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The Effect of Organizational Culture on the Growth of Private Universities in Nigeria

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Abstract:

The emergence of private universities may have been an answer to the cries of the thousands of secondary school leavers being produced each year with little or no hope of gaining admission into the inadequate public universities. The purpose of this study is to assess the implications of organizational culture on the growth of private universities in Nigeria. The study was based on survey design and the entire population census of the 79 private universities represents the sample size of the study covered. The investigation relied on secondary data obtained on private universities. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics based on using the central tendency (mean) and frequency. The findings revealed that organizational culture has no effect on the growth of private universities in Nigeria. It also found that sustainability of private universities is high as only 2 universities had closed down operations in the 21 years of its existence in Nigeria. The study therefore recommends that organizational culture should be upheld in Nigerian private universities and intending proprietors should be thoroughly briefed on these unique cultures of universities so as to promote sustainability.

Keywords: Organizational culture, nature of a university, university culture, academic culture, business growth, university growth

1. Introduction

Deal & Kennedy (2000) described organizational culture as the way things are done around a specific place, group of people or organization. The word "growth" is like a balm to business owners because it signifies success when used in relation to a business. This basic philosophy is also one of the underlying factors of setting private universities. Nigerian universities like their counterparts all over the world have very rich and deep culture that has spanned over decades. The history of the Nigerian university system dates back to 1934 with the emergence of the University of Ibadan in affiliation with the London University. The number of Nigerian universities has skyrocketed over the years to 170 in 2019 with the private universities making up 46% of the number. This sudden growth was achieved through the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) privatisation policy of 1991 as part of the management strategy to solve socio-economic problems faced by the public (Ajadi, 2010). One of the aims of the privatization initiatives by FGN was to encourage private investors to set up their own finance, structure, and academic teams to manage universities effectively. Private universities are primarily controlled and funded by private investors such as missionaries, groups of individuals or foreign organisations.

Allowing private participation in university education delivery was quite inevitable, as there was a large pool of youths yearning for university education, which in the last few years had crossed one million mark. Before the establishment of private universities, all the public universities – Federal and States – could only absorb less than 25% of intending applicants. At the advent of private universities in Nigeria, not many gave the pioneers any chance of survival. Many were critical about the propriety of allowing private individuals and organizations to make forays into university education delivery in Nigeria. Given the experience during the first advent of private universities in Nigeria in the early 80's, such apprehensions were not altogether misplaced and therefore understandable. Nonetheless, private universities have come to stay. However, the goal of making profit in private universities while conforming to the requirements of their founders, government policies through the regulatory agency of ties in Nigeria, National Universities Commission (NUC) as well as maintaining university culture to meet students, community, industry, local and international needs and expectations poses some challenges. It is an attempt to attend to some of these that, this study seeks to investigate the effect of the university culture on the growth of the number of private universities. Culture when properly harnessed can be an arousing energizer, but if not, it can be a lug on productivity.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

It is arguable to say that although university culture is very rich and unique, it may have impacted negatively on the number of private universities established. The bureaucracy endemic in the university culture makes it distinct from any other organisation. But, does it actually bring about decrease in the number of private universities in Nigeria? Is there constant record of closure of established private universities? Okebukola (2015) stated that one of the problems observed

in private universities growth is the naivety of proprietors as evidenced in response of about 78% of vice-chancellors interviewed were displeased with the low knowledge of university culture by their proprietors and that it translated into unhealthy practices. Should a different culture be created for private universities? What would be the implication? The era of private universities in Nigeria started in 1999 with the establishment of the first three private universities: Babcock University, Igbinedion University and Madonna University. Over the years, it has grown tremendously to 79 in 2019. Has there been any private university that felt by the edge? This study investigated the frequency of establishment and closure of private universities in Nigeria since inception despite the existing university culture. It also compared the rate of growth of private universities with the non-private universities.

1.2. Research Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to assess the effect of organisational culture on the rate of growth of private universities in Nigeria. However, the specific objectives include:

- To ascertain the relationship between university culture and private universities growth in Nigeria.
- To determine if the existing university culture has caused decline in establishing private universities in Nigeria
- To compare the rate of growth of the private universities to the federal and state universities in Nigeria.

1.3. Research Questions

- Is there any relationship between university culture and private universities growth in Nigeria?
- To what extent does university culture influence private universities' growth?
- Does rate of growth of private universities compared to the federal and state universities in Nigeria?

1.4. Hypothesis

- There is no significant relationship between university culture and private universities growth in Nigeria
- There is no significant effect of university culture on private university's growth in Nigeria.
- University culture does not significantly influence the growth of non-private over private universities in Nigeria

2. Literature Review

Culture is a strong contender in arrays of economic outcomes as shown in a growing body of empirical studies measuring different types of cultural traits. Alesina and Giuliano (2015) postulates that culture and institutions interact and evolve in a complementary way, with mutual feedback effects. They further stated that, the same institutions may function differently in different culture and that culture may evolve in differing ways depending on the type of institutions. Some of the examples discussed of this interaction fared between different types of institutions (such as political and legal institutions, regulation, and the welfare state) and different cultural traits (including trust, family ties, individualism, and generalized morality). They focused on one specific aspect of the relevance of culture: its relationship to institution and also assessed the presence of a two-way causal effect between culture and institutions. This suggests that the joint dynamics of culture and institutions can be much more complex and highly nonlinear.

2.1. Concept of Organizational Culture

Alesina and Giuliano (2015) postulates that culture and institutions interact and evolve in a complementary way, with mutual feedback effects. They further stated that, the same institutions may function differently in different culture and that culture may evolve in differing ways depending on the type of institutions. Some of the examples discussed of these interactions fare between different types of institutions (such as political and legal institutions, regulation, and the welfare state) and different cultural traits (including trust, family ties, individualism, and generalized morality). They focused on one specific aspect of the relevance of culture: its relationship to institution and also assessed the presence of a two-way causal effect between culture and institutions. The joint dynamics of culture and institutions can be much more complex and highly nonlinear.

Organisational or cooperate culture includes a system of rules and work guidelines, both formal and informal, as well as a range of rituals and traditions, behavioural patterns of the employees working within the given organizational structure, management styles, and levels of cooperation (Vasyakin et. al. (2016). Organizational culture refers to the deep-seated beliefs that make an organization's environment unique both socially and psychologically. Organizational culture is a set of shared assumptions that guide what happens in organizations by defining appropriate behaviour for various situations (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). According to Needle (2004), culture includes the organization's vision, values, norms, systems, symbols, language, assumptions, beliefs, and habits. Serpa (2016) sees organizational culture as "a shared way of being, thinking and acting in a collective and coordinated people with reciprocal expectations" (p. 51). Several studies have been conducted in determining the relationship between organizational culture and performance in different aspects of an organisation. For instance, the research conducted by Al-Tit (2017) suggested that organizational culture and supply chain management practices significantly predicted organizational performance.

2.2. University's Organizational Culture

A university's organizational culture also called academic culture is a very special case, since it is based on the fact that an educational unit is a self-organized system resting on the ethics of knowledge and learning. University culture serves as a platform for relations of various natures. It includes the internal relations between management, staff and students; external relations with alumni, prospective students and their parents; and employers as customers; and,

certainly, the partnerships and competitions with other educational institutions (Vasyakin, et. al., 2016). The nature of universities was captured by the philosopher Williams James (1907) in his book *Pragmatism* where he postulated that any difference that is a difference should make a difference. What then is the difference, if any, about universities as organisations which should be taken into account in their management? It is argued that organisations dominated by professionals must be viewed as "value-rational" organisations, in which members have absolute belief in the values of the organisation for their own sake, independent of the values' prospects for success. Obedience to a set of values or ideological norms is the core of authority of any enterprise. For example in a hospital, we might find that doctors, nurses, patients, and administrators have different views from the ultimate purpose of the organisation (Morgan & Ogbonna, 2008). Also worthy of note is the legitimacy of rules and regulations within academic institutions which is determined by their consistency with the goals of academic ideology.

Organizations following university or academy culture hire skilled individuals and allocate roles and responsibilities according to the background, educational qualification and work experience of the employees. Organizations following academy culture lay emphasis on training their existing employees by ensuring that various training programmes are conducted so as to hone their skills. A lot of efforts to upgrade the knowledge of the employees to improve their professional competence are orchestrated by management so as to reduce staff turnover and encourage sticking with the organization for a longer duration and also growing within it. Educational institutions, universities and hospitals practice this culture that can be compared with Charles Handy's model's role culture which are; power culture, task culture, person culture and role culture. Prachi (2015) describes this as a culture where every employee is delegated roles and responsibilities according to his specialization, educational qualification and interest to extract the best out of him. Most of the university cultures are embedded in its rich tradition of statutory bodies, administrative structure and ceremonies; the Laws establishing the individual institutions specify their roles and functions.

The Nigerian regulatory body of universities, the National Universities Commission (NUC) has often decried "the mother-hen and overbearing nature of the proprietor on the day -to day running of the university" (Okebukola, 2015). Nonetheless, in addition to the benchmark minimum university culture, there is the need for individual universities to develop some personal culture so as to boost their growth since the proprietor would "not want his/her investment to turn to rubies by management hands who will bear no risk when the university ship runs aground" (Okebukola, 2015). The fears of the proprietors are genuine as no business desires failure; nonetheless, the benchmark university culture must be respected while ensuring the growth of private universities. The complexity and diversity of these relations make it necessary to study the rate or timely growth of private universities in Nigeria. Is the benchmark culture of universities hampering the establishment of private universities vis a vis its public counterparts?

Clark (1981) suggested that the ideology or culture of academic organizations was much more complex than that of other organizations. Ideologies, or systems of belief, permeate academic institutions at least three different levels: the culture of the enterprise, the culture of the academic profession at large, and the culture of academic discipline. In recent decades the emergence of a more competitive international market among universities has been interpreted as threatening core academic values (Teixeira et al, 2004). As Burton Clark (1983) made clear universities are 'culturally loaded' organizations, in which values such as objectivity, academic freedom, and respect for students and human subjects guide academic behaviour and are therefore reflected in the language, symbols, and ceremonies of academic life. In the new world of the corporate university, where many institutions are being accorded greater autonomy over their internal affairs, the successful management of academic culture may well determine whether the university fully meets its responsibilities to society while strengthening the collective processes by which the academic members of the university communicate and enforce the norms and values essential to teaching and research.

2.3. University Growth

The main purpose for establishing any organisation is for sustainability, growth and possibly profits. Business growth therefore is the process of improving some measure of an organisation's success. According to the Business Dictionary, business growth can be achieved either by boosting the top line or increasing the bottom line. This simply means, boosting revenue of the business with greater product sales or service income or increasing profitability of the operation by minimizing costs. Business growth can be looked at from different point of view. Davidsson and Wiklund (2006) postulate that resource-based perspective, the motivation perspective and the strategic adaptation perspective focus on factors leading to survival and growth, while configuration studies are concerned with how growing organizations should be managed. The configuration perspective looks at business growth from the angle of the stages of growth or the company's life-cycle.

A study by Abdulpattovich on the current state of the organization and development of public-private partnership in Uzbekistan stated that a system of private education was beginning developing in Tashkent. Private schools provided high-quality educational programs for students in almost every district. The study showed the growth of private schools in Uzbekistan by the number established in every district. It was evident that only two districts did not have private schools; Bektemirsky and Yash-nobadsky. In all other areas, the development of private schools was observed, the largest number of private schools were Yunusabad with seven and MirzoUlugbek districts recording six. Abdulpattovich further stated the importance of noting that for private business, the sphere of education is not only and not so much an object of charity or social responsibility, but the sphere of effective, returning investment. While Abdulpattovich study looked at growth of private schools by district in Uzbekistan, this study looked at the rate of private universities growth in the entire country; Nigeria.

2.4. University Culture and Growth of Private University

University growth can be measured by its ability to adhere to extant laws and its academic brief, leadership quality, national and global competitiveness, staff retention, robust student enrolment, ranking position, quality of graduate output, quality and quantity of academics, development and quality of facilities, research output, alumni involvement, etcetera (NUC Bulletin). In a general sense, private universities growth can be measured by its number; by the number of private universities established yearly, quarterly or by the total number in the country. (Bernad W. et al. 2015)

Nowadays, firms must face extremely turbulent environments whose main characteristics are high levels of uncertainty, complexity and dynamism. If firms aim to survive in such volatile environments, they must develop capabilities to detect environmental changes early and to offer accurate responses to them, gaining new business opportunities and competitive advantages to exploit. In a study conducted by Vasyakin et al., (2016) in organizational culture in higher institution it was suggested that, in students' opinion, a hierarchy culture prevailed at the university and that the students potentially expect some consistent adjusted and stimulated changes in the style of its organizational culture. While much progress has been made in isolating the importance of culture and institutions, there is need to do more to fully understand their complementarities and how they jointly affect development. To find empirical answers to these questions, researchers will need to assemble a chronology of both cultural change and institutional change and then examine the interrelationships between them. Arguably, organizational culture has a huge impact on business performance. Denison, (1990) discussed how organizational culture hinders or facilitates an organisation in achieving its overall goals and objectives. Umrani et al (2017) found that the relationship between organizational culture and business performance is positive, suggesting the importance of the culture-performance relationship.

However, for the purpose of this study, university growth was measured by the frequency of establishing and extinction of private universities in Nigeria through the calculation of the mean and frequency using the descriptive analysis. It concentrated on the implications of academic culture with respect to number of private universities established in Nigeria and the number that couldn't continue after establishment. It attempts to answer the question of how organizational culture has impacted the number of private universities in Nigeria. Also is the proportion of increase comparable to its public counterparts?

2.5. Theoretical Framework

Business performance has long been associated with organizational culture, as some cultures are more conducive for better business performance than others, considering the differences in their cultural and business practices. Therefore culture has the potential to influence organisational processes and performance (Deresky, 1994; Lee, & Yu, 2004; Kessapidou, & Varsakelis, 2002). Charles Handy is a renowned authority on organisational culture and he defined four different kinds of culture: Power, Role, Task and Person. Educational institutions, universities and hospitals practice a culture that can be compared with Charles Handy's role culture model. Prachi (2015) further describes role culture as that where every employee is delegated roles and responsibilities according to his specialization, educational qualification and interest to extract the best out of him.

Similar to Handy's role culture is Max Weber's bureaucratic culture of management. The key elements of a bureaucracy are defined by Weber as: A clear chain of command within a well-defined hierarchy where the top post holders have the authority and the right to control the lower post holders. Furthermore, it is governed by accurate and complete rules and regulations, to control and govern all decisions, activities and situations and also promotes impersonal relationships between employees and managers, with clear duties of personnel and statements of the rights. A bureaucratic system of management is based on five principles: formal authority; positions are arranged hierarchically; task and authority; managers must create a well-defined system of rules; and appointment and promotion base on competency not base on sentiment (Mahfooz, 2017). This study aligns with bureaucratic culture because of universities' well structured hierarchy of administrative command. Most of the university cultures are embedded in its rich tradition of statutory bodies, administrative structure and ceremonies; the Laws establishing the individual universities specify their roles and functions accordingly. The role culture as described by Handy and Weber's bureaucratic management theory were used for the purpose of this study Has this culture impeded the growth of private universities in Nigeria?

2.6. Empirical Review

Most of the papers reviewed tried to isolate one direction of causality, by using instrumental variables or by looking at historical exogenous shocks. The existence of complementarities between culture and institutions hinders identification; therefore there is the need to better understand channels of causality. Linear regression methods tend to be less appropriate than more structural analyses of the data in analysing culture-performance relationship. Umrani et al (2017) examined the relationship between organizational culture and business performance or growth. The results support relationship between organizational culture and business performance. This is consistent with the findings of the previous studies (Deshpandé, & Farley, 2004; Lee, & Yu, 2004; Marcoulides, & Heck, 1993). The result also suggests that organizational culture is important factor which influences business performance (Deshpandé, & Farley, 2004). Umrani et al (2017) found that organizational culture explained 28 percent variance in business performance; however, 72% remains unexplained suggesting that there are other variables not incorporated in the present study which can potentially influence the business performance. Hence, the organizational level variables such as absorptive capacity, leadership, and corporate entrepreneurship may be considered to further assess the significant contribution into the business growth.

Nonetheless, for the purpose of this study, university growth was measured by the frequency of establishing and extinction of private universities in Nigeria through the calculation of the mean and frequency using the descriptive

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3. Methodology

The study employed a survey research design, which involves a set of procedure on the required data, the methods applied to collect and analyze the data, and how all of these attempted to answer the research questions (Grey, 2014). Survey data is the most commonly used method for studying the interaction between culture and institutions (Nunn (2009, 2013). The secondary data used were sourced from the National Universities Commission's Bulletin and its website listing of Nigerian universities. There are a total of 79 established private universities in Nigeria and all were taken into account for the computation of the study. Another population used was all public universities (federal and states) established after the commencement of private universities in Nigeria in 1999 to enable for comparison of growth rate. Descriptive research methodology was used in analysing the data through the central tendency. The population of this study comprised all of the 79 private universities (PU) in Nigeria, and sampling technique adopted was stratifying by the number of public universities (state and federal universities) established since the inception of private universities in Nigeria; from 1999 to date. This was done to aid in measuring the periodic growth of PU since inception in 1999 vis a vis its public counterparts. The data was sourced from National universities Commission Bulletin and its website and as well as other published documents because the information is readily available.

3.1. Data Analysis

This section presents findings of the study. It deals with results generated using the secondary data. Descriptive analysis was used to analyse the data in order to ascertain if the hypothetical statement posed for this research work was true.

Year	Number of PU Established per Year	Number of PU Shutdown per Year
1999	3	0
2000	0	0
2001	1	0
2002	3	0
2003	1	0
2004	0	0
2005	14	0
2006	1	1
2007	10	0
2008	0	0
2009	7	0
2010	0	0
2011	4	0
2012	5	0
2013	0	0
2014	0	0
2015	11	1
2016	8	0
2017	6	0
2018	1	0
2019	4	0
Total	79	2

Table 1: Number of Private Universities Established or Shutdown Yearly in the Last 21 Years of PU Existence

Table 1 shows the total number of private universities in Nigeria = 79; the number established or shut down each year; and the total number that has shutdown since 1999 to 2019. According to the table, almost every year saw the establishment of private universities except for 2000, 2004, 2010, 2013 and 2014. It also showed that 2005 recorded the largest number of the establishment of private universities with 14 and followed by 2015 with 11. Table 1 also shows that 1 private university shut down in 2006 and 2015 making a total of 2 that has seized operations since 21 years of the existence of private university in Nigeria

PU established		PU shutdown	
Mean	3.761905	Mean	0.095238

Standard Error	0.91001	Standard Error	0.065638
Median	3	Median	0
Mode	0	Mode	0
Standard Deviation	4.170189	Standard Deviation	0.300793
Sample Variance	17.39048	Sample Variance	0.090476
Kurtosis	0.319474	Kurtosis	7.562327
Skewness	1.077287	Skewness	2.974597
Range	14	Range	1
Minimum	0	Minimum	0
Maximum	14	Maximum	1
Sum	79	Sum	2
Count	21	Count	21
Largest(1)	14	Largest(1)	1
Smallest(1)	0	Smallest(1)	0
Confidence Level (95.0%)	1.898247	Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.136919

Table 2: Analysis of PU Established or Shutdown Yearly Using Descriptive Analysis

S/N	Year	Number of PU Established	Number of FU Established	Number of SU Established
1	1999	3	0	2
2	2000	0	0	4
3	2001	1	0	0
4	2002	3	1	2
5	2003	1	0	0
6	2004	0	0	3
7	2005	14	0	3
8	2006	1	0	4
9	2007	10	1	0
10	2008	0	0	2
11	2009	7	0	2
12	2010	0	0	2
13	2011	4	9	1
14	2012	5	1	2
15	2013	0	3	1
16	2014	0	0	0
17	2015	11	0	1
18	2016	8	0	4
19	2017	6	0	2
20	2018	1	2	1
21	2019	4	0	1
	Total	79	17	37

Table 3: Number of Private (PU), Federal (FU) and State Universities (SU) Established Yearly

Table 3 is a representation of the rate of growth of the 3 types of universities in Nigeria; federal, state and private universities since the coming of private universities in 1999. The table shows that in 21 years 79, 17 and 37 private, federal and state universities had been established indicating a huge growth in the number of private universities

PU		FU		SU	
Mean	3.761905	Mean	0.809524	Mean	1.761905
Standard Error	0.91001	Standard Error	0.445181	Standard Error	0.283723
Median	3	Median	0	Median	2
Mode	0	Mode	0	Mode	2
Standard Deviation	4.170189	Standard Deviation	2.040075	Standard Deviation	1.300183
Sample Variance	17.39048	Sample Variance	4.161905	Sample Variance	1.690476
Kurtosis	0.319474	Kurtosis	14.1624	Kurtosis	-0.66715
Skewness	1.077287	Skewness	3.603958	Skewness	0.337752
Range	14	Range	9	Range	4
Minimum	0	Minimum	0	Minimum	0

Maximum	14	Maximum	9	Maximum	4
Sum	79	Sum	17	Sum	37
Count	21	Count	21	Count	21
Largest(1)	14	Largest(1)	9	Largest(1)	4
Smallest(1)	0	Smallest(1)	0	Smallest(1)	0
Confidence Level (95.0%)	1.898247	Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.928631	Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.591836

Table 4: Comparison of the Rate of Growth of the Three Types of Universities in Nigeria

Table 4 shows the mean number of private universities established each year as 3.76, for federal and state universities 0.81 and 1.76 respectively.

3.2. Hypotheses Testing

The Ho1, stated that: There is no significant relationship between university culture and private universities growth in Nigeria. The mean calculated shows that an average of 3.7 private universities are established yearly indicating a steady growth of private universities which suggests that there is no significant relationship between university culture and private universities growth.

The second hypothesis statement, Ho2, states that there is no significant effect of university culture on private university's growth in Nigeria. The statement of the problem feared that due to the uniqueness of the culture expected of all universities in the world, Nigeria included, private universities may find it difficult to stay open even after establishment. This was refuted by the analysis on table 2 showing that an average of 0.0 private universities had seized operations since the introduction of private university system in Nigeria in 1999. This is a clear indication that the private universities are not affected by the existing university culture.

The third hypothesis Ho c: states that university culture does not significantly influence the growth of non-private over private universities in Nigeria. The analyses on table 4 show that the rate of growth of private universities is more than that of the federal and state universities. This is evident in the fact that, while private universities are growing at the rate of 3.8 (about 4) yearly, the federal and state universities are growing at the rate of 0.8 and 1.8 respectively. Therefore, the study shows that Ho c is not a statement of fact and that private universities record far more growth than their public counterpart.

3.3. Discussion of Findings

It is evident as is shown on the tables and analysis presented that organizational culture is not an impediment to the growth of private universities in Nigeria. The fact presented in table 4 shows that private universities are established three times more frequently than its government counterparts. The mean of 3.761905, 0.809524 and 1.761905 for the establishment of private, federal and state universities respectively yearly as shown is a clear indication that the organisational culture endemic in universities has not impacted negatively on the growth of private universities. Furthermore, the analysis represented in table 2 shows that in 21 years only 2 private universities had seized operation representing that 0.0 private universities are shut down yearly.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusion

Organizational culture, in this case university or academic culture is the beauty of an organization. The administrative, Committee and statutory bodies of the university gives it its glory and may affect quality if not maintained to its minimum benchmark. Nonetheless, it should not overbear on the organization to the extent of affecting its sustainability. The study has shown that private universities growth in Nigeria has been positive and has not been marred by university culture. It also showed that private investors may not be bothered about the uniqueness or bureaucracy of the university culture; this may actually be the attraction into the industry. The study therefore concludes that university culture has no implication on the growth of private universities. This topic is open to more research especially as relates university culture and governance of private universities. While much progress has been made in isolating the importance of culture and institutions, there is need to do more to fully understand their complementarities and how they jointly affect development. To find empirical answers to these questions, researchers will need to assemble a chronology of both culture and institutional growth and then examine the interrelationships between them.

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, this paper recommends thus: that

- The organisational culture is good and should be maintained according to the nature of institutions
- Proprietors should be well schooled on the minimum benchmark organisational culture of universities for sustainability of private universities
- Stakeholders should foster the growth of private universities.

5. Areas for further Research

There may be need for further studies on some aspects of the existing university culture to ascertain if there are possible ways to allow private universities have their inputs on the existing university culture without eroding the beauty and value. There is also the need to research university growth from the perspective of accreditation.

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