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Challenges and prospects of private higher education in Africa: Emphasis on Bamenda University of Science and Technology (BUST) Cameroon

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Challenges and prospects of private higher education in Africa: emphasis on Bamenda University of Science and Technology (BUST) Cameroon

Abstract

Private higher institutions of learning complement the work of government in the educational sector. The paper presents challenges and opportunities for Private Higher Education in Cameroon in general and the need for the creation of Bamenda University of Science and Technology (BUST) Research Space in particular. The paper articulates the rationale for BUST to be involved in the creation, development and management of knowledge. A literature review has been made tracing the history of Higher Education in Africa from the period of the Meroitic civilization in Egypt to where BUST currently is, as well as analysis of trends in raising demand for private higher education. Methods used in primary data collection included interviews, focused group discussions and observations. Secondary data were sourced from books, Journals and the Internet. Eight areas have been examined on the challenges and prospects for private institutions, with a clear focus on BUST's contributions to innovative strategies in higher education systems. Such areas included; quality assurance mechanism, harnessing of traditional knowledge assets, replicating the relevance of the BOLOGNA process, encouraging research culture, exploring relevant partnerships, considering hikes in tuition fees, developing a School of Technology and tapping the optic fibre backbone to facilitate research. Recommendations were made for BUST to create a suitable research environment, create academic working committees, develop and encourage creators, and build sustainable partnerships to manage knowledge.

Keywords: Private higher education, quality assurance, challenges and prospects, BUST

I. INTRODUCTION

Since independence in the early 1960, higher education in Cameroon has grown dramatically to meet expanded demand for human resources needed to build the country at all levels. From the late 1980s, the Government of the Republic of Cameroon implemented relevant laws to encourage the creation of Private Higher Education institutions. Such a growth pattern occurred when public investment had been shrinking and private investment in tertiary education has been on the rise in

Africa. Private higher institutions of learning complement the work of government in the educational sector.

It is widely accepted that higher education plays a key role in the economic, scientific, social and human development of any country. In initiating, developing and implementing programs in Higher Education, Bamenda University of Science and Technology (BUST), created as a result of that innovation in the higher education, has identified several strategic orientations for the creation, development and maintenance of a BUST Higher Education and Research Space. Creating a Higher Education and Research Space through institutional, national, regional and international collaboration equally fits in with BUST's strategy for the harmonization of the Bachelor, Master and Doctor (BMD) system in Cameroon and within the CEMAC countries, based on the BOLOGNA System. The BOLOGNA system aims at strengthening the capacity of higher education institutions through innovative forms of collaboration, improving the quality of higher education and promoting academic mobility across institutions, countries, regions and continents.

The economically strongest nations (ADEA, 2000; Tanveer, 2012.) are those with the best performing higher education sector. Higher education, as producers of knowledge and knowledge workers, has lately assumed an even more important role. It is assisting countries to develop into knowledge economies and to be globally competitive. As a result of globalization, countries can now recruit highly-skilled and research-strong labour force from any part of the world to support their knowledge drive. Knowledge, and not natural resources, has become the key factor that determines a country's global competitiveness. Knowledge is becoming a global currency in the world today (ibid)

Cameroon and other countries in the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (*French Communauté Economique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale* (CEMAC)),desperately need a strong higher education sector that can assist in rapid development. They need to produce and adapt knowledge to strategize on how to manage developmental challenges. The real challenge for the CEMAC countries is to be able to develop a higher education sector that can assist the sub-continent to be locally relevant and globally attractive and competitive. That is more so because of the limited resources available within individual countries within the sub region. Such objectives can best be achieved through academic mobility and through collaboration and cooperation among the countries and their higher education systems. CAMES (Council for African and Malagasy Universities) has actually applied the BOLOGNA agreement and are tirelessly working towards is effective networking process.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Evolution of Higher Education in Africa

The history of higher education in African is often traced back to Ancient Egypt in the last fifteen thousand millennia BC with the development of the Meroitic civilization which spread as far as Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. The Meroitic civilization through its scholarisation and research invented the Meroitic Writing which was used in the various Temples Universities of the monastic system run by priests and monks. The Ancient Egyptian and African educational development was later embraced by the Christian cultures as well as Islamic and Arabic cultures, which spread in the early centuries in Northern and Eastern Africa. The Muslims established the first Universities of Kano and Timbuktu in West Africa.

The Christians and Islamic religious cultures were further developed over centuries and carried to new territories by missionaries as well as by colonial influences through their rule that exposed the colonies to Western system of higher education. Most religious agencies (Churches) such as the Catholic, Protestant, Methodist, Anglican and others much later opened basic and secondary schools whose graduates led to the felt need for the creation of Higher Education institutions (Goolam, 2008; Ajayi et al: 1996)

The term higher education is used in most cases to represent all forms of organized educational learning and training activities beyond secondary school levels. These may be at the levels of universities, polytechnics, training colleges as well as all forms of professional institutions, and other tertiary pursuit of knowledge (Materu, 2007). Modern African Universities can be traced back to the period between 1930 and 1960 when few African educated elite who had been exposed to the Western system of higher education used it as a strong tool to fight colonialism. They believed that anything including education, that was good for the Europeans was equally good for the Africans (ibid).

Most of the countries in sub Saharan Africa created their universities at independence. That was the case for countries such as Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana and many others. Universities created in these African countries were modeled on specific institutions of the colonial powers and were operated simply as campuses of the colonizing country. Such were cases with institutions such as Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, which was a college of the University of Durban; the Universities of Ibadan in Nigeria, University of Ghana, and Salisbury (now Harare) College in Rhodesia (modern Zimbabwe) had special relationships with the University of London. French campuses also had their colleges which included the universities of Dakar, Yaounde, Abidjan and Brazzaville (Obanya, 2004, cited by Goolam M: 2008)

Between 1960 and 1980 a pool of highly trained civil servants were the products of such European modeled universities. The importance of higher education has become urgent as knowledge increasingly plays a key role in fostering economic and social development. An analysis of the role of higher education in the context of Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries shows that expanding higher education contributes to promoting faster technological development, improving the ability to maximize output and decrease the knowledge gaps and poverty in the region (Bloom et al, 2005).

2.2. Increased Demand for Tertiary Education and Rising Private Contributions

From the late 1980s, the international global market for tertiary education has been growing at an average rate of 7 percent per annum. In South Korea, for example, 75 percent of tertiary education is privately funded; relying heavily on tuition and fees (Yu, 2009). Without a robust system to ensure that programs offered are relevant to the socio-economic needs of the society they serve, a higher education system lacks a mechanism to promote and monitor the accountability of higher education institutions to their stakeholders (students, parents, governments, and other funders).

This global trend is reflected on the African continent. Between 1985 and 2002, the number of tertiary students increased by 3.6 times and on average, by about 15 percent yearly. Phenomenal growth was witnessed in Rwanda: 55 percent, Namibia: 46 percent), Uganda:37 percent, Tanzania: 32 percent, Cote d'Ivoire:28 percent, Kenya: 27 percent, Chad: 27 percent), Botswana: 22 percent and Cameroon: 22 percent (Materu, 2007).

This growth pattern occurred when public investment had been shrinking and private investment in tertiary education has been on the rise in Africa. Materu (2007) holds that of the over 300 universities operating today in Sub-Saharan Africa, about one-third is privately funded. The majority of these have been established since the year 2000. Private participation in tertiary education has undoubtedly made a significant contribution to easing the social demand for higher education, accounting for up to 20 percent of enrollments in some countries.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A number of sources were used to gather information for this paper. Primary data sources included interviews, focused group discussion and observations. We utilized for the focus group, a convenient sample of two founders, two faculty members, one administrator, three students all of BUST and two civil society representatives. We facilitated discussion with these ten individuals who have characteristics of the overall population. The discussion followed the five stages suggested by Barry N.

and Nichelle W.(download) which included the purpose, method, facilitation, analysis and reporting. Secondary data were exploited from available sources such as the internet, annual reports and Journal publications which have been all acknowledged.

The paper embarks on a general survey of the landscape of higher education in Africa. It traces the evolution of BUST as an example of a private higher education in Cameroon, focuses on current issues as well as challenges that BUST is facing now and is likely to face in the future. During the focus group discussion, it was understood that BUST started operations before the Law on Private Higher Education was promulgated by the Government of the Republic of Cameroon (GRC). The founders of BUST had a vision and mission to fulfill in complementing the efforts of GRC. When GRC eventually promulgated the Law first cited above, BUST found herself facing many challenges and prospects relating to the funding, quality assurance, institutional development, research and service to society.

BUST was subjectively chosen for the study in order to understand the developmental processes in operating Private Higher Education over time as well as make analysis and recommendations for the future.

BUST is being urged to face the future with determination as such challenges are not unique to one institution, country, or region but are globally present in all economies

IV. DISCUSSION

4.1. Emergence of Private higher education in Africa

Private universities are in the increase globally. There is no education as private education (Masum, 2011). There is therefore no invidious distinction per se between the private and public university education. There was a time students enrolled in private universities because of their failure in public universities, but the perception and what happens has changed along with globalization. During the period immediately following the national independence of most Africa countries, the issue of nation building became crucial and the task was on each state and its public sector units.

The issue of trained manpower became important because such skills were needed to manage the economies, plan and organize their educational systems. In most of such countries, there was a "state" monopoly on the tertiary education (World Bank, as cited by Varghese, 2006). Due to the impact of the

financial and political crises experienced in many African countries, funding to universities declined and massive increase in the number of students became a burden to handle.

Such a change of attitude towards public higher education and perceptions to falling standards ushered in an opportunity for market forces to play a role in the creation of private sector universities. Private higher education has become a significant actor in a number of African countries. A result of one survey of some of the countries is presented in Table I below.

Table I: Private Higher Education Institutions and Universities in Africa.

Country	Number of Private Higher Education Institutions
Benin	27
Cameroon	17
Ghana	28
Nigeria	13
Kenya	14
Senegal	48
Tanzania	10
Uganda	15
Zimbabwe	5

Source: Teferra and Altbach, as cited by Varghese, 2006

The legal framework for the establishment of private higher education was lacking in Cameroon until during the reforms of 1991 when the law on private higher education was enacted. The emergence of a Private Higher Education Sector is very visible in Cameroon as new institutions are being approved to operate almost on a yearly basis. In Kenya, East Africa for example, private higher education had been existing for a much longer period of time (Varghese, 2004).

4.2. Promoting quality assurance: A challenge for higher education.

Higher Education and Research Space need to satisfy the requirements of quality. Both institutional and national Quality Assurance systems are not well established in Africa. Every nation and its tertiary education graduates are in competition in an environment that is shaped by their own local, national, sub regional, regional and international expectations and standards (Materu, 2007). In the case of Africa, tertiary education plays a critical capacity building and professional training role in support of all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). But it is made up of disparate higher education systems inherited from Africa's colonial past, namely Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone. Recent research findings indicate that expanding tertiary education may promote faster technological catch-up and improve a country's ability to maximize its economic output (Bloom, Canning, and Chan 2006, ADEA 2011).

A call is therefore made and tertiary institutions are challenged to adjust their program structures, curricula, teaching and learning methods to adapt to these new demands. In recognition of this challenge, greater attention is being focused on quality assurance as a critical factor to ensuring educational relevance. The World Bank underscores the importance of establishing robust quality assurance systems as necessary instruments for addressing today's challenges (World Bank, 2002 as cited by Materu, 2007)

The notion of quality is hard to define precisely, especially in the context of tertiary education where institutions have broad autonomy to decide on their own visions and missions. Any statement about quality implies a certain relative measure against a common standard; in tertiary education, such a common standard does not exist. Various concepts have evolved to suit different contexts ranging from quality as a measure for excellence to quality as perfection, quality as value for money, quality as customer satisfaction, quality as fitness for purpose, and quality as transformation in a learner (SAUVCA, 2002)

Africa's higher education has an opportunity to learn from the Bologna Process in Europe, where a decade ago Europe, too, faced the challenges of disparate higher education systems. There was insufficient academic mobility, diverse providers, a multitude of languages and non-uniformity in quality provision of higher education. A decade later, the situation changed through what is now commonly known as the Bologna Process. Africa shares with Europe many common drivers for educational reform such as expansion, employability, globalization, skills shortage, and other. However important

differences exist in terms of demography, levels of academic infrastructure and local challenges. African higher education should therefore adopt the Bologna Process to fit the African context.

4.3. Quality assurance framework at the Sub Regional and National levels

There are difficulties associated with the implementation of effective Quality Assurance (QA) at national or institutional levels. Such difficulties include high cost of implementation and lack of trained personnel, among other issues. Quality Assurance is becoming important because of increasing student enrolment relative to facilities for delivering quality higher education, and the rapidly growing private and cross-border higher education provision in Africa. Human and institutional capacity building is being encouraged through training of higher education practitioners in implementing QA practices through a partnership between the UNESCO Bamako Cluster Office and the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI)-Africa (UNESCO,2004).

Another major step has been the setting up of the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN). The African Union is also actively promoting Quality Assurance in African higher education institutions as part of its harmonization strategy; it is currently implementing a Quality Rating Mechanism for African higher education institutions (ADEA, 2000)

The first formal accreditation processes in tertiary education took place in Francophone Africa in 1968 (Materu 2007) with the creation of the Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES) to, among others, harmonize recognition and equivalence of awards among member nations. Currently CAMES is also responsible for accrediting private universities as well as a select number of professional programs.

The 16 member countries of CAMES are Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, and Togo. CAMES enhances mutual recognition of qualifications, assists in the promotion of academic staff and facilitates academic mobility. It is also implementing the LMD reform among its members, which will help to bridge the difference between the higher education systems in Anglophone and Francophone African countries.

The Inter University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), which groups the public universities in five East African countries (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi), has put in place a system of cooperation among universities in the region, thus facilitating academic mobility. Since 2006 it has

embarked on developing a regional higher education Quality Assurance (QA) program, the main focus of which is to create a viable East African Region QA Framework.

The Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA), which groups the heads of public universities in the 15 countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, was created in 2005. In its first three years of existence, SARUA has focused on establishing the basic profile of the region by undertaking extensive research in this regard. Several recommendations have emerged for strengthening the sector. The recommendations relate to improving the collection of reliable data on higher education; improving coordination between higher education funding and planning; improving the effective use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs); developing the science system in the region; and improving quality assurance.

At the National level, QA agencies have been established, for example, in Liberia and Sierra Leone in West Africa and Lesotho in the SADC.

In Cameroon, although an agency for accrediting private higher education is operative, the Minister for Higher education has tremendous powers over quality assurance and accreditation throughout the system (Titanji, as cited by Materu, 2007)

4.4. Higher education and quality assurance in Cameroon

When Cameroon became an independent nation in 1960, one of the crucial problems faced by the government was the need for trained Cameroonians in senior positions of the civil service. Before independence, most Cameroonians pursued university education abroad (Njeuma, 2003). The government created a university complex known as the National Institute for University Studies (Institut National d'Etudes Universitaires) in October 1961 with the assistance of the French Government. Its mandate was to prepare students for degrees in Education, Law, Economics and the Arts. Professional training programmes were developed at the same time through the School of Administration, School of Agriculture and the Military Academy. In 1962 the National Institute for University Studies was transformed into the Federal University of Cameroon (ibid).

The lone university became the main centre of learning where massive non-selective admission of students was permitted to pursue general studies. The graduates were less qualified and were not readily employable. On the one hand, selective admissions into professional and technical education institutes (schools) through highly competitive entrance examinations assured that in most cases, the graduates were readily employed into the public sector.

The government induced and kept increasing number of students to enroll into the faculties of the university by offering a very generous system of student welfare where students paid no tuition fees, received subsidized accommodation and meals, and were in addition provided with well-paid bursaries. That approach greatly reducing the number of students leaving to study abroad. In 1990 the Government engaged different strategies to liberalize the economy, and the private sector assumed a significant role to participate in the tertiary sector (Fomba, 2009; Dorothy et al 2004). A series of reforms were later pursued in the higher education sector. The lone University of Yaoundé was decentralized and six new universities were created in 1993 as well as four university centers amongst others. The issue of quality assurance became global and the role of private higher education became urgent.

It is worthy to note that the Bamenda University of Science and Technology was created in 1987, long before the promulgation of the legal framework on private higher education in Cameroon

In Cameroon, the process of creating Private Higher Education is carried out under the auspices of the National Commission on Private Higher Education (NCPHE), but the final decision on accreditation is made by the Minister of Higher Education. Cameroon National Commission on Private Higher Education (NCPHE) was established in 1991.

4.4.1. Quality assurance and the evolving program of the BMD system

The challenge of quality assurance seems to dominate all others. It has international, national and institutional dimensions. At the international level, especially in Europe, it is marked by the internationalization of higher education (the Bologna Process), and works in favour of a common framework of reference for higher education qualifications. It encourages transparency in the higher education system of participating countries, recognizes certificates and at the same time, ensures student mobility. It is diversified in the kinds and forms of operators within higher education training institutions; on issue relating to socio-economic expectations, the employability of graduates and the consideration that education is a life –long process

Within the context of the African Region, QA is characterized by the African Convention project on the recognition of studies and certificate, diplomas, grades, and other titles of higher education in Africa as resolved during the 4th Conference of Ministers of Education of member states of the African Union,

held in Mombasa, November 22-26, 2009. At the sub regional level within the CEMAC countries a CEMAC platform of Higher Education and research (CEMAC BMD/BMP) has been created.

Before Cameroon became independent and thereafter, the Anglophone educational system at the primary and secondary levels has had long standing and effective QA standards. Empirical evidence hold that the design of course work, organisation of examinations, setting of questions, invigilation, marking of scripts and proclamation of results must pass QA standards at each stage of the First School leaving Certificate (FSLC) and the General Certificate Examinations (GCE) at both Ordinary and Advanced (O/A) levels (focus group,2012). If these feeder levels to higher education could hold to such high QA standards for such a long time, something must be wrong else where to find low QA standards being observed in higher education even under the Anglo Saxon higher education system in Cameroon. What is wrong is for research to find out.

At the national level context, quality assurance in Cameroon is ensured by the Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP, 2010) and features include: a formal adaption of the national higher education system based on the CEMAC BMD/BMP that started in 2007; a formal recognition of the Prime Minister, Head of Government, in the MINESUP 2010 roadmap; the resolution of the conference of CEMAC Heads of States on public university institutions of December 2009, demanding the urgent holding of " Expert Workshops" on university programs for the eventual putting in place of a common language that would facilitate the mobility of students; and Resolution No 10/07 of the coordination meeting of February 09, 2010 that prescribed a revisiting of the BMD/BMP texts that falls within the framework of the holding of Expert Workshops.

The general objectives on quality assurance in higher education in Cameroon include to: harmonize the national higher education framework with the goal of adapting the institutions of higher learning in Cameroon to CEMAC BMD/BMP; organize national education programmes; promote national and international cooperation with regards to quality control and contribute to improve on the CEMAC BMD/BMP platform on harmonisation of university programs.

In 2010, a methodological framework prepared by expert working groups was examined during a conference held in Yaoundé. Five working groups of experts examined specific issue areas that included: the definition of the Expert workgroups' general framework; the production of instruments of harmonization; the dissemination of instruments of harmonization; the putting in place of the

instruments of higher education and the follow-up-assessment phase. Duration and courses offered in all State Universities were evaluated.

The validation of instrument of harmonization of programs was carried out in a workshop called “Expert Workgroup of University programs 2010”, which was held for three days in the Congress Hall in Yaoundé. The phase of implementation of the instruments of harmonization and, making them operational and real both at the level of MINESUP and at the level of institutions of higher education is being suggested for four years ,2010 to 2013 (MINESUP,2010).

The BMD is a European system and how far it fits into the Cameroonian uniqueness of indigenous cultures and values is still a matter for research to find out. BUST operates or to operate in affiliation (partnership) with the University of Buea (UB), the University of Dschang and the University of Bamenda (UNIBA). What roles will lecturers at BUST have in ensuring QA standards that are objectively assessed by the mentoring State Universities? The Mentee and the Mentors need to state the role of each party in a Memorandum of Understanding.

4.4.2. Challenges and prospects that BUST needs to address

Challenges facing BUST are those relating to the vision of the founders and the mission of the university. The mission of BUST is to address the unaddressed issues in Cameroon education through teaching and learning (education), research and discovery; and, outreach and service to Society.

It is important to note that higher education and research space in Africa and within the CEMAC countries at present suffers from several challenges. First, it roots are in an-un-adapted higher education systems inherited from Africa’s colonial past, namely Anglophone and Francophone. This handicaps the mobility of staff and students among the countries.

Second, Cameroonian higher education institutions over some years have suffered from under-funding, partly as a result of economic and political crises and partly because of implementing the misguided policy that investment in higher education does not yield sufficient economic and social returns when compared to investing in lower levels of education. As a result, in order to meet the pressing demand for higher education, the institutions have had to accommodate enormous increases in student enrolment with hardly any expansion of their infrastructures or proper maintenance of the existing ones. Quality of higher education has inevitably been paying the price.

Third, research output from universities is extremely poor when compared to other world regions, partly because of lack of resources such as up-to-date journals and good Internet connectivity, but equally because of the absence of research-strong academics

Such challenges are in no way less demanding for BUST. BUST is a private university and funding will continue to be a major problem. BUST should therefore develop its own space; set her QA standards; communicate and ensure that all stakeholders who fit in are motivated, ready to learn, discuss, get down to critical analysis; share on core values through research, are of service to the community and build capacity in related core areas. We may think that a BUST space is hard to come by. What we need is to start the space right away so as to motivate and harness what we already have. Interventions stated hereunder are the immediate challenges:-

5. Proposals to overcome challenges in Private Higher Education: Focus on BUST

5.1. Develop a mechanism for quality assurance standards

Emphasis should be put on quality assurance of course materials to the changing process in teaching and learning (education): transmitting, transforming and extending knowledge, as well as promoting the intellectual and moral development of students. Research and discovery should equally be emphasized as well and it deals with discovering, integrating, evaluating and preserving knowledge in all forms.

Outreach and service is about; furnishing special expertise to address the problems and needs of society in Cameroon and in the World in such areas as: increasing productivity, decreasing unemployment and stimulating self actualization. Indicators will include the quality of teaching and research, class participation, lecture base, quality of course materials, lecturers and students interaction, laboratory and on-the-job practical work; organization, setting, invigilating, marking and proclamation of examination results

5.2. Develop a mechanism to harness traditional knowledge assets

There is need to adapt BUST's higher education Space by integrating Indigenous Knowledge, Science and Technologies in to academic research, training, and development and community outreach programs. A framework for multi and inter disciplinary research and training should be build. Once done the university should attract cooperating partners from within Cameroon, Africa and beyond who will capture document research, generate and share knowledge.

BUST will target various audiences and establish permanent and strong relationships with local stakeholders to make university education meaningful to the local community e.g. rural farmers, traditional health practitioners, rural youth and students for higher degrees.

The process will call for multi-disciplinary curricula development for short courses, field schools sessions and higher academic degree program utilizing the wisdom of traditional artisan, traditional health practitioners, poets, traditional leaders and academicians. It would be necessary for BUST to also develop and conduct education and training programs and design course materials on indigenous knowledge for inclusion in the formal curricula of BUST and for use by extension and other development workers (Weisheit, 2011).

5.3. Design programs and mechanisms to create and manage knowledge

It would be necessary for BUST to design all relevant programs and mechanisms that will give graduates the capability to create and manage knowledge. It is widely accepted that higher education plays a key role in the economic, scientific, social and human development of any country. Innovative knowledge and creativity is becoming a global currency in the world today. The economically strongest nations are those with the best performing innovative higher education sector

The role assigned to higher education by the Government of the Republic of Cameroon (GRC) as presented in the "Growth and Employment Strategy Paper" GRC (2009), is documented on a single page, probably because information expected from higher education on the role of education, training, research and innovations was lacking. The development of the knowledge economy expected in 2035 will be the direct outcome of what higher education is expected to generate and BUST is expected to make significant contributions to that goal.

5.4. Need to learn from the BOLOGNA process and adapt.

A harmonization of programs that fit into the BMD System requires that BUST develops a unique higher education and research space. This has to be developed with emphasis placed on institutional, national, regional and international collaboration. While BUST can learn from the European experience, it should adapt the approaches used to fit to the national, sub-regional and the African context, taking into account the uniqueness of indigenous African cultures and values.

5.5. Develop a mechanism to encourage research culture

BUST should develop a mechanism that will take stock of number of research publications annually. BUST should be pre-occupied with the creation of knowledge and the goal of knowledge creation should remain the real challenge. The strategy to set aside one day each week for meetings and research related events is a good starting point for BUST to fully develop.

5.6. Explore possibilities of promoting partnerships

BUST should explore possibilities of promoting the establishment of partnerships between institutions of higher education and the business community in order to increase collaborative research and innovation. In the circumstance BUST should develop clear Memorandum of Understanding with each collaborating partner.

5.7. Explore possibilities of increasing fees

Increases of fees in higher education are becoming a world wide issue. BUST should pick up the opportunity, increase fees to get required level of funding needed for her programs. Britain is not even left out of the strategy to commercialize higher education. Recently Francis (2011) stated that in Britain, students were marching to protest against higher tuition fees and the Government's plans for a more competitive market-driven higher education system.

Anyone who is ideologically averse to competition in higher education is out of touch in the real world, as competition has become a fact of life for universities. Universities are in or are to position resources to compete for part-time students; post-graduate students for research funding and for international students. BUST should standardize and publish her fees structure both for current and for potential students and other stakeholders

5.8. Fully develop a School of Technology

The School will be a centre for technological development. One urgent need will be to create a centre for the development of Educational Resources. Emerging trends in knowledge development is for universities to develop open education resources and keep online for free access by interested parties. As BUST becomes innovative in open education resources, the issue will no longer be if other are copying but to be in control of what is produced and expect other to look unto BUST.

5.9. Link BUST to the optic fibre infrastructure

BUST will have to embrace Open and distance learning (ODL) especially to cater for continuous adult education and training and re-training especially of teachers. ODL requires well-trained personnel, who are scarce to find, for preparing the learning materials; and there must be adequate learner support within the university community. BUST should prepare a specific strategic project and submit to Government for the extension of the ICT Super highway: the optic fibre backbone so as to enhance the potentials of contributing positively towards developing the knowledge economy which the government expects to achieve in 2035. That dream lies squarely at the door steps of higher education. BUST will need to demonstrate that when it comes to knowledge generation and management, the front edge is the place to be.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In Sub Sahara African countries, especially in Cameroon, private higher education is facing enormous challenges and such challenges have come with even greater prospects. Private universities such as BUST, have a big role to play in developing the knowledge society that Cameroon expects to attain in 2035. Quality standards and necessary infrastructure to sustain such standards need to be developed, reviewed on a regular basis and maintained at all times.

There is an urgent need for BUST to create at the strategic level, an enabling environment that will initiate, promote and sustain innovations. At the operational and tactical levels, BUST should create working committees to develop and elaborate on each identified opportunity. There is need also for BUST to motivate and encourage initiators, innovator and developers to realize targeted goals as well as build a self sustaining system in collaboration with partners. Appropriate implementation of options identified will depend on a strategy to develop manpower capacity and capability to manage knowledge creation, translation and transmission. This papers ends by affirming that challenges and prospects identified are real. The question to be addressed in further research is whether stakeholders will agree to innovative options cited and initiate action in the development of private higher education?

The challenges and opportunities for private higher education in Cameroon are real. BUST need to accept the challenges and make available resources to exploit opportunities offered. Delays in prioritizing identified challenges may affect BUST to wither and may become paralyzed.

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