

Towards a Self-Sustaining Christian University Education in Contemporary Zambia

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Introduction

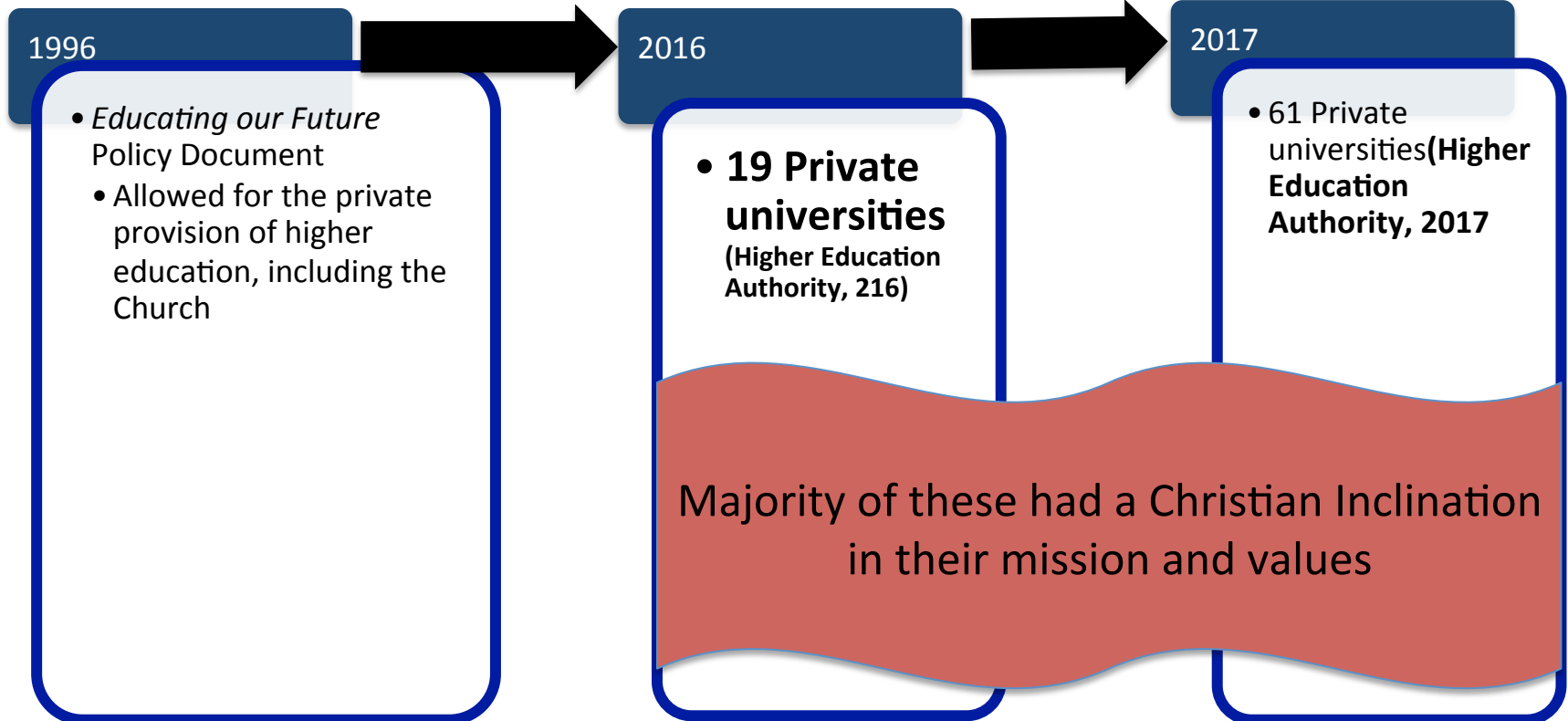
The Zambian private higher education landscape has witnessed the growth of Christian higher education (CHE) after the 1990s.



This scenario was a mirror of other contexts as confirmed by Carpenter (2017, 2011 & 2008) that Christian schools dominated the rise of private universities in Africa

Growth Over Time.

Despite this growth, CHE has not received academic engagement because religion and education discourse is preoccupied with lower levels (Carmody, 2004,2011; Simuchimba, 2005)



Church




**Christian
university**

*Religious
Resource*

**Self-
Support**

- This paper is a reaction to this academic silence on the Christian university movement in Zambia
- Focuses on the self-understanding of the Christian universities on the ways of sustaining themselves in the provision of university education.
- Does not seek to evaluate these initiatives, but merely to provide an in-depth understandings of the lived experiences of these institutions in their quest to be self-supporting

Context: Policy Perspective



1990 Liberalisation
policies



Educating Our Future, 1996



University Act, 1999

THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT, 2013

Context: Religious Landscape



- Multi- faith society
- Christianity is dominant (Islam, Hinduism, Zambian Indigenous Religions, Bahai, Buddhism and Sikhism account for smaller percentages)
 - 1991: Christian nation by declaration
 - Popularisation of Pentecostalism
 - 2016: Ministry of National Guidance and Religious Affairs established to actualise the declaration

Method

- Situated in Interpretivist tradition
 - informed by qualitative methods
 - an interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenological research orientation(Manen, 1997)
 - Data collection methods (Creswell, 2007;Merriam, 2014)
 - » Recorded in-depth interviews
 - » Documents
- Participating Churches and Universities
 - Purposively chosen
 - 3 Mainline Churches & their Christian universities
 - 2 have been reported here
- Reductive analysis (Moustakas, 1994)

Description of Institutions

- Institution 1

- Institution 1 was the earliest Christian university in Zambia (established in a 2003).
- The university began as a ministerial school in the 1970s to provide ministerial training to most of the pastors serving its Church.
- Over time, it broadened the scope of the theological training that was being offered and incorporated other academic and professional disciplines in addition to theology.
- It was subsequently registered as a private university under the University Act No. 11 of 1999, and re-registered under the 2013 Higher Education Act.
- The establishment of this university was driven by the need to provide balanced preparation for life and to widen access by providing a holistic Christian university education.

- Institution 2
- This Christian university was of interest because of its unique beginnings.
- Unlike the many Christian universities that began as Bible colleges, it was neither a Bible school nor a seminary.
- Rather than transforming their seminaries into a university, the Church set up a university that was distinct from their seminaries.
- The university was a local initiative and the resolution to establish the university came into fruition after many years of consultation (Carmody, 2007), in fact from as early as 1953 (Chilambwe, 2018).
- The university was established in 2008 under the provision of Part II of the University Act No.1 of 1999 of the Laws of Zambia, and re-registered under the 2013 Higher Education Act.
- Opening with 49 students and three programmes (Development Studies, Education, and Business Administration), the institution grew in student numbers and programmes (full time, open and distance learning) on offer to include undergraduate, post graduate, professional and diploma and certificate programmes in different fields.
- The university was set up in order to contribute to the social and economic development of the country (Chilambwe, 2018) among other reasons.

Experiences of Self-Support

- Institutional –Church Support
 - Both Institution 1 & 2 got support from the Church
- Donations
 - Both Institution 1 & 2 received donations from different individuals and groups or organisations
 - Own Graduates
 - Other friends
- Tuition Fees
 - Lower than Public and other private universities (Though Institution 2 had the lowest tuition fees)
 - Flexible payment terms

Experiences of Self-Support

- Entrepreneurship
 - Both institutions were involved in the sale of different items-programmes and institutional brands
 - Institution 1 was operating a supermarket, plus other numerous auxiliary enterprises such as the farm/garden, cafeteria/bakery, auto mechanics, block yard.
 - Institution 1 also had a Farm -consisted of both livestock rearing and the cultivation of crops. The university grew food crops such as bananas, cabbages, carrots, onions, oranges, lettuce, spinach and others which were either sold to outsiders or used in the cafeteria.

- Student work programme

- Institution 1 had the student work programme which entailed giving students an opportunity to work and earn some money while studying.

- Students were involved in Janitorial and maintenance work, in the bakery, cafeteria, library, garden, farm, poultry, orchard, laundry and secretarial etc

- Research

- Both institution 1 & 2 were involved in Consultancy related research in different fields such as medicinal value of plants, methodological programmes, ICTS etc

- Call for Help

- Both Institution 1 & 2 called for help from different stakeholders including the government.

- For example, Institution 2 called on the government to extend the student loan scheme to students in private university education, a request which the Ministry of Higher Education and the government welcomed and promised to roll out (Vice Chancellor's Graduation Speech, 15th September, 2018)

Reflections on the Experiences of Christian universities

Concept of self-sustaining – broad

Religious Ideas

- Teachings on education

Organisation

- Church structures, networks etc

Practices

- University day
- Charity
- Students involvement

Experiences

- 'Trust from previous involvement in education
- Appreciated and recognised by different stakeholders

The greatest resource the Churches was the religious resource

Imagining a Self-Sustaining Christian University Movement

- The greatest resource at the disposal of the Christian universities in their quest to be self sustaining was the religious resource.
- In order to be self-sustaining, the Christian universities needed to tap into this resource in ways that did not foster dependency on gifts and donations, but rather in investments that would survive even when gifts and donations were minimal.
- We argue that the Christian universities needed to be enterprising as they had already began to do.

- These ventures needed to continually involve the students as part of holistic Christian university education.
- In addition, the Christian universities needed to blend their mission of university education in all their self-sustaining ventures so as to minimize the risk of losing their core business in the sector.
- This was because the reality remained that Christian university education was in need of a continuous flow of income if they were to continue to offer the quality Christian university education they have been associated with throughout the ages in Zambia.

Conclusion

- The paper reflected on the experiences of the Christian universities in their quest to support their provision of university education.
- The initiatives ultimately mirrored the quest of the church to provide a unique kind of university education grounded in moral values and a holistic nature.
- As students took part in the different initiatives as part of the Christian university community, they were empowered with knowledge, skills and values and thus were groomed into a different kind of citizenry for present day Zambia.

- The church philosophies and policies on university education informed these initiatives and aspirations.
- The Christian universities were making strides to be self-supporting, not only by looking within themselves but even through networks and partnerships with other well wishers.
- As such, the initiatives of the churches demonstrated the broader understanding of self-sustenance as a concept as it was not centred on the churches and universities themselves, but was open to other forms of networks and partnerships with different stakeholders.
- The paper has argued that to be self-sustaining, the Christian universities needed to tap into their religious resources and invest in long term ventures that had the mission of Christian universities at its core in contemporary Zambia.

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Thank You