



Envisioning Incentives for Improving University Governance: A Ghanaian Perspective

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The incentive to strengthen university governance system has three implications: (1) improving the quality of the university education system, and thus providing students and the general public value for money, (2) enhancing the utilization of resources invested in university education, and (3) contributing significantly to the formation of human capital, quality of public leadership, and best services to the society. However, there are limited studies on how this can be realized in Ghana. This is a qualitative study seeking to explore the following questions: What is needed to ensure desirable university governance? And how can it be achieved? In-depth interviews and documentary research were used to collect data from twenty-three participants. The study examines key governance issues such as funding, accountability, infrastructure, trust, and regulation. The study contextually contributes to the literature on university governance and management by bringing to the fore the incentives needed to enhance it for a better output to meet the development needs of the Ghanaian economy and the African continent with similar challenges as a whole.

Keywords: university governance, education policy, trust, accountability, management, Ghana

Introduction

Education is generally accepted as a principal mechanism for promoting economic growth and for Africa, where growth is ever more essential if the continent is to climb out of poverty, education is particularly of more impor-

tance. The importance of university education in Africa cannot be underestimated as former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, in a speech maintained that (Kurtz & Schrank, 2007, p. 6):

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 universities; 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.

Education remains the most single dosage that many multilateral universities, organizations and agencies have prescribed to addressing not only the world's health issues but also political, economic, and social ones, among others. Education brings about better ways of life, and conveys stronger social and economic benefits to a nation, to a community and to the individual (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2005). Education goes well beyond its obvious role of providing a setting for teaching and learning.

In response to the need for the physical and human capital, a number of countries have undertaken significant transformations of their tertiary education systems, including changes in patterns of financing and governance, the creation of quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms, curriculum reforms, and technological innovations (Holm-Nielsen, 2001). But progress has been uneven and sharp contrasts remain across and within tertiary education systems the world over. Most developing countries continue to wrestle with difficulties produced by inadequate responses to pre-existing challenges, some of which are the expansion of tertiary education coverage in a sustainable way, the reduction of inequalities of access and outcomes, the improvement of educational quality and relevance, and the introduction of effective governance structures and management practices. Even though tertiary level enrollments have grown significantly in virtually all countries in the developing world, the enrollment gap between the most advanced economies and the developing nations has become wider (Holm-Nielsen, 2001). Financial resources have been insufficient to sustain the growth of enrollment and at the same time improve quality at both the public and private university levels.

A good education system that works for the good of the nation depends partly on the governance structures and principles upon which it is anchored. Such elements of good governance may be varied but include effectiveness, rule of law, regulatory quality, and control of corruption (Forson, Buracom, Baah-Ennumh, Chen, & Carsamer, 2015; Forson, 2016; Vries,

2013). Good governance must be responsive to the demands of the citizens (Roy, 2005). To achieve this, there is need for public participation since good governance is political and requires non-governmental actors to shape political policy (Elahi, 2009). Because good governance issues are complex, there is a need to integrate different issues, such as leadership, resources and competitiveness, when searching for solutions (Babacan, 2014). Others are also of the view that the concept entails the state providing quality services to the state (Bingab, Forson, Mmbali, & Baah-Enumh, 2016; Machado & Macagnan 2015). Government should also open avenues for citizens to participate in decision-making in order to influence priorities (Lameck & Kamugisha, 2015). Good governance should also take into account adequate representation and concerns about citizen satisfaction with the services provided (Bebe & Bing, 2015; Forson & Opoku, 2014).

While there is broad agreement on the importance of university governance for the achievement of universities' missions, especially in the 21st century, there is little or no specific information that looks at university governance issues in Ghana especially in the wake of the challenge that has to do with the resultant university output. The quality in recent times has been questioned and is a matter that has drawn public concern. More particularly that university governance has received relatively little attention in the higher education research literature until quite recently, and most of what has been written on the topic is not grounded in empirical research (Jones, Shanahan, & Goyan, 2004). If such research is conducted, key university governance issues that will emerge from the research findings will constitute a guide to the university community to enable them concentrate on which governance issues matters most in their systems of operation.

On this basis one can infer three implications: (1) strengthening university governance system will improve the quality of the university education system, providing students and the general public value for money. (2) Improving university governance will enhance utilization of resources invested in university education. (3) Good university governance will play a more effective role in formation of human capital, quality of public leadership, and best services to the society. In light of these, this is a qualitative study seeking to explore the questions: What is needed to ensure desirable university governance in the Ghanaian context? And how can it be achieved? The implications for the emerging issues are discussed for policy and practice.

Method and Techniques

This is an exploratory qualitative study. Yin (2009) argues that 'what' and 'how' questions are best suited for exploratory research, as such questions develop pertinent premises and does not limit the research to what

Table 1 Respondents, Representation and Codes

S/N	Respondent	Representation	Code
1	Council Chair A	Public University	CC A
2	Council Chair B	Private University 1	CC B
3	Council Chair C	Private University 2	CC C
4	Vice-Chancellor A	Public University	VC A
5	Vice-Chancellor B	Private University 1	VC B
6	Vice-Chancellor C	Private University 2	VC C
7	Registrar A	Public University	Reg A
8	Registrar B	Private University 1	Reg B
9	Registrar C	Private University 2	Reg C
10	Finance Officer	N/A	FO
11	Student Leaders A	Public University	SL A
12	Student Leaders C	Private University	SL C
13	Executive Secretary, NCTE	NCTE	ES-NCTE
14	Executive Secretary, NAB	NAB	ES-NAB
15	Former Vice-Chancellor	N/A	FVC
16	Former Executive Secretary, NCTE 1	NCTE	FES-NCTE 1
17	Former Executive Secretary, NCTE 2	NCTE	FES-NCTE 2
18	Former Executive Secretary, NAB	NAB	FES-NAB
19	Former Student Leaders	NUGS	FSL

you find but how such issues have been or are being handled, as captured in this study's research questions. Documentary data, in-depth interviews, specifically semi-structure interviews, and the authors' experience in university administration were used to collect data from high level university leaders who were serving or had served three top universities in Ghana. For instance, questions such as 'What is university governance in Ghana?' and 'How does good university governance enhance quality university education?' were some of the questions often asked. The researchers sought to learn from the experiences of these other senior university management staff, the students and the regulators. Twenty-three participants were interviewed.

The participants were former and serving university governing council chairs, former and serving university Vice-Chancellors, university registrars, senior finance officers, former and serving executive secretaries and student leaders who served on university governing councils. Data recording, note taking, transcribing, and documentary techniques were used to collect data. Transcribed data was read repeatedly to make sense of thematic issues emerging from the data. Significant quotes were derived from the participants' responses and integrated into the report writing in order to highlight key issues and voice. In so doing, as Bernard and Ryan (2010)

pointed out, to be able to select quotes from narratives, the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon plays a great role and support, and so does the authors' level of involvement in the university governance processes. On ethical issues, the study was much concerned about this and thus Boijie's ethical principles were followed (Boijie, 2010). As a consequence, strict ethical principles, such as ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, obtaining information consent and permission, and ensuring participant's privacy, were adhered to, and not just dragged into, the study. Table 1 captures the respondents together including how they were represented with codes for the purpose of ensuring anonymity. The final draft was sent to the participants to obtain feedback regarding the accuracy of their contribution and whether changes were necessary before proceeding further with the analyses.

Result and Discussions

The Key Desirable University Governance Issues

If it is true that university governance is about the structures, systems, policies, processes and procedures that universities adopt in the quest to guide everyone in the enterprise to justify their activities for legitimacy to meet its visions and missions, then it should sound normal to say that university governance is a process and not an event. Governance involves collaboration between management, the board and stakeholders. It also takes into account factor inputs such as structures, systems and sometimes the means that the universities can ride on to achieve set objectives.

It is, therefore, important to find out the desirable university governance issues that arise in this process of working to achieve the objectives of the university. Several issues have come up from the respondents. Key among these issues subjected to further deliberations has been grouped into three broad thematic areas: *accountability and funding*, *trust among stakeholders* and *infrastructure*. The details of the themes have been discussed below.

Accountability and Funding

A terminology that is almost synonymous with funding is accountability. The two words almost always go together because of their complementing role in governance. At the public funded university level, it has become a *cliché* to say that government funding to universities have kept reducing over the years, but has the accountability aspect also been reduced? Certainly not, at least from the views of respondents and also based upon the fact that, as the world develops, more civil society groups are springing up and more individuals are getting enlightened on the most appropriate use of public funds. As posited by former ES-NCTE 2, 'You know all over the world, public support for tertiary education has been dwindling over the years' and supported by the Finance Officer (FO) that:

During the past 10 years, we have gradually learnt to reduce our dependency on government; it used to be 75%, now we are only 49%. The intention is within the next 10 years, we should be less than 20%.

The FO further posited that ‘more accountability, less money, they give you more work to do, ask, demand more from you in terms of accountability and they give you less money.’

They give [. . .] government gives us [. . .] when we were given 75%, they give us on quarterly basis. So generally, I have my funding for January, February, and March. By March ending early April, I have April, May, June. Now they give it to me on a monthly basis in arrears. I have to look for the money, spend and then send PVs. They no longer depend on our resolve and our reports and signatures. They want to see the actual PVs before they reimburse. So they are demanding more accountability. You will be there they will just tell you reviewers are coming from the Ministry of Finance to come and check your books. Unannounced visits. They come. Every month, you will send the report on salary to NCTE and to the Ministry of Finance through the Ministry of Education. You have to send to the auditor here, not our auditor here but the audit service which are external. You have to send to them every month for them to audit, then you attach the PVs. And if salaries (what government actually pays) goes up by 2% from the previous month, you need to explain.

The Chair of a governing council of a public university advanced that, in many respects, ‘the things that senior management do’ in as far as management of the university’s funds are concerned ‘are done on behalf of the university council’ and, therefore, ‘the council must ensure that Universities are accountable at every level’ of their operations. Another council chairman had this to say: ‘University councils must see to it that all levels of accountability are respected by management because they act on behalf of the council.’ According to an Act of one of the public universities:

The Council shall control the finances of the university as well as other finances arising out of the administration of the university as well as other determining questions of finance which directly affect the educational policy of the University.

Both at the public and private university levels, there are internal mechanisms that have been put in place to manage the funds of the university. Apart from the finance committee that reports to the university council on all payments and receipts of the university, all payments or expenditure so incurred in the name of the university must have received approval before

it is processed. A key office that ensures that this compliance is adhered to is the internal audit that carries out pre-audit activities. In addition to ensuring that such an expenditure or request has received the necessary approval, the internal audit also ensures that the payment requested for falls in line with laid down policies. All the funds that are received on behalf of the university are required to be paid into the university bank accounts within a stipulated time, though the time might vary from one university to another.

This is a form of accountability that allows the people's representation, the parliament, to review the activities of the public universities for that particular year. All these are aimed at given credence to the works of universities in terms of accountability. Similarly, at the private university level, accountability is an issue, as VC B puts it 'I think we have been able to use our money effectively because we have control of what we use the money for [...] We are very prudent with the way we spend our money.' Indeed, if effectiveness and being prudent are anything to do in as far as money is concerned, then it is obviously about being accountable.

Additionally, accountability is not different at the private universities as well, because at private universities funding is linked to control systems at all levels of university governance. As VC C put it:

Though we are allowed to charge tuition and other fees, we are also concerned about affordability because if the fees are high and they cannot afford, it comes back to the same thing and for the fees to be approved by the council you must show how the previous fees have been applied.

In essence, whereas public university managers think that their private counterparts are able to charge full fees, this thinking has a limit as the councils of the private universities also need to be convinced that the proposed fees are affordable and reasonable. According to the respondents from the private universities in terms of accountability, private universities, just like their public counterparts, are audited each year by external auditors appointed by its parent institution (owners) and their report is submitted to the university council and finally to the parent organization, apart from the internal audit units that carry out pre- and post-audit activities. Data available also show that the private universities have tuition fees charged on students as their main source of funding. Other sources of income include: contribution from the the university's parent organization (faith-based universities), donations, research grants and other commercial activities that the university engages in, such as canteen services, operating shops, and the list differs from one university to another. So to be accountable within the framework of university governance is about 'openness,' 'transparency,'

through 'effective communication' and 'adhering to Acts, policies, rules and regulations within the system' according to Vice-Chancellor B. The essence of these regulations is to meet required standards for effectiveness and efficiency in the governance process.

So, whether at the public or private university level, 'every revenue/income/funds generated in the name of the university becomes a public fund and must be accounted for,' according to the due process as set out by the enabling law or policy of the university, as the former ES, the National Accreditation Board (NAB), posited. Indeed, it is against this background that 'financial accountability remains key to university governance.'

Trust amongst Universities and Some Stakeholders

A key desire in every organization is trust among stakeholders but an important element that supports governance seems minimal within the public universities and the relevant agencies within the public university system. An example of such, according to VC A, is that public universities face its major financier, the government, through the Ministry of Education and the NCTE makes promises and, although it fulfills some of the promises (usually at a very late hour), many other promises are left unfulfilled. As a Finance Officer put it: 'Government cannot be trusted when it comes to releasing funds and other promises.

As noted earlier, government is unable to release salaries for example at the right time, sometimes in five months arrears, because not enough is coming into the national kit or even the little that comes in there are more priority areas that must be attended to first. Government last year promised public universities furniture because they were requested to increase their enrollments but far into the second semester of the 2013/2014 academic year only about 45% of the furniture has arrived meanwhile the universities had already increased the enrollments from the beginning of the academic year.' The behavior of the government in this regard has the tendency to ruin the trust that exists between public universities and the government and, by extension, the same mistrust could affect relationship with the private universities as well.

Infrastructure

Another key issue that is needed to ensure desirable university governance in Ghana is infrastructure, if sound and prudent academic and administrative desired targets are to be achieved. The Council Chair A admits that unfortunately, however, infrastructural inadequacies and deplorable conditions of the existing infrastructure in universities in Ghana remain a huge challenge to university education. He admits that infrastructural issues are linked to funding and accountability, because the most essential and critical

of funding for university education is in the area of infrastructure. Explaining further, he said, infrastructure in the context of physical and non-physical facilities are an essential component of quality measures that university education needs at all times. And so, when funding is inadequate, there is a tendency to not getting the required infrastructure in both quality and quantity. Vice-Chancellor B, for example, says 'we wish we had more resources.' 'Infrastructure is even more an issue because of the huge increment of student numbers at the public universities,' he adds. Lecture halls, for instance, in the public university, from the account of a student leader, are not spacious to accommodate the large student numbers and this affects teaching and learning and, in some cases, lecture halls are not equipped with the necessary equipment, as she says that one of the key issues that they as students face is not being 'in modern lecture halls with the state of the art equipment.' Also, former VC thinks that inadequate funding deprives the universities from embracing the ICT world, because ICT comes at a cost.

Former ES-NCTE also alludes to the fact that inadequate budgetary allocation has caused the deteriorating infrastructure on the university campuses. Inadequate infrastructure has been a problem in the past and even now. This is evident in the work of Sawyer (2004) when he alludes that infrastructural inadequacies led to poor morale and decline in academic standards across all sectors of the educational system in Ghana. Another area where inadequate funding cripples is in library resources. Indeed, the way forward in addressing the physical infrastructural inadequacies according to VC A is to look beyond the traditional form of education, where physical space becomes an issue, into rather thinking about e-learning. In his university, for example, in recent times the majority of the student population is learning through distance education, where the university does not necessarily need to have all the physical space to accommodate the student numbers.

At the private university level, Registrar C, for example, states that 'as a university you do not only need funding to pay staff, but you also need to put up infrastructure; facilities have to be provided, all the requisite facilities – varying kinds,' he concluded. So to run a university involves huge investment in infrastructure (ICT, Buildings, etc.). Even the instance when some of the physical and non-physical facilities have been provided, there is need to adequate funding to keep these facilities abreast with modern times apart from the maintenance cost.

Indeed, how can universities provide quality skills if they have inadequate funds leading to poor or inadequate infrastructure on their campuses? For quality university education, there must exist the necessary logistics (funding, faculty, facilities and infrastructure) so that quality is earned and sus-

tained. The data available therefore suggest that there is infrastructure limitation, which can lead to poor training of graduates. Certainly, to have a weak university education system is to suggest that other levels of the educational systems will be in jeopardy, since it is the product of universities that serve the manpower needs at these levels, and that production levels in the country may be low.

Achieving Desirable University Output: The Way forward and Challenges

For university education across the globe to meet minimum standards, there must be some level of quality. But quality cannot be the reserve of a single university or entity and, therefore, there is the need for a body to regulate the activities of universities at all levels. We explore how quality can be achieved by considering agencies that regulate university education, and requirements for university education in Ghana. These issues are discussed alongside challenges faced by these agencies in dispensing their duties.

Regulating University Education

Universities in Ghana are regulated; public and private alike. Regulations forms part of the university governance as posited by the former VC and supported by the former ES-NCTE¹. Their argument is that it is part of regulating university education that some state agencies and universities have been established. Established by an Act of parliament, Act 454 of 1993, the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE), serves as the supervisory and regulatory body that advises government through the Minister responsible for education on policies relating to tertiary education (National Council for Tertiary Education, 2014). Additionally, the NAB also exists as the quality assurance body at the tertiary education level. The place of call to either apply for a new program or establish a university is the National Council for Tertiary Education. After the NCTE has given approval for the establishment of a university or program NAB then takes over, as its executive secretary put it: 'we facilitate the establishment of both public and private tertiary universities, and ensure that standards are set and maintained.' In doing so, NAB appreciates that university education has over the years become an international commodity and, as a country, Ghana needs to be abreast with world trends. The Board therefore carries its mandate through the collaboration of both local and international stakeholders. Such partnership and information sharing or engagement informs the operations of the board. Just like other parts of the world, it is proper that governments take every step necessary to regulate the activities of universities.

As stated by the executive secretary (ES) for NCTE (ES-NTCE), it is dangerous to leave the operations of the universities entirely in the hands of the public universities not to talk of the private ones. As regulatory agencies,

he adds, every effort must be made to sensitize Universities and their operations to ensure that necessary and relevant conditions are met for the effective and efficient operations of universities. While there is no contest that government should provide some level of oversight to university education industry to ensure that quality is not compromised, the universities themselves should continue to peer-review their activities as a balance to that oversight is carried out by the regulatory agencies.

Requirements of Universities

Under the national regulations, to set up a new university, the law requires that when a university is to be set up, a formal application is submitted to the National Council for Tertiary Education for approval. In the case of a public university, the government sends a request to the NCTE requesting its advice, but in the case of the private university, approval is sought. NAB is thereafter in charge of finding out if the necessary quality assurance requirements have been put in place. Ideally, the current norm requires that, for a new university to be set up, it must undergo a mentorship of not less than ten years under a university that has a charter to award its own degrees, diplomas and certificates. Which means, under normal circumstances, a university that is younger than ten years in operation can only award the degrees, diplomas and certificates of its mentor university.

All universities are required to adhere to national regulations when it comes to minimum admission requirements, quality and quantity of faculty, library resources among others. Supporting this, VC C declared that, though they are a chartered private university, they still have the regulatory agencies coming to check to see if they are operating according to the 'admission procedure and criteria' that has been put out for all universities to adhere to. The position that universities should be regulated is supported by all respondents in general and by the institutional theory that posits that universities, just like other organizations, must conform, for survival and legitimacy purposes, to rules, policies, regulations and other guidelines that may have been imposed on them by the environment.

Perceived Biases of Regulatory Agencies

To regulate within the framework of university governance is to have standards that each and every one must comply for the purpose of achieving the desired quality. In the view of VC B, when it comes to regulating universities, it appears government is doing it to the advantage of the public universities. As he put it, 'government is way away from private universities.' He argues that, though the ES-NAB, in what regards enforcing the rules of the game when it comes to university governance, is not tilting in favor of public universities, he eventually admits that due to the importance of university

education, coupled with the fact that private universities are new in the terrain of university education, the regulatory agencies focus more on that category of universities, as compared to public universities, which he described as already established and having some level of quality structures in place. Addressing the issue of inequality when it comes to the rules from his office, he responded 'yes, the rules are the same and so there are no distinctions.' However, when he was reminded of few instances he stated that:

Well, you see the universities, especially those that preceded the NAB, had their own standards of ensuring academic excellence and quality, so there is an observable tradition of running a university. But for the private ones, these are completely new terrain for them and it is our considered view that they should be tutored along the lines of operating tertiary education universities.

Agreeing to the view expressed by VC B and ES-NAB, the former ES-NCTE 2 said that to some extent he agrees with that observation, because it is almost impossible to ask some public universities to close down, as witnessed in some private universities. To confirm the views expressed by the former ES-NCTE 2, he said; 'it will take a long time for anybody to say Legon (University of Ghana) is closed because of this or that. That's the difference whereas in the case of private universities, it can easily be done once they have violated a regulation that requires that.' But ES-NAB again says that, although they have not attempted to close a public university before, there have been instances in which they had written to public universities to suspend the admission of students into some programs that, in their view, the public university had not met the minimum requirements to run the program. As he put it, 'sometimes we have asked them not to admit into a program until certain things are put right.'

This idea of enforcing the rules more strictly on public and private universities appears to be more visible in the case of setting up new universities. Though this norm is strictly enforced when it comes to private universities, it appears relaxed when it comes to the setting up of public universities. ES-NAB, justifying the discriminatory nature of applying some regulations, had to say:

I can assure you that the private universities have to be under affiliation for a period not less than 10 years before they become full fledged. But Ho and Sunyani Universities were just set up by an Act of Parliament. They are new, they didn't have anything but they have been set up and they can award degrees today and we advised but government will not listen. So these are the challenges; and some-

times the private Universities have a case when they say that the law is not been applied equally. Because there is no way a private university can start like that without going through an affiliation. So as it is, the law is been applied discriminately, because why should it only be the private Universities that should apply for and go through affiliation for at least 10 years and not the public universities?

Whatever the rationale might be for those who put in place this part of the law, the researcher's interpretation is that the purpose of this arrangement is to enable the new university structures and systems under the guide of an older (experienced) university. The reason being that, since the certificates to be awarded are those of the mentor university, that Mentor University will ensure that all quality measures have been carried out before the award of the certificate. Especially that in the past a university that started on its own as a fully-fledged university faced numerous quality assurance issues. As explained by the ES-NAB:

For example, UDS faced serious challenges in quality assurance issues in terms of teaching staff, physical infrastructure and we should have learnt from that. The point about history is that we are not learning about history and that is where our hands are tied as regulators.

The point here is that in setting up new public universities, 'political expediency outweighs professional advice,' as advocated by ES-NAB. Alluding to ES-NAB, the ES-NCTE further opined that they, as a regulatory agency, never advised the government against setting up and giving a new public university the full autonomy to award its own degrees, diplomas and certificates. When the researcher further asked if he thought that, as the agency is fully responsible for policy direction on tertiary education, they had failed the people of Ghana on this particular subject, he responded in the affirmative:

I agree with you. That is a failure on our part. We have not tested this system. And what I mean is, government has declared this intention, and has gone ahead, sometimes with our assistance and we complain at the level of the council. But to my knowledge, we have never stated our position to the government, to say that this is wrong, don't do it this way, and government has refused. So I think we have failed in that aspect. We should be able to tell the government that this is not right, but we haven't done that.

This to a certain degree shows how some State Owned Agencies are not doing enough to safeguard the quality of the university system in Ghana. It will be in the interest of the country and that of all stakeholders in the university enterprise to take a critical appraisal of these lapses in enforcing

some of these laws, so that, if there is need to revise these rules, it is done instead of it to be enforceable only on some group of stakeholders.

Difficulties/Dilemmas Faced by Regulatory Agencies

Perhaps, it is the weakness in the Acts that established those regulatory agencies that seem to have disabled the agencies. Most probably it is due to these dilemmas that one of the agency identifies in its strategic plan for 2010–2014 independence as a second value and as a core principle. Unlike the University Commission of Nigeria, whose decision on university matters are final and not subject to the discretion of any political influence, it is not so in Ghana. 'I can tell you that the University's Commission in Nigeria is very powerful. This is because their decisions are final.' The refreshing news, however, is that these agencies are in the process of asking for a review of their Acts to make them more autonomous so that their decisions will no longer be just advisory to the Minister responsible for Education but final.

Because our current status as a board allows us to advice, so we are in the process of making a preposition to the Minister to make it an Authority to give it more powers. We have done a draft.

The further argument is that 'tertiary education landscape is changing very rapidly in that lately you can find transnational education or cross boarder education' in every part of the world. With some of them setting up in Ghana, using online in various modifications for their programs, it is therefore in the interest of the nation for these regulatory agencies to move with time. On the other hand, this is a clear case of political power being the most dominant in the wake of nation building.

Quality as an Issue

Quality is influenced and determined by the inputs and processes that a product goes through. In the case of quality university education, the inputs, processes and the effectiveness and efficiency of the various actors in the university governance process all play a role in determining the desired quality.

To talk about quality is to talk about standards and in the case of university governance, it is about world standards, as posited by VC B that, if we require quality, 'there should be a homogeneous system that all of you can tap into just like the world of standardization.' So deciding on who qualifies to be a management member or qualifies to be faculty or what curriculum must go into a program of study in a university setting, all must be geared towards quality. So how to recruit staff, putting in place the right structures on how examinations are conducted, the grading system, the right physical

structures for academic work and providing adequate resources to handle student numbers are all measures aimed at ensuring quality with the environs of a university as mentioned by the respondents.

Regarding quality university education, another area of concern is that university governance faces in Ghana, just like in other places in the world, is what can be termed as 'mcdonalization' of university education. The term 'mcdonalization' comes from the fast food giant McDonald's, where food is readily made available to customers in a matter of minutes. This is what the former ES-NCTE 2 stated:

There is a major concern worldwide, not just here in Ghana, with what has been called mcdonalization of university education. Fast food, you know what McDonald's is, within seconds you have food. If we don't take care, increasingly, we are going to have that.

Some individuals, especially those who have very limited knowledge in university education, think that university education should not take so long to pursue, forgetting that university education is a process and not an event. As expressed by the former ES-NCTE 2, in order to ensure quality within the university fraternity, it is important for all stakeholders, students, managers of universities, industries, regulators, civil society and the citizenry at large, to be mindful of such negative developments. Universities, therefore, must be seen engaging these stakeholders more.

Increase in Enrollments

The exponential increase in enrollments (from 52,712 in the 1999/2000 academic year to 165,000 in the 2012/2013 academic year) has created problems for public universities in Ghana because this increase has not matched the increase in faculty and physical infrastructure, a situation the NCTE has captured in its strategic plan as a threat: 'explosion in enrollments in public universities (National Council for Tertiary Education, 2014) for university education.' For now, the high student numbers may appear to be in public universities, but there is no certainty that it will not happen in the private or public universities, bearing in mind there is a high demand for university education that public universities alone cannot handle. For example, according to the World Bank, private higher education universities enrolled almost 40% of the student population in Portugal, 35% in Jordan, 30 % in the Cote d'Ivoire and in Iran, and 15% in Bangladesh (World Bank, 2002).

In the same report, private higher education universities provided access for more than half of all students, for example, in the Philippines private higher universities enrolled 80% and in Korea 75% of students (Salmi, 2003). So clearly it is possible that, at a point in time, private universi-

ties may enroll more students than their public counterparts. However, the high demand for university education has created a market for the private sector, some of which is very new to the university landscape in Ghana. It is against this background that quality assurance becomes an avoidable issue of concern not only to the regulators but also to the university community and the country at large. How Ghana will ensure the quality of this growing enterprise and how university education is set and maintained remains important. Specifically, how will it protect Ghanaians from fraudulent providers and counterfeit qualifications, especially when some providers emanate from other countries? Ghana therefore requires a quality assurance system that is robust, own and can become an integral part of the university's structures.

Self-Regulatory

Universities must pride themselves of their own quality assurance system and demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt to the general public that the internal structures are adequate to address quality issues at all sectors of the university's operations. Indeed apart from the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE), created with the mandate to coordinate and provide policy direction by setting the appropriate guidelines for tertiary education, the National Accreditation Board (NAB) has also been set up to ensure, among other responsibilities, that national standards are met to achieve the desired quality at all levels of tertiary education in Ghana. For a more sustainable quality assurance system, this is what ES-NAB said:

You see [...] we want to throw the issue of quality assurance to the universities themselves. They must take up the issue of quality assurance seriously and we will only come as external body to validate. Internal quality assurance must be owned by the university. The structures must be in place to ensure that just like an engine, the systems are working well. The external quality assurance only comes in to validate what you are doing.

The preceding statement justifies the regulator's desire to see universities recognize and accept quality assurance as part of the entire university governance operations and not as a separate entity from the university. Invariably, universities think that the issue of quality assurance is the duty of the regulator, a thinking that is being contested by VC A, who holds the view that 'quality is the underlying strength of every university.' Universities, he asserted, have now established quality assurance offices and senior academics have been appointed to these offices. He further opined: 'look at our buildings, our examinations, our staff, our curricula, and the graduates we turn out, all these will clearly tell you that quality assurance is been

taken serious.' According to him, 'universities themselves want quality' in whatever they do because, 'you want to issue out a certificate that will not be treated as sub-standard,' especially as parents are paying so much for the education of their wards in recent times. His position on this matter is that universities, as academic institutions, will have to guide and protect the integrity of all what they do. And, in doing so, they must ensure that the desired standards are met.

Incidence of Compromising Quality

The universities must regularly review their courses and put in place all necessary measures that will ensure that the certificates that are issued are based upon justifiable performance from the students, even in the case in which the certificate has been awarded in a mentee university. But ES-NAB stated however that some mentor universities have not lived up to their responsibilities:

There has been an instance in one private university where students were due for graduation but had not met the minimum requirements for graduation and it took a leak from an insider for us to know. So sometimes that is how we get our information. So we had to send a team there and they did confirm so we had to write to the mentor university to stop those people from graduating until they have made good the requirement for graduation.

Here, the officer speaking on behalf of the regulator sought to confirm that, despite of the desire of universities to protect the certificates that are issued, there might still be some lapses that need to be addressed, citing the case of this private university as a case in question. He also mentioned the case of a public university that was hit with an examination scandal, which cost the Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellor their jobs.

His argument is that the issue of quality is not only a challenge in private universities but also in public ones and must be dealt with properly so that the level of confidence of public universities regarding university certificates are not only maintained, but improved. In the case of the said public university, the university used its internal structures to get the matter addressed and to look into the wider challenges facing the university. It also instituted a Visitation Panel that was made up of distinguished personalities, purely outside of the university.

After a cursory study of the views expressed by respondents, one can conclude that regulation of universities has been accepted by all stakeholders as a conduit for quality university education in spite of the challenges that private universities have in terms of the perceived partiality regarding the enforcement of rules being carried out by regulatory agencies. The limi-

tation, however, of regulating universities is that excessive regulations may limit the ability of universities to be innovative, as they might just focus on complying with the rules and policies of the regulators.

Implications for Policy and Practice

In the effort of making a difference between poverty and wealth, knowledge becomes an indispensable means, and university education is at the centre of such knowledge. James D. Wolfensohn, the former World Bank President in 2000, affirmed that it is impossible to have a complete education system without an appropriate and strong higher education system (Holm-Nielsen, 2001). As a consequence, university governance through which knowledge is produced should be of importance to the Ghanaian State, the African continent and the world at large. Good governance remains the bedrock of development. Indeed the roles of universities in the production of leaders remain pivotal, and so does the management and administration of universities. For its reason, university governance should be of interest to every good meaning person. Consequentially, questions on which are the key desirable university governance issues and how can these issues serve as a conduit for ensuring quality are central to this study. These have been explored and its implications for policy and practice outlined.

Universities, through their governance systems, build their cultures through values, ideas, beliefs, norms (Morgan, 2006). And thus, to gain legitimacy, every university ought to strive to do what is right so that they are in agreement with this set of norms, rules, laws, policies, and form the guide in as far as university governance is concerned. Indeed, a system to monitor progress of compliance must always be in place with the agreed or set norms. However, it is a more refreshing approach to establish internal institutional mechanisms that will allow the universities to do self-appraisal at periodic intervals in order to inform policy direction and not just depend on the external monitoring schemes.

Openness, transparency and accountability can be synonyms of good governance not only in universities but also in other spheres of the human endeavour, only if the impact of these virtues can be beneficial to those who are being governed. It is for this reason that good governance can be contentious when it comes to its measurement; what is good governance to you might not be for another. But should there be any difficulty measuring what stakeholders have agreed in relations to structure, laws, policies and processes? It is for this reason therefore that governance should not be built on an individual but on organizations and universities. This is not to suggest by any least of imagination that governance can be effective and efficient if there are no good leaders. But it is a more sustainable way to build governance around universities and organizations rather than on

its leadership. Universities, therefore, must not only pride themselves with good governance systems because they are accountable and all the right policies are in place and are being implemented, but also because of how relevant such rules and regulations have been to the graduates, as well as to the benefit of the larger society or the immediate communities that these graduates find themselves.

The call for public universities to be managed like businesses continues to be a contentious issue, therefore the term governance and its discussion might not end any moment soon. For the proponents of this idea, public universities are no longer getting the needed resource support from the state and, by implication, the state does no longer view university education as a social good. Therefore, universities must find their own way of operating by introducing reasonable fees to generate revenue. However, the school of thought against this ideal, believes that university education must continue to be treated as a social good because it is geared towards the development of the country. If it is expensive and if it is left just to those who can afford it, the poor and disadvantaged will be marginalized, and so the state directly or indirectly must continue to fund university education. Funding cannot be devoid of accountability and so are the appropriate policies that guide the disbursement of revenues that the universities accrue. However, though there is less funding support from the state to public universities, yet there is an ever-increasing demand for accountability in as far as university governance is concerned.

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