Faith in Higher Education
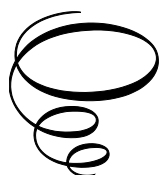
Faith in Higher Education:

A Study of Church-founded Universities in Britain and Africa

By

Hirpo Kumbi

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CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

This book argues that church-founded institutions plays a role in widening participation in higher education, particularly among marginalised areas of society. The research at the core of the book examines three church-founded universities, quantifying their impact in intellectual and economic terms. Other positive attributes to church-founded institutions are also noted, which only become fully visible when examined in detail. The higher education sector is increasingly business-like, concerned with profit and marketability over the concept of human flourishing; this book establishes that when churches are stakeholders from an institution's inception, it results in higher levels of individual attainment and an increased number of graduates from under-represented groups. The book further argues that an emphasis on nurturing people over making profit is particularly important for developing countries, where higher education provision is the most lacking due to limited governmental financial resources and students often struggle to afford the fees demanded by privately owned institutions. The findings from these three case study universities are used to derive a set of recommendations for 'good practice' to be used by policy makers and church leaders developing higher education institutions in the future who are concerned with widening participation and improving the quality of this provision.

The question then becomes how to facilitate a partnership between church and state without either party feeling short-changed. Historically, higher education in developing countries has frequently been funded by foreign agencies or governments, and such external

funders have included Christian churches.[1] The effectiveness of non-indigenously funded and directed higher education has arguably been limited, not least because of vested interests on the part of the funders and a lack of contextual sensitivities. [2] This presents a challenge as to how potential pitfalls occasioned by an ignorance of contextual issues can be avoided in the future, whilst enabling learning from good practice elsewhere. This book responds to this dilemma and in particular asks whether churches have a role to play.

Post-colonial critiques of Western Imperialistic ideology have copiously demonstrated the need for authentic and appropriate indigenized methods of education suited to the specific contexts of developing countries. The university programmes currently being delivered in many areas lack indigenization of this kind, and need to be enhanced by the application of cultural and anthropological theory to help inform realizable relevant styles of pedagogy suited to their nation's context. The goal of the book is thus, to establish a set of good practices in higher education, related to church-founded universities, which could be applied in the context of future establishments.

The book begins, in chapter two, with an overview and discussion of church-founded higher education, in general terms and with reference to the specific locations of the three case studies which follow. This chapter also outlines the methods used to arrive at the figures and measurements of the economic and intellectual impact of these institutions. Chapters three to five discuss the case studies in detail, in each instance examining the history of their establishment, their modern structure and the impact they have had on their communities. Chapter six provides a synthesis of these findings, followed by a conclusion in chapter seven, including of a set of recommendations for future institutions of this type.

As a foundation for what follows, it is vital at the outset to clarify the particular definitions of the words 'Christian' and 'university' that this book describes. This clarification entails a clear distinction between two different types of institution that otherwise risk becoming confused. In this book, the expression 'Christian-based university' is used to indicate a higher education institution in which the ethos and practices of the Christian faith are incorporated into the administrative and pedagogical structure. This takes into consideration that processes in a Christian-based institution may be informed by doctrinal issues, and means that doctrine might be used in rejecting, approving or establishing acceptable conditions in recruitment, as well as course content. For instance, Birmingham Christian College, UK describes itself as "a training college for Christian Ministry and Mission where men and women are enabled to become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ."[3]

Conversely, the expression 'church-founded' university is used for a higher education institution which has been established by a church, or churches, but does not require its students or syllabus to adhere to the teachings of the Christian faith. Church-founded universities, despite their historical or religious affiliation, do not place any doctrinal requirement on students and staff. They are, therefore, identical in their day-to-day operational procedures as secular institutions in terms of the goals they seek to fulfil related to the secular state. In contrast to the above mission statement, Liverpool Hope, a church-founded university, aims to provide a "distinctive philosophy … to 'educate in the round' – mind, body and spirit – in the quest for Truth, Beauty and Goodness."[4] Liverpool Hope, and other church-founded universities, may be inspired by Christian values, but they have developed schools and courses unrelated to the Christian faith. The Business School at Liverpool Hope sees its mission as being about developing professional business and

enterprise programmes.[5] The university is not focused on mission, evangelism or directly faith-related matters, which Christian-based universities often emphasise. In church-founded universities, however, appointees to the highest levels of office are normally from the church, as in the case of the Vice Chancellor at Liverpool Hope.[6] In this way, Christian values can influence appointments to key departmental roles. This indicates a complexity in the distinction between the nature and operation of a Christian-based university and a church-founded university.

Thus, there are two very different metanarratives at play in the two models. In Christian-based universities, every aspect of student life, course content and ethos is likely to be closely-defined by Gospel principles and imperatives. In the church-founded institution on the other hand, the metanarrative is necessarily informed by and acknowledges the impact of the close working relationship between the institution and the state educational apparatus. Questions, for example, of sexual diversity or freedom of expression which may be closed in the Christian-based institution need to be addressed head on in the Church-founded one; access to state funding carries the expectation that requirements should be followed – for example, those governing equal employment opportunities. For the Church-founded institution, therefore, a constant reference to external legislation results in an essential pragmatism, so that for the Church-founded University, a practical working narrative might well be, 'in the world, but not of it.'

The universities whose case-studies form the main chapters of this book, namely Liverpool Hope in the UK, St Paul's in Kenya and Bowen University in Nigeria, were chosen due to their status as church-founded universities. Both St. Paul's and Bowen are located in developing countries, while the example of Liverpool Hope is an important point of comparison, considering the nature of a church-founded institution in a developed, Western country. The impetus

behind their initial foundation was derived from a single church, in the case of Bowen, or a collaboration as in the cases of both Liverpool Hope and St Paul's, and all of their educational programmes are fundamentally based on secular principles. As such, all three can be classified as church-founded institutions, though other aspects of their operation may be more or less Christian-based but informed by a secular ethos.

This book is not concerned with the promotion of the Christian faith. Instead, it investigates how church-founded institutions have benefitted their societies by introducing and establishing higher education provision where it was previously lacking. In each case, the original motivations behind the founding of these universities and the running of the present-day institutions is discussed. Following this, the impact these institutions have had over the course of their existence is considered in economic and intellectual terms. To reiterate, the intention is not to investigate or assess the missional achievements or doctrinal beliefs of these universities, but to examine them in practical terms, through their establishment, organisation and economic and intellectual impact. Ultimately, this leads to a set of generalised recommendations incorporating the 'good practice' mentioned throughout the book. The final chapter provides a list of recommendations for policy makers and church leaders developing higher education institutions in the future who are concerned with widening participation and improving the quality of this provision.

Notes

[1] Leak Halima, and Reid, Chera, "'Maling Something of Themselves': Black Self-determination, the Church and Higher Education Philanthropy", *International Journal of Educational Advancement* 10, no. 3 (2010): 235-44.

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[2] Joel Samoff, and Carrol, Bidemi, "The Promise of Partnership and Continuities of Dependence: External Support to Higher Education in Africa", *African Studies Review* 47, no. 1 (2044): 67-199.

[3] "Vision and Mission," accessed 04/08/2020, 2020, https://www.bccoll.uk/local/pages/vision-and-missions-partners.

[4] "About Us," accessed 04/08/2020, 2020, https://www.hope.ac.uk/aboutus/.

[5] "About Us," accessed 30/04/2022, https://www.hope.ac.uk/aboutus/.

[6] Memorandum and Articles of Association and Articles of Government of Liverpool Hope University," accessed 30/04/2022.

CHAPTER TWO:
NOTIONS OF CHURCH-FOUNDED HIGHER EDUCATION

The distinction between Christian-based universities, founded by churches and run in adherence to faith or scripture, and church-founded universities, founded by churches but operating without religious bias, was outlined in the introduction. This book is concerned with church-founded higher education, but some consideration of the earlier, religiously-focussed form is necessary for historical context. This chapter will therefore discuss the establishment of Christian higher education in Europe and Africa in general terms, before considering the specific contextual backgrounds of higher education in Nigeria, Kenya and the UK in order to provide a foundation for the case studies which follow.

This book is also concerned with issues of 'good practice' in higher education institutions. The terms 'organisation' and 'impact' are often used by scholars to analyse the operations of this sector, and as such this chapter will also consider these categories of analysis. Firstly, however, higher education in general will be briefly discussed, to properly characterise the subject at hand.

Defining Universities

John Henry Newman cites Dr Johnson's definition of the university as, 'a school where all arts and faculties are taught.'[1] In other words, 'universality' of knowledge, in the 'highest schools of intellect', is the hallmark of a university.[2] In Newman's account, a university is a

place where a person goes to study and learn at the highest level. Similarly, D.W. Bebbington observes that 'the university is part of its environment; political, economic, social and cultural, and so is unavoidably affected by its context.'[3] He explains the distinction between earlier universities which focused on training and later, post-enlightenment institutions which placed more emphasis on research. The latter are connected more to the abstract, theoretical work of the neo-humanist Germans, while the former push for a closer connection between institutional learning and pastoral fieldwork.[4]

To return to the work of John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (1899) is seminal in terms of a Christian understanding of the ideal function of universities as educational institutions and is referenced in many works written from this perspective. Newman raises issues of the place of moral and religious values in higher education, issues that are still debated by the modern liberal establishment and which resonate with the subject matter of this book. *The Idea of a University* is a helpful text in thinking through the transformational role church-founded universities play for a nation. For instance, Astley notes that Newman employs the notion of *paideia* – 'a system of broad cultural education – as a means to induct students into the prevailing norms of society providing young gentleman [sic] with the tools to conduct business in contemporary society.'[5] This concept of the link between the university and outside society will need to be kept in mind during the case study chapters to follow.

Following from Newman, John Sullivan connects the concept of a Christian university to three theological emphases: nurture, service and prophecy.[6] Of these, the most relevant for the church-founded focus of this book is service, which emphasises academic freedom and breadth of study, in which a Christian university should welcome dissenting, non-Christian voices in the spirit of wider community

engagement and higher quality learning, both among its student population and among members of the faculty.[7] In Sullivan's view, both faith-based and secular viewpoints require challenge, and the university can be a positive and useful location for these conversations to occur.

A university appears to be a multi-natured organism. It is alive at one level with a focus on a single need, purpose and locality: it is national, responding to a national identity and agenda and appealing to a nation-wide sense of ownership. On the other hand, the university appeals to a sense of internationalism and global accountability, whether situated in a country allowing it to thrive, or online. The modern university, on both of these levels, is closely connected to the concept of social impact—a concept which is itself a reflection of modernisation as such.[8] Khondker and Schuerkens explore social transformation, considering Marxist concerns with social evolution and historical change as well as the ideas of Max Weber and cultural transformation. To be clear, the idea of social impact relates to specific structures and elements, the inherent conditions and factors affecting situational shifts in society.[9]

The university must also meet an individual need and individual values. Joy argues that individual transformation happens when the norms of relationship of an individual to another shift.[10] In higher education, however, this recognition of individual transformation is manifested in the increasingly competitive nature of providers, who have adopted a business management model whereby higher education is presented as a personal investment that delivers individual economic security. The idea of a university consequently identifies with a transformation of personal and individual values, fostering the concept of 'individual good' suggested by Marginson.[11] A worrying tendency in Western societies is to regard Universities

through a primarily utilitarian lens: in other words, to equip students to maximise their potential contribution to the economy. When higher education institutions' degrees are only presented as a means of higher income for graduates, this restricts the meaning of a university. The purpose of a university is not merely to create tangible benefits, in fiscal terms, but also intangible ones - relating, for example, to human flourishing and an enhanced capacity to engage with the perspectives of others. Marginson asks, 'what greater good would be lost if universities closed?" and proceeds to talk about the 'common good of higher education' in benefitting society.'[12] I will discuss the concept of impact, as connected to concepts of the 'good' and especially the notion of the 'common good' further in later sections of this chapter.

In reference to developing countries, Yizengaw makes the general statement that 'higher education provides the human resources required for leadership, management, business and professional positions that are important for economic and social development.'[13] The specific areas of development mentioned here suggest social and economic growth, the expression here is immediately industry-inclined, human resources with the skills set to spearhead national development. Yizengaw suggests strongly that higher education, and especially its research capacity, play a critical role in 'developing democratic cultures and improving national productivity.'[14]

higher education 'is a pathway to gainful employment, empowers people to exercise their agency for personal and social transformation, and is instrumental in helping members of disadvantaged groups break the cycle of marginalization and poverty.'[15] If this is an accepted role of higher education, then the state as principal stakeholder needs to reconsider how to maximise the involvement of other stakeholders.

These descriptions go some way to providing a positive definition of higher education. Firstly, a higher education institution should provide education at the highest level and represent the culmination of an individual's studies. Furthermore, these studies should be connected to both the wider world and the student's personal needs – a program or institution which provides for only one of these will inevitably be limited in its outlook. Following from this duality, a university will produce benefits both tangible, in terms of financial benefit, and intangible, in terms of intellectual growth and social consciousness; again, centres for higher education should be mindful to balance these two areas. Finally, the modern university must be ready to navigate difficult areas regarding power relations and outside influence, in order to both maintain independence and ensure fairness.

Christian-based Universities in the UK

David Bebbington's 2011 essay regarding Christian higher education in Europe traces the development of higher education in a sequential manner, beginning with the rise of scholasticism in the twelfth century to the modern day. The final, most salient period of Bebbington's schema is the modern age, characterised by postmodernism, defined as 'a revolt against the *modernity* associated with the Enlightenment.'[16] Since the end of World War Two, European institutions have seen a collapse of epistemological certainty, and a growing attitude of scepticism towards the concept of knowledge as such. French structuralists and German logicians, such as Pascal Engel,[17] have brought into question the traditional justifications for scientific certainty and metaphysical claims, placing the existence of universities themselves under scrutiny. The academic focus for many modern universities is therefore subjective, and subject to a number of caveats: the possibility of developing

religious consciousness within such a framework, being based on the immutability of God and His teachings, is therefore slim. Bebbington explains, 'the vacuum in agreed views of the purpose of universities has been filled by demands for relevance to particular concerns.'[18]

Similarly, Adrian shows that, from the late nineteenth-century onwards, there was a shift in interest in higher education and the nature of universities and the multiversity became dominant. The links with founding churches and the Christian tradition, for most universities, were cut.[19] There is a clear explanation here that as political influence increased, religious influence decreased. Political authority, according to Adrian, also marked the rise of secular universities,[20] and theology was no longer the most sought-after qualification for a large number of students. Tight sums it up when he explains that over the years, religion, 'which was an important subject in the past (after all religion and higher education were virtually coexistent until the early nineteenth century) fell out of interest during the 1960s.'[21]

Academics such as Philip Eaton have suggested that, in the face of these challenges, religious bodies simply re-centre the Biblical narrative, deploying a literal application of scripture as the ultimate point of reference across the curriculum. William Buhrman criticises this approach as a repetition of old tactics, suggesting moreover that few modern students would be satisfied by this approach.[22] In a less theoretical critique of church universities in the modern era, Keith Sharpe notes that many universities in the UK include policies related to managerial appointments which require a certain faith background for applicants, and questions the acceptability of such practices in relation to UK equality legislation.[23] Furthermore, Sharpe argues, on similar grounds to the postmodernists noted by Tight and Bebbington, that the metanarratives of religion have no place in a modern university context, and constitute 'partisan doctrinal assertions; they are not starting points for academic research and

investigation in a contemporary university context.'[24] However, as a counter argument of Sharpe's view, we may note the example of the Cathedrals Group, a collection of UK universities which maintain a close connection with the church in the modern day. The distinctive marks of this group of universities are four-fold, according to David F. Ford, who delivered the Third Lord Dearing Memorial Lecture in 2011.[25] Firstly, the universities have Christian roots or, as Ford puts it, "church foundations;"[26] they were originally set up by either an individual Christian denomination – such as Catholic, in the case of Newman University – or a more ecumenical group, such as in the case of Liverpool Hope. Secondly, these universities share a vocational vision: their pedagogical focus is on training students for active service in the community, alongside the pursuit of knowledge. Third, Cathedral Group universities encourage and foster a "community of learning" informed by Christian values – they are collaborative and support a multiplicity of viewpoints. Finally, all of the institutions in the group maintain close links with churches in the surrounding areas for reasons of worship and prayer, and church schools for the recruitment of students and further educational collaboration.[27]

What makes the Cathedral Group universities distinctive is an "academically mediated Christianity," which allows both secular and religious scholars to engage with multiple viewpoints and places an emphasis on interdepartmental learning.[28] One may ask how this is possible, while still maintaining a distinctive Christian ethos connected to the third distinctive, a community of learning. Christianity has historically been, and remains, concerned with concepts of 'service' and 'mission,' both of which involve close engagement with the community and a set of actions which aim to educate and improve the lives of the people.[29] For this to be effective requires careful training and nurturing of a student's practical

abilities, be this in teaching, public service or other areas. Importantly, this need not be strictly religious in character – the skills which Christianity traditionally fosters for missional purposes are easily translatable into secular modes, and as such the universities of the Cathedrals Group place heavy emphasis on placements and volunteering as part of their educational process, an emphasis which is often lacking in other modern universities, which are often more concerned with business interests or areas of personal financial reward.[30]

Also, in support of religiously connected universities, John Sullivan argues that the church and secular higher education are in fact complimentary and may be seen to rely on each other to further their aims. A connection with the academy allows churches to remain in contact with current thought and, more practically, with the younger generation, which in recent years has become a serious issue for many congregations.[31] Meanwhile, the academy benefits from church connections via a broadening of debate, and an increase in the intellectual honesty which is prized by institutions of higher learning. If postmodernism is seen as the ruling meta-narrative of modern universities, Sullivan suggests, then it should have a challenger in order to remain honest and rigorous in thought.[32] In Sullivan's view, what is of vital importance is that the secular and the religious do not override each other but work together towards a common goal.

Christian-based Universities in Africa

The previous section discussed Christian-based universities in the context of the West, but two of this book's case studies are situated in the African continent. Part of this book's aim is to produce a set of good practices for future higher education establishments, many of which will be in developing countries, and as such a picture of Christian-based institutions in countries which fit this designation is pertinent to what follows. John B. Laba's 'Christian higher education

in Africa: Past, Present and Future' identifies a number of shifting trends on the subject over the past one hundred years, and also helpfully points out what he considers to be a number of problems and prospective solutions for new universities across the continent.

Laba argues that anti-intellectualism is losing its standing in Africa due to a growing number of sophisticated communities across the continent; as people are becoming more educated they are rejecting a religious education and feel it can no longer provide for their academic needs.[33] It is not enough, therefore, to merely gain the confidence of students and teachers when establishing new universities, but the church itself must also be persuaded of their value. However, Petria Theron suggests that these concerns could be reduced by viewing Christian universities as the marrying-point between secular and religious values, due to their capacity to encourage community engagement and social responsibility, qualities which are prized by secular governments and religious bodies alike.[34] Furthermore, she argues that Christian institutions are in fact better placed than secular universities, as their founders will presumably be connected with the community already, while government or private interests may not be.[35]

If African churches are suspicious of secular influences, these secular bodies can be seen as equally wary of the power of the church. Laba notes that many African governments have viewed missionary schools as 'tools for Western imperialism,'[36] an attitude which is understandable given their history. The issue of wary governments is greater than one of mere convenience: there is a practical concern involved too, as tightening regulations in many post-revolution states have made the initial establishment of church-based universities much more difficult than at any previous point in history.

A problem shared by both church-based and secular institutions in Africa is financial; across the continent, 'these institutions are operating in a context of poverty.'[37] This means that not only is there a smaller amount of capital for investment initially, but that as universities operate, they often do so at a loss, which discourages investment, forming a vicious circle. Morné Diedericks connects these financial issues with the rise of 'for-profit' universities, which come with both advantages and downsides.[38] Due to their financial need to recruit high student numbers, these types of institutions have been criticised for a lack of integrity. Morné Diedericks further suggests that grades have been inflated and that the motivation of profit for many universities has led to questioning of their ability to provide quality education. However, Diedericks also suggests that for-profit universities solve a number of the financial problems which cause a lack of higher education provision, and further argues that the 'profit' in question can be restated in spiritual or intellectual terms, relating more to managerial style than foundational motive.[39] To an extent, this process of privatisation has already occurred, however, as Trisha Posey notes, in several states there is already a distinction between state-funded universities, which are usually cheaper for students to attend, and a string of second choice private institutions, including those run by churches, which charge higher fees and are generally resented by students as a result.[40] She suggests that a solution to this problem may include forging closer links with universities outside Africa for financial support, but as noted earlier this may not be an easy sell to governments concerned about Western imperialism. This may also be a negative contributing factor to 'brain drain', as discussed below. It is clear that financial issues are a complex problem for church-founded universities in Africa: as summarised by Diedericks, they suffer from the paradoxical situation of operating in a world of higher education which is increasingly profit-driven, while attempting to adhere to biblical principles which argue against these motives.[41]

The final major problem for new universities, again shared by secular and church-based institutions alike, is 'brain drain': the mass exodus of many students from Africa after the completion of their studies, and the resultant knock-on effects this has on the educational system as a whole, are serious factors that impact quality teaching provision. Laba notes that, 'According to World Bank figures, 23,000 academics emigrate from Africa annually; more than 30 percent of Africa's skilled professionals live abroad; about 70,000 Africans trained in Europe remain.'[42] Furthermore, this lack of home-grown talent ultimately exacerbates all of the other problems noted above. With many teachers being graduates from secular Western institutions, church leaders who might otherwise fund new projects have their suspicions of corrupting influences supposedly justified; the lack of attention many of these foreign lecturers pay to local history or current issues in their country of choice then increases common governmental attitudes regarding the inefficiency of the university system. A lack of investment further down the line means that ultimately funds are being taken out of the system through wages and time investments in these outsiders, instead of remaining within the country itself. Finally, a lack of local staff can foster the belief among prospective students that there is no future for them through academic study. This then has a further knock-on effect of reducing representative staff numbers in subsequent years, and further discouraging students: another vicious cycle. The importance of addressing this 'brain drain' and its effects in any new venture is obvious and must be the first priority. The case studies to follow will ask how these specific universities are dealing with this problem, or how they hope to address it in the future.

Christian-based Universities in Nigeria

Western-style higher education has a longer history in Nigeria than in most African nations due to the influence of British colonial occupation and heavy government investment following independence. The sector is viewed as 'critical for developing Nigeria's human capital and forging national unity.'[43] However, since the 1960s there has been a slow degrading of the country's higher education provisions in line with many other parts of the continent. As Takyi-Amoako notes, 'in the decades following independence, higher education became a shadow of the past lively and productive academic community.'[44]

There are several issues which are specific to Nigeria's context, however. Firstly, a culture of strikes has been allowed to gain a strong foothold among the academic community, to the extent that lectures and seminars are often disrupted for several weeks, if not more, in any given year. Romina Ifeoma Asiyai, in a challenging analysis of modern higher education in the country, characterises the wide-spread nature of this problem: 'In most cases a semester's course work is sandwiched into [the remaining] few weeks during which lectures are rushed to accommodate the time lost to strike.'[45] This also has a severe knock-on effect for the standards of education in general, leading to dissatisfaction from the student community, a reduction in the reputation of higher education among the general public and a reduced likelihood of funding from the government.[46]

Another issue which is especially prevalent in the modern Nigerian higher education system is 'cultism'; a propensity towards gang formation and violent behaviour among some groups of the student body.[47] In recent years there has been a growth of this kind of tribal behaviour, characterised by threats towards members of staff, assaults and even kidnappings. As with the frequent strikes, these events seriously disrupt academic life, and have the potential to erode

the confidence of both staff and the general public in universities as a whole.

A further aspect particular to the Nigerian context is the deep north/south divide in the country, with Amoako noting that, 'during the first decade of the first federal university in Ibadan, 865 southern and 74 northern students were educated.'[48] The southern areas of the country often being greater beneficiaries of government funding, which does not merely mean that there are more universities in the southern states than the northern, but that many more graduates originated in these wealthier areas, producing a growing class divide. This has had an effect on the establishment of higher education in the modern era and led to uneven development in many areas.

Criticisms specific to faith-based education in Nigeria have also been noted. For instance, Fatai Ayinde Aremu, Senior Lecturer of Political Science at the University of Ilorin, argues that faith-based universities have eroded social cohesion in the country, and work actively against good citizenship in their student populations.[49] At the core of Aremu's critique are four core aspects of citizenship: obedience; taxation; interfaith accommodation and volunteering. The first of these, obedience, corresponds to the duty of the citizen to obey state law, as a fulfilment of the social contract, and faith-based universities can be seen to reduce this capacity in their students. Two primary reasons are given for this: first, the possibility of resentment, as students feel aggrieved to paying high fees at the private, faith-based institution as compared to state university, which is subsidised by the government. Aremu finds that 45% of students at faith-based universities expressed a preference for study at a public institution, compared to 34% expressing satisfaction with their placement (19% were undecided).[50] Secondly, the 'hidden curriculum' of faith-based

universities, being reliant on religious ideals, may undercut state virtues such as obedience to the government.

A more positive account of the impact of faith-based universities in Nigeria, and Bowen University in particular, one of this books's case studies, comes from Samuel Peni Ango, who undertook a study in 2010 into gender bias at two Christian universities, Babcock and Bowen. Ango notes that gender disparity in education is very high in Africa generally, and that Nigeria placed 108th in the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report 2008/09*.[51] Furthermore, he notes that religious scripture often emphasises a supposed superiority of men over women, so it may be expected that universities with a religious ethos would be particularly bad offenders in areas of gender parity.[52] Ango's investigation into Babcock and Bowen aimed to establish whether this disparity existed in reality.

At Bowen, Ango's research found that, in the majority of cases, there was no gender bias in the student body, and it was only in questions related to the Christian leaning of the university where female students were more likely to be positive in their response compared with male ones.[53] Although the study was a narrow one, and Ango's conclusions were relatively weak as a result, they were nonetheless encouraging. Notably, Nigeria place d 139th on the most recent *Global Gender Gap Report*, undertaken in 2021, well within the lowest quartile of those studied.[54]

Also supportive of faith-based education in Nigeria, Ezekiel Ajani notes that over 50% of the country's population is Christian and suggests that the values of students from such backgrounds could be utilised positively in the country's education system.[55] Ajani asserts that Christian values can be most easily used by universities which themselves have a Christian focus. Focussing on two key issues in Nigeria, misuse of natural resources and government corruption, he

further suggests that the stewardship of the earth and honesty in rule encouraged by the Bible could be helpful foundations for any course of study which aims to improve these problems.[56] This is a similar argument to that made by Diedricks, writing about for-profit universities in Africa generally, and operates as a counter-argument to Aremu's points regarding faith-based education and the erosion of social responsibility noted earlier in this section.

Christian-based Universities in Kenya

There is a significant amount of existing research which considers how best to drive educational reform in Kenya generally. Nyangau's argument that higher education is used as an 'instrument of economic growth'[57] in the country relates to two key examples found in Bloom *et al*'s research on higher education and economic development in Africa[58] and Johnson *et al*'s research on the development of higher education policy in Africa and the entrepreneurship of policy makers.[59] The thesis proposed by Johnson et al proposes that African governments should collaborate with African entrepreneurs so that higher education policies are not formulated in isolation.

Nyangau's key thesis is that Kenyan educational policymakers need to reform the nation's existing tertiary education provision and structures in order to provide a better basis, in order to '…ensure that it creates the skilled domestic workforce necessary [to] drive economic transformation.'[60] He argues that in order to achieve this strategic goal, Kenyan national educational policymakers need to be informed by 'conceptual frameworks' which can be 'borrowed' from other more recent 'success stories of newly industrialized economies,' such as those located in Brazil, and Asia.[61] He stresses that, 'higher education continues to play a fundamental catalytic role in the process of social and economic transformation' in these

emerging new economies. However, there are cultural, social, political and geographical differences between Kenya and these newly industrialized countries, which means it is not straightforward to take what works for them and to apply their frameworks as a template in the East African context.[62] He also argues that there is much to be learned from higher education policy and curriculum borrowing/knowledge transfer that can facilitate the enhancement and development of a much better level of contextually relevant higher education provision to Kenyan nationals if it is done well.[63]

Likewise, Christian higher education in Kenya has an issue with relevance and economic justifiability. Mannoia notes that many Kenyan universities are stubbornly attached to traditional teaching methods due to the country's British colonial past, and the emphasis placed on these pedagogical processes at the point of these universities' founding. For Christian universities this issue is two-fold, as the organisations which established them were often also colonial in nature.[64] The Christian higher education Faculty Development Network (CHEFDN) was established to combat this, encouraging more contemporary practice, and as a result a diversifying process has begun in Kenya's church-based institutions, aiming to offer more relevant subjects taught in a more modern manner.[65]

Mannoia also identifies funding concerns related specifically to Christian universities in the country, which are further emphasised in a recent report by Malechwanzi *et al*. They note that in the past, most Kenyan universities were government-funded, whereas in the modern era a rapid growth in students has put unprecedented pressure on the country's resources. For instance, in 2008/9, the Kenyan government's higher education spending increased by 31%, while enrolment numbers rose by nearly double that amount.[66] Focused work on increasing employability and the relevance of degree programmes was found by this study to be effective at combatting