

Purpose – The incentive to strengthen university governance is espoused by a number of implications but among these three are very conspicuous: improve quality of university education system, and thus provide students and the general public value for money; enhance the utilization of resources invested in university education; and nevertheless contribute significantly in human capital formation, guaranteeing effective and efficient public leadership and services to society. However, there are dearth studies on how this can be realized in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Ghana. The purpose of this paper is to explore pertinent issues for desirable university governance and how it can be achieved in the sub-region drawing from the Ghanaian perspective.

Design/methodology/approach – This is a qualitative study seeking to explore the questions: what is needed to ensure desirable university governance? And how can it be achieved? Data were collected from primary sources and bolstered with secondary sources. In-depth interviews (structured and semi-structured guides) and documentary evidence were used to collect data from 19 participants in selected public and private universities in Ghana.

Findings – The study examines key governance issues such as funding, accountability, infrastructure, trust, and regulation. The paper further identifies and discusses dilemmas (weakness in legislative instruments, quality assurance, increased enrollment and self-regulation) institutions of higher learning have had to contend with in the discharge of their duty.

Social implications – In an effort to make a difference between poverty and wealth, knowledge becomes an indispensable means and university education is at the center of such knowledge. The call for public universities to be managed like businesses continuous to be as contentious as an issue, as the term governance and the discussion might not end any moment soon. For the proponents of this idea, public universities are no longer getting the needed resource support from the state and by implication the state does no longer view university education as a social good and, therefore, they must find their own way of operating by introducing reasonable fees to generate revenue. However, the school of thought that is against this idea thinks that university education must continue to be treated as a social good because it is geared toward the development of the country and is expensive and if not subsidized, who can afford. The poor and disadvantaged will be marginalized and so the state must directly or indirectly continue to fund university education in return for accountability.

Originality/value – This explorative study is a contribution to the discourse of university governance. It primarily focuses on issues that could serve as a catalyst in enhancing university education. This has important implications for equipping universities in Ghana and within the African sub-region with similar International Journal of Educational Management Vol. 32 No. 4, 2018 pp. 606-624 © Emerald Publishing Limited 0951-354X DOI 10.1108/IJEM-02-2016-0039 Received 24 February 2016 Revised 5 July 2017 21 August 2017 Accepted 21 August 2017 The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available on Emerald Insight at: www.emeraldinsight.com/0951-354X.htm 606 IJEM 32,4 Downloaded by Doctor Joseph Forson At 10:32 18 May 2018 (PT) challenges for a better output to meet the development needs of its ailing economies and reposition it as a major firebrand to instill competition on the global arena of lifelong learning.

Keywords Ghana, Education policy, Sub-Sahara Africa, Management, University governance