

Governing of the SDA higher education institutions in Indonesia: Problems and challenges

Stanley S. Nangoy

Abstract

There are three SDA higher education institutions in Indonesia. All of them were built based on the distinctive characteristics of SDA philosophy of education however as time changes Indonesian SDA higher education institutions gradually shifted to the structure of the national system. Curriculum originally designed to gain accreditation by the GC-AAA status, began changing to meet the minimum requirements of the Indonesian Department of Education. Today these institutions are facing problems and challenges in dealing with policies regulating tertiary education.

The institutions' principle of governance and policies are caught in between an idealized version of SDA denominationalism philosophy of Christian education and the government policies to regulate the country tertiary education.

This paper investigates the role of the tertiary institution board on important on three important issues: a. The roles, functions, responsibilities of the board and its members, b. Aligning church mission, visions, objectives to government regulations/restrictions and the market demand, c. Academic and finance pressures arising from the national accreditation requirements

Key words: *Adventist education, higher education, school governance*

Introduction

The first Indonesian Adventist higher education institution was established in West Java as the Netherlands East Indies Training School founded in 1929. In 1962 the institution was recognized as Indonesian Union College offered two years degree patterned after the American Adventist curriculum which was then upgraded to four years bachelor degree in 1963. The university status was granted in 1982, since then the institution is known as the Universitas Advent Indonesia (UNAI). Today UNAI offers undergraduate programs in Theology, Education, English, Business, Computer, Biology and Secretarial Science and graduate programs in Business and Theology (UNAI website 2015, Nainggolan 1985).

The second one was North Sumatra Training school established in 1949. In 1972 the institution became Perguruan Tinggi Surya Nusantara (PTASN) accredited by the Adventist Accrediting Agency (AAA) and fully recognized by the Indonesian Higher Education Department of Education (DIKTI) as a college offers bachelor programs in Theology and Accounting and Diploma programs in Accounting and Nursing (PTASN website 2015).

In the eastern part of Indonesia, Perguruan Tinggi Klabat was established in 1965, a college which was recognized by the Adventist Accrediting Agency and DIKTI in 1970. The university status was granted in 1982 and the institution became Universitas Klabat, offered bachelor programs in Theology, Education,

English, Business, Agriculture, and diploma program in Secretarial Science. Today Universitas Klabat also offers programs in Computer, Nursing and Master in Management (Unklab website 2015).

Follow the pattern of Adventist philosophy and missions, as the early higher education institutions all over the world the Indonesian institutions also have their goals and objectives to train church youth in character development and for service to God and to humanity. These philosophical objectives coincided with rising Indonesian educational expectations of college and university degrees. The early curriculum patterned after American Adventist education was later found inadequate for the long-term interest of the constituency. Therefore, Indonesian higher education institutions gradually shifted to the structure of the national system of education. Curriculum originally designed to gain accreditation as a senior college by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists status was then changed to meet the minimum requirements of the Indonesian Department of Education (Nainggolan, 1985).

And as the demand of tertiary education grows, so is the government regulation and policies. Problems and challenges in dealing with religious diversities and liberty as well as the policies regulating tertiary education become challenges for the Adventists both individually and institutionally. Although the Indonesian government recognizes the country religious

diversities, and professes to promote religious liberty, the policies of dealing with such issues are increasingly under pressure. The Adventist tertiary education institutions' principles of governance and policies are caught in between an idealized version of Adventist denominationalism philosophy of Christian education and the government policies to regulate the country tertiary education.

This paper investigates the role of the tertiary institution boards on important challenges faced by the Adventist higher education institutions on three important issues:

1. The roles, functions, responsibilities of the Adventist tertiary board and its members.
2. Aligning church mission, visions, objectives to government regulations and restrictions, and market demand.
3. Academic and finance pressures arising from the national accreditation requirements.

The Indonesian Adventist higher education board: roles, functions and responsibilities

The structure, roles, functions and responsibilities of Indonesian Adventist higher education boards mostly follow the pattern of US Adventist university board as one investigated by Lawrence T Geraty (2004) with few modifications, where the union president is the board chair, the secretary is the university president and the members are the union executive officers, the presidents of the conferences/missions with additional number of representatives from the territories. There is an unwritten consent that the chosen laymen representatives must be the one who contribute at least two of the following w's (and hopefully all three): *wisdom, work, and wealth*.

"The board main roles, functions and responsibilities include the followings:

- a) *Academic Programs and Personnel* - processes all new or modified academic programs, all personnel items, and anything that deals with academic and personnel;
- b) *Finance, Budget, and Audit* - deals with institution finances;
- c) *Student Life*- watches over the co-curricular aspects of the university's programs such as residence hall issues, the student association, clubs, student services, the spiritual life of the campus, etc.;
- d) *Marketing and Promotion*- looks for ways to attract and retain students (Geraty, p.40)".

Richard T Ingram in his book *Handbook of*

College and University Trusteeship sums up the following conclusion about the roles, functions and responsibilities of the board:

"The effectiveness of a board greatly depends on the structure of its organization and the conduct of its meetings. A productive board is usually one that has periodically taken that time to thoughtfully sort out its duties, critically review its organizational structure and rules of procedure, and update its bylaws, policy or operations documents. Committee structure depends upon the board's size, the frequency of meetings, and the workload that can be placed on individual members. Periodic critical review should also determine, among other things, if a few persons in fact are making most of the board's decisions, if responsible minority opinions have the opportunity for full board consideration, and if communication between the campus community and the public is open."(1980,12).

If such considerations characterize all our denominational boards, they will surely serve the church and their institutions well.

Geraty (2004) in his article on the roles and responsibilities of the boards of five US Adventists colleges/ universities concluded there are similarities/differences in their boards' structures/procedures/process, but despite of the differences in the process of governance, their boards are considered effectively contribute to the progress and development of their institutions.

How much different are the results with the progress and development of our Indonesian institutions? To answer this question, the following challenges/questions should be addressed to the boards regarding their roles, functions and responsibilities:

1. As board members do they fully understand the contents of Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Mission Statement, Organizational Charts, Faculty Senate Constitution, Committees, and Conflict of Interest Statement?

2. As board members do they fully understand the real problems and challenges faces by the institutions in these four areas *Academic Programs/Personnel, Finance/Budget/ Audit, Student Life, Marketing/Promotion*?

3. To the union executive members and the union/conference/mission presidents, members who make up the majority of the board the challenges are "as they are mostly occupied by the church problems/issues, can they really

concentrate on the university problems/challenges?

4. Most of the board meetings are attended by the executive committee board members and the full board members meet only once or mostly twice during midyear and year end meetings. How many are these non-executive members? How well informed are these members? How interested are they in problems/challenges/solutions faced by the university?

Aligning church mission, visions, objectives to government regulations/restrictions and the market demand

According to the General Conference working policy, the distinctive characteristics of Adventist education, derived from the Bible and the writings of EG White, point to the redemptive aims of true education- to restore human beings to the image of their Maker- mentally, socially, spiritually and physically. Our church exists to prepare individuals for God's kingdom and education is a crucial process through which this preparation occurs. Should the vision of this mission be lost, there would be no reason for our school to exist (Dulan, 2004).

The General Conference Working Policy- Policy FE05, FE10 formulates the Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Education as follows: "Adventist institutions of higher education provide students a unique environment needed in pursuit of learning in the arts, humanities and religion, sciences and various professions, within the perspective of the Adventist philosophy of education and spiritual commitment. Adventist higher education (1) gives preference to careers that directly support the mission of the Church; (2) recognizes the importance of the quest for truth in all its dimensions as it affects the total development of the individual in relation both to God and to fellow human beings; (3) utilizes available resources such as revelation, reason, reflection, and research to discover truth and its implications for human life here and in the hereafter, while recognizing the limitations inherent in all human endeavors; (4) leads students to develop lives of integrity based upon principles compatible with the religious, ethical, social, and service values essential to the Adventist worldview; (5) fosters—particularly at the graduate level—the mastery, critical evaluation, discovery and dissemination of knowledge, and the nurture of wisdom in a community of Christian scholars."

The working policy is also very clear about the expected outcomes of our tertiary education, "After completing the tertiary education at an Adventist institution students are expected to:

- *Have had the opportunity to commit themselves to God and therefore live a principled life in accordance with His will, with a desire to experience and support the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.*
- *Exhibit proficiency in critical thinking, stewardship, creativity, appreciation of beauty and the natural environment, communication, and other forms of academic scholarship toward fulfillment of their vocations and lifelong learning.*
- *Manifest social sensitivity and loving concern for the well-being of others in preparation for marriage and family life, citizenship within a diverse community, and fellowship within the community of God.*
- *Maintain a consistent lifestyle that demonstrates a commitment to optimal health practices essential to effective adult living. This includes careful use of time and discriminating selection of music, media, and other forms of entertainment.*
- *Answer God's call in the selection and pursuit of their chosen careers, in selfless service to the mission of the Church, and in building a free, just, and productive society and world community."*

What would the ideal Adventist college graduate look like? On the weekend of March 14-16, 2008 presidents and others leaders of Adventist colleges and universities based in North America came up with this provisional answer:

"Based on our commitment to Scripture, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and present truth, Adventist colleges and universities inspire our graduates to practice the Way of Christ through: *God's transforming Grace; Careful, logical thought about ideas and faith; Wholeness as physical, intellectual, and spiritual beings; Educated servant leadership in community and congregation; The pursuit of truth and the pleasure of learning; Authenticity toward self and others ;Life work as divine calling; Compassion, Peace-making and the stewardship of God's creation ;The blessing of Sabbath rest; and Hope for the future as a basis for witness and action (Scriven, 2008)."*

How successful are the Adventist tertiary education institutions in achieving these

objectives are not known. There are many studies and reports about successful achievements of Adventist education institutions however there are also reports from the parents and students who complain about academic, finance and spiritual aspects of life in Adventist education institutions (Cho, 1987; Plummer, 1997; Brantley, 2001; Jones-Gray, 2002; Hill, 2006; Sauder, 2008). C Garland Dulan - former GC Education Director, in his editorial comment published in *Journal of Adventist Education* (2004) expressed his concerns about our church members' perceptions on the quality of Adventist education -*the one perceived as costly but does not warrant commitment and sacrifice, the core value of the Adventist education.*

From the perspective of Higher Education Department of Indonesia the vision and mission are as follows:

”Vision Indonesian Directorate General of Higher Education

Healthy higher quality education system, resulting in faithful, devoted, intelligent, and skillful graduates

Mission Indonesian Directorate General of Higher Education

The mission of Directorate of higher education, in order to realize the vision as mentioned above:

- a. Set, monitor, and control the national higher education system nationally;
- b. Align the system of higher education with the job market as well as to social change and global developments;
- c. Facilitate, strengthen and empower quality, efficient, transparent and accountable higher education;
- d. Keeping the interest of the public service and encourage community participation in improving the quality and availability of higher education services (DIKTI, Renstra 2010-2014, 3).”

Although the vision, mission and objectives of our national higher education seem to be in line with our Adventist philosophy of Christian Education, however to practically aligning our programs, curriculum, teachers' qualification, school facilities to the government requirements and the demand of business market is a huge and overwhelming challenge for the board and management.

The following trends and practices may be identified as challenges on board's role as a governing entity as well as the shifts on the institutions' leadership, faculty/staff and

students' life:

1. Shift from private church corporate governing entities to public education governing bodies.

The board as an entity represents the Adventist Church who governs the institutions for the interest of “the church and the church constituent” are now acting as a public education entity for the interest public education. It won't be a surprise, if the board organization structure originally designed after the church structure will then be proposed to be restructured according to the national education board structure.

2. Shift from Adventist to National ways of managing tertiary education institution.

Programs usually accredited by the AAA are now also subjected to the National Accrediting Agency (BAN) accreditation. Reports on “students' academic activities/ academic performances, teachers' qualification, academic/research/community services, and academic facilities” must be regularly updated and uploaded to the Higher Education Department web-site.

Curriculum patterned after Adventist education was gradually shifted to the structure of the national system of education. The one originally designed to gain accreditation from the General Conference Adventist Accrediting Agency (AAA) began changing to meet the requirements by the National Accrediting Agency known as Badan Akreditasi Nasional (BAN). Teachers' academic ranking originally patterned to the Adventist Working Policy, are subjected to the National Academic Ranking Qualification and Certification requirements.

Time and space originally dedicated for teaching/class preparations/spiritual activities are now divided to research and administrative reports, which felt as additional heavy burdens to the teachers, program directors, faculty deans and vice president of academic.

Programs originally designed as Adventist spiritual/academic programs are now general academic forum for example Chapel originally designed as spiritual chaplaincy program is now a general assembly forum.

3. Shift in ways of preserving the Adventist value in private, family and public.

Worship, church attendance, vegetarianism, dress-code, work education, campus entertainment/ music/internet are crucial issues. Should the school impose strict regulations on these issues? To whom should these regulations apply: all campus residences or

strictly for students only? Where must these regulations be exercised: classrooms, dormitories, school premises, teachers/staff residences, or off campus premises?

4. Shift in policies and practices of imposing the Adventist value to non-Adventist students, *from inclusive to exclusive approach*.

The main purpose of our Adventist education is to train our youth. In campus settings the word “our” has an inclusive meaning “not only exclusive for the Adventist, but the non-Adventists are included”, it is **all of us not us and them, not my children and your children but our children**, and our schools had done this very well. The employment market has been long recognizing our graduates for the quality of their excellent work performance, and many of our alumni are known for their good conduct, discipline and work ethic. Our programs and degrees also have been internationally accredited. The impact of this recognition and accreditation is “more non Adventist students are interested in joining our institutions”.

Willey (2014) in his article published in *Spectrum magazine* wrote “...despite the higher cost of an Adventist college education where only half will graduate after six years, thousands of students are drawn to Adventist institutions. Many students rejoice at the opportunity to hear the gospel throughout their college experience, and say they fear that public institutions undermine the overarching philosophy of Christian life”.

Regrets had been expressed that we have loosened the grip to impose the genuine Adventist values in our “worship, chapel, vesper, music, Sabbath, work education, recreation, week of prayer, voice of prophecy and evangelistic programs” to accommodate students’ demand for more leniency in our campus discipline and to attract more new non Adventist students who want our academic degrees - *an approach that requires in-depth spiritual discernment/wisdom from our board and management, and if not carefully addressed will exclusively dis-integrate our inclusive way of integrating faith and learning*.

Academic and finance pressures arising from the national accreditation requirements.

As the government and market demand for national accreditation grow, the institutions and the faculties are facing the following pressures:

1. Pressure for the faculties to meet the national accreditation and certification.

Institutions which are committed to

Adventist denominational tradition are now adapting to national and market demand for academic standing. Campus which previously maintain an intimate community atmosphere to the benefit of students’ and place minimal pressure on the faculty to conduct and publish research are now requiring faculty to commit their time to conduct and publish research. Teacher must get the government academic and professional ranking certification as requirement for the institutions’ accreditation.

2. Pressure to meet requirements for teachers-students ratio, academic facilities, curriculum, and also pressure in adjusting to the changes in those requirements.

New faculty will be needed, both to replace the expected retirements and to meet the national teachers-students ratio. Curriculum must be adjusted to the minimum requirement of the Standardized National curriculum (standardized but subject to revision), library, classrooms and internet facilities, labs, teachers’ offices must be upgraded to the minimum required standard of spaces according to students ratio.

3. Financial pressures to meet above requirements

Budget constraints and the need for new faculty affect how many faculties will be hired and for what types of positions. The national accreditation also control and put limit for the use of temporary faculties.

Managing and balancing funds to maintain academic facilities such as classrooms, computer lab, English lab, internet facilities is always tricky management for Adventist institutions. Source of funding is always a problem. Approximately 66 % of the total revenues in these Adventist institutions came from tuition (most of the rest for cost of living on campus). By comparison, the tuition revenues at public institutions only account for about 16 % of income (Willey, 2014), and I believe the same scenario applies to the Adventist college and universities in Indonesia.

One of the weakest aspects of the Adventist board roles and functions is the ability to provide financial supports, policies and guidelines for the institution fiscal and financial sustainability.

Should the tuition be increased, to what level? How does the tuition increase affect students enrollment? Will it increase or decrease? Where should the source of funding come from?

These are questions that haunted our faculty and our institutions. Problems if are not carefully addressed by the board will affect the

institutions in either one of these two options:

1. Loosing national accreditation and operate with short term operational permit.

2. Do not have operational permit and must close the school.

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