

Neoliberal and Transformation of the University of Botswana: From Public Education to Entrepreneurism

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the concept of entrepreneurial university and its applicability to Botswana. This is a general conceptual analysis with a special focus directed at the University of Botswana. It traces its emergence and the extent to which it is embraced as an alternative to traditional model of education under the rubric of state-owned public university. Although entrepreneurial educational model is increasingly, getting global attention, it is not so widely established in the global south, where the role of the public sector in providing social services is still imperative. Understandably so because many people in developing countries are still struggling with the basics hence privately paid education whose raison-detre is profit making will not be affordable unless funded or subsidised by the state. The research provides insights into the influx of newly established privately owned universities which could be classified as entrepreneurial. Researchers contend that their emergence is driven by the neoliberal agenda in education which underpins the market supremacy and private universities as contributing to investment and job creation. These universities are not directly funded by the state, they are autonomous and self-run; the government only sponsors the students enrolled in their courses by paying their tuition fees.

Keywords: neoliberalism, entrepreneurial university, University of Botswana.

INTRODUCTION

In Africa, the history of entrepreneurial university goes back to colonialism. Then a few schools existed, some publicly owned and others private. Private schools were owned by the missionaries whose mission was to help provide basic education to colonies, whilst also pursuing Christian religious ideology. In Southern Africa, the Catholics owned primary schools and associated colleges. This extended further to higher education when they founded a private university, though not purely entrepreneurial. The Catholic University College, which later became Pius XII Catholic University College, University of Basutoland, Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland, was an early model of social entrepreneurship university. Following the attainment of independence, the national states built public schools and national publicly funded university. The University of Botswana was built through a community funded self-help appeal contribution. Ordinary people gave generously and kindly to government fund: money, goats, chickens, eggs, to cattle. Such pledges marked the spirit of self-reliance which is embodied in the core values that defined Botswana nascent nationhood, marking a departure from British colonial independence. It is against this background that due care must be exercised in any attempt to turn a community funded and owned university into an entrepreneurial venture as this will be tantamount to privatisation of education. The recent restructuring of the University of Botswana to introduce High Performance Organization, is a

classic case of transformation towards privatisation, especially as it comes with retrenchment of university worker's, who will lose jobs to private companies, as is the case now with catering, cleaning, security worker's, whose jobs have no terminal benefits such as pension, as they are temporary and precarious. What angered university of Botswana worker's is that management workers, is that when they started the process of restructuring, they wrote to the commercial banks, subsequently the banks stooped lending money to staff as a precautionary risk measure. However, the same University management requested loans from the banks to fire workers by paying voluntary exit packages. To secure the loans, they bonded university buildings as security. The new privately owned school, Awil College, which operates at the media studies in the university, is a sign that wheels of private ownership are gradually grinding to entrepreneurship, within the public education space.

A related aspect to this is the role of the university in academic research, some research might be beneficial but does not necessarily generate profit driven outcomes, and hence the private sector will not be interred to invest. In fact, the same might apply to the establishment of university, where the private sector is not willing to risk capital because the returns are low. According to Clark (1998) a university can be entrepreneurial if its organisational culture is characterized by collective mind-set in which entrepreneurship is facilitated in a combined top-down bottom-up fashion including a high tolerance for risk taking. A case in point is the new Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST), which was conceptualised as part of Private Partnership model. It was expected that the private sector will contribute start-up funding to partner with government, however this was not to be because they reneged, and leaving government to finance the multi-million project. This was possible because government was not doing it for profit but to help provide science education, a field that is critically needed for the economy.

GLOBALISATION, NEOLIBERALISM & ENTREPRENEURIAL UNIVERSITY

The concept of entrepreneurial university or "academic capitalism" was first propounded by Slaughter and Leslie (1997) and taken further by Clark (1998). Since then, there has been an extensive and intense debate about it, in particular, scholars tend to differ on its global applicability (Deem, 2010) given different national specificity and sensitivity, for example the level of a country's development matters in reforming education in consonance with global trends.

At higher education, Hardy (1991, 127) argues that pressure for reforms has been driven by a unitary perspective which sought to "changing enrolment patterns, government funding restrictions, and demands for increased accountability from public paymasters have led university administrators to turn to the business world". This unyielding pressure for transformation to the business model has been widespread globally and in Africa where it has been mediated through the new public management (Marobela, 2008). Similarly, in a bid respond and adapt, the University of Botswana has gone through this change, specifically restructuring exercise which Tabulawa, (2007) posits that it must be seen in the context of global trends such as knowledge-based economy but also situated within local context where there is also pressure for neoliberal reforms. Such reforms for example entail cutting the budget and using private sector managerial style of management than collegial management which promote free flow of ideas, discourse analysis and engagement.

The Chancellor is appointed by the President and the Council is appointed from outside by the Ministry of Education. The vice chancellor is appointed by the ministry of education, upon recommendation of the Council. Ironically, members of staff whose interests are superbly critical, have no real power to exercise in determining university leadership. With neoliberalism the balance of power has shifted from academic staff to administrators as result of restructuring, which saw more managers and directors appointed to manage academic staff. According to Fako, (2004) this restructuring is part of the global managerial revolution that came with authoritarian style of management. The introduction of performance management system (PMS), for example is a clear case of how managerialism solidified the power asymmetry in favour of managers at the detriment of academic staff who felt demotivated (Marobela and Marobela, 2012) by unreasonable performance standards, applied as part of adoption of neoliberalism. Presently the grip of managerial power over academic staff has not relented if anything it has cemented. Thus, occasional complaints of management by fear and disciplinary threats are raised by staff. Recently some staff members successfully took management to court over forced and procedural restructuring. The union have also raised concerns of management disregarding collective labour agreements and the tendency to take unilateral decisions.

Such reforms are in tone with the World Bank and IMF mantra, which views the public sector as huge, wasteful, and inefficient hence the call to privatise and outsource some of the work to the efficient private market. It is from the emergence of neoliberalism with its strong rhetoric and narrative of over-blotted public service and wasteful government that the urgency for privatisation became strongly pushed both globally and locally. This also meant that government must show concrete support for the nascent private sector both ideologically and financially. In terms of public education, the university of Botswana has faced increasing pressure to move away from the social sciences as they were perceived to be not in tandem with the demands of the strong lobbying private sector and therefore of less value to the economy. Former president of Botswana, Festus Mogae signalled this;

"Passing through Molepolole last month, Mogae complained about the poor work ethic of public servants. Under normal circumstances, education (supposing there is no traditional dancing during school time involved) should empower its intended beneficiaries but Mogae's administration saw record numbers of jobless graduates roam the streets. Invited to give a lecture at the University of Botswana which, as president, he is titular head of, Mogae suggested that studying courses like political science was not going to be helpful in terms of getting a job. Some people rapped him on the knuckles for that comment, but a government-commissioned study also found that it is vital to ensure that academic qualifications are aligned with what the labour market needs". Bashi Letsididi (Mogae - No easy walk to citizen empowerment, 16 Mar 2008, Sunday Standard).

In a way these debates relate to the dynamics of power at the global front and how it is projected to shape the nature, content, and delivery of education at a micro level. With globalisation there has been a profound shift from education as an essential need, of public good for the common good of society. Today, capitalist globalisation has commoditized education, in ways which make it restricted and controlled to suit the dictates of the market. The vagaries of the market

forces determine who can pay and afford education and what education to be offered in universities. With the continuing global economic crisis, for example, students across the globe, from US, UK and Botswana are indebted and will pay heavily for the grants/loans in future. That is why there is resistance and a call for an alternative for free education. It is no wonder that in recent years we have witnessed a growing swell of mass protests from angry students who clashed with university management and government on high fees which go the agenda of liberalisation of education.

The mass student protests in South African Schools, code named #fees-must fall, galvanized students around a common campaign for affordable decent education. The pressure and anger of young people resonated with the pre-liberation freedom chatter which promised South Africans that “the doors to learning shall be open and education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children; Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit” (<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=72>). The protests forced the Zuma regime to back off on the planned increase in fees, that way the South African government was sensitive to the demands of its people, bearing in mind the weight of the global institutional calls for cutting public spending while demanding increase in fees and taxes. As alluded to earlier these events should be placed in context of the advent of neo-liberal ideology which praises the efficacy market in allocating resources. Yet, putting pressure on governments to toe the Washington consensus values, of deregulation, liberalisation, and the privatising the public sector to open it up private sector market:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey, 2005).

However, this assumed freedom is more about freeing the market to accumulate and make more profits, while on the other the space for expressing dissent is curtailed. For example, some of the new entrepreneurial universities in Botswana have been dogged with students protest demanding better facilities and qualified lecturers, but instead of listening and addressing these concerns, management of the university's response has been to attack the student leaders by suspension or expulsion as they are regarded as rabble-rousers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Clark (1998) posits that, at the heart of an entrepreneurial university there is a strong and expedient central decision-making body which enable it to react to expanding and changing market conditions. In cases where academic staff have little influence and power in strategic decisions regarding academic issues in their universities, there tends to be minimal growth towards becoming entrepreneurial. Non-academic administrators tend to be transactional in their leadership and decision making. Private universities need to be flexible and more dynamic to changing needs of both learners and the industry if they are to remain competitive and relevant. Considerable risk profile of private universities enables them to discover continuous funding streams such as government, private organisations, alumni fund raising, intellectual property, campus services, student fees etc. External expectations for economic development

and internal pressures to generate new sources of income have also led to universities escalating their involvement in technology transfer and transforming university research into marketable products (Powers and McDougall, 2003).

Organisations have an economic incentive to invest in the development of technical knowledge when they and not others, can appropriate the economic returns from that knowledge (Arrow, 1962). These therefore counter the effort by universities to partner with several firms in development of technical knowledge. Instead of collaboration between universities and firms, the later tends to partner with universities on individual basis and seeking self-centred outcomes. Universities rarely manufacture goods or provide services other than education, making it difficult for them to profit financially from inventions that must be incorporated into products and services before they are sold. Therefore, universities appropriate the economies returns to invention exclusively through licensing. This is a constraint on universities becoming entrepreneurial.

METHODOLOGY

The research design draws from critical realism philosophy. This paradigm emphasizes the importance of causal explanatory research and the role played by social context in shaping phenomena (For a detailed exposition (See: Bhaskar, 1978b, Sayer, 1984, Fleetwood, 1999). Realist's causality is not associated with positivist cause and effect factor, which is often taken to be reducible to empirical quantitative representation of reality (Carr, 2000). The intention is not to take observations and correlation to validate generalisation and make predictions derived from empirical (mostly quantitative) representations of reality (Ekstrom, 1992). Realist philosophy is anchored on the concept of stratification, hence acknowledgement of a different multi-layered ontology. In this sense reality is not limited to empirical observation of causal events but extends to recognize abstraction of contextual factors. In this respect, the research uses conceptual theory to explore the context in which education is transformed in Botswana to understand role played by the structures, social and cultural relations. Such interventions from global agents, governments, university management, staff and students' interface in ways that helps to understand the contestation ideas and engagement in concrete form when implementation of change is advocated, advanced, and resisted.

Documentary reports supported by discourse analysis is combined with researchers own subjective experiences as workers and interactions at the university of Botswana, is used reflect on the changes at the university of Botswana as a public university aspiring to transform some of its features to echo with the notion of entrepreneurship. We also examine new private universities which have in recent years proliferated to the extent that some have grown to establish new branches in Botswana regional areas. Considering the importance of national context, our approach takes the Resource Based-View (RBV) (Penrose, 2013) methodology to underscore the need and criticality for an adequately resourced university. It therefore follows that the extent to which an entrepreneurial university could make impact in terms of different competences such as innovativeness will depended on resources both human and technical. In relation to Botswana we find that some of the new private entrepreneurial universities recently established, are poorly resourced and staffs are not sufficiently trained and motivated. While the University of Botswana is well resourced in physical infrastructure but severely incapacitated finally to engage in robust innovative research. For example, it so difficult for

university staff to attend conferences abroad or get research funds because of bureaucratic managerialism. Yet top management frequently travel abroad on first class, at prohibitive cost, yet the real benefits which accrue from these trips are minimal.

REFLECTIONS ON ENTREPRENEURIAL UNIVERSITY IN BOTSWANA

The University of Botswana was founded in 1982, following the separation of the three University Colleges of University of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland, (UBLS). It is now a fully-fledged University with six faculties, the recent one being the school of medicine. The university of Botswana vision and mission is based on pursuit of academic excellence and contribution to the socio-economic welfare of society. These are noble goals which resonate with the ideals of entrepreneurship. For universities are not ivory towers, isolated from the community, through scholarly research and engagement they can develop innovative solutions that respond to the needs of people. By educating across a wide spectrum of human endeavour the University of Botswana contributes to the economic development.

The Faculty of Business could be termed the entrepreneurial division of the university since its focus is to teach students business skills and practice. The faculty has four departments resembling functional areas of business management-like marketing, management, accounting & finance. Tourism and hospitality are a new addition, which was introduced to tap in the tourism sector as it is the second largest contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) after diamonds. In addition, the department of Management has added new programmes like Entrepreneurship and Logistics. For postgraduate studies, the now defunct Graduate School of Business, provided middle to higher executive training in Master of Business Administration (MBA) and Executive Master in Entrepreneurship, the graduate school is a member of the global MBA association and therefore it must meet certain standards and expectations required for accreditation. For outreach programmes and support to the business community, the faculty uses the Business Clinic; plans are underway to transform it into a centre for entrepreneurship. The Business Clinic has been mandated to offer consultancy to the public and to empower students by giving them applied knowledge and training in start-ups. The Business Clinic is self-funded through the funds it accumulates from its three enterprises namely Koffi Cabin, Koffi cabin on Ice and Inkdrop. These enterprises are run by students as a way of giving them hands on experience in managing enterprises. They are not commercial enterprises even though they have potential of going the commercial route. Being student run implies a lot of trial and error which sometimes impedes profit making. The students are not paid, they run the enterprises as part of their study programme. This sometimes leads to problems motivation, accountability, and responsibility.

Members of Business Clinic and UB students undergo several trainings including Entrepreneurial Development Training (EDT) which is offered in partnership with Local Enterprise Authority (LEA) to screened completing students from all tertiary institutions in Botswana. EDT equips completing students with basic entrepreneurial skills; it unravels the opportunity identification process. The Business Clinic has partnered with LEA to ensure that completing students from various institutions are given skills to venture into entrepreneurship (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (1995). In other words, the university is taking into consideration economic issues of high youth unemployment (Lopez, 2013).

The establishment research and development at University of Botswana is one attempt to institutionalise and commercialise research which could be of economic value. This supported by the legal affairs department, with the signing of memorandums of understanding for joint or collaborative research with external partners. The faculty of Business could be the entrepreneurial arm of the university because it provides business education. Moreover, it gives nascent support through the business clinic and business incubation programme. The incubation programme offers support to students' start-ups (only students enrolled in Entrepreneurship programme) for about six months. Resources are still extremely limited which compelled facilitators to group students instead of having them running businesses individually. This is a good development towards being entrepreneurial even though funds are a limiting factor, to having more business coaches and mentors on board. More could be done in terms of outreach training programmes such as leadership, entrepreneurship, and management development. A major constraint in embracing some of the entrepreneurial attributes is the structure and management. The University of Botswana is funded by government, and to a larger extent managed by government through a bureaucratic structure which tends to slow decision making hence impedes on innovation.

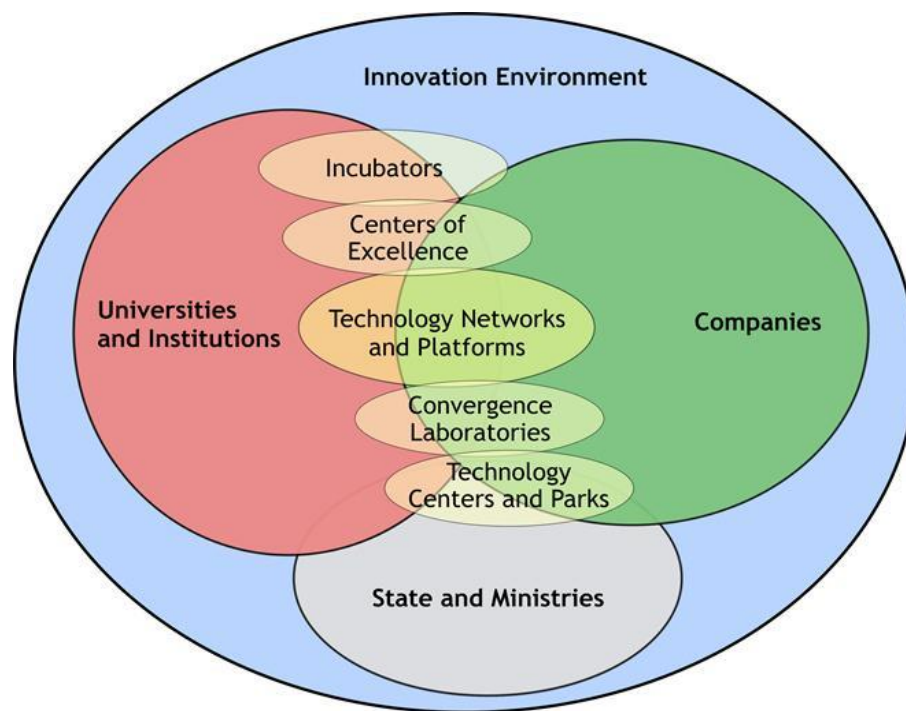
The faculty of Business has partnered with Global Business Labs (GBL). Stockholm based company, to offer an accelerator programme which helps companies get the basic right from start. They help teams turn great ideas into sales and give the selected companies an opportunity of growth in the lab with all the resources. The constraint on the side of UB is the resources, there is limited space for companies in the lab. A positive aspect is that UB has signed a memorandum of understanding with GBL, and the latter has come on board and helping in technology dissemination and knowledge sharing. GBL has annual business idea competition in which the winner gets an award in the form of funds to start up a business. This in a way increase channels through which UB reaches out to the public and make relevant contributions. GBL staff from Stockholm assist in entrepreneurship classes as Guest Lecturers occasionally and they offer short course training to Faculty of Business members.

So, taking all these into account the University of Botswana has a lot more to do in terms of best practice management innovations that are needed to enhance entrepreneurial environment. A university needs individuals with strong entrepreneurship spirit and supporting organisational structures for it to be entrepreneurial (OECD, 2006). This implies that entrepreneurship is vital in universities. Recruitment of staff in universities aspiring to be entrepreneurial should not only focus on the technical skills, but on the soft skills such as innovativeness, risk taking and flexibility. Universities have always been the spanner wheel behind economic development through knowledge dissemination (Lopez, 2013). New roles of universities include creating, transferring, and commercialising knowledge. Creation and development of commercial activities within universities requires insights into transitions towards entrepreneurial universities. But Entrepreneurial ventures should not come as the burden.

TRIPLE HELIX MODEL

The triple helix model was developed by Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (1995). Since then, it has been used as a guiding framework for entrepreneurial university, especially to illustrate the relationship of critical stakeholders-university, industry, and government. However, some have criticized the model for ignoring contextual factors, for example, paying less attention to

contradictions within stakeholder interactions. Moreover, it has been criticized for failing to recognise the role played by workers, as key player (Cai, 2015:301), other have found it limiting as it does not accommodate the public- hence the proposal for the fourth Helix — Quadruple Helix, (Leydesdorff, 2011). More concrete technologically and innovative driven ventures are needed especially at higher education, however the private sector is failing to participate and lead except to expect government tenders. The government funded Botswana Innovation Hub, Botswana Institute for Technology Research and Innovation are welcome centres of innovation and technology. If properly supported and given requisite power and lead by accomplished professors in respective fields, they have the potential for stimulating value driven innovative research projects. This, however, means forging closer partnerships with the critical universities locally and globally.



Triple Helix Model Source (ETSSP: 167)

The triple helix model has been adopted by government of Botswana in the Education and Training Strategic Sector Plan, taking from Stanford University framework (above), the new policy on education elucidates government long term intentions:

“Botswana should draw lessons from international best practice where tertiary institutions are moving from the traditional role of being sources of human resources and knowledge to being sources of technology generation and transfer. Rather than just serving as sources of innovative ideas for existing firms, universities are now combining their research, teaching strengths, and becoming sources of firm formation; especially in areas of science and technology. Their research and innovation feeds industrialization and the economic growth of knowledge- economies and creates further knowledge. They achieve self-sustenance by participating in profitable off-shoots of their research and innovation (ETSSP: 167)”.

It is clear government sees the private sector participation in education as a potential for future investment. This, however, has always been done as some of the large government projects like building classrooms and schools have always been fully funded by government and work given to the private sector. The policy call for private sector intervention in innovation and technology is spot on but one would have expected that after more than 4 decades in mining partnership with De Beers, the country will have seen research and innovation in mining at the university of Botswana or better still a whole entrepreneurial mining university. This would have elevated Botswana not just as the biggest producer of diamonds but also as a centre of excellence in diamond production, manufacturing research and knowledge.

Both Research and Development and higher education can be analysed in terms of markets (Dasgupta and David, 1994). Rosenberg and Nelson, (1994) argued that academic technology transfer mechanisms may create unnecessary transaction costs by encapsulating knowledge in patents that might otherwise flow freely to industry. But would the knowledge be efficiently transferred to industry without the series of mechanisms for identifying and enhancing the applicability of research findings. It is not planned how the development processes to be carried further, through special grants for this purpose or in new firms formed on campus and in university incubator facilities. The innovations aim to promote closer relations between faculties and firms. Research funded as an end itself with only long-term practical results expected is being replaced by an endless transition model in which basic research is linked to utilization through a series of intermediate processes often stimulated by the government (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000)

Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff identified that a strong Triple Helix was characterised not only by good partnerships between actors, but the tensions played out. Inevitably, coalitions faced problems that led to tensions and so it was in the spaces where those led to tensions and so it was in the spaces where those tensions could be most productively solved that the most dynamic and economically successful places evolved (Benneworth, Smith and Bagchi-Sen, 2015). With pressure from policy makers, it is hardly surprising that Triple helix models have become a holy grail for those seeking to make places more entrepreneurial, including people working for universities, local government, or innovative businesses. Different people mean different things when they talk about the Triple Helix. Some are talking about two convergent bodies of literature explaining territorial dynamics from either a neo-institutional or neo-evolutionary starting point. Another broader group of academic researchers studying territorial innovation find it useful to make a distinction between the three different components and to explore the three sets of bilateral relationships as well as the collective effects they have. Practitioners are concerned with trying to bring together a group of actors and encourage more collaboration than competition in innovation. One reason the Triple helix concept has been so successful is that it has had the conceptual power to speak to all these constituencies simultaneously and to help them address intractable challenges related to the development of the knowledge economy (Benneworth, Smith and Bagchi-Sen, 2015).

CONCLUSION

Higher education in the world has experienced periodic calls for greater relevance to society since early history. Despite the growth in both formal and informal entrepreneurial activities involving university inventions over the past 20 years, little scholarly research has explored the

topic (Mowery and Shane, 2002). It has been argued that university research affects private sector innovation. Public research affects industrial research and development in a variety of manufacturing industries and non-market channels of knowledge flow such as publications and conferences are the most important channels of these effects. University research in Botswana does not fully contribute to innovation. Botswana Innovation Hub and Botswana Institute for Technology Research and Innovation have been established to drive innovation in Botswana. University of Botswana has partnered with BIH through GBL in ensuring that competitors for lab space generate and pitch innovative and scalable business ideas. Further partnerships could be forged on research projects.

Mowey and Shane (2002) concluded that financial incentives played little or no role in motivating members of universities to undertake the research projects that produced the inventions of interest and in most cases private sector undertake commercial development of these inventions without exclusive licences to them. The research projects tend to be acknowledged in academia only when one researcher cites or reference the other. In manufacturing industry however, products hardly bear names of researchers who contributed to their efficiency due to limited protection of ideas.

Entrepreneurial university proved to be a university where risk taking is a normal phenomenon when new practices are initiated and where entrepreneurship is often perceived as taking innovative practices to a commercial profit exploiting stage. The collective action enables universities to become entrepreneurial universities. Transformation occurs when several various individuals come together and agree on a new vision. Private universities in Botswana can be defined in the context of entrepreneurial universities whereas public state-owned universities are still lagging in being entrepreneurial. They are constrained by a few factors including the structure, the processes, and policies in place. The University of Botswana has made initiatives to become entrepreneurial.

In Botswana, the history of entrepreneurial universities goes back to colonialism. The number of both private and public schools has increased drastically since independence. Private schools in higher learning are very much reliant of the government for sponsoring their students. In most cases without tuition fees from the government most private colleges and universities would go bankrupt because parents cannot afford high tuition fees which views education as a commodity not a public good. The entrepreneurialism of public universities in Botswana, will bring more harm than benefit as the private owners will be motivated by generating profits at the expense of quality. For now, the two streams, should be allowed to exist, as most the funding for both public and private institutions come from the government. However, there is need for a regulatory framework which minimum standards for quality (facilities, faculty, and tuition). Going forward entrepreneurialism should be viewed also as a governmental business, government can provide the same programmes at higher quality by investing more in education-both physical and human resources.

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