

CHALLENGES IN THE PROLIFERATION OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA: ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC ISSUES AND ENHANCING QUALITY

By

Edinoh Kingsley, Phd.

Test Development Department, National Examinations Council (NECO) Headquarters,
Minna, Niger State, Nigeria
edinohkings@gmail.com

Ruth Asemota,

ruthas97@gmail.com

Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education,
University of Abuja, Nigeria

Taibat Adetutu. O. OLADIMEJI, PhD

Department of Social Science and Humanities Education,
School of General Studies Education, Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo, Oyo State.
oladolayinka@gmail.com

Abstract

Nigeria has experienced significant growth in private higher education over the past decade, as private universities emerged to meet excess demand beyond public sector capacity. While this expansion has widened access, concerns remain about quality assurance, accreditation, financial stability, staffing, and infrastructure. This paper reports a secondary empirical synthesis, drawing on studies, policy documents, and regulatory statements published between 2010 and 2025. The review highlights five systemic challenges: (1) weak regulatory capacity and inconsistent accreditation, (2) dependence on tuition-based financing, (3) shortages of full-time faculty and reliance on adjuncts, (4) inadequate infrastructure and weak research ecosystems, and (5) fragmented governance and poor sector coordination. These challenges are interconnected, with fragile funding models constraining staffing and infrastructure, while regulatory weaknesses undermine quality assurance. Addressing these issues requires coordinated reforms. Key recommendations include strengthening the operational capacity and transparency of the National Universities Commission (NUC), diversifying financing through endowments and public-private partnerships, creating pathways for faculty development and retention, linking programme approvals to staged infrastructure benchmarks, and improving governance through centralized data systems and clearer regulatory mandates. If implemented, these reforms would allow private

universities to evolve from primarily widening access to becoming sustainable contributors to Nigeria's human capital development. The findings emphasize the urgency of multi-stakeholder action involving regulators, institutions, industry, and development partners to ensure that private higher education fulfills its transformative potential.

Keywords: Private Higher Education, Quality Assurance, Accreditation, Funding, Academic Staff, Infrastructure, Governance, Policy

1. Introduction

The National Universities Commission, as the apex body for overseeing university education in Nigeria, plays a crucial role in the orderly development of the Nigerian University System (NUS) for the production of quality graduates and research output relevant to national development in the face of global competitiveness (Bisong, Asemota & Edinoh, 2025). In the past two decades, Nigeria's higher education landscape has undergone a profound transformation marked by the rapid proliferation of universities and other tertiary-level providers, with private institutions accounting for a significant share of this growth. The deregulation of higher education in the late 1990s created an enabling environment for private investment, leading to the licensing of dozens of new private universities by the National Universities Commission (NUC) (Okebukola, 2015; Ajadi, 2010). This expansion has been hailed as a crucial mechanism for addressing the excess demand for university education, which public institutions alone have been unable to absorb (Olayanju, 2020; Onuka & Akinyemi, 2012).

Private higher education institutions (PrHEIs) have therefore broadened access to tertiary education, diversified the higher education landscape, and introduced competition that in some cases spurred innovations in curriculum design, technology adoption, and student support (Iruonagbe, Imhonopi, & Egharevba, 2015; Saint, 2019). However, their rapid proliferation has also triggered widespread concerns about consistency, quality assurance, and long-term sustainability. Scholars note that in many cases, the pace of expansion has outstripped the development of robust systems, qualified academic staff, and the financial stability needed to sustain credible academic offerings (Varghese, 2013; Salami, 2021).

Contemporary reviews and policy reports further highlight systemic issues such as uneven accreditation outcomes, overdependence on tuition fees, weak research productivity, limited infrastructural facilities, and governance challenges within private institutions (NUC, 2022; Okebukola, 2021). In this regard, while private universities play an indispensable role in easing enrolment pressures and complementing the efforts of public universities, their unchecked expansion poses risks of declining standards, exacerbating educational inequality, and eroding public trust in the higher education system (Banya, 2020; Teferra & Altbach, 2004).

Against this backdrop, this paper seeks to empirically map the systemic challenges accompanying the proliferation of PrHEIs in Nigeria and to propose evidence-informed interventions. Adopting a secondary empirical approach, the study synthesizes peer-reviewed publications, policy analyses, regulatory pronouncements, and sectoral reports produced between 2010 and 2025. The

goal is not only to characterize recurring structural and operational problems but also to advance practicable solutions that strengthen quality, accountability, and sustainability in Nigeria's private higher education sector.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Growth and Contributions of Private Higher Education

The rise of private higher education in Nigeria is part of a broader continental trend in which private providers have become central to expanding access to tertiary education (Varghese, 2013; Teferra & Altbach, 2004). In Nigeria, the first wave of private universities emerged in the late 1990s following the liberalization of higher education policy, and by 2025, the National Universities Commission (NUC) had licensed over 140 private universities (NUC, 2025). These institutions have contributed to increased enrollment capacity, thereby reducing the burden on overstretched public universities (Ajadi, 2010; Olayanju, 2020).

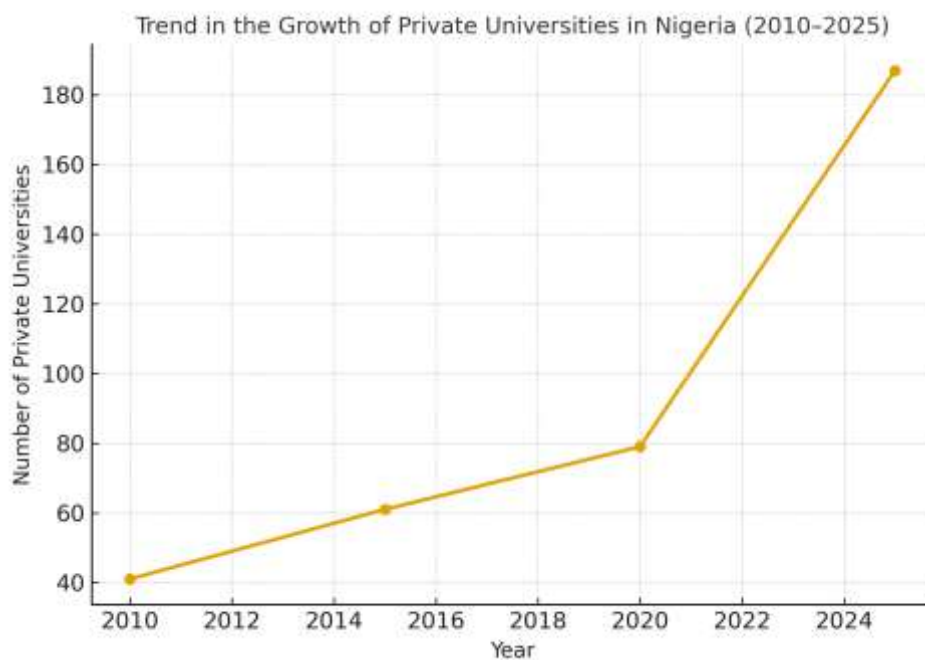
Beyond expanding access, private universities have also created employment opportunities for academic and non-academic staff and introduced diversity in programme offerings, including entrepreneurial and applied disciplines (Iruonagbe, Imhonopi, & Egharevba, 2015; Saint, 2019). Nevertheless, growth has been uneven, with some institutions thriving while others struggle with sustainability challenges. Scholars emphasize the structural tension between rapid expansion and the ability to maintain consistent academic quality (Okebukola, 2021; Banya, 2020).

Table 1. Growth of Universities in Nigeria by Ownership (2010–2025)

YEAR	FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES	STATE UNIVERSITIES	PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES	TOTAL
2010	36	34	41	111
2015	40	40	61	141
2020	44	47	79	170
2025	50	63	187	300

Source: NUC statistics; Nigeria Education News (2025).

Figure 1. Trend in the Growth of Private Universities in Nigeria (2010–2025)



2.2 Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Quality assurance remains one of the most debated issues in Nigeria's private higher education sector. The NUC serves as the principal regulator responsible for accreditation and quality monitoring (NUC, 2022). However, studies highlight persistent constraints such as high accreditation costs, duplication of verification processes, logistical bottlenecks in resource assessments, and limited regulatory capacity to monitor a rapidly growing sector (Okebukola, 2015; Salami, 2021).

In some cases, the accreditation process has been critiqued as excessively bureaucratic, creating perverse incentives for institutions that may perceive compliance as a financial and administrative burden rather than an avenue for continuous improvement (Akinyemi & Bassey, 2012). Such challenges undermine the consistency of enforcement and leave space for weaker institutions to operate without fully meeting quality benchmarks.

2.3 Funding and Financial Sustainability

To say that adequate funding plays a key role in the effectiveness or success of educational programmes, will be putting it mildly. This is because, often, the effective implementation of policies will require adequate funding (Kingsley, Oche & Adesola, 2024). Unlike public universities, which rely heavily on government subventions, private universities in Nigeria depend primarily on tuition fees, donations, and irregular private investment (Nnoje, 2025; Ajadi, 2010). This financial structure creates vulnerabilities: enrollment shocks, such as economic downturns or declining student demand, can significantly destabilize revenue streams (Babalola, 2011).

Moreover, limited endowments and weak alumni networks constrain long-term financial sustainability. Multiple studies document inadequate funding for research, laboratories, staff development, and capital-intensive projects, with many private universities allocating over 70% of their budgets to recurrent expenditures, leaving little for innovation or infrastructural expansion (Ebekozen, 2023; Saint, 2019). The tuition-dependent model also restricts their ability to invest in permanent academic staff and competitive research environments.

2.4 Academic Staffing, Scholarship, and Research Capacity

A persistent theme in the literature is the shortage of full-time, qualified academic staff in private universities. Research indicates that many rely heavily on adjunct and visiting lecturers, often drawn from public universities, to sustain their programmes (Adetomiwa, 2023; Olayanju, 2020). While this model addresses immediate staffing gaps, it undermines program continuity, weakens postgraduate supervision, and limits faculty availability for student mentorship and institutional service (Okebukola, 2021).

This staffing structure has a direct effect on research productivity. Several studies report that private universities contribute minimally to Nigeria's overall research output, partly due to limited postgraduate programmes and insufficient funding for scholarly activity (Iruonagbe et al., 2015; Ebekozen, 2023). The result is a credibility gap that affects institutional reputation and reduces attractiveness to international collaborations and grants.

2.5 Physical Infrastructure and Learning Resources

Infrastructure development has been uneven across Nigeria's private higher education sector. While some well-funded institutions such as Covenant University and Babcock University boast modern campuses with state-of-the-art laboratories and ICT facilities (Saint, 2019), many smaller or newer institutions continue to struggle to meet basic infrastructural benchmarks (Ebekozen, 2023).

Deficits in laboratories, libraries, and digital learning resources particularly constrain programmes in science, technology, and medicine, where practical training is indispensable (Salami, 2021). According to Okebukola (2015), fewer than half of Nigeria's private universities meet the minimum infrastructural requirements set out by the NUC for accreditation of science-based programmes. This unevenness highlights the tension between aesthetic investments in campuses and the substantive need for research and teaching resources.

3. Methods

3.1 Study Design

This study adopted a **secondary empirical research design** that combined structured literature retrieval with thematic content analysis. Instead of generating primary data through surveys or interviews, the research systematically examined peer-reviewed publications, sectoral reports, media analyses, and regulatory pronouncements relating to private higher education in Nigeria

between 2010 and 2025. Secondary analysis of this kind has been widely recommended in higher education research as an effective approach to identify recurring systemic issues, synthesize dispersed findings, and generate policy-relevant insights (Johnston, 2017; Vartanian, 2011). The approach was considered particularly appropriate for this study, given the dispersed and fragmented nature of evidence on Nigeria's private higher education sector.

3.2 Data Sources and Selection

Literature was retrieved from academic databases such as **Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, and ScienceDirect**, as well as sector-specific platforms including the **National Universities Commission (NUC)** repository and open-access journals covering African higher education. Following a PRISMA-inspired screening approach (Page et al., 2021), we applied the following inclusion criteria:

1. The study focused on private higher education in Nigeria or provided comparative analyses of public and private institutions;
2. The document was published between 2010 and 2025; and
3. The publication provided empirical evidence, policy analysis, or regulatory information relevant to the themes of accreditation, funding, staffing, or infrastructure.

The final corpus consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles (e.g., Ajadi, 2010; Iruonagbe, Imhonopi, & Egharevba, 2015), policy reviews (Okebukola, 2021; NUC, 2022), and thematic studies on financing and governance in higher education (Varghese, 2013; Banya, 2020). Sectoral reports and regulatory documents were particularly useful in contextualizing trends and providing statistical grounding.

3.3 Analysis

Data analysis employed an **inductive thematic coding strategy** (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Documents were first open-coded to identify recurring challenges, after which related codes were consolidated into thematic categories. Iterative refinement of the coding framework produced five final clusters: **quality assurance and accreditation, funding and sustainability, academic staffing and research capacity, infrastructure and learning resources, and governance and transparency**.

To enhance credibility, findings were triangulated across at least two independent sources whenever possible (Patton, 2015). This process not only strengthened the robustness of the interpretations but also helped filter out idiosyncratic claims found in isolated sources. Thematic synthesis, as applied here, enabled the integration of diverse evidence into a coherent account of systemic challenges in Nigeria's private higher education sector.

4. Results (Thematic Synthesis)

Table 2. Major Challenges Reported in Private Universities in Nigeria

CHALLENGE AREA	EVIDENCE FROM LITERATURE	EMPIRICAL INDICATORS
QUALITY ASSURANCE & ACCREDITATION	Multiple, costly, inconsistent (EA Journals, 2023)	High accreditation fees; delayed accreditation cycles
FUNDING & SUSTAINABILITY	Heavy tuition dependence; weak endowments (Nnoje, 2025)	70–80% revenue from tuition; <10% research funding
ACADEMIC STAFF SHORTAGES	Reliance on adjunct staff (Adetomiwa, 2023)	Full-time staff ratio < 40% in many institutions
INFRASTRUCTURE GAPS	Weak labs, ICT, libraries (Ebekozen, 2023)	<50% of private universities have functional research labs
GOVERNANCE & TRANSPARENCY	Regulatory overlaps, opaque reporting (NUC, 2024)	No centralized database on private HEIs

4.1 Quality Assurance and Accreditation Challenges

A central theme in the literature concerns the difficulties of maintaining robust quality assurance in a rapidly expanding private higher education sector. Accreditation of academic programmes is one of the quality assurance mechanisms initiated by the National Universities Commission (NUC) to regulate academic standard and enhance quality university education in Nigeria. But the dwindling quality of our university education has become a matter of great concern to the nation, whether the accreditation exercise actually achieves its purpose (Akpan, & Etor, 2016). Accreditation standards and guidelines in Nigeria educational system is aimed at strengthening programme for quality assurance and quality improvement (Ogunode, Edinoh & Rauf 2023). Scholars consistently point to three interconnected problems. First, the **regulatory capacity of the National Universities Commission (NUC)** is overstretched, given the exponential growth in the number of private universities over the last two decades (Okebukola, 2021; NUC, 2022). Second, accreditation procedures are often perceived as administratively burdensome and financially costly, placing pressure on institutions with limited resources (Akinyemi & Bassey, 2012; Salami, 2021). Third, enforcement of standards is inconsistent: while some institutions are rigorously monitored, others continue to operate with subpar infrastructure and staffing

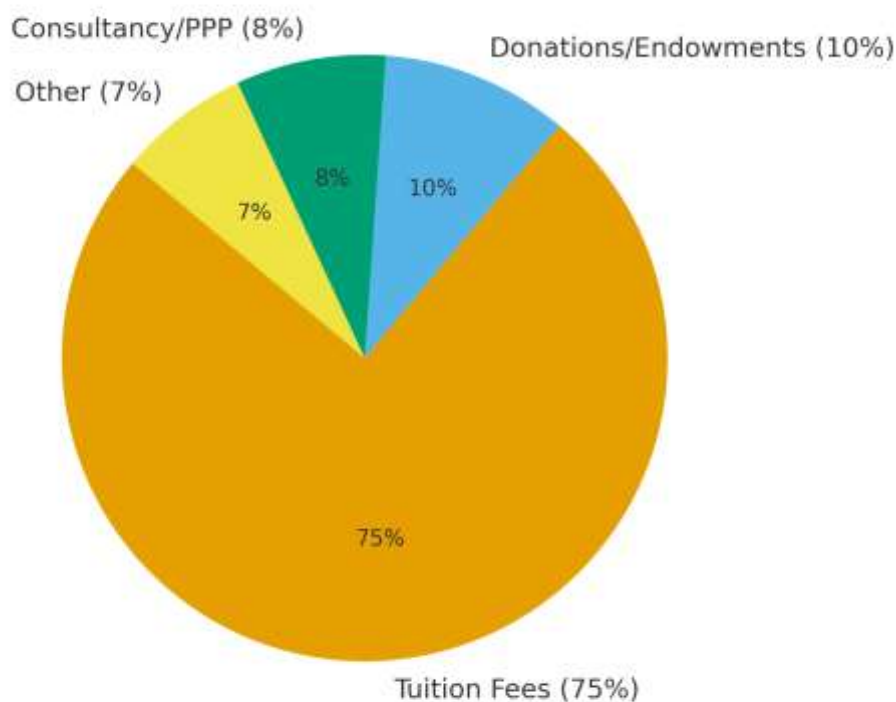
(Varghese, 2013; Saint, 2019). These dynamics erode public trust in the accreditation regime and complicate national planning for higher education quality.

4.2 Financial Fragility and Unsustainable Revenue Models

A second recurring issue relates to the **financial fragility** of many private universities. The overwhelming dependence on tuition fees as the primary revenue source makes these institutions highly vulnerable to fluctuations in student enrollment (Ajadi, 2010; Babalola, 2011). Unlike older, established universities that have begun to cultivate **endowments, alumni networks, and diversified income streams**, smaller or newer providers often lack the financial base to invest in laboratories, faculty development, or long-term capital projects (Nnoje, 2025; Ebekozen, 2023). This structural vulnerability constrains research capacity and raises sustainability concerns, especially in the face of economic downturns or increased competition among providers.

Figure 2. Sources of Income in Private Universities

Sources of Income in Private Universities (Illustrative)



4.3 Academic Staff Shortages and Casualization

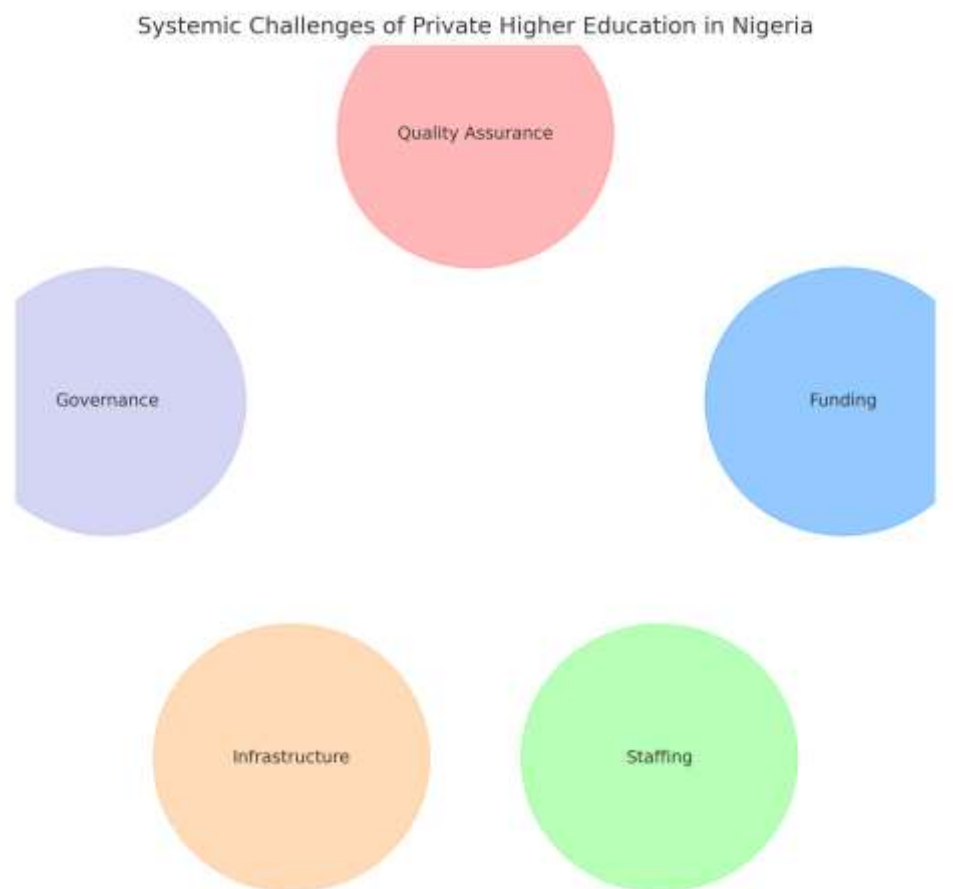
Academic staffing represents a critical bottleneck in the private higher education sector. Evidence shows that many institutions rely disproportionately on **adjunct, visiting, or part-time lecturers**, often drawn from public universities, to cover teaching obligations (Adetomiwa, 2023; Olayanju, 2020). While this arrangement addresses immediate staffing shortages, it undermines program continuity, reduces faculty availability for student mentorship, and complicates postgraduate supervision. Furthermore, the lack of stable, full-time academic staff depresses **research productivity**, limiting the ability of private universities to build reputational capital and attract competitive grants (Okebukola, 2021; Iruonagbe, Imhonopi, & Egharevba, 2015). These deficits also affect accreditation outcomes, as research output and staffing stability are critical benchmarks for institutional credibility.

4.4 Infrastructure and Research Capacity Gaps

Infrastructural limitations remain widespread across private universities in Nigeria, particularly among newer or under-resourced providers. Studies highlight inadequate **laboratory facilities, libraries, ICT resources, and campus infrastructure**, which restrict the development of STEM and professional programs requiring intensive practical training (Salami, 2021; Ebekozien, 2023). In parallel, limited funding for faculty research further discourages scholarly engagement, leading to an underperformance in research output relative to expectations at the university level (Saint, 2019; Varghese, 2013). These gaps reinforce the perception that many private institutions prioritize **aesthetic investments in campus buildings** over substantive investments in research and teaching infrastructure (Okebukola, 2015).

4.5 Governance, Transparency, and Sector Coordination

Figure 2. Systemic Challenges of Private Higher Education in Nigeria



Finally, the issue of governance emerges as a cross-cutting theme in the literature. Observers note **fragmentation in accreditation-like activities**, occasional **duplication of oversight**, and weak institutional reporting systems (Banya, 2020; Teferra & Altbach, 2004). Data-sharing arrangements between institutions and the NUC remain underdeveloped, hampering sector-wide monitoring and coordination (NUC, 2022). Many analysts recommend stronger institutional transparency, clearer delineation of regulatory responsibilities, and investment in centralized data systems to support evidence-based decision-making (Okebukola, 2021; Saint, 2019). Without such reforms, governance inefficiencies will continue to limit both accountability and effective sectoral planning.

5. Discussion

The thematic synthesis demonstrates that the challenges confronting Nigeria's private higher education institutions (PrHEIs) are **systemic, multidimensional, and mutually reinforcing**. Financial fragility constrains investment in infrastructure and staff recruitment; staffing shortages weaken the research base and depress teaching quality; under-resourced regulatory systems struggle to enforce standards across a growing and diverse sector; and governance fragmentation amplifies these weaknesses (Okebukola, 2021; NUC, 2022). In combination, these factors jeopardize the credibility and sustainability of the private university system.

These challenges are not unique to Nigeria. Comparative studies across Africa and other emerging systems reveal similar tensions between the rapid expansion of private providers and the ability of regulators to safeguard quality (Varghese, 2013; Levy, 2018). For instance, in Kenya and Ghana, the proliferation of private universities has raised concerns about staff casualization and accreditation bottlenecks (Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Materu, 2007). However, Nigeria's experience is shaped by local dynamics, including its highly centralized regulatory framework, limited higher education financing ecosystem, and acute demand–supply imbalance in student enrolments (Saint, 2019; Banya, 2020). These factors create **context-specific vulnerabilities** that call for tailored policy interventions.

Crucially, improving quality in private higher education requires **coordinated reform across multiple levers**. Strengthening the NUC's regulatory capacity and enhancing transparency in accreditation processes are critical first steps (Salami, 2021; Akinyemi & Bassey, 2012). Financial sustainability must also be reimagined beyond tuition dependence, with greater emphasis on alumni endowments, public–private partnerships, and research grants (Nnoje, 2025; Ebekozen, 2023). Faculty development policies — including competitive remuneration, research support, and professional growth opportunities — are essential to reduce turnover and enhance institutional reputations (Adetomiwa, 2023; Olayanju, 2020). Finally, infrastructural investment must be tied not only to physical expansion but also to **measurable improvements in teaching and research outcomes**, ensuring that laboratories, libraries, and ICT systems directly enhance student learning and scholarly output (Okebukola, 2015; Saint, 2019).

Taken together, these reforms align with broader calls for systemic thinking in higher education governance: addressing one challenge in isolation is unlikely to yield durable results unless the interdependencies across financing, staffing, quality assurance, and governance are simultaneously engaged (Patton, 2015; Johnston, 2017).

6. Policy and Institutional Recommendations

Building on the synthesis of evidence, this study identifies **five interrelated policy and institutional priorities** for strengthening Nigeria's private higher education sector. These recommendations aim not only to address immediate systemic challenges but also to create a more resilient and sustainable governance framework for the future.

6.1 Strengthen and streamline quality assurance

A recurring theme in the literature is that Nigeria's National Universities Commission (NUC) faces severe **capacity constraints** in monitoring the rapidly expanding number of private institutions (Okebukola, 2021; Salami, 2021). To address this, the NUC should expand its operational capacity for regular monitoring and resource verification, supported by greater budgetary allocations and technology-enabled inspection tools. Accreditation costs and procedures should be standardized to avoid imposing undue financial burdens on institutions, which can lead to noncompliance or superficial compliance (Materu, 2007). Transparency in

accreditation criteria and outcomes would also enhance trust in regulatory processes and signal clear performance benchmarks to stakeholders (NUC, 2022).

6.2 Diversify higher-education financing

Adequate funding is critical for the development of any public institution. Adequate funding is the key to the achievement of the institution's goals. Adequate funding is the life wire of any organization. No meaningful impact institutions can attain without adequate funding, (Edinoh, Bisong & Asemota, 2025). Most private universities in Nigeria remain **tuition-dependent**, a model that exposes them to financial fragility when enrollment dips (Banya, 2020; Levy, 2018). Policymakers should encourage the creation of **dedicated endowment funds** and provide frameworks for **public-private partnerships (PPPs)** to finance infrastructure, laboratories, and research facilities (Ebekozen, 2023). International evidence suggests that tax or policy incentives can encourage philanthropic giving and industry collaboration, thereby expanding resource bases for higher education (Varghese, 2013). Matched-fund research schemes—where government contributions are contingent on institutional or donor co-funding—could stimulate faculty research engagement while reducing overreliance on tuition (Adetomiwa, 2023).

6.3 Invest in faculty development and career pathways

Faculty shortages are among the **most acute challenges** for private universities in Nigeria (Olayanju, 2020; Saint, 2019). To address this, regulatory frameworks should mandate **minimum full-time faculty-to-student ratios** as conditions for programme accreditation, ensuring teaching continuity and postgraduate supervision. Incentive packages—including competitive salary scales, housing provisions, research grants, and sabbatical opportunities—can help retain qualified staff (Akinyemi & Bassey, 2012). Moreover, pathways for **converting adjuncts into full-time appointments** and expanding postgraduate scholarship schemes would support long-term academic career development and stabilize the workforce (Adetomiwa, 2023).

6.4 Tie infrastructure to programme benchmarks

Infrastructure development must be **strategically aligned with academic programmes** rather than pursued as a symbolic expansion (Okebukola, 2015; Johnston, 2017). Regulators should require realistic, staged infrastructure plans before granting programme approvals. Access to capital grants or PPP funds should be tied to demonstrable milestones—such as functioning laboratories, libraries, and ICT facilities—linked to specific curricular outcomes. To optimize costs, institutions should be encouraged to establish **shared facilities and regional research hubs**, which would not only enhance efficiency but also foster collaboration across institutions (Saint, 2019).

6.5 Improve governance, data, and sector coordination

Weak governance and fragmented oversight remain **enduring barriers** to private higher education effectiveness (Varghese, 2013; Teferra & Altbach, 2004). Establishing a **centralized**,

open-access institutional data platform would enable more evidence-based policymaking and enhance public accountability on enrollment, staffing, finances, and research outputs (NUC, 2022). In addition, clarifying and streamlining the roles of accreditation and regulatory actors would reduce duplication, prevent regulatory conflicts, and ensure a more coherent framework for quality assurance (Okebukola, 2021).

7. Limitations

This study is primarily a **secondary empirical synthesis** of peer-reviewed literature, policy documents, and publicly available reports. As such, it does not include **new primary data** generated from surveys, interviews, or ethnographic observations. The reliance on existing sources means that the analysis is inevitably shaped by the **quality, scope, and biases** of the literature available up to 2025 (Cooper, 2017; Snyder, 2019). For instance, while published research and regulatory reports provide valuable insights into systemic challenges, they often emphasize **macro-level dynamics** such as regulation, financing, or infrastructure, while giving less attention to the everyday lived experiences of administrators, faculty, and students in private universities.

Moreover, secondary synthesis cannot fully overcome issues of **publication bias** and **data gaps**. Studies with negative or less policy-relevant findings are often underreported in academic publishing, which can skew interpretations (Gough et al., 2017). Similarly, grey literature such as unpublished evaluation reports, internal audits, or confidential institutional data were inaccessible for this study but could have offered richer perspectives on governance and sustainability issues (Adams et al., 2017).

Although triangulation across multiple independent sources was applied to enhance credibility, the lack of direct stakeholder engagement limits the ability to make **causal inferences** or offer **fine-grained institutional comparisons** (Torraco, 2016). Future research should incorporate **primary empirical studies**—including surveys of administrators and faculty, interviews with regulators, and focus groups with students—to provide a more granular and context-sensitive understanding of challenges in private higher education. Such designs would also allow for testing whether the patterns identified here are **consistent across different institutional types, regions, and governance models**.

8. Conclusion

Private higher education has become an indispensable pillar of Nigeria's tertiary education landscape, expanding access to students who may otherwise be excluded from the oversubscribed public system. Yet, as this review demonstrates, expansion has occurred alongside **persistent systemic challenges**—including fragile financing, staffing shortages, infrastructure gaps, regulatory weaknesses, and governance fragmentation (Banya, 2020; Okebukola, 2021; Saint, 2019). These interdependent issues pose significant risks to the sustainability and credibility of private universities and, by extension, to Nigeria's broader human capital development agenda.

Addressing these challenges requires a **multi-pronged and coordinated response**. Strengthening the operational capacity of the National Universities Commission (NUC) is vital to enforce transparent and consistent quality assurance mechanisms (Materu, 2007; NUC, 2022). Equally, financing innovation—through endowments, public–private partnerships, and matched-fund research schemes—can reduce overreliance on tuition and create more resilient financial models (Levy, 2018; Varghese, 2013). Faculty development, including competitive career pathways and adjunct conversion schemes, must be prioritized to ensure academic continuity, enhance research output, and support postgraduate supervision (Akinyemi & Bassey, 2012; Olayanju, 2020).

Moreover, infrastructure investment should be explicitly tied to programme benchmarks, ensuring that laboratories, libraries, and ICT facilities align with curricular and research needs (Okebukola, 2015; Johnston, 2017). Finally, improving governance and sector coordination through open-access institutional data platforms and clearer delineation of regulatory responsibilities will foster greater accountability and policy coherence (Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Varghese, 2013).

If effectively implemented, these measures can enable Nigeria's private higher education institutions not only to expand access but also to **deliver quality, sustainable, and research-driven education**. In doing so, private universities can evolve from stopgap providers into **strategic contributors to national development**, strengthening the country's human capital base in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015).

References

- Adams, R. J., Smart, P., & Huff, A. S. (2017). Shades of grey: Guidelines for working with the grey literature in systematic reviews for management and organizational studies. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 19(4), 432–454. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12102>
- Adetomiwa, B. (2023). Financing innovation in Nigerian private universities: Emerging models and policy implications. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, 21(2), 55–72.
- Akinyemi, S., & Bassey, U. (2012). Planning and funding of higher education in Nigeria: The challenges. *International Education Studies*, 5(4), 86–95. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v5n4p86>
- Akpan, C. P. & Etor, C. R. (2016) Accreditation of Academic Programmes and Quality University Education in South-South Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Studies*, 13(2), 37-54 MN
- Banya, K. (2020). Financing higher education in Africa: New strategies for sustainability. *International Journal of African Higher Education*, 7(1), 19–36. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ijahe.v7i1.11955>

- Bisong.J.N,Asemota.R, Edinoh.K (2025) Digitalization and the National Universities Commission in Nigeria. *AMERICAN Journal of Science on Integration and Human Development Volume 3, Issue 7, 2025 ISSN (E): 2993-2750 p.15-22*
- Cooper, H. (2017). Research synthesis and meta-analysis: A step-by-step approach (5th ed.). SAGE.
- Ebekozien, A. (2023). Public–private partnerships in Nigerian higher education infrastructure delivery: Opportunities and risks. *African Journal of Economic Policy*, 30(1), 1–18.
- Edinoh.K, Bisong.J.N, Asemota.R. (2025) Adequate Funding Panacea for Sustainable Development of Academic Planning Units of Nigerian Universities. *American Journal of Education and Evaluation Studies, Vol.2, No.7 (July, 2025),p331-338*
- <https://semantjournals.org/index.php/AJEES>
- Gough, D., Oliver, S., & Thomas, J. (2017). An introduction to systematic reviews (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- Johnston, L. (2017). University infrastructure and the knowledge economy: International comparisons and lessons for Africa. *Higher Education Policy*, 30(2), 151–170. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41307-016-0018-0>
- Kingsley.E, Oche I.G.O, Adesola O.O (2024) Adequate Funding: Panacea for Development of Early Child Care Education (ECCE) in Nigeria. *The International Journal of Leadership and Innovative Management (IJLIM) Vol.1 Issue 1|2024 p60-69*
- Levy, D. C. (2018). Global private higher education: An empirical profile of its size and geographical shape. *Higher Education*, 76(4), 701–715. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0233-6>
- Materu, P. (2007). Higher education quality assurance in Sub-Saharan Africa: Status, challenges, opportunities, and promising practices (World Bank Working Paper No. 124). World Bank. <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-0-8213-7272-2>
- National Universities Commission (NUC). (2022). Accreditation and quality assurance in Nigerian universities: Annual report 2021/2022. Abuja: NUC.
- Ogunode N.J, Edinoh.K, RAUF O.S (2023) Programme Accreditation in Tertiary Education *European Journal of Higher Education and Academic Advancement Volume 1, Issue 5 | 2023*

- Okebukola, P. (2015). Quality assurance in higher education: The Nigerian experience. In S. P. Heyneman (Ed.), *Quality assurance in education: Comparative perspectives* (pp. 198–214). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-8919-1_11
- Okebukola, P. (2021). Strengthening quality assurance in Africa's universities: Lessons from Nigeria. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, 19(2), 23–40.
- Olayanju, F. (2020). Academic staffing challenges in private Nigerian universities: Trends and implications. *International Journal of African Higher Education*, 7(2), 85–101. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ijahe.v7i2.12107>
- Saint, W. (2019). Private higher education in Africa: Risks and opportunities. *International Higher Education*, 96(1), 10–12. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.96.10824>
- Salami, I. (2021). Regulating private higher education in Nigeria: Policy frameworks and institutional realities. *African Journal of Governance and Development*, 10(1), 112–128.
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333–339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>
- Teferra, D., & Altbach, P. G. (2004). African higher education: Challenges for the 21st century. *Higher Education*, 47(1), 21–50. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:HIGH.00000009822.49980.30>
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. United Nations. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
- Varghese, N. V. (2013). *Governance reforms in higher education: A study of selected countries in Africa*. International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) Research Papers, UNESCO.