

Sustaining the Mission of the Church in Education

A Narrative of Christian Higher Education in Post-1990 Zambia

Nelly Mwale¹

Abstract

The article explores the activities of selected Christian Higher Education (CHE) institutions in the quest to sustain themselves in a changing university education funding landscape in Zambia. The purpose was to understand the experiences of self-sustainability initiatives of the Christian universities in Zambia, like other private institutions of higher education in Zambia that had no form of funding from the government. At a time when local church leadership advocated for self-propagating, self-ministering and self-sustaining church-affiliated institutions (owing to a paradigm shift towards local, self-sustaining initiatives), Christian universities needed to devise their own strategies for self-sustainability. The article draws on the three self-theory (indigenous church mission theory) and an interpretive phenomenological approach in which data were collected through document analysis and observations (supplemented by interviews with key informants from the church leadership and Christian universities). The article shows that Christian universities were enterprising and had ventured into farming and basic food processing. Other initiatives included fundraising ventures, which included talk shows soliciting support and donations of assorted items (ranging from land to library materials), bidding for research grants, and undertaking research. The article argues that although most of these initiatives were grounded in being self-sustaining, they demonstrated the meaning attached to holistic Christian university education, as students were part of these initiatives, thereby directly and indirectly contributing to the creation of a self-sustaining Christian university community. The article contributes to missiological scholarship by applying the self-sustaining principle of Venn to Christian universities as providers of education that contributes to fulfilling the mandate of creating students who become agents of change.

Key words: Christian University, Self-Sustaining, Christian Higher Education, Mission, Three selfs

1. Introduction

The Zambian higher education landscape witnessed the growth of private higher education after the 1990s. As of 2017, there were 55 private universities in Zambia (Higher Education Authority, 2017), of which the majority had a Christian inclina-

¹ Nelly Mwale (PhD) is a lecturer in the department of Religious Studies at the University of Zambia. She is also a research fellow at the Research Institute for Theology and Religion at the University of South Africa. Her Research interests are religion in the public sphere, religion and education, church history and African Indigenous Religions. Email address:nelmwa@gmail.com

tion in their mission and values. This scenario was a mirror of other contexts, as confirmed by Carpenter (2017; 2008) and Glanzer, Carpenter, and Lantinga (2011), that Christian schools dominated the rise of private universities in Africa. However, despite this growth of Christian universities, there was little academic engagement with these institutions, which had changed the university education landscape in Zambia. This is because Zambian studies on religion and education have been preoccupied with the primary and secondary levels of education (see Simuchimba, 2005; Carmody, 2007; 2011). Levy's (2009) sentiments about the private higher education system are that it has not been a static entity, but has changed and evolved over many years in response to social, economic and political change (hence deserving sustained critical investigation). This article is a reaction to this academic silence on Christian universities in Zambia.

This article, in particular, focuses on the self-understanding of Christian universities² with specific reference to the ways of sustaining themselves in the provision of university education. Therefore, the article does not seek to evaluate these initiatives, but merely to provide an in-depth understanding of what these institutions were doing to sustain themselves. This was deemed significant in a context where private institutions of higher education in Zambia had no funding from the government. Additionally, at a time when the local church leadership advocated for self-propagating, self-ministering and self-sustaining church-affiliated institutions (owing to a paradigm shift towards local, self-sustaining initiatives), Christian universities needed to devise their own strategies for self-sustainability if they were to continue providing university education. Therefore, the article is deemed significant for providing insights into the experiences of the Christian universities, enabling Christian higher education institutions to reflect on their undertakings and complementing scholarship on Christian Higher Education (CHE) from the Zambian context.

2. Context

The growth of CHE in Zambia has a long history which stretched to the very arrival of the Christian missionaries in the country. However, the development of Christian universities was a recent undertaking. Christian universities only emerged after the 1990s. This was provided for by the 1996 National policy document on education in Zambia, *Educating our Future*, in which the importance of encouraging private organisations, individuals, non-governmental organisations and communities to take an active role in establishing and maintaining institutions of higher education

² Christian universities are understood as one that acknowledges and embraces a Christian or denominational confessional identity in the mission statements and alters aspects of its policies, governance, curriculum and ethos in the light of its Christian identity (Schroeder, 2002:9).

was stressed (Ministry of Education, 1996; Kelly, 2006). This policy was also necessitated by the growing demand for university education.

The Christian universities first emerged in the 2000s, with mainline churches and individuals establishing the first universities that claimed a Christian identity between 2000 and 2010, a period called the first decade of Christian university education in post-1990 Zambia. For example, while the Seventh Day Adventist Church transformed its ministerial school and established Rusangu University in 2002, the Catholic Church established a university distinct from her seminaries in 2005 (though the first students were enrolled in 2008). The Reformed Church in Zambia also transformed its theological college into Justo Mwale University in 2008. In the same year, the Reformed Baptist Church Association of Zambia established the African Christian University. Dr Moffat and Doreen Zimba were among the first individual Christians to establish universities through their Northrise University in 2004.

More universities claiming a Christian identity emerged after 2010. These were primarily established by Pentecostal Churches, a few mainline churches and individuals. For example, Chreso Ministries established Chreso University in 2010, while the Holy International Ministries and PaGlory Ministries established Alliance International University in 2013 and PaGlory University in 2016, respectively. The Pentecostal Assemblies of God in Zambia also transformed their Bible College into a university known as Trans Africa Christian University. Mainline churches like the United Church of Zambia transformed their theological college into the United Church of Zambia University in 2012, while the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia established their Evangelical University in 2014.

Individuals and religious organisations also established universities after 2010. For example, Prof Kaluba Kapapula and Dr Ken Banda established the Twin Palm Leadership University and the Harvest Institute of Missions University in 2014, respectively. In addition, Seventh-Day Adventist individuals founded Eden University in 2016, while religious organisations like Foundation for Cultural Education established the Foundation for Cultural Education University in the country in 2014. Others, such as Trinity and Greenlight universities, are among examples of universities established by individuals after 2010 that claimed a Christian identity.

With regard to legislation pertaining to private higher education, for any private university to exist, it must be registered and recognised under the Higher Education Act (Act No. 4 of 2013), which until 2013 was the University Act of 1999. The Act spells out the procedures and regulations governing private higher education provision. Most importantly, university education in Zambia was only funded in public universities, though poorly (Masaiti & Mwale, 2017). At the same time, the end of the missionary era in the history of Christianity in Zambia pointed to new ways of sustaining church activities in the education sector as the churches could no longer continue to receive grants from overseas as they had done before. As such, having

established universities that did not receive any form of financial support from the public pool of university education, the churches needed to devise initiatives to sustain their provision of university education. This Christian dominance on the private higher education landscape was a reflection of the multi religious context in the country in which Christianity remained the dominant religion. Other religions including Islam, Hinduism, Zambian Indigenous Religions, Bahai Faith, Buddhism and Sikhism account for smaller percentages in terms of following (Mwale and Chita, 2016). Therefore, the study was located in this context.

3. Situating Zambian Christian Higher Education in Existing Scholarship

The inquiry into how Christian higher education was sustained in Zambia is firstly situated in existing scholarship addressing CHE in Africa. For example, Carpenter (2005; 2008) provided insights on the growth of CHE and concluded that outside of North America, the centre of Christian higher education was Africa, with over 200 new universities created since 1980. Glanzer (2005) observed that the creation of CHE continued and that 1,100 Christian institutions worldwide would fit the identity of a Christian college or university by 2005. Glanzer *et al.*, (2011) also argued that Africa was leading the way in the global surge of religion-affiliated universities in the 21st century. Scholars like Zwana (2008) have provided country-specific studies on the growth of CHE in Africa using the Zimbabwean context by tracing the development of the Africa University. While Carpenter (2017) linked the growth of CHE to the rapid rise of Christian adherence and the volatile growth of higher education in sub-Saharan Africa, Zwana (2008) associated the growth of CHE with the decrease in state sponsorship for higher education owing to financial constraints, which led the churches to begin offering higher education as part of their mission. Nonetheless, these scholars affirm the changing higher education landscape through the growth of CHE in sub-Saharan Africa.

Besides the growth of CHE, other scholars have dealt with the role of CHE. For example, Theron (2013) studied the impact of CHE on the lives of students and societies in Mozambique using the qualitative research methodology of participatory action research in which three students from a CHE institution shared their experiences. In addition, Nguru (2008) advanced the view that the role of CHE was to help a student become a certain kind of person and do certain things by integrating the students' faith and education.

Different aspects of CHE have also been explored by scholars like Enegho (2017) and Diedericks and Diedericks (2019), who analysed Christian universities in the Nigerian and South African contexts, respectively. Therefore, given the limited studies on CHE in Zambia and discourses of sustainability, the article complements scholarship on CHE in Africa from the Zambian context.

The article is also located in scholarship on Christian universities as linked to the discourses on the transformation of theological education institutions in CHE. In this regard, it is acknowledged that scholarship on CHE has also been centred on the debate on the place of theological education in Christian universities and the implications of the transformation of theological colleges into Christian universities. For example, Mwale and Chita (2017) observed that the integration of theology and other secular disciplines (as was the case at the United Church of Zambia University College (UCZUC) had not only transformed the institutional identity, but also diversified the institution. The duo argued that in the context of sustainability challenges associated with theological education, UCZUC presented a potential success story of theological institutions' quest to maintain viability in modern times through striving for active and intentional integration of sacred and secular (theology with other disciplines).

Other scholars who have addressed the subject include Zakai (2007), who focused on the irony of the declining place of theology in public universities and Venter (2016), who identified numerous changes in theology, such as some faculties being phased out and departments (some) being reconfigured. While the changes in theological education centred on transforming theological education institutions into universities have raised debate, existing scholarship is also not short of insights that favour the growth of Christian universities. For example, Van der Walt (2012) argued that there was a greater need for Christian universities than theological schools in Africa, adding that one solution lay in existing theological schools to develop other faculties. Opening up theological education institutions to other disciplines through transforming theological colleges into universities is one path numerous institutions take (including in the Zambian context). Although the article is not focused on the place of theological education in Christian universities, it can be stated that this is an area of research that requires sustained inquiry in many contexts in order to ascertain the experiences of these institutions on the benefits and disadvantages of theological education in private higher education institutions.

4. Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, the article is informed by Henry Venn's three self-theory, which is anchored on the indigenous church principle popularly known as the three self-formula (self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating). In the three self-theory, Venn stressed that the native mission agencies needed to function independently without the Western mission societies' support or interference (Shenk, 2006). The self-governing principle was premised on the idea that outsiders should not be involved in the administration of the local mission and that the leadership should be drawn from the local mission society. This suggested that outsiders were to be

replaced by the local leaders in order to promote self-reliance (Shenk, 1977:467). Similarly, Venn's view on the self-propagating principle was that the local mission should take up the responsibility of witnessing the kingdom of God as aligned to self-responsibility in which the local mission is responsible for witnessing the kingdom values in the society.

Different scholars have reacted to the three self-theory in different ways. For example, in examining the self-support theory, Finley (1999) argued that financial support to the indigenous mission agencies was legitimate and Biblical based on the New Testament mission model where the church at Jerusalem extended financial support to the needy. Based on this, Finley questioned the self-support theory's validity and challenged the western mission societies to support the indigenous missions. At the same time, Culbertson (2017) affirms that 'three selfs' are necessary qualities for local churches.

Of the three aspects of the three self-theory, the article engages more with one entity, namely self-supporting, because the Christian universities were a new development in Zambia, hence deemed significant to explore how these institutions were making strides to support themselves. Thus, given the debates surrounding the principle of self-sustaining church institutions (as advanced by Finley, 1999), self-sustaining as a concept is carefully used. Linked to Venn's ideas that the church needed to be self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating in order to move away from a deadening dependency on the foreign initiative, foreign money, and foreign personnel (1846:17), in this article, self-sustaining relates to the ways in which the Christian churches and universities were supporting themselves in their new role and mission in university education provision in Zambia.

5. Methods

Situated in the interpretivist tradition, the study which informs the article drew on qualitative methods and an interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenological research orientation. This was because of the explorative nature of the research question and its focus (Merriam, 1998) on seeking to understand the lived experiences of the church in the provision of university education through their own initiatives (to support their universities). Creswell (1998) and Moustakas (1994) also suggest that interpretive phenomenological design is used because of its orientation towards lived experiences. In this case, the lived experiences focused on the church's provision of university education in post-1990 Zambia.

The study was multi-sited as it involved more than one unit of analysis. Given the numerous universities associated with Christianity, two pioneer Christian denominations in the provision of university education and their universities in Zambia were chosen. These included Catholic (one) and Protestant (one) churches

and their universities located in the Copperbelt and Southern provinces of Zambia. These institutions were purposively chosen because of their typicality or possession of particular characteristics being sought (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). In this case, they were among the country's earliest providers of Christian university education.

The data were collected through document analysis (largely comprised of archival materials in the form of church leader's conference minutes, newspapers, photographs, brochures and annual reports chosen based on the availability criteria) and observations (by way of participating in university functions). The 2018 graduation ceremonies of the institutions were analysed for themes related to the research question. In the case of Catholic university education, the 10th anniversary and 7th graduation ceremony were attended in September 2018. The graduation proceedings for the Protestant Church University were followed through online platforms. The article also draws insights from interviews with two purposively chosen national church leadership representatives in Lusaka.

These methods were guided by Creswell's (2007) and Merriam's (2014) suggestion that phenomenological studies present numerous evidentiary sources such as interviews, documentation and observations. In addition, Scott's (1990) guidelines on quality control, formulated for handling documentary sources (authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning), also informed the use of documents, which were chosen based on availability.

The central research question was centred on exploring the experiences of the Christian churches and their Christian universities in supporting their provision of university education in contemporary Zambia. The data were collected between August and December in 2018 and May and June in 2019, and analysed through horizontalisation, the development clusters of meaning and textural and structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). In addition, ethical considerations relating to confidentiality, privacy and getting consent from the participants (Creswell 2007) were adhered to. This was firstly through ethical clearance and approval from the University of Zambia (the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee). Secondly, consent was also sought from the proprietors of the selected Christian universities, and pseudo names were used to represent the participants' voices and institutions in the study.

6. Church Experiences of Self-Support in their Provision of University Education

To begin with, both the selected churches understood their mission in higher education to be linked to offering a Christian-based university education. This confirmed Benne's (2001) and Schroder's (2002) description of Christian universities

in which they are seen as embracing a Christian or denominational confessional identity in the mission statements and altering aspects of their policies, governance, curriculum and ethos in the light of their Christian identity. In this regard, the mission of the Catholic University was centred on the integral development of the human person in accordance with the Gospel values, and the approach to education remained holistic. As such, the Catholic University's specific purpose was to form boys and girls and men and women who would be good citizens of the world (Zambia Catholic University, 2018). As confirmed by the Catholic Education Department official:

Our role is to promote Gospel values and Christian ethics; we endeavour to provide holistic formation by disseminating knowledge and truth through teaching, learning, scholarship, and rigorous research in line with the provisions of the teachings of the church (Interview, 2019).

In like manner, the Protestant Church expressed its mission in university education as preparing students not only for professional careers, but also equipping them physically, mentally, socially and spiritually by providing quality holistic Christian education at tertiary level to all who met the university entry requirements.

We aim to educate not only the head, but also the hands and mind. All we do is educate. Our education is holistic and inspired by Matthew 9:35 and 36 (Interview, 2018).

Driven by these similar mandates, which were only expressed differently, both churches shared the common experience of not receiving grants from the government, as they were private providers of university education. Thus, to continue providing this education, which was described as Christian and holistic in nature, the churches, through their universities, had devised their own ways of supporting themselves by tapping into their religious resource. In this case, the Christian universities received support from the mother church. Apart from financial or budgetary allocations from mother churches, the universities also had their own experiences of support through assorted donations. These donations came from not only the church, but from outsiders or other stakeholders. For example, the Catholic University received donations and gifts in the area of the givers' preferences.

In the case of the Protestant Church, donations also came from students themselves. For example, the class of 2018 gave back to their university by donating funds for the purchase of an ambulance. "A representative of the graduates, Sheila Ruto, announced that her fellow graduates have decided to give back to the university over one hundred and seventy-four thousand kwacha towards the purchase of

an ambulance” (Zambia National Broadcasting Co-operation News, 12 September, 2018). Similarly, a University of Kentucky student, Brittany Rice, organised a textbook donation drive for disadvantaged students at the university. This was because the students were in need of textbooks from various disciplines such as biology, chemistry, biochemistry, physics, mathematics, agriculture, agribusiness, geography, environmental sciences, nursing, business, accounting, human resources, nutritional sciences, family and consumer sciences, education, literature, English, history, music, psychology, sociology and linguistics (Mills, University of Kentucky Campus News, 26 July, 2017). It is probable that the different church teachings on giving, charity and being of service to society were exemplified in the gestures of giving. This affirms conclusions by Guthrie and Schuermann (2012) that the funding sources for higher education included revenue generated through philanthropy, among other avenues.

Though lower than the fees in public universities, Christian universities also supported themselves through tuition fees paid by students, which remained the main source of income. Thus, the Catholic University had the lowest tuition fees pegged at K 9,000 (postgraduate-masters), K8,750 and K5,650 for undergraduate full-time and open and distance learning, respectively (Zambia Catholic University, 2018), while the Protestant University fees ranged from K5975 to K10, 250 for undergraduate full-time and part-time programmes, respectively. The Catholic Education department official explained that:

Our fees are not only lower, but we also have flexible payment plans. With the majority of our students from poor families, we are very flexible. We do not need a student to pay 100% as that person is being enrolled. Our fees are spread out over a semester. Of course, this puts a strain on managing finances, but we also have the poor and disadvantaged at heart (Interview, 2019).

The Protestant Church national leadership official also remarked that:

Our tuition fees are fixed for a year and are currently around K5000. For the most part, the church subsidises these fees because our interest is to make university education affordable to everyone.

The Protestant University increased fees to K10, 250 from K7, 944 for full-time students and to K5, 975 from K3, 716 for part-time students in 2014 because of the high inflation and the escalating costs of running the institution (Namaiko, Times of Zambia, 27 December, 2013). The payment of fees was broken down into smaller instalments to facilitate planning and smooth payment. These fees can be

understood in light of similar arts-based programmes in public institutions like the University of Zambia, which were around K23, 000 plus other user fees, which were just under K1, 000.

The foregoing activities are in line with conclusions drawn by Thaver (2008) that tuition fees and grants from sponsoring organisations were the two primary sources of finance for Private higher education institutions (PHEIs) and that there were attempts at tapping into other sources, such as donations from parent organisations, gifts and finance accrued from charging residential fees.

The churches and their universities were also enterprising as they were involved in selling their academic programmes and other items. For example, the Catholic University was involved in providing methodological courses to the mines on the Copperbelt and at the same time selling its institutional brands like t-shirts, Vitenge (wrapper) materials and other assorted items as expressed in the following:

We do not only rely on full-time students; we also have open and distance learning students. We also have part-time or evening classes as programmes that help us with the issue of sustainability. We have offers from business organisations, especially the mines; they may request that we conduct a workshop, facilitate a seminar, etc. We also have t-shirts and *Vitenge* for marketing purposes (Interview, 2018).

Similarly, the Protestant University was involved in selling numerous products. For example, the university operated a supermarket. Additionally, the university had numerous other auxiliary enterprises such as the farm/garden, cafeteria/bakery, auto mechanics, block yard and the university brand (Vice Chancellor's Report, 2017). In line with this scenario, scholars like Altbach (2005) observed that Catholic universities often easily turn to market models for sustainability. However, it should be pointed out that this move was not new as the churches were merely reviving the old self-sustaining concept of a mission station which involved running a farm, store, cafeteria, bakery, providing accommodation and student work programmes. This is also aligned with Venn's idea of a self-supporting church. At the same time, these entrepreneur ventures empowered students with life skills.

Research ventures were also a common experience of supporting the provision of university education by Christian universities. In this regard, the Protestant University had embarked on research projects such as the Moringa project, in which over 3000 trees had been planted for research in partnership with international researchers. They were also engaged in researching the medicinal properties of the baobab tree and the geology project in which they were linking geology with the flood of Noah. In the case of the Catholic University, they had set up partnerships with British Council and the Association for Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)

to become an accredited computer-based examination centre. These strides in research ought to be understood from the perspective of limited research associated with private universities owing to limited research capacity. Thaver (2008) observed limited research in private universities due to a lack of finances and limited capacity. Thus, Christian universities could be said to be making strides to grow the institutional research profile.

Another common experience in the churches and their universities' quest to be self-supporting in the provision of university education was the call for help. From inception, the church encouraged well-wishers to come on board. For example, Archbishop Spaita, as Director of Education, urged all people of goodwill to come forward and render generous support in monetary form and kind (Sinjela, *National Mirror*, 15 March, 2005). The Catholic University also called for funding from corporate bodies, supporting partners, alumni members and others to construct the new campus to accommodate the growing student population. The Catholic University further called for government and other well-wishers support to help the students meet their tuition fees. For example, the government was called upon 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, 15 September, 2018; Mukuka, 2017). Similarly, the Protestant University called for help from well-wishers towards student fees through their work programme. "...Vice Chancellor has appealed to the corporate world and other interested stakeholders to partner with the university to financially support needy students through its student work programme (Vice Chancellor's speech, 9 September, 2018). These calls for help signified the financial struggles of CHE and affirmed observations in the existing literature. For example, der Walt (2002) identified inadequate funding as one of the challenges facing CHE.

While some experiences were common to both churches, other experiences were unique to certain institutions. For example, the student employment or work programme was unique to the Protestant University. The programme entailed giving students an opportunity to work and earn some money while studying. Thus, in an effort to help those with established financial needs, limited work opportunities for students on campus are available. Preference is given to those staying in the hostels, those on scholarship, those with established financial needs, janitorial and maintenance work, work in the bakery, cafeteria, library, garden, farm, poultry, orchard, laundry and secretarial (Vice Chancellor University Report, 2017).

The Protestant University also managed a farm which 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. The proceeds

from the farm were either sold to outsiders or supplied to the cafeteria, which was run by the university. In this way, money was ploughed back into the institution. Other activities peculiar to the Protestant University included making blocks, as the institution had a block-making factory. As of 2017, the income from these auxiliary enterprises was K6.5 million, which helped the university to balance its budget (Vice Chancellor's University Report, 2017).

7. Towards an Explanation of the Self-Supporting Initiatives of Zambian Christian Higher Education

To begin with, the churches expressed a sense of fulfilment and a longing for a more self-sustaining provision of university education. As such, the universities had endeavoured to be self-sustaining by embracing numerous ventures at once. For example, the farm, shop, cafeteria, block-making factory and all other activities fed into each other and simultaneously added to the holistic nature of the education provided. For example, the students who worked on the farm and in other ventures in a bid to raise funds for their education also acquired valuable practical knowledge and skills. This was complemented by learning entrepreneurship courses. While beyond the scope of this article, the holistic involvement of students pointed to the benefits the students had accrued. For example, some students affirmed how they had learnt to value human dignity and the value of treating others as equals because they had internalised their self-worth and goodwill toward others through their experiences at Christian universities (Mwale, 2020:122). Therefore, although the subject of how education provided in Christian universities impacted the engagement of students and scholars in the workplace was beyond the scope of the study, it could be assumed that it (holistic education) positively contributed to producing graduates who were adapted to the workplace. As concluded by Theron, through CHE, students' faith and education could be integrated, thereby ensuring students are competent in their professions and committed to applying their competency to deal with the spiritual and material conditions of their communities.

Secondly, an investment in research enabled the institutions to contribute to societal concerns and fulfil their role of contributing to transforming societies. This was backed by their policies and philosophies on education. For example, inspired by the encyclical on Catholic Universities, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (1990), which gives an overview of the role of a Catholic university (such as promoting research that searches for an integration of knowledge, dialogue between faith and reason, an ethical concern, and a theological perspective) and the 1965 Declaration on Christian Education. which spells out Catholic principles on education, the Catholic University embraced research in order to contribute to the social and economic

development of the country. Furthermore, the Protestant philosophy on education (educating the head, hands and mind) also inspired the Protestant University activities and approach to research and education.

The churches also fostered the ownership model of the university that facilitated members' contributions to the institutions in different ways. For example, both churches fostered an understanding that the members of these churches owned the university; hence they needed to support it. While calling for support from members had worked out well thus far, the strides made for the universities to look beyond the contributions from the church were encouraged, as studies have shown that church earnings are lower in times of economic instability (Mawudor, 2016). As such, the Christian universities' efforts to research and devise their own strategies for selling programmes and other items contributed to a stable inflow of funds.

A closer reflection on the experiences of the Christian universities in their quest to be self-sustaining pointed to a broader perspective on the self-understanding (of the concept) of these institutions. Through their activities, the concept of self-sustaining was not just about finding support within the churches and universities, but was extended to the broader environment in which these institutions operated. This confirmed the phenomenological stance that people's actions and experiences are not only a mirror of themselves, but also the structures and context in which they are. Therefore, it can be stated that the understanding and application of the concept of self-sustaining institutions for these churches and their universities were grounded in creating linkages, friendships and partnerships within and outside their circles to promote their university education.

This broad understanding of the concept of self-sustaining institutions found expression in using the institutional structures to facilitate the sustenance of the mission of the church in higher education within and outside the churches and universities. For example, within the church, the structures of the church served as an organisation that not only created networks for contributing to university education, but also an anchor that facilitated people's sharing of the knowledge of their doctrines and participation in ritual activities during worship. As such, the collections from the church were a direct product of the congregants' contributions to higher education. This affirms the idea that the local congregation was to be responsible for the growth of the local mission. In like manner, by receiving donations, the church and universities used their organisation and trust gained over time to receive these gifts. This was because these churches had long been involved in the provision of education (at lower levels) and other social services (Hinfelaar, 2009; Mwale, 2013), and as such, they had won the confidence and trust of the people. In turn, different categories of people gave back to these institutions to enable them to sustain their provision of university education.

The engagement in research and selling of different products found an explanation in their teachings on university education, which drove these activities. For example, the churches' policies on education addressed holistic education and emphasised the place of research in the academy (Lemmons, 2008). While teaching students to be enterprising, the sale of different items was centred on holistic education and indirectly contributed to supporting the provision of university education. The use of the student work programme was not just a programme that helped students meet their financial needs, but was grounded in offering holistic education. "These opportunities to engage in productive and useful labour help develop character traits of industry, dependability and initiative [and] in the process, students may also acquire valuable vocational skills" (Vice Chancellor's Graduation Speech, 9 September, 2018). In fact, the mention of auxiliary enterprises such as the farm, garden, cafeteria, bakery, auto mechanics, block yard and others reminds the mission history scholar of how the mission stations in the 19th century were oases of civilisation by having stores, farms, schools, clinics and other entities (Henkel, 1989).

While pointing to the church support network, the call for support from different stakeholders also revealed that the church's provision of university education is not immune to financing challenges affecting the sector (Nkanza, 2019). For example, Nkanza (2019) observes that Zambian higher education continued to experience inadequate funding, which affected the capacity to respond effectively to the higher education sector's demand, quality, research, and human and physical expansion. Scholars like Teferra and Altbach (2003) and Teferra (2013) report similar financial challenges for higher education in Africa. This partly explains the plea of the church to the state to extend the student loan facility to Christian higher education.

The foregoing suggests that the most significant resource at the disposal of churches and their universities for sustainability was the church teachings, structures and experiences. As such, in order to be self-sustaining, the Christian universities needed to creatively tap into their network 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 – the entrepreneurial ventures needed to continually involve the students as part of holistic Christian university education. Additionally, the Christian universities needed to blend their mission of university education in all their self-sustaining ventures to minimise 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. At the same time, the churches needed to be cautious

because the funding source had a stake in the nature and mission of an institution. As observed by Hauerwas (2007), a university is Christian if it receives financial and moral support from the church because whoever pays the bill determines an institution's character, for better or worse. However, this understanding of a Christian university may also have implications for the lack of funding and the decline in funding, hence the need for a thoughtful financing model.

8. Conclusion

The article reflected on the experiences of the Catholic and Protestant churches in their quest to support their provision of university education. It was established that the churches tapped into their structures, organisations and experiences in all their initiatives to support their university education. These initiatives ultimately mirrored the quest of the churches 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. They 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. It is on the basis of these reflections that the article has argued that though not wholly self-supporting, the selected churches were making strides to be self-supporting, not only by looking within themselves, but even through networks and partnerships with other well-wishers. Most importantly, although most of these initiatives were grounded in being self-sustaining, they demonstrated the meaning attached to the essence of Christian university education in contemporary Zambia, as students were part of these initiatives, thereby directly and indirectly contributing to the creation of a self-sustaining Christian university community. As such, the initiatives of the churches demonstrated a broader understanding of self-sustenance as a concept as it was not centred on the churches and universities themselves, but open to other forms of networks and partnerships with different stakeholders.

References

- Altbach, P.G. (2005). The private higher education revolution: An introduction. In P.G. Altbach & D.C. Levy (eds.). *Private Higher Education: A Global Revolution* (pp 1–12). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Benne, R. (2001). *Quality with soul: How six premier colleges and universities keep faith with their religious traditions*. Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing.
- Carmody B.P. (2007). Catholic Church and state relations in Zambian education: A contemporary analysis. In G. Grace & O'Keefe (eds.). *International Handbook of Catholic*

- Education. International Handbooks of Religion and Education*, 2 (pp. 543–562). Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-5776-2_28
- Carmody, B.P. (2011). Towards a contemporary Catholic philosophy of education. *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 3(2), 106–119.
- Carpenter, J. (2008). New evangelical universities: Cogs in a world system or players in a new game? In O. Kalu & A. Low (eds.). *Interpreting Contemporary Christianity: Global Processes and Local Identities* (pp. 151–186). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Carpenter, J. (2017). The rise of private universities in Africa is being dominated by Christian schools. *Quartz*, 10th July.
- Carpenter, J. (2017). Christian universities grow in Africa. *International Higher Education*, 88, 25–26.
- Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. London: Sage Publications.
- Culbertson, H. (2017). Three selfs: Necessary qualities for local churches. *Engage: A global mission magazine of the Church of the Nazarene*, March 14.
- Diedericks, M., & Diedericks, M.C. (2019). The idea of a for-profit private Christian university in South Africa. *Koers*, 84(1), 1–14.
- Ecclesiae E Corde. (1990). *Apostolic Constitution of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on Catholic Universities*. Vatican.
- Enegho, E.E. (2017). 'Is our well poisoned? A historical/economic analysis of Christian higher education in Nigeria. *Missionalia*, 45(3), 236–249.
- Finley, B. (1999). Send dollars and sense: Why giving is often better than going. *Christianity Today*, 43(11), 73–75.
- Glanzer, P.L. 2008. Searching for the soul of English universities: An exploration and analysis of Christian higher education in England. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 56(2), 163–183.
- Glanzer, P.L., Carpenter, J.A. & Lantinga, N. (2011). Looking for God in higher education: Examining trends in global Christian higher education. *Higher Education* 61(2), 721–755.
- Guthrie, J.W. & Schuermann, P.J. (2012). *Education finance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hauerwas, S. (2007). *The state of the university: Academic knowledges and the knowledge of God*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Henkel, R. (1989). *Christian missions in Africa*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimar Verlag.
- Higher Education Authority. (2017). *Registered higher education institutions*. Gazette Notice No. 232 and 561. Lusaka: HEA.
- Hinfelaar, M. (2009). Legitimizing powers: The political role of the Roman Catholic Church, 1972-1991. In J.M. Gewald, M. Hinfelaar & G. Macola (eds.). *One Zambia, Many Histories – Towards a history of post-colonial Zambia*. Lusaka: Lembani Trust.
- Kelly, M.J. (2006). *The origins and development of education in Zambia*. Lusaka: Book-world Publishers.
- Lemmons, E.A. (2008). What's so Catholic about the Catholic College: How Catholic universities and colleges can maintain a healthy sense of their Catholic identity. *The Catholic spirit. The Newspaper of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis*.

- Levy, D. (2009). Growth and typology. In S. Bjarnason, K.M. Cheng, J. Fielden, M.J. Le-maire, D. Levy & N.V. Varghese (eds.). *A New Dynamic: Private Higher Education* (pp. 1–22). France: United Nations Educational.
- Masaiti, G. & Mwale, N. (2017). The University of Zambia: Contextualization and contribution to flagship status in Zambia'. In *Flagship Universities in Africa* (pp. 467–505). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Mawudor, B.G. (2016). *Financial sustainability of church related organizations: An empirical study on Kenya*. Globethics. net.
- Merriam, S.B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Mills, M. (2017). UK doctoral student organizes textbook drive. *University of Kentucky Campus News*, 26 July.
- Ministry of Education. (1996). *Educating our future: National policy on education*. Lu-saka: ZEPH.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks.
- Mukuka, M. (2017). Government applauds the Catholic Church for partnership in country's development. *AMECEA News*, 21 July.
- Mwale, N. (2013). Religion and development in Zambia: The role of the Roman Catholic Church in the political development of Zambia: 1890-1964. *Alternation Journal*, (11), 110–133.
- Mwale, N. (2020). Ethics and morality in a religious educational community: The self understanding of Catholic University Education in Zambia. *Journal for Islamic Studies*, 38(1), 107–131.
- Mwale, N. and Chita, J. (2016). Religion and the media: The portrayal of prophecy in the Zambian media. In H. Kroesbergen (ed.) *Prophecy today: Reflections from a South-ern African context*. Wellington: Christian Literature Fund, pp.41-63.
- Namaiko, C. (2013). Rusangu varsity explains new fees. *Times of Zambia*, 27 December.
- Nkanza, P.K. (2019). *Towards a sustainable Africa with higher education financing: An inspiration from Millennium SDGs and AU Agenda 2063*. Paper presentation at the 2nd Association of African Higher Education Financing Agencies Conference, Neel-kanth Sarovar Premiere, 30 to 02 October.
- Pope P. VI. (1965). *Declaration on Christian education: Gravissimum Educationis*. St. Paul Editions.
- Schroeder, J. (2002). Robert Benne: Quality with soul: How six premier colleges and univer-sities keep faith with their religious traditions. *Intersections*, 13(9), 22–23.
- Scott, J. (1990). *A matter of record: Documentary sources in social research*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Shenk, W. (2006). *Henry Venn-Missionary Statesman*. Oregon: Wipf and Stock Pub-lishers.
- Simuchimba, M. (2005). *Religion and education in Zambia 1890–2000 and beyond*. PhD thesis, University of South Africa.
- Sinjela, D. (2005). Catholic University Born. *National Mirror*, 15 March-ZCCB Archives.

- Teferra, D. (2013). Funding higher education in Africa: State, trends and perspectives. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/Revue De L'enseignement Supérieur En Afrique*, 11(1–2), 19–51.
- Teferra, D. & Altbach, P.G. (2003). Trends and perspectives in African higher education. In D. Teferra & P.G. Altbach (eds.). *African Higher Education: An International Reference Handbook* (pp. 3–14). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Thaver, B. (2008). The private higher education sector in Africa: Current trends and themes in six country studies. *JHEA/RESA*, 6(1), 127–142.
- Van der Walt, B.J. (2002). The challenge of Christian higher education on the African continent in the twenty-first century. *Christian Higher Education*, 1(2-3), 195–227.
- Van der Walt, B.J. (2012). *The eye is the lamp of the body: Worldviews and their impact*. The Institute for Contemporary Christianity in Africa, Potchefstroom.
- Venn, H. (1846). *The present position and future prospects of the church missionary Society*. London: CMS.
- Venter, R. (2016). Theology and the (post-) apartheid university: Mapping discourses, interrogating transformation. *Transformation in Higher Education*, 1(1), 6. <https://doi.org/10.4102/the.v1i1.5>
- Vice Chancellor's Graduation Speech. (2018). *7th graduation ceremony, Zambia Catholic University*. Kalulushi, 15th September.
- Vice Chancellor's Report. (2017). *Rusangu University*. Monze.
- Vice Chancellor's Speech. (2018). *Rusangu University*. Monze. 9th September.
- Zakai, A. (2007). The rise of modern science and the decline of theology as the “queen of sciences” in the early modern era. *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, 9(2), 125–151.
- Zambia Catholic University. 2018. *Graduation booklet*. ZCU: Kalulushi.
- Zambia National Broadcasting Co-operation. 2018. *News*, 12 September.
- Zwana, S. 2008. Struggles and strides: Religion and politics in the evolution of church related universities in Zimbabwe: The case of Africa University. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, xxxiv(1), 279–304.