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The Emergence of Private Higher Education (PHE) in Ghana

An assessment of the internal quality assurance mechanisms in private universities in Ghana

By

Josephine Odjidja MSc

A thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is the outcome of my own research work which was carried out during the period I was registered as a PhD candidate at University of Nottingham, except where included data is explicitly stated to be another author's work.

Abstract

"An astonishing academic transformation has taken place in Ghana in the last three decades, evidenced by the infiltration of private sector ownership in the higher education sector."

The 1990s saw a new phenomenon emerge in Ghana – it was the beginning of private higher education following a deregulation of the higher education sector to allow the private sector to venture into the provision of higher education. Since then, there been an upsurge in the number of private universities in Ghana with 98 private universities and private university colleges, currently. While this emergence has made higher education more accessible, the society has some concerns about the compromise of quality and standards at the private universities.

The topic of this thesis addressed an understudied and essential phenomenon in the history of Ghana. Based on the interpretive theory of social constructivism, this study used qualitative research methods such as interviews, questionnaires and document analysis to explore the perspectives of quality assurance leads on quality assurance mechanisms in eight private universities and two regulatory bodies in Ghana. Specifically, the study focused on efficacy of the frameworks used by private universities to assess their inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes with the view to understand their robustness, evolvement of the systems and ultimately model a quality assurance framework for the sector. The findings, which were analysed using thematic analysis, will make a wider impact by generating new knowledge on the dynamics of private higher education, which will, ultimately, be of value to policy makers who develop quality assurance policies to augment the sustainability of private higher education and allay public concerns.

This study is divided into seven chapters. The first three chapters dealt with the development of higher education and quality in both the Ghanaian and international

contexts while the latter chapters dealt with the analysis and discussion of the findings and the researcher's final thoughts and recommendations.

The findings of the study indicated that although each of the participating universities had a quality assurance unit, the existing internal quality assurance practices focused mainly on planning, implementing the plan, monitoring and evaluation. The processes that were identified to be weak or non-existent were data collection, benchmarking and improving quality. On the back of this study was the submission that quality is a matter of agreement and setting of parameters within the specific context of the country. In addition, the focus on quality indicators varied from one university to the other. One applicable theory that underpinned this submission was the Attributive Theory of Quality which posits that quality is made up of dimensions or attributes which must interact with each other to form quality. However, as the study informed us that not all the attributes of quality are captured and assured in the participating universities, coupled with the finding that quality indicators differed from one university to the other, an important theoretical implication is that the National Accreditation Board in Ghana, in consultation with stakeholders must initiate a debate at the national level to set the parameters for quality in Ghana. Ultimately, the major contribution made by the study was the modelling of a quality assurance framework that considers the deficiencies that emanated from the study.

Dedication

To my children, Dylan and Daelyn
Do not follow in my footsteps.
Discover your own paths and go further than you could ever imagine.
Love, Mom.

To my parents, Mr Philip & Mrs Joana Adusei-Poku and my siblings, Naomi, Yvonne and Edward - Thank you for being my cheerleading squad on this journey.

Acknowledgement

"No one who achieves success does so without the help of others. The wise and confident acknowledge this help with gratitude." Alfred North Whitehead

… and, so, I am confident and proud to acknowledge that this thesis has come into fruition with the academic and motivational support, suggestions, advice and encouragement of certain individuals and institutions that I would like to express my utmost gratitude to.

Prima facie, I am eternally grateful to Almighty God for granting me the gift of life, good health and the wellbeing I needed to embark on this academic journey. My gratitude knows no bounds.

I would like to place on record my sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Professor Simon McGrath and Dr Juliet Thondhlana at the School of Education, Nottingham University. I am grateful to both of you, for the unflinching support, advice, suggestions and most of all, the patience you have provided for me over the past eight years. It has been a long journey and I am eternally grateful that you chose to travel this journey with me. May Almighty God keep you and all that you cherish.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all the School of Education administration staff for their help and support. You have, equally, played your part in my academic journey.

My utmost gratitude also goes to the private universities in Ghana that took part in my study, the National Accreditation Board and the National Council for Tertiary Education. I am eternally grateful to those who made time to grant me interviews and others who provided responses in various ways to support my data collection. Without

your support, I would not have been able to complete my thesis. I am eternally grateful and indebted to you.

Outside the academic arena, I have been blessed with family who have given me motivation and support throughout this journey. My sincerest appreciation goes to my parents, Mr Philip and Mrs Joanna Adusei-Poku and my siblings Naomi, Yvonne and Edward and your spouses. You have, in various ways, supported me financially and emotionally on this journey, whenever I visited Ghana to collect data. I am mindful that I do not say, thank you, enough. Your constant nudging of "so when are you submitting your thesis" propelled me on. May Almighty God continue to bless and keep you.

Finally, this acknowledgement will not be complete without the mention of the support of friends who have played the devil's advocate and a platform for academic discourse on this journey. Your contributions and discussions on my research are much appreciated. To my good friend who bore the brunt of my joys and frustrations on this journey, I appreciate your dedication to my dedication. I know you are smiling.

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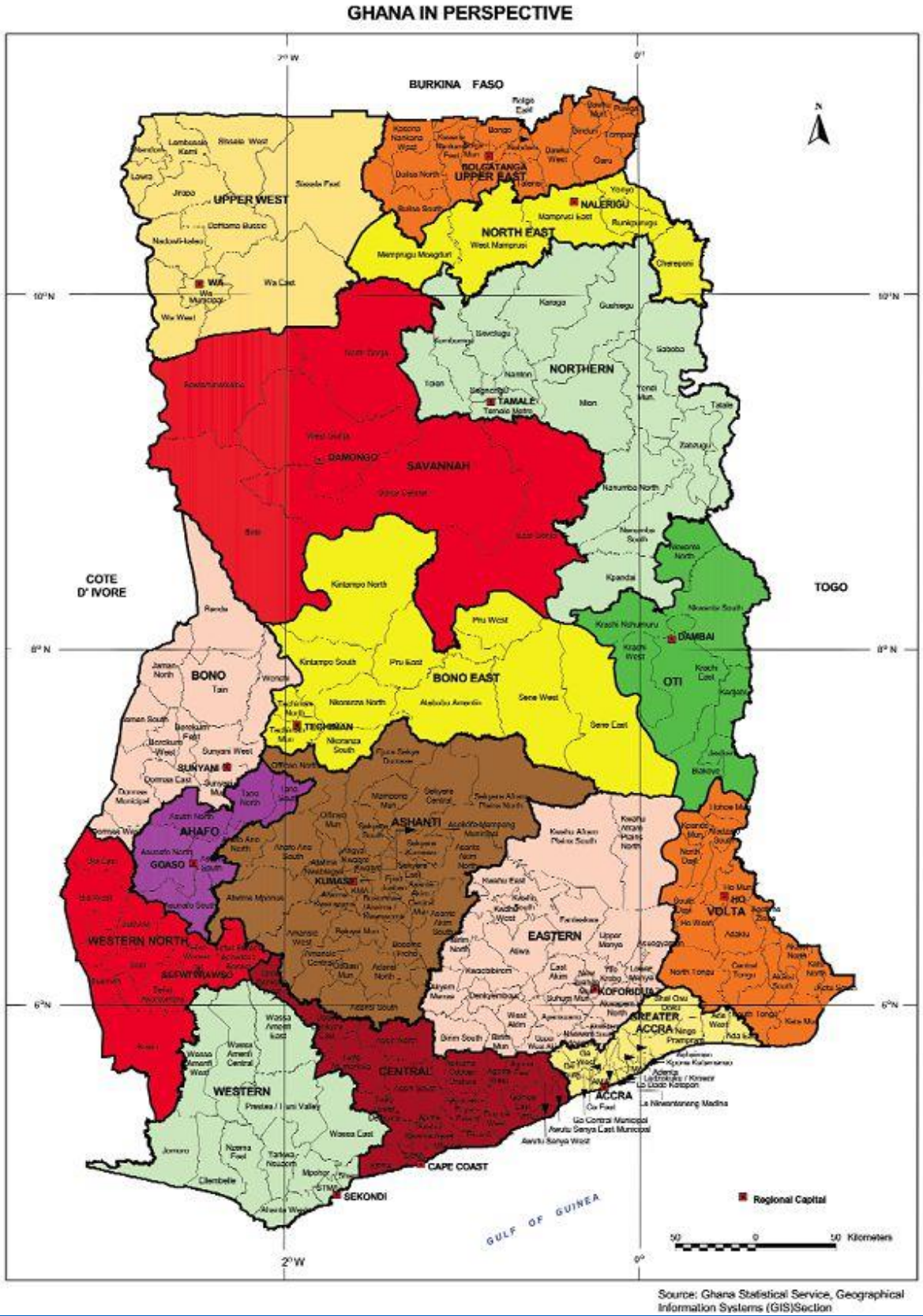
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/Source: https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/new-ghana-map-with-16-regional-capitals.html accessed 16/08/2020

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Map of Africa



Source: https://www.istockphoto.com/vector/africa-regions-map-with-single-countries-gm915644064-251986078 Accessed 16/08/20

Chapter One

Research Problem and Context

> *… in the last quarter of the 20th century, private higher education has suddenly become the fastest-growing segment of higher education worldwide – expanding in almost all parts of the world (Altbach and Levy 2005:1).*

Introduction

All over the world, higher education and private higher education is seemingly going through a revolution (Middlehurst and Fielden 2011, Bjarnason *et al* 2009, Altbach 2005). Africa and Ghana are no exception to this development. Teixeira and Landoni (2017) describe the growth as an unprecedented expansion and they attribute the expansion to restraints on nations' spending coupled with an increased demand in higher education which have compelled nations around the globe to relax controls, which has resulted in a relaxed environment for private higher education growth. Although, Tamrat (2017) argues that the growth in Africa is equally driven by a high demand for higher education that could not be met by the public sector, Tamrat (2017) also attributes the growth to foreign policy influences such as the World Bank's Structural Adjustment programmes that favoured privatization in sub-Saharan African countries in the 1980s and beyond.

Another significant factor being argued to have influenced the growth of private higher education is the worldwide recognition that higher education contributes significantly to the long-term socio-economic development of a country. As highlighted by Sanyal (1998), the growth of a cost-effective and valuable higher education systems happens concurrently with the creation of knowledge and socio-economic development. More importantly, a higher education system which is robust and completely developed serves as a catalyst for the creation of human resource to meet the developmental needs of a country. Yakubu (2017) asserts that the connection

between higher education and innovation for the developed world, may not be current as this recognition has been established since the dawn of the industrial age. However, for the African continent, Yakubu (2017) argues that this connection is becoming cemented in the scholarly community and embedding into the national policy mechanisms of various African countries. Hence, prior to the 1980s, most African countries including Ghana, depended solely on the government to produce higher education. As Varghese(2004b) argues, public universities in Africa had a near monopoly until recently. Ghana, for instance, had only three state universities for more than three decades until the early 1990s.

Amid the revolution, we are reminded that higher education itself is not a new phenomenon in Africa. Teffera and Altbach (2004) liken the age of higher education in Africa to the pyramids of Egypt, the obelisks of Ethiopia, and the Kingdom of Timbuktu. They argue further that Africa is still the home to the oldest university, Egypt's Al-Azhar, which is still is the major centre of Islamic learning (Teffera and Altbach 2004). Nevertheless, higher education has generated so much debate, recently, and one significant area in this debate is the rise in Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs). In the last quarter of the 20th century, "*private higher education has become swiftly become the fastest-growing segment of higher education worldwide – expanding in almost all parts of the world*" (Altbach and Levy 2005:1). This is reflected in the increasing number of private universities that have emerged in most African countries making it a kind of a 'niche' that has been found in the market.

This first chapter presents the research problem and context of the study. Here, the current state of private high education in Ghana is reviewed which will lead to the

statement of the problem and the research questions. This is, however, preceded by the background to the study.

Background to the study

As mentioned above, there has been a significant growth in private higher education, around the globe, although Altbach (1999) notes that the private sector was already providing higher education in Japan, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines, with these countries having 80% of their students in private higher education. Middlehurst and Fielden (2011) affirm that, globally, there has been an increase in the number of students attending private universities than state owned and funded universities. In the same context, Bjarnason et al (2009), attest that 1 in 3 university-level students is in a private higher education institution. While there has been a global increase in PHE, that of Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries has been described with words and phrases like 'phenomenal', 'sprung up like mushrooms', 'dramatic and particularly striking' due to the rapidity of its growth in the last decade (Lau and Yuen 2010, Sawyer 2004).

These assertions are reflected in the number of private universities that have sprung up in most African countries. As depicted in the comparative chart on the next page, Uganda has currently 50 private universities while all 40 universities in Somalia are privately owned. In addition, Ethiopia has now more than 30 private universities, Tanzania has 30 universities, South Africa has 102 and Nigeria has 75 private universities and Ghana has 101 private universities.

There is the expectation that this growth will continue as predicted by the Secretary-General of the Association of African Universities (AUU), Professor Olugbemiro Jegede in a presentation at the launch of *Weaving Success: Voices of Change in African Higher Education (February 2012)* that in five years, there is a

potential for Africa to have more for-profit private universities than state owned ones. After five years when this statement was made, it could be argued that the figure below is consistent with the prediction.

The figure below is a comparative chart which depicts the remarkable growth trend in 2017 - 2018. In just one year, Uganda had 11 more universities, Ghana 9 more universities, Nigeria had 14 more and South Africa had 15 more private universities. Kenya on the other had seemed to have lost 4 of its private universities. The average increase in the number of private universities in a year was 9 universities. It is the rapid growth of private universities and the subsequent implications for quality assurance that have driven the objective behind this study.

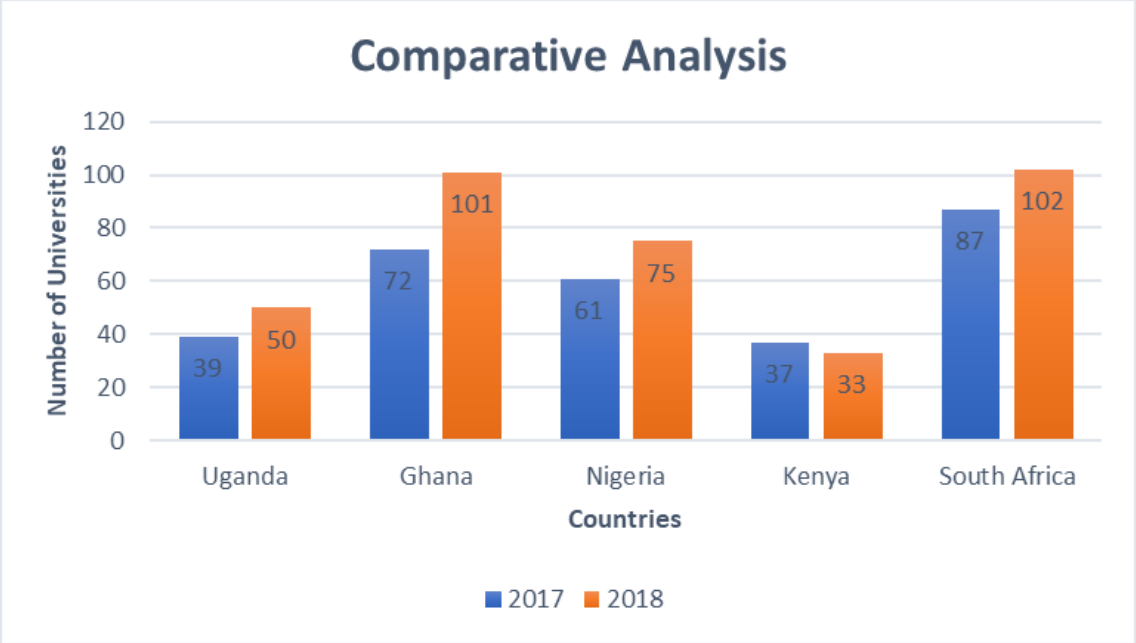


Figure 1: Comparative growth of private universities in African countries

The rate of growth of private universities in Ghana, which is particular interest in this study has been remarkable. With no private universities as at 1990, Ghana had 44 private universities when I began this study in 2012. As at 2018, Ghana had 81

accredited private universities. This number has risen to 101 private universities within a couple of years (http://www.nab.gov.gh/private-tertiary-institutions-offering-degree-programmes - accessed 22/10/20).[1] In Ghana, this means that 82% of higher education institutions are now privately owned.

Naturally, the emergence and rapid growth of Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) in SSA countries have brought with it various concerns including the commodification of knowledge, abdication of state responsibility, exclusion of students from low socio-economic background, changing the ethos, curriculum and values of higher education and the compromise of quality and standards (Morley, 2013). While all these concerns are present in the private higher sector, there is no concern which is more threatening than the compromise of quality. The case of Ghana which is the central thesis for this study has come with excitement and major concerns about the compromise of quality and standards. Arising out of this, the primary focus of this study is to evaluate the quality of PHE systems as they emerge in Ghana.

Private Higher Education in Ghana

It is instructive to note that private higher education in Ghana came about as result of deteriorating conditions in the public sector. As mentioned earlier, the higher education sector in Ghana was monopolised by the state for over three decades. This monopoly began after independence when the government believed higher education was necessary to produce the man-powered skills needed for the country. It was a hope for national development and so for a long time the state solely funded higher education until the late 1980s when the state began to struggle, financially. According to Sawadogo (1995), African countries in the 1990s were hit by the global economic

[1] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

crisis which resulted in drastic reductions in university budgets. A UNESCO (1998) report noted that there was a reduction of 28% in spending on higher education by African governments between 1980 and 1995. In consequence, there was a decline in quality of education and research (Sawadogo (1995), UNESCO (1998). Among other factors, which are discussed in the next chapter, the private higher education sector was borne.

This section of the study will focus on the current conditions of the private universities and highlight the gaps in knowledge, which will also lead to the research question. To begin this, it will be useful to provide a brief country profile, including the education system in Ghana.

Ghana is a Sub-Saharan West African country bordering the Gulf of Guinea between Togo and Cote d'Ivoire (please see Appendix 1). It lies between four and eleven degrees north of the Equator and covers a land area of 92,456 square miles (239, 460 square km). It has a size similar to American state of Oregon, and with a population of 25 million (UN, 2011). Ghana is a country endowed with rich mineral resources and a good education system. Similar to many developing countries, Ghana has experienced rapid growth for decades, with a population of 6.7 million in 1960, 18.9 million in 2000 to 24.2 million in 2010 and an average growth from 2.4 - 2.7 percent. With this average growth, there is the expectation that Ghana's population will double in twenty-nine years. With reference to rural and urban growth, the trends indicate that urbanisation began in 1970 with a rate of 29% and still continues, which has resulted in a change in the spatial distribution in Ghana. The rate of urbanisation increased to 32% in 1984 and as at 2010, the urbanisation rate stood at 44%. (Ghana Population Council 2011). Presently, about 70 per cent of the population live in the

southern parts of the country namely Kumasi, Cape-Coast, Koforidua, Accra, Ho and Sekondi-Takoradi (Appendix 2). The results of the 2010 population census also revealed Ghana's youthful population with a significant proportion of the population under 15 years of age. (The Ghana Statistical Service, May 2012). As depicted by the chart below, 58% of Ghana's population are of school going age while 39% are under 15 years of age. A country needs to study its age structure and factor it in its socio-economic development. Hence, with such an age structure, the implication is that Ghana needs to invest more in education and ensure that quality is managed. This growth pattern has further shaped the development of the private higher education sector as will be seen shortly.

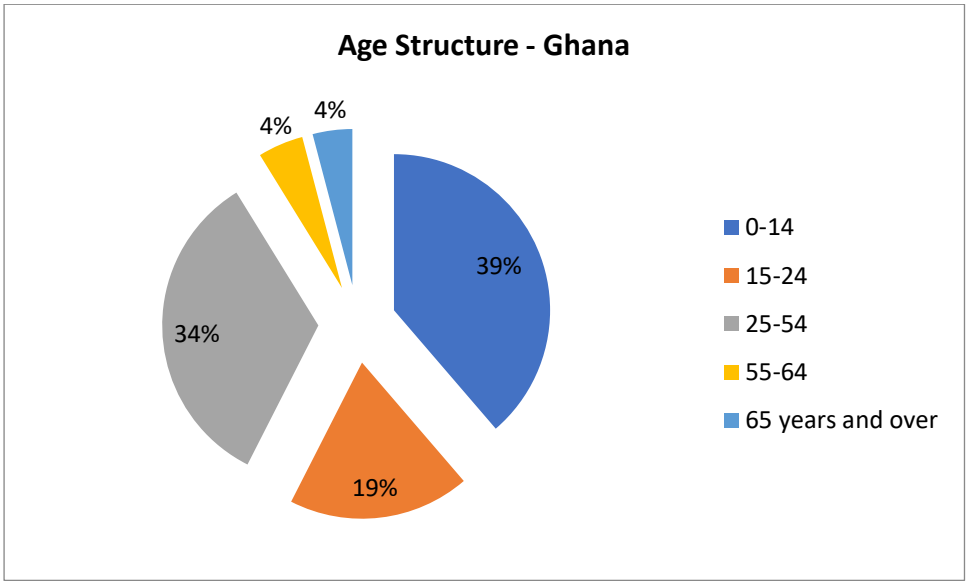


Figure 2: Age Structure of Ghana's population

Source: http://www.indexmundi.com/ghana/age_structure.html accessed 24/05/14[2]

In terms of its educational sector, currently, Ghana operates a four-layer education system of 6-3-3-4-year process, after switching from a previous tier system. The educational structure comprises primary, junior, and senior secondary and tertiary

[2] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

education. As depicted by the diagram below, tertiary education which is the fourth stage of the educational level is normally taken to include university education, teacher training, polytechnic education and professional education. After senior secondary school education, a student has the option of entering university, teacher training, polytechnic or professional education. As at the point of completing this study, most polytechnics had been upgraded into technical universities by the past government.

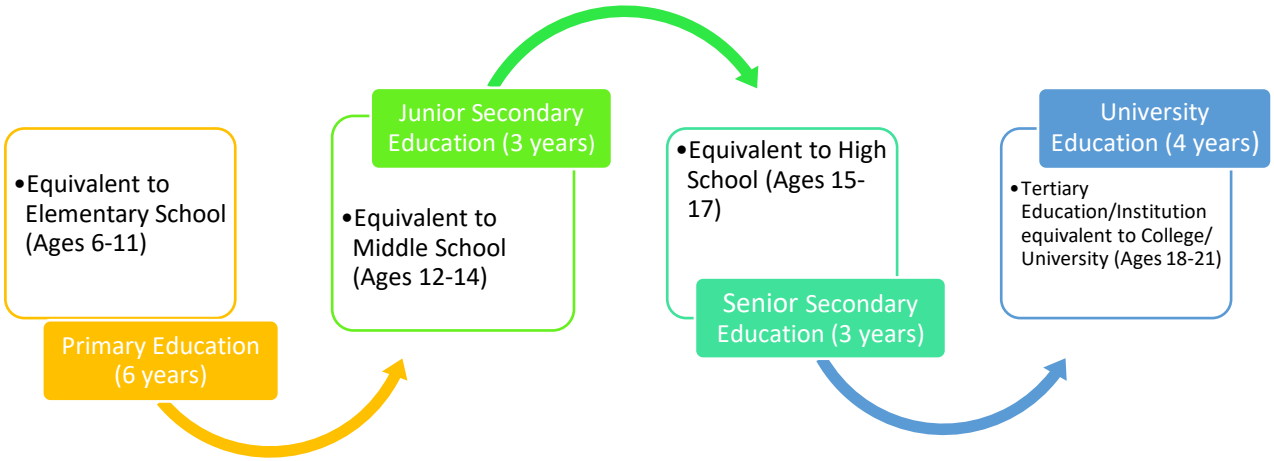


Figure 3: Education System in Ghana

Source: http://www.ghanaembassy.org/index.php?page=education-in-ghana – accessed 25/05/2014[3]

The State of Private Universities in Ghana

Following the world crisis as mentioned above, Shabani (2013) highlights the decline in quality in higher education and argues that.

> *the quality of higher education declined in several African countries, mainly due low public spending which did not match the rapid increase in student enrolments; poor standards of libraries and laboratories, inadequate pedagogic training of academic staff, and limited capacity of quality assurance mechanisms (Shabani 2013:1)*

[3] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

Such concerns apply to both public and higher education, but the very speedy growth of private provision naturally leads to major concerns about private higher education quality. In Ghana, a publication by the National Accreditation Board (NAB), the body mandated to accredit, monitor and improve quality standards in tertiary education, it was stated that.

> *some private tertiary institutions in the country are operating with unqualified lecturers and staff, while others are admitting students who do not have passes in the requisite core courses. Available at: http://www.modernghana.com/news/339814/1/nab-slams-private-universities.html. Last accessed 26th January 2012.*

Additionally, a communiqué by The National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE), the body with an oversight responsibility over the tertiary sector, highlights among other issues.

> *a weak regulatory oversight, a disconnect between industry and academia, failure of institutions to redesign their curricula and admission policies to cope with the prevailing exigencies, resource constraints, low research and post-graduate output and some higher education institutions have diverted from their original missions, resulting in a 'mission creep.'*

Source: http://www.modernghana.com/print/464624/1/communiqu-on-tertiary-education-policy-dialogue-in.html accessed 10/11/13). [4]

The reason for these concerns is what Awuah (2007), explains in his presentation at the 58th Annual New Year School, that efforts made to increase the number of tertiary institutions in Ghana has happened at the expense of quality.

The resultant effects of this are that Ghana's system of private higher education is faced with a number of challenges. Although these challenges might be present in the public universities as well, there are tendencies for these challenges to be more pronounced in the private universities due to their self-financing state. Whilst there is still a paucity of hard evidence regarding private higher education quality in Ghana,

[4] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

there is widespread concern that private institutions are struggling with respect to several key issues which undermine the quality of PHE as follows.

Admissions Malpractices

There have been several recent cases of admissions malpractice involving private higher education providers in Ghana. In a publication by University World News, Article 2011 Issue No:84, the author Francis Kokutse reported that the chances of possibly 1000 students in final year in Ghana is unknown after the National Accreditation Board (NAB) found out these students gained admission without the required grades. As a result, the Board hinted it was possible that some private universities were ignoring the guidelines on admission to boost their student's numbers. In the following year, there was another report that suggested that Methodist University admitted they had not followed the guidelines on minimum entry requirements and as a result NAB had requested that they be immediately withdrawn (www.ghanaweb.com-accesed 29/06/12).[5] Central University College was also forced to revoke the admissions of about 700 students (www.myjoyonline.com 28/08/12).

Shortage of Faculty Members

The shortage of faculty members has an impact on both teaching and research. It is believed that private universities are struggling to recruit and retain permanent faculty staff. The proliferation of private universities and in some instances marginal salaries and poor facilities mean that faculty staff are now mobile than ever. As a result, private universities have to draw on the already over-stretched human resources from the public universities, which come with its own implications on quality and effective

[5] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

performance at both the private and public universities. Where there is an outright shortage of qualified staff, some private universities have been found to be using unqualified lecturers. In a news article, it reported that NAB had observed that some private tertiary institutions in the country are using unqualified staff and lecturers (www.modernghana.com accessed 23/04/2018). Even more disturbing is the shortage of senior faculty at levels of PhD. There is a wide shortage of PhD staff to train PhD students, and this is a potential threat to the future of private universities. Hayward (2010:40) argues this "*shortage poses especially critical problems for graduate programmes, where faculty must have PhDs to supervise PhD training*." Besides teaching, higher education in any society is also seen to be centres which exist to provide world-class research into the unknown, science which provides solutions, diagnosis and treatments which benefit the society. More widely, Mufutumari (2010:85) argues that "*the research output from Africa remains dismal and is not expected to improve as universities become mainly teaching institutions*."

Inadequate physical infrastructure

The expansion of physical infrastructure is difficult for private universities. Higher education is expensive to provide even for the State, thus finding the money to start a small private institution is more than a challenge. As argued by Musa and Ahmad (2012), it can be very challenging for private investors to provide and maintain physical assets as the process is cost intensive and complex for them. Subsequently, most private universities are run on small acres of land, apart from the religious bodies that are able to expand and even have multiple campuses. It is for this reason that, even in their high numbers, private universities still account for a relatively lower percentage

of total enrolment in the country. The lack of physical assets no doubt has an impact on the quality of teaching learning.

Financial Constraints

According to Banya (2008), self-financing is the very element that distinguishes a private university from a public university and goes on to describe the difference as the danger. Funding is the decisive factor; the 'mover' and 'shaker' of higher education systems and threatens the very core functions of higher education. Speck (2010) asserts that;

> *private funding undoubtedly shapes the university in ways that challenge academic traditions, creating a new paradigm for financing the modern university (Speck 2010:7)*

While funding continues to be a menace even for public universities due to decreases in state funding, for the private university it is the single greatest financial jeopardy because it has a multiple effect on how private universities are operated.

Statement of the Problem

From the above, it is logical to argue that the rapid expansion of PHEIs has come with no corresponding strategy to ensure that quality assurance mechanisms are in place. In a World Bank/UNESCO (2000:27) report, the authors note that "*the expansion, in both public and private universities, has been unbridled, unplanned, and often 'chaotic', resulting in deterioration in average quality, continuing inter-regional, inter-country, and intra-country inequalities, and increased profit provision of higher education*". Equally, Teixera and Landoni (2017) argue that the expansion in the private higher education sector has been unplanned and so not enough regulations are in place in most countries.

In addition, the upsurge of PHEIs could be likened to neo-liberalism and marketization which has their implications on the quality of education as education is

seen as a market commodity and the student as a consumer. Rutherford (2005) argues that the traditional role of the university has gradually shifted and transformed universities into consumer-oriented corporate bodies. The traditional function of the university in society as centre of learning and as a public interest entity to serve the good of humanity is being threatened. The resultant effects of these are the current challenges and constraints facing PHE; which ranges from affordability, lack of funding, faculty recruitment and retention, quality and accreditation issues, invalid study programs and the lack of physical facilities. Similarly, McCowan (2004) argues that the impact of private higher education on a country's long-term development appears to be unnoticeable because there is not enough investment in research and academic staff.

With these developments in the private higher education sector, Levy (2006) contends that the proliferation of private higher education institutions naturally sparks a great interest and debate on the sector. To this end, Altbach (1999) argues that the global development of education brings to bare the importance to study the private higher education sector and its potential challenges.

In consequence, the study seeks to assess the quality assurance mechanisms in private universities in Ghana. In Ghana, the quality of private tertiary education and its sustainability are unknown and insubstantial. The Ghanaian society does not know what PHEIs are doing in terms of the quality of education they provide. This study is being undertaken to fill this research gap.

Purpose of study

Given the above problem statement, the purpose of this study is to assess the current quality mechanisms in the private universities with a view to produce a QA

model. To accomplish this purpose, the researcher will undertake a systematic and objective assessment of the quality mechanisms in the private universities and make recommendations for future developments. Accordingly, the three questions identified for the study are:

1. What is quality in higher education?
2. What are the current institutional quality assurance mechanisms used by private higher education institutions in Ghana and how are they monitored?
3. How relevant is the curriculum to the Ghanaian society?

Significance of the study

This study is significant in the sense that it will develop and expand current knowledge and understanding of private higher education and how it is evolving. Specifically:

1. The study will make a significant contribution to this growing area of research by exploring a new phenomenon like private higher education.

2. The study will create a quality assurance model that will become a guide for other developing countries who are also experiencing the proliferation of private universities and its associated issues.

3. The study will generate greater awareness among stakeholders especially the government on the significance of having an effective and practical quality assurance and measurement mechanism (quality culture) to ensure the core values of universities are protected, while making universities proactive in responding to the Ghanaian society's needs.

Personal Rationale for the Study

I have always had a passion for education. My first degree was in education and even though I did not teach for a long time before I left the shores of Ghana, my passion

was rekindled when I was looking for an area in Finance to research for my PhD. This was because I had completed my master's degree in Finance and as I was looking for literature on Finance, I came across literature on the emergence of private universities in Ghana and how the sector was facing some teething problems. As a Ghanaian who grew up knowing only three state universities for most of my adult life, I found the emergence of private universities really intriguing and therefore it was not a difficult decision for me to make a switch from Finance to Education. I thought that it was a great idea that the higher education sector had been opened up for the private sector to take part in the provision of higher education. I therefore became concerned when I started to see literature on the concerns in the media. I was concerned that if nothing was done about the concerns, it may, in the long run, damage the reputation of university certificates from Ghana.

I wanted to know more about the activities of the private universities in terms of what quality mechanisms they had in place and make the information known to the public. It is my objective that the outcome of my study will have a wider impact by generating new knowledge on the dynamics of private higher education, which will, ultimately, be of value to policy makers who develop quality assurance policies.

Delimitations of the study

As previously mentioned, Ghana, currently has 101 registered private universities. I would have chosen to include at least half of the number of private universities in the study if I had the resources and financial assistance. However, as a self-financing researcher, I had to take certain decisions to make the research manageable and feasible. The study was restricted to eight private universities using a criterion designed by the researcher. The choice of university was based on

proximity to the researcher, the availability of a quality assurance lead at the university and the age of the university, which was set as at least 10 years.

Organisation of the study

The overall structure of the thesis is composed of seven chapters. The introductory chapter focuses on the background to study and state of private universities in Ghana. The relevance of these two sections was that they enabled the researcher to establish the relevance of the study and identify the knowledge gap and following that, the research questions were presented. The introductory chapter also presented a profile of Ghana, which is the research location. In the second chapter, the focus is on the development of higher education in Africa and Ghana and how higher education evolved to create the current private higher education sector. This is followed by review of literature on quality assurance and higher education in chapter three. Here, the literature is reviewed both the international and Ghanaian contexts. The methodology and methods used for the study are identified in chapter four. The researcher's account of the outcome of the field study is presented and analysed in chapter five, which is followed by a discussion of the implications for theory and practice in chapter six. Finally, the study concludes with the researcher's final thoughts and recommendations presented in chapter seven.

Summary

In this chapter, I have elaborated on the background to the study which highlighted the growth of private universities in the world, Africa and Ghana. The chapter also discussed the state of private universities in Ghana and the ensuing research problem and purpose of the study. The organisation of my thesis and delimitations were also outlines. In the next chapter, I shall be presenting the beginning of higher education

in Africa and Ghana and how developments in the public sector led to the emergence of private higher education.

Chapter Two

The Development of Private Higher Education in Ghana

"The development of higher education in Africa cannot be separated from the past and present political developments of the continent." (Atuahene 2006:22).

Introduction

This chapter, mainly, focuses on the chronological developments of private universities in Ghana. However, it is instructive to begin the chapter with an insight into the development of higher education in Africa and Ghana to put the main discussion into a perspective. With reference to Ghana, Leney (2003), argues that to understand how the University College came to be founded in 1948 in the then Gold Coast, it is necessary to review the antecedents of HE in the Gold Coast which in turn reveal how a political powerful Gold Coast education lobby evolved. As mentioned in the abstract of this study, private higher education emerged in Ghana, following the deregulation of the higher education sector, which had been monopolized by the State for some time. It is, therefore, necessary to, initially, delve into the development of higher education in the then Gold Coast (now Ghana), especially, and how its growth has driven the emergence of private higher education.

The chapter has three sections beginning with a brief insight into the development of higher education in Africa. This second section deals with the development of higher education Ghana, which leads the chapter to the emergence of private universities and their characteristics. The final section of the chapter will present the factors that have been argued to have driven the rise of private higher education in SSA countries.

Historical Development of Higher Education in Africa

Higher education in Africa originated from three ancient civilizations. These were the Alexandria Museum and Library (AML) which were founded in the 3rd century BC in Egypt; the influence of Christianity and Islamic traditions (Zeleza 2006). It is believed that the AML housed 200,000 volumes of literature and supported over 5,000 scholars and students (Lulat 2003, Zeleza 2006). It is argued that Christianity was established through monasteries and monastic orders and these were instrumental in the provision of education as they served as spaces for writing, reflection and learning for scholars in Africa, Europe and Asia. Between the three ancient civilisations, Zeleza (2006) argues further that it was the Islamic tradition that was pivotal in establishing Africa's first and oldest higher education institution, Al-Azhar mosque university in Cairo in 969 B.C. It is instructive to note that, aalthough, the world's oldest university still exists in Egypt's Al-Azhar, in other parts of Africa, mostly, the sub-Saharan, university education is pretty much deeply rooted in the colonial era.

Apart from Egypt and South Africa, where universities were established in the 10th and 19th centuries, respectively, most African universities were founded from colonization (Atuahene 2006). In SSA countries, the development of universities was mostly influenced by the British, Spaniards, Belgians, Germans, Portuguese, the Dutch and Italians, in their quest for power and colonization. Hence, even though, Africa had some colonial university colleges established as far back as 1902 like Gordon Memorial College (which was renamed as Khartoum University College in 1951 and later renamed in 1956 as Khartoum University); and also Sierra Leone had Fourah Bay College as far back as 1827; for countries like Ghana and Nigeria, it was mostly education commissions which investigated the principles of higher education

and subsequently led to the establishment of premier universities (Atuahene 2006). These premier universities were internationally extolled, according to (Atuahene (2006) and were patterned on European model. He argues further that, the quality of teaching at these universities was comparatively higher because they were attached to metropolitan universities. However, this metropolitan attachment was short-lived as at the time of independence for most African countries and the consequence was a severe lack of the skilled human capital needed to run the public and civil services.

The education system at the time was depicted as a pyramid, with the lower educational levels as a broad-based prerequisite for the creation of a few institutions at the top. This pyramid metaphor was challenged by the advisors to the Colonial Office who suggested in 1940 that instead of a structure:

> *'built of blood and tears', education might be envisaged as a volcano with 'internal rumblings and periodical eruptions which provide dynamic possibilities denied to the stone-dead pyramid and its mummified contents (Leney 2003).*

That notwithstanding, one could also argue in favour of the pyramid metaphor as it is the products of secondary education who will demand access to higher education systems. Mohamedbhai (2008) asserts that during the 1990s, however, the impact of the neglect began to show. Many African universities were not adequately financed to meet increased students' enrolment, due to financial and political crisis that were experienced in these African countries. Furthermore, international donors and funding agencies who were the backbone of most projects in Africa had decided to shift their attention to funding basic education, as opposed to higher education because they believed the returns from primary educations were far greater than higher education. The influence of international donors and funding agencies is explored further in the next section when the development of higher education in Ghana is discussed.

The Historical Development of Higher Education in Ghana

Pre-Independence Era

The establishment of higher education in West Africa, which included Ghana (then known as Gold Coast) was literally as a result of the influence of activists, which led to the education commissions being set up by the British government. The education commissions were set up every now and again to study the feasibility of an African university. Prior to the establishments of universities, the colonial government had formulated policies which restricted many Africans from having any form of higher education. Emudong (1997) explains that the governor,

> … feared, among other things, that the product of such universities would not only undermine the expatriate monopoly on higher government and business posts but also constitute a vanguard of nationalist agitators against the colonial status quo, which most of the officials believed would perpetuate itself indefinitely. (Emudong, 1997, p. 139)

While some authors have argued that the British decision to establish universities in colonial Africa was to produce well-educated Africans to improve the political and socio-economic welfare of the colonial people (Pearce 1982); and to serve as a payback reward from the British to the colonial people for the loyalty during the crisis of World War II (Wise 1956), Nwauwa (1993:248), on the other hand, states that the establishment of universities in British West Africa was "*neither a sudden affair nor was it solely for the welfare of Africans*". Rather, Nwauwa (1993) argues that the establishment of African universities was as a result of the influence of African intellectuals which began, as far back, as 1865 with Sierra Leonean, James Horton; followed in 1872 with Edward Blyden and then in 1900 with Gold Coast nationalist, Casely Hayford, but all their efforts were systematically ignored by the British. In his demand for an African University, Casely Hayford went ahead and founded the National Congress of British West African in 1920 which comprised mostly of African

elites. Around the same time, between 1920 and 1921, the Phelps-Stokes Commission on Education in Africa was also set up, with a Ghanaian intellectual Dr Kwegyir Aggrey, an American – trained, as the only African member (King 1969). As there was no African university in the 1920s, many Africans travelled to the United States of America for university education and on their return, they realised the British did not want to employ them in institutions in the colony. Following the rejection, they became antagonised with racism and therefore decided to form nationalists' groups to reject British rule. Nwauwa (1993) argues this further caused uneasiness among colonial officials.

Following protests from the African intellectuals and nationalists' movements, Hussey (1945) reports that, in consequence, two main commissions were set up that studied on providing higher education, namely the Asquith and Elliot Commissions that are behind the creation of higher education in West Africa. The Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies was chaired by Mr Justice Asquith, while the Commission on Higher Education in West Africa was chaired by Rt. Hon. Walter Elliot. According to Hussey (1945), the memberships of both commissions were of the same value and therefore both reports are regarded as authoritative documents. In August 1943, the government of the United Kingdom set up the Asquith Commission to review existing facilities in specific territories, that would guide the creation of higher education institutions and also explore the means in which these institutions would have the opportunity to co-operate with institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom. The Elliot Commission, on the other hand, was set up to review all other aspects of higher education in West Africa in terms of social, economic and educational background (Hussey 1945).

The main recommendation of the Asquith Report was the need for the establishment of universities and university colleges, with an intimate relationship between the universities in the colonies and the UK universities, specifically, London University, which had already become an Empire University. The recommendation was that all the university colleges must be affiliated to London University. In the discharge of its duties, the Asquith Committee reported that there were centres in the colonies which were already providing university-type education. These centres included Fourah Bay in Sierra Leone established in 1827 by the Church Missionary Society, Higher College at Yaba in Nigeria and Achimota College in Accra which had been established later in 1924. The Colleges, according to the Commission's report of 3 May 1945, were already accepting students from Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Gambia to pursue courses which led to University of London certificates in Intermediate Arts, Sciences, Engineering and teaching qualifications (Daniel 1996)

The Committee also recommended that further universities are set up as early as possible to provide education in the areas that are not being catered for by the College. According to the Commission, this would ensure that the human capacity needed for leadership and development of the colonies is available. The report stated that it was significant to produce men and women had all the skills set to work in the public service in areas of leadership and self-governance (Daniel 1996).

Similarly, in its report dated 13th June 1945, the Elliot Commission recommended, amongst others, that there should now be university in both Gold Coast and Nigeria. Specifically, the report recommended the university in Gold Coast must have faculties of arts and science and an institute of education (Daniel 1996). Commenting on both reports, (Hussey 1945:166) states that: "*the Report of the Asquith Commission covers*

a very wide range of recommendations of principle and detail, many of which are reflected in the Elliot Commission's Report." however, due to a disagreement on the recommendations of the Elliot Report, a minority group who were against the setting up of universities in individual countries also produced their own report. While the Majority Report was similar to the Asquith Report regarding establishing universities, the Minority Report was of the view that there should be one unitary university college for the whole of West Africa, which is intended to,

> *Bring within the grasp of West Africa a university of high quality within the shortest time; while respecting territorial differences it will emphasize the value of West Africa approach and a fuller appreciation of the influences and forces at work in that part if the world (Leney 2003:62)*

In response to the minority report, the people of Gold Coast protested and insisted they would want their own university and even offered to contribute funds towards its development. This action gave birth to first university in Gold-Coast, called the University of Gold Coast, established by an Ordinance dated 11th August 1948

> *for the purpose of providing for promotion of university education, learning and research'. The university continued to offer University of London programmes but were suited to local conditions. It also awarded University of London certificates* (Daniel 1996).

It is instructive to note here that the immediate objective of higher education in both reports, which is to provide the human resource capacity needed for economic development, is in line with the underlying cause of the recent attention and debates on higher education - the increasing pace of globalisation and a worldwide recognition of the strong correlation between higher education and the socio-economic development of a country. Holm-Nielsen (2001) identifies globalisation as one of the challenges facing the higher education sector with its subsequent effect which views the knowledge economy as the main backbone for a nation's socio-economic development. He argues further that:

> *tertiary education is indeed central to the creation of the intellectual capacity on which knowledge production and utilization depend and to the promotion of lifelong learning practices necessary to update one's knowledge and skills* (p.3).

It is interesting to note that the recent factors driving the upsurge in higher education was the main objective higher education begun in Ghana and as to whether this has been achieved is another research area for further studies.

Not long after the Gold Coast's first university, the 'Gold Coast' became the new sovereign state of Ghana on 6th March 1957. The sovereignty of Gold Coast was to enjoy among other things, socioeconomic, scientific, bilateral and multilateral agreements and opportunities from the international community (Atuahene 2006). In his address to the people of Ghana on the 6th of March 1957, Ghana's first president, Dr Kwame Nkrumah outlined his government's vision – education was at the heart of his message. He stated that,

> *We must seek an African view to the problems of Africa. This does not mean that western techniques and methods are not applicable to Africa. It does mean, however, that in Ghana we must look at every problem from the African point of view … Our whole educational system must be geared to producing a scientifically-technically minded people. Because of the limitations placed on us, we have to produce, of necessity, a higher standard of technical education than is necessary in many of the most advanced countries of the Western world … I believe that one of the most important services which Ghana can perform for Africa is to devise a system of education based at its university level on concrete studies of the problems of the tropical world. The University will be the co-ordinating body for education research, and we hope that it will eventually be associated with Research Institutes dealing with agriculture, biology, and the physical and chemical sciences which we hope to establish … today in a country of five million inhabitants nearly half a million children enjoy primary education. We must, however, provide further outlets for these children and give them an opportunity to learn something of engineering, tropical agriculture and of the problems of tropical medicine and hygiene. Only with a population so educated can we hope to face the tremendous problems which confront any country attempting to raise the standard of life in a tropical zone*. Source: https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/Kwame-Nkrumah-The-African-Genius-1-378974 accessed 24/03/20

In present day Ghana, there are debates still going about the vision of Dr K. Nkrumah. In a speech delivered on Nov 11, 2012, Professor Dominic Kuupole, Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Coast (UCC) remarked that the accelerated development of Africa rests on African universities. In a related development, a Trust

Africa Policy Brief has contended that fifty years after most African countries attained independence, the issue of transformation of higher education is still a matter of serious concern requiring prioritization. It argues further that higher education in Africa still faces various challenges, including lack of resources, skills flight and consequent staff shortages, lack of institutional independence from the typically centralized state, and curricula that are ill-suited and unresponsive to local needs and expectations.

Post-Independence Era

The period after independence saw many African countries, including Ghana, investing heavily in their higher education systems. They saw this as part of a national development program to alleviate poverty and create the highly skilled human resources needed to steer socio-economic and political developments. Writing about HE in SSA, Hoffman (1996:83) states that**:**

> **...** *in the immediate afterglow of newly found independence, many African countries in SSA looked at higher education as one of the essential elements of economic and political revitalization, and in some instances, as the cornerstone of a new society***.**

Similarly, Sawyer (2004**:**3) states that:

> *With the approach of political independence or immediately thereafter, many African countries regarded the establishment of local universities as a major part of the post-colonial national development project.*

The new sovereignty of Ghana also led to the establishment of the new International Commission on Higher Education (ICHE) in 1960. By an Act of Parliament of 1961 and on the recommendation of the ICHE, the University of Ghana was created from the former University College of Gold Coast. Further recommendations by the ICHE led to the confirmation of the College of Technology in Kumasi as Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in 1961, a post-secondary college for training science teachers; University College of Cape-Coast was also established in 1962

(Sawyer 2004). Consequently, for more than thirty years, Ghanaians lived with only these three universities.

In the words of Varghese (2004:4): "*public universities had a near monopoly in providing higher education in countries of Africa".* In an appraisal, Quist (2003 cited in Atuahene 2006) analyses the spending on education in relation to other sectors by the government of Ghana between 1958 and 1965. According to the appraisal, of the £66,003 of the budget allocated to education by government in 1965, 51% out of this was allocated to higher education; 37% and 12% allocated to secondary and primary education, respectively. Comparatively, the government budget allocation to social services was £101,358 as compared to £25,384 for defence and £19,660 for health, in the same period.

The first three public universities during this era were beacons of post-independent Ghana. The University of Ghana in particular was hailed as the ultimate paradise and a privilege university to attend. Indeed, for some students it didn't really matter what program they studied at the University of Ghana, it was just to have the opportunity to say 'I studied at 'Legon' - as it is affectionately called.

It is instructive to note that similar developments were occurring in other African countries during this period. From the period of its inception, the University of Nairobi owed its existence to public resources. Economically, HE was considered crucial in modernizing independent Kenyan society. It was therefore thought prudent to spend public resources since it was considered that in the long term the whole country stood to benefit through the application of skills to transform society (www.codesria.org,[6] accessed 20/01/20). According to Hoffman, (1996:85):

[6] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

> *the University of Makerere, which was referred to as 'Africa's Havard University attracted some of the finest minds on the continent and served as a nexus of post-colonial political, economic and social development.*

Due to increased population growth and the inability of the three sovereign universities to absorb post-secondary students, a further 2 sovereign universities were established in Ghana. These were the University for Development Studies in 1992 and the University College of Education at Winneba in 1993.

As would be seen in the next section, the progress made in HE systems were ,however, overturned at the beginning of the 1980s. Suddenly, due to limited funds, HE systems were competing with other sectors of the economy for their share of the national budget. In the words of Atteh (1996:37):

> *the once internationally extolled higher institutions of learning such as the Universities of Ibadan, Makerere and Legon as centres of serious research and teaching in the 1960s and 1970s, are today more or less existing in their past reputations*.

With reference to the Makerere University, Hoffman (1996:85) has described that: '*once revered as 'Africa's Harvard University', Makerere University is now but a shadow of its former self."* Although, Ghana had seen some developments in the higher education sector in the 1990s, as mentioned above, there had already been a reduction in state funding prior to the 1990s. Boafo-Arthur (1999) contends that for Africa, in general, the 1980s ushered in a completely new global economic situation. Moselet et al (1991) explain that the harsh economic conditions meant there was an essential need to find ways and means to lessen the financial burden of developing countries. He argues further that for Ghana, the situation had reached abysmal levels in its socio-economic development by the same year. In terms of HE, this meant a significant reduction in public expenditure on education.

While the poor economic performance at the turn of the 1980s had been blamed on declining terms of international trade, Logan and Mengisteab (1993:2) are however,

of the view that most African countries inherited debt at independence, and for many the debt burden continued to grow, especially following the oil price shocks of the mid to late 1970s. Varghese (2006:19) has also states that: "*structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s included policies to reduce the role of both of the public sector in general, and of public-funded higher education in particular*." Furthermore, he argues, that these programmes favoured the diversion of public resources from education to productive sectors, as well as the diversion of public investment from higher to lower levels of education. This was because most donor agencies, in particular, the World Bank viewed higher education, especially universities in Sub-Saharan Africa, as "*irrelevant institutions, which were not worthy of their support*" (Banya and Elu 2001:23).

In addition to SAP, there was also the Jomtien Declaration, which was spearheaded by UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, UN Development Programme and UN Population Fund in the 1990s and sought to universalize adequate basic education. The key outcomes of the declaration were that countries had to meet basic education needs; universalize access and promote equity; focus more on learning; broaden the scope of education; enhance the environment for learning and focus on strengthening partnerships. The implementation of the declaration meant that countries around the globe had to focus extensively on widening access to basic education for every person. The declaration recognised that basic education was fundamental in strengthening higher levels of education. All 155 countries present at the conference declared to prioritise and channel their resources to meet basic education needs in their respective countries. Effectively, this collective action on the international front

resulted in the neglect of higher education and African countries were not left out of this.

Due to the above views of international donors like the World Bank and the United Nations at the time, public universities in Ghana began to suffer the consequences of the lack of funding. As would be seen shortly, this neglect, among other things, is among the drivers behind the emergence of private higher education. In the sections that follow, I shall discuss the drivers behind the emergence of private higher education, but it will be useful to precede with how public universities performed in the 1980s.

Public Universities in Ghana – The period after 1980

Many factors, both domestic and international have accounted for the decline in higher education systems in Ghana. By the turn of the 1980s, most African countries including Ghana were heavily in debt and were experiencing slow economic growth. For Africa in general, Boafo-Arthur (1999) contends that the 1980s ushered in a completely new global economic situation. Similarly, in a study by Atteh (1996) it was revealed that from 1970 to 1980, all of Africa's principal mineral exports suffered an annual average decline in nominal price of 18.7 percent. Additionally, the prices of cocoa and coffee, traditionally two of Africa's most important exports continued to decline. In more specific terms, Boafo-Arthur (1999) highlights that

> *Ghana's economic conditions were deplorable, to say the least, and the economy was on the brink of collapse. Cocoa production had declined from 403,000 tons in 1970 to 179,000 tons in 1983, and 9 percent of government expenditure was devoted to non-performing state-owned enterprises. The average growth rate of investment as percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) had by 1982 plummeted to 2 percent from the 1970 levels of 14 percent, and the domestic savings rate fell from 12 percent to 3 percent over the same period* (Boafo-Arthur 1999:47-48).

The resultant effect of the market instability and decline in terms of trade was a reduction in foreign revenue. In terms of higher education, this meant a reduction in

public expenditure on education. Sawyer (2004) points out that the main drivers behind the reduction in public expenditure were the unfavourable terms of international trade, autocratic military or civilian rule and civil wars.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, development analysts believed that soaring debts was the major cause of the decline in economic growth. In fact, Logan and Mengisteab (1993:1) have cited the World Bank as consistently referring "*to a number of debt-related factors, such as SSA's limited ability to service its loans, as being central to the region's economic development problems."* They argue further that :

> *As a consequence of the focus on debt as a central problem in SSA's development agenda, several mitigating strategies-notably the structural adjustment and economic stabilization programs of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) respectively (subsequently referred to as "adjustment")-have been implemented in the region since the late 1970s* (Logan and Mengistab 1993:1).

In consequence, the adjustment programme was initially implemented in Senegal in 1980, next in and Togo in 1983 and then to the rest of West Africa towards the end of the 1980s. In fact, between 1983 and 1992, Ghana implemented six IMF reform packages in which most severe austerity measures were put in place (Boafo-Arthur 1999), and these measures affected higher education, considerably. Notably among the six IMF reform packages is the Structural Adjustment Programme, which is discussed in the next section.

Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) in Ghana

According to Boafo-Arthur (1999), in April 1983, a landmark policy change occurred in Ghana. Socialism was abandoned and Ghana embarked on the World Bank/IMF – inspired SAP. Ghana is perceived to be one of the success stories of SAP. The two World Bank reports on adjustment in SSA identify Ghana as a model of true and persistent economic reform (Logan and Mengisteab 1993). In its 1993 report entitled *Ghana: 2000 and Beyond*, the World Bank flaunts the positive impact of

adjustment on the Ghanaian economy referring to it one of the most successful in Sub-Saharan African countries. Hutchful (1989) describes IMF/World Bank's reforms in Ghana's reform as the most rigorously applied in SSA. Following such assertions, it is imperative to explore the effect SAP has had on the Ghanaian economy with reference to HE systems.

According to neo-liberal economic theory, SAPs improve economic performance by generating better human rights practices, but the conditions also meant that the government had to reduce its spending on social provisions, which some analysts believe infringe on human rights practices. In a related study by Abouharb and Cingranelli (2006), there was evidence that SAPs had the net effect of worsening government respect for all types of physical integrity rights. According to Abouharb and Cingranelli (2006), countries that signed up to SAP were required to shift their focus from areas such as health care, housing, jobs and education that protected the socioeconomic rights of their citizens. To further prove their point, Abouharb and Cingranelli (2006), cite China as one of the countries that have developed economically because they refused to sign on to SAP from the World Bank and IMF. Similar considerations on the social cost of SAP have also been expressed by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) that SAPs caused a negative impact on human resource development, specifically in health and education sectors (African Recovery Newsletter, 6 July 1989). These concerns stem from adjustment's complete focus on economic issues, to the exclusion or underestimation of the social implications of austerity. In the context of HE, it was no longer a priority for the government and was relegated to the background.

In relation to higher education systems, Varghese (2006) has also stated that structural adjustment programmes targeted the reduction of public sector funding and in particular, state universities. Furthermore, he argues, that there was a preference to direct public funding towards production and lower levels of education. This was because at the time, international donors and agencies especially the World Bank which has significant influence on developing countries' budget believed the economic returns on basic and secondary education were far greater than on higher education. As previously mentioned, most donor agencies viewed higher education, especially universities in Sub-Saharan Africa, as "irrelevant" institutions, which were not worthy of their support. Furthermore, the donor agencies believed that "*developing countries needed basic education as that was the maximum level that the bulk of the population would ever achieve"* (Banya and Elu 2001:23). According to Blooming et al (2005:6):

> *this belief stemmed from two important considerations: first, repeated studies appeared to show that the returns to investments in primary and secondary education were higher than those to higher education, and second, that equity considerations favoured a strong emphasis on widespread access to basic education*.

The World Bank is the largest lender to education in the world, making its views on any issues very critical (Banya and Elu 2001), as such the effect of this 'official thinking' of the World Bank on higher education in SSA was considerable. As stated by Blooming and Canning (2005), because of this belief, the international development community influenced African governments' decision to neglect higher education. From 1985 to 1989, 17 per cent of the Bank's worldwide education-sector spending was on higher education.

The decline in higher education funding was however in contrast with enrolment which had increased drastically. A research by Effah (2006) has reported that enrolments in university education increased by 19% from 11,857 in 1991/92 to 63,567

in 2003/04 academic year. The increase in enrolment implied that there was an increase in students' numbers without the equivalent development of physical facilities, thus, overstretching their capacities (Effah 2006). Compounded by deterioration in basic necessities such as libraries, computers, laboratory materials, and furniture, many universities lack the physical infrastructure to conduct continuous and comprehensive programs of instruction. In some cases, major universities have been forced to close for extended periods throughout the academic year because of disrepair. Consequently, it is not unusual for university graduates to receive substandard preparation in their disciplines, and their test scores reflect this gradual decline (Hoffman 1996:85). It is instructive to note here that the long period of investment on lower levels of education especially the secondary level with no corresponding investment at the tertiary level has also had a knock-on-effect on HE. Indeed, as would be seen shortly, the expansion on primary and secondary education provided a large pool of post-secondary students who increased the demand for HE, one of the reasons for the upsurge of private higher education in Ghana, today.

From a different viewpoint, critics have commented on the heavy reliance on external aid as part of the features of SAP, which has rather increased the external debit of Ghana from $1.77b in 1983 to £2.270b in 1988. Clearly the Ghanaian economy is aid-driven, and the nation's economic future is not so bright due to dependence of foreign aid, mounting debt burden and escalating debt service ratio (Boafo-Arthur 1999:52-53). The World Bank/IMF implemented SAP across SSA because the duo believed the 'soaring debts' of SSA countries was crippling their economies, so to further increase the debts of the recipients of SSA leaves much to be desired. The effects of SAP thus remain questionable as it defeats the purported idea behind its implementation. According to Atteh (1996), the actions and policies

formed by international donors and creditors for African countries have been described as re-colonisation of Africa. In the words of former President Rawlings in December 1989, he stated that,

> ‘*I should be the first to admit that the economic recovery program (launched in 1983 and since acclaimed internationally as a success especially in the corridors of the World Bank) has not provided all the answers to our national problems (Cited in African Business1 990: 11).*

The implication for HE was that, as debt and debt servicing were mounting for the government, financing education and more specifically higher education was increasingly difficult.

From the foregoing, the deduction is that HE has suffered from a long period of socio-economic and political developments. The combined effects of SAP, Jomotien Declaration coupled with increase in population and the stance taken by the international community to neglect HE due to its economic returns was that the continued full state control and financing enjoyed by HE became questionable and public HE became a convenient target for the government to reduce its expenditure. As pointed out by Sawyer (2004:1) *that with the relative decline of state support during the severe economic crisis of the 1980s Africa's universities suffered substantial deterioration: overcrowding, infrastructure deficiencies, and inadequate access to international knowledge resources.* Consequently, Oghenekohwo and Abu (2011) are of this view that the seemingly negligence of the public sector to adequately fund higher education in most sub-Saharan African countries provides a justification for private initiatives in university teaching, training, research and community development activities.

It is logical to argue that like a double-edged sword, the SAP contributed to the neglect of higher education in the 1980s and early 1990s, an event which led to the

development of the private sector to participate in basic service delivery. The intention of the World Bank/IMF to salvage a dying economy has gone pear-shaped. In the process, national 'heirlooms' have been lost but a new era in higher education systems have evolved. Whichever way this is looked at, the benefits of SAP are debateable, as there have been social costs which extends to deindustrialization and a total loss of control over socioeconomic policy making. All these social costs present themselves as new challenges for African universities (Sawyer 2004).

Apart from SAP and its discontents which affected public-funded higher education, political developments, and other factors worldwide have also had it impact on higher education. As part of national development, higher education suffered from inconsistencies and instability in the economy. Boafo-Arthur (1999) has argued that political instability and maladministration over the years had an equally devastating toll on the economy and national development. Of special significance are the frequent changes in government through undemocratic means since independence. Between 1966 and 1981, there were four successful military interventions and one successful palace coup (1978). There were several abortive coups. These unconstitutional regime changes led to grave policy discontinuities that had a deleterious impact on economic planning and development. In affirmation, the authors of a UNESCO-Breda report remarked that,

> *To say that higher education in Africa is in crisis does not mean simply that the funds available to run higher education institutions are grossly inadequate; thereby making them subsist on a starvation diet. More than that African countries and societies are going through a period of economic uncertainties, political and social upheavals, plus other contortions and higher education has become a victim of the prevailing state of Affairs (Quoted in Atuahene 2006:32).*

Apart from SAP and political instability that have had their fair share of impacts on public universities, it is instructive to note that there have been global factors that have

equally threatened the existence of public universities. In the section that follows, I discuss the global factors, which is then followed by the emergence of private higher education in Ghana.

Global Drivers of Private Higher Education in Ghana

As mentioned above, apart from SAP and political instability, certain conditions have also driven private participation and expansion in the provision of higher education in Ghana, and these conditions directly affect one another. James (1986) mentions that the developmental pattern of private higher education comes in two folds. There is an excess demand which refers to the insufficient supply of state universities to meet the growing demand; and there is differentiated demand which refers to the expansion of private higher education due to a special demand from some groups of people in the society. In a related discourse, Wei (2009) argues that the development patterns of PHE in developing countries may be labelled as the 'excess demand' type, whereas that of developed countries may be described as 'differentiated demand'. Similarly, Altbach (1999) believes the factors behind the growth in PHE to be a mixture of unparalleled need for access to higher education and the inability or reluctance of governments to provide the needed support has brought private higher education to the limelight. Against this, it could be argued that development patterns of PHE in developing countries may exhibit a 'differentiated demand' pattern as well. As would be seen shortly, the courses offered by the modern PHE institutions tend to skew towards business-related and ICT programmes. Due to globalization, which is also discussed as one of the drivers of PHE, these courses are in high demand in the labour market; however, it appears the public universities have not been able to meet this high demand.

While excess demand for HE and the financial inability of the state seem to be the most commonly, if not universally accepted factors, it is also imperative to note that they are not the causes in themselves. Certain inter-related factors have produced the excess demand and have also caused the states to be financially incapable of expanding higher education. While PHE analysts worldwide have attributed the expansion of PHE to several factors, the factors pertinent to Ghana are:

- Structural Adjustment Programme
- Globalization
- Population Growth
- Culture

Structural Adjustment Programme: - As already indicated, like a double-edged sword, the SAP had its discontents and benefits. In the context of HE, SAP resulted in major policy shifts with multiple effects. Firstly, SAP prioritized primary and secondary education which led to the neglect of higher education. Thus, according to a World Bank (1989) report,

> *not only were primary and secondary education levels prioritized but there was an active divestiture from higher education by the state, under the belief of the infallibility, efficiency and effectiveness of the private sector*. (World Bank 1989 cited in Mabizela 2007:22-23).

In the long term, the effect of this stance by international donors created a pool of post-secondary students seeking higher education but there was no corresponding increase in higher education to meet demand. As indicated by Mabizela (2007:23), "*such advice was attached to the conditions of the Bank's lending to developing countries, and this resulted in education systems bloated with primary and secondary education graduates in the mid to late 1990s"*. The resultant effect was that the existing

state universities did not have the capacity to absorb the secondary graduates because there had not been a corresponding growth in higher education. In Ghana, for example, between 1999 and 2006, the number of students seeking access to HE doubled to 118,000 but the public-funded universities were unable to absorb all of them. In particular, the University of Ghana received 22,865 applications in 2008, however just over a third or 8,774 students were enrolled (Adu, UWN). According to Bayeh (2009), little efforts have been made to expand the physical structures to correspond to the increased enrolment figures at the universities. In Ghana, it is a common for students to sit in pairs on a single desk due to lack of tables and chairs; and some students are compelled to stand and look through windows to take lecture notes. Secondly, SAP initiated the development and participation of the private sector in the provision of basic delivery services. As indicated by Arthur (2006) the drive to promote the private sector has become a central part of Ghana's economic development plan since it signed up for the structural adjustment program (SAP) in 1983.

Lastly, as already indicated above, conditions of SAP implied that the international donors had a substantial amount of influence on the budget of the recipients. It was an expectation for loan recipients to drastically decrease their efforts in protecting the socio-economic rights of their citizens, in respect of, health care, housing, education and jobs, in the short term (Abouharb and Cingrenelli 2006). For example, in 1991, the government of Kenya was forced to reduce the number of students admitted to public universities to no more than 3 percent in 2017, before it could access credit assistance from the World Bank. Such restrictions, no doubt, promoted the establishment of many private universities and institutions in Kenya (Osokoya 2007, Varghese 2004).

Globalization**:** Although the arguments on these societal forces seem to be fragmented, among the most influential forces, globalisation and its impact appear high on the agenda. Kuyini (2013:161) states that: "*For countries like Ghana and Uganda, recent education reform goals have been influenced by the unavoidable storm of globalisation and by the World Bank".* According to Sanyal (2011), globalization is a process which develops the interconnectivity between humans, institutions and countries. Sanyal (2011) argues further that globalization is driven by information and innovation which are both products of higher education. In the view of Baumann and Blythe (2008), globalization is not a new phenomenon as they claim it has spanned over several centuries. However, the advent of new technologies accelerated the speed of globalization due to the ease in the circulation of information, resources, and people. Globalization, which is more recent, has had its advantages and disadvantages, therefore like many dominant social dialogues, there are dichotomous views from critics and advocates about the benefits and drawbacks of globalisation on higher education. While there are several lines of argumentation in favour of globalisation, there are those who believe the tenets of globalisation are questionable. Some authors are of the view that globalisation is a highly debated issue, conceived to be both a process and an ideology with broad implications, which extends to political, socioeconomic, cultural and technological sectors of the economy. It has been described as multi-faceted and unpredictable (Altbach & Knight 2007, Morley 2003).

Globalisation, as has become obvious, has had an impact on higher education in many ways. Proponents of globalisation believe globalisation has increased the demand for education, especially university education, and this has increased pressure on the whole system for higher quality schooling (Carnoy 2005), thereby affecting the rise of the quality industry (Morley 2003). In addition to the benefits of

globalisation, Altbach & Knight (2007) argue that globalisation has resulted in the integration of research; increase in international labour market for scholars and scientists; the use of English as the lingua franca for scientific communication; the growth of communications firms and of multinational and technology publishing, and the use of information technology (IT). These positive outcomes, they argue facilitate communication; permits efficient storage, selection, and dissemination of knowledge; and allows providers to offer academic programs through e-learning. Similarly, to Currie and Newson (1998), globalisation sits within the neoliberalism framework. The fundamentals of neoliberalism are free trade and open markets instruments in all sectors of the economy. In terms of higher education, this implies reduced public spending and consequently an increase in privatisation and marketization of public services. This, further, exposes state institutions to competition as there is a reduction or removal of regulatory barriers to free trade (Morley 2003). In consequence, higher education especially private higher education has thus expanded all around the globe and this has come with it the need for more robust quality assurance measures.

In contrast, some authors have highlighted the negative impact of globalisation. Morley (2003) argues that there is now a more apparent connection between massification, industrialisation and higher education with the needs of commerce and industry, such that the purity of knowledge production institutions have been blighted. This new position of the university, Morley (2003) argues, implies the university is now one provider and has to open their doors to new constituencies, new competitions and new risks. For the private universities, Morley (2003) argues further that market forces, profit driven motives and commodification of higher education means that more attention is paid to quality and value. Likewise, Collini (2012) asserts that although universities have become so important or numerous, there is a loss of identity and a

lack of confidence. He argues further that universities across the world in the early 21st century find themselves in a paradoxical position. Never before in human history have, they been so numerous or so important, yet never before have they suffered from such disabling lack of confidence and loss of identity. In addition, globalisation is also believed to have increased exploitation, social exclusion and inequity. Bauman (1999) avows that social exclusion is as direct result of globalisation, while Gorostiaga (1999) argus that globalisation can lead to unfairness due to different levels of technological advancement in different countries.

Arguing from a different perspective, Brown et al (2011) notes how neoliberalism, which is also believed to be a drive behind globalisation, has failed to deliver on the promise of education, jobs and rewards. Their argument here is that neoliberalism has promoted the idea of 'learning equals earning', which has encouraged individuals to take on personal debt to pay for college and university credentials believing they will be rewarded once they enter the job market (Brown et al 2011:5). The problem this poses for society is an education explosion in the supply of students and the potential limited opportunities in the job market. In relation Africa, globalisation has enabled it to be part of new trends which are pushing for the expansion of HE like the creation of knowledge economies, competitive advantage, return rates to university education and a return to the realization of the role of HE in socio-economic development, which were occurring in other parts of the world as discussed below. All of these trends have been spread by globalization.

Knowledge Economies and the Role of Higher Education- There is widespread agreement that in a globalized world, education is a vital element necessary for the preparation of people for the knowledge economy (Chetro-Szivos 2010). In the same vein, Jamshidi (2012) argues, therefore, that knowledge acquisition has risen because it is now

believed it gives you a competitive advantage in the job market. He argues further that, because of this, there seems to be a paradigm shift - knowledge acquisition is now viewed as wealth more than physical wealth. The new economy, therefore, focuses on intellectual capital, as opposed to physical labour (Nagaraju and Suresh 2008). In a related development, Leach et al (2008) have also pointed out that the recent decade has witnessed an explicit linkage of widening participation in higher education with sustainable economic and social development within globalising knowledge economies. Subsequently in the developing world, the urgent need to construct knowledge economies implies that they now need human capacity with higher education training. In a speech, by the then UN Secretary General, the Late Kofi Annan states that:

> *"The university must become a primary tool for Africa's development in the new century. Universities can help develop African expertise; they can enhance the analysis of African problems; strengthen domestic institutions; serve as a model environment for the practice of good governance, conflict resolution and respect for human rights, and enable African academics to play an active part in the global community of scholars" (Bloom et al 2006:2)*

On account of the above, the late 1990s saw a policy intervention from the international donor community especially the World Bank. There has been a major policy shift on the agenda of donor agencies who exercise so much influence on expenditure of African countries. They have a different view on the role of HE and now promote for the expansion of high education. Bloom et al (2006) remarks that, in recent years, key organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have gone back to appreciating the significance of higher education and its impact on economic development. In its policy paper *New Challenges*, the World Bank argues that the is a direct impact of higher education on primary and secondary school education because higher education produces the teachers and administrators; and ultimately, the quality of products from here will also impact on the quality of higher

education institutions (World Bank Report 2002, New Challenges). Similarly, Furniss (2005) has reiterated that, while the last decade has saw the Department for International Development (DFID) and other donors leave the primary education sector to fend for itself, it is now apparent that restored balance with a refocus on tertiary education has emerged.

In its reaction to the global changing environment, a World Bank report issued by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, it was argued that higher education can no longer be considered as a luxury for the developed world in a globalized world (Morley et all 2007). A decade ago, the World Bank argued in contrast to this position at a meeting with African vice-chancellors in Harare in 1986. At that time, the World Bank viewed higher education institutions in Africa as a luxury and promoted training over-seas (Brock-Utne 1995). The contrast between the two viewpoints at the different points in time could only be associated with the pace of the globalization. Gone are the days when HE was thought to be expensive and only benefited the wealthy and privilege, and as such HE contended with primary and secondary education for policy attention. A decade on and changing global environment has steered the role of primary players (Ewen 2009).

Even more so, the World Bank has argued the importance of HE in the achievement of Millennium Development goals. In the policy paper, *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education (2002)* the World Bank argues that it is doubtful that any developing country could make significant progress toward achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for education—universal enrolment in primary education and elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education—without a strong tertiary education

system. There is a further argument that *Constructing Knowledge Societies* uses in order to further its support of tertiary education. "*It holds that a primary function of higher education is 'building capacity for managing and improving the basic and secondary education system, including capacity for training and retraining teachers and principals'. The assumption here is that higher education matters because it is the site where teachers and principals are created in the first place"* (Kotecha 2004:117).

With this recognition, HE is now on the agenda of many countries and SSA is no exception, however most SSA countries are unable to expand current state-funded universities and thus the private sector is seen to be at the forefront of meeting this high demand.

Rate of returns to Higher Education: In contrast to earlier views about the return on education, recent studies some OECD countries revealed that the rates of return gained from university education are as high or even higher than that of secondary or primary education. The studies also measured the rates of return in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and this showed the rates of return for universities have risen over the period, in relation, to secondary and primary education. (Canoy 2005). It is now a worldwide recognition that HE has both public and private benefits. In Ghana and Nigeria, recent studies have shown that private returns range from 19 per cent to 38 percent while social returns range from 9.7 per cent to 17 per cent (Chute and Dookhony 2007). In a World Bank/UNESCO report, it was stated that the "*benefits of higher education extend well beyond the incremental earnings accruing to those individuals who receive it* "(World Bank/UNESCO, 2000, p.40). Even though these were less seen in the past, they have now become the major underpinning factor which has changed the face of higher education. (Pillay 2011) explains further that society

can benefit when individuals gain from attending university, as higher earnings will lead to increased tax revenues for governments, which will also ease demands on government budget. Individuals with higher earnings will benefit the consumption markets because there will be a greater consumption for the economy.

Considerations of this kind have also been expressed by Bloom et al (2005), who argue that higher education may create greater tax revenue, increase savings and investment, and lead to a more entrepreneurial and civic society. It can also improve a nation's health, contribute to reduced population growth, improve technology, and strengthen governance. Furthermore, Bloom et al (2005) highlight the benefit of higher education by citing India's emergence on the world economic stage, which has been attributed to the focus India gave to the provision of high quality higher education that concentrated on technical education. The central idea being that, ultimately the direct benefit for the individual transforms into a societal benefit.

On account of the above, the inference could be argued that globalisation has had both a positive and negative effect on higher education. The view out of these discourses is that if globalisation has further increased auditing and accounting of quality assurance systems, then one could argue that some aspect of globalisation is after all a positive one. Nevertheless, it is instructive to highlight that the promotion of social injustice and inequity by globalisation as argued by some authors, is in contrast with the universally held view that the goal of university education is to help build a fairer and more just society. In sum, Pels (2000) argues that globalisation brings with its high hopes of transformation, i.e. increasing good governance and transparency, yet on the other hand, they generate the fear of increasing global inequalities.

Population Growth: One major factor pressing for the expansion of HE is population explosion. In most developing countries, as the young population increase in number and consequently, the demands of higher education rise, and the governments cannot respond to all the demands (Jamshidi et all 2012). Recent research has shown that Africa in general and SSA in particular has a youthful population. According to United Nations World Population Prospects, 60% of Africa's population is less than 25 years old. Only 5% of Africa's population falls within the age range of 60 to 80 years old, remarkably different from other regions such as Europe whose estimate for the same age group is 26%. The rise in population has been attributed to increased fertility and a reduction in child mortality rates to due to improved health care provision. There is a high presence of youths in many developing countries due to decades of high fertility rate, which has resulted in sub-Saharan Africa being the youngest region in the world with 44% of its population under the age of fifteen years. Comparatively, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean have 30% of their population under the age of fifteen, while it is only 16% for Europe. Sub-Saharan African women are noted to give birth to six children on the average, which is the highest in any region. With the AIDS epidemic hitting the African continent, largely, there has not been a corresponding impact that has reduced the overall population, significantly. These fertility levels have caused the youthful population in Africa (Ashford 2007).

With such a force in population growth, its implications on basic services delivery cannot be overlooked. As explained by Atteh (1996), it is a phenomenon that is having tremendous repercussions on the region's physical resources and social services such as education, health and nutrition. In relation to HE, the rapid rise in population has not come with a comparable expansion in HE. For example, between 1985 and 1990,

Africa had the highest population growth of 3.1 per cent compared with 2.34 per cent in South Asia, 2.09 per cent in Latin America, 0.23 in Europe and 0.90 per cent in USA. Some African countries like Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria were growing at 3.5 per cent each year (Atteh 1996). In contrast, this was the period that most SSA countries were implementing SAP which meant that financial resources were being diverted from public-funded HE to primary and secondary education. There were no expansions in HE, yet the number of school-age children were increasing. The result is the high number of secondary school leavers seeking HE with limited resources to absorb them. In response to this, the private sector had to fill this gap.

Culture: - There is a cultural connection that has also contributed to the rapid expansion in PHE even though it has not been mostly discussed in HE literature. From a cultural perspective, Africans in general value education and they tend to 'praise' and promote that which is non-state. There is this conviction that basic services provided by the private sector are often better managed and of good quality than that provided by the state. For example, in Ghana, most parents would rather send their children to private primary and secondary schools than the state schools; this has resulted in a rise in private pre-university education especially at the primary education level. A trend which seems to have developed in private primary education level in recent times is the claim by these private primary schools to be using British and American curriculums; parents see this as an added advantage for their kids. In consequence, private schools and hospitals, most of the time, tend to be successful businesses. Indeed, these private schools and hospitals are mostly better in quality as it is thought to be. Osokoya (2007) makes a reference that in most African countries, private universities are perceived to be efficient and of high quality and are therefore

preferable to state universities which are perceived to have poor quality standards. It is this conviction that has been transferred to the perception about higher education. With the emergence of PHE, the demand for their services will be high because they will be preferred to the state-funded universities and this has contributed in a way to the expansion of private HE.

From the foregoing, apart from changing global environment, the position of the World Bank has been pivotal in influencing the direction of education in general and HE in particular, in SSA countries. In the earlier years of World, higher education in SSA countries was, literally, put on the back burner and totally ignored. In place of that, basic education was boosted. This idea that basic education yielded far more returns that higher education was perpetuated. Subsequently, this idea became the norm, and the higher education was put under enormous strain (Peril and Promise cited in Ewen 2009).

In recent years, the World Bank is seen to have made a U-turn. It is now clear that basic education and higher education are no longer mutually exclusive (Ewen 2009). By the time James Wolfensohn took over as the Head of the World Bank in 1995, the position of the bank had shifted. Banya and Elu (2001:28) points out that;

> *the question that used to be asked of developing countries by International aid groups' "How can you think about higher education when you can't afford to provide basic education for many of your people?"* was no longer being asked. As a senior higher-education specialist at the World Bank puts it, *"There was an ideology against investment in higher education, this has evaporated* (Banya and Elu 2001:28)

Arising out of the above submissions, there was a higher demand for HE, and no corresponding expansion of HE facilities. Most countries are faced with economic crisis and fiscal resources scarcity to expand state funded higher education. Consequently, the private sector can replace the public sector and fill this gap and respond to the global need of higher education (Jamshidi et el 2012).

Development of Private Higher Education in Ghana

It is logical to argue that the development of private universities in Ghana could be attributed to the events that have occurred in the public sector HE institutions as has been seen in the above accounts. Sawyer (2004) points out that, with the relative decline of state support during the severe economic crisis of the 1980s Africa's universities suffered substantial deterioration: overcrowding, infrastructure deficiencies, and inadequate access to international knowledge resources. Consequently, Oghenekohwo and Abu (2011) argue that the seemingly negligence of the public sector to adequately fund higher education in most sub-Saharan African countries provided a justification for private initiatives in university.

Following the events in the public universities sector as discussed above, it had become apparent by the late 1980s that the government of Ghana could no longer shoulder all the responsibilities to increase access to HE and called for the private sector to contribute their quota to provide HE in Ghana. The government took major policy measures to streamline its higher education system. Accordingly, under a World Bank/Government of Ghana project, the Tertiary Education Project (TEP) was designed to assist the Government of Ghana with the restructuring and quality enhancement of its tertiary education sector, after a prolonged period of underfunding and decline. Subsequently, implementation took place over the period 1993-98 (Girdwood 1999).

The Tertiary Education Project was initially a preliminary policy framework drawn over a two-year period by the University Rationalisation Committee (URC) which was appointed by the government in 1987. The terms of reference for the Committee was to produce proposals for improving the management, academic structure and funding for Ghana's tertiary education sector. The URC undertook a thorough job of reviewing

the current situation of tertiary education in Ghana, and of suggesting a way forward from the demoralized and depressed state then experienced within the sector. Upon the recommendation of the URC, the policy framework was subsequently re-formulated as a White Paper, *Reforms to the Tertiary Education System* (1991), with development objectives to:

- to reverse system deterioration, falling standards, and the declining quality of education.
- to expand access to tertiary education.
- to establish a stable and sustainable basis for the financing of tertiary education; and
- to create institutional capacities for quality monitoring and policy evaluation in the tertiary education sector. (Girdwood 1999: IX).

It is also useful to mention that subsequent governments took steps to create an enabling environment for the private sector to develop. A private sector development was initiated by the NDC government in the 1980s and 1990s, which was continued by the NPP government but probably in a different approach. To realize its private-sector development goals, the NPP government created a Ministry of Private Sector Development and also launched the President's Special Initiative (PSI) in August 2001 with the aim of identifying and developing potential business opportunities in the country. This was an era that the government referred to as the 'Golden Age of Business in Ghana (Arthur 2006:37). In relation to HE, the sector was deregulated following a general trend of deregulation in Africa in the wave of democratization. In Ghana, this process started with the creation of a structure for accrediting private universities. In the 2007, at a Ghana Education Reform, a goal was set to increase

private participation in educational services and aligned policies such as tax exemptions on imported books were created (Adu 2009:1). The aftermath of this saw the expansion of private higher education.

Sawyer (2004) states the emergence of private and for-profit HE providers therefore began in Ghana in the 1990s and by 2001, Ghana had 7 and soon 21 registered, and 8 in operation. In Ghana, Valley View University at Oyibi, run by the Seventh Day Adventist Church, was the first private university to be accredited by the NAB in 1995, followed by Central University College in Accra in 1997 (Leach et al 2008). Presently, there are 81 private tertiary institutions in Ghana offering degree programs (Private Universities - Ghana Education Center; NAB - Ghana Education Center - accessed 08/03/2021). [7]

Characteristics of Private Universities in Ghana

This section continues with the discourse on the development of private universities by outlining their unique characteristics.

Mapping of PHE Institutions

Naturally, the population growth pattern, as discussed in Chapter one is also reflected in the way private universities have developed in the country. Below are two figures which show where and how private universities are dispersed in the country. Figure 4 shows the regions and the number of universities established there, while figure 4a depicts all the regions in Ghana to help put the locations into perspective.

[7] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

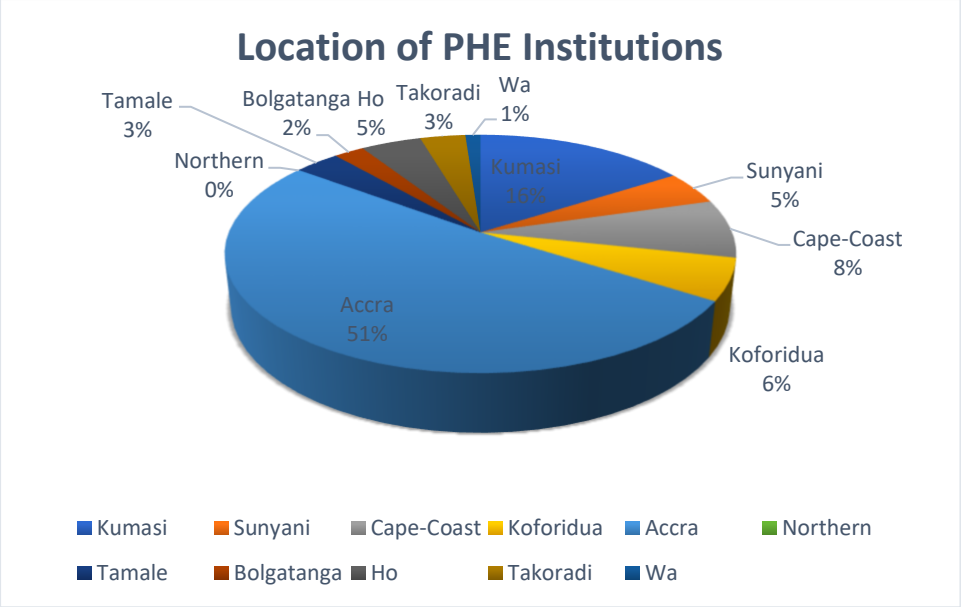


Figure 4: Location of Private Higher Education Institutions in Ghana

Source: NAB - Ghana Education Center; Private Universities - Ghana Education Center **– *accessed 08/03/2021*** [8]

Unlike the public universities which are fairly distributed across the ten regions of the country, with each region having at least one public university, the situation with the spread of PHE institutions is different. Out of the 81 PHE institutions in the country, Accra, the capital is home to around 51% of them, followed by Kumasi and Cape-Coast with approximately 16% and 8% respectively. As depicted by Figure 4a below, this means that most of the private universities are located in the south of the country. The likely reasons for this dispersion is due to urbanisations, as was mentioned in chapter one. The country has experienced a rise in its citizens migrating from the rural to urban areas to seek greener pastures (please see page 12).

[8] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.



Figure 5: Map of Ghana
Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Ghana-map-showing-the-study-area-Accra-
Accessed 02/05/20 [9]

The Growth and Size of the Sector

Specifically, in Africa, Ng'ethe et al 2008: xix assert that since 1990, private universities have increased at a much faster rate than public universities. In Ghana, this assertion is supported by the space of growth. In the last two decades, the number of private universities has spiralled and at a rate that is well and above the rate of growth of public universities. According to Sawyer (2004), the case of Ghana is particularly striking in that, in 1990, there were no private universities as reported in a study carried out by the Association of African Universities (AAU 1995) for the Ministry

[9] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

of Education in Ghana. The study revealed further five years later in 1995, still, Ghana had no private universities although proposals had been made to establish about three universities. After another five years later in 2001, seven private universities had been established. The comparative growth between public and private universities is presented in Figure 3. From 7 universities in 2001, the numbers increased to 21 in 2006; 42 in 2012 and currently 88 accredited private universities, as mentioned above.

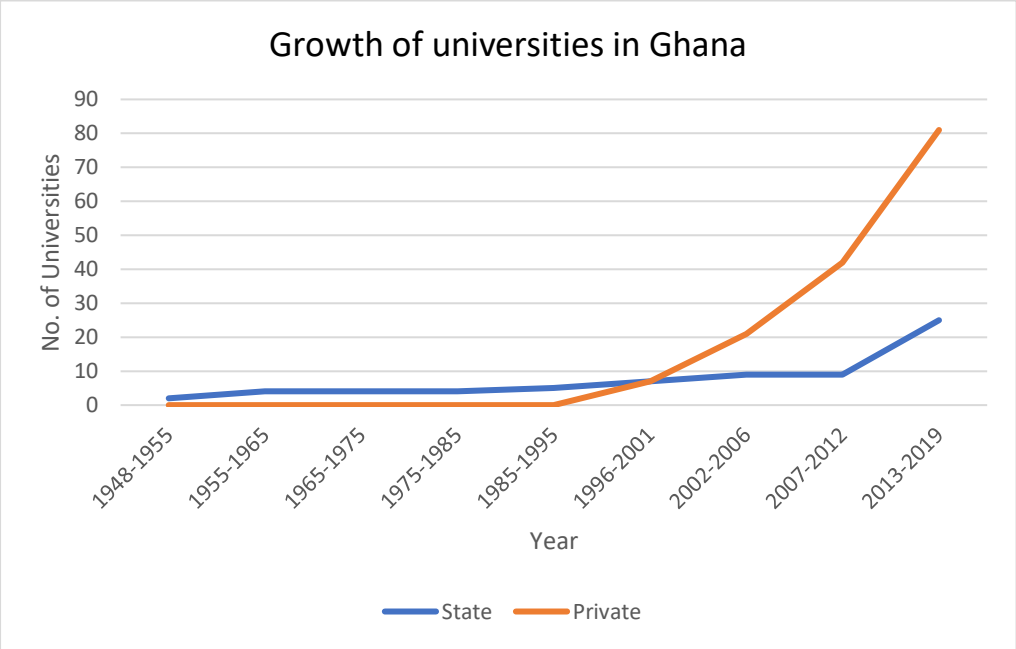


Figure 6: The Growth of Universities in Ghana, (1948-2019)

Source: NAB - Ghana Education Center; Private Universities - Ghana Education Center **– *accessed 08/03/2021***

Despite the rapid growth of the private higher education sector and the fact that private universities have outnumbered the state universities, a tertiary education statistics report issued in 2018 by the National Accreditation Board of Ghana revealed that the private sector still enrols less than half of the number of students enrolled by the state universities.

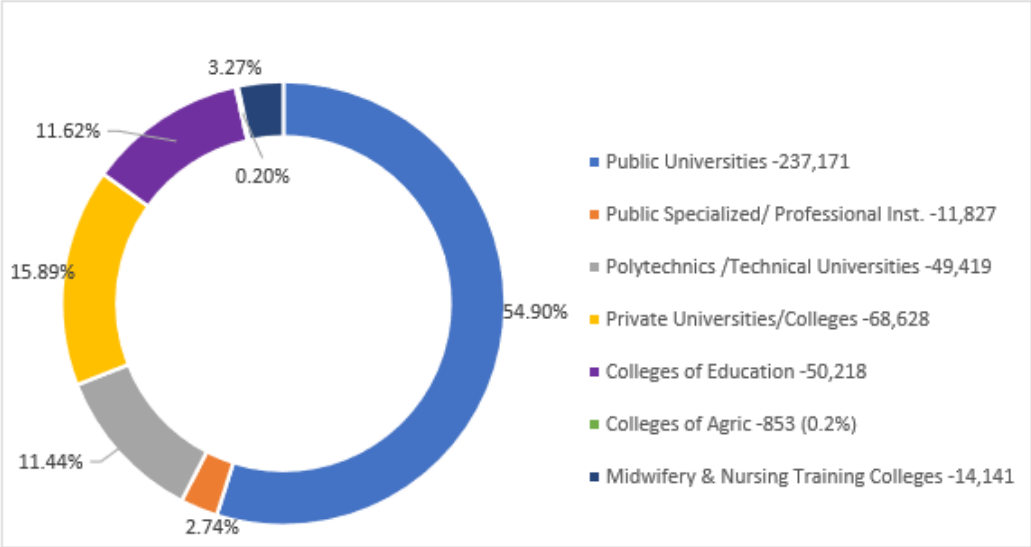


Figure 7: Tertiary Education Institutions in Ghana
Source: Tertiary Education Statistics Report, National Accreditation Board 2018

According to the report, in the period 2015/16, there were 20 state universities and 65 private universities. However, the student enrolment was comparatively far more in the state universities with a staggering enrolment figure of 237, 171 students, while the 65 private universities enrolled 68, 628 students.

Programmes Offered

For the private university, course provision is a key aspect of university strategies to generate revenue. Thus, in their not-for-profit status and for the reason that they are privately funded, PHE institutions in Ghana tend to offer mostly theology, IT and business-related programmes which relatively are not expensive to run. A representation of the major programs offered by private universities is presented in the figure below.

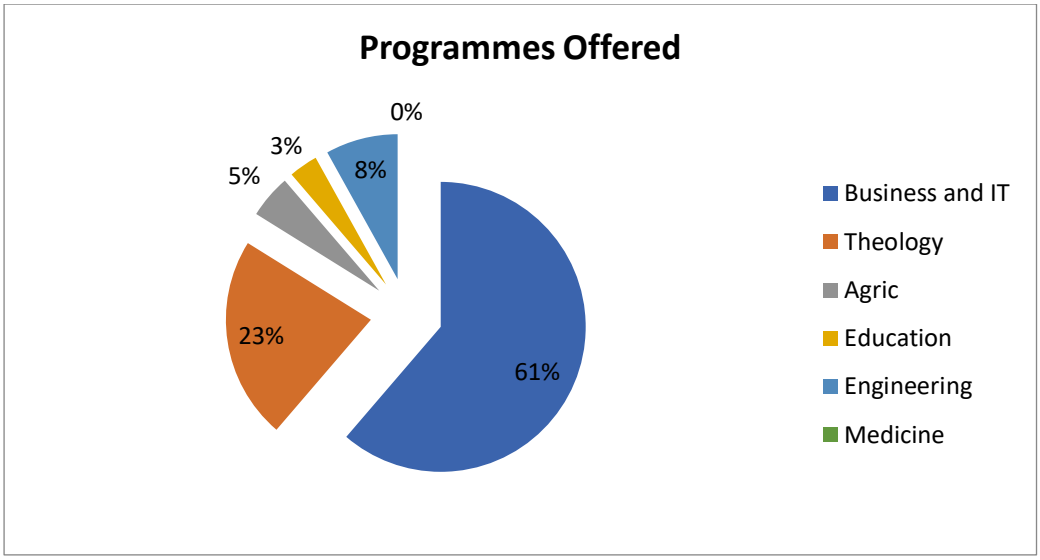


Figure 8: Programmes offered by private universities

Source: NAB - Ghana Education Center; Private Universities - Ghana Education Center **– *accessed 08/03/2021***

For this reason, none of the private universities offer programmes in Medicine which is relatively expensive and takes longer to complete. In his recent state of the nation address, the then President of Ghana, John Mahama expressed concern that many universities and tertiary institutions go for softer course options and churn graduates in business and humanities at the expense of science, technology and allied courses which are increasingly in demand (www.universityworldnews.com- accessed 02/03/2014).

Affiliation

Private universities in Ghana are all affiliated to a state university referred to as the Mentoring University. This is a requirement and are therefore referred to as University Colleges. According to the National Accreditation Board (NAB), affiliation is used to ensure and maintain standards in the private higher education sector.

> *Affiliation is a relationship agreement between a newly-established tertiary institution/prospective tertiary institution (i.e. mentored institution) and a nationally-recognized chartered tertiary institution (i.e. mentoring institution). Prospective tertiary institutions should first seek affiliation with Chartered institution(s). The objective of the affiliation is to ensure the attainment and maintenance of high standards for the promotion of academic quality. The relationship is for the mentoring institution to provide academic support and supervision to the mentored institution. Graduates of mentored institutions shall receive certificates of the mentoring institution until the mentored institution is granted a Presidential Charter.*

Source: http://www.nab.gov.gh/about-us/classification-of-accredited-institutions - accessed 27/05/2020[10]

The process to establish a private university involves accreditation and reaccreditation of the institution and the programmes it intends to offer and then a presidential charter when the private university is deemed to be able to manage its own affairs and award its own degrees. A charter is granted when a private university has satisfied certain conditions, with the first condition being to be in existence for ten years. After 10 years, a university college can apply to NAB to be considered for a presidential charter. The process is stated below:

1. The applicant institution shall have operated under the supervision of a mentoring institution for a minimum period of ten (10) years.

2. The accredited institution shall submit an application to NAB with a copy to the mentoring institution using the appropriate NAB questionnaire.

3. The applicant institution shall request the mentoring institution to submit a comprehensive appraisal directly to NAB.

4. A joint Committee of the Board, made up of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and the Accreditation Committee (AC), shall undertake a preliminary evaluation of the application based on the following:

    a. Special reports on Governance and Management.
    b. Comprehensive Audit Report.
    c. Annual Reports; and
    d. A comprehensive appraisal report from the mentoring institution.

5. Following the review of the above reports, the Joint Committee of the Board shall assess the application within 180 days and make recommendations to the Board based on the following:

    a. The length of period of operation under mentorship not less than ten(10) years;
    b. The governance structure of the institution.
    c. The quality of teaching, research, the academic staff and work of the applicant.
    d. The financial, material and teaching facilities and resources at the disposal of the institution; and
    e. Other factors the Board may consider appropriate.

[10] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

6. NAB shall make appropriate recommendations to the President of the Republic of Ghana through the Minster responsible for Education for the grant of a Charter or otherwise immediately after the Board meeting.

7. Decision by the President

Source: http://www.nab.gov.gh/2014-08-13-14-37-14/gazette-nab-requirements Accessed 24/05/2020[11]

Since the emergence of private universities over the last two decades in Ghana, there have been five universities that have been granted a presidential charter, namely Valley View University, Central University, Ashesi University, Trinity Theological Seminary and Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture.

Implications of Decolonisation for Quality in Higher Education in Ghana

According to Mamdani (1990), African universities set up in the colonial era were initially started as colonial projects to produce frontlines to promote European value systems and so the modern African university has been established to model European higher education. In a similar vein, Musitha & Mafukata (2018) argue that many scholars believe that most African countries inherited the education systems of their colonisers.

As mentioned earlier on in the chapter, the Asquith Report back then recommended that all the universities and colleges set up in the colonies must be affiliated to the University of London and be issued with certificates from University of London. These universities and colleges operated the systems and education policies of the University of London and had external interferences in terms of quality assurance in admissions, human resources, governance and management, examinations teaching and learning. In the modern African university, certain quality assurance practices like the use of

[11] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

external examiners, writing of exams, peer reviews, students surveys, affiliations, curriculum development and setting up of QA agencies to regulate the activities of universities are still prevalent, as would be seen later in the thesis. African universities back then carried on these practices of their colonial masters and the modern African university still exhibits some of these practices. Mamdani (1990) argues that after independence, the European knowledge systems continue to influence the way knowledge is imparted to African students. In the modern African university, affiliation to a foreign university is still prevalent. There is still the presence of the European model and more so the need the universities feel to role model the culture of foreign universities. In Ghana, most of the private universities, according to their websites, have affiliations to foreign universities and the foreign universities 'quality assure' processes in the Ghanaian universities. In other words, these universities are still controlled to some extent by the foreign universities.

After independence, Formunyam (2017) argues that Europe has been presented as the epicentre for higher education and scholarship, in general. The implications of inheriting educational practices as indicated above could be argued to be mainly contextual and have their advantages and disadvantages. For instance, in Ghana, the affiliation system is used by the National Accreditation Board to regulate new universities, so it is a requirement for private universities to affiliate with a state university for a considerable number of years. In this way, the state university becomes a mentor to the private university and awards its degrees to the students at the private universities until such a time that the private university is granted a charter to operate and award its own degrees. The affiliation system was, to an extent, a quality assurance practice in the colonial period which is still being used to quality assure new universities to ensure they are fit for purpose. On the other hand, it is reasonable to

argue that a system including quality assurance mechanisms built on European model cannot be expected to fit the African context in all instances. Mkandawire (2005) points out that the current practices in educational institutions in Africa including quality assurance pay a lip service to the African's real lived experience. Curriculum development has been argued to be a misfit for the African continent because they are still based on European model and not developed within the African context and has resulted in producing graduates who do not have the needed skills for the African continent. According to Musitha & Mafukata (2018), colonial practices inherited have contributed to the challenges African countries and their universities face such as inadequate funding, graduate unemployment, inconsistencies between graduates and skills required in the labour market, alienation and exclusion due to delivery modes and a lack of proficiency in the medium of instruction. For instance, Musitha & Mafukata (2018) comment on how research and funding collaborations with Europe are still influenced by European ideals and notions which can be linked to education practices that were inherited from colonisers. Musitha & Mafukata (2018) further argue that for decolonisation to be effective, there must be research into a curriculum that seeks to meet the needs and life experiences of students in their home country to make higher education relevant to African countries. In view of this, Adebisi (2016) argues that decolonizing inherited educational practices including quality assurance must include a thorough reorientation and should be a rigorous process that does not augment the idea that the local or indigenous way of doing things is inferior. On the other hand, QA practices as would be seen later in the thesis include benchmarking so, in this regard, it could be argued that it is best practice for African universities to benchmark their practices and performance with other universities both within and outside of their continent.

Summary

This chapter set out to recount the development of higher education in Africa and Ghana; and the events that necessitated the emergence of private higher education in Ghana. The chapter also highlighted the features of private universities in Ghana and the global factors that have also impacted on the growth of private higher education in Ghana and other SSA countries. Finally, the chapter ended with the potential implications of decolonisation on quality assurance in Ghana. In the next chapter, I shall review the relevant literature on quality assurance and position it in the context of the study.

Chapter Three

Conceptualisation and Contextualising Quality Assurance in Higher Education

"Both 'higher education' and 'quality assurance' are socially, politically and morally charged." Petrucka 2017

Introduction

The objective of a literature review is to set the study in a broad context to enable the researcher to differentiate what has been studied, previously, and what still needs to be studied (Boote and Beile 2005). This chapter, therefore, explores the two fundamental concepts of this thesis – 'quality assurance' and 'higher education' which will ultimately lead to the research questions. In addition, the chapter will synthesise the theories on quality and higher education to direct the theoretical framework of the study at the end of the chapter.

The extant literature on quality has increasingly become extensive in recent years. According to Harvey and Newton (2007), the literature stems from varied definitions and different ways of assuring quality to the effectiveness of quality assurance processes and the possibility of replacing the whole concept of quality assurance in higher education institutions. In subsequence, this chapter will explore the broad literature on quality and higher education; and position them in the context of the study. The first section of this chapter will examine the definitions, debates, developments, current trends and dynamics of quality and quality assurance in higher education. The discussions on quality assurance will direct the section to Internal Quality Assurance (IQA), which is the main focus of this study. In the second section, the idea of higher education will be explored. In both sections, the discussions will be from both the international and African perspectives. As Barnett (1992) argues, unless we attempt to reach a position of some clarity about the nature and substance of these concepts

and their relationships, any more procedural discussions (about criteria, methods, and forms of improvement of quality) are bound to be unsatisfactory. Finally, following the theories discussed, the theoretical framework will be established, then the chapter will conclude.

In what follows, a brief account of the historical overview of quality will be presented, followed by a discourse on the notion of quality. Next, the rise in quality issues is discussed leading to the concept of quality assurance and the implementation of internal quality assurance, which is the focus of this study.

QUALITY

Historical Overview of Quality Development

According to Sallis (2002), quality development began in the 13th century and could be traced back to medieval Europe. Originally, it was an essential part of craftsmanship. Here, the craftsmen set their own quality standards and the livelihoods and reputation depended on the quality of their work. To regulate themselves, they set up Guilds that monitored and created apprenticeships to ensure there was adequate training for starters. Craftsmanship was passed on to other parts of the world, hence, quality and monitoring standards in the industrialised world followed the craftsmanship model up until the 19th century, when mass production emerged. With this development, Sallis (2002) argues that an important aspect of the craftsmanship model which puts the responsibility to ensure quality on the worker was lost. Subsequently, the 20th century saw new quality processes in the industrialised world with the introduction of a new scientific way to quality management which was the use of division of labour.

Elsewhere in the United States, quality emerged after the quality revolution in Japan, after World War II. When America had initially rejected any form of quality

revolution, the Japanese welcomed the ideas of Americans Joseph M Juran and W. Edwards Deming, and instead of focusing on inspections, they rather shifted their attention to improving organisational processes. Subsequently, this approach led to the development of Total Quality Control (TQC), and this gave the Japanese "*a lion's share of the world markets in automobiles, electronics and consumer durables in the 1970s and '80s. Much of this market dominance was the result of the overriding concern for quality"* (Sallis 2002:8). Table 1 shows a chronology of the quality movement.

Pre-1900	Quality as an integral element of craftsmanship
1900-1920	Quality control by foreman
1920-1940	Inspection-based quality control
1940-1960	Statistical Process Control
1960-1980	Quality Assurance/Total Quality Control (Quality Department)
1980-1990	Total Quality Management (TQM)
1990 – present	TQM, the culture of continuous improvement, organisation-wide quality management

Table 1**: Chronology of Quality Movement Source: Sallis (2002:9)**

Alongside, TQM (Total Quality Management) (Sakthivel et al. 2005), there have been developments of new quality systems such as SERVQUAL by (Parasuraman et al. (1985), SERVPERF by (Cronin and Taylor, (1992) and HeDPERF (Abdullah 2006) that have emerged from the foundations of Joseph M Juran, W. Edwards Deming and the early Japanese practitioners of quality. By the mid-1990s, the first wave of quality reform, TQM (Total Quality Management) characterised by industrially constructed TQM principles had given way to a second wave focusing on meeting customer needs and value creation.

While it could be argued from the chronology of quality development above that quality has been a principal part of the manufacturing industry in the western world for decades and in recent years has evolved beyond the manufacturing sectors into the services sector like education and other public services sectors, to some analysts, quality in education is not new (Vroeijenstijn 1995; Green 1994; Liu 2016; AUN-QA (2010). According to the AUN-AQ (2010), the emergence and rapid growth of quality issues make it appear that quality is new to higher education, but this is untrue. Interestingly, Haskins and Homer (1957, cited in Ntim 2014) recount that in medieval times, students used to make professors accountable, and they did this by signing a bond with their professors to ensure they provided education that was worth the students' monies. Thus, attention to quality is not new in the education sector and has, traditionally, been part of education. Liu (2016) and the AUN-QA (2010), however, make the argument clearer and distinct. Liu (2016) argues that universities have always had quality assurance systems and has been part of the academic tradition quality in higher education up until the 1980s. He, however, cautions that the quality assurance systems were limited to universities and had nothing to do with external agencies. In a similar submission, the AUN-QA (2010) states that, although, universities had quality assurance systems, they were not structured. The implication of these assertions is that quality has always been part of the academic tradition, however, the concern or attention to quality seems to have leapt to the top of the agenda of many nations. This raises the question about what has triggered this leap, which is discussed later in the chapter.

The next section discusses the differing views on the definition of quality.

Definition of Quality

This section will focus on the definition of quality in both the international and Ghanaian contexts and ultimately conclude with the position of the study on what quality is, for the purposes of this study. Before proceeding to discuss the definition of quality, it will be useful to begin with the challenges that have been encountered in defining quality in general and specifically, in the higher education sector.

As discussed above, quality is not new in the higher education sector. As would be seen shortly in the chapter, rather it is the rise in quality issues that has gained so much attention in the last decade. It is interesting to note that it has been thirty-five since Ball (1985) asked the question, "*What the hell is quality?"* and the definition continues to be debatable. To begin with, Bobby (2014) argues that perhaps it is impossible to define or quantify quality. Afshar (1990:3) argues that the term '*quality' is one of the most exhaustively used words in everyday life, yet it has not yet been accurately or acceptably defined, measured or tested.* Drawing on an extensive range of sources, there is evidence that several authors have discussed the challenges in attempting to define quality. *Although, the ubiquitous and elusive concept of quality has preoccupied people throughout history, attempts to capture the concept of quality have resulted in a wide range of interpretations from philosophical discourses to operational definitions (Afshar 1990:38).* In a similar vein, Pounder (1999:156) argues that *quality is a 'notoriously ambiguous term' given that it has different meanings to different stakeholders.* Mishra (2007:11) remarks that *"to some it is like beauty that lies in the eyes of the beholder"*. To Green (1994:22), *quality like 'freedom' or 'justice', is an elusive concept*. One would argue that, with the growing focus and discourse on quality issues, there would be a definition or a consensus on the definition of quality, yet to date, there is none in the higher education sector. In his study, Galloway

(1996:22) *affirms that "there is no universal definition of quality readily apparent in the academic literature."*

The above scenarios are no different from what pertains to African countries. In Ghana, the National Accreditation Board (NAB) established by an Act of Parliament 2007, Act 744, and has the mandate to give accreditation and evaluate periodically the quality of programs offered by both private and public universities, does not give a definition of quality but suggests that quality is about an institution conforming to the standards set by the board. For example, according to NAB Legislative Instrument (L.I 1700 PP.7),

> *"for grant of accreditation, an institution has to comply with the relevant standards prescribed by the board" (www.nab.gov.gh - accessed 04/11/2013).*

Furthermore, a review of the government's White Paper on Tertiary Education Reforms issued in 1991, shows that there was little attempt made to define quality. Instead, there was a connection made between quality education and efficiency of resources. In this way, it appeared to suggest that efficiency in resource use alone would lead to an improvement in pedagogical practice. Girdwood argues that "w*hile there is obviously a connection - and the level of resourcing is a major factor in teaching quality - little further attention was given to offering greater clarity, nor to defining the academic standards which would be relevant and/or desirable."* (Girdwood 1999:42). Clearly, the above connotations of quality are based on single factors, which make defining quality even more problematic. As explained by Ankomah et al (2005:5), *"more problems arise when only the outcomes of education are the focus for defining quality. This is because purposes of education are culturally bound and value-laden. For example, for some people, the purpose of education is to foster students' cognitive, moral, and social development; for others, it is a means of promoting social*

cohesion and nation building; while for some others, it is a preparation for the world of work". Similarly, Gyekye (2002:28) argues that achieving quality in education goes beyond quantitative expansion only, he states that;

> '*The desire or enthusiasm to access school education in order to acquire knowledge, skills, and new tools of analysis, is one thing; to actually succeed in acquiring them and showing evidence in having acquired them in concrete terms is quite another … The quality of the products of an institution or a programme is often evidenced in the quality of performance of the products' (Gyekye, 2002, p28).*

Some authors have argued the difficulty in defining quality from another angle, which is the intangible nature of educational services which makes it even more difficult to define quality. As Watty (2003) argues, it is not that easy to define quality in any context, however, the difficulty is heightened in an educational environment. In the same vein, Abari et al (2011:229) explain that "*services have the characteristics of being untouchable, non-congenial and the simultaneity of production and consumption*". To elaborate on this, Tsinidou et al (2010:227) explain that "*education services are often intangible and difficult to measure, since the outcome is reflected in the transformation of individuals in their knowledge, their characteristics and their behaviour*". There is also another dimension to the argument, which is stakeholders. Lovelock (2001) is of the view that apart from the intangible nature of higher education, the service is directed at the minds of stakeholders in a continuous delivery process through partnership. As such, Mello et al (2001) emphasize the need for students' expectations to be met, in the process. Pereira (2004) asserts that institutions must therefore obtain a certain level of quality that meets or exceeds students' expectations. The implication here is that, in addition to higher education being intangible, it has both internal and external stakeholders who are likely to have differing definitions of quality. Hence, Cheng and Tam (1997:23) state that, '*education quality is a rather vague and*

controversial concept'. As would be seen at the end of this chapter, the position of this study will include the need for stakeholders to be consulted in the definition of quality.

To synthesise all of the above, Schindler et al (2015) in a review of existing literature, identifies the three significant challenges in defining quality as.

The elusive nature of quality – Quality is interpreted based on the views of different stakeholders, which gives quality a wide range of interpretation. (Schindler et al 2015). The study by Pirsig (1974), which is often quoted offers probably the most comprehensive approach about the elusive and slippery nature of quality. In his words, Pirsig (1974:82) that:

> *Quality—you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that's self-contradictory. But some things are better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what the quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes poof! There's nothing to talk about. But if you can't say what Quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists? If no one knows what it is, then for all practical purposes it doesn't exist at all. But for all practical purposes it really does exist. What else are the grades based on? Why else would people pay fortunes for some things and throw others in the trash pile? Obviously, some things are better than others….*

The different stakeholders are categorised into four: providers (e.g., funding bodies and the community, taxpayers); users of products (e.g., students); users of outputs (e.g., employers); and employees of the sector (e.g., academics and administrators (Srikanthan & Dalrymple 2003). So, for instance, for students, quality may mean high grades, physical infrastructure, or the ranking of the university. On the other hand, employers may associate quality with the final product which is measured by student's performance through an employee pool (Harvey & Knight 1996). Similarly, Ankomah et al (2005) explain further the elusive nature of quality by referring to the purposes of education to the individual which are based on culture and the value the individual places on education. For example, the purpose of education may be to develop student's cognitive intellect, moral and social skills, while, for others, the purpose of

education may be fostering social cohesion or to prepare one for the workplace. In their argument, Martin and Stella (2007) emphasise that the discussion on quality is not just about setting standards or regulations, but, it is equally important to identify who set the standards and on what basis standards are set. To address this, Cullen et al (2003) suggest that it is important that all stakeholders engage in a discourse that includes all the differing views and needs.

The multi-dimensional concept of quality – According to Article 11 of the World Declaration on Higher Education published by the United Nations, "*quality is a multi-dimensional concept, which should embrace all its functions and activities: teaching and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, faculties, equipment, services the community and the academic environment, thereby making it a multi-faceted concept*". Schindler et al (2015), therefore, questions definitions of quality which focus on only dimension and argues that such definitions are problematic. In the same vein, Eagle and Brennan (2007), argue that such one-dimensional definitions do not have any relevance and too generalised.

Quality is not static - A review of quality definitions, which follows this section will reveal that quality is a dynamic concept. It is a journey and not a destination. Schindler et al (2005) describes quality as a dynamic and ever-changing and so the discourse on it must be wider and varied such as educational, social, economic and political contexts.

Another challenge that can be inferred from the arguments is the intangible nature of higher education, which further heightens an already difficult situation. While different debates are going on about a universal definition of quality in higher education, some analysts are of the view that there should be no attempt for society to achieve a universal definition of quality. Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002) maintain it is unnecessary and unwelcome for us to attempt to agree on what constitutes a good

university and how it should be regarded as. In support of this position, Vroeijenstijn (1991) argues it is not worthwhile for anyone to try to define quality. The basis of this argument as already discussed, is that quality is dynamic and relative, with different stakeholders. Parents might have a different meaning to what constitutes to them, while the university might have what constitutes quality. To achieve a balance, Woo (2006) believes that to make a meaningful debate and find a closure, the definition of quality must be unanimous on a global level, or at least, at the national level. Barnett (1992a) argues that there is little to be gained in a discussion of quality if you have not clarified what you mean by the term. To this end, academic researchers have proposed many definitions of quality as applied to education, although Schindler et al (2015) argue that defining quality continues to be difficult. From the proceedings, although, there is no definition of quality, worldwide, what constitutes quality can be agreed upon within a particular context for a meaningful discussion to take place. In the words of Gummesson (1990:3*) it might be useful to create an insight into the many dimensions that form a fuzzy entity referred to as quality through social consensus rather than defining it.*

Nonetheless, a plethora of research has been conducted and many researchers have argued on the definition of quality in higher education, which has resulted in a large body of various definitions. Although, there are differing views on the definition of quality, an element which is common, though, which (Materu 2007:1) points out is *"that what is certain or perhaps universal though about quality is that any statement about quality implies a certain relative measure against a common standard." Similarly,* Barnet (2003) highlights that all the differing definitions have one thing in common, which is about doing something well. In a similar analysis of the definitions in the literature, Schindler (2015) identifies that the definitions, usually, are either

standard-driven or stakeholder-driven, depending on which stakeholder's interest is being served.

Having presented the challenges that have clouded attempts to define quality, I shall now move on to discuss the definition of quality. To begin with, *"Quality" as a concept has been variously recognized to mean "fitness for purpose'; 'transformation from one state to another with value-added'; 'attainment of a flawless product"; "excellence'; 'attainment of exceptionally high standards' among others* ((SAUVCA 2002:3, Materu 2007:6). According to UNESCO, quality in higher education, according to Article 11 of the World Declaration on Higher Education[12] published by the United Nations, is a *multi-dimensional concept, which should embrace all its functions and activities: teaching and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, faculties, equipment, services the community and the academic environment.*[13]The view of Mishra (2007) on quality is that it underpinned by certain factors such as absolute, relative, a process and a culture. Watty (2005) advocates that a stakeholder-driven definition promotes the need for the various stakeholders to be involved in the discourse on quality definition. In other words, the stakeholder has a say in what should constitute quality in order to meet their expectations, thereby making the institutions accountable to the stakeholder. All the above definitions project two common factors as quality being multi-dimensional and stakeholder driven. Proponents of this view have argued that for the discourse to be meaningful, it must reflect different stakeholders who will bring out the multi-dimensionality of quality. (Westerheijden 2007, Harvey and Green, 1993, Green 1994). In support of this view,

[12] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

[13] European Student Handbook on Quality Assurance in Higher Education, p.13

Boyle and Bowden (1997) explain further that as education is an activity which has an intended outcome shaped by a range of stakeholders and as such, it is reasonable to allow the stakeholders' views in order to define and improve quality. There are other authors who have adopted the stakeholder-driven approach (Bogue 1998; Harvey 2005; Harvey and Knight 1996; Vroeijenstijn 1995; Houston 2008), however Beckett and Brookes (2008) assert that the definition by Harvey and Green (1993) is clearly defined and reflects different dimensions clearly defined. These dimensions have been well recognised in the academic literature and have been referred to many studies on quality (for instance, Lim, 2001; Tam, 2001; Cheng 2003; 2007; Lomas, 2004, 2007; Van Kemenade et al., 2008; Langfeldt et al., 2009; Kahsay, 2012.

Harvey and Green (1993) posit quality can be grouped into five discrete but inter-related concepts as follows.

Quality as exceptional – This concept of quality assumes the traditional thought of quality which associates quality with excellence, distinctiveness and of high class. Quality, thought of in this way does could be argued to be inconclusive, as it fails to offer a means of determining or measuring quality. This notion has, therefore, been criticised by Pfeffer et al (1991) who highlight the weakness in this concept of quality. They argue that this concept assumes excellence and does not allow a means for quality to be measured.

Quality as perfect or consistent – This concept assumes that there is a predefined specification that quality must conform to, to be perfect. In this regard, a product or a service is perfect if it is consistent to the specification. Although, this concept provides a criterion unlike *quality as exceptional*, Watty (2003) is critical of this, as he argues that the aim of higher education is not produce defect-free graduates. Furthermore, he argues that this concept only focuses on process and overlooks inputs and outputs,

which are equally important in higher education. As would be pointed out in the next chapter, this study will argue that quality indicators are not stand-alone indicators, and that quality cannot depend on one or two indicators.

Quality as fitness for purpose – This concept assumes that a service or product is of good quality if it does what it says it can do. In other words, quality is measured by the extent to which it first its purpose. In relation to higher education, this could be the university's mission statement or a particular programme's objective. Is the university able to train graduates to satisfy the need for which it was instituted? Although this looks straightforward, as it provides the criteria by which one can measure quality, critics of this notion have argued that this notion raises the issue of whether it's the customer or provider's purpose or what the purposes of higher education should be (Moodie 1986, Green 1994).

Quality as value for money – This notion of quality is referred to as populist and is related to efficiency and effectiveness at a price the customer can afford. In subsequent, the customer expects some form of accountability from the supplier that the product or service is worth the money the customer pays. Harvey and Green (1993) argue that this populist notion of quality has been used by the British government to demand effectiveness and efficiency in the quality of education.

Quality as transformative – Quality as transformative views quality as an ongoing process to enhance and empower the student. Here, quality education is one that adds value and results in a change of form so the student leaves university having been empowered and enhanced to make a contribution to society. Besides, the student is not merely a customer or product but a participant in the ongoing process. The value-added serves as a measure by which quality can be measured. Harvey and Green (1993) explain that quality here can be measured in terms of the extent to which

education enhances the knowledge, abilities and skills of the student. In this regard, Austin (1991) concludes that an institution that is regarded as high-quality is one that seeks to enhance its students. An important aspect of quality as transformation is its relation to Newman (1999 [1852]), which is the conceptual framework for higher education in this study, Writing in 1852, Newman (1999) argues that students must come out of university with an education of character and intellect. As would be seen shortly in this chapter, this study will argue that university education should provide a holistic education to enable students to contribute to society in whatever capacity they find themselves.

The five dimensions provided by Harvey and Green (1993) demonstrate how different stakeholders will view quality, which affirms the relative nature of quality. Commenting on the relative nature, Vroeijenstijn (1995, cited in Liu 2016) explains that to governments, quality may mean as many students earning a degree; to employers, it may mean students developing the required set skills for the labour market; and the academic may see quality as when a robust academic education results in knowledge transfer. Owlia and Aspinwall (1996) argue that it is likely that stakeholders would have different concepts of quality based on their interests and motivations. For example, quality as value for money mean differently to the different stakeholders. Value for money may mean tuition fees paid versus contact time supplied; while for a department, value for money may mean tools and resources made available to students and their adequacy. Ankomah et al (2005:1), however, cautions that *it becomes more problematic when quality is conceptualized in terms of a particular aspect of education* because as Dare (2005:17) argues, *all the elements associated with educational quality are interrelated and therefore, a serious defect in one element is likely to have implications for quality in others*. Although, the idea of quality

comprising of dimensions have become well recognised and popular in the academic literature, a consensus on a definition of quality in higher education is still an ongoing debate in higher education sector.

It is instructive to note here that the various definitions of quality have not been without criticisms. For instance, Watty (2003) argues that the concept of quality as perfection is not realistic as the purpose of higher education is not to produce defect-free products. Green (1994:25) also argues that "*the problem with the definition of quality as 'fitness for purpose' in higher education is that it is difficult to be clear what the purposes of higher education should be"*. In their study to trace the evolution and definitions of quality, Reeves and Bowden (1994:441) conclude that "*the search for a universal definition of quality and a statement of lawlike relationships has been unsuccessful."*

To streamline all the different views on the definition of quality, Schindler *et al* (2015) argue that there are two strategies that could serve as a guide to defining quality:

- The first strategy is for institutions to have a broad definition of their mission or vision as their primary goal to achieve.
- The second strategy is for institutions to specify the indicators that will be used to measure the expected inputs and outputs.

A significant implication of all the definitions in the academic literature is that the different views on quality have implications for the quality assurance processes that are developed by an institution. As pointed out by Schindler et al (2015), the first step in quality assurance is to determine what quality is before measures can be put in place to how to assure it. In other words, defining quality is therefore a prerequisite for quality assurance. Accordingly, the first research question for this study required participants to define quality.

In the section that follows, the concept and specifics of quality assurance in higher education will be discussed.

Quality Assurance

Like the concept of quality, the concern for quality assurance is not new. Van Vught (1995) points out that, traditionally, the quality assurance has been an essential part of the academic community since higher education came about. However, according to Van Damme (2002), the 1990s have seen quality issues, undoubtedly becoming the central concept and major focus of policy-making organisations and governments around the world. In other words, there has always been a concern for quality, but it could be argued that, this concern has soared in the last two decades – perhaps it could be described as a 'renewed interest' (Barnet 1992). Arguing further, Van Damme (2002) notes that with disparate degree of intensity, pace, thoroughness and success, the world has seen the establishment of systems and procedures of quality assurance in countries and higher education institutions. The existing body of literature suggests that the rise of quality issues in higher education has emanated from different societal forces. These societal forces have been discussed extensively by many authors. In general, Barnett (1992) argues that governments have begun to have a renewed interest in seeing an expansion of their higher education systems. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is argued that this motivation may be due to the combined effects of the recent demand for high skilled human capital, the rapidly expanding demand for higher education, the return to the realisation of the significance of HE to economic growth, globalisation and competitiveness. In consequence, higher education institutions are now under a lot of pressure to provide quality education than they have ever been. As Friend-Pereira et al (2001:11) point out, "*higher educational*

institutions now face similar pressures that the business sector has been facing for decades".

In the context of developing countries, Leu & Price-Rom (2006:1) argue that "*educational quality in developing countries has become a topic of intense".* Achieving quality in education has become a national debate, and Ntim (2014) attributes this to the de-monopolization of the higher education sector from the government in the beginning of the 1990s, with increased participation of the private sector in the provision of higher education. In subsequence, Ankomah et al (2005:1) points out that "*increasingly, successive governments in Ghana have sought and continued to seek strategies for quality delivery of education"*. National initiatives to promote education quality have, therefore been characterized by dialogues among policy makers, practitioners, and other non-governmental agencies. Before proceeding to discuss what, many authors have identified as the forces behind the rise of quality issues, it will be necessary to start with where the rise originated from.

The Rise of Quality Assurance in Education

Beginning with the USA, Dill (2010) recounts that in the 1980s, state policy writers took a cue from France and the UK and became increasingly concerned about quality, which led to the developments of policies designed specifically to assure the quality of teaching and learning in the higher education sector. Dill (2010) argues that it is this interest that has now spread to other countries and has resulted in over a quarter of a century of experience with new forms of external academic quality assurance. According to Liu (2016, citing Dill (2010), the extent to which this interest has become a concern to other countries has been studied by many researchers (Vroeijenstijn 1995; Brennan and Shah 2000; Morley 2003; Huisman and Currie 2004; Trow 1996), and they argue that main drivers behind the rise in quality issues include decreased

funding from States; massification and diversification of higher education; the demand for better public services; and the globalisation of higher education. In other studies, similar considerations of this kind believed to have caused a rise in the concern for quality have also been identified to include a global increase in student numbers; a growing number of ever more diverse higher education institutions, globalisation, the emergence of new governmental paradigms and a general demand for accountability, and the managerialism and marketization of higher education (Hodson & Thomas 2003; Brennan & Shah 2000; Schnell & Kopp 2000, Van Vught, 2000; Mok 2000, also Vettori 2012). While some authors have attributed the rise in quality issues to varied reasons, Smidt (2015) pinpoints that internationalisation in higher education has augmented the growing demand for accountability and transparency, which in turn has triggered the rise in quality concerns.

A notable result to emerge from the rise in quality issues is the establishment of QA agencies across the globe. QA networks (QA Networks | INQAAHE [14]– accessed 08/03/21) as shown below have rapidly emerged in most parts of the world indicating how widespread the concern for quality in higher education has risen;

- The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) was set up in The Hague in 1991 to deal with theory and practice of quality assurance in higher education.
- The African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) has been set up to provide assistance to institutions concerned with Quality Assurance in higher education in Africa.
- Central Asian Network for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (CANQA), is de facto a tool to enhance cooperation between HEIs, national authorities and other bodies from three countries of Central Asia to collaborate in establishing a common framework and reference and to disseminate best practice.

[14] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

- The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EAQA) disseminates information, experiences and good practices in the field of quality assurance (QA) in higher education to European QA agencies, public authorities and higher education institutions.

- The Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQATE) was established in 2004 to enable members to share information about the maintenance, evaluation, accreditation and improvement of higher education and to disseminate good practices in the field of Quality Assurance.

- The Bologna declaration (1999) by which the signatory states agreed to act in concert to increase the competitiveness of Europe through a range of measures aimed at creating a European Higher Education Area. These include the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, a system of credits and co-operation in Quality Assurance at a European level. The objective of such tools is to promote mobility, inter institutional co-operation and integrated programmes of study, training and research.[15]

- The East African Quality Assurance Network (EAQAN) was formally established in 2012 in the East African region to serve as a platform to discuss and exchange experiences of quality assurance amongst the universities to enhance higher education.

Turning the focus to Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, the drivers for the growth of PHEIs in SSA have been viewed from a variety of perspectives. Altbach (1999) argues that private higher education has emerged due to a combination of a spike in demand and the failure and reluctance of governments to invest in higher education. Specifically, the unprecedented demand for higher education which has been caused by the increasing number of students leaving secondary education and the subsequent effect on the growth of private universities has caused a concern for the quality of higher education. In a similar study, Levy (2007) observes that, globally, the most common factor that has caused the rise in private higher education is the unprecedented demand and the State universities are usually not able to cope with

[15] European Student Handbook on Quality Assurance in Higher Education

the high demand. In their study, Ofojebe *et al* (2015) argue that the emergence of private higher education, in Nigeria, has raised concerns about the compromise of quality. Although, this study was about Nigeria, the situation is not different in Ghana and other SSA countries. In addition to the increase in demand for higher education, Morley (2013) argues that the needs of specific groups in society i.e. religion, the influence of market ideology (Brown 2011, Thaver, 2004) and the profit opportunity for business (Ball 2007) have also triggered the growth of PHEIs in SSA, which has subsequently triggered a rise in quality issues.

Furthermore, *the return to the realisation of the socio-economic benefits of higher education has had its impact on higher education. Hence Gillis argues that: "today, more than ever before in human history, the wealth - or poverty - of nations depends on the quality of higher education" (Gillis cited in Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000, p. 15).* For the above reasons, concern about the quality in higher education is on the rise in SSA and the term 'quality' is now a key word used in higher education debates. As a further note, it is envisaged that the growth of PHE will continue in many SSA countries, as indicated in 2012, by the Secretary-General of the Association of African Universities (AUU), Professor Olugbemiro Jegede, that in five years, Africa could have more for-profit private universities than those established by governments. Materu (2007) argues that as at the year 2000, about one-third of the roughly 300 universities in Sub-Saharan Africa had been established and funded by private providers. As mentioned in chapter one, similar developments have occurred in Ghana and other SSA countries over the past decade and half as depicted below.

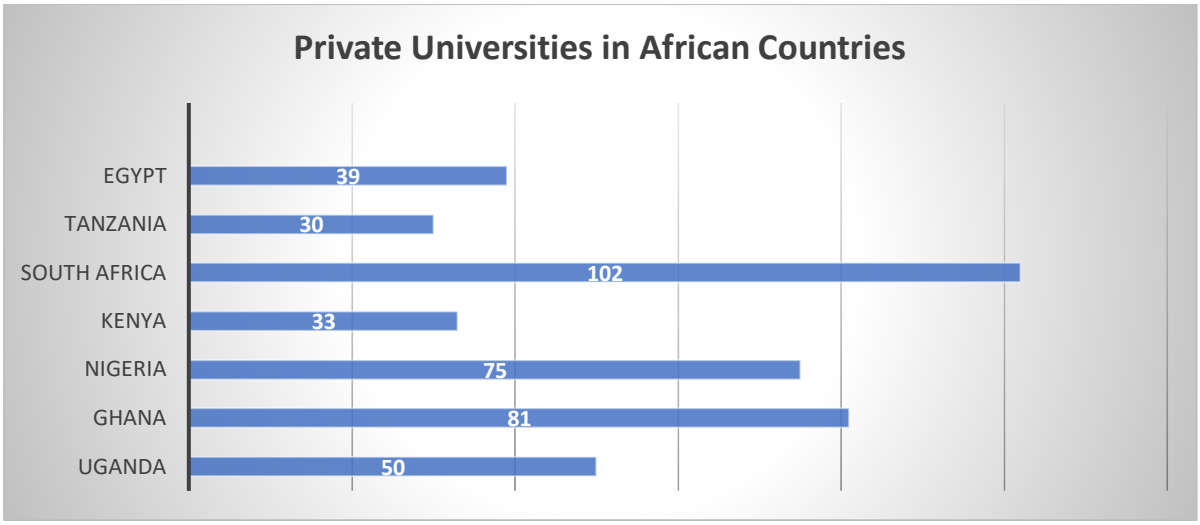


Figure 9: Growth of Private Universities in African Countries

Source: Source: http://www.unche.or.ug/institutions/private-universities (accessed 01/11/18)[16]
http://www.nab.gov.gh/private-tertiary-institutions-offering-degree-programmes (accessed 01/11/18)
https://nuc.edu.ng/nigerian-univerisities/private-univeristies (accessed 01/11/18)
https://www.tuko.co.ke/273383-list-private-universities-kenya-2018.html#273383 (accessed 01/11/18)

Taken together, it can be concluded that, in Ghana and most SSA countries, the knock-on effect of demand for higher education, coupled with globalisation has resulted in the emergence of private universities, which has led to the rise in quality issues. Consequently, the last decade has seen the establishments of QA agencies in SSA. As Materu & Righetti (2010) argue, the concern for quality has led to many African countries establishing regulatory agencies to accredit and monitor quality assurance in both public and private universities.

Quality Assurance Agencies in SSA Countries

While in Europe, Alzafari and Ursin (2019) reckon that the early 2000s saw an ever-increasing focus on quality assurance in European higher education institutions, Mohamedbhai (2008) argues that quality assurance is new in Africa. Friend-Pereira et al (2002:29) state that: "*all countries have some kind of quality assurance mechanism in place, although they differ significantly in terms of purpose, focus and organisation"*.

[16] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

However, in SSA countries, Mohamedbhai (2008) argues that the QA agencies have been established, mainly for regulatory purposes, especially with the rise of private universities, rather than for improving quality. Describing how QA agencies operate, Materu (2007:20) state that:

> *Some QA agencies operate as semi-autonomous bodies with their own establishing law, governing board and budget allocation, and their decisions on accreditation are final, while others are highly dependent on government; that is, their governance, management and financing are tightly controlled by government and their decisions are subject to approval by the government (for example, Minister for Higher Education in Cameroon). Each of the accrediting agencies has its own board though the compositions differ. Some consist mostly of government officials and vice chancellors from the different universities while others incorporate a broad cross-section of universities, government, business, professionals, and the public. The most common type of QA is the semi-autonomous.*

In Ghana, [17]the National Accreditation Board (NAB), the body responsible for accreditation and monitoring of the higher education sector is mandated to:

- *Accredit both public and private (tertiary) institutions with regard to the contents and standards of their programmes.*
- *Determine, in consultation with the appropriate institution or body, the programme and requirements for the proper operation of that institution and the maintenance of acceptable levels of academic or professional standards.*
- *Determine the equivalences of diplomas, certificates and other qualifications awarded by institutions in Ghana or elsewhere.*
- *Publish as it considers appropriate the list of accredited public and private institutions at the beginning of the calendar year.*
- *Advise the President on the grant of a Charter to a private tertiary institution.*
- *Perform any other functions determined by the Minister.*
  Source: http://www.nab.gov.gh/our_mandate - Accessed on 08/08/2020

With its vision to ensure high standards in tertiary education, NAB is a semi-autonomous body governed by a Board and has separate Committees for Quality Assurance and Accreditation.

A notable observation is that just like other SSA countries, the activities of NAB are more of accreditation than quality assurance even though they are mandated to do both. [18]According to Professor Jean-Pierre Ezin, Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology at the AUC, it has been observed that due to financial constraints facing most of the regulatory agencies in Africa, they, often, do not have the requisite human and physical resources to carry out effective monitoring of the universities. That is not to say that universities do not have a responsibility for quality assurance. Mckay and Kember (1999:25) point out that: "*quality assurance mechanisms are imposed by university management and all over the world, universities themselves are establishing or strengthening their measures for monitoring and enhancing the quality of their teaching"*. This is a trend that is seemingly emerging with the rise of private universities in Ghana, with most universities establishing their own QA units. Similarly, [19]according to the QAA (2005), universities and colleges are responsible for managing the academic standards and quality of their awards. In Ghana, apart from standards put in place by the quality assurance bodies to ensure quality HE, each institution has its own internal policies and mechanisms for ensuring that it is fulfilling its own purposes.

Like the rest of the world, QA partnerships have seen to be established across the African continent to foster and harmonise QA processes.

- The Association of African Universities (AAU) developed its Quality Assurance Programme (QAP) in the year 2000 and pledged its support to facilitate the establishment of institutional, national and sub-regional quality assurance systems. This has been followed with a series of workshops and forums for example, in Morocco (2003), Nigeria (2007), Ghana (2009), etc. The Africa Management Commission (AMC) based in South Africa has also been holding annual conferences on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in recent years. [20]

[18] University World News, 15 June 2013 Issue No:276

[19] Quality Assurance in Higher Education in a Globalized Era, Public Lecture by Prof Kobina Yankson, 2013

[20] Quality Assurance in Higher Education in a Globalized Era, Public Lecture by Prof Kobina Yankson, 2013

- In 2012, a regional coordination mechanism for quality assurance in higher education in Africa was created, which is facilitated by UNESCO in close collaboration with stakeholders such as African Union, African Development Bank and African Universities.

With the rise in quality issues and the subsequent creation of QA agencies, it is logical to discuss the definitions of quality and quality assurance in the context of higher education from both the international and Ghanaian perspectives.

Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The chapter, so far, has discussed the historical overview of quality and how it has developed over centuries. In addition, this chapter has focused on the developments of QA agencies across the globe and the difficulties surrounding the definition of quality. In the proceeding sections, the discourse will be on quality assurance with a focus on internal quality assurance, which is the main focus of the study.

As discussed above, the rise of quality issues has increased the need for quality assurance and further prompted the establishment of quality assurance agencies across the globe. The AUN-QA (2010) reports that, although, there has been some form of quality assurance in the early days, the systems were, often, unstructured. However, nowadays, quality assurance must be structured. It is logical to argue that it appears that quality assurance is on the rise due to the pressure from stakeholders regarding accountability, which in turn has been driven by public funding and tuition fees paid by students who attend private universities, while the universities are still striving to achieve high academic performance to remain competitive in the market (Stensaker 2007).

As discussed, extensively, in previous sections, there's no universally accepted definition of quality. Sergers and Dochy (1996:115) state that: '*as there is no general agreement concerning the meaning of quality in higher education, it is not surprising that there is confusion about the terms used to describe the systematic procedures aimed at monitoring and enhancing quality'*. Thus, similar to the concept of quality in higher education, quality assurance has been defined or described in many disparate ways. To Kendal (1983), "*quality assurance is the collective term for institutional activities, policies, and procedures that provide a measure of confidence that what is done academically is consistent with the institution's goals and is likely to effect learning at levels established by the institution or by the external bodies". (Kendall, 1983, p. 74).* This definition is similar to that found in Harman (2000) who writes that quality assurance consists of management and assessment systems put in place by institutions to monitor their performance against set objectives, to ensure objectives and targets are being met. In a similar vein, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) defines quality assurance as the "*planned and systematic review process of an institution or programme to determine that acceptable standards of education, scholarship, teaching, administration and infrastructure are being maintained and enhanced* (www.oau.org – accessed 17.06.13). To Barnet (1992), it is the development of a culture by an institution to sensitise individuals about their input in improving quality. Dill (2007:1) notes that: "*quality assurance in higher education is increasingly used to denote the practices whereby academic standards, i.e., the level of academic achievement attained by higher education graduates, are maintained and improved".*

Boyle and Bowden (1997:114) identify a commonality and write that: "the common requirement for quality assurance is 'being systematic and comprehensive

about maximising the quality of how things are done and the outcomes that result." Similarly, the AUN-QA (2010) reports that quality assurance could be described as a structured and continuous system for maintaining and improving quality. The report, particularly, highlights that a continuous system is a sine qua non for an effect quality assurance system. In the view of Goetsch and Davis (2005), quality assurance is ensuring that the organisation's policies and procedures; plans and strategies; resources and processes are, purposefully, geared towards the production of a product or service which meets customer satisfaction and the objectives set by the organisation. Onocha (2002), also makes a similar reference to industry by arguing that quality assurance could be compared with the production a good, which goes through a process from input, process stages to outcome at the end of the production cycle. Onocha (2002) argues further that his definition is applicable to higher education. This distinction is exemplified later in this study when the input-process-output is used as the theoretical framework for this study. In a more elaborate definition, which also refers to quality assurance as cyclical, Vlasceanu *et a*l (2004) argue that quality assurance is an all-encompassing word and also a continuous process of evaluating and monitoring systems at higher education institutions or programmes. Other similar definitions highlight the multiple elements in quality assurance as consisting of processes, systems, policies, attitudes and actions that are necessary to ensure that quality is monitored and improved (Glanville 2006, Woodhouse 2001, Harman and Meek 2000)

In many ways, the definitions stemming from the literature reveal different themes. Matei and Iwinska (2016) write that the range of definitions shows that there can be different elements to look at to understand the concept of quality assurance. They point out that while some definitions focus on maintaining standards, others focus on

improvement and enhancement; with others focusing on culture and stakeholder needs. What is notable about theses definitions is that they clearly recognise quality assurance as a process - an ongoing, process, maintenance and improvement machinery; and consists of different elements. Lomas (2002) writes that the focus on quality assurance as an improvement of standards is extremely useful as it is essential for stakeholders like employers, students and financiers. It is obvious from the above definitions that quality assurance has been defined in many ways, just like quality. Again, just like quality, one could argue that there are common themes that appear to run through all the definitions.

The stakeholder-driven approach which has been mentioned earlier in the discussion on definition of quality leads to the question of who stakeholders are in higher education. Matei and Iwinska (2016) are of the view that it is important to identify the relevant players or stakeholders who have an interest in the quality of higher education and have a conversation with them about the roles they want to play in the QA systems and process. To this end, Srikanthan & Dalrymple (2003) identify four types of stakeholders in the higher education sector namely, providers, students, employers and employees of the sector.

There has also been the issue of the terminologies that have sprung up in the literature. The academic literature emphasizes that although quality assurance is not a new concept, the terminology used to define it are relatively recent. Lucin 2007 argues that in the last ten years, various concepts like quality control, quality guarantee, quality management and quality culture have been used to describe quality assurance. While the AUN-QA (2010) reports that there is no real difference between these terms and are used interchangeably; some authors have cautioned the use of ‘quality control’ as quality assurance. In their interesting analysis, Okebukola and

Shebami (20021) argue that quality control is the removal of defects at the end of production. In a similar vein, Cole (1996) refers to quality control as a system for monitoring set standards and taking the necessary steps, but the steps or actions are outside permitted tolerances. The presumption is that this cannot apply to higher education, as it makes quality control a retroactive measure rather than a proactive, which is what quality assurance in education should be. The university cannot afford to wait for faults and deviations to occur at the end of students' programme, for instance, before rectifying it.

Although varying definitions of quality assurance have been suggested in the higher education sector, they appear to bear some similarities; with a significant similarity being that quality assurance is an evaluation, monitoring and improvement activity. In addition, these definitions reveal that quality assurance is a journey and a holistic term that encompasses a series of practices. As would be seen shortly in this thesis, this premise illustrates the thesis of this study, which argues that quality is made up of indicators processed to ensure they are effective, as supported by Campbell & Rozsynai (2002) who highlight that quality assurance is an all-encompassing term and multi-faceted, extending to policies and procedures and other actions which allows higher education to be monitored and improved.

It is instructive to note that the debates on quality assurance in higher education have also focused on whether current quality models which have been mostly built on the foundations of industry quality are applicable to the higher education sector. Some critics have questioned the application of quality in industry to quality in education. In the words of Greatrix (2005), what do these industrial models offer and is there anything intrinsic to them which might explain their popularity in higher education? A distinction is, however, made between QA in industry and higher education. Whereas

in industry, QA is about procedures and processes, it is both about quality of the process and quality of the product in higher education (AUN 2010). By this distinction, the higher education sector has developed its own approach to quality assurance which comprises of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA), External Quality Assurance (EQA) and Accreditation; as shown in the figure below.

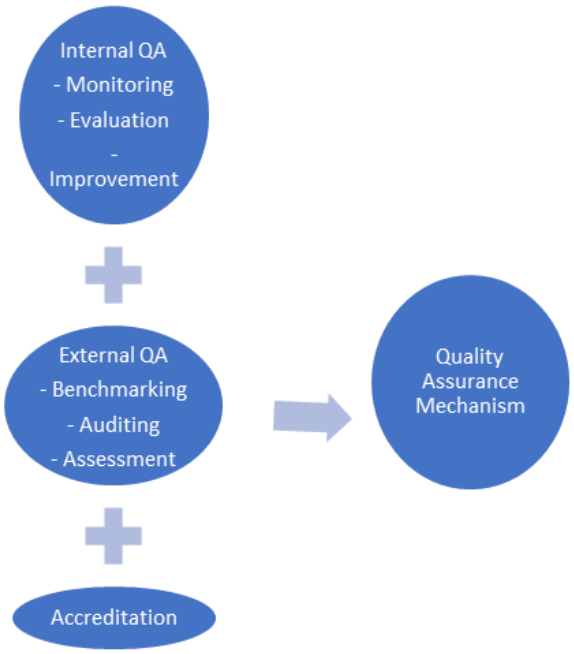


Figure 10: Quality Assurance Mechanism in Higher Education (Adopted from AUN 2010)

Components of Quality Assurance in Higher Education

There are three components of quality assurance used in the higher education sector. Jackson (1997a) explains that the concept of quality assurance is in two-folds, either internally by the provider of education or regulated externally by an authority. The AUN-QA (2010), however, adds accreditation, as the third component. In most countries, governments have an oversight responsibility for ensuring the quality of higher education, however, ultimately it is the university which is responsible for providing and assuring quality education (AUN-QA 2010). This means each university must have a formal structure – an efficient internal quality assurance that directs its activities to enable the university to achieve its goals.

In the section that follows, the components of quality assurance and their relationship will be discussed. However, given that the dominant feature of this thesis is to assess the internal quality assurance mechanisms used by private universities, a more in-depth review of IQA from both international and African perspectives will be presented.

Accreditation

Accreditation is a form of external quality assurance. Damme (2002) argues that accreditation leads to a formal approval given to an institution to provide education or run a programme after the institution is deemed to have satisfied the conditions set by a legitimate body. Woodhouse (1999) describes accreditation as an evaluation activity to decide whether an institution qualifies for a certain status. This status, he argues further may have implications for the institution itself, as to if it will be granted permission to operate or its students are eligible for grants.

Commenting on how accreditation has evolved over the years, Schwarz and Westerheijden (2004) reminds us that accreditation was, traditionally, granted by the States but has recent times been transferred to established bodies (referred to as accreditation or quality assurance boards or agencies) who have been given the mandate to give accreditation. Martin and Stella (2007) claim that, although, accreditation is a component that has recently been introduced as part of external quality assurance, it has become the most widely used tool of external quality assurance. As a result, Damme (2002) argues that many countries have now established national quality assurance arrangements or are in a process of doing so.

The primary focus of accreditation, according to Dill (2000) is a comprehensive examination of the mission, resources and procedures of the institution including its

programmes. The output, therefore, of an accreditation is straightforward yes or no decision (Woodhouse 1999).

External Quality Assurance (EQA)

Martin and Stella (2007) refer to external quality assurance as the actions of an external body, other than the institution that assesses the operations or programmes of the institution to ascertain if it is meeting the agreed standards. Due to the societal forces already mentioned above, both developed and developing nations have been seen to be establishing agencies to carry out this 'watchdog' duty. In his review of quality assurance and accreditation and already mentioned, Damme (2002) points out that since the inception of first quality assurance in the eighties, quality has undoubtedly become the focus of governments, which has seen many countries now establishing national quality assurance agencies. These agencies may differ in mandate, scope and focus but one similarity is that they all work towards ensuring accountability and a robust higher education sector. The development of these external quality assurance agencies across the globe is also occurring in African countries like Tanzania, South Africa, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Cameroon. Established by an Act of Parliament, the National Accreditation Board in Ghana is mandated to monitor and develop measures to improve standards of higher education.

There are also quality assurance networks across regions to support governments and higher education institutions. In his review of higher education quality, Materu (2002) emphasises that, globally, countries have come to recognise the benefits and value of cross-border collaboration in delivering quality assurance. According to him, potentially, cross-border collaboration comes with substantial benefits to the countries such as mutual recognition of status and degrees, sharing of peer reviewers and external examiners, amongst others. One of such institutions that

has been created to foster cross-collaboration is the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) which was established in 1991 to collate and disseminate useful information on current theories and practices in quality assurance. In the European Union, the Bologna process was created in 1999 to bring together and strengthen cooperation within the union, in matters relating to quality assurance. In Africa, Materu (2002) refers to three well developed regional initiatives in quality assurance which are The Conseil Africaine et Malgasche pour l'Ensignement Supérieur (CAMES) based in Burkina Faso (CAMES); The Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Association of African Universities (AAU). All these institutions work collaboratively to develop and provide support to the institutions.

While external quality assurances are being established, the higher education environment also continues to evolve and therefore the agencies must proactively to rise up to the challenges (Woodhouse 2013). In response to the changes in the HE environment, Woodhouse (2013) notes that there has been a paradigm shift in the external quality assurance process. Whereas previously, EQAs evaluated systems based on purely inputs and physical facilities on a campus, now EQA are seen to be paying attention to processes and even more at outcomes. This approach would be seen shortly, when the theoretical framework of this study is established later in the chapter.

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

Internal quality assurance, which is the main focus of this study, can also be referred to as institutional quality assurance. It involves the processes designed and developed internally by the institution itself and it's not in any way influenced by an external body. In the specific context of higher education institutions, IQA

encompasses several elements which represents the entirety of resources and systems set up, specifically, to maintain, monitor and improve the quality of education, research and service provided by an education institution to its community (AUN-QA 2010). Essentially, its main purpose is not just to improve quality, but to ensure a culture that promotes quality assurance as a constant reflection and as a process rather than a journey. In comparing external and internal quality assurance, Middlehurst and Woodhouse (1995) explain that while external quality assurance may provide short term solutions because once the assessment period is over, institutions are likely to return to their old habits, internal quality assurance on the other hand requires the institutions to have an understanding of the need to improve and an inherent willingness to improve quality. These requirements, they argue, will result in engagements at the workplace and individuals will better cooperate and understand the objectives and will commit to achieving the objectives. These assertions portray internal quality assurance as an organisational culture, which Kahsay (2012), argues, is an emerging argument in the academic literature. Kahsay (2012), further notes this approach to quality assurance recognises quality as a culture and a process of transformation.

Relationship between Internal Quality Assurance, External Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Mishra (2006) submits that most countries prefer to use accreditation as an external quality assurance tool to encourage universities to assure quality internally. He argues further that, many countries also use external quality assessment as a valuable instrument in monitoring quality of higher education institutions with the aim of adding value and credibility to their quality assessment. A criticism here is that this makes IQA an activity that only occurs when the external agency is about to visit and

as Martin (2016) cautions, there is a potential risk that external quality assurance will lead to compliance and not, actually, improve quality. Questions have, therefore been raised in the literature about the relationship between the three elements of quality assurance. Does it mean that it's EQA that triggers IQA? As Matei and Iwinska (2016) argue, the relationship and balance between external and internal quality assurance is a topical topic between higher education practitioners.

To Woodhouse (2013), the relationship between IQA and EQA is a thorny one. In his view, he explains that the relationship should be one of mediation – it should mediate to the higher institution what the requirements of EQA are and mediate to the EQA how well the institution is performing. Woodhouse (2013) further cautions that if the two are seen to be too close, staff may perceive both processes as a quality bureaucracy. Furthermore, quality assurance should be a cyclical structure and not a seasonal activity for accreditation. (Mishra, 2006).

Overall, it has been argued that, although, governments have an oversight responsibility to assure quality, ultimately, the universities have the primary responsibility to provide and ensure quality. quality assurance is the primary responsibility of the education institution. (AUN-QA 2010). This view is supported by Hanft and Kohler (2008), who admit that it is the ultimate responsibility of universities to ensure they have measures in place to assure the quality of their teaching and research and the onus is on them to design their own internal quality assurance systems. In the same vein, Woodhouse (2013) supports this view as he argues that quality task is the responsibility of the higher education institution, while quality assurance agencies set up by governments are responsible for validating, accreditation and assisting higher education institutions' quality assurance work.

Matei and Iwinska (2016) draw on the work of (Kahsay, 2012, p.39; Barnett, 1994; Askling, 1997 and Wiclund, et al., 2003) who argue that: "*internal quality assurance is more formative in nature and likely to lead to continual quality improvement efforts and the development of quality culture in institutions.*" Furthermore, research has shown that to achieve a robust external quality assurance, it is imperative for internal quality assurance to be robust, first and foremost, before any real impact could be made. (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2010; Harvey & Williams, 2010; Kettunen, 2010; Law, 2010; Poole, 2010, cited in Ansah 2015). The implication is that even though external quality assurance and accreditation play a pivotal role in shaping the higher education sector of a country, as it ensures integrity and credibility; the development of an internal quality assurance by universities is crucial for the higher institution and could be argued to be more important in assuring quality in the higher education sector. It is apparent from the above discussion that universities must remain committed to the development of their own IQA as a culture or tradition rather than an event that occurs only when accreditation or external review is imminent.

The above discussions have reviewed the three components of quality assurance and their application in higher education. In addition to the review, understanding the link between the three components was useful in determining the role each plays. Therefore, it was logical to ask if the three components are inter-related in any way. In the sections that follow, the study will review in depth the internal quality assurance process which is the focus of the study.

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Process

Internal quality assurance, as already noted is an institution's method of managing its processes to ensure they are aimed towards the achievement of its goals.

Specifically, Matei and Iwinska (2016) write that the process involves all activities (policies and procedures, systems and mechanisms) that evaluate and improve quality, and more so, are designed and carried out by the institutions themselves. However, against the background of the slippery and elusive nature of quality, it raises the question of what to include in the IQA process. In the case of private universities in Ghana, it could be argued that it is more problematic as they are purely self-financing and therefore autonomy to decide their own missions and visions. That said, perhaps a starting point would be to identify the purpose of IQA or what does an institution aim to achieve by developing and implementing IQA. Writing about the elements of quality assurance, Stumbrys (2004:161-162) outlines four objectives of IQA as follows.

1. *To assist together with various means in enhancing high quality of services and perfect standards.*
2. *To provide students, employers and other stakeholders with reliable and comprehensive information about the study quality, scientific achievements and management.*
3. *To ensure that the areas of performance where quality is insufficient are identified, and instant measures are taken to improve the quality.*
4. *To guarantee the accountability of the high school for the allocated state financial resources – in the context of this study, the objective of IQA here will guarantee accountability to students and parents for the financial resources they invest in the education.*

With this caveat in mind, then any process of IQA adopted by a higher institution should assist in achieving the above objectives, in one way or the other. In addition to the objectives are the basic activities. Here, a reference will be made to the literature on IQA, as discussed earlier. The literature emphasizes that internal quality assurance is an organisation culture and process (Kahsay 2012; Middlehurst and

Woodhouse 1995; Onocha 2002; AUN-QA 2010; Matei and Iwinska 2016) that must be accepted by the institution's community. To explain this further, Mishra (2006) argues that lecturers have the academic autonomy to discharge their duties in a manner that they see fit. For example, a suggestion could come the principal and the facts show that it is up to the teachers to apply it in their classrooms in a way that is applicable to their classroom situations. Essentially, Mishra (2006) highlights that quality assurance requires a community effort and not necessarily the responsibility of individuals, senior management or principal alone. This assertion is similar to Middlehurst and Woodhouse (1995), who argue internal quality assurance requires the institutions to have an understanding of the need to improve and an inherent willingness to improve quality. These requirements, they argue, result in an individual or group engagement with the desired objectives and commitment to their achievement. Even though there is no commonality in what goes into internal quality assurance in higher education institutions, the different assertions point to quality as a process (continuous improvement) and a culture.

As far as continuous improvement is concerned, the EUA (2009) states that internal quality assurance process begins from the institution setting a definition for quality assurance; setting up systems to assure and enhance quality; strategically planning to include staff and curriculum development. Vroeijenstijn (1995) holds a similar view that to achieve an effective quality assurance mechanism, there is the need for the institution to establish quality assurance structures to aid in the evaluation and improvement of quality. In what follows, this study will review some of the QA processes in the current literature to serve as a term of reference for the study.

A study by Denning (1999) offers, probably, an insight into what goes into a continuous improvement process. In the study, Denning (1995) argues that the

process of continuous improvement consists of four major steps known as P-D-C-A, as shown below.

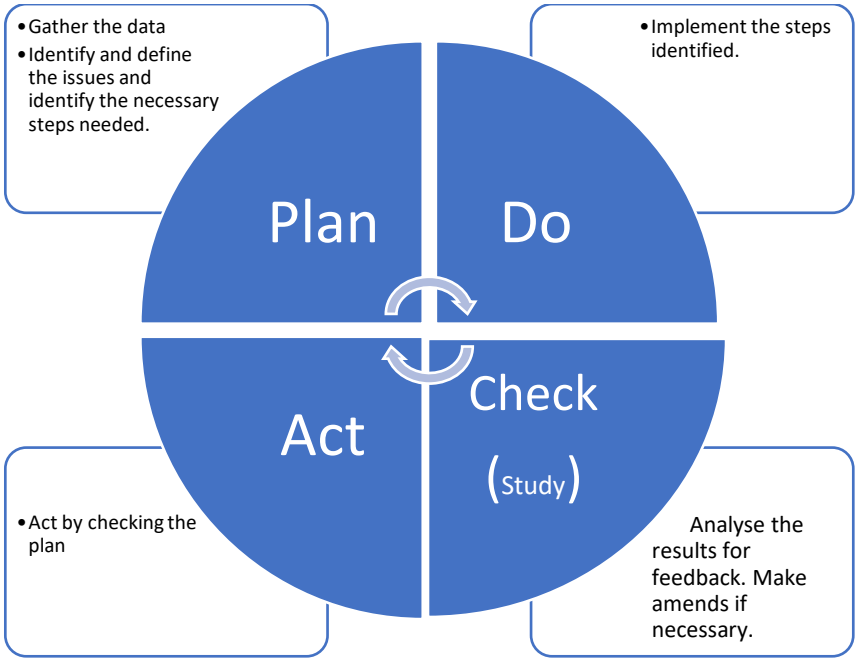


Figure 11: Basic Steps of Quality Assurance

Source: Denning (1995)

The P-D-C-A cycle summarises the basic activities that keeps a process in motion and could be argued to be applicable to any system that requires to be monitored, evaluated and improved. In the view of Mishra (2006), this cycle of P-D-C-A depicts a fundamental cycle that should occur in all models of quality assurance, and surely applicable to higher education institutions. It is instructive to mention that this is not suggest all IQA systems follow the same procedure, as this is highly impossible due to the already mentioned elusive nature of quality. Ideally, each institution must build its own internal quality assurance system. However, the AUN-QA (2010) reports argues in the same view as Mishra (2006) and that the P-D-C-A cycle covers the

fundamentals that fulfils the internal quality assurance process of monitoring, evaluation and improvement.

IQA Implementation Process

Following the debates on what goes into quality assurance, Matei & Iwinska (2016) argue that several models of quality assurance have been introduced in the higher education sector, while Cheng and Cheung (1997) explain further that the different models are usually based on conceptualisation, evaluation and usefulness to the institution. The authors support the different models in existence as they believe it offers the sector varied possibilities in the quest to understand the quality in higher education. Prisăcariu (2014) argues the focus of the different models available include models that focus on comprehensiveness, functioning and effectiveness of institutional procedures, methods, processes and instruments, review of quality against external standards, assessment of quality of results and quality of governance, which revolves around institutional goals. In this regard, Alzafari and Ursin (2019:61) argue that "*quality assurance in higher education involves a wide range of understandings, approaches, models, challenges and definitions."* This is further compounded by a complex environment and research field which makes the implementation of quality assurance challenging for researchers (Kauko, 2014; Nascimbeni, 2015, Alzafari & Perner, 2018). Similarly, Vroeijensijin's (1995) identifies a model of internal quality assurance, which assumes four basic elements that should be included in IQA system namely, institutional goals, monitoring instruments, evaluation instruments and improvement of quality. The AUN-QA (2010) report also recommends a similar model that includes monitoring instruments, evaluation instruments with some further activities as QA processes for specific activities and specific QA instruments. In the models presented, the commonalities are institutional

objectives, monitoring, evaluation and improving quality which will be the focus of the study.

Institutional Goals

A fundamental element in any internal quality assurance mechanism is a statement of an institutional goal, which is the planning stage. An institutional goal serves as a guide of terms of reference for the institution to follow. It also defines explicitly why the institution exist and what its operations are intended to achieve. In addition, Vroeijensijin (1995) argues institutional goals and aims must be formulated to meet scientific and societal requirement. In other words, institutional goals must satisfy the expectations and requirements of stakeholders. Setting an institutional goal will also help set the parameters for the rest of the elements in the IQA process. If not, then it raises the question of what is there to monitor, evaluate and improve.

Monitoring Instruments

Monitoring instruments, according to the AUN-QA (2010) are required in the IQA process to track performance and development. In support of this view, Vroeijenstijn (1995) explains that the primary purpose of monitoring quality is to enhance quality and so an effective monitoring system is an integral part of the internal quality assurance process. A key aspect of monitoring is data collection, to ensure that there is data integrity, which subsequently allows for monitoring. That is why, according to the AUN-QA (2010), data can then be collected on indictors like student progress, pass rates and drop out phrase and feedback from employers and alumni. Data collection is therefore very important in the monitoring process and institutions must ensure there is data integrity, if monitoring is going to be effective. Vroeijenstijn (1995) adds that a good monitoring system is a necessity to facilitate the collection of data about the activities of the university. In his analysis, the benefit of using monitoring

instrument to the university is that the institution or faculty will be able to track progress the performance of input, process and output (IPO) and take timely actions when necessary.

Evaluation

Evaluation, which is also referred to self-assessment or self-review is the core element of the internal quality assurance process. The objective of self-assessment is to enable the institution to review its own processes and outcomes and how they are helping the institution to achieve its broad missions and goals (Thune 1998). As an internal quality assurance measure, Vroeijenstijn (1995) argues that evaluation, which, normally takes the form of self-evaluation and self-assessment is necessary due to external assessment or accreditation. In such an instance, carrying out a self-assessment will help the institution to prepare itself for and also be able to provide the required information for external assessments (Kelly, 1993). Conversely, as stated earlier, Martin (2016) cautions the use of IQA as preparation for EQA, as this has the potential to make IQA as an activity to ensure compliance, rather than improvement (Martin 2016). Self- assessment can also serve other useful purposes, as an internal audit, when according to the (AUN 2010), it is not purposefully carried out because of external assessment and hence serves as an internal quality assurance. In effect, for self-assessment to be recognised fully as an IQA, higher institutions must not link it with EQA or make it the basis for an imminent EQA. In this way, IQA becomes a process for improvement and a culture that is practised every time. There are certain elements that are fundamental to self-assessments – these include an evaluation from students based on their views on courses and the curriculum, as part of the evaluation process (AUN, 2010).

Improving Quality

Improving quality is the final stage of the IQA process, which also makes the whole process and in particular the evaluation, an effective one. Evaluation has no relevance if it is not followed with actions that will enhance the shortcomings (AUN-QA 2010). Without this stage of improving quality, the process is bound to be defeated. Furthermore, Vroeijenstijn, (1995) argues that the outcome of the evaluations reveals what has worked and what has not worked so that the shortcomings are improved to enhance quality. The feedback from the monitoring and evaluation processes become the guidelines the institution uses in developing their quality assurance systems. The implication is that for quality to be developed or improved, the feedback must be acted upon or implemented. This also places a responsibility on the institutions to have an improvement plan based on their self-assessment to address any gaps. However, Soundarajan (2010) stresses that although much attention is often paid to the other elements of the IQA process, the attention given to the outcomes of self-assessments is relatively less.

Although, the implementation process is quite significant in any QA process, it is instructive to note that the existence of an evaluation and feedback system is not enough to improve quality. The feedback must be implemented or there must be a plan to implement the feedback. Weiss (1998) argues that it is naïve for us to assume that the mere identification of gaps or outcome of self-assessment is enough to trigger a habit of quality improvement. According to Weiss (1998), for the outcome of self-assessment to be implemented effectively, it has to be added to regular tasks and an enabling environment created to motivate and sensitise people about the importance of quality improvement.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking, which was identified as part of EQA is believed to be equally useful in the IQA process. While Vroeijensijin (1995), Prisăcariu (2014) and AUN-QA (2010) have similar processes for IQA, in another study, Inglis (2005) makes mention of benchmarking as part of the quality assurance process. According to Inglis (2005:1), '*Benchmarking' is a term that is now widely used within the quality arena*'. Likewise, Achim et al (2009) argue that benchmarking, which is as old as the university itself is now a useful, easily understood and effective tool in quality assessment process and for higher education institutions to be stay competitive. In a further explanation, Achim et al (2009) state that benchmarking creates an avenue for higher education institutions to share and emulate good practices. There are different types of benchmarking universities can employ to improve their quality assurance. This includes internal, external competitive and external collaborative benchmarking. According to Achim et al (2009), internal benchmarking is when two different departments or campuses share information with the view to learn from each other. In addition, while external competitive benchmarking takes place between institutions who see themselves as competitors, external collaborative benchmarking, on the other hand, is between larger group of institutions who see themselves as collaborators. In Africa, some authors have highlighted that collaborative and engagement amongst higher education institutions are recommended, thereby highlighting the need for institutional benchmarking (Kakembo and Barymak 2017; Kagondu and Marwa 2017; Mgaiwan and Ishengoma 2017). The authors argue that institutional benchmarking was an impetus that would embed the culture of quality assurance and ensure continuous improvement is achieved. In the words of Petrucka (2017:3), "*such*

benchmarking will not only move individual institutions along the quality assurance continuum but will potentiate diffusion to all higher education institutions."

Taken together, for IQA to be effective, it must cover some fundamentals which have been highlighted from the above arguments as plan, implement, check, benchmark and improvement. There has to be an implementation plan and the human resource to implement the plan and act on feedback for IQA to be effective. It is therefore not sufficient to have feedback but there has to be the human resource capacity to implement the needed change required to improve quality. The discourse on internal quality assurance provided a direction for the formulation of the second research question, which required participants to describe the participants the internal quality assurance mechanisms existing at their universities.

The Idea of Higher Education

This chapter set out to examine quality assurance and higher education, which are the two main concepts of this thesis. The first part of the chapter, which also developed two research questions, focused on exploring quality and quality assurance and their application in higher education, from both the western and African perspective with an in-depth review of the IQA process and what it entails. The second part of this chapter will discuss the idea and purpose of higher education in both the international and Ghanaian contexts and its implications for quality assurance.

As already noted, there has been a rise in quality issues in the higher education sector. Hence, Teeroovengadum et al (2014) argue that maintaining and enhancing quality is now a *sine qua non* prerequisite for higher education institutions. However, as a consensus on what constitutes quality is currently non-existent, perhaps it has become necessary to, also go back to the purpose of a university if it would direct opinions on what constitute quality in higher education. Barnett (1992:15) states; '*we*

cannot form secure ideas about the quality of higher education, unless we first have a reasonably clear conception of what might be included under the umbrella of 'higher education'. It is, thus not surprising that there have been the old and new voices on the purpose of a university and it seems to be an unending debate. The necessity to revisit the idea or purpose of a university has come at a time when according to Collini (2012:39), "*critics, reformers and governments have claimed that the studies carried on in universities are outdated, irrelevant, or in one word, useless, and that they need to be made to serve national needs more effectively and more directly – to become in other words, more useful*". Above all, Barnet (1992) argues that even if we do not explicitly state what quality means to us, our inherent views on quality will still be mirrored in the idea of quality we, eventually, form. In effect, the models and approaches that we create for evaluating and enhancing quality will potentially take the form of the inherent views we hold about the purpose of higher education. According to Barnet (1992): "*they will be offered as if they are neutral attempt to get grips with 'quality' but in reality they will contain hidden interests, bound up with our assumptions about the fundamental purposes of higher education*" (Barnett 1992:15). Accordingly, Gibbs and Barnet (2014) argue that it raises questions like, to what end do we think of higher education or in what forms should the thinking take or what forms has it taken?

One well-known early study in the old school of thought that is often cited in research on the purpose of higher education is that of John Henry Newman, who writing in 1899 makes specific reference to the definition of universal and its implication to university. In addition, Newman writes about the diversity in subjects offered and the benefits of the student community. To begin with the definition, Newman (1999: xvii) writes that the university is a "*place for teaching universal knowledge which*

implies its object is intellectual and extension of knowledge." Newman makes a logical argument about the meaning of the word 'universal' which he argues is defined by Johnson in his dictionary defines as '*a school where all arts and faculties are taught and therefore the very name of university is inconsistent with restrictions of any kind* (Newman 1992:20). With reference to a university's studies, Newman explains that all branches of knowledge are connected together because the subject matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself and so they have multiplied bearings on one another. Explaining the impact of the university community on students' experience, Newman writes that:

> A*s an assembly of learned men brought together by different intellectual interests, there is the benefit of students interacting, respecting and consulting to assist each other, leading to the formation of a habit of mind, which lasts through life. So even though, it is not physically possible for a student to enrol to do all subjects, there is the added benefit of the diverse community. In the end, the university prepares the student to fit into any post with credit and to master any subject with facility.* "*This is the main purpose of a university in its treatment of students.* (Newman 1999:93).

The deduction from Newman's argument is that a university should adopt a holistic approach to teaching all subjects (purist to contemporary) and should not give undue prominence to certain subjects and neglect the others. Students, then come out of university not as a genius in a particular subject but as a good member of society who is intellectually equipped to fit in any part of society and can make an impact with his intellectual abilities. The university must also engage in research to extend knowledge. Hence, Newman sees the university *as "a community engaged in the education of character and intellect."* (Holmwood 2011:13).

Equally, another old school of thought is that of Veblen (1918:34 cited in Collini (2012), who focuses on the purist role of the university, which leads to a holistic higher education. Veblen (1918) argues the place of a university "*has always been a corporation for the cultivation and care of the community's highest aspiration and*

ideals". This, however, raises the question of what society's highest aspiration and ideals are, nowadays? To explore Veblen's idea (1918) further, Collini (2012:86-87) argues the "*university's role of 'cultivation and care' are considerations that are longer term and less material"*. With the current trends in the HE sector, Collini (2012) argues that the expectations that society has placed on the university as powerhouses of economic development and prosperity are far-fetched. Furthermore, Collini (2012) argues that with the extension of subject areas and research which have gone beyond the traditional subjects studied at a university, coupled with the rise in student numbers, there is now a heightened scepticism about the purpose of a university (both intellectual and material). A situation Clark Kerr refers to as 'Multiversity', in 1963 to refer the diversification of the activities of universities. This view presupposes that society must recognise the inherent worth of intellectual enquiry and therefore Collini (2012) questions the expectation placed on universities to demonstrate their contribution to economic growth. In contrast to this argument, it is believed that universities assumed the dual role of "*securing economic growth and an educated workforce"* during the period when public funding for HEIs increased (Holmwood 2011:12). Besides, Varghese (2004) argues that in most countries, the development of HEIs was in a bid to build their economies after World War II, which implies the expectation that Collini (2012) is challenging has always been the norm. In addition, it is also possible that these expectations are as a result of the rise in private universities which come with the charging of high fees, and therefore students and parents, logically expect some materialistic returns. To argue further, Collini (2012: 3-4) states that: "*because the huge expansion of recent decades has involved growth not just in students but also in range of subjects and types of institutions, it is too late to in the day to attempt to be insistently purist about the usage of the term 'university*'". In

effect, it could be argued that with the recent massification of higher education, has come with the potential paradigm shift in the role or purpose of a university. Nonetheless, in Collini's (2012) view, the experience of a student attending one of today's universities which seems to have been marketized should still, in the least be an embodiment a set of ambitions and values that extend beyond, simply, gaining economic power. Collini (2012) cautions that his argument is not intended to disparage the growth of private universities, or to discount their relevance in the shaping of higher education sector in many countries. According to him, there are now many types of institutions to which the label 'university' is applied to, and they offer a range of activities that have drastically been extended in recent decades. The effects of this, he argues further :

> *are commonly talked about in terms of the transition from an 'elite' to a 'mass' system of higher education, and there is the tendency, which I think we should resist, to identify 'useless' with the former and 'useful' with the latter* (Collini 2012:41).

Holmwood (2011) in his argument, likewise, refers to the holistic approach to higher education. Holmwood explains that the purpose of a university is not only to transmit skills but it also about the wider growth of the individual and to foster community cohesion among students and teachers, who themselves are pursing research. Holmwood explains further that with students paying fees comes with less students residing on campuses, as most students now study and work to pay their fees and would rather stay home to reduce their costs. As a further note to the university's role of building a community that students and teachers interact and consult with each other, Holmwood argues that nowadays, the university is being referred to as an instrument that extends social inequity. This assertion is based on what he refers to as the higher differentiated fees which has augmented issues of

equality of access and therefore defeats the social mission of universities, in its ability to democratise higher education.

Turning now to another interesting argument on the purpose of higher education, Barnet (1992) begins his idea of a university with specific reference to the need to define the term 'higher' in higher education, without which he argues that the debate on the purpose of higher education is likely to go off on a tangent, resulting in the attenuation of the idea of higher education. Barnet (2012) raises the question if there should be a criterion for institutions to justify the title 'institution of higher education'. In his view, higher education signifies a certain level of intellectual attainment and not merely an 'additional education'. This view is supported by Mishra (2005) who argues that higher education allows for an in-depth knowledge and insight which gives students new horizons of knowledge in different fields. With this level of intellectual attainment, Mishra (2005) believes students are, consequently developed to critically think and become competent to critique the truth and contemporary issues. Mishra argues that even though students obtain a broader intellectual power within a narrow field, this leads to wider perspectives about the world, in general. Barnett (1992:20) refers to this as "*the educational processes which students are exposed to or which are intimately concerned with the students' development*. All the above about students' development taken together, (Barnett 1992:20-21) argues that the purpose of a university, ultimately, is to:

1. *Achieve an expansion of student's outlook, turn of mind, habit of thought and capacity for social and civic interaction.*
2. *Produce a person of broad knowledge, critical intelligence, moral decency and social sensitivity.*

The findings that emerge from the above arguments are that of the development of intellect, cultivation and care and extension of knowledge. To summarise these findings, Materu (2007) argues that higher education institutions exist to cover teaching, research and extension which can be inferred from the above arguments. Nonetheless, if one of the purposes of a university is the extension of knowledge, then one cannot completely ignore the aspirations and ideals of society, as raised by Veblen (1918). Society is dynamic and aspirations and ideals are expected to change so could one argue that it is logical for the university to adapt itself to this change to be able to serve its useful purpose. In this case, the university may need to 'change' and be able to manage this change to the mutual benefit of both the university and society. Subsequently, it could be argued that society's ideals and aspirations have changed over the years; the job markets require certain skills and that is the reason these private universities, which Collini (2012) refers to as 'marketized' seem to be focused on, a setting that is familiar with the current trends in the higher education sector in SSA countries. As explained by Pickard (2016), the shift from elitism to massification has brought to light the multiplication and diversification of missions for higher education institutions.

Relating the above arguments to higher education in SSA countries and Ghana, in particular, the rise of private universities has also brought with it an increase in the number of students applying for Business and IT related courses. Referring to Norman's view of a university, then questions can be asked on why courses offered by modern universities (mostly private) tend to be skewed towards certain a particular direction, i.e. Business and IT. Are these universities teaching 'universal' knowledge to their students? Holmwood's argument on community cohesion also raises questions about today's university. With the rise of private universities and the charging of fees,

there appears to be a contradiction in today's universities, as they appear as corporations delivering higher education.

As noted above, it is logical to argue that the private universities are simply responding to society's aspirations and ideals to make them useful. According to Holmwood (2011:15), this was the idea of university advocated by Kerr (2001 writing in 1963) when he spoke during a lecture delivered at the "*Godkin lectures on the uses of a university, he spoke of the transformation of the university into a 'mulitversity'. He used this term to indicate the different functions, or single communities into a multiplicity of communities, each reflecting its different functions, and their ability to adapt to the changing wider environment"*. In other words, the university can in the pursuit of intellectual enquiry; in the pursuit of cultivation of care and in the pursuit to extend knowledge still adapt to society's changing aspirations and ideals.

Taken together, it could be argued that the views by Newman, Holmwood and Barnett seem to protect the core values of a university and also develops the intellect while encouraging the university to be responsive to its societal needs. The reality is that society's ideals and aspirations have changed over the years, the job markets require certain skills and these modern universities seem to be able to provide the labour needed for the job markets. The central thesis is that Newman's idea of a university presents a holistic approach to university education which impacts on the quality of education provided. What then, is higher education in the Ghanaian context?

The Idea and Concept of Higher Education in Ghana

As per the debates above regarding the purpose of higher education, the situation is no different from Ghana. According to Alabi et al (2018), the purpose of higher education in Ghana is not found in any document. However, there are documents that categorise and define what is considered as higher education. Higher education is considered as post-secondary education leading to the award of a degree and post-graduate qualifications. It falls under the umbrella of tertiary education and is categorised by NAB (National Accreditation Board) as a University, University College, post-secondary diploma awarding institution, professional body awarding certificates or diplomas or professional training Institution (**www.nab.gov.gh** accessed 16/11/2013). With reference to higher education, NAB defines,

***A University**: An educational institution designed for advanced instruction and research in several branches of learning, conferring degrees in various faculties, and often embodying colleges, schools and similar institutions.*

***University College**: An institution of higher learning that is affiliated to a university and that offers instructions based on programmes approved by the university to which it is affiliated and whose degrees/diplomas/certificates are awarded by the parent university.*

Source: www.nab.gov.gh **accessed 16/11/2013**

The mention of 'several branches of learning' in the above definition aligns with Newman's idea of a university and Clack Kerr's 'mulitiversity' idea of a university. Following Newman's views in 1853, the argument for this study is that intellectual enquiry and universal teaching should form the idea of a university. More specifically, the 'university' should aim to produce students who have received a holistic education and are not contracted in the mind, therefore they have the ability to exercise their intellect in any capacity they find themselves. Students should come out of university in their specific field but should also have the intellectual ability to query not just in their

field of study but other fields as well. The concentration of private universities on Business and IT related subjects has, therefore raised some concerns. As mentioned earlier in Chapter Two, in his recent state of the nation address, the then President of Ghana, J. Mahama expressed concern that :

> *Many universities and tertiary institutions go for softer course options and churn graduates in business and humanities at the expense of science, technology and allied courses which are increasingly in demand."* (www.universityworldnews.com- accessed 02/03/2014).

What are the obstacles hindering the provision of a holistic university education? Or is there a mission creep as suggested by the Communique issued by the NCTE (National Council for Tertiary Education).

Holmwood's argument also raises questions about today's university. One could argue that today's university is not a community as envisaged by Newman but a corporation delivering higher education. Looking at it from the opposite point of view, it could be argued that the university is simply being responsive to the changes in its wider environment. Another argument in contrast to Collini's view is that the society that the university serves is changing with regards to how it pursues knowledge. The changing environment is steering the role of the university in society, so it will be just as logical for the university to adapt itself to this change to be able to serve its useful purpose. In this case the university will have to 'change' and be able to manage this change to the mutual benefit of both the university and society. Nevertheless, the provision of a holistic university education impacts on the quality of education provided and quality of output. In the context of the above, the third research question required of participants to describe the relevance of their curriculum to the Ghanaian society.

Theoretical Framework

The plethora of definitions and discussions on quality and higher education will form the basis of the theoretical framework for this study. The third part of the chapter,

therefore, will synthesize the ideologies to lay out the theoretical dimensions of the research using a two-pronged approach (quality and higher education), which will ultimately enable the theoretical framework of the study to be developed.

There are deductions that can be identified from the arguments on the definition of quality and purpose of higher education. First, the study argues that the purpose of higher education is to provide well-rounded students. Second, there is every indication that quality has multiple concepts, and it is context bounded. It is the contextual form of quality that makes it difficult for any consensus to be reached on the definition and measurement of quality. The decision as to what is quality depends on the individual, institution or nation. This does not mean quality cannot be defined. Rather, for any meaningful discussion to take place, there must be a consensus, which leads to the second deduction that quality is a matter of agreement, be it the definition, concepts, dimensions or any other thing related to it. The choice or agreement is dependent on the different stakeholders and how they perceive quality. In this view, Sarrico et al (2010:40) argue that: "the multidimensional character of quality is related to it encompassing different higher education dimensions, namely 'the quality of inputs, outputs and processes, which have to be combined with the demands put forward by students, universities and society each time one intends to assess quality."

Green (1994:27) argues that "*the best that can be achieved is to define as clearly as possible the criteria that each stakeholder uses when judging quality, and for these competing views to be taken into account when assessments of quality are undertaken.*" Third, depending on the definition selected, quality implies a relative measure of "*inputs, processes, outputs or learning outcomes."* (Materu 2007:1). In other words, quality is perceived to be a mechanism which has other processes embedded in its entirety. It has to go through certain processes which requires other

inputs to complete the process. These processes are integrated, and they give the overall picture of the quality process. Put briefly, quality does not stand or exist on its own. Afshar (1990:21) posits this "*characteristic of quality in his Attributive Theory, which lays to rest the disputes over the definition of quality in the context of higher education."*

Drawing on these arguments and for the purpose of this study, the Attributive Theory of Quality (ATQ) was a preferable theory for this study, as it presents quality not as a single entity, but, rather as quality as multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. In other words, quality cannot be assessed or measured based on one attribute but rather it is the sum of multiple attributes. In addition, the ATQ was preferrable because similar tools have been developed in Africa which posit that quality is made up of attributes and cannot be measured as a single entity. Notable among these are African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) which was developed by the African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the African Association of Universities (AAU), which contextualised quality attributes as functions of eight dimensions. In the following section, I discuss the concept of the ATQ and the different dimensions of quality that have been used by authors in the higher education sector. These discussions will lead me to contextualise the dimensions of quality to suit Ghana and this will ultimately provide useful theoretical lenses to help adapt a framework for this study.

Attributive Theory of Quality

A comprehensive study to establish and develop a theory for defining and assessing quality, specifically, as it relates to higher education institutions was carried out by Afshar (1990), in which it was found that the fundamental challenge around the concept of quality is the assumption that quality is an independent entity. Following an

analysis of this finding, the Attributive Theory of Quality (ATQ) was formulated, which postulates that quality is not an independent entity and so cannot be thought of as existing in isolation. To gain a deeper understanding of this theory, a distinction is made between any given phenomenon and its attributes. According to Alder (1978 cited in Afshar 1990), the distinction between a phenomenon and its attribute was initiated by Aristotle, when he categorised the physical world into two, namely, bodies and attributes. To help place the theory into perspective, it is instructive to distinguish between such terms as a phenomenon and an attribute.

The dictionary definitions are that a phenomenon is a *"fact or situation that is observed to exist or happen, especially one whose cause or explanation is in question*," while an attribute is a "quality or feature regarded as a characteristic or inherent part of someone or something." The premise for this theory is that an attribute is related to a body, object or a situation and finds its existence in it. For instance, an attribute such as weight and size only exist when related to an object. In the same vein, quality is only identifiable when it is related to a phenomenon such as higher education and therefore can be defined or assessed as a set of properties whose interactive sum form the phenomenon. This implies that to assess the quality of any given phenomenon, the components or properties must be identified and it's their interactive sum that indicate the quality of the phenomenon (Afshar 1990). Applied to higher education, this implies the components of HE must be identified so that quality can be assessed based on the interactive sum of all the components. It is the interactive sum of these components that will indicate the quality of education provided. Quality in higher education is, thus, best described as a set of dimensions. (Lacovidou et al 2009).

Turning back to the ATQ, the theory is that when assessing the quality of a phenomenon (in this case PHEI), certain 'necessary and sufficient' factors come into force. The necessary and sufficient factors include all the components needed for an institution to fulfil and protect its core values. When applied to this study, it raises the question of what attributes are necessary to allow a comprehensive quality assessment, which is very fundamental to this research. As Tsinidou et al (2010:228) point out that "*a simplistic approach to quality assessment would be to briefly describe what quality is, set certain standards that can be assessed, compare these with the work done in each institution and draw a conclusion on the quality of the institution in question*." If quality is not an independent entity or concept, then there are factors that make up or determine quality – quality dimensions.

Dimensions of Quality

According to Kang and James (2004), one of the key steps to take when assessing quality is to identify the appropriate quality dimensions. Harvey (2004) argues there are several dimensions of quality but no one quality assurance framework can give a definite measure of quality, so choices must be made about what dimensions we want to assess. This goes to support the argument deduced earlier that quality is a matter of agreement – certain parameters must be set to make an assessment or anything else, for that matter, to be meaningful. With the rise in quality issues, there have been several studies that have sought to identify different dimensions that sum up quality in higher education. Furthermore, Yeo (2008) is of the view that there is a rapid growth of competition in the service industry which has forced many organisations to critically review the services they provide to both internal and external customers – a trend that has found its way into the higher education sector. As the primary aim of higher education is to provide quality learning experiences to

students, higher education could be considered as part of the service industry (Yeo 2008). Subsequently, a number of authors have identified service quality dimensions that have been used as a basis for identifying quality dimensions in higher education as in the table below.

Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985	Sasser *et al.*, 1987	Haywood-Farmer, 1988	Schvaneveldt *et al.*, 1991	Grönroos, 1990	Stewart and Walsh, 1989
Reliability	Consistency		Accuracy	Reliability, Trustworthiness	Reliability Accuracy Mistake-free
Responsiveness **Understanding customers**		Timeliness Diagnosis Advice, guidance Attentiveness	Responsiveness		Timeliness Understanding users' needs
Access	Availability		Ease of use	Accessibility	Ease of access
Competence		Knowledge Skill		Professionalism and skill	Competence Knowledge
Courtesy	Attitude	Warmth Neatness Politeness	Emotion	Attitudes and behaviour	Courtesy and respect
Communication		Communication			Helpfulness in contact
Credibility		Honesty		Reputation and credibility	Credibility
Security	Security	Confidentiality			Security
Tangibles	Condition	Physical facilities	Environment		Surroundings
	Completeness		Completeness		Effective use of technology
		Handling complaints, Solving problems		Recovery	Redress
		Flexibility		Flexibility	Capacity for choice
			Performance		

Table: **Dimensions of Quality**
Source: Owlia and Aspinwall (1996)

There are similarities when the above dimensions are compared to higher education. In their study, Owlia and Aspinwall (1996) further highlighted that each of the quality dimensions identified has its definition in higher education as follows.

Dimension	Definition in higher education
Reliability	The degree to which education is correct, accurate and up to date
	How well an institution keeps its promises
	The degree of consistency in educational processes (teaching)
Responsiveness	Willingness and readiness of (academic) staff to help students
Understanding customers	Understanding students and their needs
Access	The extent to which staff are available for guidance and advice
Competence	The theoretical and practical knowledge of staff as well as other presentation skills
Courtesy	Emotive and positive attitude towards students
Communication	How well lecturers and students communicate in the classroom
Credibility	The degree of trustworthiness of the institution
Security	Confidentiality of information
Tangibles	State, sufficiency and availability of equipment and facilities
Performance	Primary knowledge/skills required for students
Completeness	Supplementary knowledge and skills, use of computer
Flexibility	The degree to which knowledge/skills learned are applicable to other fields
Redress	How well an institution handles customers' complaints and solves problems

Table 2: **Dimensions of Quality and Definitions**
Source: Owlia and Aspinwal (1996)

To position these dimensions in the Attributive Theory of Quality, it is the interactive sum of the dimensions that make up the quality of higher education. The use of the word 'interactive sum' indicates that these components interact or collaborate with each other. In this regard, Dare (2005:17) argues that "*all the elements associated with educational quality are interrelated'* which also indicates that *"a serious defect in one element is likely to have implications for quality in others.*" Owlia and Aspinwall (1997) in their comprehensive review demonstrate the dynamic relationship between quality components using a system approach, as shown in the diagram below.

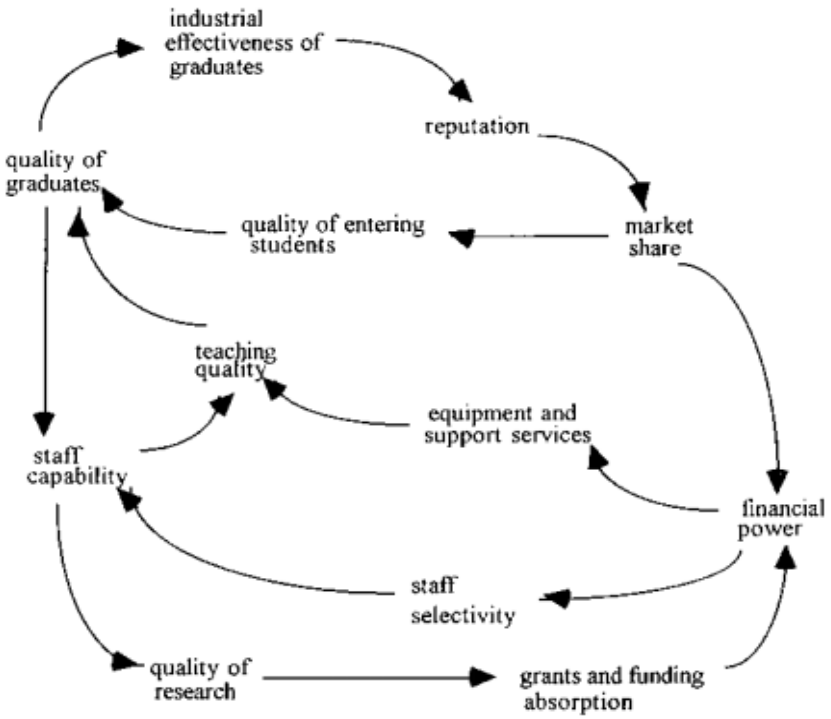


Figure 12: Relationship of Quality Assurance Components
Source: Owlia and Aspinwall (1997:528)

Owlia and Aspinwall (1997:528) argue that '*changing a variable in one direction (either increase or decrease) will inevitably lead a more and more change in the same direction.'* In practice, the loop is entered at the 'quality of graduates' – the quality of graduates admitted would result in higher job performance, which will build the university's reputation and ultimately increase their market share. Conversely, when the private university admits low quality students or students who do not meet the entry requirements, it can have potential consequences as this can lead to poor performance for the students (Output) and a reputational damage for the university (Outcome). When applied to teaching, the quality of teaching is also affected by the quality of the teaching force supported by the facilities and support services offered by the university.

Contextualising Dimensions of Quality in Ghana

By drawing on the concepts discussed above, the study has established that there has to be contextualisation of quality attributes for it to be measurable or assessed. Before shifting the focus to Ghana and as mentioned previously, the AQRM, a tool developed by the African Union Commission contextualises quality attributes to be governance and management, programme planning, curriculum development, teaching and learning, infrastructure, assessment, research, publication & innovation, and programme results. In the context of Ghana, the Improving Educational Quality (IEQ), a project funded by USAID in its report, *Defining Educational Quality* stipulates that for all IEQ collaborating countries which includes Ghana, the expectation is that student progress must be included in measuring educational quality, and this must stem from a prior agreement that specifies the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are expected to be acquired by students. In line with the framework for this study, the report, further, highlighted inputs, process, outputs and outcomes as the concepts, usually, associated with quality. These components defined in the context of Ghana are that:

> *Outputs typically refer to changes in student achievement, completion rates, certification, skills, and certain attitudes and values. Outcomes, if distinguished from outputs, are conceptualized as the longer-term consequences of education such as employment, earnings and changes overtime in attitudes, values, and behaviour. Inputs, if limited to factors subject to policy manipulation, include characteristics of teachers, pupils, facilities, curriculum, and fiscal and other resources necessary for the maintenance or change of the educational enterprise. In a broader sense, contextual influences may also be considered as inputs. Process is usually interpreted as the forms of interaction between teachers, students, administrators, materials and technology in educational activities (USAID Report Defining Educational Quality)*

Drawing on my experiences and background from Ghana, this compares to the Ghanaian context of educational quality. In support of this, Ampiah (2010) in his presentation at the Africa-Asia Experience Sharing Seminar, pointed out that;

> *In Ghana, the measurement of the quality of education has focused principally on resource, inputs and outcomes. Hence, the quality of education is measured against stated curriculum goals and objectives, and a range of elements including the level of student achievement, the qualification of teachers, pupil-teacher ratio, the availability of textbooks, school facilities and*

> *equipment, and cognitive achievement.*[21] *(Ampiah (2010) at Africa-Asia Experience Sharing Seminar in 2010)*

In a similar submission, Alabi et al (2018:17) argue that;

> *A critical analysis of Ghana's tertiary education quality assurance approach indicates that it is largely input based. In fact, almost all the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) norms are input based and those norms inform accreditation processes and quality assurances practices at institutional level. … the input-based approach in Ghana, characterised mainly but not solely by accreditation, focuses on entry requirements of students, academic staff credentials and resources dominated by infrastructure and library and laboratory resources.*

From the above, higher education quality to the Ghanaian could be translated in four indicators: inputs, process, output and outcome as below and which was also the framework underpinning the design questions for the interview and questionnaire. In this study to assess the QA mechanisms in private universities in Ghana, the above framework was used to assess the processes each university has in place to assure the quality of education being provided.

The framework below is comparable to the AQRM in two ways. First, it is similar in its underpinning concept, which is that quality is made of attributes and each dimension is equally important the in the quality equation. Second, it is comparable in some of the attributes to that of the AQRM. As mentioned, the attributes in the AQRM include governance and management, curriculum development, teaching and learning, infrastructure and programme assessment which can be found in the framework below. This study's framework, however, includes human resources, students' Admissions, values and behaviours, employment and destination, values and skills and achievements to reflect the Ghanaian context as described above by Alabi et al (2018) and Ampiah (2010).

As per the figure below, quality as inputs which includes physical resources, number and qualification of lecturers has been extensively used by professional

[21] In a follow up email conversation with the author, the situation as described in the paper has not changed (02/11/13).

bodies of accreditation and international agencies and thus data is easily available (Adams 1993). Quality as a process is about the student's experiences from admissions thorough out studies until they graduate.

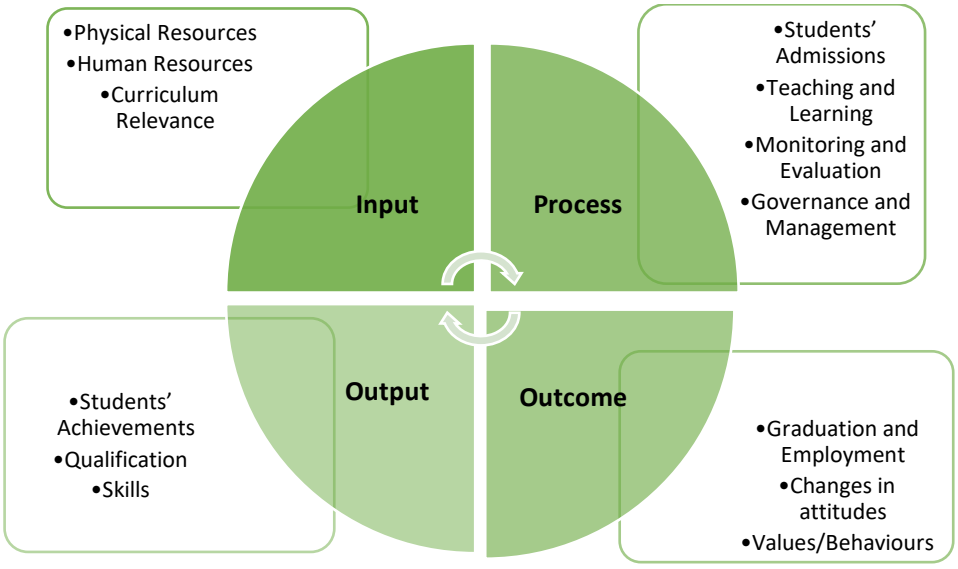


Figure 13: Theoretical Framework
Source: Adopted from *Improving Educational Quality Project-Defining Quality Education* (Adams 1993)

Adam (1993) explains it is the 'intra-institutional interaction of students and lecturers; it is the 'quality of life' of students in entirety and explains further that quality as process is often objective as the experiences of students may be seen as proxies for the intended output sought. Quality as outputs and outcomes are the achievements of students and the long-term effect of higher education, respectively. This assessment, which is quite popular with policy makers include students' achievement, cognitive skills, employment and changes in students' attitude.

As indicated in the Attributive Theory of Quality, it is the interactive sum of the above quality dimensions that would form quality in the participating universities. This study also presupposes that based on these dimensions, the university will, ultimately, be able to provide a holistic education. As stated earlier, these indicators are not stand-alone indicators. Dare (2005:17), observes that *"all the elements associated with*

educational quality are interrelated; a serious defect in one element is likely to have implications for quality in other. Thus, the definition of quality cannot depend on one or two indicators. Quality indicators should therefore convey notions of quantity and quality."

Applicability of Western QA Models for the Ghanaian Context

The concept underpinning the QA framework adapted for the study was applicable to the Ghanaian context as there were some similarities to a certain degree. The Ghanaian concept of QA as argued is that it is made up of multiple indicators like what was argued in the international literature. However, it is worth noting that in Ghana, Alabi et al (2018) argue that the approach identified to be the practice is the input-based.

Throughout the chapter, it was made clear that the definition of quality was still at no consensus stage, however, there appears to be an agreement that a consensus that quality is not a single entity but rather a composition of attributes. Furthermore, it was made clear that the attributes are inter-dependent on each other and so the failure in one attribute can potentially affect the entire QA process. The attributive nature of quality was easy to apply to the Ghanaian context in that the concept of quality is thought of in the same way. As Alabi et al (2018:17) points out, "*the input-based approach in Ghana, characterised mainly but not solely by accreditation, focuses on entry requirements of students, academic staff credentials and resources dominated by infrastructure and library and laboratory resources".* The study found that the universities had rich data on the input-based attributes of quality.

In contrast, the outcome and output processes were not particularly applicable in the Ghanaian context as the attributes such as students' achievements, qualification, skills

set, graduation and employment, values and behaviours were not familiar to the Ghanaian universities. As would be seen later in the study, there was little or no data on these attributes. The interconnectivity between the quality attributes as highlighted in the discussion was also found.

Summary

Given the focus of this study, this chapter explored the two fundamental concepts of this thesis – quality assurance and higher education from both the international and African perspectives. From the discussions, it was established that even though there was currently no consensus on what constitutes quality, it was actually a matter of agreement between nations and their stakeholders to establish parameters, which then direct the quality assurance processes. The discussions also focused on the concept of higher education to enable the purpose of higher education to be identified, as one that provides a holistic education. There was a need to discuss the Ghanaian context of higher education and higher education quality as these helped to define the parameters of the study. Finally, the chapter ended with the applicability of QA models in the Ghanaian context and the theoretical framework was established and which was underpinned by the research questions identified as below;

1. What is quality in higher education?
2. What are the current institutional quality assurance mechanisms used by private universities in Ghana and how are they monitored?
3. How relevant is the curriculum to the Ghanaian society?

In the next chapter, the study will discuss the methodological approaches that will be used for the collation of data.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology and Methods

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology and methods that were used for this study. The first part of the chapter deals with the methodology and theoretical framework underpinning the research which will lead to the identification of appropriate methods required for the study. As Silverman (2000) argues, your methodology influences the methods chosen by the researcher and how they are used. Next to this, the study population and sampling will be discussed, followed by a submission of the data collated and analysis. Finally, ethical issues related to the study will also be discussed.

Choosing a Methodology

The methodology selected for this study was Qualitative. Stern (1980) argues that qualitative methods are useful when one wants to explore into issues that little is known to help us acquire an understanding of the dynamics. In the same vein, O'Leary (2010) explains further that using qualitative methodologies allows the researcher to delve into a world set in its natural settings, in search for holistic meanings. In this way, O'Leary (2010) argues that the researcher can immerse themselves into what is being studied and the researcher also gains a thorough and intimate understanding of a people and their culture, places and situations. These assertions align to my work, in that, as discussed in chapter one, private university in Ghana is a new phenomenon and little is, therefore, known. Again, in my quest to answer my research questions, I searched for meanings and perceptions of participants about quality and its mechanisms. In addition, I engaged with different stakeholders in a natural settings;

and as a Ghanaian who grew up in the country and have had a tertiary education there, it was easier for me to realise and immerse myself into the reality being studied.

Rationale for Qualitative Design

As stated previously, the focus of my research is primarily to explore and assess the internal quality assurance mechanisms in private universities in Ghana, of which little is known. Referring to Stern (1980) who argues that qualitative methods are useful when one wants to explore into issues that little is known to help us acquire an understanding of the dynamics, then, my research naturally lends itself to a qualitative research more than a quantitative research and as such, qualitative research became a more preferable tool to understand how different stakeholders in the education sector view quality in private higher education and their idea of what mechanisms must be in place to ensure quality standards are not compromised. In addition, Atuahene (2006:104) states that "*using qualitative methods provides the researcher with varied perspectives when analysing the research questions".* Apart from this benefit of using qualitative research, Atuahene (2006) highlights it is well suited for studying the behavioural changes and complexities of human institutions. In my quest to explore quality in the private higher education sector, I, inevitably, studied human/institutional behaviour. Hence, using qualitative research helped me better understand the different perceptions on higher education quality, the current quality assurance measures in place and what quality assurance are required to achieve the level of quality expected from the private universities. Furthermore, according to (Boateng 2010:34), "*with qualitative research, one can understand the feeling, values and perceptions of participants".*

Atuahene (2006) argues that the permissibility of qualitative methodology makes it practical to make changes to suit the environment of the study. For instance, he

explains that for the cultural and traditional settings in Ghana, makes is suitable to use qualitative methodology. This implies that, by using qualitative methods for my research work, I was able to form an idea or theory from my interview responses on the quality mechanisms that are in place in the private universities.

Finally, another reason for using qualitative methods was that authors who have carried out similar studies have employed qualitative methods and have been successful. For instance, a study by Atuahene (2006) on "Policy Analysis of the Financing of Tertiary Education Institutions in Ghana : An Assessment of the Objectives and the Impact of Ghana Education Trust Fund; a study by Utuka (2012) on Quality Assurance in Higher Education : Comparative Analysis of Provisions and Practices in Ghana and New Zealand and a another study by Kagondu & Marwa (2017) on Quality Issues in Kenya's Higher Education Institutions were successful in using qualitative approach to conduct their studies. Other similar studies carried out by Baryeh (2006) on Higher Education Quality Assurance in Ghana: How NAB is coping the balance between Improvement and Accountability and that of Inkoom (2012) on Implementation of Initiatives to reform the quality of education in rural Ghanaian Junior High Schools, have all used qualitative research method, and were successful.

Theoretical Underpinnings

A review of relevant literature suggests that the "*approaches to designing a qualitative research are underpinned by various philosophies and are described according to the type of analysis they imply and their assumptions. The epistemological landscape in qualitative research is as diverse and complex as various disciplines that employ qualitative methods."* These assumptions and implications are sometimes combined in one research. Maxwell (2008:224) states that "*it is possible to*

combine aspects of different paradigms and traditions, although if you do this, you will need to carefully assess the compatibility of the modules that you borrow each from". As this study seeks to understand a phenomenon such as quality assurance in private universities, the philosophical assumption for my study was therefore derived from interpretivism. However, the study has also footprints of other two philosophies – naturalistic and phenomenological because, to a larger extent, they each have a bearing on the overall object of this study, as will be discussed in the sections below.

Interpretivist Approach

This study was positioned within the Interpretivist Constructivism paradigm. This theory postulates that reality comes to bear when humans interact (Kukla 2000). This means, as a researcher using the interpretive approach, my aim was to unearth meanings which directs me to understand the issues, fully, through the interaction the researcher has with the participants (Allvermann and Malozzi 2010). In the words of Atuahene (2006:108), "*a constructivist approach in qualitative study is an attempt to offer subjects the opportunity to construct their views and perceptions about the way they observe and understand a phenomenon."* In a descriptive and explorative research as mine, this approach was suitable because it enabled me to understand and analyse the different perceptions participants had about the challenges in the private higher education sector; what quality in higher education meant to them and what mechanisms existed. The advantages of Interpretivist approach have been highlighted by authors. Creswell (2007) argues that the use of an interpretivist approach allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of a phenomenon and its uniqueness. In this vein, Hammersley (2013) explains that researchers who use this approach must seek to understand the diverse ways of looking at or experiencing the world through different contexts. The benefit to my study

was that I gained a deeper understanding of participants' experiences of the quality assurance processes at their universities. Tuli (2010) argues further that researchers who use this type of approach can really gain an insider's insight to provide more authentic information. As a researcher who has had university education in Ghana, I considered myself as an insider and this leveraged my ability to understand the participants' thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views and feelings. A benefit of this was that I was conscious of my own and that of participants' biases and ensured it did not have an impact on my interpretation of the data. Using the interpretivist approach also meant that I was able to use in-depth and semi-structured interviewing to investigate participants' opinions and experiences on what quality assurance mechanisms existed.

Naturalistic Approach

According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), the naturalistic approach, basically, considers both sides of the coin. They state that the naturalistic approach "*looks into different groups of people from different backgrounds and incorporates their understanding about a common phenomenon by observing life from separate yet overlapping angles makes the researcher more hesitant to leap to conclusions and encourages more nuanced analysis*" (Rubin and Rubin 2005:4). With reference to my study, this implied I was able to listen to and observe different perceptions from the different groups that make up the population. As my study involved an assessment of quality in the PHE sector, I listened to the different levels of stakeholders from the universities, the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the National Accreditation Board (NAB). This helped me understand or observe how each group felt about quality in the private higher education sector. As a Ghanaian who has had all her education in Ghana, this approach, therefore, increased the credibility of my

study, as data collated were from different sources, and thereby mitigated any bias in the researcher's opinion. As Atuahene (2006:107) claims, "*a broader and holistic approach to a study of this nature is a necessary vitality for ensuring credibility of the findings*".

Phenomenological Approach

Phenomenology means the study of phenomena. Hancock (1998) explains that it is a description of something such as events, situations, experiences or concepts which we may not have a full understanding. Hancock (1998:8) states: "*our lack of understanding of these phenomena may exist because the phenomena has not been overtly described and explained or our understanding of the impact it makes may be unclear*". As stated earlier in the problem statement, Altbach (1999) argues that it is significant to study the dynamics of private higher education due to the recent global expansion. In Ghana, the quality of private tertiary education and its sustainability are unknown and insubstantial. For the purposes of my study, it is a new phenomenon that needs to be explored. It is a phenomenon that, not much is known about its processes. This lack of knowledge or understanding has therefore led to biased opinions about the activities of PHEIs. Ultimately, my study sought to make available in the public domain the processes of these universities, their challenges, their quality mechanisms and what stakeholders expected of them.

Research Design

As mentioned earlier on, the research methodology is the overall approach a researcher would take and this also determines the selection of instruments (Leedy and Ormrod 2010). This is supported by Mouton (1996), who argues that research methodology directs the research design and data collection based on the underlying philosophical underpinnings. Since the leading theoretical framework is the

interpretivist approach of describing and assessing the processes and practices of quality in the private higher education sector, semi-structured and open-ended interviews became the most appropriate data collection instruments used for the study. In addition, a benefit of qualitative interviewing, Atuahene (2006:126) argues is its "*permissibility of different methods*". Similarly, in the word of Rossman and Rallis (1998:9): "*qualitative research uses multiple methods that are humanistic and interactive*". Hence, the researcher also recognised documents review as the second main data collection instrument to use. This flexibility meant that with I could use analysing existing policy documents, official government publications on private higher education as sources of information for my data. In relation to semi-structured interviews, it meant that I was able ask questions that were not, necessarily, in my interview guide but picked them up on responses from participants. In instances where the researcher was not able to interview some participants face to face, questionnaires and telephone interviews were used.

Although the first round of visits to Ghana was not entirely successful, it worked out well as it served as pilot, which was overlooked initially. The responses from the first round of visits afforded the researcher the opportunity to use the feedback to test how effective the research design was. Following this, some ambiguities and inadequacies were identified in the research design and so these were corrected for the subsequent interviews and questionnaires. For instance, I had to introduce new questions to capture information on enrolment and the establishment of a QA unit.

1. What is the current student enrolment?
2. In which year was your QA Unit established?
3. Do you have a QA Policy/Procedure document?

I also reshuffled the flow of the questions by presenting questions on QA first to help the questions appear in an order that will generate the useful discussions, coherently. The main sources of data for this research were:

- Review of official documents and literature relating to PHE quality assurance systems.
- Interviews with key personnel in eight private universities, National Accreditation Board and the National Council for Tertiary Education.
- The international literature on quality assurance in higher education

The table below sets out the research questions and how they were processed to enable the researcher find answers to the questions.

Research Process Table

Research Question	**Context**	**Concept/Theoretical Framework**	**Methods of data collection**	**Analysis**
What is quality in higher education?	Ghanaian context	Attributive Theory of Quality	Open-ended interviews/questionnaires	Documents Analysis Interview data Analysis
What are the institutional QA mechanisms currently in place in PHEIs in Ghana?	Ghanaian context of HE quality.	Pls refer to Fig. 10 Quality Indicator Framework on page 124	Open-ended interviews, documents and archival analysis	Document Analysis of processes and practices written. Interview data analysis to confirm/verify the processes and practices in place
How relevant is the curriculum relevant to the Ghanaian society?	Ghanaian context	Newman's idea of higher education	Open-ended interviews, documents and archival analysis	Interview data analysis to confirm/verify the processes and practices in place

Table 3**: Research Process Table**

Population Study

Site Selection

Currently, there are ninety-six accredited private universities in Ghana, so it was impossible for the researcher to focus on all of them due to limited resources and time.

Glesne (1998) argues points out that the two factors that impact on the numbers of sites for a study are the researcher's interest and what the researcher wants to learn from the study. In addition, Patton (2002) asserts that there is really no rule of thumb when it comes to how a researcher must focus their study but rather the depth of the study is determined by the interest, purpose and resources available to the researcher. With this in mind plus the limited financial resources available to me as a self-funding student; the study was limited to eight private universities and university colleges. It was prudent to select sites that would give me enough data and have result in creation of knowledge. Therefore, I chose these eight institutions due to the amount of information and contribution each of these universities can make to finding answers to my research questions. Patton (2002: 236) cautions that "*while studying one or a few cases does not technically permit broad generalizations to all possible cases,* "*logical generalization can often be made from weight of evidence produced in studying a single"* Furthermore, for this reason and given the focus of my study is to describe and assess the quality mechanisms in private universities, it was logical that I chose universities which had been in existence long enough to have quality processes and procedures in place and are functional. By default, this position also meant that the two governing agencies in Ghana with the strategic responsibility over the higher education sector namely, the National Accreditation Board and the National Council for Tertiary Education had to be included in the study. I pointed out in Chapter Two that, the private higher education sector in Ghana emerged in the early 2000s, hence the I was of the view that a university which had been in existence for ten years or more will be appropriate. From the above, my sample for the study was chosen using these categories - proximity to the researcher; how long the university has been in existence and the ability of the university to provide the needed information.

Selection of Sampling Units

Rubin and Rubin (2005) highlight that it is important for the researcher to interview people who have in depth knowledge and understanding of an issue to ensure the credibility of a study. In other words, to ensure the credibility of my interviews, I had to ensure I interviewed people who had the knowledge and understanding of quality assurance and the dynamics of the private higher education sector in Ghana. This suggests that I needed participants who were adept in quality management in PHE, the challenges facing private universities and what quality mechanisms were in place. In consequence, I choose to use purposive sampling to select my sample units, and they must meet the following criteria:

- Participants must have knowledge of the how Ghanaians perceive quality.
- Participants must have knowledge of the current quality mechanisms in PHEIs.
- Participants must be involved in the policy/decision making, administration and with responsibility for quality assurance from the University, NAB or NCTE.
- Participants must have an understanding of how PHEIs are governed and how they operate.

While purposeful sampling has been criticised to be highly prone to researcher bias because it is based on the decision of the researcher, on the other hand, Patton (2002) argues that the purposeful sampling allows for information-rich samples to be selected for the study, which offers a greater depth of learning for the researcher because the samples selected are of crucial importance to the study. Using purposeful sampling, therefore allowed me to obtain the needed information to answer my research questions.

For the interviews and questionnaires, I required specifically to interview the Quality Assurance Lead for each institution. The participants I interviewed or sent the

questionnaires to, were the Quality Assurance Officers and Managers. In the regulatory agencies, I interviewed the Head of Quality Assurance at the National Accreditation Board a senior officer at the National Council of Tertiary Education in Ghana.

Data Analysis Technique

Srivastava and Hopwood (2009) describe qualitative data analysis as a continuous search for ideas and themes which gives us an in-depth explanation to questions like 'what's going on' in a study. For this reason, they explain further that this continuous search for explanation is a process that requires process requires the handling and interpretation of data to be thorough. Data analysis is, therefore, a very important stage of any research study. It has a potential effect on the results of the study, and therefore requires a methodological approach. There are many well-known studies which demonstrate the best procedures for analysing qualitative research ((e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), and so the researcher had to choose a procedure, amongst the many studies, which was logical to use for the study. As a study which seeks to describe and interpret a new phenomenon, thematic analysis became the preferred method to use. Braun and Clarke (2013) explain that thematic analysis is a process used to categorize and interpret patterns in qualitative data. Originally developed by Gerald Holton in the 1970s, Braun and Clarke (2013) argue that the method has been extensively used although it has had little discussion until in recent times, when it evolved and has become widely accepted. In addition, they argue that thematic analysis is actually similar to other analytic methods such as grounded theory, however thematic analysis is more of a method, than a methodology as it is not fixated on a theory, thus making

it flexible to use and also gives the potential for the researcher to use it in a range of different ways, In particular, the flexibility makes it user-friendly for novice researchers.

Braun and Clark's (2013) thematic analysis consist of a recursive six-phase process, which I utilised for analysing the data for this study. The process as shown below can be employed to find answers to a wide variety of questions about the different experiences of social objects or processes we go through.

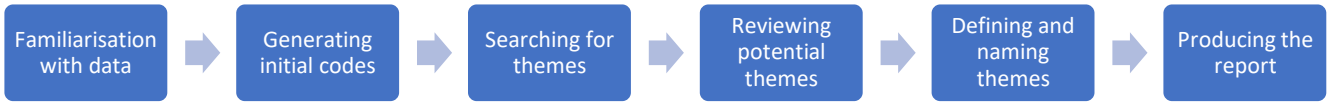


Figure 14 Thematic Analysis Flow Chart

Source: Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2012, 2013, p60-69) Components of Thematic Analysis

Data Analysis

Frechtling *et al* (1997) advise that it is important for data analysis to begin in tandem with the collection of data because the process is iterative and continues over the course of the fieldwork. In this direction, I commenced data analysis immediately after each fieldwork using Braun and Clarke's (2006) components of data analysis as discussed below.

Familiarisation

The first phase of thematic analysis is the familiarisation stage. Described by Braun and Clarke (2013) as a stage common to analysis, in general, this is the stage the researcher reads and reads again any data collected, and listens to all the audios, if applicable. (Braun and Clarke 2013). Accordingly, the first action I took when I got back from my fieldwork was to carefully read all the responses and listened to audio data repeatedly. This process allowed me to observe, make casual notes and highlight parts of the data that were potentially interesting and relevant to the research

questions. For instance, in response to the question on how NAB measures the quality of physical facilities, a part of the response is transcribed below:

"I'm sure, [snuffles] I'm sure you've read through our standards (Interviewer: mmm) and err we have the physical facilities standards, right (Interviewer: mmm) that give indication of even the number of students per WC, (Int: mmm), the measurements of the classrooms and the way the door should be opened (Interviewer: okay) …"

Listening to the above response, notes were made as the response was relevant and the initial observations were that NAB had a system to measure physical facilities and they were not taken at face value.

Generating Initial Codes

This phase consists of a systematic coding of the data set to generate initial codes. Initial codes are important as its aim is to potentially identify meaningful bits of the data at the smallest local level (Braun and Clarke 2013). They explain further that codes provide a pitch summary of the data and serve as a shorthand for the researcher. After I had familiarised myself with my data, I revisited the data and this time highlighted and generated initial codes for all the responses that were relevant to my study. This action took me deeper into the data to help me identify any relevant hidden meanings. An example of how codes were generated in two responses are shown below:

Responses	**Use of Language**	**Codes Generated**
The university views QA as an ongoing cyclical process which require continuous improvement. There is an overall body for QA, and then there is a QA lead at the faculty, department and unit levels.	Overall body Faculty department Unit levels Departmental and unit heads report.	Faculty checks Dept. checks Unit checks
Broad targets are set which trickles down to each level with quarterly meetings held with the various departmental and unit heads, who give a report on targets that were or were not achieved. For instance, lecturers make known their targets for the academic year and so at the end of the year, lecturers will have to report if they achieved their target or not. Where targets are not achieved, lecturers are required to explain why and state what preventative measures would be taken so it does not reoccur. *For non-teaching departments like Alumini, targets like how many students go into internship and outcomes are monitored.*	Broad targets are set. Report on targets Departmental and unit heads report. Lecturers report if they have achieved targets or not. Where targets are not met,, lecturers explain why and state preventative measures	Monitoring and evaluation
Quarterly reporting, regular student staff interactive forums, student Faculty Evaluation, Peer review of teaching,	Faculty evaluation Peer review	Monitoring an Evaluation

Committees for monitoring Academic and non-academic structures within the University and, the Excellence Awards to recognize high performing Units, Faculties and Campuses.	Student-staff interactive forums	
"I'm sure, [snuffles] I'm sure you've read through our standards (Interviewer: mmm) and err we have the physical facilities standards, right (Interviwer: mmm) that give indication of even the number of students per WC, (Int: mmm), the measurements of the classrooms and the way the door should be opened (Interviwer: okay) …"	Physical facilities standards Measurements of classrooms Even number of students per WC	Physical checks

Searching for themes

Braun and Clarke (2013) explain that a theme shifts the analysis to a wider focus, and it is important for illuminating the research questions. In other words, this is the stage the researcher needs to be make sure that the coded data is enough to answer the research questions. They caution that, there is no one ideal way to do this so the researcher can rely on their own analytical judgement about what is meaningful and important for answering the research question. To apply this stage to my research work, I built on the initial codes generated and distilled the different responses expressed by participants into themes that could potentially fit into the broader themes that had created in the theoretical framework. The amount of data collected on a fieldwork can be overwhelming and daunting for a novice researcher, so this phase was quite useful in further reducing the data to a manageable amount. In the table below, the themes that were identified from the initial coding are further categorised and matched with the responses.

Faculty, Dept and Unit Level Checks	**Lecturers explain why**	**Physical check of facilities**
… and then there are is a QA lead at the faculty, department and unit levels (PU8)	Where targets are not achieved, lecturers are required to explain why and state what preventative measures would be taken so it does not reoccur (PU8)	"I'm sure, [snuffles] I'm sure you've read through our standards (Interviewer: mmm) and err we have the physical facilities standards, right (Interviewer: mmm) that give indication of even the number of students per WC, (Int: mmm), the measurements of the classrooms and the way the door should be opened (Interviewer: okay) …" (NAB)
Faculty Evaluation, high performing Units, Faculties and Campuses (PU5)		

Reviewing potential themes

Braun and Clarke (2013:65) describe this stage as "*quality checking*." This stage of thematic analysis consists of two stages, which are checking that the developed

themes are aligned to the coded data and the whole dataset (Braun and Clarke 2013). They explain further that, if they do not work, it will be appropriate to disregard or do a reallocation of themes. During this process, I checked that the responses for each theme were coherent and substantial enough to answer the research question. This stage was useful as it helped me to identify the questions that were not thoroughly answered. For these questions, I had to go back to the participants too probe further. There were certain themes that needed to be reallocated. This action ensured that my data was rich and detailed. However, for some questions, I was not successful in obtaining thorough answers as some participants were not engaging well at this stage.

Defining and naming themes

Braun and Clarke (2013) describe this stage of the process as the stage where a thorough analysis of data is carried out. It is at this stage that detailed and complex themes are defines. At this stage, the broader themes from the previous stage were further broken down into sub-themes to specifically target the research questions as created in the theoretical framework. This is also the stage where names are given to each theme. For naming my themes, I assigned the names as has been created in the theoretical framework to ensure there was a connection between the themes and the theoretical framework. The end result as indicated in the table below shows that the identified themes correspond with Inputs and Process in the theoretical framework of the study. The benefit of this stage was that it gave me a summary or outline of the report I was due to produce in the next phase of the process.

Identified theme	**Theoretical Framework**
Faculty, Dept and Unit Level Checks	Process
Lecturers explain why	Process
Physical Facilities Check	Inputs/ Process

Producing the report

This was the final stage of the data analysis process and an expansion of the previous stages into a detailed report.

Gaining Access to the selected Universities

Gaining access to a research site is an essential part of the research journey. Glesne (1998:39) states that:

> *Gaining access as a process which includes an acquisition of consent to go where you want, observe what you want, talk to whomever you want, obtain and read whatever documents you require and do all of this for whatever period of time you need to satisfy your research purposes.*

The acquisition of consent was the initial step towards gaining access to my research sites. This included identifying the participants who are well placed and knowledgeable in my area of research. According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), the first step is to identify the audience to elicit information from. After the identification stage, both email and telephone were used in making contact with each participant identified at all the research sites. These contacts were important as it helped me establish rapport with some of the participants before going to meet them in person. Apart from establishing a rapport, these email and telephone contacts were used to seek consent from the participants. To make my research look authentic and genuine, it was necessary that a formal letter of introduction on university letterhead from my supervisors were used to make the contacts.

After establishing contacts and receiving permission, I planned to travel to Ghana on different occasions to conduct my interviews with the participants who granted permission for an interview. Several contacts had to made with them on arrival in Ghana before an appointment could be made. For some of the participants, a questionnaire was appropriate as the time of my visits was not convenient for them. At the initial stage of the interviews, I began an informal chat to discuss my interest

and excitement about the emergence of private higher education in Ghana, and what the future held for the higher education sector. The informal chat was helpful for both me and the interviewees as it generated participants' interest, established a rapport and calmed nerves. The interviews were also preceded by informing participants of my ethical responsibilities, their privacy rights and non-obligatory participation.

In Ghana, I was able to visit five private universities, National Accreditation Board and National Council for Tertiary Education. I could not visit all of the sites due to their location and the logistics I would need to travel there. Furthermore, I had to make three separate trips to Ghana to conduct interviews because it was impossible to meet all the participants on one visit. Even at this, I was still not able to meet all the participants so had to use questionnaires and telephone interviews for some participants. It was either the participant was engaged or not available as scheduled. I made appointments with some of the participants in advance but for others, this was not possible. When I arrived, the first step I took was to make contact again and confirm appointments for both the interviews and handing in of the questionnaires, for those who could not grant me an interview. Even though, contacts were made, and some appointments made before arriving in Ghana, it was still a difficult and frustrating process to get in touch with some of the participants to make them aware I had arrived in Ghana and re-confirm the appointments. The process involved making several telephone calls, which were to no avail most of time, probably due to network failure. Although, all my research sites are in the capital city of Accra, they were not close to home. The city of Accra has expanded to such an extent that all the research sites, though in Accra, were no less than two hours' drive from where I resided. The locations of the research sites were not devoid of heavy vehicular traffic, which even compounded the length of time to travel there. It was therefore not practical to travel

there without making contact with the participant to make them aware. This situation made the fruitless telephone calls frustrating, as it was essential that the participant was aware that I was travelling to the site.

As a Ghanaian who spent most of my life in Ghana, I am aware of the cultural dynamics – that most people have their schedules fully booked or do not operate on a schedule at all. The schedule of most people is adhoc, so it was important I called on the day to re-confirm appointments before embarking on the journey. They were a couple of visits that even though, they were aware I was travelling to see them, I still ended up waiting for a couple of hours before I could see the participants. Unfortunately, there were other sites too that, I did not meet the participant to interview because they have had to make an unexpected travel out of the country. I was lucky to meet other staff who were willing to help me, show me around their campuses but not grant me an interview. They were happy for me to leave a questionnaire for them to respond and send to me later. On all the sites I visited, although the participants took me around the campus, I also spent some time simply hanging around to fit into the landscape and observe activities on the campuses.

In conclusion, I was happy with the coverage I had. Being a Ghanaian, I was highly aware of the difficulties I would face in getting interviews, so I am glad I was able to access these sites.

Ethical Considerations

Denzin and Lincoln (1998:21) argue that:

> E*thical practices in any study may include "mutual respect, non-coercion and non-manipulation, the support of democratic values and institutions, and the belief that every research act implies moral and ethical decisions that are contextual*.

My responsibilities to the participants were to assure them and make them feel safe to partake in the study. In this regard, seeking consent from participants was of

paramount importance so detailed information about the purpose, scope, objective and any implications of the study was made available to participants to ensure they made an informed choice to partake in the study. I made participants aware of their right to withdraw at any point in time if they felt uncomfortable. I also assured them of anonymity to protect their identities. There was the challenge of having to capture all the salient points during interviews in my notes taking so there was the need to record my interviews. To be able to do this, I made participants aware that there was the risk of me not capturing all their responses as they spoke and to prevent me asking them to repeat themselves which may inconvenience them, it was important that I recorded the interviews. I assured participants that the recordings would only be used for the purposes for which they were recorded and destroyed after my thesis was published. For this study, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Nottingham School of Education Research Ethics Committee. The study also adhered to BERA, ERSC and the official national regulations and guidelines for human subject's research in Ghana.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the methodology and the theoretical framework that guided this study. I also elaborated on the population for the study and how the units were selected. Later, I discussed how the data was collected and analysed using the six-phase process of Braun and Clarke (2013). In the end, the ethical issues associated with the study were also discussed. The next chapter is mainly to present and analyse the outcome of the data collection.

Chapter Five

Quality Assurance Mechanisms in Private Universities in Ghana

Internal quality assurance structures that are effective serves as an efficient way for institutions to measure the quality of education. Sternstaker et al (2008)

Introduction

The study has, so far, justified the statement of the problem; presented the development of higher education in Africa and Ghana; reviewed the existent literature on quality assurance and higher education; and then explained the methodology and methods employed for the study. This chapter will focus on the presentation and analysis of the data from interviews and questionnaires collected from the fieldwork.

The chapter begins with a brief profile of the participating universities and the responsibilities of the two regulatory bodies namely The National Accreditation Board (NAB) and The National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE), to situate the responses received from them into perspective. The brief profile is followed by the research evidence intertwined with the arguments raised through the analysis of data and the conclusion. To facilitate the analysis, the data was coded into themes and further categorised into sub-themes to augment my understanding of participants' perceptions in relation to how quality is assured in their institution. As a qualitative research, Hoepfl (1997) explains the difference between quantitative and qualitative research to be that the former is interested in casual determinations, prediction and generalization of findings, while the latter focuses on seeking understanding and bringing information to bear. For the data collection, the researcher collected data from eight private universities and the two regulatory bodies mentioned above. As already mentioned in the theoretical framework, the design of the questions was based on four clear and distinct themes namely Input, Process, Output and Outcome. The data collection focused on the identification of the processes and practices that go into

assuring the quality of higher education at the institutions and the perception of participants on quality and the regulatory systems. In this regard, the analysis is laid out using these four themes. The four broad themes were further explored resulting in eight sub-themes which focused on issues relating to:

Input

- Physical resources
- Human resources
- Curriculum relevance

Process

- Student's admissions
- Teaching and Learning
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Management and Governance

Output

- Students' achievement, skills and value for money

Outcome

- Impact of students' achievement on national development
- Changes in attitudes, values and behaviours

In addition to the above, the researcher extended the questions to two different angles which were also useful in addressing the research questions. These centred on issues relating to:

- Institution's perception of the private higher education regulatory system
- The challenges in the private higher education system

Glense and Peshkin (1992) explain that the purpose of data analysis is to bring out the meanings and understanding of data by make sense of the data collected by creating meanings of what the researcher has observed. In this view, having identified the above themes and sub-themes, this chapter will integrate the data evidence and the themes identified and weave it around the related literature review to present a comprehensive analysis of the quality assurance mechanisms in the private universities in Ghana. Using a thematic analysis, as submitted in the previous chapter, helped me to compare the different responses from the participants.

In what follows, the results are presented for each theme intertwined with the analysis. However, before proceeding, it will be necessary to present a brief profile of the universities and regulatory bodies. It is worth mentioning that to protect their identity and privacy, the private universities were code named as PU1, PU2 up to PU8.

Profile of Participants

As stated earlier, the data for the study was collected from eight private universities in Ghana and the two main regulatory bodies in the tertiary sector. The universities selected were established between 1979 and 2001, making each one of them at least 10 years old. This was one of the criterion that was used for selection. The expectation was that a period of 10 years was enough for the university to have established a quality assurance unit. The average student enrolment is approximately 3000 students. A common feature of the private universities in Ghana is that most of them were established by churches. It was therefore not surprising to see that out of the eight universities, five of them were established by churches. In addition, each university has a quality assurance unit with a designated quality assurance person, which was also a criterion used for the selection. All private universities in Ghana are self-funded and do not receive any subventions from the state. As was mentioned in

the introduction of this study, higher education in Ghana was, once upon a time, solely provided by the state until the early 1980s when the higher education sector was opened to private investors. Following this development, each private university is from the onset, affiliated to a state-owned university for several years before they can apply to be granted a charter. Out of the eight universities, five are still affiliated to a state university, while three of them have been granted a charter and so they are able to award their own degree certificates. Below is a brief on each of the participating universities, code-named (Private University – PU) PU1, PU2, PU3, PU4, PU5, PU6, PU7 and PU8.

Private University One

Established in the 1970s, PU1 is a chartered university situated in Accra. As a chartered university, it is not affiliated to any state university and it awards its own degrees and certificates. As a university founded by a church, its mission is underpinned by academic, vocational, technological and spiritual excellence to prepare students for service to God and humanity. The University has 3 schools and 2 faculties namely Faculty of Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, School of Business Studies, School of Theology and Mission and School of Graduate Studies. The university prides itself in producing students who have an independent of thought, greater depth of understanding of at least one discipline, global understanding of their discipline and are morally and spiritually mature. PU1 reports that it is the only private university with the highest number of publications and there is a high demand for its Computer Science/Information Technology and Nursing graduates by organisations. It was ranked as the Best Private University in 2013 by 4ICU.

Private University Two

With a current enrolment of 1005 students, the mission of PU2 is to churn out a new generation of graduates who are endowed with ethical and entrepreneurial skills; to instil in students the ability to think critically; have concern for others and have the courage to make an impact in the world. In this regard, PU2 offers a multidisciplinary core curriculum which it believes provides skills such as critical thinking, ethical reasoning, problem solving and effective communicative skills to its students. The University currently provides only undergraduates programmes and has 2 faculties/Schools namely Arts and Sciences, and Faculty of Engineering.

The university was awarded the World Innovation Summit in Education Prize in 2017. This was followed by an award of Charter by the President of Ghana, which granted the university the full recognition as a degree-awarding institution. This made PU2 the youngest private university to have been granted a Presidential Charter in Ghana's history. In 2012, PU2 was ranked among the top ten most respected organizations in Ghana (a first for an education institution) in a survey of 300 CEOs conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and Business and Financial Times.

Private University Three

PU3 has its origins as a training institute which was eventually incorporated as a university, after several years of upgrades and expansion of its programmes. With a mission to nurture a vibrant academic community through the creation and dissemination of knowledge through research, PU3 currently has six (6) faculties/schools, namely the School of Theology and Missions (STM), Central Business School (CBS), the School of Architecture and Sciences (SAS), School of Research & Graduate Studies (SRGS), Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), Faculty of Law(FOL)and the School of Pharmacy(SOP). PU3 prides itself in not only

teaching, but also in its research contribution, which it believes focuses on virgin areas which are of immense concern to the country and the world, at large. Some of the areas it has conducted research include Health, Religion, Communication, Media, Science, Agriculture and Economics.

Private University Four

This was initially established as an institute to award certificate and diplomas but after being successful in its operations, a decision was taken by the Board of Governors to convert it into a university to broaden its scope and maximise the use of its vast resource and facilities that had been established. Subsequently, it was accredited in 2005 and currently has one Business School and three faculties namely, Faculty of Education and Humanities; Faculty of Health Sciences; Faculty of Applied Sciences and the Centre for Open Distance and eLearning (CODeL). With a student enrolment of approximately 2300 students, its mission is to become a centre of excellence in the core areas of a university which are teaching, learning and research. It also seeks to be a centre for business excellence where different businesses like information technology, social sciences, education and health sciences are blended to innovate ideas for the socio-economic and industrial sectors in Ghana and the international community.

Private University Five

As a technology-oriented institution of higher learning, PU5 was established in November 2005 and granted accreditation in March 2006. With nearly 8000 students, PU5 is committed to providing the highest quality of educational experience for its students. The university is currently affiliated to the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, plus it has other international partnerships with Aalborg

University, Denmark, Anhalt University of Applied Sciences and Wildau University in Germany, Coventry University, UK, M. S. Ramaiah University of Applied Sciences, India and Maharaja Agrasen University.

The university has three core faculties namely the Faculty of Computing and Information Systems, Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of IT Business. In addition, the University operates a Graduate School which delivers postgraduate programmes in the areas of Business Administration, Management, Engineering and Information Communication Technology.

Private University Six

Registered as a corporate body, PU6 was founded by a Christian church to provide sound Christian-based higher education to raise upright and effective leaders to serve the church and the nation. Thus, it has a vision to embolden students to serve humanity and posterity; and instil in them values like integrity and the fear of God.

With four faculties, PU8 offers mostly business, finance and IT related programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. In addition, it collaborates with Buckinghamshire New University in the UK to provide some of its business and finance related masters programmes.

Private University Seven

Established in 1998 as a limited liability company, PU7 received its initial accreditation in 2000, thus making it one of the first private universities to receive accreditation. The university has a vision to become the first-choice private university in Ghana. It has, therefore, sets a mission to develop a human resource which is of world-class standard and equip them with appropriate skills sets and attitude to meet the country's human resource needs and by extension to meet global challenges

through the provision of first class teaching and learning; and research, while collaborating with stakeholders.

Having established itself uniquely to attract a considerable amount of students from West African countries, North Africa, Central Africa and East Africa and other continents, PU7 offers flexible learning options to make it possible for students to attend evening or weekend lectures. This flexibility allows students to take steps to pursue an education without having to give up their jobs. The University College boasts of state-of-the-art facilities, including nursing patient simulators that are the first of their kind in Africa, a Law Moot Court, an IT Skills Lab and a Broadcast studio.

Private University Eight

PU8 was registered as a company limited by guarantee in September 2003 and received its accreditation in January 2005, thereby starting its maiden lectures with 30 pioneer students. It currently has 4 schools, namely, School of Business and Leadership, School of Informatics Engineering and Technology, Faculty of Arts and Science and the Institute of Languages and General Studies. There is also the Language Centre and a newly established Centre for Academic Writing, including several interdisciplinary programmes cross the boundaries between schools and disciplines. It is affiliated to the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi; the Trinity Theological Seminary at Legon, Accra and University of Education, Winneba. Its international partners are Umwelt Campus, Birkenfield, Germany; Trier University of Applied Sciences, St Mary's university of Canada; and Maastricht School of Management, Netherlands; The mission of the university is to raise highly skilful, visionary, ethical, and God-fearing leaders to function as change agents.

National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE)

The NCTE was enacted by an act of Parliament entitled, The National Council for Tertiary Act 1993. The Council serves as an advisory council to the Minister of Education. Generally, it has an oversight responsibility over the tertiary sector and its responsible for influencing and developing policies that would strengthen and enhance the quality of tertiary education. The functions of the Council as stated by law are:

a) to advise the Minister on the development of institutions of tertiary education in Ghana.

b) to enquire into the financial needs of the institutions of tertiary education and advise the Minister according.

c) to recommend to the Minister for the purposes of the preparation of the annual national education budget:

i. block allocations of funds towards running costs; and

ii. grants towards capital expenditure of each institution of tertiary education, indicating how the allocations are to be disbursed.

d) to recommend national standards and norms, including standards and norms on staff, costs, accommodation, and time utilization, for the approval of the Minister and to monitor the implementation of any approved national standards and norms by the institutions.

e) to advise the institutions of tertiary education on the applications for and acceptance of external assistance in accordance with government policy.

f) to advise the Minister generally on rates of remuneration and other conditions of service of staff of the institutions.

g) to publish any other functions provided in this Act; and such other functions relating to tertiary education as are incidental to the functions specified in this Act.

(2) The Council shall, in advising the Minister under this Act take into account the total national resources, needs and development programmes, especially those of the entire education sector.
Source: NCTE Act 1993

National Accreditation Board (NAB)

The National Accreditation Board, established by the National Accreditation Board Act, 2007 (Act 744) and operationalized by the Tertiary Institutions (Establishment and Accreditation) Regulations, 2010 (L.I 1984), has a direct oversight responsibility over the universities in terms of accreditation, monitoring and evaluation. With a mission to provide the best foundation that provides guidelines on how to establish, measure and improve standards in the tertiary education sector in Ghana, the Board seeks to

provide a systematic and rational basis for establishing, monitoring and improving standards in tertiary education through:

i. *developing benchmarks for accreditation and quality assurance*
ii. *ensuring proper operations in tertiary institutions.*
iii. *To facilitate the development of accredited public and private tertiary institutions towards the attainment of Presidential Charter.*
iv. *To determine the equivalences of both local and foreign tertiary and professional qualifications.*

A more detailed overview of the regulatory bodies is presented later on in the chapter when responses from both institutions are presented. Having presented the profile of all the institutions involved in the study, the following sections submit the outcome of the field work.

Inputs

In reviewing the literature, a reference was made to Ampiah (2010), who in a report concludes that in Ghana, the measurement of quality is based mainly on resource inputs and outcomes. According to Scheerens et al (2011) inputs are like the prerequisite conditions that are needed for the core transformation in organisations. In the context of a university where teaching and learning are the primary transformation processes, Scheerens et al (2011) draw our attention to the main category of inputs to be financial and material resources, human resources and the background condition of students. However, as previously mentioned in the literature review, the Ghanaian context of inputs include curriculum relevance, so there was the need to include this in the study. Hence for inputs, the focus was based physical and human resources, and curriculum relevance of the participating universities.

Physical Resources

In the view of Bitner (1992), physical facilities are a good measure of the capabilities and quality of service offered by a company. In the context of private universities in Ghana that are profit making institutions, the physical facilities could be argued to be one of the effective ways to use to review the quality of education provided by private universities, as was mentioned in the literature review. This view is supported by Russell (2005) who also writes that, to a certain extent, students' perceptions formed about the quality of education provided by a university is influenced by the presence of physical facilities. The lack of physical assets will, therefore, have an impact on the quality of teaching and learning. As mentioned in the literature review, in Ghana, physical facilities are one of the qualities that play an essential role in determining the quality of education provided.

In assessing the physical facilities at the universities, one of the most relevant finding was that NAB has a Standards For Physical Facilities Guide which has been issued for the private universities to adhere to in relation to the physical facilities that they must provide for their students. This is a very exhaustive list and detailed document to a fault, such that one could argue how NAB is able to check each and every one of the requirements effectively. To assess the adequacy of physical facilities, the study employed the minimum requirements as stipulated in the Guide. According to this Guide, each tertiary institution shall provide the following to accommodate its activities:

(a) Classrooms, lecture rooms, seminar rooms
(b) auditorium or lecture theatre
(c) Academic and non-academic offices.
(d) library /information resource centre (including E Learning Facilities)/access to sources of information.

(e) the information access facility may include a knowledge exchange/socialization area
(f) student areas for knowledge exchange/socialization with recreation facilities;

(g) office for Students' Representative Council
(h) outdoor recreation facilities in form of games or sports facilities.
(i) proper drainage system, proper sanitation and water supply.
(j) Infirmary/sick bay.
(k) Adequate Parking space for staff and students

1. *Every residential tertiary institution, shall, in addition to the facilities to be provided under paragraph (4) provide the following physical facilities which meet the minimum national safety standards–*

   (a) Provision should be made for cafeteria services, kitchen and dining facilities for student accommodation, including adequate laundry and storage facilities.
   (b) Adequate parking space for students.
   (c) students' common room

2. *Every building used or intended to be used as part of the tertiary institution physical facility shall comply with the requirements of the National Building Regulations LI 1631 of 1996 and provisions of the Ministry of Health Act, in particular –*

   (a) The area for the buildings must be approved by the appropriate authorities

   (b) the minimum requirements for health and safety of the public to which the premises of every tertiary institution shall conform, shall be in line with those prescribed by the National Building Regulations LI 1630 of 1996 or any amendments thereof, the Ministry of Health Act and the requirements prescribed in the Schedule;

   (c) any building designed and constructed for use as tertiary institution building or any building altered so as to be used as a tertiary institution building or any building which has undergone material change of use into tertiary institution building must be approved by the relevant local authority;

   (d) all buildings and other physical facilities used by a tertiary institution should show evidence of approval by the appropriate authorities and in addition show evidence of the ff–

      (i) drawings of the proposed building(s).
      (ii) building permit for development of new structures.
      (iii) structural integrity test confirming compliance to minimum required structural strength.
      (iv) alterations or extensions if any for existing buildings; or
      (v) proposed change of use if any; and
      (vi) a certificate of occupation for the newly constructed or altered buildings.

   Source: Standards for Physical Facilities Guide

In a follow-up interview, I asked how the above list could be used as a measure of quality, the interviewee explained that:

> *"The minimum requirements standards, for example, gives indication of WC per students, number of students per classroom, measurement of classrooms and even how entrance doors should be operated and student-staff ratio."*

A review of the Standards for Physical Facilities Guide revealed an extensive guide which has elaborate specifications regarding academic buildings, teaching

laboratories, catering and accommodation, utility services and library facilities. In addition, there are guidelines on health and safety of facilities, dimensions and spatial requirements for specific departmental buildings, libraries, laboratories, computer laboratories and auditoriums. For instance, the Guide provides the "*spatial requirements for minimum size and floor areas for various buildings; minimum unit numbers of various types of buildings; and the locational relationship of various facilities. A lecture hall or a classroom that takes 60-149 students, each student must have a space of 1.7 square metres of floor area to accommodate a desk and a chair. For social science-based courses, each student must have a usable space of 3 square metres and an auditorium that takes 300-500 students, each student must be assigned a minimum space of 0.3 square metres"* (**Source:** NAB Standards For Physical Facilities).

With reference to academic buildings, NAB has expects that.

Every tertiary institution shall provide classrooms which are adequate in number and shall be of adequate size; and in establishing the adequacy of classrooms, the minimum floor area per student specified in Table 5 shall be provided.

Table 5: Minimum Classroom Floor Area per Student

No. of Students	*Space in square metres with desk and chair*	*Space in square metres with chairs only*
0-29	*2.25*	*1.9*
30-39	*1.9*	*1.4*
40-59	*1.7*	*1.3*
60-69	*1.7*	*1.2*
100-149	*1.7*	*1.0*
150-299	*1.5*	*0.9*
300- 500	*1.4*	*0.9*
Above 500	*1.35*	*0.9*

Table 1**: Minimum Classroom Floor Area per Student**
Source: NAB Standards for Physical Facilities

Given the specification requirements detailed in the Standards for Physical Facilities Guide and the number of universities involved in the study, the researcher focused

on the availability of physical facilities at the universities, as a baseline. Figure 15 below shows the physical facilities available at eight private universities in Ghana.

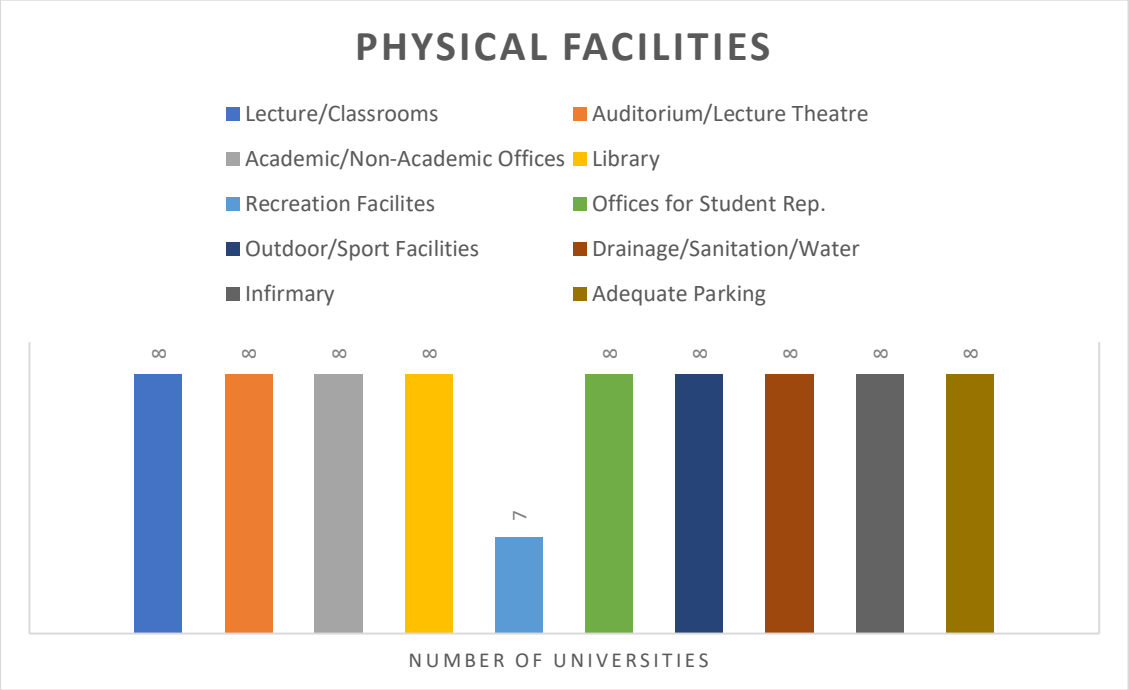


Figure 15 Physical Facilities

The data collected revealed that seven out of the eight participating universities meet the full minimum physical facilities standards set out by the regulatory body. In other words, seven universities have made available all items on the 11-point list presented above. On a face value, they have met the required conditions. However, it is important to note that the observation was that the universities seem to be at different stages in their development. On visits to five out of the eight participating universities, there were indications that the universities were at different stages of development with some more developed than others. These differences can be explained in part by the by the size and capacity of each university, which are determined by the student population. In effect, all though seven universities meet the minimum requirements, some are more developed than others. The impression

gathered was that the development of facilities at the universities could be described as one that takes place as the students' numbers increase.

A visit to PU1 and PU8, although relatively larger campuses, revealed they had lots of building works going on to increase their physical facilities. While at PU1, on-going works didn't seem to affect space in the lecture halls and the corridors; and the existing facilities appeared to be adequate for the current student population, the situation was the opposite at PU8. At PU8, it appeared students were crammed in the lecture rooms and not enough space to manoeuvre. Inside one of the buildings that served as both classrooms and offices for lectures, ventilation and lighting were poor; corridors were narrow and darkened, and classrooms seemed crowded with students, giving the impression they were not big enough. On the other hand, a visit to PU3 painted a different story. Also, a large campus, buildings were well laid out, completed and furnished. The buildings, corridors and classrooms were relatively spacious and comfortable. This campus has a relatively structured lay-out than PU8. Similarly, the picture painted at PU2 was an inspiring story. PU2 presents a stunning campus with modern buildings and technology. The classrooms and corridors are spacious and the whole campus is magnificent. At PU5, which was a smaller campus, it appeared all building facilities had been completed. No indication of on-going works. In an interview, the interviewee confirmed there were no plans of extension works, rather the university had embarked on increasing its satellite campuses in other locations, as their expansion strategy.

There was also stark differences in the condition of the physical facilities at all the universities Comparing the five campuses visited, PU1, PU2 and PU3 have comfortable and inspiring campuses than PU8 and PU5 and potentially could impact

on the learning experiences of their respective students. All taken together, the condition of some of the physical facilities did not meet the requirement in terms of repair and maintenance. The state of the facilities at PU5 and PU8 were not in a good state of repair and maintenance. This is not in consistent with the Guide which clearly states that, in quote:

> *(a) the buildings shall be kept in a good state of repair and maintenance and shall be free from structural failures, (for example deflection, spalling, cracking or dilapidation of building material fabric and components).*

The above scenarios at PU5 and PU8 raise concerns about the effectiveness of NAB's monitoring and evaluation of facilities. These concerns seem to be in consistent with what a couple of the universities highlighted during interviews that they did not think they received frequent visits from NAB. In NAB's response, the interviewee explained that,

Quality assurance now is just not about monitoring. What we have done is to institute post-accreditation measures and one is academic audit where we find out whether the institutions are adhering to the minimum standards, we have given to them. Then we do institutional review where the board members themselves will hold discussions with the institutions to find out about their challenges and the way forward. Apart from that, when we do the audit and there are adverse findings at some universities, we try to invite them, or we commission some people to go and do quality monitoring or to verify. In programme assessment, when we receive the report from the universities without evidence attached, we often send people on visits to the universities to verify. At times, we receive a lot of complaints and we constitute an investigative team to go the universities to investigate. We should remember that the private universities are autonomous so we cannot micro-manage them. And NAB is just one office overseeing the whole country, we are lacking in terms facilities and other resource.

Following this response, the researcher enquired if NAB was fully resourced to perform its mandate considering how the number of private universities has soared in the last two decades. The interviewee's response was that:

> *No institution is adequately resourced and you should always ask for more. In terms of logistics, we have good vehicles that we use. We are not doing the job ourselves. We depend mostly on consultants – we call them assessors. These are the senior lecturers and professors from the universities. They do the job for us. We do not use our staff for these things. What we do is to attach our staff to the team of professors that visit the universities so they represent NAB and so if there are any questions pertaining to NAB policy, we expect the staff to be able to explain. Most of our work, right from audit to accreditation are done by these senior academics. Most of them are professors and the minimum qualification is a PhD.*

Having discussed the campuses in general, it is now necessary to focus on some specific physical resources. Below are the detailed responses on the state of their libraries. In response to which library facilities were available for students, PU2 commented that:

> *Our library is primarily digital, with subscriptions to a number of electronic information resources, including the PERI databases which give access to over 30,000 scholarly journals. The library is not limited to the library building; it reaches out, with cutting edge information, into faculty and administrative offices, classrooms, cafeterias, and even outdoor gathering spaces. The electronic library is supplemented by a paper collection that is currently 24,000 volumes, as well as a variety of international and local magazines, newspapers, and research publications.*

In a similar submission, PU6 commented that:

> *Our library system remains focused on achieving its strategic goal to serve as the gateway to scholarly information that meet the needs of faculty, staff, students and the greater community. The Library collection currently stands at 16,709 volumes. 146 copies of periodicals (print) were acquired through purchase and donation in the year 2015. In addition to print sources the Library also subscribed to 27 online scholarly databases including Ebscohost, Sage, Emerald. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) granted the University's request for access to their publications online. The Library has acquired Ezproxy software from SABINET in South Africa. The software enables students/faculty and staff mobile phone users or others who wish to access our e-resources from different Internet platforms to do so easily.*

For PU8, it offers a library facility that anticipates and responds to student learning and research needs. With a book stock of 20,301 volumes, the library is fully furnished and provides computer and internet access. There are plans to enhance and improve student and staff experience as space becomes available with the completion of the campus physical infrastructure http://regent.edu.gh/index.php/academics/library/library-services - accessed 26/4/18

PU7 boasts of a state-of-the-art library and computer complex. The library is equipped both books and electronic databases. It has access to a range of electronic journals due to its membership with the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Ghana http://www.wiuc-ghana.edu.gh/library-collection - accessed 26/4/18

PU1, however, noted that even though their main library had a limited capacity, this limitation was compensated with libraries on other sites. In a quote,

> *The University has a main library with a limited capacity. There are other departmental and smaller libraries on the main campus. The satellite campus in Techiman also has a library. The campuses have internet facilities that are accessible to both students and lecturers.*

The above responses indicate that the private universities have taken steps to ensure their students have access to quality information sources. The universities have invested in information and communication technology resources, which have become effective and powerful means to impact knowledge. A notable feature which is worth-mentioning advantage is that apart from their physical collections, they all operate on a digital platform, which meets the requirements of NAB. Apart from meeting this requirement, technology is empowering for the students and allows them to be competitive in the knowledge they are acquiring. With the world becoming a global village, the benefit to the student and staff could be enormous as it enhances the quality of teaching and learning experience for students. Drawing on my experiences and background from Ghana, it could be argued that these results are encouraging.

Turning now to other physical facilities like social and recreational facilities, PU7 indicated that they had such facilities but were planning improvements to them plus a bigger auditorium was needed. Surprisingly, PU4 indicated a complete lack of such facilities while

PU1 also admitted that,

> *"There are a few of such facilities currently. The University is in the process of developing more".*

The two universities (PU4 and PU1) that did not meet the full requirement for socialisation and recreational facilities admitted they had plans to build the required facility or make improvements to their existing facilities, respectively. However, it cannot go without saying that the essence of physical facilities in higher education cannot be underestimated. Furthermore, Isa and Yusoff (2015) caution that the morale and performance of students could be affected by the availability and adequacy of physical facilities. In other words, it is not just enough for the facilities to be available; they must be fit for purpose. In this regard, one could argue three of the universities (PU1, PU4 and PU7) are failing in the provision of adequate social and recreational facilities. In the case of PU4, recreational facilities do not exist at all and PU4 and PU7 have such facilities but are not adequate. To add to the importance of physical facilities, Bakare (2009) points out that, given that higher education is important in nation development, the need for educational facilities cannot be overemphasised. To explain further the importance of the need for adequate physical facilities, Anifowose & Lawal (2013) contend that, ultimately, the objective of teaching and learning is to produce a change in the learner's behaviour and this cannot happen in a vacuum but within an environment with physical facilities to facilitate the process. In addition, Dilanthi and David (2000) point out that the facilities in higher education must be suitable for the objectives of the institution. While these findings may not be encouraging, it is somewhat surprising to note that the study found only one university which did not have any recreational facilities at all. The provision of recreational facilities could easily be overtaken by more pressing needs like lecture rooms and classrooms, so it was encouraging to find out that this need had not been neglected amongst by most of the participating universities. Nevertheless, this result brings to light and questions the robustness of NAB's accreditation process which requires that

certain facilities to be available. This is an important issue for future research, with a focus on NAB's processes and procedures.

As far as classrooms, lecture and seminar rooms are concerned, the findings indicated that there was an ample provision of these. In Ghana, the private universities, as mentioned in chapter 2, mostly offer business and IT related courses which require mainly classrooms, lecture and seminar rooms; and do not venture into the sciences due to the high capital required. The implications for this are discussed in this chapter under curriculum relevance. The data collected therefore indicates that most of the participating universities have only classrooms or lecture rooms and they have enough. As there is a lack of programmes in engineering and the sciences, this outcome was expected. However, PU2, one of the few universities which offers Computer Science and Engineering noted that apart from the classrooms and lecture rooms; they also had:

''2 computer labs, a science lab, a mechanical lab, an electronic lab''

Although this sounds encouraging, it needs to be interpreted with caution. PU2 has a relatively small number of students in the region of approximately 790 students and as the study did not collate data on number of students per course or programme, it cannot state the adequacy of the laboratories. The inference here is that facilities must be adequate in relation to the guidelines hence 'fit for purpose' would be the assumption for this study.

The findings of this study in relation to physical resources suggest that, in general, five out the eight participating universities have all the minimum facilities required by NAB, while one university did not have any social and recreational facilities at all. Two of the universities had inadequate recreational facilities and had plans to improve their

facilities. Apart from this, the conditions of facilities at some of these universities were appalling and did not befit a tertiary institution. However, NAB is of the view that private universities are self-funded, with no support from the government, plus they have categorised the quality indicators into two - fatal and non-fatal indicators, which imply that if the shortfall or inadequacy is non-fatal, they would allow the university to operate. In this scenario, lack of recreational and social facilities or the condition of some of the facilities may be seen by NAB as non-fatal, hence their decision to allow these universities to operate.

Human Resources

It is a widely accepted knowledge that higher education plays a crucial role in the provision of human resource required for a nation's development. Therefore, it is logical to argue that the quality of human resource in higher education institutions has a direct bearing on the quality of students who graduate from these institutions. This view is supported by Akinyemi & Abiddin (2013) who write that as a machinery for national development, the human resource input for universities must be given a greater consideration. Likewise, Chowdhury & Habib (2012) mention that higher education provides the human resource for national development, while at the same time, human resources are inputs for higher education. The study therefore questioned the quality of human resource as both an input and outcome. In this section, questions on human resources focused on the qualification of lecturers. As was mentioned in the literature review where the researcher drew on the work of Owlia and Aspinwall (1997), the teaching quality and staff capability are crucial and therefore make the qualification of lecturers an essential area to be considered in this study.

To assess the human resources input, questions were asked about academic staff composition, Staff-Student Ratio (SSR) and the qualifications of academic staff, which

are discussed below. These are some of the factors that can also impact on the quality of teaching and learning, and capability of lecturers.

Academic Staff Composition

The figure below depicts the staff composition for each university in percentages, alongside that of NAB's. The study found an intriguing trend of a high presence of lecturers and an acute shortage of PhD holders or professors at the universities. Returning briefly to chapter one, it was highlighted that one of the challenges facing private universities was the lack of faculty members, especially PhD holders, thus this finding is consistent with the concerns raised in chapter one. The chart below compares the minimum academic staff composition set by NAB to what exists at the universities. It is apparent from the chart that all the universities have a higher percentage of lecturers forming their staff composition, and the percentages are higher that the NAB guideline of 40%. There are a few professors and associate professors with the percentages quite lower than the NAB guideline of 10% and 15% respectfully.

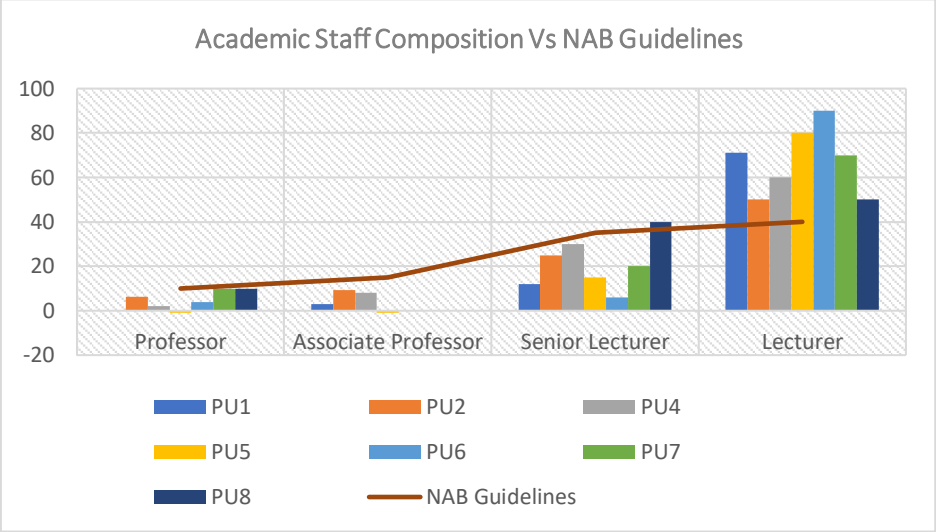


Figure 16 Academic Staff Composition

In terms of quality of teaching, these findings suggest the universities have a robust capacity of lectures above what is required, however, there is a lack of professors. To

assess the quality of the teaching staff, there was the need to review the qualification of lectures. Here, the guidelines on qualification issued by NAB formed the basis of the review. According to NAB, the minimum qualification for a lecturer is a PhD, especially for the state universities. However, in a follow-up interview, NAB explained that,

> *The minimum qualification for lecturers has always been a PhD, but you can understand that for the private universities, they do not have enough the PhD holders so at times, we are flexible. So even though we may have lecturers with MPhil in the private universities, we do not have the same situation in the public universities, unless in certain subjects like Accounting, where we allow ACCA/MBA professionals to lecture. In the private universities, we consider what we call fatal and non-fatal indicators. For instance, if a programme has one professor or a senior lecturer and one MPhil holder delivering it, we would accept it because there is a professor who can provide both academic and administrative leadership to the programme so it's non-fatal. We allow this because for a new private university just beginning to operate, it is difficult to recruit or pay for a PhD holder so if there is at least one PhD holder as head of department, we accept it. We will not, however, accept if all the lecturers delivering a programme are MPhil holders and there is not a PhD holder as the Lead.*

Consequently, to the above, the current situation at the private universities regarding the qualification of lectures is a relatively high level of MPhil holders.

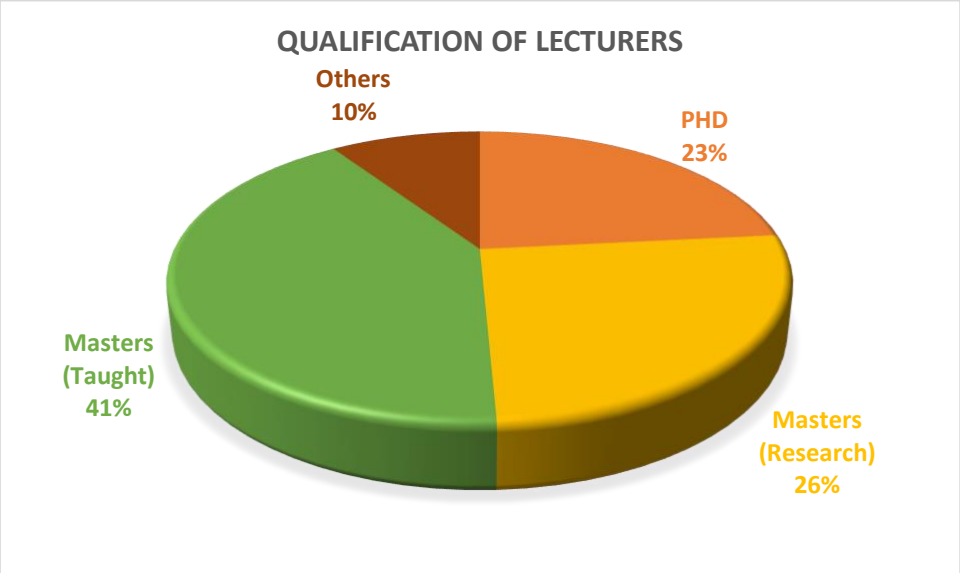


Figure 17 Qualification of Lecturers

Source: Tertiary Education Statistics Report 2018 National Accreditation Board

The figure above presents the qualification of lecturers existing in all the private universities in Ghana compiled by NAB for the academic year 2015/16. Of the 2425

lectures in the private universities, 41% are MPhil (Taught) degree holders, 26% are MPhil (Research) degree holders and there is only 23% who hold a PhD qualification, which is consistent with one of the problem statement for this study stated in chapter one that there was a lack of PhD holders to supervise research in the private universities.

One major setback and a quality issue that emerges from this finding is a possible lack of qualified human resource to supervise graduate programmes. As Hayward (2010) argues, such a shortage presents a crucial issue for graduate programmes, where faculty must have lecturers that are PhD holders to supervise PhD students. These findings could be the attributing reason the private universities do not offer doctoral programmes after more than ten years of being in existence. To explore this further, there was a need to review the level of degrees offered at the private universities to ascertain this reason.

Level of degrees offered

Following the above, it was relevant for this study to collate information on the programmes offered by the private universities. The results obtained revealed that a relatively high number of undergraduate and masters programmes were being offered by the private universities. It is apparent from the chart below that apart from PU3 and PU5 who PhD programmes, the rest do not offer any programmes at doctorate level. These universities which do not offer any doctoral level courses have been in existence for more than a decade, so it would be interesting to know what the impediments are. Due to the lack of faculty members with PhD qualification, it seems possible that the private universities are currently unable to offer post-graduate research programmes, as depicted by the chart below.

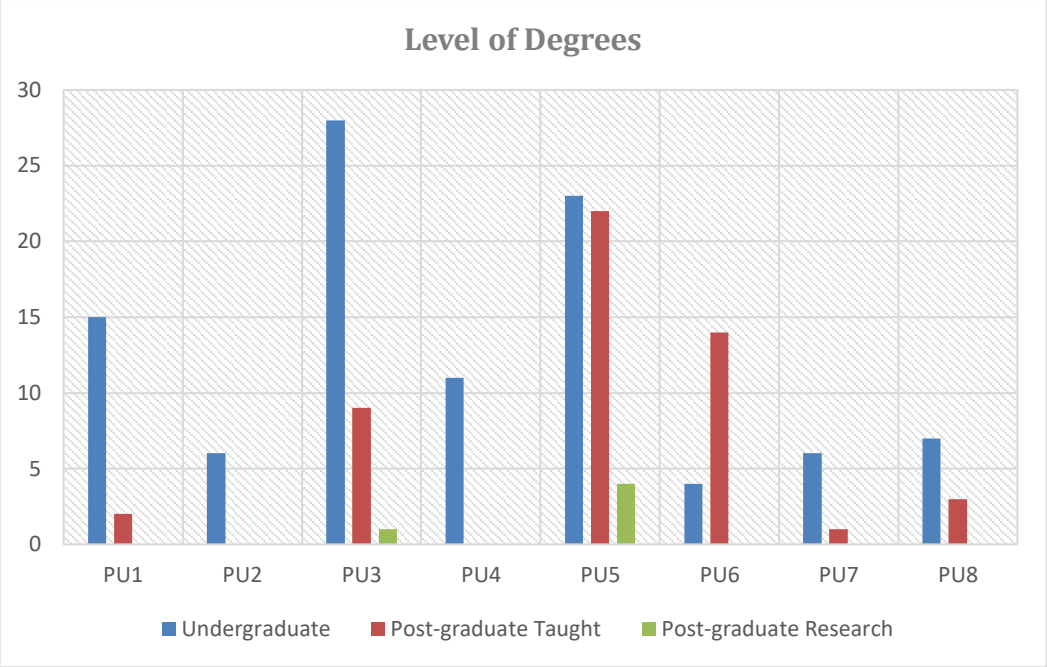


Figure 18 Level of Degrees

Source: www.nab.gov.gh – accessed 01/03/18

In a follow-up interview with PU1, the interviewee explained that,

> *The reason is that it is expensive and the other reason is the faculty strength. We in the private sector are just building up our faculties. You will see that when I give you data on our faculty strength, there are a few PhD holders and when it comes to ranking, there may be just a couple of professors. To be able to run a PhD programme, you will need experienced PhD holders and professors to give guidance. So, there is a lack of PhD holders in the private sector. We do not have that many of them.*

> *On the other hand, the interviewee at PU5 was of the view that, aside the financial constraints faced by private universities, there is also political influence of the 'powers that be.' For instance, the panel members who do the assessments to accredit programmes are from other private universities who may have their own selfish interest. There is the perception of 'how long have you been in the system?' to offer PhD programmes, in a situation where the assessor's university has not been accredited to offer PhD programmes. PU5 currently offers PhD programmes but in partnership with Coventry University in UK and interviewee believes PU5 has grown, relatively, quicker because of this partnership with a foreign university.*

It is possible that the absence of PhD holders to supervise research could have dire consequences for the development of the country, in terms of research needed to influence policy directives, research into social and medical issues and there will be the added pressure on the relatively few public universities to provide this research need. In this regard, the interviewee commented that:

> *This affects the research capabilities of the university. It's not just PhD holders but you need experienced faculty to supervise research and experienced professors to mentor young PhD*

holders, so in a way, I wouldn't say it doesn't affect the university. NAB now insists that all lecturers at the tertiary level to have a PhD so we have set a target and given our lecturers time to do their PhD programme.

The lack of PhD holders is a grave concern that needs a long-term solution at both the national and university level so it was important to ask the interviewee to comment on whether there was a need for government intervention. The interviewee was in support of this view and commented further that:

We could have support from the government. That will be helpful. What some of us believe is that these lecturers in the private universities are teaching Ghanaian students so if they are helped to improve themselves, they will come back to help the students. Once upon a time, we had very few public universities in Ghana but then the realisation dawned on policy makers to open up the space for private institutions to come in so I think that capacity building is very important. The government needs to come in to help; to have a long-term strategy to help faculty development. I know that in the public universities, what they are doing now is that they are getting a lot of faculty to enrol their lecturers on summer programmes. I know that the University of Sussex and others are doing that, where lecturers University of Ghana or Cape-Coast go there in the summer to study and come back to teach when school re-opens. It's expensive to have people go away full time to study because you lose their services. So I think that's something the government can do and give some kind of awards to the lecturers in the private universities because at the end of the day, whether it's the private or state university, we are all helping to build the human resource capacity.

However, interestingly, NAB did not agree to a government intervention. The NAB interviewee discounted this idea explaining that:

Why should the government do that? There are lots of PhD avenues. We know the government is already over-stretched. So, for example, if you take the University of Ghana, they are able to collaborate and look for PhD avenues for their lecturers, then from there, they support them. There are lots scholarships available from Germany and other places so the lecturers should take the initiative and help themselves, or the universities should help them. We don't need to burden the government. Education already takes the highest percentage of government budget. If I am here and I want to pursue a PhD, I do not need to go to the government. It's up to the organisation to see the need or relevance of the programme to my work, but it all depends on the individual's initiative.

Staff-Student Ratio (SSR)

While the National Accreditation Board provides its guidelines per subject, as per the table below, there were two different types of responses received for the staff-student ratio. In the figures below, five of the universities provided the average SSR across board, while three of the universities gave their SSR according to individual courses and faculties, thus making an analysis of the data quite difficult.

Staff-Student Ratios

Subject Categories	SSR
Social Sciences and Humanities	27:1
Business Administration	27:1
Science	18:1
Applied Science, Technology and Health	18:1
Engineering	18:1
Pharmacy	15:1
Medicine	12:1

Source: NCTE Norms for Tertiary Education 2012

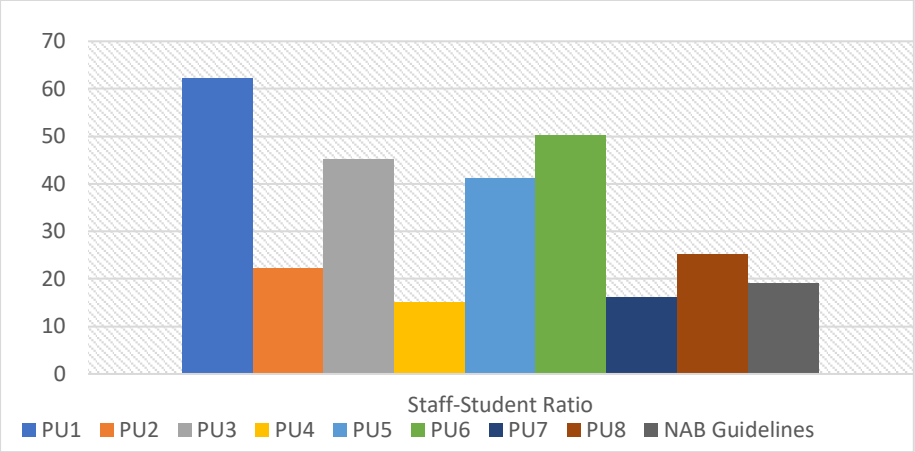


Figure 19 Academic Staff Ratio: Average Staff-Student Ratio

As the above figure depicts, six out of eight universities have an average SSR higher than what NAB requires of them, which raises quality concerns. In addition, there are significant differences in the SSRs amongst the universities. There are likely explanations for the differences and among the plausible explanations is that the universities vary in student numbers, size and status, thereby, resulting in a lower SSR for the smaller universities. An example of this is PU1 and PU3 which have been in existence since 1979 and 1988, respectively. In terms of student population, PU1 has approximately 5000 students and PU3 has 8400 students. They have relatively large campuses and very well known in the country, whereas PU7 and PU8 have smaller campuses with student numbers of less than 2000 each. It could be argued they are

still ‘finding their feet’ in the market and so may have small size classes, which is why the SSR is currently low.

The above findings have important implications for the teaching and learning experience of the students. While the absence of a guidelines makes it difficult to assess whether the universities are complying or not, logical interpretations could still be made here, with caution. Generally, education, no matter which level it is, is effective when the teacher/lecturer has a class size they can teach and manage effectively. Thus, the absence of SSR guidelines here could potentially lead to large sizes where a lecturer cannot manage effectively, thereby impacting negatively on the effectiveness of teaching. In the absence of control on class sizes, the university could easily find itself in a situation where student numbers exceed the capacity of human and physical resources, which then leads to compromises on the quality of teaching. It is essential that there is a guideline in place to ensure quality is not compromised. On the other hand, while smaller classes are preferred in any school setting due to its ability to facilitate effective teaching and learning, the SSR from the data above does not necessarily connote that PU7 and PU8 offer smaller class sizes. It seems possible that the smaller classes are reflective of the student population. Nonetheless, one could argue that students in the universities with a lower SSR will benefit from some degree of effective teaching which may not be available to students in other universities where the SSR is high. The wide disparity in the ratios suggests a possible inconsistency in SSR across board. Taken together, the above data and its inconsistency makes it difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions. Nonetheless, it still raises quality concerns and therefore, a much more systematic approach would be required to mitigate the possibilities of quality being compromised. It is therefore important for the regulatory body to consider putting in place a guideline for the

universities to work with. Alternatively, the universities themselves, as part of their internal quality assurance mechanisms, must have a guideline in place.

Curriculum Relevance

One of the arguments in the literature review was Newman's idea of a university as a place designed for universal learning. Writing in 1899, Newman argues that the university exists as a place for intellectual inquiry and extension of knowledge. In other words, the university must provide a holistic education, so its products are not contracted in the mind, but students come out with the ability to utilise the knowledge gained to solve society's problems. In addition, Newman highlights the benefits of diversity in subjects to the student community. The idea is that branches of knowledge are connected and have bearings on each other. Hence, there is a benefit of students interacting, consulting and respecting each other's knowledge which leads to the habit of the formation of the mind, and this lasts a lifetime. In effect, there is the added benefit of a diverse community, although it is not possible for a student to enrol in all subjects. The interactivity between students from different background is what Newman sees as an added opportunity for students to learn from about other disciplines. Logically, it is expected that an institution that calls itself a university and provides quality education must provide a wider range of subjects. It is therefore the expectation that private universities in Ghana will provide different branches of knowledge to create a community that promotes diversity in subjects and knowledge.

It is therefore not surprising that in the Ghanaian context and again referring to the literature review, Ampah (2010) highlights that in Ghana, one of the factors used to measure the quality of education is the curriculum and its content. This study, therefore, explored the output and outcome of private higher education – this includes the performance and achievement of students; how they integrated into the society;

challenges they faced; values and behaviour exhibited by students when they enter the job market and most importantly the programmes offered as there is currently a concern of a potential mission creep in the private higher education sector. To explore this, there was the need to review the courses offered at each of these universities to establish their core curriculum. In addition, three items on the questionnaire assessed the extent to which students were exposed to a universal learning. This section of the questionnaire required respondents to give information on the social values and morals embedded in the curriculum. In addition, respondents were required to comment on how they ensured teaching was based on intellectual enquiry.

A review of the courses offered indicated that the private universities limited themselves mostly to business studies and IT related courses both at the undergraduate and master's level, as illustrated by the figure below.

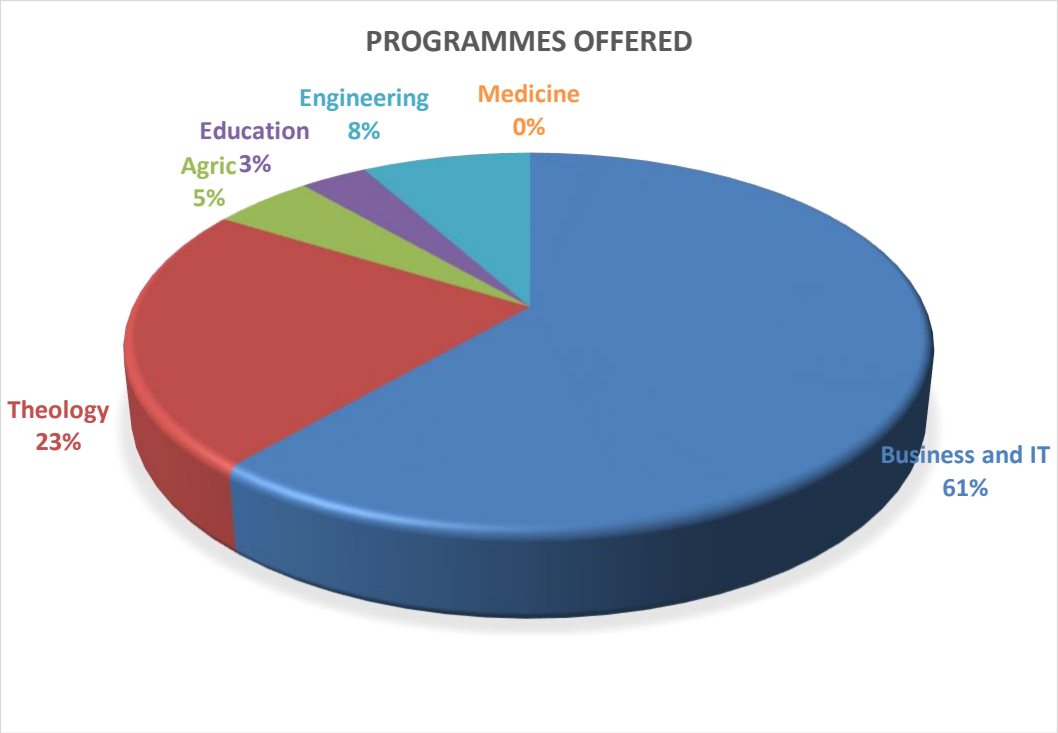


Figure 19 Programmes Offered at Private Universities
Source: Universities' websites – accessed 08/03/18

This finding confirms the current concern which was mentioned in chapter two that was a 'mission creep' in the private higher education sector or a disconnect between courses offered and industry, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The second part of the review of curriculum relevance focused on the social and moral values embedded in the curriculum. As was mentioned in the literature review, a holistic education is one that does not just provide book knowledge but in addition, develops character and intellect. For this section of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to indicate whether the students were offered other non-academic programmes to build their character and intellect. The overall response to this question was very positive as all the eight universities provide courses to develop the character and intellect of their students, although these courses are not compulsory in all the universities. In response to this question, PU1 commented that:

"We do so through what we call integration of faith and learning. This is where every aspect of academic and social life is inextricably fused practical Christian faith both in and out of the lecture rooms. For us parochial institution, we add another dimension to our education, that is we also prepare you for eternity. So sometimes, we question ourselves whether we are doing that for our students; whether those who pass through our institution become aware of that."

Similarly, PU6 remarked that:

"In *addition to program specific contents, we have programs such as Mentorship, Pentstuds, College Assemble, Leadership and Personal Organisation courses."*

The above universities are both owned by churches so one could argue that such is expected. However, this argument could be termed as weak as the non-faith universities equally offer such programmes to their students. In their response PU2 which is a non-faith university stated that:

"*learning is based on our Learning Goals which are Ethics and Civic Engagement, Critical Thinking and Quantitative Reasoning, Communication, Leadership and Teamwork, Innovation and Action, Curiosity and Skill and all of these are in line with the mission of the university."*

In the same vein, PU4 explained that they there were extra curricula workshops/ seminar that supported students on social and moral values by engaging students on comprehensive curricula, organizing workshops and seminars. These findings support the idea of a university as discussed in the literature review. It is therefore encouraging that these private universities are also providing knowledge that goes beyond the lecture rooms.

In summary, this section explored participants' responses on questions relating to Inputs, which focused on three sub-categories namely physical and human resources and curriculum relevance. Overall, two of the most significant findings to emerge from the data collated which have dire consequences for the country, if not resolved, are the lack of several branches of knowledge and lack of PhD holders amongst the private universities. As mentioned, these are important issues that require strategic planning at the national level.

Process

By drawing on an extensive range of sources in the literature review, it was established that the process of internal quality assurance is the institution's own method of monitoring, evaluating and improving its processes to achieve the institutional goals. A reference was made to Matei and Iwinska (2016:3) who explain that the *process includes all kinds of policies, activities and mechanisms related to evaluation and improvement of quality and developed and carried out by and within higher education institutions*. In this regard, other authors like Vroeijensijin (1995) and AUN-QA (2010) explain further that the internal quality assurance process must incorporate four basic elements namely institutional goals, monitoring instruments, evaluation instruments and improvement of quality. Nevertheless, what is known about

quality from the literature review is that it is slippery and elusive in nature which raises the question of what to include in the IQA process. One of the characteristics of private universities in Ghana, as stated in chapter two was that they were self-financing or profit-making institutions. Hence, it was argued that this made the situation more problematic as they have partial autonomy to decide their own missions, visions and what to include in their IQA process. As would be seen shortly in the responses received, the private universities appeared to have varied levels of quality processes with each university assuring quality in a different way. In addition, the regulatory body, NAB also has its own framework for monitoring and evaluation, which is discussed under Monitoring and Evaluation.

That said, the concept of quality for this study, as already mentioned, is based on a conceptual framework which identifies certain characteristics that need to be part of Process. To further clarify the term 'Process', Adam (1993) as was mentioned in the literature review, explains it is the 'intra-institutional interaction of students and lecturers; it is the 'quality of life' of students in entirety, and explains further that quality as process is often objective as the experiences of students may be seen as proxies for the intended output sought. Quality as a process, therefore, is about the student's experiences from admissions thorough out studies till they graduate. Stated differently, process is the interactions between all the necessary human and physical components, namely, both human and physical, teachers, students, administrators, materials and technology in the educational process. Therefore, the broad components of process for this study focused on the processes below, which are related to the four basic elements of QA (institutional goals, monitoring instruments, quality instruments and improvement of quality) highlighted in the literature review.

- Students' admissions -

- Teaching and Learning
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Management and Governance

Assessing these four components in the participating universities allowed the researcher to understand the institution's existing internal quality assurance mechanisms; the quality assurance processes and practices of the institutions and the compatibility of institution's quality assurance mechanisms with NAB.

The following sections will present and discuss the findings of the study on the processes (students' admissions, teaching and learning process and management and governance) at the participating universities.

Students' Admissions Process

An effective admissions system is an important component of the higher education sector. As was pointed out in the literature review using Owlia and Aspinwall's (1997) study which demonstrated the dynamic relationship between quality components, the students' admissions system is a quality component which, could be argued, kick-starts the journey of the prospective student. According to Owlia and Aspinwall (1997:2), '*the loop is entered at the 'quality of graduates'* – the implication is that the quality of graduates admitted would result in higher job performance, which will build the university's reputation and ultimately increase their market share. On the other hand, when the private university admits low quality students or students who do not meet the entry requirements, it can have potential consequences as this can lead to poor performance for the students and a reputational damage for the university.

To assess what goes into the process at the private universities, first, it was important to begin with the admission process. With their partial autonomy, one of the

processes that the private universities are required to follow is NAB's guidance on the minimum requirements for admission. Hence, in order to assess the admissions process, the study employed the minimum requirements for admissions to first degree programmes as issued by NAB as the basis. According to NAB's guidelines, each student from Senior Secondary School (SSS) shall meet the following conditions.

1. ***Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (SSSCE), West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and General Business Certificate Examination (GBCE)***

The general requirements for admission of WASSCE, SSSCE and GBCE candidates to first degree programmes are three (3) credit passes in three core subjects and three (3) credit passes in three relevant elective subjects.

I. *SSSCE Candidates: Credit Passes (A-D) in six (6) subjects comprising three core subjects, including English Language and Mathematics, plus three (3) relevant elective subjects.*

II. *WASSCE Candidates: Credit Passes (A1-C6) in six (6) subjects comprising three core subjects, including English Language and Mathematics, plus three (3) relevant elective subjects.*

III. *GBCE Candidates: Credit Passes (A-D) in six (6) subjects comprising three core subjects including English Language and Mathematics plus three (3) relevant elective subjects*

2. ***General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level Candidates***

Passes in three (3) subjects (at least, one of the passes should be Grade D or better). Also, the applicant must have had credit passes (Grade 6) in five GCE Ordinary Level subjects including English Language, Mathematics and a Science subject (for non-science students) and an Arts subject (for Science students).

1. *All foreign qualifications should be referred to the National Accreditation Board (NAB) for determination of equivalences and eligibility for admission to tertiary institutions in Ghana*

(National Accreditation Board Act, 2007 [Act 744 (2(2b)]). It should be noted that the American SAT, TOEFL etc. cannot in themselves be acceptable as entry qualifications into Ghanaian tertiary educational institutions.

The table above provides the breakdown of the different pathways to gain entry into a university in Ghana, with the regular pathway being the WASSCE. According to the West African Examinations Council, WASSCE which is also taken in other African countries like Gambia, Nigeria and Liberia replaced SSSCE in 2006. SSSCE was introduced when the GCE Ordinary and Advanced Levels were phased out in 1994 and 1996, respectively. WASSCE is now the final examinations students take after 3 years of senior secondary education for selection into tertiary education. For those who wish to enter tertiary education, they must obtain 6 credit passes which must include 3 core (including English and Maths) and 3 elective subjects. As shown in the above table, the old pathways are still featured. The likely explanation could be that these old pathways are gradually being phased out of the educational system. Notably, the table only give requirements for general admissions which raises the question of what the requirements are for the sciences, engineering and medicine. It would be seen shortly from the responses that some of the private universities have their own requirements for such subjects or they follow those of their mentoring university.

Turning now to the question about entry requirements that was put to the universities and as would be expected, all of them presented NAB's minimum entry requirement as, mainly, what they followed. It was noted from the responses that with PU4 and PU7 added a further note that they also followed that of their mentor universities. As mentioned earlier, all private universities in Ghana are mentored by a state university until they are granted a charter. It was therefore not unusual to receive such responses. In their response, PU4 commented that:

"As prescribed by NAB and Mentor Institution (KNUST)"

while PU7 quoted:

"As specified by the National Accreditation Board and our mentoring institutions"

In addition to the NAB guidelines which could be described as a blanket guideline, PU2 presented entry requirements for specific subjects like engineering and Sciences. PU2 commented that they had an in-house requirement for Engineering, as per below:

- *West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE): Three core subjects including Mathematics, English and Science, and three elective subjects including Elective Mathematics and Physics, with a C6 or better in each of them.*
- *A-Level: Three A-Level passes (A-D) including Mathematics and Physics, and six IGCSE (G.C.E. O-Level) passes including Mathematics, English, and Science are required for admission to PU2. A grade of D or better in Further Mathematics instead of Mathematics is also acceptable for entry as a prospective engineering major.*
- *International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma: For prospective engineering students, Mathematics SL with a 5 or better, or Mathematics HL with a 3 or better is acceptable to fulfil the entry mathematics requirement; similarly, Physics SL with a 5 or better, or Physics HL with a 3 or better is acceptable to fulfil the entry physics requirement. However, Mathematics HL and Physics HL are expected to be a competitive engineering applicant.*

There was therefore every indication from the results obtained that all the participating universities used NAB's entry requirements as a guideline to admit students. The responses also indicated that although the universities used the NAB guidelines, some of them also had 'in-house' guidelines for specific programmes, which are not found in NAB guidelines. As the above requirement for pursuing engineering is not found in the NAB guidelines, it seems possible that inconsistencies could occur in the system, as it appears there are no directives from NAB regarding programmes that required prerequisite knowledge in certain subjects. One possible implication is that some private universities could be 'doing their own thing' when it comes certain programmes. Another implication is that there could be a mixture of entry requirements for different universities. For the students, it could mean that one could gain admission easily or otherwise, depending on which university you apply to.

With the current concern that some private universities are relatively relaxed with their admission procedures and taking on less qualified or unqualified students, these findings of possible inconsistencies could be argued to be a genuine reason for society's concern. In a recent publication, the Minister of Education, Prof. Yankah stated that "*there were cases of irregularities in admission requirements right through to examination malpractices*. *An ongoing audit report on randomly selected private university colleges in the country revealed a disturbing and an embarrassing state, as 20 per cent of students admitted by the private university colleges did not provide information as to whether they even wrote the WASSCE, "not to talk of whether they got the required grades."* https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/education/weed-out-unqualified-students-or-face-consequences-ministry-warns-university-colleges.html Accessed 03/08/2018. One question that needs to be asked is if NAB monitors the 'in house' guidelines. There would therefore seem to be a definite need for these universities to be properly guided. Nonetheless, in a follow-up interview with NAB, the interviewee explained that:

The admissions requirements issued by NAB are only a guideline. NAB provides a guideline on the minimum requirements to enter a tertiary university. It is up to the university to go above the minimum depending on the programme. For example, a university may decide to admit only aggregate 6 for Medicine and aggregate 20 for a Business programme. The cut-off is therefore determined by the university. NAB only provides a minimum to enter a university.

Admissions Process

The next question that was asked required participants to give information on their admission process. Returning briefly to the subject of dimensions of quality in the literature review, Owlia and Aspinwall (1997) explained how admissions were crucial because it was the stage that determined the quality of graduates. Hence for this question, participants were required to describe how they chose their students. In

particular, this question was to examine the robustness of their admissions process and in response to this request, a range of responses were elicited. It appeared the universities employed a range of methods and the use of admission committees to admit students, as depicted in the table below.

In their account of what goes into the admission process, PU2 reported that admission is a very highly selected process which recruits only the best and brightest through a competitive process based in part on the evaluation of information submitted by applicants. In addition to academic merits, the admission process also focuses on skills such as communication, extracurricular activities and writing proficiency. The admission process, according to PU2 involves:

1. *Fill application form and attach transcripts, final exam results, essay, and other documents as requested*
2. *Submit documents to admissions via email, post or in person.*
3. *Applications reviewed and shortlisted for interview*
4. *Shortlisted applicants interviewed*
5. *Results are collated and vetted by a committee*
6. *Admit letters are sent out to prospective students who have gained admission*
7. *Offer of admission accepted or otherwise.*
8. *Fees are paid and student matriculates.*

For PU3, its admission involves a selection at the faculty or school level, joint committee approval and interviews mainly for mature students.

1. *Adverts*
2. *Purchase of admission form*
3. *Information capturing*
4. *Faculty/School selection*
5. *Joint admission committee approves*
6. *Interviews especially for mature students*
7. *Admission letters issue to selected applicants*

PU4:

Application goes through vetting and qualified students are written to. Faculty of health sciences in addition to vetting application forms, written and oral interview is conducted.

A further comment from PU4 was that:

Senior members and officer from the quality assurance directorate are in charge of the process

PU5:

Student is counselled by the Admission Officer, with reference to their qualifications. Where student can be admitted, it is referred to the Head admissions for final approval. Certificates are verified with NAB.

Audit of admission forms and checks by the Admissions Committee

PU6:

1. *A qualified student buys and completes admission form*
2. *Submits to the Academic Registry*
3. *Prospective students/rep signs Log Boof for submitting*
4. *Vetting of forms by the respective Head of Department, Admission Officer with representatives from the University of Ghana, who ae our mentor institution officer*
5. *Letters issued for qualified applicants*
6. *These letters are sent to the Receptionist who calls them to indicate mode of dispatch – either by mail or personal collection.*

PU7 commented that:

Applicants purchase hard copy application forms or fill the forms online and submit same to Academic Registry for processing by Admissions Board before admission is granted.

In a further comment, PU7 explained further that:

The mentoring institutions are furnished with the records of all applicants to ensure they are qualified. Periodic academic audit exercises are also conducted by the NAB and our mentoring institutions from time to time to ensure that the institution has duly complied with the admission requirements.

The above responses tabulated when tabulated gives the following:

University	Admission Process		
PU1			
PU2	Selection	Vetting of forms	Interview
PU3	Selection	Approval	Interview for mature students only
PU4	Selection	Vetting of forms	Interview for Health Sciences only
PU5	Consultation	Vetting	Approval
PU6	Vetting of forms	Approval	
PU7	Selection	Approval	

Table 4: **Data on Admission Process**

It is apparent form the data above that the universities use different processes to admit students with some using shortlisting and interviews while others used just shortlisting only. It appears that the universities with a considerable number of students like PU6 and PU1 tend to use selection and vetting of forms to admit their students, while those with a small number of students go a step further by interviewing their prospective students.

This data is significant in the sense that one major criticism of the private universities is the possibility that they admit students who have not attained the minimum requirements to enter university. As was mentioned in chapter one, (http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20110917103932187) and again published recently on 27th Jan 2018 (https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/education/weed-out-unqualified-students-or-face-consequences-ministry-warns-university-colleges.html). These reports have suggested that private universities' admission processes are not robust and as a result of this, some unqualified students have been admitted in some private universities. Due to their self-financing state and with tuition fees being their main source of income, it is possible that they tend to relax their admissions process. An implication of this is the possibility that students applying for the same course at different universities could all be admitted after having gone through different admission processes. In addition, stakeholders like employers who absorb the students after they have graduated would like to be assured that qualified applicants are selected. To elaborate on this need, Schwartz (2004) argues further that it is essential that all stakeholders in education have confidence in the admission process, given that there is now a fierce competition for the benefits of higher education. In his review of higher education admissions in the UK, Schwartz (2004:2) argues: "*Higher education is a valuable commodity. It can affect salary, job security and power to influence society. A fair and transparent admissions system is therefore*

essential to all." The current variations in the admissions processes at the universities do not allow for a fair and transparent system and easily lends itself to malpractices. However, in a follow-up interview with NAB, the interview refuted the researcher's viewpoint arguing that NAB's guidelines are enough to guide the universities. He explained that:

Each university has an admission policy that guides that guides them. The policy states the officers who are responsible for assuring quality in the admissions process and how it is done. We expect them to have an admission committee to oversee the admission. NAB only provides a minimum guideline and it's the role internal quality assurance unit of the university to ensure quality in the process. All that NAB requires of them is to verify with the exams board, WAEC, to ensure the results presented by prospective students are genuine.

This view leads to a further question which required the respondents to comment on how they ensured there were institutional structures to ensure a robust admissions process. The overall response to this question was positive and is discussed into detail in the next section.

Monitoring and Evaluation

In the literature review, mention was made of monitoring and evaluation as the core elements of the internal quality assurance framework, with references to some authors. A reference was made to Vroeijenstijn (1995) who explains that monitoring quality allows the institution to enhance quality and so an effective monitoring system is essential in the internal quality assurance process. Commenting on evaluation which was also referred to a self-assessment, Thune (1998:3) argues that evaluation "*helps the institution check how far it is achieving its strategic mission and goals, and it allows it to prepare an action plan for further development."*

As this study is primarily about assessing the quality assurance approaches adopted by private universities, it was important to ensure that all the participating universities had a QA Unit established. The presence of a QA Unit was one of the

criteria used in the selection, as was mentioned in Methodology. This part of the questionnaire was therefore quite significant to the study. After questions had been asked about inputs and processes, this part of the questionnaire required respondents to give information on their QA Unit and how it functioned in ensuring that their inputs and processes were monitored and evaluated. Below are the responses received from each university.

PU1 *There are several of them. Of course, the obvious ones are the external quality assurance processes. We are supposed to account to the NAB and because we are a parochial institution, we also have our accrediting agencies called the Adventist Accrediting Association and the International Board of Education who come periodically to see what we are doing. They look at structures, they look at facilities that we have, they look at students' questions, moderated questions and all that. But internally, we have an officer, directorate of quality assurance. When it comes to students learning, there are questionnaires that we are supposed to respond to. Students also evaluate teaching and learning; they evaluate faculty so that's also in place. The various levels, right down from the Dean to the heads of departments are supposed to oversee what's done to ensure teaching and learning are been done effectively. Heads of department, for instance are supposed to check course outlines, questions have to be sent outside for moderation but sometimes moderation of questions are done internally. All these are in place. And then periodically, we are supposed to queries from the Pro-Vice Chancellors office. These checks are done at least once every term but there are certain things that the departments are supposed to do. For instance, in order to make sure the departments are doing what they are supposed to do, the departments are supposed to meet at twice a semester, they are supposed to have their minutes deposited at the Pro-Vie Chancellor's Office, so he knows exactly what's going on at the departments. These are the specific schedules in place but if for some reason, the Pro Vice chancellor feels that some information needs to be provided or the Dean feels that certain information needs to be provided based on something that is going on, then he can instruct heads of department to provide the information.*
PU2 *The Quality Assurance Committee has the responsibility of ensuring that the university maintains acceptable teaching and learning processes. The Quality Assurance Committee appraises curriculum reviews, pre- and post-moderation reports, NAB accreditation reviews, performance reviews, examination and final grade distributions, and/or any other issues pertaining to quality that Academic Council or members of the Quality Assurance Committee choose to bring forward. It has advisory responsibility for maintaining facilities on campus in terms of growth, IT and academic spaces which includes classrooms, faculty and staff offices.* *The Quality Assurance Committee is a committee of the Academic Council. It is chaired by the Quality Assurance Officer of the University, and membership includes the Provost, any Associate Provost(s) or Deans, the Academic Registrar, the Affiliation and Accreditation Liaison of the University, the Chief Operating Officer, and at least one nomination from the faculty from each academic department serving two-year terms.*
PU3

Assessment questionnaire, from Quality Assurance Unit, Assessment questionnaire form Faculty/ School Quality Assurance committee, NAB Visits, Mentor Institutions Visit, External Examiners

PU4

Peer review, assessment of lecturers and courses, staff development training, programme and professional accreditation. Regular assessment of lecturers and courses by the quality assurance office. Assessment of the performance of programmes periodically.

PU5

Quarterly reporting, regular student staff interactive forums, student Faculty Evaluation, Peer review of teaching, Committees for monitoring Academic and non-academic structures within the University and, the Excellence Awards to recognize high performing Units, Faculties and Campuses.

PU6

We have the Quality Assurance Unit that monitors and ensures the processes are carried out accordingly.

PU7 noted their quality assurance process consisted of:

- *Provision of the necessary tools and equipment necessary for effective delivery*
- *Constant checks by the National Accreditation Board and our mentoring institutions on compliance to various policy frameworks regarding our operations*
- *Evaluation of courses and lecturers by students*
- *Peer assessment of teaching by lecturers*
- *Facility inspection and periodic reports to Management on state of the facilities and making recommendations where necessary*

PU8 explained as follows:

The university views QA as an ongoing cyclical process which require continuous improvement. There is an overall body for QA, and then there are is a QA lead at the faculty, department and unit levels. Broad targets are set which trickles down to each level with quarterly meetings held with the various departmental and unit heads, who give a report on targets that were or were not achieved. For instance, lecturers make known their targets for the academic year and so at the end of the year, lecturers will have to report if they achieved their target or not. Where targets are not achieved, lecturers are required to explain why and state what preventative measures would be taken so it does not reoccur. For non-teaching departments like Alumini, targets like how many students go into internship and outcomes are monitored.

The above responses are quite detailed and give an idea how the universities monitor and evaluate processes. As mentioned in the literature review, internal quality assurance is both a continuous improvement process and a culture of an institution. In addition, it became clear that for internal quality assurance to be robust and effective, the institution needs an established process in place, with a reference being made to Denning's (1999) four major steps; Plan, Do, Check and Act (P-D-C-A). To elaborate, Plan is the gathering of information of what needs improving, Do is to implement, Check is to analyse to see if the goal has been achieved is in line with stated goals and finally Act, depending on the results obtained at the Check stage. Comparing the responses to Denning's (1999) four major step, which was argues that quality is a continuous process, it could be argued the responses indicate that the universities monitor and evaluate, however that is where it ends. Data is collated on some of their processes (Plan), then implemented (Do) but there was no indication of step (c) or that that failures are acted upon (Act) to ensure a continuous process. It is all useful for monitoring and evaluation to be done but if there is no further action taken, then the final process of the IQA process, which is Improving Quality, is not achieved. As was noted in the literature review, evaluation does not make sense if there are no actions to enhance the quality and to overcome the shortcomings AUN-QA (2010). Apart from PU1, PU7 and PU8 which appeared to have preventative and improvement measures, the others did not indicate such in their process. Soundarajan (2010) further stresses that although much attention is often paid to the other elements of the IQA process, a relatively less attention is given to the results of the assessment, which is supposed to be used to implement improvements to the system, which seems to be the case from the responses received from the participants.

There also some similarities and further implications in the responses received. It was noted in five cases that the universities, mostly, make use of assessment questionnaires, appraisal, and peer reviews to periodically review the quality of lecturers and courses. PU7 made mention of periodic inspection of facilities and reports to management on the state of facilities and recommendations made, if necessary. It was also clear that they relied on NAB and Mentor visits, as part of their quality checks. It could be argued that the universities are aware of the need to monitor and evaluate their processes. It also appears that they have a plan; however vague or otherwise. An implication is that processes are being quality checked, which is positive. In addition, it was also apparent that the universities had adopted different approaches. These different approaches may indicate that one university could be doing better than the other. The responses did not indicate there was a practice of benchmarking in any of the universities. Given that there are different approaches to quality management in the private higher education sector, embedding benchmarking as part of their processes will be good practice and an impetus for quality improvement.

Teaching and Learning

By drawing on the concept of system approach used by Owlia and Aspinwall (1997) to demonstrate the relationship between quality components in the literature review, they argued that the quality of teaching is somewhat affected by the quality of the teaching force supported by the facilities and support services offered by the university. In relation to Ghana, it is thought that process is usually interpreted as the forms of interaction between teachers, students, administrators, materials and technology in educational activities. This makes teaching and learning an element of the processes that takes place at the university and this element involves the

interaction of lectures, students and facilities. Furthermore, with the self-funding state of Ghanaian private universities, the quality of teaching and learning, logically, becomes an issue of importance because students and parents in particular will expect that the teaching and learning experience is worth their money. Hence this section of the questionnaire required respondents to describe their teaching and learning process with a focus on how teaching is enhanced; how knowledge is impacted; and the resources available. According to Fry, Ketteridge & Marshall 2009, a fundamental aspect of the role of academic staff is planning teaching and learning for students. This activity cannot be carried out in a vacuum but rather it is carried out in accordance with the mission, vision, aspirations, ethos and values of the institution. Hence, in response to this question, a mixture of detailed and brief responses on teaching and learning were expressed from content to design to technology and the range of support given to students.

In an elaborate response, PU1 explained that;

> *There are several levels. We run different modes. We have what we call a regular mode which is the session we have right now. We also have the distance mode which is specifically for teachers who are in field and want to upgrade themselves. So they come in during vacation and it's very intensive. We also have the distance mode for people who may not necessarily be professionals but are interested in getting university education but are unable to come to campus full time due to other commitments they may have. So these are the 3 modes we provide. I would say that we are moving towards a blended mode especially for the sandwich and distance modes where you have the face-to-face interactions and we also combine online stuff where we provide materials for students to respond so lecturers can be in contact with those on the distance and sandwich modes. For those on campus, it is essentially face-to-face but we try to incorporate some of the recent social media applications. For instance, my students are on my Whatsapp platform and we interact a lot, if I have to send out a message. This is the generation that we are dealing it. Sometimes we noticed that when you send an email, they do not read it as fast as they read their Whatsapp messages. We also make use of PowerPoint presentations in class and in communicating with them, we use other social media applications as I have mentioned. Regarding assessments, we have quizzes, assignments, mid-semester exams and we have end of semester exams and in between we do formative assessments. We try to engage them to ensure effectiv teaching and learning is taking place.*

In their detailed accounts of the teaching and learning process, PU2 highlighted seven key values underpinning how knowledge is passed on to the students. The extract

below indicates the seven key goals that each PU2 student must achieve at the end of their course. A student who graduates from PU2 is;

- *An ethical, responsible and engaged member of his/her community.*
- *Able to apply critical thinking and quantitative reasoning to approach complex problems.*
- *An excellent communicator in a variety of forms.*
- *Adept at leading and functioning in team.*
- *Takes intellectual risks and demonstrates an entrepreneurial spirit. Inquisitive and confident, has breadth of knowledge, and has attained a high level of mastery in his/her chosen field.*
- *Effective and flexible user of technology*.

In a further question as to how the above goals are achieved through teaching and learning, PU2 explained the steps taken at both faculty and teacher level to embed the above in their teaching and learning process included sensitizing faculty lectures on the requirement to design their teaching with the aim of achieving the above goals. The steps taken are as follows:

- *Faculty will include the learning goals in the syllabi of the courses they teach. A course may not be suitable to train all learning goals, so faculty members should pick those leaning goals their courses should best address.*
- *Communicate to new students and faculty about the Learning Goals during orientation.*
- *At the beginning of class, communicate to students about the learning goals and how they can achieve them through the courses they take.*
- *There will be discussion about the Learning Goals with the Student Council and academic representatives.*
- *There will be discussion with the student body during town hall meetings.*
- *Evaluate the success of our curriculum, programmes and courses in training these attributes.*

From the students' perspective, a further question was asked about the measures taken to ensure the effectiveness of teaching and learning. In their response, PU2 explained that departments and students themselves had a role to play in the scrutiny of teaching and learning. On a departmental level, there is an internal moderation of examination questions before a further external moderation by the mentoring institution. In terms of the role student played, they had the opportunity to do critical

course evaluations at the end of every semester and this is an activity that was thoroughly carried out and actions taken.

In the case of PU3, teaching and learning is carried out via lectures, seminars, assignments, examinations, reporting and group discussions. Similar to PU2, students have the opportunity to evaluate if their teaching and learning experience is what they expected, while on the faculty level, external examiners pay regular visit to the faculties to assess their methods of teaching and assessments designed for students.

The responses received from PU4 were similar to that of PU3, with an additional note that their approach to teaching and learning focused more on students. The extract below shows how PU4 ensures that teaching and learning are effective.

PU4:

"There is regular assessment of lecturers and courses by the quality assurance office. There is also regular assessment of the performance of programmes periodically."

PU5:

Courses are assigned by Course Coordinators (HODs) the Lecturer then delivers the courses after which students evaluate their teaching." Peer review of teaching and Faculty evaluation are used to monitor the effectiveness of teaching.

For PU6, teaching and learning involves:

"Methods of teaching includes lecturing, teaching, seminars/workshops, presentations by students, field/educational trips and tutorials. To assess how students have assimilated what is taught, they are examined through questioning in class, assignments, interim assessments, end of semester examinations, etc."

The response from PU8 highlighted two modalities used to deliver teaching and learning. The interviewee commented that apart from brick and mortar, they had recently introduced teaching via online platforms to enhance the teaching and learning experience for students, although this only formed about 20% of their teaching and learning process, as it did not lend itself to most disciplines. There is a long-term plan

to improve this, as such being able to use information technology was a skill they focused on when recruiting lecturers. Talking about how they ensured the effectiveness of teaching and learning, the interviewee stated that lectures were held accountable for their learning objectives. For instance, lecturers had a duty to report back to the faculty on how learning objectives had been achieved or explain why they had not been achieved. In addition, the university places emphasis from the onset during recruitment of lectures.

It is encouraging to note that students were given the opportunity to give feedback on their learning experiences. Given that the students' feedback is followed up, it gives the universities opportunities to take measures to improve, where necessary. The findings also present a perception suggesting that there are both in-depth and insufficient approaches to teaching and learning which exists at the universities with varying degrees of roles played by both lecturers and students. As was mentioned earlier, these private universities rely solely on tuition fees as their source of income. Students and parents are therefore the major stakeholders in the private higher education sector, with the students being the recipients of the service provided. One would expect that students would have a greater involvement in the evaluation of the teaching and learning process. However, apart from PU2 and PU3 which appear to have a process that allows discussions with students and their representatives, the rest of the universities do not appear to have a structure in place. For instance, from the responses, PU4, PU6 and PU8 do not give an indication of such, although they tend to focus more on assessing their lecturers.

Management and Governance

As part of the Process review, the participants were also required to respond to questions regarding management and governance. Referring to the literature review,

a mention was made about the importance of institutional goals which is the first step in the IQA process. Given that an institution's goals are likely to be instituted by top hierarchy, this section of the interview included questions on institutional goals plus how the universities were governed and managed internally.

The first set of questions required participants to state their institutional goals, which was aimed to align it with the argument in the literature review that one of the fundamental elements of QA must include institutional goals to serve as a guide of terms of reference for the institution to follow. It also defines explicitly why the institution exists and what its operations are intended to achieve. Vroeijensijin (1995) further argues institutional goals and aims must be formulated to meet scientific and societal requirement. Setting an institutional goal will, thus, help set the parameters for the rest of the elements in the IQA process. If not, then it raises the question of what is there to monitor, evaluate and improve.

There were seven responses out of eight and the most obvious findings to emerge from the responses is that all the participating universities have an institutional goal which is one of the four basic elements of an internal quality system. The results obtained are presented below:

PU1

… to emphasize academic, spiritual vocational and technological excellence in a context that prepares lives for service to God and humanity.

PU2

… *to educate a new generation of ethical and entrepreneurial leaders in Africa; to cultivate within our students the critical thinking skills, the concern for others and the courage it will take to transform their continent.*

PU3

… committed to *nurturing a vibrate academic community conducive to the study, creation and dissemination of knowledge through research, training and service*

PU4

… to effectively blend communication and information technology, business managerial education in arts and sciences as the engine of development and change in the Ghanaian and the world.

PU5

- *Provide an enabling environment for quality teaching and learning, research, intellectual creativity, innovation and service to community.*
- *Promote relevant cutting-edge technology, leadership development and an enterprise culture to deliver value to Ghana and the world.*

PU6

…to be on the cutting-edge of the dissemination of knowledge, quality education, research and training for the purpose of producing an excellent human resource base to meet the demands of Ghana's development.

PU7

- *Train and develop skilful and competent professionals for business, Information and Communication Technology and Entrepreneurship.*
- *Ensure that its graduates are not marginalized in the knowledge and expertise required for the management of modern global organizations*
- *Provide a broad-based adult and continuing education for the knowledge society in Ghana and Africa.*

PU8

… to function as a cutting-edge Christian University dedicated to providing science and technology-oriented education through teaching, research and outreach.

From the data above, the researcher identified two themes which seem to emerge. It appears the universities' mission is focused on a combination of spiritual/academic for some of them and entrepreneurial/academic for others. For instance, PU1 and PU8 are committed to achieving academic, spiritual and technological excellence. On the other hand, the majority of the participating universities made up of PU2, PU4, PU5, PU6 and PU7 have a mission to provide an education that prepare their students for both the entrepreneurial and academic world. Notably, PU3 is the only university

whose mission is purely academic. Overall, there appears to be a sense of spirituality, humanity and service to the world with an added focus on entrepreneurial excellence.

Comparing the two themes, it can be seen that the sense of spirituality and service to humanity is in line with *Veblen's (1918 cited in Collini (2012), argument in the literature review that the place of the university has always been a corporation for the cultivation and care of the community's highest aspiration and ideals, while the focus on entrepreneurial seems to be in consistent with* Varghese (2004) who argues in the literature review that in most countries, the development of higher education institutions was in a bid to build their economies after World War II. Most importantly, Varghese (2004) points out that this role has become more relevant in present times as a result of the rise in private universities which come with the charging of high fees, and therefore students and parents, logically expect some materialistic returns. In contrast to this role of the university, Collini (2012) argues society has placed so many expectations on the universities, thereby, turning them into powerhouses for national development, which is not the reality. In the context of Ghana, this is echoed in the programmes offered by the private universities. As was mentioned in chapter two in the review of courses offered by private universities, there was a remarkable observation made that most students in the private universities were studying business and IT courses. In an interview, PU1 admitted that:

> *There are too many private institutions and the challenge we have is that we seem to be running identical programmes. We don't have too many of us going into the science programmes and others because the capital outlay is huge. If for instance you are going to run a science programme, you need labs and all kinds of things. I think these are the areas the government could come in to help. The government for instance could say that those of you who go into the sciences and others, we will give you this incentive. Or we would help you. It is true that when it comes to infrastructure and other things, the government cannot help us because we are private institutions but there are several ways the government can help. It's much easier to offer the business and IT because it is cheaper to run. With business subjects, all you need is a classroom and a lecturer. All of us are aware that we need a lot of people in the STEM areas.*

Obviously, there are long term implications for the country's development. The net effect of identical business and IT courses on the country's development will be discussed in the next chapter.

The next section of questions was concerned with the governance structures of the universities. As would be expected, all the universities have established executive and management boards or councils in place to govern the affairs of the universities. Overall, the results indicated that the universities have either an Executive Management Team (EMT) or a council which are approved and monitored by NAB, as would be seen shortly that governance is one of the quality indicators used by NAB. The responses also highlighted the members that form the various executive teams and councils. The composition of the EMTs is also another quality indicator used by NAB. A few of the responses received stated that:

	The Executive Team currently consists of the following Departmental Heads: Dean of Academic Affairs, Dean of Students & Community Affairs, Registrar, and the Director of Development. New member will be nominated or appointed by the President in consultation with the team. Other departmental heads are invited to sit in Executive meeting as and when the need arises. It is the responsibility of the Executive Team to ensure that there is effective leadership, management, and coordination of all the activities undertaken by the University; that the University's portfolio including resources (e.g., people, finance), organisation (e.g., structures, policies, and decision-making), and services (e.g. systems, projects and service delivery) is properly managed. The Executive Team also assists the President in the preparation of draft plans, strategies, and budgets for consideration and approval by Board of Directors, set administrative policies and takes key executive decisions to ensure that the institution operates efficiently.
	We are managed by a Council appointed and the Executive Committee/ Management. Through the Management, made up of the President, Vice President, Registrar and other Departmental and Faculty Heads.
	PU4 *The University has a council as the highest governing body, management headed by the President, academic Board, faculty boards headed by Deans, department boards headed by HoDs.*
	PU5

PU5 is managed by a Council appointed and the Executive Committee/ Management. Through the Management, made up of the President, Vice President, Registrar and other Departmental and Faculty Heads.
PU7 *The University is managed by a highly competent team comprising the Chancellor, Council, Board, Academic Board, Management and other Principal Officers.*

There was a particular observation that the faith universities had an extra layer of governance, usually, from the parent church that they are associated with. For instance, PU1 commented that:

> Article 9 of the University's constitution states: The governance and regulation of the University shall reside in the following individuals and bodies:
>
> (1) The President of the General Conference of the Church serving as the Visitor.
> (2) The President of the West Central Africa Division (WAD) of the General Conference of the Church serving as Chancellor; *
> (3) A president of a Union Conference/Mission of the Church in Ghana serving as Chair of Council.
> (4) The WAD Board of Education
> (5) The Council
> (6) The Vice-Chancellor and other Principal Officers
> (7) The Academic Board

In another response, PU6 explained that:

> *The Executive Management Team Lead is the Rector, who is the head of the institution. The EMT comprises of Vice Rector, Librarian, Financial Controller, Dean of Students, Dean of Faculties, Academic Board Representative and the Chaplain. The university is governed through the council system which is approved by the National Accreditation Board.*

Output and Outcomes

This chapter has, so far, presented the findings for Inputs and Process as part of the four quality indicators used as the underpinnings for the theoretical framework for this study. As was mentioned in the literature review, this study presupposes that quality consists of the interactive sum of certain dimensions which for this study, are inputs, process, output and outcomes. In this section, the findings of the other two quality indicators will be presented together to allow a coherent perspective of quality, in this study's context to be laid out. In reviewing the literature, quality as outputs and

outcomes are the achievements of students and the long-term effect of higher education, respectively. Specifically, Outputs in this study refer to student achievement, completion rates, certification and skills. Outcomes, on the other hand, are the longer-term impact of education on the student such as employment destinations, earnings and changes overtime in attitudes, values, and behaviour. This assessment, which is quite popular with policy makers include cognitive skills, employment and changes in students' attitude.

In subsequence, this section of the questionnaire required respondents to describe their students' qualifications, entry into the job market, social and moral values and behaviours and employment. There were further questions to respondents to describe the support offered to students; the challenges they faced in the job market and the impact or contributions they are making to the economy. Overall, the respondents felt that their students graduated with the relevant qualifications, which were required in the current job market. However, only a small number of respondents indicated that their students were offered support to enable them to enter the job market. In addition, the respondents felt their graduates were successful in their careers and were contributing to national development.

To begin with the assessment of Outputs, the first set of analysis examined the achievements of students after graduation. Respondents were also required to give information on the performance of their graduates in the job market. A common view amongst the participants was that their graduates were doing well, either as employees or employers. In their accounts.

PU1 commented that:

The University produces graduates in fields such as teaching, nursing, computer science, biomedical engineering, agro-business, theology, development studies, business, at the

undergraduate and graduate levels. This a clear contribution to the manpower development of the country. Their achievements of our graduates are varied depending on their areas of specialization. Our graduates in Computer Science and Information Technology do very well wherever they are employed. The graduates from the School of Theology and Missions are found at various levels of Church administration in the SDA Church locally and internationally. The current Vice Chancellor is an alumni. Those in the sandwich programmes are already teachers so they go back to their jobs. We do a bit of tracking, but we need to do more to be able to say that, for instance, within five years of graduation, 50% or 90% are gainfully employed.

PU2 remarked that:

Those who have started their own companies, have employed other Ghanaians, and they pay their taxes. Past students have been able to start their own businesses and are doing very well, e.g. DreamOval. Graduates take initiative, they communicate excellently and exhibit good ethical values. Nearly 100% of our graduates receive job offers, start businesses or enter graduate school within six months of graduation.

PU3

Our graduates exhibit hard work, respect, transparent, responsible, patriotic.

PU4 explained that:

Their graduates were occupying senior positions in both private and public sectors, while others have set up their own businesses.

PU5

A number of student/alumni are in the Telecom Companies, most are entrepreneurs. GTUC 101 is established where prospective job vacancies are posted for students.

While PU6 commented that:

Some graduates have risen from lower positions to management level positions at where they are working. Others have become top organizational assets in terms of policy and business development. A few that I know of are doing so well managing their own companies. Some are in governance as Members of Parliament and serving on a number of company boards. Majority of our products are also in academia as lecturers and administrators. Our graduates are contributing high intellectual capital to knowledge creation. Reducing the unemployment rate by creating jobs, providing employment opportunities for the unemployed. Contributing to the national fund as they faithfully pay their taxes as company owners. Serving the nation as state officials in diverse capacities. Contributing to the socio-economic development of the nation.

PU7

Some of graduates occupy various managerial and middle level management positions in highly esteemed organizations including Bank of Ghana, Registrars at various universities, Managers and Supervisors of the various banks and telecommunications industries.
Others have obtained PhDs and lecturing in various institutions of higher learning.

The next section of the questionnaire asked participants to describe the support or skills that was offered to students in gaining employment. In their response,

PU5 explained they used:

Annual career fairs and information shops are organized for students to prepare them for internships and work after school. There are CV clinics and mock interview sessions.

PU7 explained that:

Various workshops are organised by the career services unit on how to develop a CV whilst mini interview sessions and other career training programmes are also organised for final year students. The university also writes letters of introduction to various organizations who intend to employ our graduates.

PU1 responded:

Yes, we provide them with the knowledge and skills to enable them to enter the job market. Besides the content of the programmes, which are tailored to among others suit the needs of the various industry clientele, the programmes also incorporate internship and practicum components. The aim is to introduce students to the world of work and smoothen their transition after graduation. We have introduced courses in entrepreneurship and small business management. I tell my students I want you to see yourselves as entrepreneurs. You have a degree in education, can't you start a creche? Can't you start something in your father's living room and gradually expand it? Think of yourself as doing something. So that's what we encourage them to do.

PU4 on the other hand admitted:

No, we do not offer such support for their graduates.

PU5

Annual career fairs and info shops are organized for students to prepare them for internships and work after school. There are CV clinics and mock interview sessions.

PU6

We ensure our programs content meets industry demands; our students go on internships and industry players are invited to talk to students and we make use of field trips.

PU8

"We use internships and work experience placements. We ensure that our courses provide the skills set required for the industry. For instance, I am just coming out of a conference and some CEOs we interviewed stated that about 50% of the current curriculum universities provide will be phased out in the next 4 years because they do not meet the skills set that is required by employers. That is why, we as an institution ensure every student is offered Information Technology, regardless of what programme you are on. We believe all our students must be prepared to meet the pace at which information technology has become part of our society."

The overall rate of response was positive. Five of the participants were able to describe the career support offered to students and this was encouraging. PU4 admitted it did not have such a service in place, while there was no response from the others. It was apparent from the responses received that most of the private universities offered career services support to prepare students for the job market. It is possible that only a few of the private universities do not have such a structure in place to provide this service. Nonetheless, in relation to the literature, it was argued that quality was the interactive sum of dimensions (inputs, process, output and outcome) with a mention of Dale (2005) who argues that elements associated with educational quality are interrelated; a serious defect in one element is likely to have implications for quality in other. To this end, the findings regarding the provision of career services support raise concerns and are not consistent with the theoretical framework for this study.

In the next section of the questionnaire, the focus was on Outcomes, which is the long-term effect of higher education on students after graduation. The participants were required to give information on how they monitored the destination. There was also a further question for participants to comment on changes in attitudes, values and behaviours. In this regard, the first appropriate question was to find out, in the first instance, if there was a monitoring in place to collate such a data. Five out of the eight participants responded in the affirmative, adding that they carried out tracer studies to help them collate the data. It is instructive to mention here that two out of these five explained further that even though they collated such data, it was on a small scale. Participants also commented on the challenges faced by students in gaining

employment. In their responses to the question about challenges faced by graduates, a variety of perspectives were expressed but the main theme identified was that there was currently a national graduate unemployment in Ghana, besides students' limited or no experience and lack of funding, ban on public sector employment which were also some of the challenges. The extract below shows the responses received from participants.

PU1 explained that:

The challenges may be related to the general state of the Ghanaian economy. There seem to an unfortunate trend of graduate unemployment. However, those with the specific skills required by employers find employment.

PU2 also explained that:

The current unemployment state in the economy makes it difficult for graduates to enter the job market.

Similarly, to PU1, the challenge faced by graduates according to PU6 was:

The national challenge of unemployment and sometimes capital to start their own businesses.

In the same vein, PU7 explained that:

There is a choked job market and government ban on public sector recruitment.

PU5, on the other believed the main challenge was due to the limited job experiences of graduates.

The situation was slightly different for PU8. Talking about this issue, the interviewee explained that most of their students come on study leave so it is easier for them to return to their various jobs after graduation. However, there is a small number of their secondary school leavers, who are faced with the challenges of gaining employment after graduation.

In general, therefore, it could be argued that the Ghanaian economy is not able to fully absorb the graduates produced by the universities and there is lack of funding for those graduates who would like to set up their own businesses. With the rise of private universities in Ghana, it could be argued that, logically, the unemployment situation has been heightened, as indicated in the responses. These findings corroborate the discourse in the literature review that in SSA countries, there has been an unprecedented demand for higher education which has been caused by the increasing number of students leaving secondary education, hence the proliferation of private universities which are now potentially making the unemployment situation worse in the country. These findings are therefore significant as they raise questions as to why SSA countries have provided an enabling environment for private higher education to thrive and produce more graduate students, but the job market is not available to absorb the graduates and neither is there support for graduates who want to set up their own businesses. To compound this unemployment situation, PU7 noted that there was a ban on public sector employment. The ripple effect of this is discussed in the next chapter.

The next analysis focused on the provision of holistic higher education. In the review of the literature, it was noted that the purpose of higher education was not only to produce a genius in a particular subject but produce a graduate educated in both intellect and character. In other words, the purpose of higher education is to provide well-rounded students. For this reason, this set of questions examined the curriculum and required the participants to give information on what else they offered their students apart from academics and the impact this had on their graduates. The extract below shows the responses.

PU1

We do so through what we call integration of faith and learning. This is where every aspect of academic and social life is inextricably fused into practical Christian faith both in and out of the lecture rooms. We are a Christian tertiary institution operated by the parent Church. Our mission emphasizes academic, spiritual, vocational, and technological excellence for service to God and humanity. Our core values are; Excellence (the commitment to attain higher standards and expectations), Integrity (a life that matches convictions with actions, authenticity and trustworthiness) and Service (the willingness to serve God and humanity in a selfless manner). These we endeavour to inculcate in our students throughout their study with us.

PU4

There are extra curricula workshops/ seminar that support students on social and moral values. By engaging students on comprehensive curricula, organizing workshops and seminars etc. Studies indicate that our graduate are exhibit high moral values and perform better at their place of work. We have not captured 100% of our graduates though.

PU6

In addition to program specific contents, we have programs such as Mentorship, Pentstuds, College Assembly, Leadership and Personal organization courses. Since we have not had any adverse report on any of our graduates, we want to believe they are demonstrating the kinds of values that we would want. Again, the University had a number of requests from some institutions to send them names of students to do their national service with them. This is a positive indicator that earlier students sent to those institutions performed very well, hence subsequent request by those institutions. To a large extent since we have not received any adverse notice on any of them, we want to believe that they are demonstrating the kinds of values we want. However, we also give room to the few who may not live up to expectation.

PU7

Weekly church services are organised for students and staff where various speakers minister on life changing messages. Talks and other social activities are also organised by various groups on campus for students. Students are encouraged to join Associations and Clubs of their choice and also participate in extracurricular activities. Seminars and workshops on various topics are also organised for students.

While the overall rate of response in this section was low, the themes that emerge are the use of seminars/workshops and personal development courses for students at PU4 and PU6. Another theme that emerges is the focus on the use of religion and Christianity, which reflects the mission statements of these universities. There was no significant indication that most of the universities were paying attention to personal development and the social values of students, besides academic work. These findings are therefore contradictory, in relation to the argument in the literature review.

As was concluded in the literature review, Newman argues that the purpose of a university, ultimately, is to:

- Achieve an expansion of student's outlook, turn of mind, habit of thought and capacity for social and civic interaction.
- Produce a person of broad knowledge, critical intelligence, moral decency and social sensitivity.

What is Quality?

As a study that focused primarily on quality assurance, it was significant to have an idea of what "quality" meant to the participants. To this end, the final part of the survey asked the respondents to give information of their perception of the term "quality in higher education". There were three themes, as shown in the figure below, that seemed to appear in the responses received.

Outcomes	**Culture**	**Facilities/Systems**
PU1 Education should be able to serve a certain purpose. Education is not for its own sake. It needs to be able to empower people to do certain things. If you are able to do that and do that very well, then we can say the quality is good. We are looking at certain outcomes and if at the end of the day, we are able to achieve those things, then the quality is good. Now wherever you go globally, people are questioning the quality of education. It's not only in Ghana. We are talking about numeracy skills, communication skills, critical thinking, etc. If education is able to achieve these things, then the quality is good. And for us, as a parochial institution, we add another dimension, and the dimension is that we also prepare you for eternity. So sometimes we question ourselves if we are fulfilling that role.	PU8 Quality or quality assurance is an ongoing cyclical improvement. You do not just get there and stop. It's a continuous process.	NCTE Quality in higher education encompasses all the activities of tertiary education institutions such as teaching, academic programmes, research, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, academic environment, service to the community etc. with the view of enhancing efficiency, effectiveness, higher standards, excellence, value for money and fitness of purpose to meet the national development needs of the country.
PU4 Process of ensuring standards are sustained and improved in the higher education system to bring forth well trained graduates and strong research output		

PU5 Quality is when our graduates are selected appropriately and undergo all the laid down systems and structures in place for the 'production' of graduates. It includes learning the right courses, being taught by qualified lecturers, being given all the necessary support and pastoral care to enhance student experience.		

From the responses received, some of the participants were of the view that quality was determined by the quality of outcomes and facilities. These two themes are consistent with the theoretical framework of this study, which is based on the premise that quality encompasses inputs, process, output and outcomes. The two themes are also consistent with the Ghanaian context of quality (see page 86). It was interesting to note that the theory underpinning the framework was dotted in the responses received. There is also an overarching theme which is the setting of parameters. Again, this is consistent with the argument in the literature review that quality is of a slippery nature. To recap the argument in the literature review, it was argued extensively that quality was elusive, multidimensional and is not static. For these reasons, there had to be a consensus on the definition of quality before any meaningful discussion will be possible.

Quality Indicators

Given that the study is underpinned by a set of quality indicators, it was relevant for the respondents, including the regulatory agency, to provide information on the quality indicators they employed in assuring quality.

The themes identified in the results is a huge reliance on assessment of students' coursework and peer reviews. Apart from PU6 which made mention of using the presence of teaching and learning facilities and good infrastructure as a measure of

quality, it appears that assuring quality in most of the private universities is all about outcome of examinations and assessments. The table below presents some of the responses received from participants.

PU1

Through various levels of assessment both in and out of the lecture. Student learning is evaluated through formative and summative assessments, student evaluation of faculty teaching surveys, external moderation of examination questions, graduating student surveys, evaluation of principal officers and other non-teaching employees, etc.

PU2

- *Departments have internal moderation of examination questions before the final one by mentoring institutions*
- *Faculty engage in frequent peer review*
- *Student do course evaluations every semester*
- *Faculty do annual personal evaluations of their work*

PU3

Preparation of course outline, punctuality, timely release of results, publications, responsiveness, dedication

PU5

Student Satisfaction survey results, student faculty evaluation, Feedback from students during forums, External examiner reports, Committee Reports.

PU6

Policies, regulations, processes
Recruiting competent human resources
Providing academic aids to teaching and learning i.e. access to library and e-library facilities
Good infrastructure
Development of administrative structures that support academic work

PU8

We have departmental and academic level indicators. For example, at the academic level, a lecturer will have to set objectives or learning outcomes, so the lecturer reports back if they were able to achieve their learning outcomes and how it was tested. For the departmental heads, they present their deliverables at the beginning of the semester. An example of a target may be a 95%

pass for a particular lecturer, or a department may set a target to achieve a 10% of students get employment after internships. So, the lecturers have their targets and the department as a whole has its objectives.

These findings have important implications for the private higher education sector, as it raises questions as to how quality is assured in the private universities and how improvements can be made, when the focus is just on students' assessments. As was discussed in the literature review, assuring of quality is a measure of components which are inter-related. As Dare (2005), argues that all the elements associated with educational quality are interrelated; hence, a serious defect in one element is likely to have implications for quality in other. In addition, Owlia and Aspinwall (1997:528) argue that "*changing a variable in one direction (either increase or decrease) will inevitably lead a more and more change in the same direction."* Thus, the definition of quality cannot depend on one or two indicators. In a similar vein, the NCTE, the body with the oversight responsibility in the administration of the tertiary education sector defines quality in higher education as;

> *Quality in higher education encompasses all the activities of tertiary education institutions such as teaching, academic programmes, research, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, academic environment, service to the community etc. with the view of enhancing efficiency, effectiveness, higher standards, excellence, value for money and fitness of purpose to meet the national development needs of the country.*

At this point, it is equally significant to get a view on the quality indicators used by NAB to monitor and evaluate the private universities. What was significant here was find out if there was any correlation between the systems used by both parties. In response to how NAB monitored and evaluated the private universities, it explained that monitoring and evaluation were carried out at two levels namely institutional and programme levels using the following indicators.

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL	PROGRAMME LEVEL
• Affiliation (for private universities only) to a recognised/accredited degree-awarding institution	• Programmes, aims and objectives
• Organising and governance - Governance structure and members - Vision and mission - Statutes/Rules/Regulations and policies - Keys and Principal Officers and their qualifications etc.	- Components of programmes - Core, elective and institution-wide courses - Research component - Practical component including attachments, rotations, internships etc. - Programme structure - Logical sequence of courses
• Academic and administration leadership	• Entry Requirements
• Student Matters - Admission Policy - Code of ethics - Student support services	• Requirements for graduation
• Quality Assurance	• Staffing
• Library Facilities	• Technical support
• Financial Standing	• Academic support - Library - Financial - Physical
• Physical Facilities	

Table 5: NAB's Quality Assurance Indicators

A comparison of the processes of the universities and the regulatory body indicates NAB appears to have a holistic systematic process in place and for them to be able to monitor the universities using this system, the universities themselves will have to have an internal quality assurance process similar to that of NAB's. However, the responses received from the universities appear to focus mostly on the use of peer reviews and assessment of lectures and courses, which suggests that the focus is at the programme level. What remains unclear here is precisely how NAB uses their process to monitor and evaluate the private universities when there is a wide disparity between the processes of NAB and the universities.

Given the roles of both bodies and NAB in particular, it was significant to have their input for the study. Hence, having presented mostly the responses from the universities, the next section focuses on the regulatory system and how both the universities and the regulatory bodies perceive the higher education sector.

The Regulatory System

As was noted at the beginning of this chapter, the higher education sector of Ghana is regulated by The National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and The National Accreditation Board (NAB). In general terms, the NCTE has an oversight responsibility over the tertiary sector and its responsible for influencing and developing policies that would strengthen and enhance the quality of tertiary education. The NAB on the other hand, is responsible for accreditation and monitoring of tertiary institutions. In the following paragraphs, the two institutions will be looked at into more details.

National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE)

Specifically, The NCTE was established by an Act of Parliament entitled The National Council for Tertiary Education ACT 454 on 6th July 1993. The Act 454 established a National Council for Tertiary Education "*to oversee the proper administration of institutions designated as institutions of tertiary education in Ghana; to provide for the composition of the Council and provide for related matters"* http://ncte.edu.gh/index.php/about-us/the-act - accessed 19/04/2019). The functions of NCTE as provided by Section 2 (1a) of Act 454 are:

a) to advise the Minister on the development of institutions of tertiary education in Ghana.

(b) to enquire into the financial needs of the institutions of tertiary education and advise the Minister accordingly.

(c) to recommend to the Minister for the purpose of the preparation of annual national education budget.

(i) block allocations of funds toward running costs; and

(ii) grants towards capital expenditure of each institution of tertiary education,

indicating how the allocations are to be disbursed.

(d) to recommend national standards and norms, including standards and norms on staff, costs, accommodation and time utilization for the approval of the Minister and to monitor the implementation of any approved national standards and norms by the institutions.

(e) to advise governing councils of institutions of tertiary education on suitable measures for generating additional funds for their institutions.

(f) to advise the institutions of tertiary education on the applications for and acceptance of external assistance in accordance with government policy.

(g) to advise the Minister generally on rates of remuneration and other conditions of service of staff of the institutions.

(h) to publish information on tertiary education in Ghana; and

(i) to perform any other functions relating to tertiary education as are incidental to the functions specified in this Act.

The NCTE has a vision to lead tertiary education in Ghana to new heights. To realise this vision, it has a mission statement to provide strategic leadership in respect of the overall focus, purposes and significance of tertiary education in Ghana. In this regard, the NCTE has translated its functions on a day-to-day basis as being responsible for:

- *Considering applications for the introduction of new programmes in tertiary institutions and advising on their relevance for national development.*
- *Advising on the establishment of norms for effective Management of tertiary institutions and monitoring their performance.*
- *Preparation of composite budgets for the tertiary sector.*

- *Presentation of the tertiary sector budget to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education.*
- *Processing inputs for the release of subventions.*
- *Disbursement of approved subventions to tertiary institutions.*
- *Collection of and submitting monthly returns on subvention and internally generated funds from the institutions to Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and the Controller and Accountant Generals Department.*
- *Preparation of Annual budget reports of the tertiary sector.*
- *Collection of data from tertiary institutions and publishing annual statistical digest.*
- *Facilitation of negotiations for salaries and Conditions of Service for staff of Universities and Polytechnics.*
- *Providing information on tertiary education to local and international stakeholders.*
- *Coordination of donor projects involving the entire tertiary sector such as Teaching and Learning Innovation Fund (TALIF) with the World Bank support.*
- *Liaison between tertiary institutions, government and other stakeholders on tertiary education issues.*
- *Publishing information on tertiary education in Ghana; and*
- *Organization of orientation workshops on leadership development for newly appointed heads of institutions and in governance for newly appointed Council members.*

Source: http://ncte.edu.gh/the-secretariat/ Accessed 03/07/2020

National Accreditation Board (NAB)

The National Accreditation Board (NAB) is a government agency under the Ministry of Education, responsible for regulation, supervision and accreditation of both public and private tertiary institutions in terms of contents and standard of programmes, requirements and the maintenance of acceptable levels of academic and professional standards in the country. NAB is also the body responsible for ascertaining the equivalences of degrees and certificates issued in Ghana and other

countries. Established by the NAB Act 2007, the mission of the National Accreditation Board is to provide the best foundation that provides guidance for establishment, measurement and improvement of standards in the tertiary education in Ghana. It is considered a major participant in this study as it has a direct oversight responsibility over private universities in terms of accreditation, monitoring and evaluation Specifically, it's mandate and functions are to:

(a) determine the programmes and requirements for the proper operation of an institution and the maintenance of acceptable levels of academic or professional standards in the institution in consultation with that institution.

(b) determine the equivalences of diplomas, certificates and other qualifications awarded by institutions in the country or elsewhere.

(c) publish as it considers appropriate the list of accredited public and private institutions and programmes at the beginning of each calendar year.

(d) advise the President on the grant of a Charter to a private tertiary institution.

(e) perform any other functions determined by the Minister.
Source: http://www.nab.gov.gh/our_mandate Accessed 04/07/2018

The NAB operates a secretariat headed by an Executive Secretary, who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the secretariat. The board is financed through government subventions. Its modus operandi is through committees and sub-committees which are responsible for programme accreditation, institutional accreditation; and monitoring and supervisory roles to achieve the mandate of the board. NAB is the institution that has a quality assurance unit to monitor and evaluate the private universities. In a more detailed brief about its quality assurance unit, the researcher was referred to its website which states that:

The Quality Assurance Department (QAD) of the National Accreditation Board (NAB), among others, assists in the execution of the mandate of the Board by supporting it to develop appropriate instruments including assessment tools/questionnaires, guidelines and information packs to guide institutions, NAB experts, staff and members of the Board. The department operates on the principle that quality is a culture that needs to be imbibed and lived by institutions rather than an imposition. Therefore, it uses supportive approaches in the design of the instruments thus making information simple and user friendly to the target stakeholders.

The Department is also responsible for a number of post-accreditation exercises which include but not limited to the following: Data Management; Academic Audits; Institutional Audits; Ranking of Institutions and Programmes; Monitoring and Evaluation; Research and Documentation; and Capacity Building for staff, NAB experts and Internal Quality Assurance Units of recognized tertiary institutions in Ghana. It also provides direct support services to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) of the Board which also oversees the work of the Department. The Department is headed by the Deputy Executive Secretary who reports directly to the Executive Secretary and is supported by three (3) Senior Members and four (4) Senior Administrative Assistants.
http://www.nab.gov.gh/2014-08-21-11-46-34 accessed 19/04/19

There are two main levels of assessment levels which is the programme and institutional levels of assessments. For institutional accreditation, the board issues self-evaluation questionnaires to the universities to elicit information about their facilities, staffing and student data, research publication, financial status and graduate output, among others. A committee then carries out institutional visit to ascertain the responses received and take an informed decision. For programme accreditation, a panel of assessors in particular subject areas are assigned to assess the programme. Over the years, NAB has been successful in addressing certain pertinent issues, which it believes has improved quality standards in the high education sector. Some keys aspects of its achievements include:

(i) *Developing and reviewing relevant frameworks for accreditation, quality assurance and scholarship. For instance, the policy and framework for Affiliation developed by the Board has been accepted as international best practice by the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).*
(ii) *Improved quality assurance in programmes delivery in the institutions*
(iii) *Continuous public awareness about tertiary education institutions, accreditation and quality assurance through constant media engagement and workshops.*
(iv) *International recognition and acceptance through membership and participation in the activities of international quality assurance bodies such as the INQAAHE and the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN).*
(v) *Strengthened service delivery systems and information dissemination.*

(vi) Enhanced competencies of staff and Board members through workshops, conferences and seminars, enhancing efficiency year after year.

(vii) Effective Credentials Evaluation through rigorous certificate evaluation processes which have enabled the detection of fake certificates and diploma/degree mills, a growing phenomenon across the world.

(viii) Grant of Presidential Charter to 4 Private Tertiary Institutions through effective reviews of their systems to ensure they could operate independently as autonomous institutions.

One of the challenges facing NAB is its inability to close down or prosecute unaccredited universities because the NAB Law does not give such powers. Over the years, it has issued notices to unaccredited universities and warned the public against having any dealings with such universities operating illegally, which is as far as it can go.

Relationship between NCTE and NAB

To better understand the roles of both bodies, the researcher sought clarification about the relationship between the two bodies and the private universities. In an interview, NCTE provided the following response:

I. Currently, the NCTE does not monitor and evaluate the quality of education in Private Universities. Our oversight responsibilities cover tertiary education institutions that receive monthly subventions from government. These include the Public Universities, Technical Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and other Teaching Institutions such as Ghana Institute of Languages, Ghana Institute of Journalism and National Film and Television Institute.

II. The NAB undertakes routine monitoring and evaluation of the quality standards in Private Universities in order to ensure that the institutions adhere to the national minimum requirements/standards. The quality assurance involves institutional audits and programme accreditation.

III. The NCTE would not be in position to rate the quality of education provided by Private Universities due to reasons indicated above.

IV. Our mission is to provide leadership in tertiary education by advising Government and all relevant institutions to enhance access, quality, equity, relevance and good governance. In executing this mission, the NCTE is guided by a medium-term Strategic Plan which sets out the goals, objectives, targets, strategies and activities that helps the organisation to achieve its vision.

It is obvious from paragraph (i) that NCTE does not have any direct dealings with the private universities which does not correspond with the duty placed on NCTE by

law to advise the Minister of Education on developments in the tertiary education sector. The responses also indicate that NAB is solely responsible for the private universities in terms of accreditation, monitoring and evaluation. It is not exactly stated if there are any reporting lines from NAB to NCTE. However, in an interview, PU1 confirmed that there were NAB representatives on the NCTE Board who feedback to the NCTE regarding developments in the private higher education sector. There is every indication that the functions of the two bodies are linked and a reporting function from NAB to NCTE appears to be ideal, but it is not explicitly stated. The functions and roles of the two bodies are likely to overlap. The implications of NCTE's position is discussed in the next chapter.

Turning now to the questioned asked, the respondents were required to give information on the effectiveness and the challenges in the regulatory system. There was a further question for respondents to suggest how the regulatory sector could be improved. The overall response rate was encouraging but gives the impression of a 'divide' amongst the participating universities regarding their views on the regulatory body, NAB. The responses gave a mixture of both positive and negative perspectives, as would be seen below. There were also recommendations from participants on how the sector could be improved. In response to the question: "How would you describe the regulatory environment in the country?" a range of responses were elicited as presented in the table below.

PU1
"It is very good. It has come a long way and improving every day*. The National Accreditation Board is increasingly improving its oversight and standards and institutions in the tertiary sector are growing. Universities/colleges in the private sector have major challenges especially in the financial sector and the expansion of their programme offerings into science, technology and the vocational fields. It will be necessary for the government to enable private providers with incentives and the proper policy framework."*

PU4

"It's good and on course. regulatory bodies have to intensify monitoring and evaluation to be able to improve on quality."

PU5

The NAB is an accrediting body and has limitations in terms of what they can do to support institutions. Unlike other national regulatory bodies from other countries, the NAB is unable to enforce conformance and standardization. This is a major minus for the Board and it leaves institutions to their own discretion when it comes to what should be done.

Yes this could be improved. When you take the case of Germany and most parts of Europe, the standards have been set by the regulatory body and they have the powers to withdraw licenses and close down institutions as sanctions for non-conformance. However, NAB does not enjoy such powers and hence limits the amount of regulatory work that can be done.

PU6

"Very good. The National Accreditation Board ensures that tertiary institutions abide by the laid down regulations. They also visit the premises of institutions during accreditation of new programs and re-accreditation of existing programs. Continuous improvement will suffice here."

PU7

"Effective but regular checks and monitoring could help."

PU8

"There are lots of challenges in the sector. For instance, we have submitted six applications to NAB for reaccreditation for more than three months now and we have not heard any response, not even an acknowledgement. The process is supposed to take three months, but it never happens. It causes a concern for our students when they do not know if the course they are studying has been accredited or not. So, we find ourselves having to reassure the students all the time. We are lucky I have contacts at NAB so I am able to press a few buttons to get things done. What about a university with no contacts at NAB? In addition, NAB have not been effective in terms of policing the private universities. We are supposed to be mentored by the state universities and it will be useful for NAB to, once or twice in year to send a survey to find out from us our perspective on the mentoring service we receive from our mentors."

A comparison of the responses above revealed some conflicting views on the regulatory body, NAB. Four of the universities, PU1, PU4, PU6 and PU7 commended NAB for its effectiveness, although PU7 and PU4 mentioned that they would like to see NAB in being vigilant and carry out regular visits. In their account, PU1 was of the view that NAB was continuously improving it oversight responsibilities. This perception was different to that of PU8. PU8 explained that NAB had not been effective in doing their policing role and accreditation took longer than necessary. The response from

NAB also contradicts the response from PU8, PU7 and PU4 regarding regular visits. On the part of PU5, they were not explicit in stating whether NAB was effective or not, however they indicated salient limitations, which could probably mean NAB is not able to carry out its duties. Another intriguing finding was that almost all participants called on NAB to intensify its monitoring and evaluation activities. These talk about the findings are rather troubling and makes it probable that monitoring and evaluation is not as effective as it should be. There was a further question to PU8 to find out if these inefficiencies were due to shortage of human resources and the response was that NAB is equipped with the needed human resource. It was rather an attitude of staff in the public sector, in general.

It is instructive to note that even though this study is primarily about internal quality assurance, the question about the effectiveness of the regulatory system was significant because in the literature review, it was made clear that there was a relationship between the two processes. While making a distinction between QA in industry and higher education, it was highlighted that the higher education sector has developed its own approach to quality assurance which comprises of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA), External Quality Assurance (EQA) and Accreditation. Mishra (2006) highlights that most countries prefer to use accreditation as an external quality assurance tool to encourage universities to assure quality internally. He argues further that, many countries us external quality assessment as their instrument in monitoring the overall quality of tertiary institutions, which allows for more in-depth assessment and also adds to the credibility to the objective of quality assurance system. There was however a criticism from other school of thoughts who argue that usually EQA occurs before IQA which defeats the idea that for IQA to be effective, it must be culture in the

institution. Hence, Martin (2016) cautions, there is a risk of EQA leading to compliance, rather than improvement. The implication is that there is an element of external input in the process of internal quality assurance; hence the reason the researcher included the regulatory bodies, NCTE and NAB as participants to seek their views on the private higher education sector. As already made clear in NCTE's response about the private higher education sector, they do not deal directly with the private universities and so they were not in a position to comment on the effectiveness of the private higher education sector. In NAB's account of the effectiveness of the regulatory sector, NAB responded that:

> *It is very robust. The challenge is, however, with the different types of institutions within the tertiary education landscape, viz: regular (academic) institutions and vocational/professional institutions (nursing, teaching, communication). The latter also have their regulatory bodies that exercise some control in delivery and quality of their programmes.*
>
> *There are also challenges with offshore institutions coming into the country either to establish replicas of their institutions or mounting their programmes online (distance mode) to attract Ghanaian students. The implications for quality are manifest.*

While the findings of this study may suggest a possible ineffective regulatory system, it would seem fair to present the challenges that are in the system. To this end, NAB reports that the following challenges:

- *Operations of unaccredited institutions: NAB Law does not make provision for closure or prosecution of offending institutions by NAB. Hopefully, this may be addressed with an on-going process to amend Act 744.*
- *Staffing: The Board does not have its requisite level of staff to enable it to discharge its mandate much more effectively and efficiently.*
- *Coverage of the entire country: a limited fleet of vehicles that does not allow for an adequate number of teams to go into the field to speed up accreditation processes and step up monitoring for quality assurance.*
- *Increasing numbers of offshore providers: tracking such providers to bring them in line with the prevailing laws in the country.*
- *Non-responsiveness of some international agencies to NAB requests for information.*

In the challenges listed above, NAB admits there is inadequate staffing to enable it discharge its duties effectively, which goes to support the responses from PU4, PU7

and PU8, who commented that monitoring and visits from NAB were inadequate. On the other hand, PU6 and PU1 were the only universities that commented that NAB was doing regular visits and were improving on a daily basis. Although, there are inconsistencies here, it is expected in that, with NAB facing a challenge of inadequate staffing, the implication is that they are only able to visit a few of the universities which may include PU6 and PU1, hence, their response. Nonetheless, in their response to defend this assertion, NAB explained that;

> *No institution is adequately resourced. In terms of logistics, we have good vehicles that we use. We are not doing the job ourselves. We depend mostly on consultants. We call them assessors, they are the professors, senior lecturers from the universities. We do not use staff for these things. What we do is to attach a staff to the team so they represent the face of NAB over there so if there are any questions pertaining to NAB policies, we expect the staff attached to the team to explain. Most of the job is done by these experts right from audit, institutional and programme accreditation.*

In addition to the above, the NCTE submitted the following challenges but not limited to:

i. Gender imbalances in enrolment,
ii. Limited access to qualified applicants due to capacity constraints,
iii. Declining quality due to high student/teacher ratio,
iv. Deterioration of existing facilities due to explosion in enrolment without complementary facilities in public universities,
v. Effective monitoring and evaluation of projects, standards and norms has been negligible,
vi. Inadequate funding to support infrastructure expansion.
vii. Inadequate ICT infrastructure in tertiary education institutions.

As already indicated from the mandate of NCTE, it has no direct relationship with the private universities in terms of monitoring and evaluation. However, their input was still needed for the study as the overseer of the tertiary education sector. When asked to comment on how monitoring and evaluation of private universities was done, their response was:

> Currently, the NCTE does not monitor and evaluate the quality of education in Private Universities. Our oversight responsibilities cover tertiary education institutions that receive monthly subventions from government. These include the Public Universities, Technical Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and other Teaching Institutions such as Ghana Institute of Languages, Ghana Institute of Journalism and National Film and Television Institute. The NAB undertakes routine monitoring and evaluation of the quality standards in Private Universities in order to ensure that the institutions adhere to the national minimum requirements/standards. The quality assurance involves institutional audits and programme accreditation.

As the body with a function to advise government on the development of tertiary education in Ghana, and has a strategic oversight responsibility of the sector, it was surprising to note that they were only focused on state tertiary institutions. A further question was asked which required the Council to comment on the quality of private universities in the country. Due to the above, their response was:

> The NCTE would not be in position to rate the quality of education provided by Private Universities due to reason indicated above.

These findings raise questions as to how the NCTE performs in function of guiding the government on the growth of the tertiary sector. In a further comment, the NCTE elaborated on how it executes its mission:

> *In executing this mission, the NCTE is guided by a medium-term Strategic Plan which sets out the goals, objectives, targets, strategies and activities that helps the organisation to achieve its vision.*

The tertiary sector involves private universities, so these findings were unexpected. In the review of literature, amongst the reasons that had led to a demand in higher education and subsequent demand for quality in SSA countries was the return to the realisation of the socio-economic benefits of higher education; hence Gillis argues, *"today, more than ever before in human history, the wealth - or poverty - of nations depends on the quality of higher education*" (Gillis cited in Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000, p. 15). To this end, one of the issues to emerge from these findings is a concern as to how the private tertiary sector is expected to

align its activities to the national framework if they are not considered by NCTE. Potentially, private universities may be on a different tangent to what the national vision for tertiary education. Could it be the reason private universities appear to be focusing on Business and IT related programmes and nothing seems to be done about it?

Conclusion

This chapter set out to present the data from interviews and questionnaires collected from the field. It began with a restatement of the theoretical framework, which is underpinned by four broad themes namely, Input, Process, Output and Outcomes of the education provided by the private universities. The four broad themes were further broken down into sub-themes to help answer the research questions and also guide the presentation of the data from the fieldwork. Next, there was a profile of the institutions that partook in the study. The profile elaborated on the mission and vision of the institutions and a general overview. The responses received for each theme and sub-theme were then laid out and the findings for each theme revealed different implications which are further discussed in the next chapter. The chapter also presented responses from the regulatory bodies, with a focus on their functions and responsibilities and NAB's QA processes QA indicators. From the responses, the two regulatory bodies have different functions. There were some conflicting responses which is explored further in the next chapter. The chapter concluded with the QA indicators used by the participants to assure quality. The findings presented suggest that, in general, not all the elements of quality are effective in the participating universities. Dare (2005:17), states that: *all the elements associated with educational quality are interrelated; a serious defect in one element is likely to have implications*

for quality in other. With reference to this, the next chapter will focus on the implications of the results for the private higher education sector and Ghana.

Chapter Six

The Way Forward for Quality Assurance in Ghana

Introduction

Following the submission of the findings and analysis presented in the previous chapter, this part of the thesis two main objectives. The first objective is to discuss the findings which emerged in the previous chapter to identify how the outcome contributes to current knowledge. The second objective is to draw on the conclusions with the view to provide a quality assurance model for the private higher education sector in Ghana.

In the first section, the responses of the study will be woven around the highlights of discussions in the literature review to draw conclusion on the outcome of the field work. This chapter's discussion will therefore focus on the:

- Definition of quality
- Theoretical Framework
- IQA Implementation Process
- Idea of Higher Education
- Regulatory System

Following the above discussions, the second objective will be achieved by providing a QA model. Before proceeding with the sections, it will be useful to recap the themes of the study and the research questions.

Themes of the study

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, the findings of the study were presented using thematic analyses. A total of four broad themes were identified based on the quality indicators used in the Ghanaian education sector. The broad themes

were further explored using sub-themes which allowed precise questions to be asked to enable the researcher to answer the research questions. The findings for each of the sub-themes revealed the state of quality assurance mechanisms in the participating private universities, challenges, developments, achievements and the perception of participants about the regulatory system.

Before proceeding to the discussion, it will be instructive to do a recap of the research questions which guided the themes and sub-themes used for the discussion:

1. What is quality in higher education?
2. What are the current institutional quality assurance mechanisms used by private higher education institutions in Ghana and how are they monitored?
3. How relevant is the curriculum to the Ghanaian society?

The second research question as stated above has two parts. It sought to assess the existing QA mechanisms which is the main focus of this study. The question also allowed the researcher to assess the monitoring instruments used by the universities to ensure the mechanisms were effective. In what follows, the responses for each research questions will be discussed and linked back to the literature review. In what follows, the responses for each research questions will be discussed and linked back to the literature review.

Definition of Quality

In the higher education sector, it has become a universally held view that to date, it has not been possible to reach a consensus on what constitute quality. In the review of literature, it was established that quality itself was not new as it dated back to the medieval Europe in the 13th century. As argued in the review of literature, quality as originally associated with the craftmanship industry, which placed the responsibility of

assuring quality on individual craftsmen. Following the advent of mass production, Sallis (2002) argues that quality practices were deemed necessary to be embedded in the quality process. Although, these developments began in the manufacturing industry, quality has now become part of other sectors including higher education. It is logical to argue that quality has been in the known, however it is the interest in quality issues that has increased in the last two decades, which Barnet (1992) describes as a 'renewed interest.' As already mentioned, several authors have attributed the factors behind this 'renewed interest, to societal forces which include the massification of higher education, the dynamics of the relationship between higher education and the state, internationalisation of higher education , a change in mindset about how higher education should be funded(Vroeijenstijn 1995; Brennan and Shah 2000; Morley 2003; Hodson & Thomas 2003). Although, there had been an increasing interest in quality in higher education, Ofojebe *et al* (2015) argue that the high demand for university education and emergence of private universities in Nigeria has raised concerns about the quality I private universities. As previously argued in the literature review, although, this study was in reference to Nigeria, the situation is not different in Ghana and other SSA countries. Leu & Price-Rom (2006:1) argue that "*educational quality in developing countries has become a topic of intense interest".* In reference to Ghana, Ntim (2014) attributes this to the de-monopolization of the higher education sector from the government in the beginning of the 1990s, which saw an increased participation of the private sector in the provision of higher education.

Despite the rise in quality issues, it was evident in the literature review that several attempts made by several authors (Green 1994, Pounder 1999, Afshar 1990, Mishra 2007, Cheng and Tam 1997, Schindler et al 2015, Pirsig 1974, Watty 2005, Barnet

2003, Harvey and Green 1993) to define quality had proved futile. Various reasons were established for the difficulty in defining quality, with Afshar (1990:38") arguing that "*the ubiquitous and elusive concept of quality has preoccupied people throughout history and the attempts to capture the concept of quality have resulted in a wide range of interpretations from philosophical discourses to operational definitions*". Nonetheless, the literature review identified Schindler et al (2015) highlighting the three significant challenges as the elusive nature, the multi-dimensional nature and the static nature of quality. In addition to these challenges, Watty (2003) argues that the challenges are further heightened in the educational environment due the intangible nature of educational services. As expected in the context of Ghana, what constitutes quality is still debatable and as was pointed out in the literature review, Ankomah et al (2005) point out that successive governments in Ghana have sought to seek strategies for quality delivery of education. Most importantly, the NAB, established by an Act of Parliament 2007, Act 744, which has the mandate to monitor and evaluate both private and public universities, does not give a definition of quality. The review of literature also revealed that a Ghana government White Paper on Tertiary Education Reforms issued in 1991 made little or no effort to give a definition of quality.

Following the above, the first research question was to get a sense of what participants thought quality was or how quality should be defined. Unlike the other two research questions, which were answered by asking a series of sub-questions, this was a direct question posed to the participants. As recapped above, the question was, 'What is quality in higher education?' There were various responses which revealed three themes – Outcomes, Culture and Facilities. The responses indicated a divide in

the viewpoints of the participants – a situation which reflects the literature review. A section of the participants were of the view that quality was determined by outcomes. In other words, a set of standards or parameter are pre-set and if they are achieved, then the education is of high quality - a situation like the reviews in the literature. The setting of parameters or a framework was highlighted in the literature as a possible alternative to make any meaning to quality. Subsequently, this study employed a set of parameters which fitted the Ghanaian context to build a framework to guide the study. In another response to the question on definition of quality, the participant commented that quality was about ensuring that there were adequate facilities and systems to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. One participant was of the view that quality was a cyclical culture that is embedded in the processes of the university. Similar to the literature reviews, there was evidence of different definitions of quality. The findings of the study therefore confirm the revelations in the literature review, which is that it is difficult to define quality. The findings also confirmed the arguments in the literature review that there is still no universally common definition of quality.

Despite the above, it was established in the literature review that to make the discussion on quality meaningful, parameters had to be set to aid in the assessment of quality. Hence, arising out of the above challenges in defining quality, it was highlighted in the literature review that the conclusion of some authors like Reeves and Bowden (1994) who submit that clearly the search for a universal consensus on the definition of quality has proved futile. The review, subsequently, identified Schindler *et al* (2015), who assert that to mitigate the challenges surrounding the definition of quality, these two strategies could serve as a guiding principle.

- *The first is to construct a broad definition that attaches quality to one central goal or outcome, such as fulfilling a stated mission or vision (Bogue, 1998; Harvey & Green, 1993).*
- *The second strategy is to identify specific indicators that reflect the desired inputs and outputs.*

On account of the above discussions and the strategies identified, certain deductions and inferences were made from the literature review – this included the deduction that for any meaningful discussion on quality to take place, there must be a consensus, which led to the second deduction that quality is a matter of agreement, be it the definition, concepts, dimensions or any other thing related to it. These deductions then enabled the researcher to form the theoretical framework for the study, drawing from the literature on quality in Ghana and from the researcher's own experiences as someone who passed through the university education in Ghana. In what follows, the theoretical framework for this study is discussed in relation to the responses received for the second research question.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework, as pointed out, was underpinned by the conclusions in the literature review. The conclusion was that to have a meaningful discussion on a topic such as quality, which has no universally accepted definition, there has to be agreed parameters. Following the discussion on the challenges in defining what constitutes quality and the subsequent submission of the strategies identified as a guide to mitigate these challenges, certain deductions were made. It became apparent from the literature review that quality had multiple concepts. In addition, it was the contextual form of quality that made it difficult for any consensus to be reached on the definition. To resolve this contextuality, there had to be, first of all, an agreement on definition, concepts, dimensions or any other thing related to it. That being so, quality

may include a *measure of inputs, processes, outputs or learning outcomes* (Materu 2007:1).

In the context of Ghana, certain elements were identified from the existent literature as being the indicators of quality. As was mentioned in the literature review, education quality in Ghana is said to include learning objectives in specified knowledge, skills, attitudes and values; with its associated concepts defined as outputs, outcomes, process or inputs. This is supported by Ampiah (2010), who in his presentation at the Africa-Asia Experience Sharing Seminar, pointed out that the measurement of quality of education in Ghana has, predominantly, been based on indicators like resources, inputs and outcomes. These indicators, he explained, translates into quality being measured against stated objectives of lessons and curriculum goals; students' levels of achievement, ration of teachers to ration, provision of textbooks, equipment, school facilities and cognitive achievement.

On the basis of the above, the second research question was identified to assess the current quality assurance mechanisms in the participating universities and how they were monitored, using the factors identified in the existent literature as inputs, process, output and outcome, as in the Ghanaian context. These factors became the broad themes (as shown below) upon which the interview questions were designed.

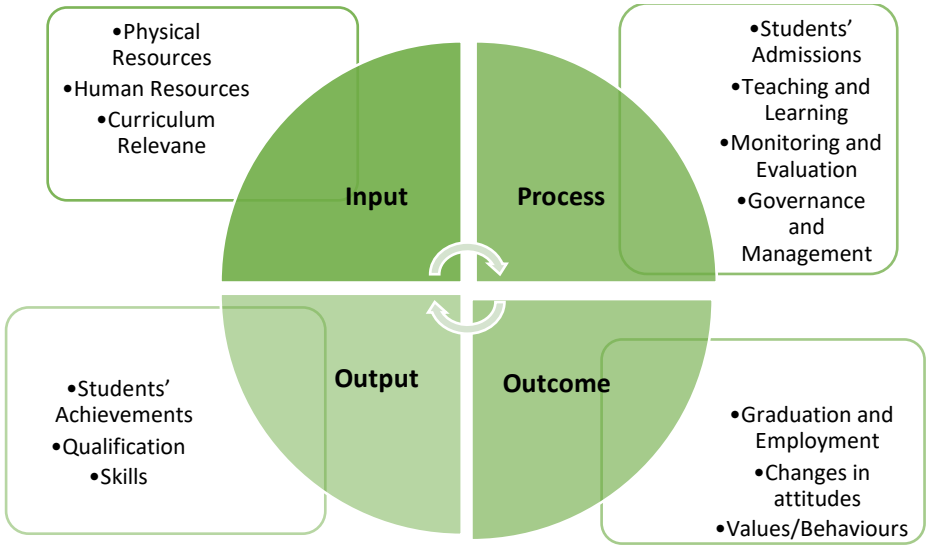


Figure 20 Theoretical Framework

Before proceeding to discuss, it will be necessary to recap the review on the four broad themes. The theoretical framework was significant to the study. Overall, it was contextual to Ghana as it captured the quality indicators discussed in the literature review to be the indicators relevant to Ghana. Central to the core of the theoretical framework was that the indicators were interactive. They work together to form quality. The implication is that they must be monitored together to give us the measure of quality. The indicators are also interrelated, as argued by Dare (2005), which implies the malfunction of one indicator can have an effect on other indicators. To this end, Owlia and Aspinwall (1997:528) argue that '*changing a variable in one direction (either increase or decrease) will inevitably lead a more and more change in the same direction".*

The results of the study showed a pattern that existed in all the participating universities. They focused mainly on Inputs and Process (teaching and learning and admission processes) in assuring quality and almost neglected the other two factors (Output and Outcome). The focus on inputs and process is consistent with the

literature review which argued that these were popular indicators and extensively used by professional bodies of accreditation and international agencies (Adam 1993). Not only was the focus on inputs and process consistent with the literature review, but so was the lack of data on Outputs and Outcomes. Adam (1993) argues further that Outcomes and Outputs are rather quite popular with policy makers. This argument, probably, explains why there was no sufficient data on Outcomes and Outputs. In spite of the argument by Adam (1993), it could be argued these are indicators that form part of IQA to give a holistic view of quality, hence the universities must put in measures to collate such data.

As mentioned, the universities had sufficient data on physical and human resources, students' admissions, teaching and learning, monitoring and evaluation, governance and curriculum. These indicators were monitored by both the universities and the regulatory body, NAB. However, the situation was not the same with data on Output and Outcomes. It became apparent that there was insufficient data on Output and Outcome, with some of the participants admitting that they would begin to monitor their Output and Outcomes, going forward. Hence, the universities could not provide enough and meaningful information about the destinations of their graduates, what impact or changes their education has had on them and their values and behaviours at their various destinations. With insufficient data on Output and Outcomes, it raises the question of whether indicators like employment and destination of students, changes in attitudes, values and behavior are being monitored to make the quality process complete. On the above account, the study can conclude that the results is contradictory to the knowledge in the literature review. In the literature review, a reference was then made to the Attributive Theory of Quality which stipulates that that

when assessing the quality of a phenomenon, in this case, higher education, certain 'necessary and sufficient' factors come into force because quality is not an independent entity. The necessary and sufficient factors include all the components needed for an institution to fulfil and protect its core values. In this instance, some of the components were physical and human resources, curriculum relevance, graduation, employment and attitudes. It was argued in the literature review that quality indicators are connected and, actually, the failure in one component affects the others. As mentioned, there was a total lack or insufficient data on Outcome and Output indicators. This has several ripple effects on the IQA process. The focus on only Inputs and Process means there is no monitoring of all the quality indicators which contradicts the literature review, specifically, students' achievements, skills, graduation and employment destinations, changes in attitudes and behaviours, and values. The implication of the results is that it is possible that there was no relation between the indicators within the theoretical framework (inputs, process, output and outcome) in the Ghanaian private higher education sector. In addition, if they are not monitoring all the quality indicators, then if there was a defect in one of them, it will go undetected with the likelihood of impacting on the other indicators. This finding contradicts the arguments in the literature review about the relationship between quality indicators. The quality cycle is such that the indicators are interrelated so a defect in one affects the other indicators. This means that the elements of quality do not stand in isolation. Rather, it is the interactive sum of the elements that work together to form quality This finding has significant implications for internal quality assurance in the private higher education sector, as it raises the question of whether quality assurance is effective. Against the background that components of quality must

work together to measure quality, it could be argued that quality is not assessed thoroughly and therefore quality assurance is not effective.

The IQA Implementation Process

In the review of literature, it was argued that the IQA process, which is a continuous process begins with an institution recognizing or establishing its goals and mission. It consists of four basic elements namely Institutional goals, Monitoring Instruments, Evaluation and Improving quality. In other words, Denning (1999) refers to the cycle as Plan, Do, Check and Action (P-D-C-A). It is instructive to state that all IQA must not follow the same procedure, however it was argued that the AUN-QA (2010) advises that there are some basic conditions that have to be fulfilled in developing an IQA process. The expectation is that the IQA system should encompass the P-D-C-A cycle and allow for the basic elements for monitoring, evaluation and improvement.

Institutional Goals

As a fundamental element in the IQA process, institutional goals were argued to be useful in the setting of parameters. As already established in the literature review, a consensus on the definition of quality is impossible due to its elusive and slippery nature. It was therefore useful for parameters to be set if we were to have any meaningful discussion on quality. Setting of an institutional goal was argued to be useful in helping the university to set its parameters for quality. As it was argued, not setting an institutional raises the question of what is there to monitor, evaluate and improve. The study established that each university had a stated goal and a mission statement. As argued in the literature review, the QA process translates into the overall goal of the institution, hence the need for the institution to have a clear stated goal as

part of the QA process. Overall, the responses highlighted a sense of spirituality, humanity and service to the world with an added focus on entrepreneurial excellence (pls refer to page 211-212). These were themes that were identified in the purpose of a university as argued in the literature review. The sense of entrepreneurship is what Varghese (2004) argues in the literature review that, has become the sought after in present times as a result of the rise in private universities which come with the charging of high fees.

Each university has processes in place to work towards achieving their goal. The data revealed two main themes namely spiritual/academic and entrepreneurial/academic. There was a general sense of humanity and service to the world with an added focus on imparting entrepreneurial knowledge to their students. There are two confirmations with regards to the literature review. First, the themes identified are in line with *Veblen's (1918 cited in Collini (2012) who was mentioned in the literature review to have argued that the place of a university has always been a corporation of care, while Varghese (2004) argued that universities had focus on being entrepreneurial after World War II mainly to help build their economies. According to him, this trend has become even more popular with the advent of private universities. Second,* with each university clearly stating their purpose or goal goes to satisfy the first step in an internal QA system thereby confirming the knowledge in the literature review However, it is instructive to state that having a stated goal doesn't automatically ensure an effective QA process. The entire activities of the university must be aligned to this goal.

Monitoring and Evaluation

In reviewing the literature, monitoring was highlighted to be an important step in the internal quality assurance process. To facilitate monitoring, the significance of data

collection was highlighted. As was mentioned, a key aspect of monitoring is data collection, to ensure that there is data integrity, which subsequently allows for monitoring. Data collection is therefore very important in the monitoring process and institutions must ensure there is data integrity, if monitoring is going to be effective. Evaluation, according to Thune 1998, is the institution's self-assessment process to ensure it is achieving its goals and mission and allows a plan for further development. It was therefore relevant to the study to assess how monitoring and evaluation were carried out at the participating universities.

On the question of how the universities monitored and evaluated their processes, the study found out that there was a wide range of instruments used which included peer reviews, students' evaluations, assessment questionnaires, periodic reporting and faculty inspections. It is instructive to mention here that these instruments were applied to processes like students' admissions, and teaching and learning. As was mentioned above, quality assurance at the participating universities focused mainly on Inputs and Processes, so although the results show that there is a system in place for monitoring and evaluation, this must be interpreted with caution as it does not apply to the other elements of quality. There was also an indication from the responses that data collation was poor. Hence, there was either insufficient data or none at all for some of the quality indicators. Outputs and outcomes of university education are very relevant to a country's development so it's crucial that data is collated on these indicators. Ultimately, monitoring and evaluation of Outputs and Outcomes enables the university to know whether it is achieving its institutional goals or not. The study can conclude based on the responses that monitoring and evaluation is partially done due to lack of data. This revelation does not support the arguments in the literature review and contradicts the information we know in the literature. The argument in the

literature was that each indicator is equally important and are connected to each other. A default in one has the potential to render the entire process ineffective. Potentially, the lack of a monitoring system that captures all the quality indicators would have a negative impact on the IQA implementation process.

Improving Quality

In the review of literature, it was argued that evaluation did not make sense if there were no actions to enhance the quality and to overcome the shortcomings (AUN-QA 2010). For this reason, it is logical to argue that improving quality is the final stage of the IQA process, which also makes the whole process and in particular the evaluation, an effective one.

In consequence, the study paid attention to if the universities had this final stage in their IQA process. The participating universities were asked to describe how they ensured their processes were effective. As discussed in the previous section, there was every indication that there was some form of monitoring and evaluation, although there was no comprehensive data collated on Output and Outcomes to allow monitoring and evaluation. Another issue the study found was that of improving quality. Apart from two of the universities which stated, categorically, that they made improvements, or they put in preventative measures when targets or objectives or processes did not achieve the desired goal, the rest of the universities did not indicate so. The emerging theme in the responses was that there was a plan in place, and it is implemented, however, the plan does not indicate the final stage of the IQA process to improve. As mentioned in the literature review, an internal QA process, fundamentally follows four major steps as explained by Denning's (1999) to consist of Plan, Do, Check and Act (P-D-C-A). Based on this, the universities were asked to explain how they ensured their processes were effective. It appeared the universities

used a variety of approaches. In addition, it appeared their main focus of monitoring and evaluation was on teaching and learning, and students' admissions where a range of measures like periodic students and peer reviews, students surveys, staff development training, QA committees and assessments questionnaires. These measures indicated that the universities had a Plan (P), and they implemented this plan (Do). However, the responses did not indicate that steps (Check) and (Act) were part of their QA process. The responses were, therefore, not consistent with the literature review. Here, again, the result raises questions on the effectiveness of the IQA process at the participating universities.

The Idea of Higher Education

There was a review of literature on the idea of higher education, which enabled the formation of the third research question. With no consensus on what constitute quality, in subsequence, it was argued that, perhaps, a look at the purpose of higher education could direct opinions on what quality was about. Some authors have argued that, given the challenges surrounding the definition of quality, it may be possible that revisiting on the purpose of higher education may help mitigate these challenges. Barnett (1992:15) argues: *'we cannot form secure ideas about the quality of higher education, unless we first have a reasonably clear conception of what might be included under the umbrella of 'higher education'.* The need to revisit the purpose of higher education has also come at a time when the programmes offered by universities have come under criticisms. As was previously mentioned, Collini (2012:39) argues that "*critics, reformers and governments have claimed that the studies carried on in universities are outdated, irrelevant, or in one word, useless, and that they need to be made to serve national needs more effectively and more directly – to become in other words, more useful."*

The review of the different schools of thoughts on the purpose of higher education established that the purpose of the university is to teach universal knowledge (Newman (1899) and seek the development of intellect; cultivation and care and extension of knowledge (Materu 2007). It emerged in the review that there were traditional and contemporary school of thoughts. A reference was made to some traditionalists like Newman and Veblen, who are of the view that higher education is a place where there is diversity in subjects offered; students benefit from community spirit; extension of knowledge, cultivation of and care of community's aspirations and ideals. Collini (2012) on the other hand, was of the view that due to the dynamics occurring in the higher sector which has brought about private higher education, society appears to have placed a greater burden on private universities to become economic power houses; and according to him, these expectations were far-fetched. In addition, the review of literature also established that the purpose of higher education was to provide a holistic education. The views of authors like Newman, Holmwood (2011) and Barnet (1992) summarised is the significance of the university to produce students who are of broader knowledge, morally decent, think critically and have social sensitivity. The inference made from the argument on holistic education was that there where the university offers a wider range of programmes, there is the benefit of student interaction and consulting each other so although it is not physically possible for a student to enrol in all subjects, there is the added benefit of a diverse community.

In the context of Ghana, NAB, defines a university as a tertiary institution that offers advanced instruction in several branches of learning and research. As was pointed out in the literature review, the mention of 'several branches' of learning

indicates an alignment with the argument made the authors mentioned above, in particular Newman's views. More so, Ampiah (2010) highlights that in Ghana, one of the factors used to measure the quality of education is the curriculum and its content. Despite these arguments, Collini (2012:13) adds that *"*although there seems to be a paradigm shift in the role of the university, the *experience of a student attending one of today's marketized, employment-oriented universities should still, in the least incarnate a set of 'aspirations and ideals' that go beyond any form or economic return*."

On account of the above arguments, the third research question was formulated as 'How relevant is the curriculum to the Ghanaian society?' The question required the universities to demonstrate the relevance of their curriculum and education to the Ghanaian society. The study, first, reviewed the programmes offered by the universities which revealed that 61% of the private universities in Ghana offered Business and IT related programmes. There was none or little attention paid to other areas of study like the engineering and science subjects. The findings of the study were therefore not consistent with the purpose of a university as a place that teaches several branches of learning. On this, Newman (see page 108) views the university as an assembly of learned men brought together by different intellectual interests, with the benefit of students interacting, respecting and consulting to assist each other, leading to the formation of a habit of mind, lasting for a lifetime. So even though, it is not physically possible for a student to enrol to do all subjects, there is the added benefit of the diverse community. This is the main purpose of a university in its treatment of students (Newman 1999:93). With the reliance on Business and IT related programmes, the universities are depriving the students the benefits of interacting with students from other fields of study. As argued by Newman's in the

literature review, a diverse community comes with an added benefit to the students. Ultimately, the university prepares the student to fit into any position with the skills set to master any subject with ease. In the current situation in the participating private universities, there is a clear contradiction to the purpose of a university as argued in the literature review. It is instructive to recognise here that some universities are specialist universities, however, none of the participating universities is known to be a specialist university.

The findings of the study, from another perspective, could be argued to be the Ghanaian society's ideals and aspirations, as argued by Veblen (1918 cited in Collini (2012) in the literature review. On this account, if the aspirations and ideas of the Ghanaian society is a mass production of IT and business graduates; or if one of the priority needs of the Ghanaian economy is IT and business graduates, then it could be argued the private universities are on the right path to fulfil this need. To make an informed choice of the ideals and aspirations of the Ghanaian society, it will be useful for the country to develop a 'balance scorecard' on the human resources needed to ensure the universities produce the required manpower for the future.

Regulatory System

In addition to the research questions, another theme that emerged was the effectiveness and challenges in the regulatory system, notably the National Accreditation Board (NAB). As described previously, NAB is the agency mandated by Law in Ghana to accredit, evaluate and monitor the private universities. It was therefore of particular interest to the study to enquire about NAB and its operations. It was necessary as the argument was that one of the effects of the rise in quality issues is a rise in QA agencies around the globe (www.inaqaahe.org – accessed 06/07/13). The situation is not different in Ghana. To support this, Mohamedbhai

(2008) argues that in SSA countries, the QA agencies have been established, mainly for regulatory purposes, especially with the rise of private universities, rather than for improving quality. It has been argued by Professor Jean-Pierre Ezin, Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology at the AUC, that due to inadequate staffing and lack of funding at most accreditation bodies in Africa, they are not able to carry out effective monitoring of the universities. To this end, the question to participants was for them to comment on the effectiveness of NAB. The results of the study presented responses from two differing angles. There was a 50/50 divide amongst the participants. There was a half of the participants who commented that NAB was effective and thorough with its visits, while the other half responded that NAB was not effective and they were not thorough with their visits and processes. Referring this outcome back to the literature review, the latter confirms what was reviewed that most QA agencies do not have the requisite resources to execute their mandate. Nonetheless, NAB has refuted these responses, commenting that the body is fully equipped to deliver its mandate, even though there were faced with some challenges (page 181-182).

The interview with the regulatory body also confirms the review in the literature that QA agencies in SSA countries have been established with the sole aim to regulate, rather than to improve quality. In the interview, it came to light that NAB would normally send out a questionnaire to the private universities to find out about their processes. The regulatory body would then, in turn, visit the universities to check that the responses in the questionnaire are really what is on the ground. This sounds like the universities tell NAB how they would like to operate as opposed to NAB issuing out how they should operate. The interviewee also commented that private universities are autonomous and so NAB cannot micro-manage them. The premise that private

universities are autonomous will always pose a challenge and restrict NAB in its dealings with the private universities. The interview also revealed how the self-financing state of the universities made NAB to be lenient with the private universities. NAB has what it calls fatal and non-fatal criteria so for instance, if a programme required two PhD and 2 master's degree holders to run, it would allow a university to run a programme even if it did not have the full staffing required but had only one PhD staff. It views this as non-fatal and also for the reason that the private universities are self-financing so they may not be able to pay for the two PhD holders required. This may sound like providing an enabling environment for the private universities to operate but, no doubt, it will also have its impact on the quality of teaching and research for the faculty. It is instructive to note here that the regulatory body states on its website that '*the department operates on the principle that quality is a culture that needs to be imbibed and lived by institutions rather than an imposition'. http://www.nab.gov.gh/2014-08-21-11-46-34 accessed 19/04/19.* The literature review did establish quality as a culture, however, seeing setting standards for universities to adhere to as imposition raises questions on the effectiveness of the regulatory body to improve quality standards – being that improving standards is also part of its mission.

Apart from shortage of staff, another interesting revelation was the source of staffing for NAB's operations. The interviewee commented that the staff who visits the private universities are not their permanent staff. These are lecturers from the private or public universities who are hired on temporary basis to run the checks on the private universities. Potentially, this raises the questions on conflict of interests. Indeed, an interviewee from one of private universities commented that sometimes one can see that the personal interest of these lecturer visitors do get in the way of their decision

making, which has also become a challenge for some of the private universities. For instance, if a private university has applied for a charter and it's being assessed by a lecturer from a university that has not chartered, personal interest sets in their decision making and you'll find that the university will be turned down. This has become a challenge in the private higher education sector.

There was also the issue of identical Business and IT programmes provided by the private universities and the long-term implication this has on the economy. It appeared this is going on for the same reason that private universities are self-financing and so they venture into programmes that do not require huge capital investment. The study questioned if the NCTE and NAB were aware of this and can confirm both bodies are aware of this trend. A review of the mandate of NCTE indicates that the body has the responsibility of:

> *Considering applications for the introduction of new programmes in tertiary institutions and advising on their relevance for national development.*

Again, it was interesting that NCTE, in one of its responses, stated thy did not have any direct dealings with the private universities. It raises concerns as to how they execute this mandate. It is obvious the regulatory body has challenges that bothers on its mandate and how it is executed. In addition, there is a potential conflict of interest between the two regulatory bodies. A further research on these challenges and their effect on quality in the private higher education sector and how the challenges can be resolved is needed sooner rather than later.

Quality Indicators

As it was established in the review of literature, quality is not a single entity that stands on its own. It is made up of certain components, which allows parameters to be set for quality assurance to be feasible. It was therefore relevant for the study to

enquire about the quality indicators used by both the universities and the regulatory body. Particularly, the study focused on whether there was a synthesis between the indicators used by both parties. As it was argued in the literature review, these components are inter-related and so a malfunction in one may lead to the malfunctioning of the others. Hence, it was really important that the components of quality are all working together to achieve quality.

In the study, comparing NAB's quality indicators with that of the universities indicate a number of differences. Whereas NAB focuses on processes at two levels (institutional and programme quality indicators), it appeared the universities mostly focused on programme quality indicators. There was only one university that commented that their quality indicators included policies and regulations, human resources, academic aids and development of facilities – which fall under NAB's institutional quality indicators.

It has already been established from the responses received for the second research question, that the participating universities are not focusing on all the components of quality. It appears the focus is on teaching and learning process. The responses received on quality indicator further supports the deductions made from the study, which is not in consistent with the literature review.

Private Universities in Ghana - Deficiencies in IQA Process

The above sections have discussed the various themes in the responses in relation to the research questions and conclusions have been drawn based on the responses. This section will synthesize the conclusions to enable the researcher to provide a QA model that reflects the current IQA process and the researcher introduced the new stages that reflect the challenges in the Ghanaian private higher education sector.

To recap the highlights of the discussion, it was established from the responses that the current QA processes in the participating universities were skewed towards teaching, learning and admission processes. As mentioned, it is likely that other indicators of quality like students' achievements, physical facilities, graduation and employment were not monitored and evaluated. This breaks the IQA cycle and can potentially affect the effectiveness of the IQA mechanisms. It was also established that monitoring and evaluation was partially done due to lack of data collection. It was apparent, as some of the universities were found wanting with regards to certain data. In particular, most of the universities could not provide data on their Outputs and Outcomes. They admitted they had no data on such indicators. Another highlight of the discussion was quality improvement. The study found out that there was none, or little attention paid to quality improvement. The QA processes as described by the universities focused on plan and implementation – improvement was hardly mentioned in their responses. Based on the above highlights, the current study can conclude that there is a greater awareness of the need for quality assurance. The QA culture is present in the universities. There is a plan and implementation. However, there is an insufficient action on data collection and quality improvement, which potentially makes QA process an incomplete and ineffective one. To enable the universities to improve on all the areas of quality, there has to be an effective data collection and a benchmarking culture for all the indicators to be captured to subsequently support monitoring and evaluation, benchmarking (if need be) and quality improvement. In this regard, the QA model as depicted below was designed with considerations given to the existing practices, the challenges and interventions needed to ensure that quality assurance is effective and thorough.

The figure below depicts the elements of the P-D-C-A cycle and IQA process as reviewed in the literature. It also depicts the current practices and contextual to the private higher education sector in Ghana, as it considers the deficiencies that emanated from the study. The three practices (highlighted in red) that appeared to be weak or non-existent in the existing practices at the participating universities were identified as data collection, benchmarking and improving quality. The figure also highlights the argument in the literature review that quality assurance indicators are interconnected rings which feed into each other. Therefore, a deficiency in one stage is likely to render the next stage ineffective and consequently render the entire process ineffective. The figure below depicts the interconnectivity between the stages, and it is important that private universities recognise the interconnected pieces of the IQA process.

Internal Quality Assurance Model

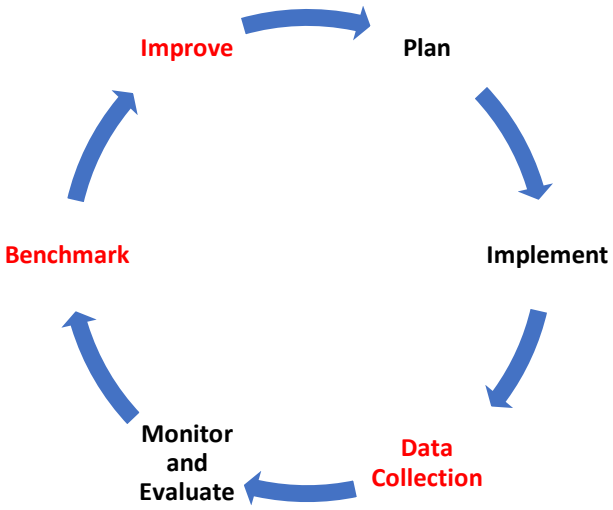


Figure 21 Internal Quality Assurance Model

Data Collection

The study established that the culture of data collection was not inherent amongst the universities. Data collection has been set aside as a level or stage in the IQA

process as the outcome of the study established the lack of data collection in the participating universities. Where data had been collated, it was not consistent, or it was not sufficient. The private universities must recognise the significance of data collection in the IQA process.

As discussed in the literature review, a key aspect of monitoring is data collection and vice-versa. The literature review established that there was a relationship between data collection and monitoring. A reference was made to Vroeijenstijn (1995), who argues that a good monitoring system is a necessity to facilitate the collection of data about the activities of the university. To ensure that there is data integrity, which subsequently allows for monitoring, data collection must be seen to be a part or a unit in the IQA process. In particular, where data collection is not an inherent culture or where there are no functionalities embedded in systems to allow an automatic and easy collation of data, the universities must set aside time in their IQA process for data collection.

Currently, with no data collection on some of the quality indicators that were used for this study, it raises questions on the effectiveness of the QA systems in the private universities. It also raises questions on how the universities are able to determine whether they are fulfilling their institutional goals. The universities must begin to put systems in place that are designed to collate data as a matter of course.

Benchmarking

It was apparent in the responses received that benchmarking was not an inherent part of the internal quality processes at the universities. The responses received indicated that the universities did well in planning, implement, monitor and evaluate even though they did not monitor and evaluate all the quality indicators. However, none of the participants made mention of benchmarking to see what other universities

were doing. Benchmarking as described in the literature review by Achim et all (1999) allows the university to learn from each other and share good practice. The private universities have the options of comparing performance between their campuses and sites for good practice. Most importantly, they could benefit from comparing the performances of their competitors or similar institutions, referred to as competitive or collaborative benchmarking, respectively. As argued by Kagonda and Marwa (2017) in their study of quality assurance practices in Kenya, higher education institutions can benefit from benchmarking with their peers who are ahead of them on specific parameters of quality. The outcome of the study, therefore, does not reflect the fundamentals of IQA as reviewed in the literature.

Improving Quality

It was evident in the responses received for the study that the final part of the IQA process, which is to improve quality, was not followed. The responses revealed there was more focus on planning, implementing and evaluation with little or no focus on final stage of the IQA process. This revelation contradicts the knowledge in the literature review. The significance of improving quality was highlighted in the literature review. It was argued that it was the final stage of the IQA process and it made the entire IQA process effective. However, the literature review noted that, in reality, much attention was given to all the other elements of the IQA process, with a relatively less attention given to using the results of assessments to achieve program improvements Soundararajan (2010). The outcome of the study confirms the argument made by Soundararajan (2010). It was argued in the literature review that without this stage of improving quality, the purpose of the IQA process was bound to be defeated. This is no way to suggest that the early stages of the IQA are not important. Indeed, they are and without them, there will be no final stage of improving quality.

The purpose of the IQA process is to improve quality. Hence, if the evaluation feedback is not acted upon, the purpose will not be achieved. This makes the improving quality stage a critical stage, but it's the early stages that give the data needed at the final stage. It was further established in the literature review that for the final stage to be effective, the institution must have the human resource capacity to effect the changes required to improve quality. The universities need a plan or a focus on the final stage of the process if quality is to be improved.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to achieve two main objectives. It sought to discuss the findings of the study in relation to the literature review. First, it sought to discuss whether the findings of the study represented the arguments in the literature review or otherwise. Second, the chapter sought to produce a QA model based on the findings. On the account of the discussions, this chapter has identified the confirmations and contradictions in the findings, vis-à-vis the existent literature. The findings from the study make some key contributions to the current literature, which are stated below.

The difficulties surrounding the definition of quality exists in Ghana, hence, there are varied views on what constitute quality in higher education. This outcome confirms the existent literature on quality assurance. There is a possibility that there is no synthesis between the indicators within the theoretical framework (inputs, process, output and outcome) in the Ghanaian private higher education sector. The study can conclude the QA mechanisms in the participating universities are not entirely thorough because some quality indicators are ignored in the process. This outcome contradicts the literature review. The implication is that quality assurance is not thorough or effective in the participating universities.

The current curriculum in the private universities is skewed towards IT and business-related subjects. This does not reflect the purpose of a university, as was reviewed in the literature. The implication, as mentioned, is the mass production of IT and Business graduates who may not absorbed by the job market. There is also the implication of a lack of human resource in other sectors of the economy like medicine, pharmacy, education and engineering.

The study also revealed the deficiencies that exist in the current IQA process being practiced at the participating private universities. The most obvious deficiencies were lack of data collection, benchmarking and improving quality which were embedded in the QA model redesigned to represent the private higher education sector in Ghana. The implication here is, again, the ineffectiveness of the IQA mechanisms at the universities. The lack of data collection, especially, is a fundamental deficiency that weakens the IQA system.

Based on the above outcome, the study can conclude that the current IQA mechanisms in the participating universities do not reflect the fundamentals of IQA as reviewed in the literature. In the following chapter, the contributions above shall be used to direct the researcher's recommendations, preceded by a summary of the study. Finally, the thesis will conclude.

Chapter Seven

Recommendations and Conclusion

"Quality Assurance can be a driver for institutions to achieve excellence in higher education. However, ensuring that the quality of educational programs meets local and international standards simultaneously has become a great challenge in many countries." (OECD & World Bank, 2007).

Introduction

This study set out to assess the quality assurance mechanisms in private universities in Ghana, following a surge in private universities in the last two decades. To this end, the preceding chapters have dealt with the emergence of private higher education in Ghana, reviewed the literature on quality assurance and assessed the mechanisms employed by some of the private universities to assure quality. This final chapter draws on the entire thesis and ties up all the theoretical and practical strands in order to bring the thesis to a conclusion.

The chapter will begin with a synopsis of the preceding chapters followed by a summary of the problem statement which will lead to the findings and themes identified from the data. The chapter will then focus on the key contributions made to the extant literature and their implications for practice and theory. The researcher will, next, present recommendations for future research and the limitations encountered during the study. Finally, the chapter will conclude after the researcher's recommendations.

Synopsis of the Study

The study began with the background to the study and the research context and problem which enabled the researcher to identify the research questions. The background to the study was that private higher education in sub-Saharan Africa and Ghana had seen a significant rise, such that it has generated much debate about the commodification of knowledge, abdication of state responsibility, exclusion of students from low socio-economic background, changing the ethos, curriculum and values of

higher education and the compromise of quality and standards (Morley, 2013). In Ghana, the key issues identified to potentially undermine the quality of private higher education were admission malpractices, shortage of faculty staff, inadequate physical infrastructure and financial constraints. Next, the study presented the development of higher education in Ghana and the myriad of challenges faced by the state universities which contributed to the emergence of private universities in the country. Here, there was a detailed chronology of development of higher from the colonial era to post-independence era.

The above was followed by an extensive review of the extant literature on quality assurance. This enabled the researcher to identify the research questions for the study. The chapter dealt with the chronological development of quality from medieval Europe to present day. Quality, which began as an integral part of craftmanship in medieval Europe in the 13th century evolved as mass production and industrialisation became the order of the day in the 20th century. The difficulty in defining quality was attributed to the slippery and elusive nature, multi-dimensional and dynamic concept. With this conclusion on the definition of quality, the first research question required participants to give a definition of quality. The chapter then explored internal quality assurance systems, which concluded that for IQA to be effective, it has to cover some fundamentals like plan, implement, check, benchmark and improvement. Following these lines of review, the second research question assessed the internal quality assurance mechanisms existing at the universities. The assessment was carried out using four broad themes namely Inputs, Process, Output and Outcomes, which was adapted from the work of Adams (1993) and was contextual in relation to quality in Ghana. The chapter concluded with a review of the idea of higher education. Notably, the ideas of Newman, Veblen, Collini and Barnet were reviewed.

The next chapter dealt with the methods and methodology identified by the researcher to be appropriate for the study. As referenced, Stern (1980) argues that qualitative methods are useful when one wants to explore into issues that little is known to help us acquire an understanding of the dynamics. In this regard, the methodology chosen was qualitative because private higher education is a new phenomenon in Ghana that needed to be explored and assessed to increase the Ghanaian society's knowledge and understanding of this new sector. As a new phenomenon which was studied in its natural settings, of which little was known with a view to interpret participants' perspectives, the study lent itself to multiple theoretical underpinnings namely, phenomenological, naturalistic and interpretive approaches, respectively.

Next, the responses received from participants were presented and analysed under the themes that guided the design of the interview and questionnaire. In chapter six, the responses were woven around the highlights in the literature review in a discussion which concluded with the key contributions made by the study.

In the sections that follow, the study will summarise the development of private higher education before presenting the highlights of the findings and discussions with a focus on the theoretical and practical implications of the study.

The Emergence of Private Higher Education in Ghana

For many sub-Saharan African countries, the period after their independence was an opportunity for them to invest heavily in higher education. As explained earlier in chapter two, most African countries saw this strategy as part of a national development program to alleviate poverty and create the highly skilled human resources needed to steer socio-economic and political developments. The effect was that the various

governments became the sole providers for higher education for a very long time. The case was no different for Ghana – the government shouldered the responsibility as the sole provider of tertiary education until the beginning of the 1990s, when the country experienced the emergence of private universities.

The emergence, as was discussed, came about as a result of government's inability to continue being the sole provider of higher education. Before the 1990s, governments across sub-Saharan Africa including Ghana began to experience slow economic growth due to high debts and poor international trade. The effect of this on higher education was a setback in government subventions, while enrolment, on the other hand, kept increasing. The demand for high education was on the rise but there were not enough facilities to accommodate the students. The state universities were over-stretched. It became apparent in the late 1980s that the government could no longer bear the responsibility of providing higher education alone. Following major policy measures to streamline higher education under a World Bank/Government of Ghana Project, the Tertiary Education Project was initiated to enhance the quality of tertiary education, after an era of prolonged under-funding and decline. The project involved calls on the private sector to venture into higher education. Subsequently, Ghana saw its first private university in 1995. This was followed by a remarkable growth over the last two decades which has resulted in over 80 registered private universities dotted across the country. This is a trend that has been identified in other sub-Saharan African countries (pls see figure 1) and it is expected that this growth will continue.

The rapid growth of private universities brought with it concerns among the general public. As a new phenomenon in Ghana, the sector is faced with challenges including

admission malpractices, shortage of faculty members, inadequate physical facilities, financial constraints among others. As was mentioned in chapter two, in a World Bank/UNESCO (2000:27) report the authors argue that “the expansion, in both public and private universities, has been unbridled, unplanned, and often ‘chaotic’, resulting in deterioration in average quality, continuing inter-regional, inter-country, and intra-country inequalities, and increased profit provision of higher education”.

In Ghana, along with this rapid growth of private universities, however, came the concerns about the quality of private higher education. Little was known about this phenomenon which indicated a need to understand the dynamics of private higher education and its position in the human resource and research development in the country. Notable amongst the concerns of the emergence was the compromise of the quality of education provided by the private universities. On account of this, a knowledge gap was identified which created the problem statement and consequently the purpose of the study was set. Given the problem stated, the purpose of the study was to assess the quality assurance mechanisms in private universities in Ghana with a view to develop an internal QA model, which is applicable to Ghana.

Findings and Themes

The findings from the interviews and questionnaires were analysed using the broad themes that were used to build the theoretical framework for the study. As mentioned in the previous chapters, there were four major themes namely Input, Process, Output and Outcome. Each of these themes was further broken down into sub-themes which were explored to enable the researcher to assess the quality assurance mechanisms at the universities. The findings revealed varied outcomes for each of the sub-themes, which are summarised in turn below in the proceeding paragraphs.

Physical Resources

The importance of physical facilities in education cannot be over-emphasised. It was established in the literature review that in Ghana, physical facilities were one of the quality indicators used in determining the quality of education provided.

The study has shown that six out of the eight participating universities satisfy the 11-point facilities listed in the minimum physical facilities requirement issued by the National Accreditation Board. That is to say, the facilities are present and there were steps by two of the universities to increase their facilities, when the researcher visited some campuses. The physical facilities were mostly lecture rooms and libraries. Some of the campuses were well laid out with larger and comfortable lecture rooms. It is instructive to note here that one of the characteristics of the private universities in Ghana is that the programmes they offer are predominantly in Business and I.T related courses, which require just lecture rooms. This was evident in the availability of mostly lecture rooms as opposed to laboratories or equipment required for other science or engineering courses. An interviewee explained that the Business and I.T related courses are not capital intensive so it's an easier option for the private universities. In terms of library facilities, the universities were noted to have invested heavily in electronic library resources for their students which is very useful.

However, an observation made by the researcher was that the condition of the facilities varied amongst the participating universities. The regulatory body requires the facilities to be, in quote: "*kept in a good state of repair and maintenance and shall be free from structural failures*." The researcher found out that some of the universities did not meet this condition. When the researcher visited some of the campuses, their building facilities were in a state of disrepair, some lecture rooms were cramped with students, hallways and corridors were narrow and dark due to poor ventilation. The

general ambience of some of the buildings did not present any suitability or comfort for studies. These conditions will have an impact on students' learning. As argued by Isa and Yusoff (2015), the adequacy and quality of physical facilities affect the morale and performance of students.

These conditions raise questions on the effectiveness of the regulatory body. The existence of physical facilities is not enough – they must be fit for purpose. The regulatory body, NAB, however, explains that private universities are self-financing with no support from the government, hence, if the short-fall or inadequacy in non-fatal, they Board allows the university to operate.

Human Resources

The relevance of human resources in higher education was established to be a crucial component in quality assurance. Authors Chowdhury & Habib (2012) mention that higher education provides the human resource for national development, while at the same time, human resources are inputs for higher education. The study therefore treated human resource as both an input and outcome indicator.

As an input, the study has shown that there is a higher percentage of lecturers which is beyond the minimum requirement set by the regulatory body. The regulatory body, NAB, requires 40% of an institution's academic to be lecturers. However, the study showed that all the participating universities had up to approximately 85% of their academic staff as lecturers (refer to page). This indicates that the universities fall short in the number of professors in their academic staff composition. In terms of qualification, the data obtained from the regulatory body captured a wider demography of all the private universities, which reflected a high of 67% of lecturers with MPhil qualifications and a low of 23% of lecturers with PhD qualification. Amongst the 67%

MPhil qualifications, only 26% have are MPhil Research qualifications. The shortfall of lecturers with PhD qualifications was also evident in the level of degrees offered by the private universities. The study has shown that the focus was on undergraduate and post-graduate taught courses. The universities do not have the human resource capacity to offer courses at the doctoral level. In a remark, an interviewee commented that it was simply due to lack of funds to recruit lecturers with PhD qualification. The main implication, as mentioned are the lack of qualified personnel to supervise research at both masters and doctoral level in the private sector. It also raises the question of the competence of lecturers employed in the private universities and the effect this could have on the calibre of graduates produced by the private universities. As mentioned, Akinyemi & Abiddin (2013) argue that because higher education is a machinery for development, its human resource input must be taken into greater consideration. Although, the regulatory body, NAB explains that this situation is only allowed in the private sector because the private universities are self-financing institutions, human resource is an input that the regulatory body cannot be lenient with. The regulatory body must disregard the self-financing state of the private universities and ensure they are robust in their accreditation process to get a competent human resource base for the private sector.

Curriculum Relevance

The idea of higher education assumed for this study is that of the university being a place that is designed for universal learning, and it is also a place designed to teach several branches of learning. The study has established that, contrary to this idea of higher education, the participating private universities were mainly focused on Business and IT related subjects. An interviewee explained that these courses did not require substantial capital, so the universities found it convenient and easy to venture.

The implications for this were discussed to be a high production of business and IT students who may not be absorbed by the markets. It also raises questions on the human resource need of Ghana – this trend will potentially lead to a shortage of human resources in other sectors of the economy in the long term, if not curtailed. The study on curriculum relevance was also extended to the content of the curriculum. This was on the premise that the universities are designed to provide a holistic education that develops character and intellect in order to produce all-rounded graduates who are capable of adjusting themselves in the society. The second finding indicated that all the eight participating universities offered compulsory subjects that built character and also developed social and ethical morals amongst the students. In this regard, the universities were fulfilling their role in providing not just academic education, but they were also interested in producing a holistic education.

Admissions

Admissions are a crucial part of a university's processes. As Owlia and Aspinwall (1997) argue, the reputation of the university begins at the point students are admitted into the university. To assess this, the study focused on students' admissions and the admissions process itself. The results of the investigation showed that all the universities' admissions were guided by the entry requirements issued by the regulatory body. Each university made a clear statement that they were guided by the requirements issued by NAB. However, there was an observation that one university had their own in-house guidelines for certain specific subjects like engineering, which was not found in the NAB guidelines. The regulatory body explained that their guideline is only a minimum to enter into a tertiary education and it is up to the university to go with the minimum or go above the minimum for specific subjects. The second finding was information on how each university processed their applications.

The study revealed different systems used by the universities, and there were no guidelines from NAB on what goes into the admission process.

The findings here suggest a possible admission inconsistency in the private higher education sector. Being that they are self-financing, this could lead to malpractices which have already been raised as a concern in the private higher education sector. As a sector that is still growing and developing, the sector would benefit from guidelines, especially when it comes to admissions, to ensure that there is consistency and fairness and the process is through. For the Ghanaian society to have confidence in private higher education and make degrees from private universities recognisable in Ghana and beyond, the regulatory body must be seen to be guiding the universities effectively.

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning as was pointed out by Fry, Ketteridge & Marshall 2009, is a fundamental aspect of the role of academic staff; and it cannot be carried out in a vacuum but rather it is carried out in accordance with the mission, vision, aspirations, ethos and values of the institution. The data collected highlighted the design and content; use of technology; support offered to students and how the universities ensured teaching and learning was effective.

The study has found that the universities engaged and communicated to their students in various ways using technology. These included lectures, seminars, assignments, examinations, presentations, reporting and group discussions. An interviewee explained that they were designing communicating methods that suited the students like the use of WhatsApp groups, as they noticed students read their WhatsApp messages than emails. The study also showed that the universities made

use of student evaluation and peer reviews to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Lecturers were held accountable to their learning objectives.

It was encouraging to note that the universities were taking steps to ensure teaching and learning were effective, and the use of student feedback was positive. Given that the feedback and peer reviews were acted upon, it will improve teaching and learning which will have an impact on the quality of graduates they produce.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The primary purpose of monitoring quality is to enhance quality and so an effective monitoring system is an integral part of the internal quality assurance process (Vroeijenstijn 1995). As a study that focused on internal quality assurance, this part of the study was significant, and it was necessary to make sure that all the participating universities had a quality assurance unit.

The main findings were linked to Denning's (1999) four major steps; Plan, Do, Check and Act (P-D-C-A) and the conclusion made from the responses was that the universities monitored and evaluated, however that is where it ends. Data is collated on some of their processes (Plan), then implemented (Do) but there was no indication of step (C) or those failures are acted upon (Act) to ensure a continuous process. In addition, the study noted similarities and differences in the approaches used by universities which included the use of assessment questionnaires, appraisal and peer reviews to periodically review the quality of lecturers and courses. The responses did not indicate a practice of benchmarking. Given that there are different approaches to quality management, it will be beneficial to the universities to practice benchmarking as one of the methods for improving quality.

Management and Governance

This section of the study focused on top hierarchy and how the universities were structured. It was also linked to institutional goals which is the first stage of the IQA process. There was a need for this link to be made as it gives focus to the management and governance of the universities.

The most obvious finding to emerge in the responses were two themes in the goals of the institutions. The goals of the universities were either a combination of spiritual/academic for some of them and entrepreneurial/academic for others, with five out of eight universities associated with the latter. The focus on entrepreneurial, according to Varghese (2004), has become more relevant in this era as a result of the rise in private universities, which also comes with the charging of fees. Varghese (2004) explains further, with the charging of fees, parents and students expect some form of materialistic returns from university education. The focus on entrepreneurial reflects the kind of programmes being offered by the private universities in Ghana. Nonetheless, the repositioning of the idea of a university does not appeal to some authors who are of the view that this new role of the university as economic power houses is far-fetched Collini (2012).

Outputs

To assess the outputs of private higher education, the study, as described in the theoretical framework focused on changes in students' achievement, completion rates, value of certification and skills. The researcher observed there was insufficient data for this indicator. Relatively, the data available was not as rich as data collected for Inputs and Process. Nonetheless, the respondents were positive about the achievements of the few students they were aware of. Although, they had no system in place to collect such data, they commented that the few students they were aware

of were doing well in their fields of employment. In relation to skills offered to students, the study has established that apart from one university which admitted they did not offer any set skills, five of the universities were very positive about the various support they offered to their students in the form of internships, experience placements, tailor-made support to suit different industry clientele, careers services, career fairs, CV and interview clinics. The study concluded that the lack of data on Output raises questions about the effectiveness of the QA mechanisms, as not all the indicators are monitored to ensure they were all working.

Outcomes

Outcomes, as explained is the long-term effect of higher education. Specifically, outcomes focus on employments after graduation, changes in attitudes, values and behavior of students in society. The observation was that there was not much data collected on the destination of students. The universities who collected such data admitted it was on a very small scale. The others admitted this was an area they needed to improve upon and would take the necessary steps to rectify it. From the data that was made available to the researcher, the overall response was that there was that apart from a current national graduate unemployment, students faced the challenge of lack of experience required to gain employment. There was also a lack of funding avenue for graduates who want to start their own businesses.

It was also relevant to the study to assess the changes in behavior and attitudes of students, given that the study is underpinned by the idea of university to be a place where students gain a holistic education and not just an academic education. In response to this, four of the universities confirmed that they embedded programs with specific content such as Mentorship, integration of faith and learning; support students on social and moral values. Overall, the responses indicated two themes where were

the use of of seminars/workshops and personal development courses for students at PU4 and PU6 and a focus on the use of religion and Christianity, which reflects the mission statements of these universities.

This chapter has so far presented a synopsis of the preceding chapters which was followed by a review of the findings and themes that emerged from the data collected from the study. It is now necessary to outline the discussions that highlight the key contributions the study has made to the current knowledge on private higher education in Ghana. In what follows, the continuing sections will present the key contributions made to the highlights in the literature review which either confirmed or contradicted the existent literature.

Issues on Quality Assurance in Ghana

As already mentioned in chapter one, central to the entire study is the assessment of quality assurance mechanisms in private universities in Ghana. However, to do this assessment, the study had to explore the meaning of quality and the purpose of higher education which helped to form the theoretical framework for the study. The framework was then used to assess the Internal Quality Assurance process at the universities. The study extends our knowledge in several ways and in the proceeding sections, the sections will outline the revelations that emerged in relation to quality, purpose of higher education and the IQA implementation process.

Quality

Quality is an increasingly important area in higher education. In Ghana, quality has grown in importance in light of the recent emergence of private higher education. Nonetheless, it remains that the debate on the definition of quality continues. Amidst the arguments in the literature review, there were two deductions inferred to make the discussion on quality meaningful. First, what constitutes quality could be agreed upon,

which means quality is context-bound. The decision as to what is quality can be agreed upon at the individual, institutional or national level. Quality, therefore, is a matter of agreement, be it the definition, concepts, dimensions or any other thing related to it. Second, quality is not a single entity. As Afshar (1990) pointed out in the literature review, misconstruing quality as an independent entity has been the fundamental cause of the challenges surrounding the definition of quality. In this view, it could be argued that quality is made up of individual indicators embedded in its entirety to form quality. It is multi-dimensional and again, what the dimensions are is a matter of agreement, as there is no definition of quality. The literature also established the dependency and relationship between the dimensions. The dimensions must function together to form quality. As was highlighted, Dare (2005) argues that these dimensions are inter-related so a defect in one of them has the ability to cause a malfunction in the other dimensions.

The study has confirmed the current knowledge in the literature review that there is no universal definition for quality. There was no agreed definition found in the Ghanaian higher education literature. The respondents, including the regulatory bodies did not have one definition for quality. As pointed out in the Analysis chapter, the responses received indicated three themes about quality. Some of the respondents thought of quality as a process, others thought of quality as an outcome, while others thought of quality as an indication of the presence of facilities at the university. A number of authors have made attempts to define quality, as mentioned in the literature review and together with this study, it has confirmed the current knowledge in the literature that there is no universally accepted definition of quality.

Higher Education in Ghana

According to Barnett (1992), we must have a reasonable clear conception of what higher education is before we could secure our ideas the quality of higher education In other words, the idea of higher education is connected to quality in the sense that, if perhaps, the purpose of higher education is established, then it may lead to a meaningful discussion on what constitutes quality. An extract from an interviewee's response buttresses this view. In the response, the interviewee noted that education exists to serve a certain purpose or outcome, so if it achieves that outcome, then we can say quality is good. In addition, the literature review established that quality does not exist in isolation but in relation to a phenomenon which in this case is higher education. It was therefore necessary to review the idea of higher education as part of the study and more so in the context of Ghana.

Similar to the definition of quality, a number of authors have varied views on the purpose of higher education. The regulatory body NAB defines a university as a place designed for advanced learning and research in several branches of learning. The mention of 'several branches of learning' as mentioned in the literature review is in line with the views of (Newman 1899, Veblen 1918, Collini 2012, Holmwood 2011) as discussed in the study. The deductions from the literature review were that assuming a university is not a specialist university, then it must not restrict itself to a particular area of study or give undue prominence to certain subjects to the neglect of other subjects. Rather, it must lend itself to teach all subjects (purist to contemporary) to ensure a holistic education for its students. As indicated, the study acknowledges that some universities may be specialist universities, however, a review of the goals and missions of the eight universities in our case study did not suggest that they were specialist universities. Contrary to the literature, the study revealed that a staggering

61% of the private universities focused mainly on Business and IT subjects. The study also confirmed lack of funding as the main reasons the private universities are not venturing into other subject areas as the sciences and engineering. The trend comes with the obvious implication already mentioned as the mass production of IT and Business graduates who may not all be absorbed by the market, thereby adding to unemployment numbers. There are also long-term effects for the economy such as a dire lack of human resource and research in other sectors. Research is what enables a society to find solutions to its socio-economic issues so if a high number of private universities are focusing their resources on only Business and IT, then potentially there will be no research in other sectors of the economy.

On the other the above trend may be viewed as the universities merely responding to society's ideals and aspirations, however, where there is a 61% of private universities focusing on Business and IT related courses, that raises concerns and could not be viewed simply as universities responding to society's needs. Ultimately, this is a trend that requires a strategic action at the national level. The Ghanaian society needs to have a debate on what the economy needs in terms of manpower. Interestingly, the study also found that the regulatory bodies and the universities themselves are aware that they are providing identical business and IT programmes.

The Perennial Problems of IQA in Ghana

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study was how the universities assured quality internally. The findings enhance our knowledge on the quality assurance mechanisms used by these private universities. As a study that focused on internal quality assurance, this part of the study was particularly significant. Returning briefly to the review of IQA in the literature, the conclusion was that the fundamental activities in an IQA process involves planning, doing checking and acting.

The implementation of the process also consists of the university, first of all, setting an institutional goal to give direction, monitoring and evaluation; and then benchmarking to improve quality.

The data received were not entirely consistent with the review in the literature. From the data presented in the analysis chapter, the universities were doing well in parts of the process than others. For instance, the study confirmed that all the institutions had a mission or goal which satisfies the first stage of the IQA implementation process. The study also found out that although monitoring and evaluation were done, they were not carried out on all the quality indicators. The major weaknesses identified in the IQA implementation process, as explained in the previous chapter, were the lack of data collection, the non-existence of benchmarking and improving quality. The responses received did not indicate the practice of these three stages. The implications as discussed are the likelihood that all the quality indicators are not monitored and evaluated especially indicators that fall under Outputs and Outcomes. A further implication is if any of these indicators are malfunctioned, it is likely to go unnoticed and no improvement will be made, which will render the entire quality cycle ineffective. The absence of benchmarking as part of the quality assurance also implies that the universities are not benefiting from a diverse sector with different ideas and approaches to assuring quality. Another significant stage which was not obvious in the data collected was the final stage of any QA process which is Improving Quality. There were indications that the universities collected data on physical and human resources, curriculum, admissions and teaching and learning for monitoring and evaluation purposes. There was an indication that the universities used various self-evaluation tools which included students' feedback and peer reviews. However, there was no indication that they acted upon the feedback received.

Without a robust system to collect data, what would the universities be monitoring and evaluating? Again, without acting on the feedback, how can quality be improved. Potentially, these situations render the entire quality assurance process ineffective.

Perceptions of the Regulatory System

The regulatory system was equally an essential part of the study as the researcher believed the current quality structures at the universities would somehow be underpinned by how effective the regulatory system. In other words, the private universities can only do what the regulatory system permits them to do. It was also an opportunity to listen to both sides of the story to enhance the researcher's understanding of the dynamics of the private higher education sector. The study has established that the regulatory body is faced with challenges that impedes its ability to execute its mandate fully.

First, there is the issue of NAB viewing the private universities as being autonomous due to their self-financing state. It appeared this view inhibits NAB in many ways. It makes NAB lenient as it turns to bend some of its rules. It also appeared from the study that NAB does not want to impose on the private universities for this same reason. The private higher education sector, although, has been around for more than a decade still would require guidance to ensure quality standards are not compromised. Their self-financing state is the more reason NAB must take a serious stance in issuing robust guidelines for them to adhere to. The approach taken by NAB is almost like a laissez-faire attitude and this is self-defeating for the regulatory body. There is the need for the mandate of NAB to be reviewed to allow it more power to execute its mandate of regulating and improving standards.

Another important finding from the study was the lack of staff and where NAB sources its staffing from. As mentioned, one interviewee commented that the use of lecturers from the private sector to assess quality in the private universities creates conflict of interests. It does not allow objective reasons to be made. This makes the lack of staffing an important issue that must be dealt with at the national level. It raises the question of where must NAB source its staff from? Does NAB need permanent staff to do the checks for them?

Another highlight of the study was the focus of the private universities on Business and IT related programmes. This was also for the reason that private universities are self-financing and so do not have the capital required to venture into sciences and engineering subjects. Although, the reason seems tangible, NAB must not lose sight of the potential effect this has on the economy. As a country, the socio-economic issues are not just business and IT related and so this trend in the private sector need urgent attention.

A final revelation from the study was about the relationship between the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the National Accreditation Board (NAB). As already mentioned, one of the functions of NCTE as provided in Section 2(1) of Act 454 is, in quote:

(a)" to advise the Minister on the development of institutions of tertiary education in Ghana".

It was, therefore, interesting to note in a response from NCTE that suggested the opposite of the above function. In a response to the question requiring NCTE to comment on the quality of education provided by the private universities, their response was that:

Currently, the NCTE does not monitor and evaluate the quality of education in Private Universities. Our oversight responsibilities cover tertiary education institutions that receive monthly subventions from government…. The NCTE would not be in position to rate the quality of education provided by Private Universities due to reason indicated.

As a body that has an oversight responsibility to advise the government on the development of tertiary institutions, one would expect that it would be able to comment or have a knowledge of developments in the private higher education sector even if it did not have a direct responsibility in the sector. There was also a possibility of an overlap between the functions of the two bodies, as the reporting lines were not distinct. It will be useful for the ambiguity of roles to be reviewed by the government and made distinctively clear strengthen the relevance of both bodies and also empower NAB, especially, in the performance of its roles.

It is impressive to note that as at the time of completing my thesis, the government of Ghana had announced a merger between the two bodies due to overlapping roles. In a statement:

> *The Ministry of Education has announced that it will merge the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the National Accreditation Board (NAB). This the ministry said, has become necessary due to the overlapping functions of the two regulatory bodies in the educational sector.*
> Source: https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/NCTE-NAB-to-be-merged-to-end-overlapping-roles-755546 - Accessed 16/02/2020

Implications for Theory

The rise in quality issues has resulted in different theories and debates on quality assurance and the idea of higher education. The goal of this section is to present the evidence that supports or contradicts the theories discussed in the study. Notably, this study is underpinned by the Attributive Theory of Quality, Newman's idea of higher education and the IQA implementation process which have informed the discussions and direction of the study. The study contributes to our knowledge by making three noteworthy contributions in these three directions, which have theoretical implications.

The Attributive Theory of Quality presupposes that quality is formed of factors that are interactive and depend on each other to function. In the context of this study, it raised the question of what attributes were necessary to allow a comprehensive quality assessment, which was very fundamental to this research. With reference to Ghana, four broad themes named as Inputs, Process, Output and Outcome, were identified from the literature to be the attributes of quality, which were then used to assess the quality assurance mechanisms in Ghana. The Attributive Theory of Quality makes it clear that quality is not an independent single entity. It is made up of dimensions or attributes which must interact with each other to form quality. However, the study informed us that not all the attributes of quality are captured and assured in the participating universities. All the universities collect data and monitor their human and physical resources, curriculum relevance, teaching methods, governance and management, while they neglect other attributes like qualifications, skills set, destination of their graduates, changes in behaviour, values and morals. If no data is collected on some of the attributes, it raises the question of whether they are monitored. The study adds substantially to our knowledge of the possible weakness of the quality assurance mechanisms in the participating universities.

The next theory that influenced the study was Newman's idea of higher education. To enable a meaningful discussion on quality, Barnet (1992) points out that perhaps a discussion on the purpose of higher education could give more meaning to quality. To this end, this study sought to have an in-depth discussion on several school of thoughts on the idea of higher education, but one applicable school of thought that informed the study was Newman's idea of higher education. Newman's idea of higher education is one of giving students the opportunity to study in an environment that offer several branches of learning. According to Newman, there is the added benefit

of a diverse community even though students will not be able to enrol in all the several branches of learning. This allows the universities to produce all-rounded students who can fit into any part of the society. Against this background, the study explored the relevance of the curriculum to the Ghanaian society. The outcome of the study, however, contradicts Newman's idea of a university as a place that offers several branches of learning. The study recognises that some universities are specialist universities but that is not the case of the participating universities. The study adds to the growing body of literature on how skewed the programmes offered by the private universities are and the potential effect on the country's human resource in the long term, if no policy directive is put in place to guide the private universities.

Another contribution with a theoretical implication is how the study extends our knowledge on the implementation of the IQA process in the participating universities. The study referred to research by several authors but the applicable theory that informed the study was the IQA implementation process by Vroeijensijin (1995) and Inglis (2005). The authors identify the fundamental stages in the IQA process to include institutional goals, monitoring instruments, evaluation, improving quality (Vroeijensijin 1995) and benchmarking (Inglis 2005). However, as mentioned, the researcher identified that the current practices at the universities were not consistent to the theories. Specifically, there was a lack of data collection, benchmarking and improving quality stages in the current practices. These stages were not given equal prominence to make the system effective. With this revelation, the study has made a significant contribution by modelling an IQA Process that takes into consideration the applicable theories and the weaknesses identified in the practices at the participating universities.

Implications for Policy

Higher education, as described by Sanyal (1998) is an impetus for knowledge creation and socio-economic development. It is universally recognised as a key contributor to the long-term socio-economic development of a country. It is against this background that the emergence of private higher education in Ghana was welcomed by both the government and the people of Ghana, at a time when the state universities could no longer cope with the demand for higher education. Since its emergence, there has been increased access to higher education. A statistical report by NAB, Tertiary Education Statistics (2016) revealed that enrolment of students in the private universities increased consistently between 2011 and 2016 academic years. It is no doubt that private higher education is playing a part in educating the youth of Ghana. However, the sector is not devoid of challenges.

While access has been increased over the years, this study has shown that quality and curriculum relevance appear to have been compromised. The purpose of this study was to assess the quality assurance mechanisms with a view to recommend a model to improve quality standards in the sector. To do this, the study further explored the meaning of quality and the purpose of higher to make quality meaningful and also decide on a framework for the interviews and questionnaire. The study also explored the operations of the regulatory body, NAB. The findings of the study have important implications for future practice and policy which will be presented in the proceeding paragraphs.

The study established that there was no universal definition of quality in the higher education sector of Ghana. Prior to this in the literature review, the study established that one of the ways to deal with the slippery and elusive nature of quality which has made it difficult for society to find a definition was to agree to set parameters. To this

end, there must be a debate amongst stakeholders on what constitute quality in the Ghanaian context. There must be a debate that answers questions like 'What is quality in the Ghanaian context? What outcome would we like higher education to achieve? A discussion around these questions will be the beginning of a meaningful direction to defining quality in Ghana. The debate will help establish what the stakeholders would like to use as quality indicators for the universities. In the study, it became apparent that there was no data collected on some of the indicators in the study's framework. It appeared some of the universities had little or no data at all on some of the indicators, which they admitted they needed to do more in the collection of data. The onus is on the National Accreditation Board to lead a discussion with stakeholders on what the sector recognises as quality. For the discussion on quality to be meaningful, there is therefore a definite need for the country to have a debate on what constitutes quality in the Ghanaian context and for parameters to be agreed.

An important revelation with a practical implication is the quality assurance mechanisms used by the participants. There were three important stages that needed to be critically looked at by the universities and embedded in the current QA systems existing at the universities – data collection, benchmarking and improving quality. To effectively monitor and evaluate a system requires data, therefore the lack of data collection has thrown up questions into the effectiveness of quality assurance in the private universities. The higher education sector is a diverse one with both state and private universities. This is a demography that has a rich knowledge resource which can be shared – the private universities can benefit greatly from benchmarking if they were to work collaboratively with each other. The private higher education sector could benefit from a higher education quality network of all the private universities where there is a balance scoreboard that collects data on key performance indicators. This

network would also be a source of quality training initiatives and recommendations for the universities. Another important benefit of this network is that it will facilitate benchmarking amongst the universities which will improve quality standards. Kagondu and Marwa (2017) argue that benchmarking will leverage the universities' standing on the quality spectrum which is an essential part of quality management. The network will also be a source for creating and collecting valuable data which will allow effective monitoring and evaluation to be carried out and improvement made.

Another important revelation that has an implication for policy was the relevance of the curriculum provided by the private universities. As indicated in the previous chapters, there is a rather larger focus on identical business and IT related courses by the private universities. As explained in the previous chapter, unless the university is a specialist university, then the act of giving undue prominence to certain subjects defeats the whole purpose of a university. The university, as was reviewed in the literature exists to provide both purist and contemporary subjects which comes with a benefit of a diverse community for the students. In the case of Ghana, the major reason for private universities not being able to venture into other subject areas is the lack of funding. The country needs business and IT graduates, but so does it need graduates in other subject areas. The study found out that both NAB an NCTE are aware of the influx of private universities that focus mainly of IT and business subjects due to lack of funds. A key policy priority for the two bodies should therefore be to have long term plan that develops targeted interventions aimed at creating an enabling environment to encourage existing and prospective private universities to consider providing other equally important subjects. Another practical approach to ensure that the private universities are providing graduates needed for the country's manpower need is for

private universities to work collaboratively with employers to design some of the programmes they offer.

As was pointed out in chapter five, the research sought the input of the regulatory body, NAB, although the main focus of the study was to assess the QA mechanisms of private universities. Whilst this study was not about NAB, the findings from NAB suggest that the self-financing state of the private universities appears to weaken the position of NAB and its capabilities in effectively regulating and improving standards in the sector. There were instances in the interview that the interviewee made reference to the autonomy and self-financing state of the private universities to be the reasons the regulatory body appeared to be lenient. The interviewee, however, commented that they would not do the same or that particular situation will not be allowed in the state universities. In addition to this, the study has also mentioned that NAB uses lecturers from both private and state universities to carry out its operations and this can often cause a conflict of interest as expressed by an interviewee. These findings suggest several courses of action at the national level to strengthen NAB's position. A first and practical approach in dealing with this is for NAB to overlook the self-financing status of the private universities and assume a position of the regulator that they are meant to be. Otherwise, it can potentially breed inconsistencies and mediocrity in the sector. The National Accreditation Board must be the first to defend its mandate without fear or favour, as it is fully funded by the state and is independent of the private universities. The use of lecturers from the private universities to carry out NAB's duties must be looked into, critically to ensure there are no compromises and the lecturers have fully laid down procedure to follow to enable them to make independent decisions.

How the study supports and builds the literature

Within the literature, the discussions that were directly linked to the theoretical framework and directed the focus of the study were the definition of quality; the Attributive Theory of Quality and the Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) process. The outcome of the study supports and builds on these as discussed below.

In the literature review, Schindler et al (2015) argues that the two strategies that could serve as a guide to defining quality are for institutions to have a broad definition of their missions and the second strategy is for institutions to identify which indicators will be used to measure the expected inputs and outputs. The participating universities have their missions explicitly stated but because there is no definition of quality, it begets the question of how quality is assured. This was evidenced in the responses received from participants when they were asked to define quality. As noted in chapter six, there were various responses which revealed three themes – Outcomes, Culture and Facilities. The responses, therefore, indicated a divide in the viewpoints of the participants – a situation which reflects the literature review and could potentially impinge on the effectiveness in the quality assurance mechanisms at the participating universities. Based on the discussions, the study addressed this need by arguing that to make the discussion on quality meaningful, there had to be parameters agreed and set by stakeholders at the national level. It is recommended that the National Accreditation Board engages stakeholders with the aim of arriving at a context-based definition of quality in Ghana.

As already mentioned, the study adapted a theoretical framework underpinned by the Attributive Theory of Quality, which presents quality as multiple concepts as was

discussed in the literature review. This allowed me to use quality indicators to assess the quality assurance mechanisms at the private universities, in line with the literature. The Ghanaian literature on quality and responses received from the participants supports the literature in that the study found that in Ghana, quality was viewed as depending on multiple indicators such as inputs and processes. In the literature review, Sarrico et al (2010:40) argue that: "*the multidimensional character of quality is related to it encompassing different higher education dimensions, namely 'the quality of inputs, outputs and processes, which have to be combined with the demands put forward by students, universities and society each time one intends to assess quality*." However, the study revealed that the focus of the universities was mainly on inputs and processes. To address this need, the study, developed a theoretical framework to include outputs and outcomes which were found to be uncommon in the private universities.

Another highlight of the discussion in the literature review is the Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) process. The study explored how the Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) process was implemented and Mishra (2006) argues that the P-D-C-A (Plan-Do-Act-Check) depicts a fundamental cycle that should occur in all models of quality assurance, and surely applicable to higher education institutions to allow for the basic elements for monitoring, evaluation, benchmarking, and improvement. As noted in chapter six, the responses support the literature to a certain degree. There were gaps that the study identified to be missing - the universities had a Plan (P), and they implemented this plan (Do). However, the responses did not indicate that the steps (Check) and (Act) were part of their QA process. The result, therefore, raises questions on the effectiveness of the IQA process at the participating universities. Another

important dimension of the IQA discussed was the interconnectivity between the stages in the IQA process. To build further on and address this need, the study developed the IQA model that captures the deficiencies that were found in current practices at the universities and highlights the need for private universities to recognise the interconnected pieces of the IQA process.

In conclusion, the existing conditions in the private higher education sector in Ghana fail to address the lack of consensus on the definition of quality; the multidimensional nature of quality and the inclusion of the fundamentals of the IQA process. The study has sought to address these challenges and filled the gaps that were identified.

Limitations

The findings of this study are subject to some limitations due to lack of resources, the researcher's background and lack of data.

First, the study was limited to only eight universities due to lack of resources. The researcher interviewed only the quality assurance leads of the universities but had to use questionnaires for some of the universities as it was not possible to travel to all the universities.

Second, being the sole instrument and interviewer, a Ghanaian who has had her university education in Ghana, it is possible that my personal biases and prior knowledge about the system and certain practices in Ghana may have influenced my interpretations and analysis of the findings.

Third, the study suffered from lack of data for Outputs and Outcomes of the education provided as the universities were found wanting. The universities either had

little or no data at all and admitted they did not collect data on those indicators. This has been included in the recommendations of the study.

Finally, there was also the unwillingness of some of the universities to partake in the study which contributed to the researcher focusing on only eight universities, instead of the original ten universities that the researcher selected.

Recommendations for further research

The main objective of this study was to assess the quality assurance mechanisms in private universities to enhance our knowledge on how quality is assured, given that private higher education is a new phenomenon in Ghana. There currently 81 private universities in Ghana and the study focused on eight universities due to high cost involved and resource restraint in including all the private universities. However, the findings from the study have raised a lot of questions that need to be investigated on a larger scale than the current study. It is recommended that a further research that will include both private and state universities is carried out to give a broader perspective of how quality is assured and improved in the sector. It will also increase knowledge and the confidence the Ghanaian society have in private higher education.

The study set some criteria in the selection of samples for the study. These were that the university must a quality assurance unit with a lead officer and the university must be at least ten years of age. These criteria were used to ensure there was data available and the structures exist to make data collection possible. As much as including more universities sounds reasonable, it is recommended that a future research also ensures that the sample is selected is based on a criterion that captures the universities that have the needed mechanisms to be assessed. With respect to the regulatory body NAB, a research with a greater focus on the extent of its mandate

would be useful. Essentially, it is recommended that NAB is more empowered to certify internal quality assurance systems at the universities. As a sector which is still being developed, this would direct institutions towards consistency and improvement, in addition to accountability. It is also highly recommended that the roles of NCTE and NAB are reviewed to remove the overlap and ambiguity in the roles. This will further empower NAB to perform its duties and reporting lines will be clear as to who does what. NCTE must also be abreast with developments in the private higher education sector as private universities are part of the tertiary sector. This will ensure that the private sector is also working towards the national agenda and not on a different tangent.

The study also recommends that once universities start to collect data on their outputs and outcomes, a further study is carried out which focuses on assessing these indicators.

Conclusion

Private higher education in Ghana has grown rapidly since its emergence in the early 1980s following a decline in government expenditure on higher education and the subsequent calls on the private sector to venture into the higher education sector. As mentioned in chapter one, Ghana is experiencing the words of then Secretary-General of the Association of African Universities (AUU), Professor Olugbemiro Jegede, who in 2012 stated that in five years, Africa could have more private universities that state-owned universities. Ghana, currently, has 81 private universities and 10 public universities. As much as the emergence was beneficial and was welcome by Ghanaians, naturally, there was a concern of the compromise of quality standards. This study was therefore designed to investigate the quality assurance

mechanisms existing at some of the private universities with a view to produce a model that will strengthen the current systems existing at the universities.

Having explored the quality assurance mechanisms in eight of the private universities and the regulatory bodies NAB and NCTE, the findings of the study add to the growing body of literature on private higher education in Ghana. The study has demonstrated that the private universities need to improve their data collection activity, make the conscious effort to implement quality improvement from feedback and form the habit of benchmarking to aid in their quality improvement actions.

The study also demonstrated there was a dire need of PhD holders in the private higher education sector to increase the research capacities of the country. The private higher education sector is a diverse community and with the lack of benchmarking, the universities are not taking advantage of sharing quality improvement ideas. As recommended, a higher education quality network is needed to serve as a database and point of reference for benchmarking, training, support and solutions that are beneficial to the universities.

In addition to the above, the study established that there was a dire need for a policy direction in the curriculum provided by the private universities. This is to ensure they are targeted at the needs of the job market rather than the current situation where the universities are providing identical Business and IT related subjects purely because it is convenient and affordable for them. In the wider higher education sector, there is a need for policy direction in the discourse on what constitutes quality in the Ghanaian context. This will ensure that there is a common goal for the universities to work towards and quality indicators are agreed across board.

Taken together, although developments in the private higher education sector of Ghana is encouraging, the sector could still benefit from more clear-cut and defined directions to improve the existing internal quality assurance mechanisms. Although, the study was limited to eight private universities, the results presented here may facilitate improvements in the wider higher education sector, in the near future. The outcome may be relevant to policy makers in the development of policy directives relating to the development and sustainability of private higher education.

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[22] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

APPENDICES

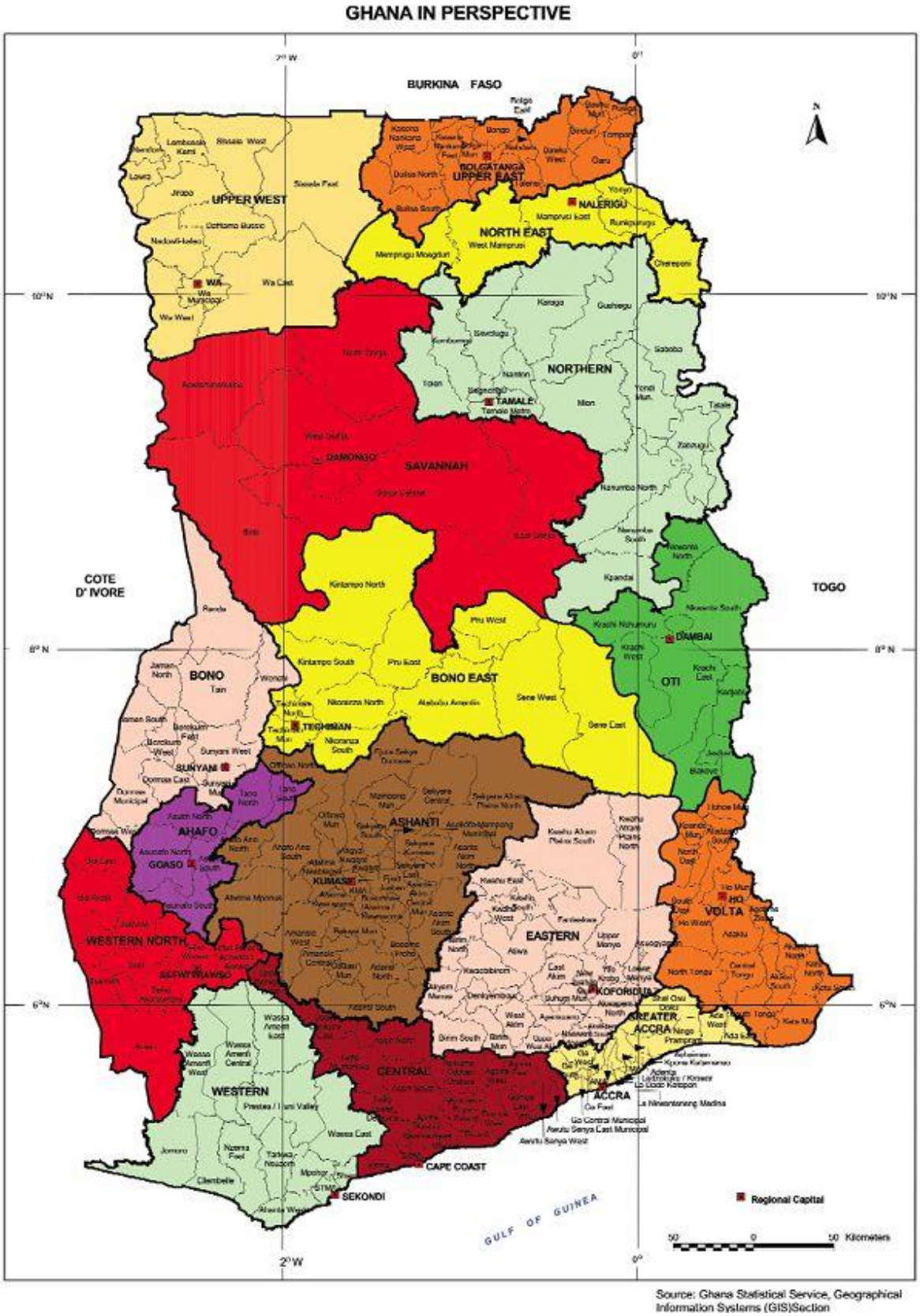
APPENDIX 1 – MAP OF GHANA



Source:
https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjbtNXNgebmAhUIyIUKHd9RDz8QjRx6BAgBEAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.pinterest.dk%2Fpin%2F660059507695869 09%2F&psig=AOvVaw228nOSGxqW0wAbG6h_DG3R&ust=1578091871256408
Accessed 02/01/2020[23]

[23] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

APPENDIX 2 – MAP OF GHANA SHOWING THE REGIONS



/Source: https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/new-ghana-map-with-16-regional-capitals.html accessed 16/08/2020

APPENDIX 3 – INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR UNIVERSITIES

About the University

4. The mission of the University is to:(quote mission)
   Is this correct?

5. The University currently has (quote number of faculties) faculties namely
   Is this correct?

6. What is the current student enrolment?

7. In which year was your QA Unit established?

8. Do you have a QA Policy/Procedure document?

9. How would you define quality in higher education?

10. What are the current quality assurance mechanisms that you have in place?

11. What are the key indicators that you use for evaluating your internal quality assurance systems?

12. How would you describe the regulatory environment in the country?

13. Could this be improved to help ensure quality in private higher education? If so, in what ways?

Inputs

Human Resources

a. What is the student: academic staff ratio?

b. What is the minimum qualification of the academic staff?

c. What is the current academic staff pyramid? Please provide information below.

Category	**%**
Professor	
Associate Professor	
Senior Lecturer	
Lecturer	

Physical Resources

Please tick answer yes/no and comment if necessary.

Physical Facilities	**Available**	**Comments**
Classrooms, lecture and seminar rooms		
Auditorium and lecture theatre		
Academic and non-academic offices		
Library/Information Resource Centre/e-learning facilities/access to sources of information		
Socialisation area/recreation facilities		
Office for Students Rep. Council		
Outdoor games/sports facilities		
Drainage systems/sanitation/water supply		
Infirmary/sick bay		
Adequate parking for staff and students		

Processes

Student Admissions

a. What is the minimum requirement for admission to first degree programmes?

b. What is the process before an admission is granted to a prospective student? Please describe the process.

c. How is the process monitored to ensure it is robust?

Teaching and Learning Process

a. Please describe the teaching and learning process at the university.

b. How is the process monitored to ensure quality is not compromised?

Governance and Management

a. What is the management structure of the university?

b. How is it governed?

Monitoring and Evaluation

a. What system is in place to ensure that the inputs and processes discussed above are functioning as they should?

b. How do you involve students and staff in the monitoring and evaluation process?

Output

Students

a. Are your graduates successfully entering the labour market?
b. How is this monitored?
c. Do you offer support to students to help them enter the labour market? Please state how.
b. What challenges do they face in getting employed?

Outcome – Long term consequences

Performance and Achievement

a. Do you follow the performance and achievements of your past students?

b. What are some of their achievements?

c. What contributions are they making to national development?

d. What are the most important achievements of the university?

Values and behaviour

a. How does the university ensure that graduates come out of their studies with appropriate values, as below?
   I. Academic and Intellectual values

   II. Social and moral values

b. How do you ensure that students receive a holistic education and not just an education in their field of study?

c. Are your graduates demonstrating the kinds of values that you would want? Please elaborate.

d. As per your mission statement, would you say you are able to train students to meet your mission?

Quality Assurance

a. Given your mission, what are the key indicators that you use for measuring your internal quality systems?

b. How would you describe the regulatory environment in the country?

c. Could this be improved to help ensure quality in private higher education? If so, in what ways?

APPENDIX 4 – INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR NATIONAL ACCREDITATION BOARD

1. The mission of the National Accreditation Board is to provide the best basis for establishing, measuring and improving standards in Tertiary Education in Ghana. Is this correct?

2. There are currently 67 accredited private university colleges and 4 private universities, which have been granted presidential charters. Is this correct?

3. What does the accreditation process entail?

4. How do you monitor and evaluate the private universities?

5. What are the key indicators that you use for measuring quality in the private universities?

6. How would you compare quality in the private and state-funded universities?

7. How would you describe the regulatory environment in the country?

8. Could this be improved to help ensure quality in private higher education? If so, in what ways?

9. What are the challenges that you face in achieving your objective?

10. Are there standard policies/procedures/regulations for the private universities to adhere to?

    I. What are they?

    II. Please advise where I can get copies.

11. What are some of your landmark achievements so far as an institution?

Follow-up questions for NAB

1. You have listed a number of facilities as minimum requirements, how do you measure the quality of these facilities or what indicators do you look out for when assessing these facilities?

2. Some of the universities sampled do not meet all the minimum facilities requirement. Do all the facilities have to be provided before accreditation is granted?
3. There appears to be a lack of engineering and science programmes, the universities mostly offer business and IT related subjects, is this in line with the country's long-term strategy? Why this trend?
4. Minimum entry requirements for sciences and engineering not stated? Ashesi University seem to have its own in-house guidelines as ff. How does this work? Are the universities expected to have their own minimum requirements for certain programmes?
5. Minimum facilities requirements only state classrooms, lecture rooms, seminar rooms, no provision made for computing and science laboratories. What's the reason for this?

6. From the responses received from the participating universities, they each have their own admissions procedure. Is this what you expect from them? Do you have a guideline for them to follow?
7. How effective is the admission procedures at the universities, given that there have been concerns in the media about the private universities, allegedly, being 'soft' in their admissions process?
8. There were concerns from the universities that monitoring and evaluation was not carried out frequently and programme accreditations were often delayed. How big is your QA unit compared to the task required?
9. The private universities have their own internal QA mechanisms. Do you have any input in how and what indicators they should be using to assess their QA mechanisms?

APPENDIX 5 – INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION

1. What is the role of NCTE in the higher education sector?

2. How is this role different from NAB?

3. Is the NCTE an independent body?

4. How does the NCTE discharge its mandate?

5. How does the NCTE define the term 'Quality' in higher education?

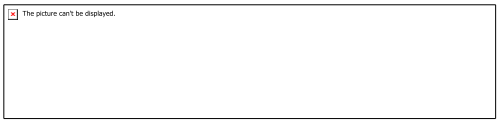
6. How does the NCTE monitor and evaluate the quality of education in private universities?

7. How would the NCTE rate the quality of education provided by the private universities?

8. How would you describe the current regulatory framework in the higher education sector?

9. What are the current challenges facing the NCTE?

APPENDIX 6 – INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO INSTITUTIONS



For the attention of:

Professor Simon McGrath
Centre for International Education Research

School of Education

Jubilee Campus

Wollaton Road

Nottingham, NG8 1BB

30 September, 2021

Dear …….

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND REQUEST FOR SUPPORT: JOSEPHINE ODJIDJA

I am a Professor in the School of Education at The University of Nottingham, where I direct research on vocational and higher education and development, particularly in Africa.

One of my students, Josephine Odjidja, is conducting a doctoral research on the growing phenomenon of private higher education in Ghana. As your institution is a key actor in this field, we would like to select you as a research site for this study.

Josephine's work is focused on how to strengthen the quality mechanisms already being developed by the sector. To this end, she is planning to review both national policies and (selected) institutional policies and practices. The intention in looking at the institutional level is not primarily to evaluate / critique but rather to understand better the current contexts and possible strategies facing institutions.

Josephine is proposing to look at a small sample of leading providers and to seek access to relevant internal policies, to examine public websites and to interview a small sample of staff with roles that include quality management aspects.

I am writing to support Josephine's request to you that you agree to her accessing your institution as a research site. Only after this will she approach any staff.

We hope that such a research will be valuable also to you given the importance we know you place on this issue. Josephine will discuss with you her project in more detail, including her approach to anonymity and her proposals for sharing draft findings on your institution with you prior to wider dissemination. The project has research approval from the University of Nottingham and is compliant with University of Nottingham, British Educational Research Association and Economic and Social Research Council ethical guidelines, as well as the UK Data Protection Act of 1998.

If you have any questions or concerns about the project, please contact me on the email address above or my co-supervisor, Dr. Juliet Thondhlana – Juliet.Thondhlana@nottingham.ac.uk

Yours sincerely



Professor Simon McGrath

BA (Hons), PGCE, MA, PhD, FRSA

Professor of International Education and Development

Director: Nottingham UNEVOC Centre

Convenor: Nottingham Sustainable Development Research Priority Area

Chair: UK Forum for International Education and Training

APPENDIX 7 – CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project title: The Emergence of Private Higher Education in Ghana – An Assessment of Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Researcher's name: Josephine Odjidja

Supervisor's name: Professor Simon McGrath, Dr Juliet Thondhlana

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped during the interview.
- I understand that data will be stored in compliance with UK data laws. Electronic data will be anonymised and password protected and any hard copies will be stored in a locked cupboard accessible only to the researcher and her supervisors. The data will be stored for seven years after the completion of the study.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research

Signed …… (Research participant)

Print name …… **Date** ……

Contact details

Researcher: *Josephine Odjidja Email: ttxjo17@nottingham.ac.uk*

Supervisors: *Professor Simon McGrath Email:* ttzsam@nottingham.ac.uk

Dr Juliet Thondhlana Email: alzjt1@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:
educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

APPENDIX 8 – INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

Research Information Sheet for Participants

Research Title

The Emergence of Private Higher Education (PHE) in Ghana - An Assessment of Quality Assurance Mechanisms in PHE Institutions.

Background to the Research

Globally, there has been a significant growth in Private Higher Education (PHE), and Ghana is no exception. Middlehurst and Fielden (2011) affirm that throughout the world, the number of students in private institutions is growing faster than in publicly-owned and funded ones. With no private universities as at 1990, Ghana currently has 61 accredited private universities (http://www.nab.gov.gh/news1/398-tertiary-education-statistics-report. Accessed 28/03/16). [24]

In Ghana, the growth means that 79% of universities/university colleges are now privately owned. There is the expectation that this growth will continue as predicted by the Secretary-General of the Association of African Universities (AAU), Professor Olugbemiro Jegede in a presentation at the launch of *Weaving Success: Voices of Change in African Higher Education (February 2012)* that in five years, Africa could have more for-profit private universities than those established by governments.

Naturally, the emergence and rapid growth of Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) in SSA countries has brought with it various concerns as well as much excitement. As Altbach (1999:312) argues, the world-wide expansion of education makes it essential to consider the status of private higher education and its specific issues. Of most significance is the question of quality. Quality is central to PHEI's future: their ambition to grow depends on public belief in their quality; as does their striving for full university status. Thus, this study will focus on the emerging quality approaches of Ghanaian PHEIs and how these approaches can evolve to serve the needs of their multiple stakeholders.

[24] Due to the time that has elapsed, some URLs may not work as they may have been retired or domains may have been moved.

Description of the research and your participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Josephine Odjidja, a PhD student from the University of Nottingham. The purpose of this research is to undertake a systematic and objective assessment of the quality mechanisms in the private universities through a review of existing institutional and national policy and evaluation documents and a series of interviews with university managers and academics. Your participation is requested as an interviewee and possible provider of relevant documents. As an interviewee, I will be asking you questions about the quality assurance mechanisms and its effectiveness at the university. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. Prior to the interview, I shall request for the University's quality assurance policy and other relevant documents for my perusal. With your permission, these documents will be photocopied to help me write my report after the interview.

Storage of Data/Documents

Any data or documents will be stored in compliance with UK data laws. Electronic data will be anonymised and password protected and any hard copies will be stored in a locked cupboard accessible only to the researcher and her supervisors. The data will be stored for seven years from the date of publication before being destroyed.

Potential Risks/Benefits

The study is intended to be a constructive engagement between both parties. Inevitably, no quality assurance system is perfect and the research will highlight some areas for improvement. Findings will be discussed with institutions prior to publication but the intended focus is on how your quality assurance mechanisms could be improved and made stronger, rather than on criticism. Anonymization will be pursued as far as is possible, mindful, however, of the relatively small number of institutions in the sector. It is intended that the research will be on benefit to institutions, working with their existing commitment to quality improvement and providing an external and comparative perspective.

Protection of confidentiality/privacy

I recognize your entitlement to privacy, and will accord you your right to confidentiality and anonymity. Therefore, your identity will not be revealed in any publication resulting from this study, unless you specifically and willingly waive that right. In such an instance, I will take a written consent from you.

You will also have the opportunity to review my draft report from the interview before my final work is submitted to the University. In the event that you have any concerns, you can

discuss these concerns with me and my supervisors and a mutual agreement will be reached.

Research Ethics

As a research student of the University of Nottingham, I am required to adhere to the following:

- University of Nottingham Research Conduct and Ethics Code – This Code outlines the duty of researchers and their responsibilities towards all participants and research subjects.
- British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines – This document stipulates that all educational research must be conducted within an ethic of respect for all participants and research subjects.
- UK Data Protection Act 1998 – defines UK law on processing of data.

Voluntary participation/informed consent

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate in this research, therefore, you may choose to or not to participate.

Right to withdraw

You have the right to withdraw your consent to participate at any time during the period of the research. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

Contact information

Researcher: *Josephine Odjidja Email: ttxjo17@nottingham.ac.uk*

Supervisors: *Professor Simon McGrath Email: ttzsam@nottingham.ac.uk*

Dr Juliet Thondhlana Email: alzjt1@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:
educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

APPENDIX 9– ETHICS APPROVAL FORM

2015/55/MO

School of Education – Research Ethics Approval Form

The University of Nottingham

Name Jo-Jo Odjidja
Main Supervisor Simon McGrath and Juliet Thondhlana
Course of Study PhD
Title of Research Project: The Emergence of Private Higher Education (PHE) in Ghana – An Assessment of Quality Assurance Mechanisms in PHE Institutions
Is this a resubmission? Yes **Date statement of research ethics received by PGR Office:** 06/10/15

Research Ethics Coordinator Comments:

Than you for your application to the ethics committee for approval to undertake the research. The participant information letter is much clearer in setting out what you are wanting from your participants and meets the requirements for the ethics committee on condition you include 2 statements on your participant letter.

Please include statements about:

1. participants being able to withdraw from the study at any time (rather than in "*the event that you have any concerns, you can discuss these concerns with me and my supervisors and a mutual agreement will be reached*").
2. the research has been approved by the University of Nottingham School of Education's ethics committee.

I consider this research to be above minimum risk ☐

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you and your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the University Research Ethics Committee. http://www/educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/Ethical%20Guidelines *If you have any concerns during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice and refer again to the School of Education's Research Ethics Committee.*

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Outcome:
Approved [X] Revise and Resubmit [ ]

Signed: *Mary Oliver* Name: Dr Mary Oliver (Research Ethics Coordinator) Date: 8/10/2015

Reflection

“Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass, anyway”

Earl Nightingale

Notes