
Conclusion and Recommendations

The transformations that have occurred on the higher education landscape have thrown up many challenges for leadership in higher education. As has been pointed out, higher education governance in Ghana reflects the general trend in Africa, which is a movement away from collegial system to managerialism. Prior to the 1990s, however, higher education governance was mainly based on the understanding that it was the state's responsibility to provide, almost exclusively, for the funding of higher education. Once the state delivered on its responsibilities, it allowed the universities to focus on a collegial governance system without the need for commercialising academic services. The understanding was that higher education was a public good that provides positive social returns for national development. The philosophical roots of this conception was in the colonial higher education project itself that saw universities as imperatives to addressing human resource deficits in the colonies that were on the threshold of independence. The Asquith Commission which was set up by the British colonial office to examine the case for the establishment of higher education in the overseas territories posited that these institutions were required for the training of indigenous populations for skills acquisition. This position was also corroborated by the Elliot Commission that focused on higher education specifically in Africa.

The need to uphold high quality in the universities that were subsequently established was emphasised, so as to produce globally competitive graduates. And in line with the existing understanding of higher education governance, the state took up the responsibility of funding of higher education, just as it was with all public projects. While state funding was the orthodoxy, the undergirding philosophy for higher education governance was essentially liberal in nature. It was expected that state apparatus should have minimal control over the universities, as they should

have the autonomy to determine programmes and their contents. It was also expected in the same frame that the academia should have the freedom to research into themes of their interest and to disseminate findings without recourse. And to uphold these tenets the universities were placed under the tutelage of metropolitan institutions for protracted periods for the sake of enculturation by the indigenous academic community. This was done as expatriates constituted the critical corps of the academic and administrative staff in the local universities. With the attainment of internal independence in 1951, Ghanaian leaders began to question the relevance of programme contents to the local conditions and thereby began to push for African Studies to bring graduates to appreciate African culture and historiography.

The demands for indigenisation of academic programmes and the staff of the universities became quite vociferous in the immediate post-independence period leading to state intrusion into the governance system of the universities. A combination of nationalist posturing and a political drive towards monolithism brought Nkrumah's government into conflict with leadership in higher education, which ended up splitting the front of even the indigenous academic community. Notwithstanding the bitter state-university relations that emerged, there was tenacity of the state to keep to its part of the social contract by providing funding for the universities. This provided the ambience for maintaining the collegial governance system.

The tenacity of the state managers to provide funding began to wobble in the 1970s as the frailty of a raw material dependent economy was revealed. As non-oil commodities found their prices plummeting, crude oil prices witnessed stupendous rise, which produced disastrous consequences for Africa. Ghana was symptomatically a failed state, in the circumstances, as the state could hardly meet any of its social responsibilities. The bailout solutions that were sought from the World Bank and the IMF were provided with unfamiliar conditionalities that were summarised in the form of retrenchment of the state and the promotion of the market. The protests that heralded the promotion of the market logic could not reverse the situation as it was obvious that Africa could not swim against the global neoliberal wave. The economic rationalisation that cropped up redefined the social responsibility of the state, thus impacting higher education governance. With the retrenchment of the state, the monopolistic control it had over the sphere of higher education crumbled in consequence. The higher education landscape was liberalised for private sector participation, and thus paving way for commercialisation of academic services to clients. The higher education leadership was thence confronted with finding ways to market their products to attract buyers.

For the private sector providers, the marketplace for higher education is largely a profit making one and as much the basic rules of the marketplace, namely: cost minimisation and revenue maximisation became the order. The public universities were to conform to the dictates of public sector reforms by adopting the new public management systems that mimics corporate governance. In practice, both the public and private sector providers of higher education behaved the same way in attracting their clientele.

The implications of these new forms of conception of higher education and its concomitant governance system triggered debates within the academia about quality service delivery. Institutionalised quality assurance units at various tiers of higher education governance are part of the responses to dealing with quality assurance. But the role of faculty as producers of knowledge in the competitive global society remains an issue, as the commercialisation drive places burden on the lecturer regarding available time.

The Ghanaian situation, as examined in this study, identifies the trajectory and the exigencies of six higher education institutions in the country. This constitutes a mix of four public universities and two private ones. The evidence is that governance structures in the universities very much reflects the British colonial legacy. For the public universities, the state interference that hitherto characterised their operations seems to have gone down considerable as the various stakeholders now understand their respective roles. The Governing Councils of the public universities continue to have government nominees, even as the Councils expanded to represent students and various workers' organisations. The troubling conditions that previously interrupted academic calendars, it appears, are now transcended; as matters related to fee payments are becoming accepted by students.

The Governing Councils in the private universities are thinner in terms of membership numbers. And in the two universities covered in this volume, membership of the Church is an apparent precondition for membership of the Council. The Councils of these two faith-based universities, in all respects, are congregations of the priestly, as the main objective of the two institutions is to make a difference in the moral standing of their graduates in the public space. However, the Councils in the two private universities are also confronted with devising the appropriate means of boosting funding, as they necessarily have to sustain their operations via aggressive participation and accumulation in the marketplace.

The implications of commercialisation of academic programmes, in Ghana, have resulted in a veritable turf war among institutions of higher education as they operate sandwich and parallel programmes to augment revenues from regular

programmes. Our study has revealed that the general academic and professional capacities among teaching staff fall short of what is stipulated by the NCTE for universities. The pressures for having to teach continually have repercussions on time availability for research and publications. While the strategic plans of all the universities are high-sounding about what they seek to achieve, it does seem that the existing capacities are inadequate to match up with the ambitions.

To deal with the challenges of inadequate capacity, the universities have instituted staff development programmes for deserving staffs to upgrade their academic laurels, so as to boost efficiency in the classroom and in research. Also in place is in-service capacity building activities that focus on addressing identified shortfalls within the establishment. These capacity building efforts are meant to enhance quality service delivery.

Notwithstanding these efforts, the worrying issue that has been identified in the study is the low research and publication output rates among faculty. This situation seems to uphold the fears of the critics of commercialisation drive that higher education is regressing into scenarios of 'teaching only' institutions. This does not portend well for Ghana as universities are supposed to be the centres of knowledge production and dissemination. It must be said that the lecturers themselves acknowledge this challenge and have offered some recommendations that are part of those enumerated below:

Recommendations

To deal with the capacity challenges that are identified, the following recommendations are made:

State Commitment to the Public Universities

In Ghana, the state continues to show a keen interest in the governance of the public universities. The state continues to deliver infrastructural projects like lecture halls and libraries. The state also caters for the remuneration of the workers of public universities. But recurrent expenditures are borne by the universities, which are normally derived from the IGFs. To be able to bear the cost of recurrent expenditures on sustainable basis, the public universities are compelled to pursue commercialisation agenda. As has been shown, this approach ends up constraining faculty's ability to engage in activities that would boost the intrinsic value of the public universities. The research and publication profiles of faculty are generally low as energy and time is spent on teaching assignments that provide additional income to the lecturers.

In view of this, it is recommended that the state's support for the public universities should go beyond salary payments and construction of lecture halls. The state should devote part of the proceeds of the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) to meet the recurrent expenditures of the public universities.

Strengthening of State Supervisory Roles

The supervisory role of the state is channelled through a network of institutions like the Ministry of Education, the NCTE and the NAB. A critical examination of the mandate of the NCTE shows that it is mainly customised for the needs of public higher education institutions and not the private ones. But the role of the private providers of higher education cannot be ignored, and the specific roles the NCTE should play in their governance systems deserve looking into. It is thus recommended that the Parliament Act 454 (1993) that established the NCTE should be reviewed to enable it exercise a more effective supervisory role over private universities.

It is also recommended that a state support system for private institutions should be institutionalised. The institutionalisation of the state support system for the private universities would assist in staff development of the private institutions, as currently the private universities are not attractive to highly qualified personnel. The scholarship window that GETFund provides public universities should, as well, be extended to the private sector institutions.

Support for Research

To effectively utilise the knowledge that is available to faculty for national development, support for research activities must be given priority attention. The current situation, in which lecturers are occupied with teaching as a source of income supplement is unhealthy. To accelerate national development, it is recommended that all stakeholders – faculty, government, alumni and industry – should take particular interest in establishing a National Research Fund. The Fund, which should be established by an Act of Parliament, should be managed by an autonomous body. Access to the funds should be on competitive basis and its beneficiaries should use the period of implementation as their sabbatical leaves. This would enable researchers to deliver to meet national development needs. It is important to add that such opportunities should also be available to private higher education and research institutions

Support for Scholarly Journals

One persistent complaint that was adduced for the low publication rate among faculty was the inadequacy of local scholarly journals. It was also added that fees charged for publishing in foreign journals were unaffordable. These factors therefore act as a snag for accessibility. As publications help in the dissemination of research findings and in contributing to knowledge, it is recommended that a critical view be taken by all stakeholders regarding the funding for journals. The challenge that academic journals face is that they have only a small constituency of readership due to the abstruse nature of their content. For this reason, journal commercialisation drives in Africa is limited. And in view of this, it is suggested that all universities devote part of their IGFs to serve as seed money for journals in their respective universities. Innovative approaches for fund mobilisation for academic journals from industry and alumni can also be done to sustain journals.

It is expected that if these recommendations are carried through, then the universities in Ghana will become more supportive to the national development effort. This would also help Ghanaian universities to contribute more effectively to the global knowledge production enterprise.