. Do you know where I have to drive from to get here every day. Once its 3:30pm I am off because I don't want traffic to catch me' (Institution Pbl, Staff ii). This insight illustrates at an everyday level the relationship between individualisation of costs, access to higher education, and private universities. This correlates with the work of Slaughter and Leslie (1997)



who suggest that such manifestations are now a dominant fixture within the neoliberal towns and cities that house modern universities. They argue that affordable accommodation considerations have been jettisoned by real estate providers whose goal is to maximise profit, severely affecting staff and student alike.

In many major cities of Nigeria, where the bulk of public universities are located, the range of accommodation available to members of staff is beyond their financial capacity. This includes but is not limited to studio apartments, mini flats, and three-bedroom flats, the very basic spaces necessary to provide a conducive family environment in a major Nigerian city. A lot of the public universities have been beacons of economic activity for decades and they have attracted a good number of housing developments around them, today these landlords are reaping the benefits of demand and supply. The wages and salaries of public university lecturers have also been stagnant for years, and whatever increment they got has not been in line with inflation. Some public universities have on-campus accommodation for a few members of staff, and this is heavily subsidised, but with government funding dwindling this can only accommodate so few and it is an issue that has placed a huge strain on the academic profession in the country.

For students, the discourse of accommodation was accompanied by the cost of feeding and printing. It may seem like this is negligible, but historically this was a cost that Nigerian students never used to bear. Government funding used to provide meal tickets and free printing for students in the past. In recent years however, the reverse is the case, and dwindling support from public coffers has altered this dynamic. It was highlighted prominently by participants as a cause of trepidation and concern.

It is an observable instance one can point to as a change brought about by an infusion of market dynamics. One student said ‘In our room which is an eight-man room we are more than twenty inside there. Not everybody can get bed space so people are always squatting someone and there’s not much you can do because if it was you, you’d squat the person too. I just wake up early and leave and don’t come back until it’s time to sleep’ (Institution PbA, Student, ii). Another said ‘some people can afford to stay off-campus but make everybody cut their coat according to their size so for me I stay on campus. I don’t even know how those people can afford it’ (Institution PbD, Student, ii). While another said ‘I come from home every day I can’t stay inside hostel it is just not it for me. My friends are there so I go there to chill after class, but I can’t live there at all, it’s not for me’ (Institution PbF, Student, iii). There are many concerns about this in different social and academic circles, with one school of thought advocating for greater private sector initiatives to alleviate this. According to a recent editorial on this peculiar Nigerian experience:

In places where hostels exist, the situation is regrettable, something that should never be seen in any part of the world. These have given rise to the establishment of private hostels within the university environment. However, these hostels are so exorbitant that only a few parents can afford them. Some parents who can afford these hostels are reluctant to do so because their children are unprotected, exposed to the constant snares in our society (The Sun Nigeria, 2019).

Due to such gesticulations and pronouncements, there has been an influx of philanthropic projects in Nigerian public universities centred on improving these conditions. This was practically unheard of during the military periods as wealthy

folks were keen to protect themselves and not come off as a threat or source of opposition. In today's neoliberal environment such initiatives are warmly welcomed. One member of staff said 'It is expected that as a company's CSR or as an act of benevolence people should donate to their alma mater, and invest in education, but unfortunately in Nigeria when people decide to give it can be a Greek gift. Give with one hand and collect with the other. They'll say they've dashed a hostel to the university, but they still want to collect a part of the rent for years to come' (Institution PbJ, Staff, iii). Hence, rent-seeking activities subtly guide instances of generosity. When I asked how catering establishments have influenced a student's university experience he said 'they have made my experience worse oh, if not for indomie I may not be standing here talking to you. But I can't totally blame them because look at how much these guys pay for space' (Institution PbD, Student, i).

Another said 'these guys that do photocopy and scanning are just enjoying, every time they are increasing price' (Institution PbH, Student, ii) A student also stated that 'If I had to choose to come here again I'm not so sure I would, because I don't even know how I've done it. There's one woman that just likes me and whenever I go there she'll allow me take food without paying, it's just God, because I don't know how' (Institution PbA, Student ii) These discussions were interesting and such opinions were highlighted by a good number of students, and one member of management I voiced these concerns to expressed support for the students and said 'the government has failed the youth of today. When it was my day the hostels were so tidy, we'll just be two in a room. We even had what is called a meal ticket and with that you got free meals at the university cafeteria. It's like these people in power enjoyed these things and were so determined that nobody will enjoy it after they've gone because I really don't understand' (Institution PbC, Management, ii).

Catering, scanning, and photocopying are some of the biggest financial expenses for Nigerian students and the inclusion of this as a major pattern of transformation is quite self-evident, but it is also guided by participant views. This section has explored the influence of neoliberal transformation on public universities; now the study will go on to highlight what is going on in private universities and the nature of neoliberal transformation taking shape within them.

Private universities stand in stark contrast with public universities, in this significant area, with one member of management saying ‘over there, in these private universities, their money is taking care of them. When it comes to structures, they have big and beautiful structures you can’t take it from them’ (Institution PbC, Management, ii). A Vice-Chancellor at a private university said ‘we have younger people going to university nowadays. When it was my time I was one of the youngest in my class and there were a lot of elderly students around, most of them in their mid-20’s but students of today are much younger, you can meet some students that are 16 in year one, therefore we have a greater obligation to protect them and provide a very safe and clean environment’ (Institution PvB, Management, iii). A member of staff at a private university maintained that ‘the depreciating state of the country has crept in. We have seen many professors at public universities getting political appointments, then when they are done they come back to manage affairs at the universities, how can such people have the best interest of their universities at heart. They are in cahoots with the politicians that is why the state of affairs of students is nothing to write home about’ (Institution PvD, Staff, iv). While another member of management expressed pride regarding the state of living affairs provided by his university, stating: ‘when you come here, whether student or staff, one thing that is guaranteed is that the university will take care of you’ (Institution

PvE, Management, i). One can then contend that the nature of satisfaction with accommodation is higher within private university staff than their public counterparts. The more you pay the better the quality you get. This is stark contrast to the situation in public universities where accommodation is scarce, and the third-party options are expensive and out of reach to both staff and student. Even on the issue of living standards, the private university people expressed admiration for the serenity of their neighbourhood, proximity to work, and the strong sense of community surrounding those who stayed on campus. Some members of staff who said they lived on campus in public universities expressed this too, but for the many who live off campus the feeling of being left out, having to seek accommodation in the outskirts of big cities, which have poor transport networks is an issue that weighs heavy on them (Abuza, 2016)

In a private university, one member of staff expressed praise for their more favourable conditions, stating: 'there is accommodation for most of the staff, from graduate assistants to professors; we're so far away from the centre so it's important that the people that live here are comfortable' (Institution PvJ, Staff, iii). This insight illustrates at an everyday level the comfort levels of private university staff as opposed to their public counterparts and it is highlighted within the literature and interviews. A recent study looking at staff satisfaction within private university accommodation noted that things 'had been put in place to enable frequent manicuring of flower hedges, lawns and gardens. In all, the services of five of the eight notable facilities in the residential estate were highly satisfying to residents with the exemption of fumigation services, maintenance mechanisms and internet connectivity' (Oluwunmi & Izobo-Martins, 2012). When it comes to students it was observed in a study that:

Most private universities within the country have policies which demand all students to stay on the school's provided accommodation. This serves as a way of keeping the students in check, providing security for them, and at the same time, making revenue for the institution. However, others have a less strict policy on housing, and students are allowed to stay off-campus (Adama et al, 2018: 12-20).

The students the researcher spoke to in private universities clearly enjoyed staying on campus. They expressed joys of staying with their fellow course mates, lack of electricity concerns, strong internet connections, and security of property. The last three can generally be considered luxuries in public universities. It is something many of the private university students cannot even enjoy at home, but it is provided to them as a result of their existence on private academic grounds. One student I spoke to described his accommodation as 'airy and spacious' with cleaners coming in to do their work 'all the time' (Institution PvG, Student, iii). Another said 'almost everyone I know stays on campus. There's no point going outside to stay when everyone is here' (Institution PvJ, Student, ii). While another student said 'it's not that bad, but staying here is not all rosy we have to be careful too especially if you have contraband like phones or meat' (Institution PvE, Student, iv). Another student told me a funny story of a public university student asking him about a popular person who is a student at his university 'one guy asked me about this guy and I was like yeah I know him he is in my hostel. The guy could not believe it. He said you mean that this guy that drives this car stays in hostel on bunk bed with you. I said yes now, if my toothpaste finishes it's his room I go to collect, he and my guy are in the same room' (Institution PvC, Student, ii). The standard of living and the general welfare provision for private university students is far above what public university

students receive. A lopsided effect of entrenched marketisation, and a clear example of neoliberalism transforming staff and students lives.

One can further argue that the privilege afforded to private students is as a result of the financial strength of their parents which creates a marginally favourable university living experience. In this situation, the market is once again king and determines who is worthy of a good experience in the Nigerian universities today. Therefore, in the Nigerian fourth republic there is a growing clamour for the private public partnership model as a pathway to alleviate housing concerns in both public and private universities, but more so in the public sphere. The argument put forth in certain quarters is that 'since we all know that to break even after investing in such a project like building hostel and staff accommodation for institutions will take some time, let there be tax concession for the investor. Also, government can help the universities with grants or support in that regards' (Vanguard, 2020). However, such initiatives were frowned upon in a conversation with a member of staff at a public university who said 'the one that they built here a few years ago using that model we encountered some issues. We all know that the project was done using looted funds and the case is still in court so even though this is a viable option it can lead to unexpected difficulties (Institution PbC, Staff, ii). This section has highlighted the influence of neoliberal transformation on public and private universities, it touched on the satisfaction of staff and students with welfare and accommodation concerns. It particularly highlighted the living conditions of students and staff, and the uncertainty that now permeates the inhabitants of the system, now the study will go on to highlight the discourse on remuneration and tuition within public and private universities.

### 9.3 Neoliberal Transformation and Payments

In this section, the governance of Nigerian universities and the relationship between the staff and student experience of these institutions and neoliberal transformative practices have been explored. This section highlights the poor remuneration, increased fee structures, and the changing nature of government support surrounding this. It also explores how private universities have received criticism for this, but as existing literature suggests this has not been vociferous enough to defeat the emergent system. Overall, this section highlights the avenues through which has transformed university and government practices in contemporary Nigeria.

The issue of remuneration and tuition is one that has come to define the academic experience in Nigerian universities today. It is quite evident and extensively maintained that many lecturers; particularly the junior lecturers in public universities are receiving wages and salaries that place them just a few feet above the poverty line. Many members of staff were hesitant to comment extensively on this but a few offered interesting views. A newly appointed member of staff illustrated the difficulties of the entire process, stating ‘The first salary I received as a confirmed lecturer I was thinking the whole day, was it all worth it? After going through all that trouble the salary is not even close to what people out there are making (Institution Pbl, Staff, iii). Another talked about the peculiar Nigerian charitable structure and its effects on his disposable income, saying ‘by the time you receive salary and you send something to your people in the village, your brother in Ilorin, you take care of basic necessities, then you’ll find that you’re basically working for nothing’ (Institution PbA, Staff, ii). Another detailed his grievances surrounding this issue by stating:



My rent is N800k, I maintain two cars, and my child's school fee for crèche is N120k and next year he is going to primary school. I have a friend who said you are a fool for paying that money and pays N20k at one place but his child is always falling sick while my child is always well taken care of where he is. I know what I am doing. Let me tell you something, in order to live a decent life in this country you must spend. That's why many of us in this department go out to consult, because man must live well' (Institution PbE, Staff, ii).

The question remains however, why then do the lecturers stay in their jobs when all these financial obstacles confront them at every turn. According to a few lecturers the joy of freedom and being in charge of your own time is a priceless perk of the job, with one participant saying 'unless there's faculty meeting or I have class or a meeting there's no reason for me to be here. You are even lucky you met me here I was just about to step out' (Institution Pbl, Staff, ii). Another talked about being charge of his own time saying 'this office is my own zone. I am the pilot of my own affairs and I really value that, some of my friends in the private sector don't even have time for themselves or their families they're always chasing one target or the other' (Institution PbF, Staff, iii).

One could argue that another reason for them to stick to the job is the prestige. In Nigerian society it is a big deal to be a PhD holder and to be called Professor is an even greater honour, so for many the goal of sticking around long enough to get the coveted title of Professor is worth the sacrifice. To be fair to the current fourth republic, the last time there was a major salary review across board; it was the first political administration of the fourth republic led by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo that instituted it, bumping up the salary of all academics nationwide. At the dawn of the

fourth republic, it was stated by his government that they would ‘govern based on transparent accountability and seek to eradicate poverty with a strong commitment to saving our present and future generations’ (Archives, Institution Ai). Nevertheless, the scourge of inflation has ravaged any gains from that procedure and the remuneration of many members of staff today is not enough to take care of rent, family demands and provisions in many Nigerian cities. Notwithstanding, since the last review such conversations on remuneration have been frustrated by successive governments. In this environment, the neoliberal market dictates, have essentially created a situation where an increase in remuneration for staff, not just in academia, but across the entire public service has become anathema to the current psyche of key stakeholders in the Nigerian state and amongst many members of the society.

To further elaborate, it takes a long time on average to reach the level of a professor within the academic environment because of the heavy politicking and ethnic chauvinism that occurs in many institutions. One member of staff expressed displeasure at the situation by stating ‘I cannot finish my career in this environment’ (Institution PbE, Staff, ii). Hence, many younger lecturers have resulted to consulting, starting small scale enterprises, and the ones who still wholeheartedly believe in research focus on leaving via a post-doctoral or getting involved with some research body. According to Paul Graham many academics in the neoliberal environments of today have become ‘professional fundraisers that do a little research on the side’ (Graham, 2019). This assertion is also supported by a comment from a well-meaning Nigerian. He said ‘they frustrate students as if those ones put them in that predicament. Thank God I changed my mind about lecturing early in life. I will rather be a volunteer lecturer and do it pro-bono when I have made decent

income and investment' (Nairaland, 2015). This section has focused on impact of neoliberal transformation on the remuneration of member of staff in public universities; I will now discuss the issue of tuition by highlighting participant views on this topic.

Students I spoke to generally expressed gratitude for tuition in public universities, with one saying 'since I've been born I can't say that I've gotten anything from government so at least with this one I'm okay' (Institution PbB, Student, iv). Another said 'It's good that it is subsidised. If you look at what people like Obafemi Awolowo tried to do, then you can see why I support [subsidisation of university education]. You are educating an entire generation' (Institution PbC, Student, iv). But many express reservations about this by pointing to the overcrowded universities, the poor amenities and infrastructure and the general decline in quality. A member of staff at a public university actually was not in support of such sentiments, stating 'I believe education anywhere is expensive and rightly so. As far as I am concerned we are where we are today because of the education we have today. Go to the public sphere and listen to the most important discussion that occupies students. If it's not what is happening on instagram and twitter, then it's what is happening with this or that celebrity. The quality of intellectual interaction has reduced considerably' (Institution PbE, Staff, ii). The average tuition for public universities hovers around N25,000 naira and though this is considered a very small amount in certain quarters it is still seen as too steep by many citizens. Tuition in public university is viewed by students as the last sustainable public good provided by government.

However, the state of neglect is so apparent that sections of the Nigerian populace advocate for a complete overhaul and an infusion of private sector expertise. One

member of staff highlighted the loan structure that is readily available in western countries as a viable model to emulate; he said that ‘many of people parading in universities don’t appreciate university education at all. If you know what it means and how much it really costs then many of these students will take it seriously. I have a friend that left to Australia and today he’s doing a doctorate program and it’s entirely on loan. By the time he finishes he will be owing the Australian government and will have to pay at his own convenience. He has enjoyed a world class education and as soon as he finishes he knows what he has to do. Can such person mess about when they finish? Such schemes will promote patriotism’ (Institution PbE, Staff, i). Such neoliberal views have taken a foothold in general Nigerian discourse on this matter. A Therefore, one can appreciate the influence of neoliberal market ideology on Nigerian debates surrounding remuneration and tuition concerns in public universities.

In private universities the influence of neoliberal marketization unfolds differently. One can compare these institutions to conglomerates rather than universities. With some organisations owning and running two or three institutions concurrently. According to one member of staff ‘here we know that when it’s time for promotion if you have the necessary publications and do all you are tasked with you will be promoted’ (Institution PvD, Staff, ii). Another lecturer expressed favourable views on being paid promptly ‘In public university you don’t know what can happen and just like that government can delay your salary for months. Such things can never happen here’ (Institution PvF, Staff, iv). While a member of management said ‘liberalising the university sector has led to many good things for Nigeria. The management of the university runs this place very well and no lecturer can tell you that their salary was ever withheld’ (Institution PvE, Management, i). These

assertions are supported by recent research with one study examining pay disparity and satisfaction in Nigerian universities maintaining that

Pay satisfaction is low both in the public and private sector universities. Working conditions in the two sectors differ; while those in the public sector have the benefits of job security, flexible working hours, less supervision, freedom of association, lesser workloads, and clearer lines of communication, for those in the private sector the pay package and promotion prospects are better but job security is low, there is less freedom and heavier workloads (Fapohunda, 2012: 8-28).

Overall, the salary and pay package of university staff in Nigeria has reduced or remained stagnant across board, with the career steadily diminishing as a viable pathway for financial sustainability and comfort, whether in private or public universities. However, in the private universities there is a clearer career pathway, but their big disadvantage is the corporate structure. For those in public universities job security is quite solid. The pay more not be as good as the private universities but that drop in percentage is compensated by reduced lecture commitments, a laissez-faire environment, and a considerable lack of accountability to the students. Therefore, the nature of transformation within this field plays out differently in private and public institutions.

I asked one student about the lecturers and he said ‘they can’t just fail you anyhow. If a good number of students fail they have to explain themselves. It’s not like the A is for God, B is for me and C is for the smartest person in the class that lecturers in public universities do’ (Institution PvF, Student, ii). There are advantages however to existing in private universities. For instance, the universities are keen to present

their academic workforce as better than average and because of this they fund conferences and training programmes abroad. In addition, the pay is periodically reviewed and is dependent on the council, board, and university management as opposed to the bureaucratic behemoth that is Government.

Nevertheless, many of them are over stretched and their attachment to the institution is always under scrutiny. A member of staff said ‘for everything we do we are seen as ambassadors of the university. This university upholds certain values and principles, and we are expected to contribute to that in how we go about our duties’ (Institution PvH, Staff, ii). For students I spoke with tuition is not a major obstacle or issue. Many expressed support for the exorbitant fees and held their respective universities in high regard. One student said ‘at this moment we may not have the prestige of the public universities but just give it some time. You’ll see that people that end up at the top in a few years will be from private universities’ (Institution PvC, Student, ii). A participant said ‘not everybody is from very rich families some are from normal families and you can pay your tuition in instalments’ (Institution PvB, Student, iii). While another said ‘You can see what you’re paying for. It’s not like you are paying and they are ripping you off’ (Institution PvF, Student, ii). A lot of student I spoke with were quite insistent that the existence of their private universities was a force for good in Nigeria and were symbols of victory for freedom and liberty. I expressed this to a member of staff at a public university. I put it to him that the introduction of private universities has increased the number of students enjoying the university experience and he expressed contrary opinions. ‘The opening up is relative. Who and who can afford to go there. How many people can afford to pay their fees? If today there is a law that people can only buy two

cars Ferrari and Lamborghini will I be driving anywhere today. So they have increased personal choices but for how many people (Institution PbE, Staff, ii).

Such school of thought is supported by a recent report which states ‘despite a glaring shortfall in federal and state university slots, the unaffordability of private study is a continuing constraint’ (Oxford Business Group, 2015: 243-251). Another paper argues that:

Private universities rely heavily on tuition fees and other Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) from the students to meet their expenditure. There are no subsidies from the government for the private universities and if it continues this way, the tuition and other fees payable will be on the high side that majority of the citizen will not be able to afford it (Okoro & Okoro: 2014: 2-7).

However, the current situation still receives considerable support. A member of staff at a private university expressing support for the current state of affairs, he said: ‘this place is not for everybody if you can’t afford it then you try all possible means to get admission into the public universities (Institution PvC, Staff, iii). In conclusion, in this section, I explored the governance of Nigerian universities and the relationship between the staff and student experience of these institutions and neoliberal transformative practices. This section highlighted the revamped fee structure and its impact on staff and student experience. Therefore, one can appreciate the influence of neoliberal transformation in private universities and the impact of this on the general state of affairs in Nigeria today. Crucially as well, it is also a key point that the neoliberal transformation has highly uneven implications depending on where you are positioned within the system as either a member of

staff or a student. The next section will look at the highly contentious issue of strike action and its role in entrenching appreciation for neoliberal principles across Nigeria.

#### **9.4 Neoliberal Transformation and Industrial Action**

In this section, the relationship between the staff and student experience of these institutions and neoliberal transformative practices has been documented. This section highlights the breakdown of unionisation and the curtailing of protests within Nigerian campuses. By so doing, it highlights the avenues through which has transformed university and government practices in contemporary Nigeria.

A crucial area for understanding the impact of neoliberal transformation on the university experience is the current state of industrial actions or strikes. There is a glaring difference between the situations of today and what occurred in the past. This is particularly important because the issue of industrial action is one that has significant ramifications for both staff and student, across both private and public universities. In the past, strike actions were instituted, sustained, and supported by dogmatic labour union positions, with majority of the lecturers standing in full support. To an extent this is still the case, but now it is less so. In Nigerian public universities today, there has been a gradual shift in attitude on the role of industrial action. Many goals of strike actions have not been fulfilled and this has led to a gradual softening of views across different quarters in academia and society as a whole. A member of staff at a public university said ‘I think it’s very clear that the government has not been honest with us. When the school is shut down I’m not happy because I know many students may not even have where to stay. But at the



end of the day a lot of things remain the same, so we need to find a more effective strategy' (Institution PbA, Staff, ii).

Another said 'The Nigerian situation is a failing experiment that is evident everywhere. The union should be looking at how to reform itself to get what they need. Many of these people in Abuja don't care because all their children abroad, instead of squabbling over who will answer chairman or secretary, they should be finding new ways to table our concerns' (Institution PbJ, Staff, i). While a member of management maintained that 'We are all members of the union. I am always in full support of all strike actions. But my main concern has always been its disruption of the school's calendar, it takes a toll on the staff and students who suddenly have to come back and get back into full gear' (Institution PbC, Management, ii). Speaking with a chairman of a state chapter of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) offered some interesting outcomes, he said:

The reason for any university system is to produce well rounded individuals that contribute and improve to the wider system. Would you say the Nigerian university system is working for the benefit of Nigerians? What we have today is a continuous cycle of exploitation. The government is hesitant to acknowledge reality. They have refused to show concern towards this very important sector. No adequate provisions for students and no commensurate compensation for staff. Strike actions is one of the few powerful tools we have for bringing them to the negotiating table (Institution PbE, Management, i).

This is the default position maintained by many members of staff but one can contend that another reason why a chink in the armour is appearing in the strike

action culture is that many members of staff know it will lead to reduced engagement with students which spells reduced revenues via handouts and textbooks. This is exacerbated by the fact that some strikes are indefinite. There have been numerous instances of strike actions lasting many months. Since the year 1999 there have been 14 major strike actions, with interspersing warning strikes not included. For instance, in 2013, 'the government's failure to review the retirement age for professors from 65 to 70; approve funding to revitalise the university system; increase the budgetary allocations to the education sector by 26% among other demands led to another industrial action that lasted six months' (Pulse, 2018). In the 1980's and early 1990's, under despotic military rule, these strikes could be quite militant. According to David Usman 'when lecturers are on strike, gates of the institutions are closed to disallow both academic and administrative activities. Academic members who showed no support are forcibly taken out and where they showed resistance, they are beaten (in few cases) and their membership mostly withdrawn from the union' (Usman, 2017).

However, though the strike actions have increased they are quite timid in comparison to what obtained in the past. Year after year the neglect to issues suffered by the university sector keeps piling, and this has led to a gradual questioning of the importance and frequency of these actions amongst academics. Hence, one can appreciate how neoliberal transformation has left its mark on the psyche on lecturers concerning the role of strike actions for bettering their conditions. Put simply, the all for one and one for all attitudes has been replaced by an every man for himself culture, which is the dominant mantra of the neoliberal environment. Speaking with students also offered interesting views on the situation. One student said 'I'm in year two but if I could stop now and move to a private

university all-expense paid I would, because at least there you are sure of when you will graduate' (Institution PbG, Student, iii). Another participant said 'it is just money these lecturers are after. If you look at the reasons they give for going on strike it's always about money. I don't even think they are really concerned about the state of the universities' (Institution PbD, Student, iv). While another said 'I am tired of it. It can just happen anytime and before you know it you have spent two months at home' (Institution Pbl, Student, ii). The students had different views considering this topic. However, many of them expressed disdain and disgust at the constant pauses in the academic calendar. However, one student expressed support for the predicament of members of staff 'It's not all lecturers that want to go on strike but it's something they have to do, and at the end of the day I don't blame them because they can't just be working when our leaders don't care about them or what is going on in the universities' (Institution PbB, Student, ii). In conclusion, this has highlighted the fundamentally altered role of industrial action culture in Nigerian universities. The next section will proceed to highlight the nature of influence within private universities.

The pronouncing influence here is encapsulated in the fact that permanent private university staff are not allowed to join their public counterparts as members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). Hence, they cannot embark on industrial action. Therefore, they're not allowed to unionise and threaten the perception of institutional stability enjoyed by their private ownership. Thus, in private universities industrial actions are non-existent and involvement in such activities is tantamount to termination of employment. This is because a stable academic calendar is something that is somewhat of a marketing tool for bringing in students in private universities. Certain members of staff I spoke to were generally

in favour of the situation and expressed support for it. A registrar at a private university stated 'students that come here know when they'll be finishing from the day they come in and that is something we take great pride in' (Institution PvE, Management, i). Another member of staff was of the opinion that 'the situation we have here is what many parents appreciate for their wards. Nigeria is already a difficult place and there's no need for such disregard for students that goes on over there (public universities)' (Institution PvJ, Staff, i). While another participant stated 'a lot of us teaching here taught in public universities for years and I can tell you that there's no comparison at all. We are treated much better here; the difference is seven-up' (Institution PvD, Staff, ii). Notwithstanding, one can argue that for a neutral observer this situation throws up wondrous admiration for how far neoliberal market principles has permeated and entrenched itself within the private ivory towers. Basically, the point is that lecturers in private institutions seem to have internalised the neoliberal logic of higher education provision. Particularly lecturers who taught at public universities for years before moving to private universities.

In Nigeria, strike action has come to represent a strong and vital weapon against all forms of injustice. It is not just utilised by academics, but doctors, lawyers, nurses and the armed forces to mention but a few. It provides the platform for individuals holding common interest to come together and exert their collective will. It is thus a necessary vehicle for addressing grievances that inevitably arise between employers and the employed. A direct observable influence of neoliberal transformation on Nigerian private universities is the erosion of this course of action within their four walls. How can an institution benefiting from the largesse of democratic principles foster such undemocratic conditions for its members of staff?

According to a recent study this happens because of ‘the need to be internally efficient. The public universities are becoming internally inefficient because of the incessant strike action due to the deplorable situations of public universities and other areas of differences between the government’ (Olugbenga, 2010). This assertion is supported by another study looking at the influence of strike action on the choice of Nigerian universities. The paper took a historical view and stated that:

The financial problem in Nigerian higher educational institutions, which started in the late 1970s, became more severe in the 1990s and remains a major problem today. The arbitrary interference in university governance by military governments and their authoritarian handling of university matters - often without regard to constituted statutory structures of the system also aggravated the problems of university autonomy and the proper functioning of the institutions which made ASUU embark on several national strikes (Okuwa & Campbell, 2011: 275-280).

The students the researcher spoke with expressed their contentment with the situation. Some of the students were familiar with the plight of their friends as a result of industrial action undertaken in public universities. According to one student ‘last time there was strike one of my aunties was complaining all the time to my mummy that she’d come back to meet my cousin at home every day and she was worried. And it is because of strike she doesn’t know when or if it will end. These things just don’t affect students they affect everybody’ (Institution PvE, Student, iii). Another student said ‘I actually wanted to attend a public university but you know how it is, but so far I’m very glad I came here’ (Institution PvA, Student, iv). While another participant said ‘the fact that we don’t have to deal with strikes is

definitely an advantage. Some of us will even finish before people that entered university before us' (Institution PvB, Student, ii). This situation highlights the influence of neoliberal transformation on the system. By creating the illusion of choice the situation allows certain members of society, usually those with access to adequate financial capacity, to be shielded from the incessant breaks in the system. It is important to note however that these breaks occur because members of staff band together to fight for better working and living conditions. Such a situation is categorized as an inconvenience by those who manage and operate the private universities. This is something that does not sit well with a member of staff at a public university the researcher spoke with, he said:

They (private universities) are cankerworms in the system and that is why they are not supported. Because people know that all they want is money, and they're not bothered about what is going on in Nigeria. But it is a false base to build on because we are all citizens of this country and eventually the troubles of Nigeria will visit you. You can't just close your eye to the conditions of your country (Institution PbE, Staff, ii).

In this section, the governance of Nigerian universities and the relationship between the staff and student experience of these institutions and neoliberal transformative practices have been presented. This section highlighted the breakdown of unionisation and the curtailing of protests within Nigerian campuses. By so doing, it highlights the avenues through which has transformed university and government practices in contemporary Nigeria. Therefore, one can appreciate the influence of this enhanced marketization process on industrial action in Nigerian today. In essence, because the private universities do not go on strike to demand better

conditions for Nigerians, it is seen as a market 'pull factor', that is the fact that for private students their years at university will proceed uninterrupted. A certainty that neither public university students or staff share. In this section, the study highlighted the softening views in public sector and the total absence of unionisation in private universities and highlighted the lopsided nature of transformation within this context. The next section will look at perhaps the biggest influence of neoliberal market transformation on the Nigerian university experience, which is the issue of cultism.

#### **9.5 Neoliberal Transformation and Cultism in Nigerian Universities**

In this section, the relationship between the staff and student experience of these institutions and neoliberal transformative practices have been documented. This section highlights the reduction in violence within Nigerian campuses as a result of neoliberal permeation. Overall, it highlights the peculiar nature by which patterns of transformations have unfolded in contemporary Nigeria.

The issue of cultism is one of the most intriguing problems of the Nigerian university experience. Secret cults as they are known are militant associations of students that have a very significant impact on the university experience across many Nigerian institutions. In many quarters they are considered homicidal gangs bringing the campus periodically into periods of terror. They are an issue affecting both staff and students and there have been very high-handed attempts to eradicate them, such as involving the military. In many Nigerian public universities they play an active role in determining the nature of experience that students go through (Ogidefa, 2016)

The first of these organisations was founded in 1952 at University College, Ibadan by seven friends. It was made up of the renowned Nobel Prize in Literature laureate Wole Soyinka, Ralph Opara, Pius Oleghe, Ikpehare Aig-Imoukhuede, Nathaniel Oyelola, Olumuyiwa Awe and Sylvanus U. Egbuche who are referred to as the magnificent seven. The organisation was created to fight injustice and they referred to themselves as pirates, and in so doing they sailed the seas of society to fight 'evil doers, injustice, corruption and oppression' which characterized Nigeria at the time (Kalilu, 1995; 21-29). The groups eventually splintered into other groups such as the Buccaneers, Black Axe and Dragons and much more. By the 1970's and 80's their numbers swelled and they had become well-oiled militant groups parading the university campus. On many Nigerian campuses, they maintain a command chain, use encrypted slogans and code words, and do not hesitate to inflict deadly violence. Members periodically promise protection and power for new recruits, and their operations are still a cause for concern on campuses across the country (Aluede & Oniyama, 2009).

Many staff were hesitant to speak on the issue, but a few obliged. One member of staff at a university said 'as far as this university is concerned such things are in the past. When you come in as a student there's a form you have to fill that says if you cause any disturbance of that kind you will be rusticated' (Institution PbJ, Staff, iv). Another said 'today things are much better. They are still there but they are not as brazen as they used to be, I guess they can't catch fresh students again, because many of the students that are coming in are young, and they still monitor them from home, so they don't have that pool to recruit like they used to' (Institution PbF, Staff, ii). A member of management maintained that 'anybody involved in such is obviously a very foolish somebody. I think it is now clear that there is nothing to gain



from that. The main reason why you still have them is because of the politicians that use these boys during election, that's why they are even still parading about, because these guys fund them' (Institution PbE, Management, ii). According to the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, Federal University, Lokoja, Professor Nimi Briggs:

The main desire of campus cult groups is the disruption of normal university activities. They do so through several avenues like causing a scare at lectures and examinations, and openly confronting one another with firearms in and around university campuses. But all this pales into relative insignificance when one considers the loss of lives that is occasioned by cult activities at the universities. Not only do the cult boys and girls themselves die from inter and intra cult clashes, but, sadly, the deaths also involve innocent persons who have nothing to do with cult activities. [For instance] in April 1989, two persons, a visitor and a student were shot dead at the Auditorium of the University of Benin by cultists when a popular campus show called "Mr. Kave" was going on (Briggs, 2014).

The above incidents have contributed in no small measure to how students navigate the campuses they inhabit and this is highlighted by University of Nigeria scholar Cyprian Eneh, in a recent study he argues that 'the unabated incidence and unrelenting activities of secret cults in the Nigerian educational institutions have wrought incalculable havoc on the lives and psyche of Nigerians' (Eneh, 2015: 6 - 17). The students were equally hesitant to discuss this, but a few gave their thoughts on the phenomenon. One student said 'My elder brother was harassed up and down. He had to leave his school and start all over again abroad. Mind you he was almost

finishing oh, but my parents were not having it' (Institution PbG, Student, ii). Another student said 'It is more rampant in the South-South and South-East. It has calmed down here; everybody is chasing money now no time for all that' (Institution PbC, Student, iii). Another student said 'You just have to be very careful' (Institution PbA, Student, i). The impact of cultism on Nigerian campuses is very evident but one of the major reasons why its influence is declining is due to the current neoliberal marketization framework that has come to define the current university experience (Oyemwinmina & Aibieyi, 2015)

As previously highlighted the public universities have been granted some autonomy to govern themselves and this has bolstered university management to tackle the issue head on. In addition, the path to cultism offered an image of success for wayward and nefarious minded youth. Today, that image has been replaced by a new one, which is the 'yahoo boys'. These are students who commit internet fraud and flaunt their glamorous lifestyle all over campus. In many public universities they have replaced the pedestal for popularity and power that cults offered. For many students that would have been tempted to join the cults, the thought of navigating bureaucratic hierarchies, watching over one's shoulder because of threats from rival cults, and engaging in grand theft auto and larceny doesn't quite cut it anymore. The pursuit of money by any means necessary has completely altered and changed the current dynamics. It has thus inadvertently led to a reduction and in certain cases an eradication of campus cult clashes. Therefore, the dominant neoliberal narrative has ushered a less violent campus across Nigeria. Hence, one can appreciate this observable impact of neoliberal transformation on the university experience in this case.

In private universities, most of which are founded on strict religious principles, cultism is virtually non-existent. And this is one of the major reasons why they became popular for parents in the early noughties. Again, really interesting. This highlights that there are issues at play beyond the logic of markets that shaped the emergence of private universities in Nigeria, and that these intersect with processes of neoliberalisation in quite complex way. The goal of going through university without coming in contact with such influences or vices is a strong magnet that attracted students and parents during the university application season. The nature of their university experience is one thing that is admired by many sections of Nigerian society. Members of staff at private universities were more relaxed and spoke much freely about the issue of cultism. A vice-chancellor of a private university said ‘there is zero tolerance for such nonsense. All our students are God fearing and they know that such activities are not tolerated. There is everything here for them to prosper and I’m sure they know better than to dip their hands into something that will bring them destruction’ (Institution PvJ, Management, i). A member of staff said ‘we have a very big campus here and students are free to exercise their fullest potentials here. The issue of cultism is something that has brought a lot of damage to the general perception of public universities’ (Institution PvB, Staff, ii). While another expressed his thoughts, by stating ‘there is no place for that here and we are very happy about that’ (Institution PvG, Staff, iii). Such assertions are supported by Onyewuenyi, who states that:

When it comes to cult free universities in Nigeria, I can boldly say that the missionary ones are in the front. Like Madonna, Covenant, etc. And that’s because of their system of administration (those schools are managed like secondary schools) I can’t vouch for any government university. Reason is

simple even when you think they are not there, they are there and waiting for the right moment to raise their heads. Permit me to inform you that cult boys move around from school to school (in search of recruits and trouble). Therefore, a cultist from another school can be residing in your school for a number of reasons (Onyewuenyi, 2017).

Another recent study highlighted the benefits of private universities on the issue of cultism and the general Nigerian university experience by stating that ‘in Nigeria, the incursion of private universities into the educational system will no doubt bring blessings into university education and educational development. As indicated in this paper, such blessings include the enhancement of the peaceful atmosphere in the campuses; reduced student unrest, cultism and strikes’ (Akindele, 2012: 41-50). Therefore, one can contend that the Nigerian university experience was fundamentally changed by the incursion of neoliberal principles. However, it still throws up questions of neglect that is suffered by public universities. It is untenable that public university students have to exist in universities that are throwing every obstacle at them. For many students in such institutions their experience and existence is fraught with many dangers, difficulties and is devoid of peace. However, this is an experience that many private universities have no understanding of. The intrusion and dominance of the market has created a peculiar situation where they are largely shielded from nefarious activities that characterize the public university experience. A few students do appreciate this though and expressed their opinions on the issue of cultism. A student said ‘I’m very aware of the issue. The things that some students go through are just crazy. We have our own trouble here but it’s not anywhere close to what I’ve heard goes on in some public universities’ (Institution PvB, Student, ii).

Another student said ‘there are many more things to be in this world than a cultist. I can’t see why it appeals to some people’ (Institution Pvd, Student, iv). While another said ‘growing up you used to hear stories but they are not as serious as before, but I’m sure it’s still there’ (Institution Pvl, Student, il). Therefore, one can appreciate how neoliberal transformation has given these students a platform to exist outside the rancorous environments of public universities. One can thus further appreciate the overwhelming influence of neoliberal market transformation on the overall Nigerian university system and the experience of individuals inhabiting it. The interesting point here is that the process of neoliberalisation is playing out in a highly distinctive way and producing some unexpected results within the Nigerian context that is not highlighted by the dominant literature on the neoliberal university. To conclude, in this section, the Nigerian university experience and the nefarious activity of cultism have been discussed. This section highlighted the role of the neoliberal environment in reducing and in certain cases eradicating violence on campus; it also explained the privilege that the neoliberal dictates accord to students in private universities who do not have to go through such.

## **9.6 Conclusion**

Through this chapter transformations across student and staff experience of higher education in Nigeria in relation to four areas: welfare, remuneration and tuition, industrial action, and cultism have been presented. The first three areas feature in existing scholarship on neoliberalism and the neoliberalisation of higher education. Findings show that dynamics in Nigeria parallel those elsewhere, albeit with some differences across public and private institutions. The focus on cultism is more particular to the Nigerian case, where we see that the historic problem of student societies that hold links to illegal and at times violent activities remains prominent.

Due to neoliberal permeation we see pecuniary considerations motivating students, and this amongst other reasons has reduced their recruitment pool. In addition, the study argued that the concerted efforts by private institutions to eradicate such from their campuses and maintain their image has been used as market pull factor to attract students to their institutions.

Overall, through this chapter, an overview of research findings on changes to staff and student experiences has been provided. As related previously, this chapter observes the effects of neoliberal university is defined by four features in the realm of these practices. First, in relation to welfare, it looked at changes in accommodation provision, secondly, it looked at remuneration and tuition and the hike in fees and stagnancy in salaries, thirdly it highlighted industrial action and the systematic removal of tools of unionisation and protests, and finally cultism and the reduction in violence as a result of neoliberal permeation. Fundamentally, there is a focus across the sector on 'market power' as the key tool for determining staff and student decisions. Hence, this study has outlined novel introductions to the body of knowledge on neoliberal transformation of the Nigerian university experience. Key similarities and differences were also highlighted here. For instance, emphasis has been placed how both institutions are affected by cultism differently, and how industrial action has been eroded in both, but for completely different but interlocking reasons. The next chapter is the concluding chapter. It explores the understanding of neoliberalism within Nigeria today, in line with the definitions postulated in chapter two. It then highlights the findings and discourse explored within chapter six to nine, and finally it highlights key contributions of the thesis.



## CHAPTER TEN

### 10.0 Conclusion

#### 10.1 Overview

The thesis has presented a comparative analysis of neoliberal market patterns within private and public universities in Nigeria. Through this concluding chapter, attempts have been made to draw together the core contributions from the study. In locating these contributions, the study draws from intellectual influences on the fields and focuses of inquiry that are extended by these contributions. Nigeria as a nation, is still in its fancy, and it is expected that newer insights and conclusions on the influence of neoliberalism and its transformation of the society will arise as the steady boots of time march along.

Through this study, conceptual and empirical contributions through my exploration of higher education transformation in Nigeria have been provided. Conceptual extensions come through my clarification of 'neoliberalisation' and my derivation and application of a three-dimensional framework for studying higher education transformation. Empirical extensions come through my detailed characterisation of higher education transformation in Nigeria. In terms of headline empirical findings what we see is an individualisation of the cost mechanisms governing elaborate processes, an application of market-based principles to curriculum formation, and an application of market optimality to institutional foundations, further cementing existing visions of the 'neoliberal university' highlighted in existing literature. These findings hold broadly across public and private institutions studied, although amongst the differences the greater use of market-based principles to shape curriculum and institution expansion in private institutions is noteworthy. We also



see, in the case of private institutions, a prominent incorporation of religious authority and cultural practices, which demonstrates the importance of existing institutions and contexts in shaping variation in higher education neoliberalisation.

Overall, the thesis is divided into two parts. The first five chapters helped to locate and explain the contribution from the thesis, by focusing on how neoliberalism has been explored previously. Through these first chapters, the mechanisms by which the thesis gains analytical traction is explained through the overview provided of the methodological framework, the background to the case and aims of the study, and the introduction of the reader to the contested definitions and concepts explored in the literature. The final five chapters focus on analysing the results of the fieldwork undertaken, which comprises a survey of staff and students from across twelve public and private universities, in addition to supporting interview material. I now forge ahead to explore the conceptualisation of broad neoliberal understanding, highlight the core contributions to neoliberal transformation, and harmonise these under the key contributions of the thesis.

## **10.2 Conceptualising Neoliberalisation and Analysing the Neoliberal University**

This section will focus on the definition of neoliberalism I offered in Chapter two. In that chapter, a broad definition of neoliberalism around which to orientate my study was derived, which conceptualises neoliberalisation as the process of extending market-based principles and processes to shape behaviour and outcomes across aspects of the socio-economic world. Prominent dimensions of neoliberalisation highlighted in existing scholarship include moves from collective to individualised payment for public goods and services, reduction of state involvement in and

regulation over the supply of public goods and services, and the creation of institutional structures to encourage managed forms of competition between providers of public goods and services. However, the study contended that all these definitions fall within the four broad pillars that were offered which are: intellectual, economic, political, and transformational. In this section, the study draws on existing literature and participant views to further add value to existing scholarship on this conceptualisation within the Nigerian context.

In this section, the study employs similar techniques utilised in the previous three chapters to speak to broader occurrences within all the pillars. The intellectual will highlight the peculiarity of disposition surrounding academic and general debates on the underpinnings ascribed to neoliberalism in Nigeria today. For the economic, it will speak to discourse on current trade and business activities, and the role of the global economic international organisations and superstructures, such as The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. On the political, it will attempt to highlight democracy and its processes within the Nigerian context, which as evidenced in the thesis is seen as a manifestation of neoliberal transformation. The spearhead of the insights that guided the writing of this section is of course underpinned by contributions from staff and students existing within the Nigerian higher education system. The thesis will now proceed to discuss the postulated definition, to shed more light on it from a Nigerian perspective, further aiding future researchers to identify areas of neoliberal transformation, and better guide scholars to pinpoint the elusive term that is neoliberalism.

**Intellectual:** The beginning of a new millennium ushered in a laissez-faire atmosphere in all aspects of life. A people that had been stifled by the iron grip of

the military could now elect leaders, conduct a new range of business activities, and engage in privatisation of state assets. However, almost 20 years later the gulf between the promises and the reality has become even more glaring. According to a member of management 'We are living in a Nigeria that is working for some people; while for others it is a daily struggle for survival' (Institution PbC, Management, ii). The chairman of a state chapter of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) said 'The position of ASUU is very clear, we can all see that this current system is not sustainable. The other day we organised a symposium on this very topic. It is clear that the government does not see this as an issue of concern' (Institution GvB, Management, i). A member of staff stated 'Nigerians are tired of the current situation. The truth is that a lot of us are shielded from the hardships because of the few comforts we have access to. But many Nigerians do not even have where to turn to' (Institution PVA, Staff, ii).

In examining the discourse one can appreciate the shifting roles of institutional outcomes and processes that have come to underpin the impact of neoliberalism on the modern Nigerian state. It is within this crucible of space and action that Nigerians exist. Some people the researcher spoke to identify this framework by the name neoliberalism, but the weight of blame is focused on the evidence of this phenomenon around them. Their anger was levied in sentences that highlighted the degradation of critical infrastructure, the declining investment in all levels of education and other core sectors, the critical nexus of high unemployment and uneven population growth, and the boom and bust cycles that underpin the general economic state of many individuals living in Nigeria. It is these issues that captivate people that sit at the forefront of general intellectual discourse on the current Nigerian situation. On the academic front, there has also been an evolution on the

definition of neoliberalism by Nigerian scholars and public intellectuals. The 2008 financial crises ushered in a greater appreciation of the phenomenon, and newer studies have emphasized intriguing ways of highlighting it.

According to a recent study by Nigerian scholars, it is argued that the neoliberal doctrine 'has not produced its purported outcomes of efficiency, consumer satisfaction and social equity, and the process has not been thoroughly transparent and accountable' (Okpanachi & Ebute, 2015: 253-276). While another study suggests that 'when we hear today that Nigerians must swallow bitter pills or bear shocks so that the future can be better, our rulers are coming from Chicago Shock Doctors' (Olorode, 2016: 9-36). This view points to the presence of market fundamentalism and its reformation of Nigerian society. Its impact on competitive advantage and the role of agency ascribed to those seeking to create value and promote efficient service provision. According to a member of staff 'private sector has improved the economy of Nigeria tremendously. Just look at all the things that are working and you'll notice it is within the private sector. Back then the biggest jobs were in the civil service but today I see that most bright young people do not even consider the civil service as an option' (Institution PbA, Staff, iii).

Another member of staff the researcher interviewed in the economic centre of Nigeria, that is Lagos, talked about a recent debacle involving a sanitation contract offered to a private company, he says:

Wasn't it recently that Ambode gave the contract to manage waste to Visionscape (a private company) and took it away from LAWMA and they badly mismanaged it? The entire city was dirty and there were heaps of refuse all around from Isolo to Mushin. No doubt there was some politics about the

awarding of the contract that we are not privy to but the simple fact of the matter is they were not able to keep the city clean. The private sector has its role to play but there are some areas that the state is integral (Institution PBJ, Staff, iii).

For him the role of government within the neoliberal framework should be that of parent or guardian to curb the excesses of an overbearing private sector, and he argues that such is not the way many other sectors are governed, and it is within this area of intellectual discourse that another cross-section of Nigerians resides. Notwithstanding, speaking with students also offered some interesting points of view.

The students that were engaged in discourse with about their views on the manifestations of neoliberalism, and their understanding of the term offered interesting observations. One student said ‘what we have is a case of the rich getting richer. What I can say about the current state of Nigeria is that it is such a difficult place to live in. I do not know how people still find time to relax because it is just from one problem to the other’ (Institution PbD, Student, ii). Another student said ‘students used to protest about everything before. But now nobody believes that what happens to somebody else affects them, as long as they and their family are okay then it is all good’ (Institution Pbl, Student, ii). A student from a private university also expressed his views by stating ‘Many Nigerians don’t even know what it means to have a functioning government that is why we still inaugurate boreholes. Can you imagine that, in this day and age a new borehole is what many people will be jumping up and down for’ (Institution PvF, Student, iii).

Such views encompass the significant ideas within intellectual discourse on neoliberalism in Nigeria. For example, according to a scholar at The University of Ibadan ‘the last three decades witnessed widespread implementation of neo-liberalism and economic reforms in Nigeria. The authoritarian implementation of the reforms, however, raises concern about social exclusion in the development process’ (Onyeonoru, 2007: 21-24). In addition, according to a study conducted on the Nigerian healthcare sector it is established that

Since the adoption of the neoliberal policy in Nigeria in the 1980s, its impact on the human development indices of the citizenry has not been satisfactory as manifested by the unequal income distribution gap between the rich and the poor over the years. [For instance], the health conditions of Nigerians have experienced a decline as revealed by the increasing rate of infant mortality and maternal mortality (Egharevba et al, 2015).

Such views capture the disposition of Nigerians on the framework that governs their everyday lives. However, there are those who embrace the current system and are buoyed on by the symbols of success that exist within Nigeria; that is the billionaires that take up a symbolic space in Nigerian pop culture. They exist as a metric for young people who believe that the neoliberal system birthed them and they in turn can tap into the tenets of the system and make it too. According to one student ‘guys like Adenuga and Dangote are an inspiration to me. Nigeria get as it be but if they can make it then I can make it too’ (Institution PbG, Student, i). Another said ‘they got their break when everything kind of relaxed and the military stepped back and to a large extent that is the society we still live in today’ (Institution PbH,

Student, ii). While another student said ‘an average Nigerian does not want to pay tax, I’m not making excuses for the leaders but the system we live in is one where people distrust anything government. Unless the government can change their ways, which I don’t see happening anytime soon then I am fully in support of all forms of private sector participation’ (Institution PvE, Student, iii).

There are also students who exist in the middle of the discourse and believe that a strong state should exist alongside a strong private sector. Their arguments are focused on the role of the state in creating elements for the latter sector to thrive. A student said ‘Nigeria should be building more hospitals, more universities and more roads’ (Institution PbB, Student, ii). Another student said ‘The current system is not geared towards supporting people. Everybody is just looking for what will bring money right now’ (Institution Pbl, Student, i). Therefore, it is clear that the intellectual discourse on neoliberalism is diverse and thriving and it elicits visceral reactions from its citizens. Hence, I contend that Nigerian citizens identify the specific transformations surrounding them and understand it is caused by structural dislocations which some identified as neoliberalism. That one can point to certain changes within a particular locale and if it fits within certain parameters then the term can be utilised. These sets of observations further give a mantle to extend and further pinpoint the definition of the term.

In conclusion, this section has looked at the views surrounding the dominant debates and discourse surrounding all aspects of neoliberalism today. It highlighted the stance of members of staff and students on evidence of neoliberal transformation and how it is understood by those who espouse the current neoliberal system, those who vehemently oppose it, and those who believe that it should be viewed in context

and adapted to the peculiar Nigerian reality. Hopefully, this chapter will offer an understanding to future scholars regarding the philosophical disposition and general understanding of neoliberalism held by Nigerians today. The study will now highlight the attitude towards the second pillar which is the economic.

**Economic:** The advertised gains of a highly market-oriented state framework are the pathway for growth, unemployment erosion, and the promotion of a stable currency. The principal organs of exporting these views are the two principal organisations, situated within the core countries, namely the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Since the dawn of the fourth republic Nigeria has requested and received loans totalling over \$4.5 billion, and there are different views on the influence of these organisations on Nigeria, and by highlighting this we add to the conceptualisation of neoliberal understanding within this pillar (Nairametrics, 2019).

According to a member of staff and professor of economics ‘they have a very important role to play in how Nigeria sets its budget’ (Institution PbA, Staff, ii). This is alluding to the dominant framework of recurrent expenditure present in modern Nigerian budgets, with majority of capital expenditure funded by foreign loans and grants. Another member of staff talked about the informal economy, he said ‘the basis of Nigeria’s economy is the petty traders we have around and a lot of the government’s policies are too harsh on them. It’s only when it’s time for election that they remember them’ (Institution PbF, Staff, ii).

The figures that guide the informal economy are very often side-lined when economic planning occurs at the highest level. This could be due to the tyranny of elitism as stated by a participant, he said ‘we have a lot of wonderful people in the



universities but when it is time to appoint ministers they will go and look for someone who has no connection with what's on ground at all' (Institution PvC, Staff, iii). He is referring to the stance of appointing individuals who have spent all their time abroad, particularly those who have worked with the World Bank and the IMF as opposed to those who are engrossed with the rigours of Nigeria on a daily basis. And there are certain Nigerians who argue that such practices have not led to greater benefits for all Nigerians.

This is because they instigate initiatives fostered upon the Nigerian state by policy planners in western capitals and endorsed by ministers who also spent time in these areas, far removed from the realities on the ground. According to a study on the activities of the organisations on the Nigerian agricultural sector, the agricultural loan schemes are often characterized by stop and start mechanisms not conducive for sustainable implementation. They maintain that 'important activities should be sustained with available funds while alternative funding sources are explored' (Oladele, 2004: 141-145). Another study on the impact of certain donor projects within Nigeria, which are characterized as 'white elephant' by scholars, argues that:

So long as the local evaluation of aid is reactive to other people's analyses of the problems, the dialogue will continue to be about someone else's priorities for the country. There are few donors who would not welcome the strengthening of the recipient capacity to set priorities or to argue powerfully for counter-priorities to those proposed by donors (Babalola et al, 1971: 2-8).

The above captures the views of a group of scholars who exist in defiance of the current global developmental model, and it highlights their views on the Nigerian situation. However, there are those who hold firm to this vehicle of development

and their agents and believe it has led to elements of progress for the union of Nigeria. According to a member of staff 'what these institutions have attempted to do is not perfect but without them we would have been a much worse situation. Africa needs a lot of financing to move forward and that money will not come from here. It is up to us to negotiate the best things for ourselves' (Institution PvE, Staff, ii). While a member of management said that 'There is definitely a role for external financing to play. But the issue is that there is very little coordination between the fiscal and monetary side of things. One side is chasing price stability, and another is focused on revenue generation and there is no harmony between them. Its Abuja politics, I was there, so I understand how it works, but if both of them can focus together then they can do more for Nigerians' (Institution PvC, Management, ii).

Another participant praised the impact of the former foreign minister and finance minister on the debt relief Nigeria obtained in the early days of the fourth republic, who was a former World Bank official, he said 'She came back and did a marvellous job' (Institution PvF, Staff, ii). He is referring to Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala who was the former managing director at the World Bank that came back to become finance minister and led negotiations that led to the cancelling of over \$20billion in Nigerian foreign debt. It was a true watershed moment for the Nigerian fourth republic. Despite this, a section of Nigerians still offers strong criticisms of the Bretton Woods organisations and ministers that are plucked from there. But in all, there are those who also exist on the edge of the discourse. In certain quarters, there are those who believe that Nigerians should control what it can and harness what it cannot. According to Prof Akpan Ekpo, the former Director General of the West African Institute for Financial and Economic Management:

Governments in low income countries faced a complex array of competing economic and policy demands in seeking to improve the lives of their citizens, saying citizens of these countries seek additional and improved services in infrastructure, education, health care, electricity, social justice and security among others, as well as more efficient and equitable systems of taxation. Because domestic resources in these countries are limited to meet these needs, countries often have to borrow and frequently accumulate debt. Consequently, governments in low income countries often face considerable balance sheet risks, given their high levels of indebtedness in relation to GDP and to export receipts (Udeme, 2013).

Speaking with students also offered interesting points of view on this pillar of neoliberalism. I asked a student if the current Nigerian environment was conducive to prosperity for him and his counterparts and he had this to say: ‘everyone knows that the Nigerian dream is to blow. But for me, I think nothing comes easy. It takes a while to build wealth, but to answer your question simply I’ll say yes, the current system is not that bad, if you work hard you can make it, but it’s the politicians that have messed this entire country up’ (Institution Pvd, Student, ii). Another student said he was ambivalent about the activities of the Bretton Woods Organisations; he said ‘the main issue is us, we are just not ready at all in this country’ (Institution PbA, Student, i).

While another student talked about the neoliberal system in interesting terms. He said ‘I don’t have any issues with the World Bank and IMF, they are doing what they were created to do, Nigeria on the other hand is not even close to doing what is was created to do’ (Institution PvJ, Student, iv). For this set of people, it is primarily a

battle for the supremacy of ideas, and it is because of this reason that they accept the subtle interference of these organisations. For those that exist in Nigeria the lack of idea driven economic decisions by members of the upper echelons is notably absent in many parts of the country. Major economic decisions are driven by party loyalties and cronyism, and the prescriptions of the western organisations provide a fundamental pathway to make sense of the economic issues of Nigeria and how the nation attempts to fit into the world.

According to a study in a working paper by Dani Rodik and Sharun Mukand ‘the role of ideas as a catalyst for policy and institutional change’ creates interesting dichotomies within the citizenry, particularly when the issue is dealing with livelihood. The economy is the very basis for a lot of human interaction and navigating it within the variables of ideas and presence is necessary for access to basic elements of survival such as shelter and food, and in Nigeria these two variables make up the bulk of consumer spending. The current system thus necessitates the people to make a clear delineation of ‘ideas and vested interests and show how they feed into each other’ and how they themselves can navigate it (Rodik & Mukand, 2018). Additionally, it is argued by a recent paper that the World Bank and IMF have been positioned as the most notable authority on navigating the path to economic prosperity, and its papers and publications are relied upon by many policy makers in nations existing on the periphery. It is maintained that:

The World Bank’s annual *World Development Report* is probably the most widely-read publication in the development field, and World Bank research is recognized by supporters and critics alike as setting the terms of international development debates. Similarly, the IMF’s flagship publication, *the World*

*Economic Outlook*, is highly influential among policy elites as it presents short- and medium-term forecasts for economic growth and inflation. World Bank and IMF publications are widely read by scholars and policymakers around the world. However, they are not vetted through a scientific peer-review process and have been observed to gravitate toward positions officially endorsed by each organization (Babb & Kentikelenis, 2018: 2-11).

Notwithstanding, there are still students who vehemently disagree with this notion. Many students today believe that Nigeria's development has been skewed by its interactions with these international organisations. One student said 'my brother look at the country we are living in, does it look like a place touched by the organisations you mentioned. All the time we hear of billions, but nothing is happening' (Institution PvC, Student, iv). Another student said 'just leave that matter, it's only God that can help us because I don't even know again' (Institution PbB, Student, ii). While another student talked about the developmental model and the divergence between the tenets it professes and what actually happens. He said 'It's every year that Nigeria is borrowing from one place or the other' (Institution PbF, Student, iii). These views highlight the school of thought that such conditions of dependency strip the people of the agency they believe is needed to navigate the very slippery economic slopes they grapple with every day.

This assertion is supported by Priscilla Twumasi-Baffour who argues that 'people [have] started to ask lots of questions about the implications of the effects of 16 years of IMF and World Bank adjustment programmes, and their ramifications. To many, the country had been tied to the apron strings of the Bretton Woods institutions and has to wean itself off as soon as possible (Twumasi-Baffour, 2019).

And this is brilliantly captured by the words of a professor I interviewed at a public university who said ‘Nigeria’s population is growing at an alarming rate, and the clock is ticking, if we are not careful what is going on with Boko Haram could be just the tip of the iceberg’ (Institution PbC, Student, iii).

In this section, an analysis of the understanding of the second pillar within the Nigerian environment is presented. The views expressed by staff and students who believe it is a vehicle for understanding the world and ushering in economic prosperity and those who err on the side of caution and point to what is seen as the negligible benefits accruing to African countries since the shift to this new framework have been elucidated. Overall, the section has added new impetus to what is and will continue to be a fierce debate in academic and policy circles. The wide range of views above further highlights the generational divide concerning discussions surrounding the current and future path towards economic development and provides more depth to this definition of neoliberalism.

**Political:** For many citizens, the banishment of military rule and the embrace of western democratic ideals is a wonderful thing. However, there are many well-meaning Nigerians who have expressed outright disdain for what the democratic political system has ultimately become. In this section, we shall be highlighting the views of academics and students within the Nigerian higher education system on the third pillar of neoliberal understanding, the political. According to a member of staff at a private university ‘we are not practicing democracy here. We are just deceiving ourselves’ (Institution PvF, Staff, iii). Another member of staff at a public university said ‘The politicians we have are a far cry from those that were there at the time of independence. Those ones stood for something. The people we have today see public

office as an avenue to enrich themselves’ (Institution PbA, Staff, iv). While a member of management at a public university chuckled when I asked him about the current political system. He said ‘we have just copied what these people abroad have done without adapting it to our own situation’ (Institution PbC, Management, ii). An archival entry suggests that ‘the end of military adventurism in the Nigerian polity characterized by political instability and economic degradation has brought the country to its lowest ebb’. It basically throws up the argument that return to democracy was the elixir that would create prosperity (Archives, Institution Aii). However, there are scholars who argue that the reason for this is that Nigeria has not crafted its own unique political system, and this is down to the major geopolitical players and the system they propagate and maintain.

For many Nigerians the ideals of a democratic society have ushered freedoms that were unspeakable barely two decades ago, though not as far reaching as many would like it to go. According to Andrea Cassani the notion that nations practicing democracy, a system hinged on freedom, and support for individual rights will extend these freedoms to other facets of the governance process is not entirely the case. She argues in a report for the Agenda for International Development, that at the end of the last century, hopes ran high and stakeholders in Western capitals sat on one side of the argument. The belief was that an introduction of ‘regularised procedures for leadership selection and replacement would have depersonalised political power’ and this would replace the logic guiding the governance process and the sharing of national resources. However, she maintains that this was not the eventual case, contending that:

One of the main arguments was that democracy makes rulers responsive to the demands of the poor for social services, thus hindering physical capital accumulation and growth. [However] participatory politics tends to generate inefficient governance, by overloading the state with sometimes contrasting demands, moreover. Finally, elections draw politicians' attention to short-term goals as opposed to longer-term investments, and are often associated with political instability, which reduces a country's attractiveness for investors. (Cassani, 2017).

However, many people the researcher spoke to argued that democracy in Nigeria has ushered in none of the expected rewards. One scholar argues that 'instead of achieving sustainable socioeconomic growth and positive development outcomes, many African states, following neoliberal, Washington Consensus based policies, experienced stagnation or regression, accrued large debts, and fell into cycles of debilitating dependency' (Amahazion, 2014). A recent pew research suggests that 'Only 39% of Nigerians are satisfied with the way democracy is working in their country, while 60% say they are not satisfied. This negative sentiment is similar to what was found in 2017 but is slightly improved from 2013, when Goodluck Jonathan was president and 72% were dissatisfied with the way democracy was working' (Pew Research Centre, 2018).

Despite the criticisms levelled against this system of governance there are those who whole heartedly support the current democratic system. One member of staff maintained that 'Nigeria has seen dark times just thank your stars you were not born then. That chapter is part of our history nothing we can do on that now, but it is our prayer that it will not be part of our future' (Institution PbD, Staff, iii). Another



member of staff said ‘democracy is something we must all be thankful for. It is not perfect, but it has done a lot of good for this country’ (Institution PvG, Staff, i). While a professor that had discussions with the researcher talked about the situation in interesting terms. He was part of the opposition to the military administration of Sani Abacha that sought to bring back democracy and he was very glad that he gave his views on democracy and the current Nigerian state.

He said ‘It is not about what I think, but what the young people of nowadays think. After all we witnessed with this man (current Nigerian president) in the 1980’s yet people still elected him, many of them young people like yourself. It is clear that Nigerians have not learnt their lesson. We are still learning as we go because we have never had it uninterrupted for this long’ (Institution PbG, Staff, iii). There are different views held by scholars on the current Nigerian democratic system. Nevertheless, one can argue that discourse on the post-military state intersects between politics and economics seamlessly. The ways and means by which Nigeria has chosen to govern itself sits in that critical point between neglecting the local and adopting the global. It oscillates between the constraints and opportunities offered by a foreign political system. The vehicle of democracy, which is elections, has been reduced to a vainglorious and violent exercise that makes many inhabitants of the state recoil. But on the other hand, it has led to a reduction of protectionist political principles and led to a more open society for a large portion of society. Therefore, to be a modern Nigerian is to accept to exist in this contradictory framework guided by foreign prescriptions that guides the political situation.

Notwithstanding, you have students who had more biting criticisms of the system. They suggest that the Nigerian state is democratic in just name alone. They contend

that the military leaders have left their uniforms and today they wear the long flowing robes of the modern politician. For them, it is little coincidence that two out of four presidents in the fourth republic were former military generals. One student said 'there are no systems of checks and balances here. The president can do and undo in Nigeria. The other arms of government cannot do much, they are just there enjoying money and sharing the national cake. Have you heard of any judge or lawmaker that challenged the president' (Institution PbE, Student, ii). Another student talked about the political system itself. He said 'every four years they will say come and choose, but it is the same people. Is it not the same Atiku that contested under Action Congress (AC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) it just doesn't make sense. In America if you vote Democrat or Republican you know what that means, you know what you are voting for. But here, me I don't know oh. We are just joking here, and the annoying thing is that we all know' (Institution PvJ, Student, i). Another student said 'Every year people will be suffering. But let time for election come and you will be hearing we need a Muslim-Christian ticket. We need somebody from the south-west to balance out somebody from the north-east. It is like Nigerians just forget the suffering. They don't even ask what these guys hope to achieve they just want their person there by any means necessary' (Institution PbA, Student, iii). I can understand the frustration of the students. They have largely existed in a political system that does not reflect their aspirations for the country. One scholar Seun Akinyemi suggest that this feeds into voter apathy. He maintains that

Since its return to electoral democracy in 1999, Nigeria's elections have been characterized by voter apathy. A small percentage of the voting population actually vote, which is an affront to idea of 'majority rule' which is one of

the basic tenets of democracy. It follows that instead of majority rule, there is 'minority rule' in Nigeria because in a population of over 200 million there were 82.3 million registered voters as collated by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and only 28.6 million voted in the 2019 elections. A mere 35% of the registered voters voted in the past election (Akinyemi, 2019).

Another reason is the poor state of things in the last decade. A system that many young Nigerians blame the politicians for. The Nigerian political economist Olu Fasan argues that 'legitimacy is not just about winning elections, it's also about the social contract. If a government doesn't meet the needs of the people, it would lack legitimacy in their eyes. Nigeria is a country where successive governments have failed to tackle unemployment, poverty, inequality and insecurity, while public officers abuse the state for personal gain. This undermines state legitimacy' (Fasana, 2018).

Despite this, there are those students who also hold strongly to belief in the democratic principles that Nigeria currently practices. They subscribe to the line of thought that it is just a few things that need taking care of for the system to be fit for purpose. One student said 'The main issue really is infrastructure. If Nigeria gets that one right all others will follow. How can a country as big as Nigeria not have light, once things like that are taken care of Nigerians will be expecting more and more from those who lead us and things will get better (Institution PbA, Student, iii). Another student highlighted the constitution as the main stumbling block. He said 'We cannot be practicing democracy with a constitution that was prepared by the military. It is just not right. My friend that is studying law explained some things

to me that just don't make sense, but it's what we have settled for, at least for now' (Institution PbH, Student, iv). While another student talked about the role of the masses and blamed the lack of an educated population. He said 'when you have a big section of the people who are not educated then these politicians can keep on misbehaving. To God who made me if I was president that's the first thing I would fix. Once you know your left from your right, nobody can come and take you for a fool, and that's what has been happening since' (Institution PbC, Student, ii).

In conclusion, this section has sought to highlight participant voices within the study to discuss how they view the political system they operate in. It has led to some intriguing insights that enhance understanding on this area of inquiry, further adding to discourse on the third pillar of the political, and further enriching the definition of neoliberalism. The area of sectoral transformation will now be highlighted.

**Transformation:** The thesis has centred itself within this debate by expanding on its impact on the higher education sector. But in this section, we shall be highlighting the general views and insights on other sectors that historically were under the remit of government. Participants expressed strong views, mostly in favour, but there were a few that were against. For those living and working in Nigeria, the rate of change that occurred because of the systemic incursion of capital is self-evident. But for the purpose of time and precision the researcher asked questions bordering on four major sectors: infrastructure, healthcare, and finance.

A member of management that told me about the days under the state-controlled telecommunications agency. He said 'back then with NITEL, when I wanted to call my sister in the United States I would go to queue at the junction and then you pay and use. But one of the big professors in the department had a landline and he

usually permitted me to use it to call. It's a far cry from what we have today' (Institution PbC, Management, ii). Another member of staff talked about the proliferation of banks at the time 'A lot of new generation banks were everywhere. They were just opening and closing anyhow. Some of them would be issuing loans to themselves and their friends with no plan of paying back and many people lost their money' (Institution PbG, Staff, i). While another participant talked about the current nature of the Nigerian state, and he mentioned that 'government of today cannot cope with the demand on the services in many areas. It is why the private sector was invited but it is not affordable for the masses' (Institution PbJ, Staff, iv). The rate of sectoral transformation in Nigeria is greatly highlighted by the telecommunications sector. The Nigeria Telecommunications Limited (known as NITEL) was established in 1985. It was effectively a government monopoly and they wielded control over not just communications but delivery of parcels too. They were characterized by poor services, neglect of maintenance of core infrastructure, and mismanagement. With the dawn of the new millennium and the return to democracy the year before, Nigeria embarked on a mass campaign of deregulation in line with neoliberal ideals. It is maintained that in the year 2001, a competitive bidding process was introduced and firms

were given renewable GSM licenses, which had a 5-year expiration date, and allowed them to operate within the 850 MHz and 1900 MHz spectrum bands. Specific targets were set for the operators by the NCC. Some of the targets were a minimum of 100,000 subscribers each in the beginning year of operations, 1.5 million subscribers in the next five years, and a minimum of 5% geographical coverage within each of the country's geopolitical states (Nairametrics, 2019).

Similarly, there was change going on in the healthcare sector. A lot of the major general hospitals had become shadow of themselves. The doctors and specialists that populated them had reduced considerably. They had relocated to other areas of globe where they could practice with the most modern technological improvements. In addition, many of them were intellectuals and their criticism of the state did not go unnoticed, they fled to escape the jaws of a military repressive state. Today the arena of healthcare has been surrendered largely to the private sector.

According to a recent USAID funded report, it is contended that ‘the private sector in Nigeria offers several priority public health services. Private expenditure on health as a percentage of total health expenditure has continued to grow and accounts for 75% of all health expenditure’ (Shops, 2010). One participant staff member talked about how expensive drugs have become. ‘If you go to many parts of Nigeria, many of the people there rely on local medicine. People die because they cannot afford to go to the hospitals’ (Institution PvA, Staff, i). Another talked about the importance of the private sector and their role in changing the landscape of business through communications innovation, but he also questioned the growing oligopoly developing within Nigeria by a few firms. ‘Of course, these guys have been very good for Nigeria. But the government have really allowed them free reign, they have just come here to eat and they pack the money outside’ (Institution PbD, Staff, i). While another highlighted the importance of the government in the process of services provision. ‘Many people no longer feel that connection with government. They have neglected their duties. It is very surprising to me that many young people do not even know who the leader of their local governments or even their senator is. And it is this neglect that has caused it’ (Institution Pbl, Staff, iii).

Therefore, one can appreciate the impact of these transformation on the lives of Nigerians. The sector faces a number of pressing challenges. The country has developed a sharp divide based on what you can afford. Most residents in urban areas can afford to engage comfortably with these sectors that improve living standards but as one participant pointed out, those in the rural areas are by and large left out. In addition, the structural issues facing Nigeria have made it more difficult for the citizenry and businesses alike, and a lot of things have become luxuries. Yet, despite these challenges Nigeria is still viewed as a good investment destination and all indicators point to increased expansion of businesses in the sectors. This illustrates that private sector participation in many core areas is broadening and is becoming an entrenched aspect of life in the African country.

It is this growing realisation that many students are keen to highlight during our conversations. One student said ‘Our politicians always forget that many Nigerians are actually poor. That’s why they just wake up and impose nonsense tariffs and taxes. They don’t even care anymore, and Nigerian masses are the real problem because when they push them to the wall instead of them to stand against it, they just break the wall and continue their own way. All of us just adjust and carry on’ (Institution Pvl, Student, iii). Another suggested that ‘we should just sell this place and share the money. At least if we share the money people can point to something that they got from Nigeria’ (Institution PbE, Student, iv). While another student said ‘growing up it was NEPA, then PHCN and now I don’t even know again. Nothing is getting better and every time they will be bringing bill’ (Institution PbC, Student, iii). This touches on something important, a key sector of Nigeria that remained firmly in the grip of government control until it was privatised recently: electricity. According to a brief profile by the Nigerian Electricity System Operator:

The Federal Government by Decree No. 24 of 1972 created the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA). The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) took further steps towards the Restructuring of the Nigerian Power Sector to establish an electricity supply that is efficient, reliable and cost-effective throughout the country and which will attract private investment. Subsequently, another Power Sector Reform Act was enacted in 2005, transferring the public monopoly of NEPA to Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) which was unbundled into 18 Business Units (BU); viz eleven (11) Distribution companies:- six (6) Generation companies and one (1) Transmission company (Nigerian Electricity System Operator, 2019).

Today the government still has effective control over the TCN section. And the distribution and generation arms are all in the hands of private companies. However, one Nigerian student contends ‘they just sold it to their people. It is the same people that have been there. See the reason we are like this today is because a lot of people make money from things staying exactly as they are’ (Institution PVB, Student, ii).

Notwithstanding, the students also had good things to say about government role in the banking sector. ‘The other day they deducted some money from my account. I was tweeting at these guys continuously they did not even care. As soon as I added CBN they responded asking me for my account number’ (Institution PbC, Student, ii). The shifting role of CBN is one worthy of highlighting. One can argue that it represents a regulator that ordinary Nigerians believe is run efficiently, though, those in the banks would likely disagree with this. In any case, the gradual consolidation was a pivotal moment in recent Nigerian history. According to a study by researchers at the University of Calabar:



Consolidation was used as a key strategy by a number of banks to meet the capitalization requirements issued by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in 2005. In view of the need to understand the effect of this strategy as used by the banks, this study sought to establish the impact of bank capital, aggregate investment, loans and advances, bank profitability on the performance of the Nigerian economy. It was recommended that the Central Bank of Nigeria should constantly monitor the activities and the performance of the emerging mega- banks in order to prevent bank distress and failure (Emori et al, 2014).

The above was a welcome development for many stakeholders. This is today now seen as a welcome unfolding of neoliberal transformation. The banks were allowed to continue under private control, but they are still effectively supervised by a government agency, in order to curtail unfair practices on the masses.

Nevertheless, the students still held a myriad of views on the overarching structure that has created the current situation. One student said ‘things are tough for many people, people come out and after many years no job. It’s just sad, and the truth is it only takes one day for things to bust’ (Institution PbA, Student, ii). And another said ‘A lot of these areas you mentioned have been altered, some good, and some bad, but at least things have gotten better overall’ (Institution PvG, Student, ii). In conclusion, this section has explored the understanding of neoliberalism within the fourth pillar of sectoral transformation, in Nigeria today.

Within the above pillars, the influence of the neoliberal environment on the intellectual thought process within Nigerian universities have been explored. The shifting narrative regarding the role of government in this new era, and how this is increasingly being understood have been examined. The second section looked at

economic issues in private and public universities. It explained the position of Nigerians in tandem with the neoliberal ideology, both globally and locally. The study then looked at the influence of Bretton Woods Organisations on the economic outcomes and processes. It then proceeded to highlight the impact of democracy and democratic ideals brought about because of adherence to the global superstructure. It then talked about the specific impact on certain sectors like the electricity and telecommunications sector. Overall, this chapter has outlined novel introductions to the body of knowledge on the influence of neoliberal transformation on the Nigerian university experience and strengthened understanding of the term neoliberalism by adding newer conceptions to buttress the evidence of its presence and its capacity for transformation (Adunbi, 2016)

The broader significance of this chapter highlights that the experience of neoliberalism within the four pillars is uneven and is shaped by a myriad of factors. Particularly a deep generational divide. It also highlights that it is not completely seen as good or bad by Nigerians but there is a strong nuance to the contributions of neoliberalism to the makeup of the Nigerian fourth republic. The next chapters will further highlight the key contributions on neoliberal transformation of Nigerian higher education and the succeeding chapter will pinpoint the key contributions of the thesis in its entirety.

### **10.3 Extending Understanding of Neoliberalisation of Nigerian Higher Education**

In this section, I highlight the core contributions of the thesis within these three offered parameters. The three parameters were chosen by me and they broadly captured the nature of answers received during the survey process. Overall, the

thesis highlighted that there are key similarities and differences that characterize the public and private institutions. In both sets of institutions, we see that quota system influences how both sets of institutions conduct themselves, we also see how a general lack of academic funding has stunted research output, and an increased workload has led to a total overhaul of recruitment practices. However, there are crucial differences. The private universities are run based on metrics infused systems, and have a stricter leash on their productive capacity, while the public universities have evolved a complex textbook purchase structure, further influencing spending habits of students. Through this chapter as a whole, I show that local and national dynamics have led to significant divergence between Nigerian higher education institutions and the governance model of the university under neoliberal principles, and the manifestation of patterns of transformation in the Nigerian context is in many cases, in complete adherence with expectations put forth by existing literature.

**Governance:** In these sections evidence of patterns of transformation within the Nigerian contemporary university have been provided, focusing particularly on management, norms, access, and oversight. In each of these areas, we see some prioritisation of market-based mechanisms. First, in relation to management, the university is defined by a relegation of student voices and a privileging of financial considerations. It is now widely acknowledged that new universities can catalyse economic development in their locale, displaying a significant market-based imperative behind their establishment. Second, in relation to universities own decision-making processes, we have a situation in which private universities in particular have incorporated significantly religious authority and cultural practices. This dynamic represents a clear example of national and cultural characteristics

shaping the nature of sectoral transformation that encompasses many neoliberal tendencies. Thirdly, the introduction of ad hoc and arbitrary fees and exams to alleviate budgetary constraints at the expense of the students is viewed in both sets of institutions; an individualisation of costs in response to shortfall. Finally, the introduction of past leaders and captains of industry into the sector has led to a steady corporatisation of the concept of the university. Overall, there is a focus across the sector on 'market power' as the key tool for determining governance decisions.

In essence, it is observed that there are key similarities and differences between public and private institutions. In both sets of institutions, we see that the role of the Nigerian Universities Commission has been transformed. The introduction of increased fees either overtly or covertly is viewed in both instances, and the relegation of the introduction of new products to alleviate budget constraints either by certain facilities or the inclusion of certain courses is the order of the day. However, there are crucial differences. The fire brand religiosity is not a feature of the public institutions, there is a wider adoption of management advances from the corporate sector in the private universities, and both institutions adoption of student governance has been lopsided with public universities ironically taking a lead in the relegation of this feature of governance.

**Pedagogy:** The evidence of patterns of transformation within the Nigerian contemporary university have been provided. The study has established expectations regarding dynamics of change in four areas. These areas are satellite earning, research, teaching, and curriculum. Through this chapter, an overview of research findings on changes to pedagogy structures and processes have been documented.

As related previously, this chapter observes the effects of neoliberal university is defined by four features in the realm of these practices. First, in relation to satellite campuses, the university is defined by an adoption of distance learning and a discrepancy in fee structure with the regular programs. Second, in relation to research, the neoliberal university features a reduced research output. Thirdly, the commodification of lecturers has led to increased workload and moonlighting within academia. Finally, profit motives have led to the financialization of curriculum production. Overall, there is a focus across the sector on ‘market power’ as the key tool for determining pedagogy decisions.

**Experience:** Overall, through this chapter, an overview of research findings on changes to staff and student experiences have been provided. As related previously, this chapter observes the effects of neoliberal university is defined by four features in the realm of these practices. First, in relation to welfare, it looked at changes in accommodation provision, secondly, it looked at remuneration and tuition and the hike in fees and stagnancy in salaries, thirdly it highlighted industrial action and the systematic removal of tools of unionisation and protests, and finally cultism and the reduction in violence as a result of neoliberal permeation. Fundamentally, there is a focus across the sector on ‘market power’ as the key tool for determining staff and student decisions. Hence, this study has outlined novel introductions to the body of knowledge on neoliberal transformation of the Nigerian university experience. Key similarities and differences were also highlighted here. For instance, emphasis have placed on how both institutions are affected by cultism differently, and how industrial action has been eroded in both, but for completely different but interlocking reasons.

#### 10.4 Key Contributions

The study has added significantly to the understanding of neoliberalism and its capacity for transformation. From the definition of the term to highlighting its peculiar manifestation in Nigeria. However, in the arena of neoliberal transformation which is the core driver of the thesis. The study further postulates that we can situate the changes within three harmonious arenas of contribution, and that is the institutional, regulatory, and attitudinal. The first is the institutional. The Nigerian university has recast its relationship with government structures, and this has led to a market capture of key levers of decision making at the national, state, and institutional levels of the university. For instance, the bodies in charge of oversight have now become a conduit for the granting of licenses to whoever demonstrates financial wherewithal, regardless of certain considerations. In addition, the Nigerian state is no longer interested in pursuing good governance in certain areas and now views the formation of universities as an avenue to do this. This is a completely new and intriguing manifestation.

Secondly, regulation of the students and the staff has been uprooted by a liberal model governed by pecuniary concerns. For instance, the case of academic welfare where lecturers literally have to carry heavy workloads, teach numerous classes, and teach in as many as three universities at a time just to make ends meet is a direct consequence of the emergent neoliberal environment. In addition, student welfare has been neglected, as many students live in squalor and exist in a state of uncertainty, totally at the mercy of the decaying academic infrastructure, and equally at mercy to the forces of the market.

Finally, the attitude of staff and student has completely been altered. The prevailing socio-political and economic attitude towards society has relegated the idea of a beneficent state. Because of this, many Nigerians now believe that the neoliberal system is one that is embedded in the Nigerian state and is the key to effective policymaking that benefits the system. The global projections and contestation associated with the phenomenon is brushed aside in certain quarters. In the concluding remarks above, the study has offered a brief reminder of what the thesis sought to do and consider how its insights might be deployed in relation to a set of emerging research agendas. Through this thesis, it is suggested however, that the contingent historical processes through which the neoliberalism has been produced and operationalised has changed over time, and that within the Nigerian context it is worthy of even greater interrogation and analysis as the steady boots of time march along.

The purpose of the study was to understand the changes occurring, and comparatively study its manifestation within private and public institutions to get a fuller picture of its preponderance. By so doing, one can appreciate the similarities and differences not only within the Nigerian context, but within the global neoliberal context. The thesis also offered interesting commentary on the situation within the Nigerian Fourth Republic. Therefore, the thesis succeeded in removing the abstraction that characterizes the term that is neoliberalism and brings into analytical focus its impact on a critical sector and the citizenry. The study also refrained from established terminology to discuss various parts of the world, further adding to the academic debate on the terms developed and developing. The study was divided into two parts. Furthermore, it elevates previously relegated voices to elevate the discourse surrounding Africa, and Nigeria in particular. Therefore, it fills

this critical lacuna within the academic literature on this topic by offering its disaggregated and comparative insights on the phenomenon that is neoliberalism within the Nigerian university.

The transformations within institutions of higher education have also been identified and explored extensively by using quantitative tools and participant voices to comprehend the critical developments. The study also engaged with literature from education, politics, history, and other fields of human inquiry and has added a different dimension on the role of the macrocosm of neoliberalism as a framework within these fields of inquiry. Overall, the dynamics show that: transformations in curricula and prioritisation of vocational studies over critique; changes in student expectations and culture; introduction of metric-based management techniques within individual institutions dominate the evidence base.



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