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The Evolution of University Governance in Ghana: Implications for Education Policy and Practice

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Abstract

The relationship between education and public policy is two way: (1) economic development of a nation depends on the human capital produced by the education system of that nation and (2) public spending and management of the education system is crucial to the welfare of the nation. Changes in this relationship generate public concerns about university governance and its implications to national development. Therefore, this study explores the questions: (1) Have the role and purpose of university governance changed since its inception? (2) Are there differences between the old and the new system of university governance? (3) What larger ramifications does this have on university governance? The study was conducted within the framework of qualitative research design. The researchers adopted the social constructivist worldview with phenomenology approach to inquiry. Participants who were mainly eminent former senior university administrators and regulators with management, administrative and governance experience in public and private university were interviewed. Data was transcribed and read repeatedly over time to make sense of issues raised by informants. Significant statements were selected, interpreted and used in the text to highlight key issues as well as to provide voice of the informants. The findings of the study suggest that remedies for the changes realized in governance should take into account measures such as strengthening institutional capacities; balancing between the interests of the private and public sector actors in university education; and safeguarding the policy space of the ordinary people to participate in university education affairs that concern or affect them.

Key words: University governance; Administration; Management; Ghana; Education Policy.

1. Introduction

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the idea of ‘good governance’ is given different meanings by different organizations, but is generally characterized as referring to participation, accountability, predictability, and transparency (OECD, 2004). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) refers to good governance as ‘not only ridding societies of corruption but also giving people the rights, the means, and the capacity to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and to hold their governments accountable for what they do (UNDP, 1997). It means fair and just democratic governance.

It is an open secret to say that bad governance is among the major barriers to economic development and social well-being in the developing world (Castañeda, 2009; Forson, 2013; Forson *et al.*, 2015; Kurtz & Schrank, 2007; Wolf, 2005). On the contrary, the belief that good governance promotes growth and development is all but completely indisputable (Kaufmann, 2004) irrespective of how subjective the term ‘good governance’ might mean. While to determine growth, it can be measured in a rather straightforward fashion, good governance on the other hand is much more problematic (Kurtz & Schrank, 2007). No wonder in granting many development aid, good governance is a pre-condition (see Forson *et al.*, 2015).

Governance could also be the agreed form, structure and processes through which universities make decisions and act (Tierney & Lechuga, 2004). In this regard, governance is neither centered on an individual nor a single organization. However, for effective and efficient governance, there must always be leaders around the institutions or organizations who seek to make governance coordination meaningful to the extent that they will be accountable to the people they govern. A governance system that is effective and efficient means and implies

good governance. Governance, according to Bovaird and Löffler (2003) is the ways in which stakeholders interact with each other in order to influence the outcomes of policies for the public. By ‘good governance’, Bovaird and Löffler (2003) meant the negotiation by all the stakeholders in an issue of improved public policy outcomes and agreed governance principles, which are both implemented and regularly evaluated by all stakeholders.

Unambiguously, the manner in which power or authority is exercised in organizations in resource allocation and management can also be university governance. It involves the enactment of policies, procedures for decision-making, for organizational effectiveness (Carnegie & Tuck, 2010) and using the university’s laid down structure, and overall organizational coherence is governance (Considine, 2004).

Therefore, University Governance Issues (UGI) refers to matters surrounding the governance of a university that have a direct effective (positively or negatively) on the quality of output of the university. These issues may include among other things conventional indicators of governance plus any important topic or problem for debate or discussion that profoundly affects the running of the university. Hence, the research sought to explore the existing governance issues to infer the extent to which these issues might have impacted on the quality of outputs from the three Ghanaian Universities.

The relationship between education, governance, and public policy is two way: (1) economic development of a nation depends on the human capital produced by the education system of that nation and (2) public spending and management of the education system is crucial to the welfare of the nation. Changes in this relationship generate public concerns about university governance and its implications to national development.

Governance of the university requires that the university leadership defend academic freedom, encourage shared governance, promote accountability, ensure meritocracy in selection and strive for excellence (Bloom & Rosovsky, 2010). So, to look at governance means, an overview of the processes and the outcomes. That is the more reason why in the university system, it is not just your certificates that are important, but also the transcripts that come with those certificates. In the same vein, university education should not just end at transcripts and certificates, but also the impacts that the holders of such certificates have on communities they find themselves and the society at large. Effective and efficient university governance therefore must not just be what happens on the university campus but what also happens in the outside world with the university’s graduates. The challenge however is that, universities might be able to control the outputs but might not be in the position to determine the outcomes as Bovaird and Löffler (2003) put it; outcomes are often contingent on factors outside the direct control of the agency responsible for delivering particular outputs. Whiles ‘good governance’ is still very much a contested area, such that measures of ‘good governance’ are used in widely different ways in different contexts around the world, it is important to also say that there is now widespread international and local interest in measuring not only the quality of services but also improvements in quality of life, both overall and in specific dimensions (Bovaird & Löffler, 2003). In that regard, universities must also take serious interest in how the lives of their products (graduates) are improved upon and not just on the fact that they have turned out huge numbers from their departments, faculties or institutions.

Ghana has an educational system that can be grouped into three main categories: Basic, Secondary and Tertiary. According to Ministry of Education (2012), there are 36,692 basic schools, 515 schools at the secondary level and 136 at the tertiary level made up of Public Universities/university colleges; Public Specialized/Professional Colleges; Chartered Private Tertiary Institutions; Private Tertiary Institutions; Polytechnics; Public Colleges of Education; Private Colleges of Education; Public Nursing Training Colleges and Private Nursing Training Colleges. Figure 1 is the pictorial representation of the categories with their respective components.

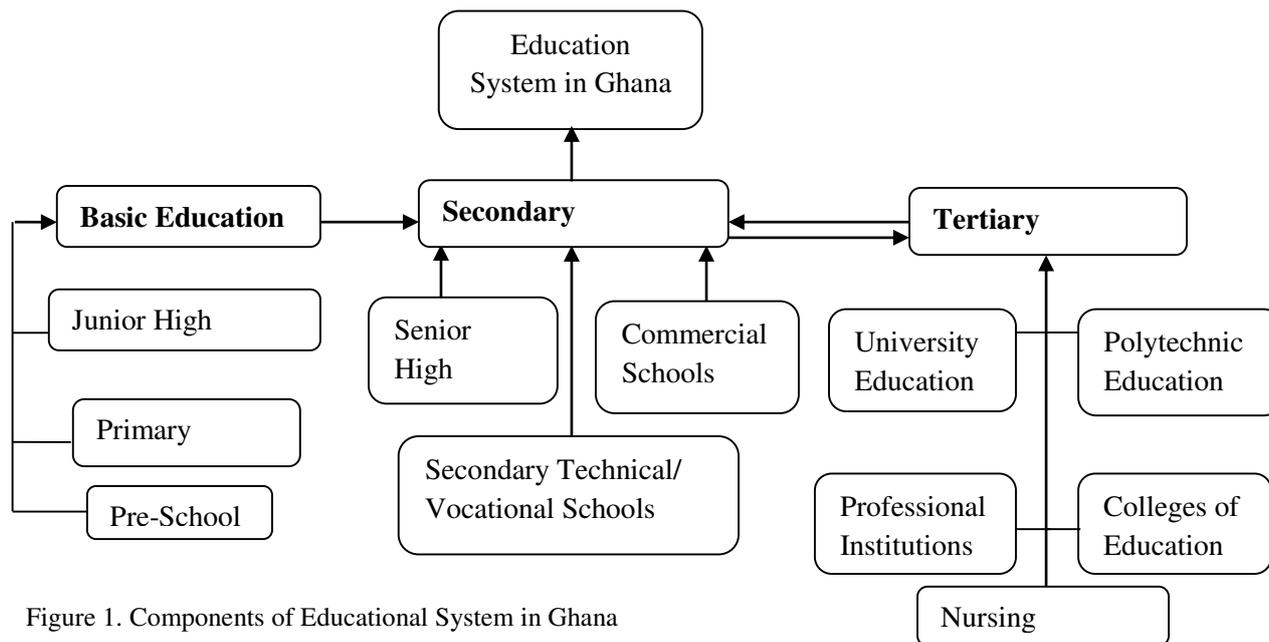


Figure 1. Components of Educational System in Ghana
Source: Authors' construct

Basic Education

Basic Education is the beginning of formal education in Ghana just like the rest of the world. It consists of three stages of Pre-School, Primary School and Junior High School. It is free and compulsory and starts with pre-school for 2 years with a 4-year old child after which the child proceeds to primary school at age 6 for 6 years. It is expected that at age 13 the child enters Junior High School (JHS) for 3 years and so 4 years old before pre-school, 2 years of pre-school, 6 years of primary school and 3 years of Junior High School. Basic education therefore takes the form 2-6-3 years of education. Which means, by the time, a child completes basic school; the child will be about 15 years old.

Table 1. Gross Enrolment Numbers for Basic Education

Enrolment	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
KG	1,338,454	1,440,732	1,491,450	1,543,314	1,604,505
Primary	3,710,647	3,809,258	3,962,779	4,062,026	4,105,913
JHS	1,285,277	1,301,940	1,335,400	1,385,367	1,452,585
Total	6,334,382	6,551,930	6,789,629	6,990,707	7,163,003

Source: GoG, 2013: 9.

As captured in Table 1, gross enrolments at the basic level has be increasing from 6,334,382 in 2008/9 to 7,163,003 in 2012/13 academic years representing an average of 13% of the base year.

Secondary Education

Secondary education is composed of Senior High Schools (SHS), Commercial Schools, Secondary Technical or Vocational Schools of 3 years each depending on the one the JHS graduate offers to pursue. Table 1.2 provides the enrolment at the Secondary education level for 2011/12 and 2012/13 academic years with an increase of 12% growth rate.

Table 2. Gross Enrolments in Second Cycle Education

Enrolment	2011/12	2012/13
SHS	758,468	842,587
TVET	62,303	61,496
Total	820,771	904,212
Population 15-18	2,044,848	2,291,267

Source: GoG, 2013: 11.

All things being equal, the percentage increase in gross enrolment both at the basic and secondary levels compared to the annual population growth of 2.1% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014) indicates that the progress is commendable.

Tertiary Education

Tertiary Education is made of Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, Nursing Colleges and Professional Institutions. Bachelor degrees in universities are usually 4 years, Polytechnics Higher National Diplomas 3 years, Colleges of Education and Nursing Colleges 3 years each and the professional institutions vary depending on the programme of study. As captured from the beginning, the focus of this study is on university governance and therefore focuses on the university component of the tertiary education in Ghana. It is important to mention that Figure 1 represents the current educational categories as at 2014; meaning it includes the reforms of the Anamuah-Mensah Presidential Commission report of 2002. A key component of the national reform agenda has been on the country's educational system. Notable among is the tertiary education reforms of 1991 which sought to improve upon educational access, relevance and quality so as to speed up the developmental agenda of the country.

These broad programmes and policies are multi-sectorial with the main aim of reducing poverty to the barest minimum and generally to improve the lives of every citizenry through the provision of relevant knowledge and skills. Under these strategic programmes, some gains have been made towards the realization of macro-economic stability and the achievement of poverty reduction goals.

Ghana has moved more quickly than she had envisaged in terms of her economic performance though much is yet to be done. For instance, the plan target of becoming a middle income country by 2020 was achieved 14 years in advance (2008) with GDP per capita (PPP) of \$3,300 in 2012. As defined, a country with a per capita income of more than \$976 a year is a middle-income country and Ghana's was \$1,318.36. Ghana's economy has maintained commendable growth trajectory with an average annual growth of about 9.0% over the past five years until 2013 (AfDB *et al.*, 2014) and was the world's fastest growing economy in 2011.

The Ghanaian economy continued to record significant growth rate in 2012 to sustain the country's middle income status as envisaged under the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (Government of Ghana, 2013). Additionally, the report showed that the per capita income increased from US\$1,563 in 2011 to US\$1,570 in 2012 compared to the target of US\$1,478.10 set under the GSGDA. Explaining further, GDP growth in 2012 was driven mainly by strong performance in the Services sector which recorded an average growth rate of 10.2%, compared with the situation in 2011 when the growth was led by the Industry sector with an average growth of 41.6% as a result of the impact of crude oil production that started in Ghana in 2011.

The Services sector continued to dominate the economy in 2012 with a share of 50%, followed by Industry (27.3%) and Agriculture (22.7%). In 2013, for example, though Africa maintained an average growth rate of about 4%, compared to 3% for the global economy, Ghana's economy grew at 7.4% (see Ghana Statistical Service, 2014) and for 10 years (2004-2013), Ghana's economy grew at an average of 7.4% annually (see CEPA, 2010). Growth in sub-Saharan Africa was 5% in 2013 and is projected to be 5.8% in 2014 (AfDB *et al.*, 2014). The Bank further posits that, Ghana is currently among the most promising economies in West Africa and in the continent, and has recently been growing faster than the average of these two groupings (African Development Bank, 2011). According to (UNDP, 2013), Ghana's HDI value for 2012 is 0.558 in the medium human development category. This mark positioned the country at 135 out of 187 countries. The Agency further posits that between 1980 and 2012, Ghana's HDI value increased from 0.391 to 0.558, an increase of 43 % or average annual increase of about 1.1 %. Additionally, within the same period, Ghana's life expectancy at birth increased by 11.5 years, mean years of schooling increased by 3.4 years, expected years of schooling increased by 4.1 years and GNI per capita increased by about 71 % between 1980 and 2012.

Figure 2 shows trends in Ghana's HDI Component Indices between 1980 and 2012. It shows that there are positive gains in as far as Life Expectancy, Education, GNI per capita and overall HDI is concerned. In effect, there is some improvement in Ghana's development but is that enough?

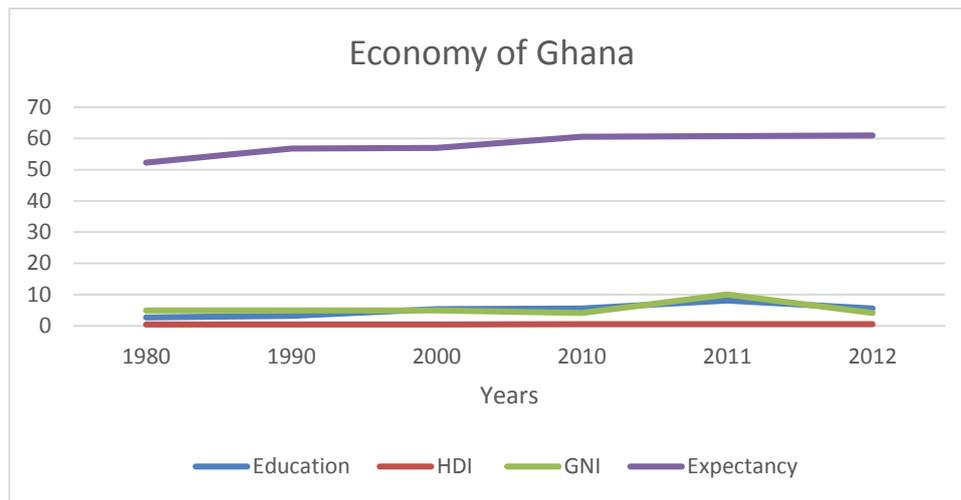


Figure 2. Trends in Ghana's HDI Component Indices 1980-2012

Source: Authors construct with data from World Bank.

On the educational front in general and according to Government of Ghana (2013) on the 'Education Sector Performance Report for 2012' spending on education continued to increase in 2012, with a total expenditure of GH¢ 6.0 billion in 2012, up from GH¢ 3.6 billion in 2011. In 2012 education expenditure was equal to 8.4% of GDP which is more than the 6% recommended by UNESCO. The largest source of funding to the education sector is the Government of Ghana (76% of all funds). However, 97% of this is allocated to compensation, leading to heavy reliance on other sources to pay for goods and services and assets, which make up 21% and 5% of total expenditure respectively (Government of Ghana, 2013).

Under the higher education reforms also, there have been increases in the number of universities from about 3 in 1991 to about 70 (see National Council for Tertiary Education, 2014). This increment in the institutions has also resulted in the increment in student enrolment. For example, student enrolment increased from 9,609 in 1990/91 (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2005) to about 73,000 in 2004/05 (Ministry of Education, 2012; National Council for Tertiary Education, 2006; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2005) and further to over 160,000 in 2013/2014 academic year.

Although the proportion of Ghana's population defined as poor fell from 51.7% in 1991/92 to 39.5% in 1998/99 and further to 28.5% in 2005/06, poverty still remains an important challenge (Government of Ghana, 2010). Headline inflation at the end of March 2014 was 15.9 per cent, up from 13.5 in December 2013, 13.8 in January and 14.0 per cent in February 2014 (see Ghana Statistical Service, 2014), an indication that life conditions could get worse. Additionally, structural challenges have been characterized by large fiscal and balance of payment deficits (Government of Ghana, 2013).

Ghana in its bit to exploit its strengths and mitigate the impact of its challenges, identified education as a conduit to:

- The acquisition and application of knowledge and skills in solving problems in society aimed at achieving growth and social equity for national development.
- Enhancing productivity and creating employment opportunities especially for the youth. In particular, this was to address the increasing unemployment especially among the youth. The employment issue was to be mainstreamed into the development planning process at all levels such that, MMDAs and MDAs will be supported to develop and implement employment creation programmes (Government of Ghana, 2003).

In the medium to long term solution to these issues, government identified tertiary education as one major way out of the challenges. It is for this reason that tertiary education reforms of were introduced not just to provide access but to also make tertiary education more effective, efficient and relevant to the development needs of the country. Reforming the tertiary educational system was also to ensure that there is uninterrupted quality education for all Ghanaians, reduce poverty and create the opportunity for human development (Forson & Opoku, 2014; Government of Ghana, 2003). Additionally, opportunities were to be created so that research and

development results in universities and other scientific institutions find expression in the day-to-day operations of farmers, artisans, government and industrialists.

Though the tertiary education reforms since introduced, have increased the number of tertiary institutions to award degrees, increased the number of universities and subsequently increased student enrolments, there appears universities might be fulfilling the access component of the national agenda to the detriment of the relevance and quality parts. This is because, in spite of all these policies interventions with some modest gains as indicated earlier, Government of Ghana (2010) still posits that there still exist high levels of unemployment, underemployment, disguised unemployment and accompanying incidence of poverty which constitute a threat to national cohesion, peace and stability, and require action to create sufficient jobs especially for young people in poverty endemic areas. More daunting is what the African Development Bank report says. The report asserts that though the Ghanaian population is becoming more educated, the current supply of skills required by the key growth and job creating sectors by the Ghanaian universities and polytechnics is still proving inadequate and according to the Bank, it is therefore important that tertiary, technical and vocational schools are encouraged to establish pro-active links with industries (African Development Bank, 2012).

While previous studies on the relationship between education and national development have taken into account the economic factors and their impact on national development (see Asongu, 2015; Forson *et al.*, 2013), the idea of university governance is least studied, yet it has far reaching implications on education outcomes and national development at large. The purpose of this study seeks to add the voice of experts in university governance to the discussion, by exploring thematic issues arising from their experiences in the administration and management of universities in Ghana. The study focuses on the historical and current governance practices and how such practices play a role in the quality of university education in Ghana. The study seeks to answer the questions: Have the role and purpose of university governance changed since its inception? (2) Are there differences between the old and the new system of university governance? (3) What larger ramifications does this have on university governance?

3. Methodology

This study was conducted within the framework of qualitative research design. The desire to use qualitative approach was influenced by exploring how people behave in their customary (natural) surroundings and how such behavior can be better understood as it unfolds naturally. The researchers adopted the social constructivist worldview, which holds the assumption that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work, and so the focus was on the specific contexts in which respondents have lived and worked in order to understand both the historical and cultural settings under which such experiences were gathered (Creswell, 2009). The researchers adopted the phenomenology approach to inquiry. This is an aspect of philosophy that deals with direct experiences of phenomena so as to determine their essence and the things that make them what they are (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). The study of “the shared meaning of experience of a phenomenon for several individuals” (McCaslin & Scott, 2003: p.449) is also viewed as a phenomenological study.

Participants in the study were eminent former senior university administrators and former regulators with management, administrative and governance experience in public and private university sector namely: university council chairs; vice and former vice chancellors; registrars; senior finance officers; executive secretaries and former executive secretaries for National Regulatory Board; national level student leaders and former national level student leaders who served in university governance council. To collect data, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with key informants (Bernard & Ryan, 2010) besides collecting documentary data from research reports, journals, books, government and non-governmental organizations reports. The first author’s over ten years’ experience and service in various university administrative capacities provided initial familiarity with the research context. It also gave the researchers an interaction platform which was used to negotiate access to the informants in the study. Guided by Bernard and Ryan (2010), the researchers sought assistance from the informants, one at a time. We chose the informants based on prior knowledge while the informants chose the lead author because they were willing to share knowledge obtained from years of experience in university governance in a study whose findings would bring to light insights that would improve policy and practice.

The research adopted the phenomenological steps as outlined by Bernard and Ryan (2010). This method is applied on the public university governance and is particularly necessary because of the first author’s exposure to the public university governance system. Key in this kind of study, as earlier stated requires that one puts aside his or her biases so that you don’t filter other people’s experiences. Specifically in gathering and analyzing data from this part of the research, the researchers adopted the live with the respondent method. At the public university, the researchers interacted with the respondents and took the data. The transcribed data was them

manually coded and put into patterns of themes. Note taking and tape recording were used to record data. Data was transcribed and read repeatedly over time to make sense of issues raised by informants. Significant statements were selected interpreted and used in the text to highlight key issues as well as to provide voice of the informants.

The phenomenological procedure was used to ascertain if the initial proposition that universities are governed by Acts, laws and memoranda supports the argument. This paved way for the policy recommendation on university governance and a conclusion done to mark the end of the research process. As a qualitative research, the process was largely inductive with the researchers generating meaning from the data that was collected (Creswell, 2009). In a bid to give an account of how university education governance system has operated in Ghana since its inception in 1948; the researchers collected the narratives from informants restructured and consolidated them into one coherent narrative that reflects the evolution of university governance and the different thematic issues that emerged from the informants' experiences. The final draft was taken back to informants to ascertain the accuracy of the account and to provide the feedback on the draft as well as other issues which they wished would be added in the research report. After this verification process, the final report was written.

4. Thematic Issues from the Study

4.1 Historical Account of University Education Governance System in Ghana

University education started in Ghana in 1948 with the setting up of University College of Gold Coast under the mentorship of University of London. Even though university education dated back to the days of Achimota School, "it is not officially regarded as university education because this only provided training of pre-first year university courses". Indeed the fact that the "British colonial government set up the Asquith Commission, in 1943" to investigate higher education and determine where they could set up a university for British Colonies in West Africa (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Gambia) gives the testimony that there was no formal university education in Ghana until 1948.

Prior to the setting up of the University College of Gold Coast, the British colonial administration approved a minority report of a Commission which recommended that the University for the British Colonists in West Africa be set up in Ibadan, Nigeria. Unfortunately or fortunately, a group of elites in Gold Coast (now Ghana) disagreed with this report and subsequently petitioned the British authorities.

But certain celebrities in Ghana including Dr. Joseph Boakye Danquah (J. B. Danquah) and Kwabena Sakyi, a prominent lawyer in those days decided they wanted a university in Ghana. (Former Executive Secretary, NCTE 1)

So they put up another proposal and this was accepted provided the university was to be funded by the colony itself. So the concept of self-financing of university education started as far back as 1948 even though, the research cannot confirm if indeed funding the University College of Gold Coast was entirely taken care of by the colony and if it was, how it raised the funds cannot also be determined. Accept to say that at least the first ten batches of the university college were not only provided with free luxury accommodation and given allowances, but were also provided with meals as former executive secretary, NCTE 1 who was a student from 1956 to 1959 put it:

I went to university college of Ghana, now Legon in 1956. We were actually the first people to go into commonwealth hall. Commonwealth hall was built for 300 students each one occupying one cubicle bigger than this office, but at that time there were only 53 students in the hall. At dining we were served on silver ware by well-dressed stewards, we were fed 3 times daily, in addition to snacks at 10am and tea at 4pm. At that time we were getting an allowance of 39 pounds a semester.

Several issues arise with the above statement; did the country Ghana fund university education from the taxes of the colony or there was some foreign support? Of course the numbers demanding university education were very low. But it is important to ask what plans were put in place by the political leaders to fund education in the future? How did Ghana as a country progress from this luxury of yesteryears to today where universities are facing huge infrastructural challenges? As the three Council Chairs all posited that the biggest challenge that their universities face is "huge infrastructural gap between student populations and available accommodation; academic and non-academic facilities". Additionally, the three Vice-Chancellors also alluded to the challenge

mentioned and added that “to recruit and retained qualified academic staff possess a challenge to university education” and for that matter university governance. Very aging faculty are retiring but no qualified replacements especially that the minimum entry for an academic position in the university is now a PhD. Extracting from one of the universities, though the same exists in all the strategic plans of the other two universities in this research is “to recruit and retain high caliber qualified, committed and willing academic staff”, confirmation that qualified academic staff is an issue in not only private universities but across board. Did we have a staff development plan and financial sustainability blue print? And if yes, what happened to it; if no, why?

The focus of the University College was more classical in its graduates as its aim was to train graduates to replace the upper labor force of the Gold Coast who were mainly expatriates. As a respondent put it, ‘Initial purpose of university education was meant to replace the expatriate staff and therefore was more classical’. Indeed, this was not only about Ghana as in classical times, universities trained only leaders because only those who were in leadership brackets could afford to go to the University.

The University College of Gold Coast therefore started and went on, but it was just about this time that the fight for independence also intensified. So Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana came and decided that because “the country was heading towards independence, and of course at that time the civil service was all made up of expatriate staff”, there was the need “to develop Ghanaians to replace these people when independence takes place”. Apart from “the sole administration, the country also needed certain individuals to start with developmental agenda of the country” and so came into fruition the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in 1952. The KNUST succeeded the Kumasi College of Technology which was established by a Government Ordinance on 6th October, 1951. “It was however, opened officially on 22nd January, 1952 with 200 Teacher Training students transferred from Achimota School”, to form the nucleus of the new College.

The other problem was teachers because in 1960 Dr. Kwame Nkrumah launched the Ghana Education Trust (GET) and “we needed teachers for the numerous (at the time) secondary schools around, at least not less than 50 schools. Now how do you get the teachers”? So the idea was to establish the University of Cape Coast, which was started as a “University of Science Education in October, 1962”. The University was established out of the need for highly qualified and skilled manpower in science education. Its original mandate therefore, was to train graduate professional teachers for the country's second cycle institutions and the Ministry of Education, in order to meet the manpower needs of the country's accelerated education programme at the time.

From 1962 when the University College of Science Education was established, there was no additional university that was set until 1992 when the University for Development Studies was set up. So University of Cape Coast came as the last university to be established under the old system of university education whiles University for Development Studies (UDS) marked the beginning of the new educational reforms of 1991.

Apart from the other reforms that the university education witnessed, a key feature was how university councils now has the power to appoint the Chancellor of their respective universities which title hitherto was for the Head of State of Ghana. Additionally, the old system empowered the government of the day to appoint the Vice-Chancellor with recommendation from the governing council but this practice was also reviewed as councils were now empowered to appoint the Vice-Chancellor and only inform the appropriate stakeholders which includes government.

Upon the recommendation of the University Rationalization Committee (URC) and the subsequent government white paper that university education fell short addressing problems of the society and only sought to focus on theory rather than practice, University for Development Studies was established in March 1992 by the Government to:

[..] blend the academic world with that of the community in order to provide constructive interaction between the two for the total development of Northern Ghana, in particular, and the country as a whole (PNDC Law 279, Section 2c).

The University was therefore borne out of the new thinking in higher education that emphasized the need for universities to play a more active role in addressing problems of its society, particularly in the rural areas. The UDS by its mandate and nature of her constituency is pro-poor focus and also located in the three poorest regions of Ghana (Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions). The university started as a full-fledged university with the powers to award its own degrees, diplomas and certificates without being affiliated to any older university.

Then followed the University College of Education of Winneba (now University of Education, Winneba) in September, 1992 under the mentorship of the University of Cape Coast. The core mandate of the University is to produce professional educators that will “spearhead a national vision of education aimed at redirecting Ghana's effort along the path of rapid economic and social development”. The university came into existence as a result of the amalgamation of seven diploma awarding institutions and has four campuses located at Winneba (Head Quarters), Kumasi, Ashanti Mampong and Ejumako. The university also has 32 study centres dotted across the country. The University sought to bridge the gap between the demand and supply of teachers as a result of the massive expansion at the basic and secondary levels of education in Ghana.

Other public universities that have been set up along with the private universities since the educational reforms of 1991 include: the University of Mines and Technology (UMaT), Tarkwa; University of Professional Studies, Accra (UPSA); University of Health and Allied Sciences, Ho and University of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani. According to the National Accreditation Board, there are nine public universities and one professional university. There are also about 61 private universities/university colleges and institutions that provide degree programmes in Ghana.

The Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) and the Ghana Technology University College (GTUC) operate in very different way as compared to either being public or private institutions. These two institutions though are not on government subvention; government appoints persons on their governing councils one of whom is the Chairman of the Council. These two institutions however with approval from their governing councils are allowed to charge full fees to run their operations. Whiles the governing councils of these two institutions are formed by the government of Ghana, they are financed through self-generated funds. In the case of GIMPA, it was taken off Government Subvention in 2001 but for GTUC, the university college has never been funded by the state. GTUC was started as a kind of relationship between the Government of Ghana and the then Ghana Telecom Company. These two universities charge their own fees and except the appointment of the governing councils, government has virtually nothing to do with them. Through these fees, they are able to carry out their mandates. Could this be suggestive that the public universities in Ghana can be taken off government subvention if they are allowed to charge their own fees as GIMPA and GTUC do? So the ownership of a university might not be the issue but being given the option to determine what charges are reasonable and acceptable to be able to run the operations of the university; private or public alike. As it is currently, the ownership of GTUC is not clear because whiles it has a council that is formed by the government, Vodafone Ghana which acquired majority shares of Ghana Telecom Company, claims ownership of the facilities in the university. The University College Strategic Plan (2011:6) puts it:

[...] GTUC still has a status issue. While the school is governed by a Council formed by the government, Vodafone also claims ownership of the university facilities. There is the need to have this issue resolved to enable the school have an identity. This is one of the issues confronting the school.

According to former Executive Secretary, NCTE 1, education in general from the “1970s to the mid-1980s went into sharp decline”, and for which reasons informed the basic and secondary educational reforms of 1987 in Ghana. These reforms brought in the 6-3-3-4 of education in Ghana putting aside the 6-4-7-3 years reducing the number of years from twenty to sixteen to progress from primary to university. So the 1987 reforms have six years of primary education, three years of Junior Secondary School, three years of Senior Secondary School and four years of university. The four years in the university as shown in Figure 3 has to do with general degrees whiles other courses like Medicine, Architecture and Law (professional) takes much longer period. Specifically, the new education reforms of 1987 took the form as indicated in Figure 3 in respect of years.

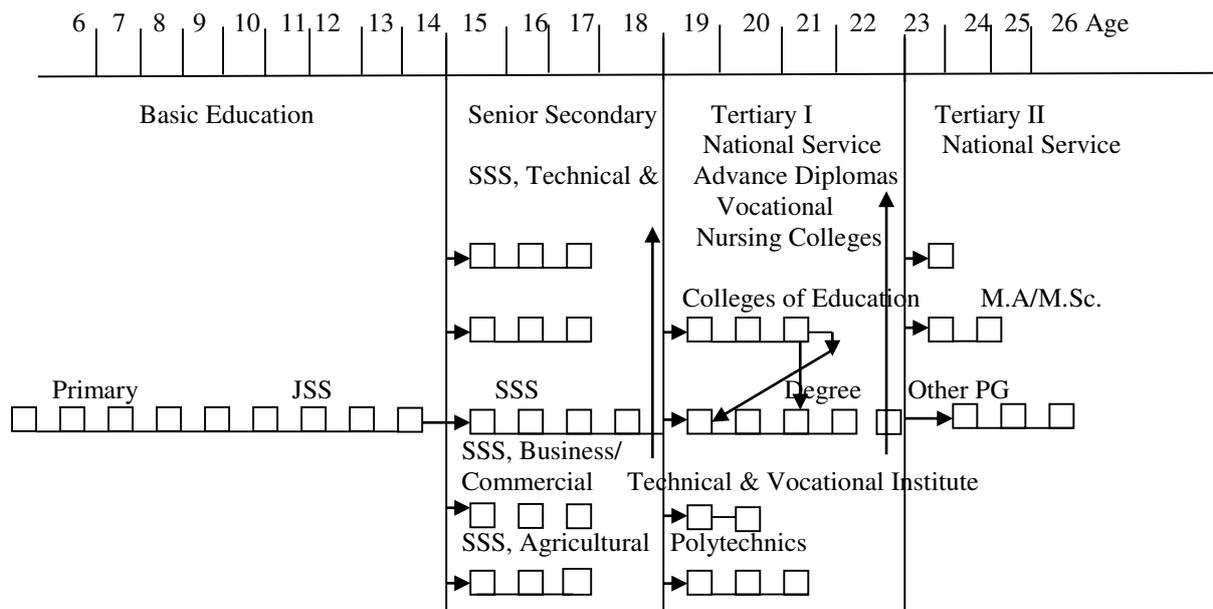


Figure 3. Structure of 1987 Education Reforms in Ghana.

Source: Bingab (2012: p.40)

Apart from the public universities, which were set up with a national agenda in mind, there is no evidence that the private universities were set up with the view towards meeting the national agenda apart from the access objective of the educational reforms. Accordingly, a retired regulator put it; ‘I think that we were a bit too lenient in allowing some of these to go through’. His view is that when the state opened up tertiary education to private participation, there should have been a guide on which areas such private participation should focus on instead of living it entirely to the decision of the private entities.

As illustrated above, ‘the reforms were tailored more towards the USA module of 6-3-3-4’ thus moving away from the initial British system that had Ordinary Level (‘O’ Level) of five years secondary school and two years of Advance Level (‘A’ Level) and emphasized more on vocational and technical education (Polytechnics and Vocational Secondary Schools).

As part of the total educational reforms in Ghana the University Rationalization Committee (URC) was also constituted in 1987 because, there was need to revamp and open up the university education system. The need became more prominent because with the reforms at the basic and secondary levels as more demand for higher education was eminent apart from the structural changes that were required of Universities. The committee released its report on the state of the higher education in the country and included in the report were the changes that were needed within the structure, administration and governance of higher education institutions. As was captured in the terms of reference for the Committee, its main objectives were “to develop strategies to expand access and equity, to improve efficiency and effectiveness at the university” level so as to improve on the quality and relevance of degree programmes.

Based on these objectives, the URC identified some key issues facing the higher education in Ghana and recommended the way forward as:

- a) Restructuring of academic programmes to be relevant to students and the economy
- b) Effective managing of higher education so that it will be cost effective
- c) Improving the existing facilities and efficient utilization of available resources and space
- d) Finding new strategies to expand higher education in Ghana.

In all, the URC made 166 recommendations to reform the higher education system. These were adopted by the government and became the Government White Paper entitled “Reforms to Tertiary Education System” issued in 1991. Indeed the reforms at the university level advocated for Ghana to open up university education to private participation because this was the time that there was a demand across the world for all countries to open up their markets, apart from the need arising from increased in enrolment at the basic and secondary levels of education. As a regulator put it:

I can say that because of limited access to public institutions, the reforms thought it was prudent to open University education up and it was all across the world. You know when all those market reforms, globalization and all those reforms set in, it affected education as well. So if we are opening up our markets, education is also part of the market so let us open it up to private participation and that is how come the law allowed private participation.

In summary the university educational reforms of 1991 were targeted at improving quality, efficiency, access, equity, relevance and sustainability, a suggestion that prior to the reforms university education had challenges in its quality, efficiency, access, equity, relevance and was not sustainable, to say the least.

4.2 Key Differences between Old and New University Education Governance System in Ghana

University education in Ghana might appear young when compared with the ones in Europe (UK), Thailand in Asia, Australia and the USA but six decades of university education as accounted for has come with some issues worth thinking through especially comparing the period of 1948 to 1991 (closed door policy on university education) and the period of 1992 – present (open door policy on university education). There has been increase in institutional capacity to regulate university education for access and quality; funding university education strategy has changed; university councils have been empowered more and above all, the introduction of private participation in university education.

4.2.1 National Policy Shift on University Education

As suggested by the respondents, the university educational reforms ushered in private participation in university education. Before the reforms, there was only public university education in Ghana, a situation that appeared not be sustainable because of the ever increasing demand for university education. This coupled with the education reforms of 1987 at the basic and secondary levels that created more basic and secondary/technical and vocational schools. The national policy shift now welcomed private sector into university education unlike in the previous. The current system has provided more access to university education and the researchers think, that the policy change was in the right direction but as to the relevance and quality of the current system will be determined by a lot of factors including the inputs that go into university governance. As part of the private participation into university education there was need to strengthen institutional capacity to supervise and monitor university education to ensure standards are maintained.

4.2.3 Institutions Regulating University Education

The new university governance system based upon the reforms now has two statutory regulatory agencies responsible for university education. One meant for the general oversight responsibility of universities (NCTE) and the other responsible for quality assurance issues (NAB) unlike in the past when there was only one body, the University Commission. Though this is a good idea to have two institutions, it might be partly because with the private sector participation in university education without an upper limit to the number of universities, the two regulatory bodies will be sufficient to handle the increases in the number of universities on matters of supervision and ensuring that quality is not compromised. So far the regulatory agencies have proved to be effective in the discharged of their duties as they have very swift in handing any regulatory issue as far as university governance is concerned.

4.2.4 Funding University Education in Ghana

As narrated in the historical account, university education in Ghana though started as self-financing by the colony, the entire training of the university graduate was funded by the state. The universities were well-resourced by the state and in addition paid allowances to the university students. Under the current university education system, the cost of running the university is a partnership between the state and the students at the public sector whiles at the private and quasi-public sector, the students bear the full cost of their training. It is the researchers' candid opinion that the old system where the state was responsible for the total cost of training a university student is not sustainable as getting resources for other equally important sectors of the national economy was going to post a serious challenge to the country. Especially that, some of those who were trained left to the western countries for greener pastures.

4.2.3 Powers of University Councils

The University councils have more powers now than in before the university education reforms in Ghana. Under the former university education governance system, the powers to decide who was the Chancellor of a university was not at issue at all as the Head of State was the Chancellor to all universities (public) in Ghana by law. Additionally, the government of the day also appointed the Vice-Chancellor of the University.

However, the current arrangements have given powers to the university council to appoint the Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor of the University. The researchers believe that the new system allows the university to be more autonomous as the Vice-Chancellor will be accountable to the governing council of the university which is composed of stakeholders of the university and not just the government. This has minimized the interference of the government on the day-to-day operations of the universities. As far as the quasi-public university education is concerned, the appointment of the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor is within the powers of the university council. While the power to appoint a Vice-Chancellor is vested in the university council, the owners of the private university decide on who can be the Chancellor of the university. The researchers argue here that in the case of the private university, it may be difficult to entirely leave the appointment of the Chancellor in the hands of the university council because of private interest.

5. Implications for Education policy and practice

The colonial structure of education which Ghana inherited at independence limited access to higher education not only on the basis of qualifications but also a complex combination of discriminatory principles masked with limited public spending on education. Almost an entire West Africa (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Gambia) was considered for only one university in 1948. Six countries paying taxes to the British colony and given one university in return for their taxes best explains exclusionary policies of the time. This exclusionary structure did not improve education quality. Instead, it led to complex education issues, after independence when the right to access to education was expanded. Two governance lessons can be drawn at this point: (1) exclusion and discriminatory policies have a complex and negative impact on education in the long run. (2) While the role of public policy is to limit those who benefit from public goods; measures used to limit the benefits of public goods should be balanced with a proportional expansion of alternative opportunities in order to ease pressure on public goods as well as to avoid future outbreaks of the demand for the very public goods a section of the population was denied access to without developing alternatives.

The study also shows that Ghana systematically maintained low public spending on education despite growth in the population that required higher education as well as the demand for human capital formulation. It lacked a constituent future planning for the education sector as well as corresponding sustainable investment in higher education. This brings to light three governance lessons: (1) the political leadership of the country systematically lacked the will to plan and invest in education. (2) While in a good national development policy planning and development, education policy is made central to economic development; education policy was put at the periphery and was not among top priorities in public spending. (3) Future policies should strive to put higher education in particular and education in general at the center of public policy priorities so that it can be matched with future national development priorities not only in principle but in practice.

The initial fundamental goal of university education was to meet the demands of the labor force. However, over time the new way of thinking has emerged, that which demands that universities help solve a range of problems in society. To be able to do so, there is need for the appointment of university leadership to take into account the interest of the society, including the adjacent communities. This has the following governance lessons: (1) With increased demand for public participation, transforming university governance structures and goals to include to help solve community issues will provide the university with vast experiences from which knowledge can be generated to help the university to create more relevant and responsive training programs; (2) the university can make the adjacent community or society at large a development partner or even a client; (3) building such relationships will not only strengthen the university relevance, leadership, accountability, and programs; but will also fuel innovation, creativity, and access to resources in the community.

The expansion of the private sector into university education comes with a range of challenges and lessons for instance: (1) concerns about the quality of university education given that some universities may compromise quality for the sake of profits; (2) private public sector partnership in university stakes may end up limiting the policy space for the public in negotiating interests and opportunities in public sector education; (3) more autonomy in university governance would lead to universities hiking fees hence exploiting the public; (4) the need to balance between quality and expanding access to education; private and public interests; and to safeguard the policy space of the masses regardless of the changes in university structures and governance arrangements.

The targets of 1990s university education reforms such as efficiency, access, equity, relevance and sustainability have not been achieved. As a result, there is need for current and future governance policies to strive to meet these basic policy needs. Some needs like efficiency will require more resources to tap into advanced technology. This is an area which government policies can take into account as a national priority when negotiating resources at the global level, especially in the context of post-2015 sustainable development goals,

particularly technology transfer and sustainable development. In this case, technology transfer should not only be about the industry level, but also university level. This would lead to maximum benefits in the deal the nation can negotiate with international partners.

Privatization of education in Ghana was prompted by a number of factors for instance globalization in the face of harsh economic conditions during early 1990s. The growing demand for higher education in the wake of limited public spending on higher education and the growing demand for employment opportunities created incentives for emergence the thriving of private universities. At the birth of democracy, Ghana was also expanding democratic freedoms which demanded that through the prior structure of governance was so strict on public accountability; the emergence of private university build on a combination of public good and market principles required some deregulation. As a result, this paved way for more autonomy and devolution of power that once belonged to the state into the hands of university councils and the private sector, particularly private university owners.

Remedies for the shift in university governance should take into account policy measures that ensure the following: (1) As part of the private participation into university education there is need to strengthen institutional capacity to supervise and monitor university education to ensure standards are maintained. (2) Maintain and increase if possible oversight bodied that deal with monitoring and regulating university education and governance; (3) Search for alternative source of university financing to complement the current sources; (4) Increasing accountability mechanisms at university and national levels.

A key limitation of this study is that, it success was progressively contingent on the rapport the lead author has had with eminent heads and administrators having served in the capacity of student leadership and administrative positions previously. The outcome of the interview and analyses could have been value-driven or skewed to preconceived view. We therefore recommend future research to explore university governance from the perspective of outsiders. The researchers should be outside university management system with minimal knowledge on university governance to ascertain whether the findings in this research will be corroborated. Additionally, for future research, it might be important to establish the impact of university education on the social and economic development of Ghana.

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