



A Recent Echo: African Private Higher Education in an International Perspective¹

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Abstract

Africa is a very recent arrival to the world scene of rapidly growing private higher education but it strongly echoes historical and contemporary patterns elsewhere. This is evident in each major category of analysis that merits our attention. It is evident in causes of growth, forms of growth, types of institutions, finance, governance, status, and roles played. Of course, such a broad generalization must not obscure significant differences and variation. Regions have their own salient characteristics and Africa is no exception. However, one does not adequately understand African private higher education without seeing it in a global context. In turn, the understanding of global context is enriched by incorporating Africa in the analysis.

Résumé

L'Afrique est tout récemment entrée sur la scène mondiale de l'enseignement supérieur privé qui connaît une croissance rapide, mais elle reprend considérablement des modèles historiques et contemporaines d'ailleurs. Cela est manifeste dans chaque grande catégorie d'analyse qui mérite notre attention. Cela est évident pour des raisons de croissance, de formes de croissance, de types d'institutions, de finance, de gouvernance, de statut et de rôles joués. Bien entendu, une telle large généralisation ne doit pas masquer les différences et les variations qui sont considérables. Les régions ont leurs propres caractéristiques et l'Afrique ne fait pas exception. Toutefois, on ne peut pas bien comprendre l'enseignement supérieur privé en Afrique sans le voir dans un contexte mondial. En retour, l'intégration de l'Afrique dans l'analyse permet aussi de mieux comprendre le contexte mondial.

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Late But Recognizable

Perhaps the most striking reality about African private higher education in an international perspective is that it is simultaneously a late yet largely conventional arrival. Particularly since the 1990s, the region has witnessed a surge of private institutions and enrolments. These same recent years have witnessed continued private higher education growth in most of the world but notable growth there was already manifest in prior decades, sometimes further back historically. By the time Africa started to move significantly into private higher education, almost all of Latin America, the great bulk of Asia, and of course the United States, had major private sectors. Closest to Africa in initiation time was Central and Eastern Europe, with the fall of Communism in 1989.² Western Europe remains the sole major region with limited private higher education, although exceptions there increase and considerable privatization of public universities has occurred.

If one were to hypothesize salient characteristics of African private higher education just by drawing on international precedent and the literature analyzing it, one would be well on the road to sketching the African reality.³ This article will bear that out with regard to causes and patterns of growth, types of private institutions, and governance. To exaggerate in order to impress the point: a remarkable feature of African private higher education is how unremarkable it is. What may seem startling inside Africa often does not appear so remarkable in comparative terms.

Of course each region has its own characteristics and contexts, however. One can hypothesize logically but one must then be attentive to empirical reality. The same can be said of cross-national research within a region; we will find considerable variation across African countries. Yet we are impressed by the important similarities between Africa and other regions, given the enormous historical, political, economic, and social differences, including Africa's extreme poverty and low overall higher education enrolments. It is after all a major rule in comparative analysis that similarities are especially notable where they emerge across radically different terrain.

These private higher education similarities allow this article to have a coherent theme with unifying modalities within which to interpret the various country-based articles in this special journal issue. Otherwise, we might have expected limited cohesiveness, for the study of African private higher education is so recent and scant that a call for papers could not prudently specify much focus beyond that submissions deal with private higher education in the region. This permitted considerable variety in the foci of the various submissions. It is the concepts, methods, and findings from the wider literature on global private higher

education that allows this article to pull together important aspects of otherwise scattered articles as well as to place the whole into broad international context.

This article has dual, tandem purposes. One is to use global knowledge to understand African reality. The primary audience in this respect is African. The other purpose is to add African reality to our global knowledge. Here the main audience is more global and diffuse.⁴

Our geographical focus is Sub-Saharan Africa. Were North Africa included, we would see both more historical precedent and still greater robustness in contemporary private growth. Dealing with the Sub-Saharan region is challenge enough, including considerable diversity. Our analysis draws largely but not exclusively on the articles in this special journal issue. *It cites them merely by author name* (whereas other citations are shown with year as well as name). The analysis does not summarize the articles in this issue.

Emergence, Size, and Scope of Expansion

Data ambiguity. New rarely means completely new when it comes to private higher education. Country authors correctly point to roots and precursors. These include missionary ventures. As Naidoo, Singh, Lange and Onsongo and Mabizela (2001) note for Kenya and South Africa, religiously-oriented colleges could precede independence and be linked to churches or colonial powers' home institutions. Otieno (2005) notes the frequency with which institutions began as affiliates of more established institutions in the metropolises, especially in the case of former British colonies, then evolving to become national universities of the newly independent states. By the mid-twentieth century South African private institutions, becoming public institutions by the mid-twentieth century, were giving vocational higher education to blacks.

Such roots and precursors point to one reason it is difficult to give precise figures about contemporary African private higher education. What, first of all, qualifies as 'higher education?' What then qualifies as 'private?' These questions are common internationally but usually alongside a now much more formidable, clear private higher education sector. Similarly, the prevalence of scattered small private institutions makes inclusive, firm counting difficult. As Salerno and Beverwijk further note for Uganda, counting is undermined by the rapidity with which private institutions spring up and close as well as by the double-counting of enrolments where there are various forms of private-public partnership. They also note that much private presence lies in non-universities, many of which are arguably not really higher education.⁵ Whereas the fuzzy borders between higher education and lower levels plague counting in higher education in general, they are typically more problematic when it comes to the private sector, which is typically disproportionate in the non-university sphere. The same

is true on the fuzzy border between higher education and related forms of vocational or professional training (sometimes in for-profit institutions not under the education ministry).

Other common problems in getting reliable numbers for private higher education are also especially strong in Africa. There is sometimes ambiguity as to whether to count un-registered but functioning institutions. The same may hold for units that are affiliated to recognizable higher education institutions. Then there is obviously the weakness of some African bureaucracies, ministries, and research records in general. In very few African countries has government gathered comprehensive data on private higher education and even the gathering has not insured transparency and open access. Finally, a logical inverse correlation between recency of growth and ample reliable data presents special problems for Africa, as the region where private growth is latest.

Causes of growth. A major finding about earlier private higher education emergence has played out in the most recent regions, Central and Eastern Europe and Africa: surprise or at least the absence of a centrally-planned process (Levy 2006c). Rarely does initial emergence and robust growth emanate mostly from government deliberation and initiative. Much more common is uncoordinated action by dispersed actors. This is what Salerno and Beverwijk find for Uganda and what Obasi (2006) pointedly ties to the global literature for Nigeria.⁶ On the other hand, we will see that some governments (e.g., Kenya) promote private growth, often hand-in-hand with regulation.

The most commonly reported major cause of private emergence, whether in Africa or elsewhere, is the surge of demand for higher education. This surge usually cannot be accommodated within existing public institutions. While the expansion of these institutions and creation of new public ones is common, they remain insufficient, at least where government financial capacity is strapped and there are ample constraints on increasing the size of public sectors in general. The Nigerian government would eventually bar the creation of further federal universities, though not of further state ones. Study abroad is one alternative and the arrival of foreign institutions offering local courses is another, but both tend to be expensive and limited.⁷ As demand exceeds supply a much more common response is private growth. If there is enrolment 'massification,' it typically involves a major private component, as in Uganda (Salerno and Beverwijk as well as Kasozi 2002). We must be clear on terms, however. 'Massification' is a heavy word for a continent where enrolment remains so limited, and the private share of the enrolment remains comparatively low.

One might draw up an extensive list of additional causes or might emphasize the inter-relatedness of most. Fitting our theme, none of the causes is unique to Africa. Major shifts toward market economies are important, as in the Ugandan

case, starting 1988. In India, as in Brazil and many other cases, private higher education development is greatest in the most economically-developed states and regions, just as in Nigeria's Southwest. Although not matching the reality of Latin America in the 1960s and beyond (Levy 1986), African public university disorder has been a factor. Kenyan strikes have been a particularly potent force as they extend the length of study at public universities, and contribute to uncertainty (Otieno and Levy forthcoming). Indeed, private institutions in Africa, as elsewhere, are largely free from disruptions common in public counterparts: student, faculty, or union (Konings 2002; Anugwom 2002). Private institutions commonly sell themselves as efficient, safe alternatives. They also sell themselves as job-market oriented, pointedly plunging into new fields that involve high demand from a 'marketizing' and globalizing economy and sometimes benefiting from public universities' reluctance to similarly commercialize their orientations (Banya 2001). They sometimes pursue attractive training collaborations such as that of Mozambique's Higher Education Institute of Science and Technology with the Southern Mozambique Hotel Association. Kruss shows how certain South African private institutions offer specialized job-oriented options, sometimes especially for blacks and the new emerging elite.

Commonly private higher education is an option for the relatively well-to-do within the potential higher education population. Kenya is a documented case. The big qualification, as in Central and Eastern Europe and much of Asia, is that the most privileged are highly represented among the secondary school graduates who have the best chances for the most prestigious universities, which remain public. Related to well-to-do private representation is the preponderance of private institutions in capital and other leading cities.⁸ Again Kenya is one of many examples, with three-fourths of private enrolment packed into Nairobi and its periphery (Abagi, Nzomo, and Otieno 2005). Over time, other regions show greater dispersion but of course African private higher education has not yet had much time.

It is instructive to see how the enrolment of women buttresses and extends our understanding of growth factors. The Onsongo article on Kenya takes the lead in gender focus. An inhibiting factor is that families tend to value male over female education so that funds are more readily available to males, at both the secondary and higher levels, a constraint obviously relevant to fee-charging institutions. On the other hand, female enrolments were notably low so that the general point about private growth through rising demand for higher education is especially potent. So is the concern over disorder and safety and thus the choice for women and daughters of religious or other private alternatives. Similarly, we see a convergence of two common global tendencies: private concentration on commercial fields and female concentration in such fields. In Kenya,

a stark gender reality is how limited female representation is in the difficult terrain of entry into science fields of top universities, while communications epitomizes the attraction for women. Whereas women account for only a third of Kenya's public enrolment, they account for a (slight) majority of Kenya's private higher education enrolment. Tanzanian private enrolments are 38 percent female, versus just 24 percent for public enrolments (see also Kwisiga). Overall, Sawyerr (2004) finds that women tend to comprise one-third to one-half of African private enrolments versus just one-fifth to one-third of public ones (Wesonga et al. forthcoming). Although these African contrasts are much larger than is typically found internationally, women do tend to concentrate disproportionately in private higher education.

Country concentration and tendencies. The most ambitious data compilations and estimations of African private higher education enrolment to date (Sawyerr 2004) indicate the region's startling private growth. From perhaps 7 private universities in 1960 and then still fewer than 20 in the mid-1980s and 27 in 1990, there would be around 71 by the turn of the century and soon 84.

A striking feature of African private growth is how concentrated it is in Anglophone Africa, and how much weaker it is in Francophone Africa. (This partly explains this special issue's full devotion to the former, not as a matter of design but probably as a reflection of where private higher education has been powerful enough to demand scholarly attention.) One macro factor that is surely in play is that the British Empire had important roots in much less centralized, governmental, single institutional type systems than was the case for the French and Portuguese empires. In any event, it is principally in East Africa and Southern Africa where private higher education has had its major roots and present enrolments.⁹

Also importantly, there is cross-national variation within sub-regions (Teferra and Altbach 2003: 7-8). Kenya led within East Africa. After having just 7 universities at the point of independence, by 2005 Kenya had 6 public and 18 private universities. Total enrolment reached 91,000 by 2006, with a peak private share around 20 percent but then falling to just over 12 percent (Otieno), largely due to strong growth of privatized modules within public universities, as these modules now are larger than the rest of the university.¹⁰ By the 1990s, Tanzania came to the fore, pushing to 11 private universities, as Uganda, from its 1988 inception, had more than 10 (Sawyerr 2004; Kasozi 2000). Elsewhere, the 1990s saw private universities first emerge, reaching 4 in the Congo, 3 in Senegal, and 4 in Brurundi. By 2001, Ghana had 7, and soon 21 registered, 8 in operation (Sawyerr 2004). Other countries noted in Eisemon's early analysis were Zaire, Rwanda, Ivory Coast, and Mozambique (Eisemon 1991).

Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe were the earliest African countries to accredit private institutions; by 2006 Nigeria would have 24 licensed private universities along with its 52 public ones. Tanzania, whose private sector began only in 1997 (other than a 1961 Catholic precursor) had by 1999 19 institutions under accreditation review and 7 already registered. By 2002 privates accounted for roughly 8 percent of total enrolment. Ethiopia's private sector opened in 1998, though with precursors back to 1991. Before long it constituted perhaps a fourth of total enrolment.

Nonetheless, it is important to note major limitations on Africa's private higher education growth. Among our significant African cases we see that even Kenya saw a low of 80 percent public and is now 88 percent public, Uganda appears to be almost 90 percent public, South Africa and Ghana around 95 percent public. Probably the major qualification comes where there are sizzling privatized modules in public universities; combining these with the private universities, roughly 60 percent of Kenyan enrolment could be identified as private. Perhaps no African country has a private share that matches the world average, loosely estimated at 25–30 percent. Certainly, the region has no parallel whatever for the majority private enrolment shares seen in Korea, Japan, Brazil, Colombia and elsewhere, the first two near four-fifths and the other two not far behind.¹¹ What is most striking about African private higher education is not its gross size so much as its notable and often fast-growing presence in recent years.

If we were to focus on shares of institutions, the private presence would look much more ample. This is almost always the case; very few countries anywhere have higher private proportions of enrolment than of institutions. Put another way, the average private institution tends to be smaller than the average public one, often by a great deal (Levy 1992). And Africa appears to be comparatively high in the number of private institutions with fewer than one thousand students. The average (non-seminary) religious institution is comparatively larger and one expects that over time the typical private size will grow, resulting from the collapse of some small private institutions and the merger of others.

And what of future growth? It behoves us to consider not just the major causes of private expansion to date but also the factors that restrain it and which could conceivably become more potent. For one thing, private growth will depend largely on public higher education. To date, private growth has been part of overall growth, fuelled by some overlapping factors. Salerno and Beverwijk report that Uganda's public Makerere University jumped from roughly 2,500 enrolments in the late 1970s to some 32,000 by 2003, while 3 additional public universities were established. Were any African government to appear very favourable to higher education growth and unfavourable to private activity, the private share could fall. Or, as the Kenyan case has shown, competitive inter-

sectoral dynamics involving a privatizing of the public university, can also bring such a fall (Otieno and Levy, forthcoming). A related point is how an unaccommodating government could implant extensive and rigorous regulation or unfriendly tax policies. Such policies have precedent in placing tuition caps, setting difficult accreditation criteria, and so forth. India stands as one national example of where government policy can rather rapidly switch in ways that threaten private growth (Gupta, Levy, and Powar in progress). Additionally, as we shall see below, some powerful privatizing forces for higher education can have their outlet not just in the growth of private institutions but in the partial privatization of public ones. As Otieno's study of Kenya demonstrates, public universities pursuing extra revenues and demand may open job-relevant modules that directly compete with the most attractive features of private higher education.

But for the most part, African prospect would seem on balance to favour further private growth, not just in absolute but also in proportional terms. The closest analysis of prospects is Obasi's (2006) on Nigeria and it is rather optimistic for the private sector, though Otieno's speculation on Kenya is quite different (Abagi, Nzomo, and Otieno 2005). The main reasons for expecting continued growth would be precisely those that have spurred private growth in recent years. Market economies, rather right-leaning economic and political models, globalization and strong private-centred international influences are all at play. And Africa remains the region with the lowest cohort enrolments, allowing ample room for overall growth through a demand outstripping public supply, all against the background in which Africa has a private higher education sector proportionally smaller than other regions do. In contrast, the other region with the latest private higher education emergence, Central and Eastern Europe, joins Japan, Portugal and other developed places where the demographics of declining birth rates can pose grave dangers to overall higher education growth and to private sectors in particular.¹²

Types of Institutions

No major private sectors of higher education are homogeneous. In all regions they encompass a variety of institutional types. Conventional categories in the global private higher education literature, mainly religious, elite, demand-absorbing, and commercial, find echoes in the African case. As elsewhere, the search for suitable categorization must not be aimed at tight, mutually exclusive and thoroughly inclusive categories, let alone ones that hold up evenly across countries. Intensive country cases should indeed play off such broad categorizations to launch analysis of mixes and variations; this issue's most concentrated effort in that direction is Kruss's on South Africa.

Religious. A striking finding of the global private higher education literature is the potent presence of religious institutions in early development. Since African private higher education is still in its youth, we might expect a strong religious presence, and that is what we find. As noted, religious institutions counted prominently among the continent's precursors, including in Kenya, South Africa, and Uganda. Although Kenya's first private university (US International University) was secular, the next 2 were religious. Fourteen of eighteen Kenyan private universities are religious. Fifteen of Nigeria's twenty-four are religious.

In the past, in the era before Africa had major private higher education, outside the United States religious generally meant Catholic.¹³ For many decades this was the rule without almost any exception throughout Latin America (Levy 1986). Of course there were and remain significant variations among Catholic institutions. But the Catholic near-monopoly is dissipating in Latin America and elsewhere. And Africa epitomizes the new plurality of religious types. Alongside Catholic and Protestant institutions are Muslim institutions. Uganda's Islamic University opened in 1988 (Kasozi 2000). Nigeria has 3 Catholic institutions, 3 Muslim ones, and 9 Pentecostal.

The small Catholic share of religious higher education is a rather unusual feature of Africa. It is the Pentecostal institutions that are ascendant, with a variety of Christian institutions early on. Of Kenya's 14 religious universities, only 1 is Catholic, one Adventist, and the rest are Protestant (Pentecostal).¹⁴

Historically and geographically, religious institutions can have more or less religious fervour and distinctiveness. Both have tended to decline over many decades. But the Pentecostal example moves in the other direction, and so it is one dimension that appears to make religious a vigorous force in African private higher education. While Kenya's Daystar University does not proselytize students, it does require that faculty and especially administrators are members of Pentecostal churches. Ugandan faculty and students must commit to their universities' basic mission of promoting Christian values. A 'compassionate' tone can be noted for Nigeria's Pentecostal institutions, notwithstanding their primal capitalist hue. Generally, Africa's religious higher education has an explicit mission of character-building, but this need not mean a vague religious mission. A sharp religious mission is evident at some institutions; Kenya's Kabarak University aspires that all hear the call of Jesus Christ as Lord. In Kenya, all the religious universities have explicitly Christian content.

Character building and religious emphasis fits in with prior points about attractiveness for women (including a degree of *loco parentis*) and lack of political disruption. Eisemon (1991) concluded that such a mission was the prime

factor that distinguished the region's religious from other higher education institutions.

On the other hand, religious higher education has often had characteristics linked to broader tendencies of their time. The modern era has generally involved a heavy dose of commercialism in higher education. Expansion and financial viability have often meant that universities cannot be too stringent in religious requirements and that they add many secular courses to the curriculum. These courses have typically been in high demand areas, most notably in job-oriented fields. Furthermore, a widespread and potent association has often existed, now prominently for Africa, between Pentecostal institutions and business orientations. As in Latin America, one sees the urge to have ample offerings in management, business, applied technology, tourism studies, and the like. For institutions emphasizing normative orientations more, as with Uganda's Martyrs University, fields like ethics and philosophy and anthropology are joined by fields like management. Some of the business-oriented institutions in Africa, as in Latin America, assume rather high socioeconomic profiles and perhaps a rather elite role in some business-oriented studies.

Non-religious. Most of the recent worldwide private higher education growth has had a major demand-absorbing component. By this the literature has referred to the excess of demand over public supply but also with a connotation of something other than high academic or social standing. To some extent, this subsector has been marginal in worth and legitimacy, raising questions about fraud. To another extent, however, the sub-sector may be depicted as commercial, a category we return to below. Much of the subsector tends to copy or pretend to copy public institutions while another part seeks some distinctiveness, often a niche distinctiveness alongside the emulation, and the niche is commonly commercial or religious (Levy 2006b). Based on information at hand, it is difficult to weigh these tendencies in the African context. An impression is that the demand-absorbing sector may account for a smaller share of the private sector than is the case elsewhere, though still a significant share. Certainly, Kruss is correct in drawing the comparative point that South African private growth has had a much less stark demand-absorbing component than we often see in developing regions.

This does not suggest, however, that academically elite private higher education is at all common in Africa. Instead, Africa fits the strong global non-US pattern of only a limited or even absent elite sub-sector. Thus there is a contrast, as outside the region, between socioeconomic elite status and the lack of academic elite status. Research, graduate education (at least outside business fields), full-time faculty and other staff, scientific and other expensive and demanding fields of study, ample laboratories and other facilities, and attractiveness as the

number one choice for the most capable of secondary school graduates: all this is rare for African private higher education.¹⁵ It is unclear why wealthy churches, such as some of Kenya's Catholic ones, have not attempted to found elite universities.

Yet, also as in much of the world, the lack of private elite universities does not preclude the existence of solid or even 'semi-elite' universities. These are often Church-run, sometimes foreign-affiliated. Here research, science, full-time status and the like are not so uncommon. We often therefore see a private top that holds a position in the pecking order mostly below the top public universities but well above most other institutions, public or private. The point is especially apt for accredited private universities.¹⁶ Private-sector Ethiopian students appear to regard their institutions as solid, comparable to public ones, even where they could not gain admission to public ones. Kenya is a good example as it is a good example of intense competition between good private and public universities, most notably where the latter open fee-charging, market-oriented modules (Otieno and Levy); competition for top professors is a good illustration, with top privates out-paying public universities. Moreover, many leading private universities in Kenya, Ethiopia (e.g. Unity College), and elsewhere have a major full-time faculty presence, a marked contrast to Latin America historically (even for public universities). Additionally, these private universities may escape the facilities' deficiency, even showing less congestion than public counterparts in matters such as library access (Otieno 2004). A major question for African private higher education is the future size of this formidable subsector and whether part of it can substantially elevate itself toward a more academic elite standing.

Finally, though it overlaps religious, semi-elite, and commercial categories, we can add a word about transnational institutions. Africa is a target for several reasons. On the one hand, there is the high demand to supply ratio domestically, in turn creating a potentially profitable market for overseas institutions, the high cost of study abroad, the fact that although most Africans are poor a share of the higher education population can afford to pay, and the thirst for status or quality associated with more developed regions. On the other hand, countries such as Nigeria and South Africa have sometimes been very restrictive based on wariness and nationalism; transnational ventures principally from Australian and British universities occupy only a small share now of South African enrolments, after initial promise (Naidoo, Singh, Lange). A particularly interesting phenomenon, which echoes many of these logical tendencies, is intra-African penetration (Mabizela and Otieno forthcoming; Eisemon 1991). More developed countries are not only receivers of poorer countries' students going abroad (with a number of private universities particularly keen for this market), they have also seen the opportunity to open campuses in those poorer countries, often neighbouring ones.

Looking at South Africa alone, we see markets involving Botswana, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. Additionally, some private African universities aspire to a regional presence, beyond their home country. Kenya's Daystar and other universities include non-Kenyans on their governing boards and the U.S. International University is composed mostly of Americans, with less than 10 percent of enrolments.

In many cases, private universities have students of more diverse national backgrounds than do the public universities. Several Kenyan private universities attract many nationalities. For religious universities, this is due partly to the nature of ownership, while for the non-religious it has to do also with the semi-elite status and appeal. A Kenyan university that is owned by nine member countries of the Association of the Member Episcopal Conference of Eastern Africa enrolls students from all nine (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe). Indeed there is increased intra-Africa competition for markets that have been mined by British and Australian universities. Uganda's Kampala International University is an example.

Commercial and for-profit. Where private higher education is pointedly commercial in its mission and pursuits, it often resembles for-profit higher education. In fact, the perception that even legally non-profit institutions are for-profit in operation is very widespread, at least outside the United States (Kinser and Levy 2005). Nigeria's Igbinedion University is a good example, with the university denying that it is a for-profit. Salerno and Beverwijk report similar common perceptions for Uganda. Often cloudy African and other higher education law allow much by the lack of proscription that it does not expressly sanction; in other words, regulations have to catch up with reality. Generally, non-profit institutions, whether in higher education or not, are permitted to generate income and enjoy most characteristics of profit; what they are not allowed to do is to distribute those profits to owners. In practice, however, disguised profits are common, notably including in family-run private institutions where salaries or perks can be inflated. All this seems true for at least Anglophone Africa. For-profits and quasi-for-profits are roundly criticized for 'extreme market' orientations, as they commonly are internationally (Sawyer 2004).

South Africa is an exceptional case where the majority of private higher education institutions are legally for-profit (Levy 2002). A variety of for-profit forms includes publicly listed companies and proprietary limited organizations. In fact, the South African case is exceptional not only for Africa but beyond. Many countries explicitly disallow for-profit higher education; others at least do not explicitly allow it (e.g., Kenya, where Daystar registers as a private limited company). Among non-African cases where for-profit is an important (but usually

not dominant) part of the private sector are the United States, Brazil, Peru, Jordan, Georgia, and Ukraine.

The overlap of non-profit commercial and for-profit is reflected in the preponderance of programs and enrolments in job-oriented education or 'training'. This is what we find through Salerno and Beverwijk for Uganda, Onsongo for Kenya, and others for countries like Ethiopia (e.g. Unity College in accounting). If private institutions make inroads into fields not inexpensive to offer it is usually because the individual rates of return are perceived to be so high that those who are able will pay. Indeed in many countries these institutions market themselves to students who are already in the workforce. It appears that some private institutions have been agile in this respect but also that some public ones now introduce modules to compete on this front. Then too, as is also common in historical precedent in other regions, the aspiring solid universities, often religious, try to balance their commercial fields with fields upholding a more academic (as well as religious) mission.

Overlap also manifests itself in tuition dependence, as in Ethiopia. Although Africa follows the global pattern of tuition and other fees being by far the major source of private institutional income, all the more for for-profit and other commercial subsectors, quite a few institutions have substantial alternative income.¹⁷ Abagi, Nzomo, and Otieno (2005) report gifts, trusts, alumni giving, and religious donations in Kenya. Government funds appear to remain scarce in the region, as is more often than not the case in other developing regions, and even if it is offered there is some question about private institutions' enthusiasm to receive, fearing debt and perhaps increased government control.¹⁸

For Nigeria, Obasi (2006) reports a tuition high of almost \$3,300 at Igbinedian University. Similar costs have been reported for South Africa's Monash and Uganda's Martyrs University. Tanzania's private charges range from \$1,400 to greater than \$8,000 annually. Yet high tuitions are often merely similar to that which privileged groups pay for private secondary education and in a few cases, even in primary education, another common cross-regional finding. And they can be similar to some privatized modules in public universities, as in Tanzania and Kenya.

Finally, overlap between for-profit and nonprofit commercial is stark where nonprofits are heavily engaged in the business sector. Although all religious institutions are legally non-profit, especially many of the Pentecostal universities fit this business point.¹⁹

Governance

Hierarchy. In governance too, perhaps even more sharply, African private higher education follows global precedent. A crucial and widespread component is hi-

erarchy. Private university students lack much institutionalized power and the basic logic of the private sector weighs against latitude for pressure and strikes. Where students wield a kind of power, which is more common in the U.S., is as consumers. For-profit and other commercial institutions claim this as a virtuous reality, promoting markets, choice, and accountability to the client. Even the faculty is limited. The limitation is especially potent insofar as professors are part-time, spending most of their work time and energies away from the university. All this can be a stark contrast to the faculty and student role at public universities, at least in the absence of heavily repressive military rule. As is the case outside Africa, faculty and students may have more power at some religious than at other private institutions. The strong generalization remains that the 'bottom' of the governance structure is weak at private higher education institutions.

It is the 'top' that is notably strong. Private institutions tend to be more vertically run and less flat than is the case at public institutions. A very common feature of the privates, and not the publics, is a board of trustees, a notably U.S. feature. Boards routinely appoint chief executive officers (Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors). An important role may also exist for management councils. These contrast with traditional professor-based councils or senates. How far down the hierarchy's control reaches is variable. At the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, bishops and other religious leaders may play a role in admissions.

One interesting tendency has a kind of anti-hierarchy thrust. Women are more represented in authority positions in private than in public universities, though this contrast speaks less to equality at the former than to persistent hierarchy at the latter. Explanations of the private openness include international religious influence (though there are few women leaders in small religious institutions and there is reticence from the Catholic hierarchy), the partial flexibility of new over traditional institutions, perhaps a merit-based competitive approach, and the fact that females can shift from public to private university for these opportunities. Thus, Onsongo found that in Kenya only private universities had female Vice-Chancellors, three by 2005, when finally one public university joined the group. Compared to 18 percent in public universities, females comprise 28 percent of management position in chartered private universities.

Government. Whereas intra-institutional governance patterns worldwide, and in Africa, show strikingly repetitive patterns of hierarchy, governance issues concerning the role of government vary more. Government preferences and actions regarding private higher education have ranged from hostile to facilitative.

In fact, the extreme has been proscription of private higher education. Far from the exception, this was the rule until the latter part of the twentieth century.

It is now far from the rule. Yet permission has often come with severe restrictions as to requirements or as to what type of institutions would be allowed, as where only non-universities are permitted. Even where operational policy is not restrictive, government may present a frowning face, at pains to note its concern for the public interest, standards, and the like. How much the motivation is conviction versus how much it is good politics, especially under pressure from public universities, varies. Often, government is divided, friendlier in financial ministries than in the education ministry. Similarly, the government posture may vary notably across states in a federal system. That is the case in China, India, and the United States for example. It can be an important consideration for a country like Nigeria, where half the public universities are state-owned, and where the governor of a state has strongly endorsed private higher education, highlighting its access and quality roles. Also as elsewhere, governments may be on the whole more favourable to private expansion than are their public universities, which often are preoccupied by a competitive threat or by genuine concerns over quality and the public interest.

Scattered information gives the impression that African governments have followed the global pattern of variability across countries, yet probably toward the more positive side. Without doubt the primary motivation is increased access with minimal public expenditure. A related consideration is to support private growth in fields lacking public coverage, as Mozambique has done. Several governments in North Africa have been more pointedly pro-private, backing their words with money or at least facilitating international arrangements favourable to private growth. Something akin to this is the case for several Asian countries, whereas ambivalence is also found. Our surest ground for assessment is Latin America, where politics, populism, European public traditions, public university pressure and the like often made governments wary of openly supporting private growth. For decades there were virtually no official statements as supportive as some heard now. However, the official Latin American stance has shifted notably in recent decades and even prior the opposition was often more normative and rhetorical than operational.²⁰

Logically, there is some correlation between African government pro-market regimes of the Right and advocacy for private growth in higher education. Senegal has worked with the World Bank and is a case where public funds annually go to private institutions. Uganda is another example. Zimbabwe, in contrast, issued a report (1989) quite emphatic on the problems of private higher education. The absolute extreme of favourable government appears in Nigeria, where private secular universities are owned by the politically powerful, including the president (Olusegun Obasanjo) and vice-president of the republic! The president's home state (Ogun) has more private universities than any other. Kenya's

Kabarak University was licensed before its owner left the presidency; critics decried a conflict of interest while defenders asserted that all the requirements had been fulfilled.

Nigeria is also a striking case of how regime change has affected private higher education (Obasi 2006). After friendliness under the democratic regime of 1979-83, allowing private emergence, and a supportive Supreme Court ruling on legality, a short-term military government closed the private higher education sector but from 1985 a new military government laid a supportive framework. The present democratic regime, of course, is quite friendly, even cosy.

Regulation. Unsurprisingly, then, regulation varies across countries and time, as it has outside Africa. A precise regional assessment is impossible whereas it is possible to identify a few salient facts. One is that regulation was initially quite limited: the demonstrable rule internationally. The private sector's emergence was typically sudden and surprising. It was born into a regulatory vacuum. Equally demonstrable, as in Central and Eastern Europe, has been the growth of regulation after a period of shock, with concern over fraud and quality (Slantcheva and Levy 2007). If other regions are a guide, the likelihood is that on the ground regulation remains weaker than government rhetoric or private university complaints might suggest. Yet, in Uganda and Kenya, for example, enforcement appears tough enough to produce bitter private university complaints.

Yet the regulatory rise is palpable. As is the case globally the rise is prominently tied to quality criteria. A perceived lack of quality may lead to de-registering, as has happened to 4 colleges in Zimbabwe, where there is increased supervision through a Higher Education Examination Council. Quality assurance often means licensing and accreditation requirements. Sometimes (e.g. Uganda) these are system-wide, for public and private simultaneously, sometimes they are targeted or tailored to the private side. As in Nigeria, East African quality assurance mechanisms aim system-wide, not just at private institutions. For a 2006 East African agreement on common regulatory standards for the region's higher education institutions, a key spur was the proliferation of private institutions, because of genuine concern over quality and because private institutions have lacked the aura that has protected public counterparts from review. There are often long delays in approval, a particularly sensitive point for private institutions that pride themselves on rapid innovation, sensitivity to the job market, and the like. Academics are slow, markets are fast, they might note. Nigeria's last 7 approvals of private universities (2005) came after years of review. In accord with practice outside the region, tuition regulation has its temptations, sometimes spurred by lobbying from parents, sometimes from residual hostility to elitism or the idea of business practices or 'profits'.

Uganda, despite a delayed start (Kasozi 2000), has engaged in major regulation (as Salerno and Beverwijk detail), sometimes to the private institutions' chagrin even though the regulations aim system-wide. There have been many closings, though also flexibility to allow classes to start while the institution engages in accreditation review. The government has published a list of the institutions truly authorized to grant degrees. Private institutions are admonished not to charge excessively when the quality of their infrastructure and faculty is weak. One problem with punitive governmental action, however, is that students themselves may be punished when institutions continue to collect fees while assuring students that licensing will be regained.

On the other hand, as found previously in non-African countries (Slantcheva and Levy 2007), and as is often the case for regulation, there can be welcome effects for private institutions. Key is legitimacy, a stamp of approval, evidence of standards met, hurdles surmounted. This has been the case with the South African 1998 Further Education and Training Act. Similarly, where regulations make private more like public institutions, they make the former less vulnerably different, though, in turn, the lack of distinctiveness risks crippling the rationale for the private places.²¹ Also legitimizing are private–public institutional partnerships. Sometimes the partnerships are with foreign institutions but Kenya has public universities that franchise private colleges and South Africa has an elaborate sweep of private–public partnerships. In fact, most of the country's private higher education enrolment lies in institutions that are so partnered. Logically, a common pattern is partnership between private colleges and public universities. The former typically provide access and fee generation, the latter legitimacy, academic and physical infrastructure, faculty, course materials, and access to licensing. Something of this pattern has been unfolding in China and elsewhere.

Summing Up

African private higher education has not been a mostly planned development; its emergence and patterns have not conformed to a blueprint. Yet many of the principal characteristics might have been predicted by the shape of private higher education elsewhere, prudently combined with consideration of the special features of African development. Aberrant for the recency of private development, as well as for its small higher education size and low level of development, Africa nonetheless parallels much about private higher education elsewhere. Thus, in terms of comparative method and analysis, the similarities (in private higher education between Africa and other regions) are especially noteworthy given the sharp differences in surrounding educational, economic, social, and political context. Of course, to highlight parallels to other regions is hardly to

paint a precise portrait, for there is considerable variation across regions, countries, time, types of institutions, and so forth.

Private higher education growth has come late to Africa when gauged against its year of emergence in other regions, though not late when gauged by the level of public higher education at the moment of private emergence. That is, total higher education was still small when the private sector started. Compared to most of the world, the private share of enrolment remains on the low side, but this fact does not negate the drama of the surge. As is the case in most of the world, the growth has had to do largely with the rapid increase in demand for access to higher education while the supply of public higher education has risen more slowly. Additionally, Africa's private growth has depended on a variety of factors not uncommon elsewhere. Where private higher education rapidly expands due to demand outweighing supply, it often is largely tied to classes and groups less advantaged than those already in higher education and less prepared for high-level academic study. On the other hand, such growth may well expand access. All this is true in Africa. Yet the private growth is not limited to basically demand-absorbing institutions. Many are viable second-choice institutions; though one's top choice is the more established and higher status public university, one's second choice may be a serious private university above a non-leading public university. In other words, there is considerable private-public overlap in access, status, and socio-economic background.

Moreover, numerous private institutions have defined academic, social, political, and economic pursuits. Academic ends sometimes relate to a belief that public universities are slipping, whether from their own faults or from crippling contexts such as inadequate funding. Socially, and again with strong parallels outside Africa, there is a belief that public universities have slipped in discipline and order. Politically, there is the belief that they have slanted heavily leftward. Economically, the critique proceeds, they are often too marginal to the job market. These factors gain currency as governments move rightward in terms of marketization and global opening. The factors are reflected in the rationale underlining many of the region's religious universities.

So whereas Africa again parallels international context in that a high proportion of private higher education institutions are 'non-universities' in a classically high-level academic sense, many are not simply weak institutions, even when they are largely commercially oriented. As in the international sphere, many pursue serious niches, emphasizing effectiveness and efficiency. The leading private universities endeavour to expand their base of full-time faculty but, as is the case globally, part-time status is especially characteristic of the private sector.

Most of what we find about both finance and governance is empirically and logically intertwined with our findings about the growth and types of private institutions. Finance is massively dependent on consumer payments, and tuition. However, there is also religious co-sponsorship (as well as international aid). Religious institutions naturally are run basically by the religious groups. Indeed there is a sharper religious profile in Africa's private higher education than is generally the case today outside Africa.

With all this, private institutions, like their counterparts outside Africa but particularly sharply, govern themselves hierarchically, top-down. Where there are serious pursuits (beyond just the pursuit of what amount to profits) they involve accountability to the paying families and to eager employers. In turn, this reinforces tendencies toward specialization in subject offering. Autonomy is a tricky private–public comparison because public universities have sometimes been allowed major autonomy. What is clear is that the regulation of privates is rising; as in other regions as well, this often manifests itself in the accreditation arena.

A host of internationally common arguments are produced on both the positive and negative sides in relation to African private higher education. Several of the pieces in this journal issue give expression to these arguments. Our mission here is not to credit one side or the other as much as to see how many of the arguments logically link to essential characteristics of private institutions. Private universities are charged with low quality, elitism, fraudulent behaviour, preoccupation with profits, ties to non-indigenous currents, non-participatory governance internally, obedience to the job market, harm to national unity, and so forth. They are praised as bringing increased finance, access, order, efficiency, practical ties to the job market, responsiveness, competition, and representation of different currents in civil society. Many of the criticisms in fact largely coincide with many of the claimed advantages.

Notes

1. The author is grateful particularly to co-editors Mabizela and Otieno and to Isaac Obasi for their comments on earlier drafts.
2. The collapse of Communism had an impact beyond Europe, into Africa. African countries that had espoused socialism with its state monopoly in public education led to an opening, introducing changes in the legal regimes that allowed private sector participation in higher education, as in Tanzania.
3. Key broad sources on international private higher education include Levy 2006a; Levy 1992; Maldonado et al. 2004; Altbach and Levy 2005; Geiger 1986; Levy 1986; Altbach 1999. Also see <http://www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/>,

- the website of Program for Research on Private Higher Education (PROPHE), a global research project and network on private higher education.
4. These purposes quite parallel those of a piece on Indian private higher education in international perspective (Levy forthcoming). Despite the importance now of Africa's private higher education, very little of the leading literature on African higher education notes it.
 5. In South Africa too, private higher education is mostly non-university. However, the university share is high in some African countries. This may be an arbitrary matter of how easily 'universities' are defined or it may be a reflection of norms and requisites. All of Kenya's private institutions are universities as are most in Tanzania. Our data (and legal information) on Tanzania come from <http://www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/data/data.html> based on research by Johnson Ishengoma and, except where otherwise noted, he is the source of our information on Tanzania, via personal communications as well as PROPHE data.
 6. Among other Nigerian realities Obasi ties effectively to the global literature on private higher education growth are the early importance of religious institutions, the impact of political-economic change, and public university disorder. For another account of causes of private growth in Africa, see Blair 1998.
 7. Bamba notes how devaluations in the 1990s led to steep increases in the cost of study abroad, thus spurring private higher education growth at home.
 8. Tanzania is an exception as just 13 percent of its private enrolment is in the capital compared to 77 percent for public enrolment.
 9. But Nigeria and Ghana are major Western African private higher education homes and Cameroon is not majority Anglophone. In any case, whereas the British Empire encouraged some importing of their educational forms, the French pushed assimilation, including advanced study in France. Within the British Empire higher education growth was stronger in colonies such as Kenya than just protectorates such as Tanzania. Thaver (2003) deals with six countries with comparatively good data and finds note with more than a 10 percent private share.
 10. For private university shares to hold or even grow, reform initiatives might include reduction of fees, curriculum expansion, and geographic expansion. Some of this could involve emulation of public universities. These speculations are from Wycliffe Otieno, in personal communications.
 11. Central and Eastern Europe has no country with over 30 percent of enrolment in the private sector. This might suggest the parallel to Africa of only recent private emergence. Yet further proportional growth seems much less likely in Central and Eastern Europe than in Africa.
 12. Public sectors will have to become more protective of their own enrolments, possibly leading to harsher lobbying against private institutions and intensified competition for extant demand.

13. Religion has been a proportionally less potent force in Asian private higher education but this has depended upon country and era. Obviously it is nearly absent in today's private surge in China.
14. Kenya's Catholic university did not start until 1983, whereas the Protestant Daystar began in 1973, the Adventist institution in 1978. Notably, there is no Muslim university in Kenya. In Tanzania marked competition among varied denominations has spurred private growth.
15. Tanzania, however, shows private-public similarity: just 3 percent of private enrolments in graduate education, yet only 5 percent of public. Compared to leading countries of Latin America, not to mention the developed world, African higher education overall lags markedly. Looking to Northern Africa, Egypt's Arab Academy for Sciences Technology and Maritime Transportation would be an exceptional institution.
16. The first 6 accredited Kenyan private universities were the University of East Africa, Baraton, Catholic University of East Africa, Daystar University, Scott Theological College, and US International University. Ethiopia's first 5 were Unity College, Micro Link Information, Technology College, Higher Institute of Distance Studies, Ethiopian Adventist College, and Agro-Technical Training College, the first 3 accredited in 1999.
17. Eisemon (1991) reports similar total costs between private and public institutions but this was written when most private institutions (like public ones) were residential and on average probably higher quality than is the case today, after years of proliferation. Tuition dependence is the norm in Uganda, despite hopes to escape that; only three universities have some core funding (Kasozi 2000). Some African countries charge tuition in their public universities, as has Cameroon since 1992. Sawyerr (2004) reports fees in fields like accounting.
18. In some cases where direct government funding is not feasible, the only form of state support is the student loan programs that may be open to private university students. However, only a small proportion of private university students receive such loans, and when they do, the loans do not cover a major proportion of education costs, being pegged to public university tuition and other fees.
19. 'Corporate Colleges' operate where corporations run their own institutions and here too the definition of higher education is blurry (Fehnel 2003).
20. Support has been greatest in finance ministries and where regimes have been oriented to conservative, free-market economics and globalization. This raises the question of prospects as a number of countries, including Bolivia and Venezuela, have taken populist, nationalist swings in recent elections. In Africa too government policy can change over time. In South Africa the attitude toward private higher education took a more negative turn after the initial post-apartheid years. A more laissez faire approach yielded to more planning based

on notions of the appropriate size and shape of the private sector (Naidoo, Singh, Lange).

21. A couple of considerations limit the public-private legitimacy gap in Africa. One concerns the problems of quality and disorder in the public universities. Another, intriguing in comparative-historical perspective, is the short time period between Independence with public universities and the emergence of private universities. In much of Spanish America the period was roughly a century and a half. In Africa (much more as in Brazil) it has been a matter of just two-three decades, so that the public sector has had less chance to develop a deep-seated advantage in legitimacy, politics, and so forth. On the difficult standing of Africa's public universities see Rinsum (2002) and Kerr (2002).

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