

CHALLENGES FACED BY CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS IN GHANA IN THE KEEPING AND PRACTICING OF INSTITUTIONAL CHRISTIAN VALUES.

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Abstract

Christian Universities are gradually laying emphasis on training the students towards a career degree and have neglected the students "inner" development; that is the formation of character, beliefs, emotions and morals. In Ghana, most Christian institutions ascribed the essence of inner development and have statutes, and other legal documents that demands that staff and students study and work within the set rules. Administrators have to put into operation the Christian faith of these institutions but are inhibited by challenges that affect the attainment of institutional Christian goals. The Paper examines these challenges and recommends some helpful solutions. The study employed the descriptive survey method in data gathering and analysis.

Introduction

Christian higher education institutions like all other higher institutions play a vital role in the social, economic and political development of a country. The uniqueness in their educational training objectives stems from their Christian belief which they seek to imbibe in their students and by this means produce a workforce with high performance in productivity and importantly have integrity and shun that which would be detrimental to the growth of the organisation within which they work. The Administrators of such institutions therefore have an immense responsibility which they are expected to undertake. This enormous task demands that these leaders make and implement rules and regulations that ensure that this core mandate is achieved. They are expected to integrate their Christian faith into their teaching, learning and service. This core mandate usually is not realised because of challenges that arises from the government and other stakeholders of education which stalls the objectives of Christian higher education institutions.

These institutions face challenges in the execution of these rules. “Don’t force students to participate in worship”, a caption in the National Daily Newspaper on 14th April 2015 clearly exhibits the internal struggle within Christian Institutions in Ghana. Administrators of Higher Christian Institutions battle with these societal pressures and demands.

These Christian Institutions have enshrined in their rules and regulations that stipulates their faith in God and demands that students and staff to live a Christian lifestyle. Some have compulsory programmes such as Chapel services that students and staff attend. Others have well defined acceptable behaviours. According to Theodore Roosevelt, 1858-1999, to educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace in society. The paper therefore discusses the challenges Administrators of Christian tertiary Universities face in their pursuit of keeping and practicing their Christian values.

Methodology

- The study adopted the descriptive survey method. The research design was selected because of the fact gathering nature of the research (Best & Kahn, 1995). Research instrument used in collecting data included the questionnaire. The Universities legal documents such as the constitution, staff policies and student’s guides were reviewed and analysed. Information from two key national organisations that regulates the operations of Higher Education Institutions in Ghana; the National Accreditation Board and the National Council for Tertiary Education is also examined.
- Ten Christian Institutions out of the seventeen perceived Christian Institutions were given questionnaires to answer. The ten were randomly selected using the fish bowl method. The Registrars of these Universities were purposively selected in view of their unique function as professional full- time administrators who have direct oversight responsibility on the administration of their institutions.

Limitation of the Study

The study focuses on Universities, specifically Christian Universities in Ghana. The State Universities in Ghana are secular institutions and as such the Research concentrates on Private Christian Universities in Ghana. These Private Universities include Christian Service University College, Valley View University College, Presbyterian University College, Ghana Baptist University College, Methodist University College,

Pentecost University College, Christ Apostolic University College, Central University and Evangelical Presbyterian University College.

The Establishment of Christian Higher Institutions in Ghana

The introduction of educational institutions in Ghana largely emanated from the introduction of the Christian Religion. Early Christian Missionary activities in the Country by the Basel Mission, the Wesleyan Mission, the Catholic and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in addition to building churches also established schools to train workforce with sound Christian principles (Enoch Darfah, 2013). The foundation set by these religious groups was built upon by the successive political governments as they built state owned primary, secondary and higher institutions of learning and collaborated with some churches in the management of their educational institutions. The higher institutions of learning include the polytechniques, training institutions and Universities.

In Ghana, currently, there are 146 higher education institutions which comprise nine Public Universities, three Public Colleges of Agriculture, seven Quasi- Public Tertiary Institutions, 61 Private University/University Colleges, ten polytechniques, thirty eight Public Colleges of Education, three Private Colleges of Education, ten Public Nursing Training Colleges and five Private Nursing Colleges (National Accreditation Board, 2015).

Out of the sixty one accredited private Universities not less than fifteen are perceived as Christian institutions.

The Role of Senior Administrators in Christian Universities

Universities as institutions of higher learning perform important functions that consist of education and training; advancing knowledge through research; strengthening cooperation with the world of work and analysing anticipating societal needs; introducing innovative educational approaches and strengthening higher education management (World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty -First Century, 1998).

In the maze of these expectations of Universities is the Administrator who ensures that every facet of the University is working to achieve the institutional objectives and goals. Duze (2012) recognises

therefore that administration in Universities provides the matrix which binds together various integral and important parts of the University.

According to Adegbesan (2001: 162) University Administrators are categorised into two, the Professional Administrators consisting of the, Vice-Chancellors, Rectors, the Deputy Vice-Chancellors the Registrars, the Bursars, the Librarians, the Directors of Non Academic Units and the Academic Administrators which include; the Provost, the Deans of Faculties and Graduate Schools, Heads of Departments and the Heads of other Academic Units. In the Professionals group are the top Managers who are mostly referred to as Senior Management Personnel/ Executives in most Universities in Ghana. The Senior Management personnel in pursuance of the accomplishment of institutional policies basically control, supervise, manage and coordinate the manpower by ensuring that:

- Highly skilled and professional workforce is recruited.
- Staff of the University are motivated and retained.
- Personnel output is maximised to achieve excellence through their leadership and mentoring programmes.
- Resources needed by the personnel are provided to enhance and maintain effectiveness and efficiency.
- Evaluate staff performance and organise appropriate training programmes for staff.

“Staffing is an essential role of educational Managers which requires his ability to search for the right people and to place them on the right job both in quality and quantity” (Adegbesan, 2001:382)

Senior Administrators coordinate the daily administrative programmes of the University College such as organisation of examinations, students’ registration exercise, admission of students, publicizing the University’s programmes and liaising with other governmental and non-governmental institutions.

The ever constant global transformation in the world of business and technological advancement are key factors that affect Universities curriculum design. The Association of the Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (2010:5) agrees that scholars and other stakeholders of education continue to anticipate a major transformation of higher education as a result of a revolution in information technology. Administrators, in keeping abreast with these developments evaluate these societal changes and demands and integrate into the structuring and preparation of curriculum.

They maintain a congenial teaching and learning environment by providing the necessary resources needed.

The financial administration of the Universities is controlled and supervised by Administrators of the University. They make sure that scarce resources are properly allocated and judiciously used, introduce sound financial regulations and prepare and control University budgets. Adegbesan (2001) agrees that Professional Staff should be concerned about how they manage the education resources allocated to them. They identify non-traditional sources of income to increase the financial muscle of the Universities.

The Administrator in the Christian Institution in performing the aforementioned diverse roles as other Administrators of Higher Institutions has more demanding expectations to fulfil. As custodians of the institutional culture, they define the identity of the institution. In a study on University Presidents Understanding of their institutional purpose, brand and culture, it was found out that many higher education institutions have a purpose and brand. The Researcher in this study explains that an organisations identity communicates what it values and what is important to it (Nate Dvorak & Dan Sinnot 2015).

The Christian University is identified by their Christian values. These values are largely enshrined in the University's constitution and reflect on the University's mission and vision, code of conduct, staff policies and students guides. The Pentecost University College, a Private University College in Ghana has its vision and mission as, empowering students to serve their own generation and posterity with integrity and the fear of God. Administrators of such institutions have to lead, manage and coordinate guided by their Christian believes.

The Administrator of a Christian institution does not have to only think about promoting quality delivery of teaching but also make sure that the Christian faith is integrated into teaching and learning. These Christian values are factored into the preparation of the curriculum. Courses such as morality and social values have been introduced into the curriculum of all programmes offered by the Christian Service University College. Students' learning is not only about acquisition of knowledge and skills but have to understand, accept and practice institutional Christian values. Graduates are expected to also put into operation their institutional belief in their working environs.

The social programmes on campuses are tailored to ultimately impact the University's Christian Values. Christian activities such as evangelism, prayer meetings and devotion periods are organised to further

propagate these values. The Administrator has the task of supervising these programmes and leading students and staff to actively participate in them.

Challenges in the keeping and Practicing of Institutional Christian Values

A Regional Cooperative programme in Higher Education for the Development in Asia and the Pacific organised for Higher Education Administrators in their report stipulates that management in Higher Education Institutions is complex and difficult. (A report of a regional workshop for Higher Education Administrators: 1991). The report indicates that the most difficult challenge faced by Managers of Higher Institutions, especially Universities is to employ the efficient and effective use of resources and to uphold the reputation and image of higher education institutions as centres of excellence in research and teaching.

In Ghana, Private Universities most of which are Christian Institutions are mandated by law to affiliate with an autonomous University and are regulated by the National Accreditation Board and the National Council for Tertiary Education (The Basic Education Division: 2004). These bodies set the academic boundaries within which Universities operate. Universities have to meet their demands and the spiritual needs of their institutions. The curriculum expectations of academic programmes for instance make it not feasible to add or incorporate Christian values. Compulsory institutional courses are sometimes “squeezed” in by Administrators to make certain that these values are imbibed into students.

The University is influenced by the challenges, constraints and pressures bearing upon it from the environment (Duze, 2012). In Ghana, the Muslim Community has cried out that they have been discriminated against in the mission schools this led to public agitation against Mission schools and urged such institutions not to force students to abide by their Christian faith (Morny Edem : 2015). These societal concerns put pressure on Administrators who are charged to maintain and protect their Christian Identity. Some Christian Universities in Ghana like Valley View University have prescribed attire for students which are in consonance with their faith. The Administrator is torn between satisfying societal pressure and maintaining the unique identity of the Institutional. The situation is worsened when national laws are enforced which are inimical to the faith of the institution. In Ghana, the proliferation of diverse religious groups on Public Universities is supported by the national law of freedom of association.

There a major challenges in the provision of the human resource needs. In Ghana, attracting high calibre teaching staff into the Private Universities is difficult as the existing few persons are engaged in Public

Universities. Highly qualified and skilled personnel are scarce relative to their demand. The Administrators of Christian institutions have the additional responsibility of finding persons with the requisite expertise who are also practising Christians and would contribute to maintain the University's Christian faith.

Managing academic and non-academic staff to ensure compliance with the University's Christian values is a formidable task. Supervision of teaching and learning and evaluation of the spiritual impact is difficult as monitoring of students academic performance overshadows acquisition of Christian faith. The direct monitoring of staff attitudes, behaviours and performance of duties to ascertain its conformity with the Universities values is complicated as personnel numbers keeps increasing with the introduction of new programmes, creation of departments, faculties and schools and increase in students enrolment numbers.

Results and Discussions

The Existence of Christian Values in Christian Institutions

This study revealed that with almost all the Universities had well-documented Christian values in their students handbooks, constitutions and staff policies. This serve as a manual to the Administrator who has to make sure that the University staff and students are following these values. The unavailability of written Christian values does not promote clarity and understanding of the University's uniqueness. An Administrator without these guidelines would struggle to interpret what should be allowed and should not be and would not be able to adequately articulate the spiritual goals of the institution. Even though most of the institutions had written Christian Values the majority had no regulations to instil discipline in staff and students who did not practice these values.

A review of the Vision, Mission and Core Values of the Institutions revealed that five of the Institutions had integrated their Christian Belief in these policy statements. The Vision and Mission of an Institution epitomize an institution's distinctiveness. Having a sense of purpose or vision enable people to find their sense of identity (Kenneth Leithwood et al., 2004:6) The Vision of one of the Universities is to be a centre of excellence for creative teaching and learning, innovative and relevant research, professional competence, and godly ethics in academic disciplines from a biblical Christian Worldview. Administrators of Universities whose Vision and Mission do not include their Christian Values could easily lose focus and concentrate more on the academic affairs to the detriment of their Christian Faith.

The role of the Administrator and Challenges in the Maintenance and Practice of Christian Standards in Universities

The study reveals that the Administrators have conflicting views on their role in the maintenance and practice of the Christian values of their Universities. While some believed that they need not be Christians to hold the positions they occupy and so should not play active role in this matter, others were not in support of this. Four out of the number did not agree to this. Rieckhoff (2014:29) in a study of Catholic Schools Principals, recommend that leaders of Christian Institutions should be faith leaders, guiding the faith development and faith life of all constituents.

The Administrators were asked to describe whether their institutions performance in maintaining and practicing their Christian Values were intensive, progressive or minimal. Only two out of the nine Universities said it was intensive while the rest said it was progressive. This shows that the Universities are facing challenges in this area.

All the Administrators mentioned that Christian activities are planned on weekly and monthly basis. These programmes are organized with the aim of imparting their values into staff and students. The Christian Leader has to provide spiritual growth opportunities for faculty and students (Rieckhoff, 2014:29). These activities include, church services, prayer meetings and evangelistic meetings. Some of the Administrators were of the view that the frequency of these programmes should be intensified and other Christian programmes introduced.

Attendance of these programmes in two of the Institutions were not compulsory for both staff and students and this is a major concern to Administrators since the situation makes it difficult to insist on students and staff attendance. This also impinges on the propagation of the institutions faith. The issue, they explained, is aggravated by the fact that there are no rules and regulations that compel attendance to such events.

All the University Administrators admitted that punctuality to Christian arrangements is a matter of concern. Students and staff have a lackadaisical attitude towards these matters.

The Administrators were asked to specify the other activities that have been integrated with their Belief. The list included, staff evaluation students representative council programmes, students admission, teaching of staff, curriculum preparation and recruitment of academic staff. Almost all (six) of the Administrators had not incorporated their faith in all the programmes. This is a massive challenge to Administrators as staff of diverse religious affiliation is recruited, the curriculum prepared has no spiritual component and teaching does not reflect the Christian values of the institution.

Other Challenges identified in the maintenance and practice of Christian values included the admission of students with various religious affiliations which make it unpractical to force students to abide by the University's Christian regulations. This circumstance has forced one of the Universities to form a Chaplaincy Board with all religious bodies being represented to manage religious programmes on the University's campus.

Recommendations and Conclusion

- Administrators of Christian Institutions need to understand the peculiarity of their institution as a faith based tertiary institution. The Administrators have to ensure the following:
- Assist the institution set Vision and Mission that will point out its Christian Faith
- Promote the introduction of policies that will promote Christian Values
- Create a conducive Christian environment that promotes faith based teaching and learning
- Intensify the organisation of spiritual programmes
- Incorporate the Christian Faith in all spheres of the University's administrative activities.

The Christian University's survival in the maintenance and practicing of institutional Christian values evidently largely depends on the Administrators of these institutions as such the critical need for Administrators to take up this responsibility and support their Universities in this pursuit.

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