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## EDITORIAL

The Ghana Association of University Administrators (GAUA) as part of its mission to promote the advancement of higher education in Ghana and around the world provides policy alternatives for national development. This is done through research reports, policy analysis, reflective practice among others. Mindful of this, the National Executives adopted this Journal from GAUA University of Education, Winneba branch in 2019 to advance this cause. The sixth edition of the journal is thus, the “first” edition since the adoption and it also serves as a special edition to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of GAUA (1980-2020).

In this edition, Kwame Boakye, Joshua Addo, Eric Awotwe and Joyce Anastasia Sam did a comparative study of pension benefits between Ghana Universities’ Staff Superannuation (GUSSS) and Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) Schemes. The writers advocated for the boards of GUSSS to educate their members on the superior financial retirement benefits offered by the scheme as compared to SSNIT and to review the pension rights under the GUSSS.

Again, George Kwadwo Anane, Elijah Ofori-Badu and Kwame Asante also examined ‘cut-off aggregates’ and academic performance of students in a public university in Ghana. The paper recommends that university managers must develop or review their admission policies and factor in more inclusive parameters for admitting students into universities, especially applicants from less-endowed schools.

The issue of work-life balance among Senior Female Administrators was examined by Rebecca Asiedu Owusu. She recommends for Ghanaian women in public career spaces to be provided with conducive working environments like flexible working hours, extended paid maternity leave, paid paternity leave and further stressed for Early Childhood Centres to be sited close to office environment.

In examining cleaners’ perspective of littering behaviour of students in a Ghanaian university context, Fidelis Z. Tang urged university management and student leaders to provide adequate waste bins on university campuses, especially at vantage points with notes to encourage cleanliness. This, he believes, will encourage the culture of cleanliness and shared responsibility in safeguarding the environment.

In promoting peace among student religious groups in public universities in Ghana, Samuel Marfo, Musah Halidu and John Yaw Akparep recommend that periodic education on religious tolerance should be carried out by amalgamated religious bodies and university managements to help deepen the understanding and knowledge of students about religious pluralism and the need for peaceful coexistence.

Investigating into communication challenges in a multi-campus university system in Ghana, Amatus Dinye, Emmanuel K. Boon and Job Asante advocated for the deployment of modern communication technologies to enable satellite campus administrators to communicate in real-time with their main campus and this should be part of a well-developed communication policy.



In a research into the assessment of governance challenges in higher education institutions, Charles Obeng-Sarpong, Daniel Buor and Paul Kwadwo Addo found out that external issues such as: funding, quality assurance, getting requisite academics, and internationalisation among others militate against Ghanaian universities. They therefore advanced an argument for the need to build the capacity of management and council members on quality assurance systems, effective governance and leadership.

Examining service delivery and satisfaction of students and its implications for educational administration, Regina Nuako, Kweku Appiah-Badu, Benjamin Boampong Owusu and Abraham Adusei observed that suggestions about areas of service delivery improvement provided by students to university management are often not addressed to their satisfaction. The writers recommend for the need for university management to work with students and design service improvement strategies to bring about student satisfaction.

Lastly, Samuel Marfo, Joshua Akpade and Halidu Musah investigated crash helmet and safety implications for student motorcyclists and postulate that relatively low patronage of the full-face helmets observed among students in their study requires periodic educational campaigns.

We are extremely grateful to all our contributors and to our dedicated reviewers.

Happy 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to GAUA!

Dr. Paul Kwadwo Addo  
**National Editor/Editor-in-Chief**  
**August 2020**



## An Assessment of Governance Challenges in Higher Education Institutions in Ghana.

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### **Abstract**

*This paper explored the inherent militating issues that confront Ghanaian universities in their attempt to execute their mandate as expected. The study used both exploratory and comparative approaches to investigate challenges confronting Ghanaian universities in governance and institutional leadership. The study adopted a multi-stage sampling technique for the selection of three public and private Ghanaian universities. Anchored on Agency and Performance theories, the study focused on six (6) out of the sixty-nine (69) universities sampled. Findings indicate that externally, issues such as funding, quality assurance, linking up with the labour markets, getting requisite academics, aligning with the global trends as well as internationalisation militate against Ghanaian universities. Some operational challenges including funding (tools and logistics-related), political interferences, dealing with staff and students complaints, unapologetic stance of institutional leadership, neglecting policy feedback and policy implementation challenges also exist. The state-owned universities were found to have comparative advantage in dealing with these challenges. The study among other things, recommended governmental financial support for the private universities while decentralising operations of the supervisory bodies*

**Key words:** Governance, Quality Assurance, Educational Governance, Higher Education, Community Service.

### **Introduction**

According to Lenn (1997), higher education has a significant role to play regarding personal, social, regional, national and international growth and its ultimate development. Advanced countries, therefore, commit a lot of resources into higher education by way of establishing quality-oriented, general as well as specialised

institutions of learning in their countries. These institutions are always mandated to churn out skilful products, some of which are professionals who are expected to ultimately function as they should. It follows that more often than not, appropriate programmes are run for the staff of such institutions of higher learning to improve total quality management, including the application of modern administration techniques, good management selection practices, curriculum modernisation, suitable appraisal systems and state-of-the-art teaching skills (Khan et al., 2018).

Specifically, universities across the world are primarily mandated to teach, conduct research and offer community service which eventually give impetus for the development of a country and its people. According to Cutting and Kouzmin (2001), the success of organisations is contingent on the quality and adaptability of its governance. For to universities, much attention has been given to their governance and the subject continues to attract so much attention in relation to size and composition in addition to the roles played by bodies in university governance (Coaldrake et al., 2003). This presupposes that the ability of the universities to successfully carry out their mandate depends on their adopted governance system. The subject of governance has been defined differently by different authors. For the purpose of this paper, governance is defined as how decisions are taken and implemented or to steer an organisation.

Organisations all over the world have had to confront the issue of governance with their associated challenges. The tertiary education sector, especially the universities, is not an exception (Tetteh and Ofori, 2010). Unfortunately, some universities around the world have suffered bad press (damaged institutional reputation) due to their inability to use their governance systems to manage risk.

In Ghana, issues related to governance have derailed the academic calendar of many universities and other tertiary institutions leading to closure of some institutions (Effah, 2003). There have been instances where lecturers and students have hauled institutions before the court for dispensation of justice on some misunderstandings arising from the application of some operational documents such as the Statutes, Constitution, Students' Handbook and even other administrative procedures. These factors together with others such as dwindling public or government funding have affected the mandate of the universities and have necessitated an investigation into these challenges.

With regard to the challenges confronting universities in the 21st century, even though Stace and Dunphy (2001) acknowledged that universities are striving hard to function in a rather more competitive fashion, we opine that the world is confronted with various changes in every facet of life including education. Therefore, this means that the pace of progress in developing these areas must be doubled or tripled by both the state and the private citizens. A study conducted by Braimah (2004) to explore challenges facing universities in Ghana identified factors such as Revenue Diversification and Institutional Autonomy; Information and Communication Technology; Dynamics of Student Mix; Issue of Quality Enhancement and Relevance; Administrative and Management

Structural Processes; Equity and Access with regard to Higher Education; as well as Networking and Developing Partnership as some of the challenges affecting the governance system. However, the extent to which these barriers have affected the operations of Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) is unknown.

Equally important in the existence of any university is its governance systems and administration. Giving credence to the importance of professionally trained administrative body, Godfrey and Grasso (2000) were concerned with the administrative dimension of the universities. They emphasised that participatory style of administration is fairly cutting edge and very much accepted than authoritarian leadership as decision making is always with mutual consultation and discussion with the former. The participatory administration is often underpinned by an arrangement of structures and procedures which lend support to the success of the organisation, both internally and externally. This often helps for the right climate to be created for teaching and learning and community impact through research.

It should be pointed out that studies have indicated varied degrees of compliance to the various factors of assessment of Ghanaian universities by supervisory bodies in tertiary education which are, National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the National Accreditation Board (NAB). For instance, in the area of physical infrastructure and library facilities, public universities were found to be better than the private ones. Physical infrastructural facilities like lecture halls, various laboratories buildings, among others are often in relatively better state in the public universities. With financial support from the state, the public universities are able to replace their obsolete equipment and are better able to maintain their subscriptions of suitable and appropriate journals for their programmes of study (Dattey, Westerheiden & Hofman, 2019). However, the private universities have been found to be doing better in terms of class size than their public counterparts as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Differences in class sizes between public and private universities

| Class in:                | Public                   |                          | Private                  |                          | NAB's SSR norm (no. of students to a lecturer) |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
|                          | Average small class size | Average large class size | Average small class size | Average large class size |  |
| Business                 | 80                       | 240                      | 54                       | 179                      | 27:1   |
| Other Humanities         | 52                       | 274                      | 31                       | 146                      | 27.1   |
| Applied Sciences         | 71                       | 310                      | 29                       | 145                      | 18.1   |
| Technology & Engineering | 57                       | 157                      | 16                       | 83                       | 18.1   |
| All programmes           | 65                       | 245                      | 33                       | 138                      |  |

Source: Adopted from Dattey, Westerheiden & Hofman (2019).

From Table 1, it is evident that the private universities have less enrollment numbers, hence, they manageable class size than the public universities. More often than not, prospective students prefer the public universities to the private because of their relatively affordable fees and variety of programmes. What then are the individual challenges of these two categories of universities in Ghana, including their style of governance?

The current study seeks to assess the governance system in Ghanaian universities, using a case study of both the state-owned and private universities in relation to the principles of good governance and mainly, identify challenging issues of governance. The nature of these challenges and the extent of their existence as developmental barriers to Ghanaian universities were investigated. These barriers were explored in relation to how the universities adopt the principles of good governance: that is, participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency as well as accountability in their operations (UNESCAP, 2011). The overarching aim is to have effective and efficient governance system in place for Ghanaian HEIs.

### **Research Questions**

This study seeks to examine the governance challenges in Ghanaian universities. It, therefore, addresses the following questions:

- i) What is the nature of the existing governance challenges in state-owned and private universities in Ghana?
- ii) What is the extent of interaction between the universities and their regulatory bodies?
- iii) What policy recommendations can be proffered to influence the governance of Ghanaian universities?

### **Objectives**

The following are the objectives of the study:

- i) To assess the existing governance situation of the Ghanaian universities.
- ii) To identify challenging issues of governance
- iii) To share findings of the studies and make recommendations that would help improve the situation

### **Purpose of the Study**

Many studies have been conducted in the area of university governance. For instance, Ayogu (2001) researched into policies and records about good governance. He concluded among other things that moral sentiments should be covered by expanding the framework for analysis so as to enrich corporate governance in Africa. Vaghese (2004) analysed the growth and the rate of expansion of private universities with Ghana and Kenya in focus. The current study seeks to examine the governance challenges in the universities in Ghana. This will ensure proper appreciation of the situation so as to provide the right solutions to it.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study would clarify the current situation of some governance challenges in Ghanaian universities for better appreciation of those issues. It would also contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the sphere of university governance. The study will unearth lapses which can be tackled directly. The study is hoped to positively impact on decision-making within the universities, as it would and will also be the basis for further studies.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

The study is anchored on the Agency Theory and also through the lenses of Theory of Performance. The Agency Theory postulates that an organisation (university) is seen as a nexus of contract (though loosely conceived) between holders of resources and their agents. In situations where an individual or a group of individuals referred to as principals, hire the service(s) of one or more other individuals, called agents to give them their mandate to perform certain functions and also, delegate their decision-making right to them then, agency relationship would have arisen (Mitnick and Barry, 1976). This is seen in university governance structure where members of Council, for instance, transact business in the interest of stakeholders. The implication is that there is always a relationship between the institutions and their various actors (Government, Faculty, Students, Council, Alumni and other stakeholders).

The two-tier governance structure (bicameralism) of the university which is the Council and the Academic Board is instituted through the interplay of these governance actors. The interplay of these actors should culminate in the achievement of the institutional objectives. However, in doing so, these stakeholders expect that the best practices are employed by the agents. For instance, they are interested in the extent to which the principles of good governance are applied such that there will be institutional peace and harmony. This expectation is highly anticipated with any of the adopted governance models.

The Theory of Performance holds the view that “performance is what the organisation hires one to do, and do well.” (Campbell et al. 1993. P. 40). This means that performance is rather defined by the judgemental and evaluative processes but not necessarily the action undertaken (cf. Ilgen & Schneider, 1991; Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997). Therefore, only measurable actions are considered to constitute performance (Campbell et al., 1993). This point of view has made the researchers unanimous that when conceptualising performance, one has to differentiate between an action (that is the behavioural) and an outcome aspect of performance (Campbell, 1990; Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993; Kanfer, 1990; Roe, 1999). From the perspectives of performance, one can generally make a differentiation of three perspectives as follows: (1) an individual differences perspective which searches for individual characteristics (e.g., general mental ability, personality) as sources for variation in performance, (2) a situational perspective which focuses on situational aspects as facilitators and

impediments for performance, and (3) a performance regulation perspective which describes the performance process. These perspectives are not mutually exclusive but approach the performance phenomenon from different angles which complement one another (Campbell et al., 1993).

From the above, it could be seen that for any institution to achieve its purpose must have an effective governance system which must be able to perform for the satisfaction of major stakeholders. As stated earlier, one of the objectives of this paper is to share findings of an assessment of governance systems in Ghanaian universities and its implications for managing universities in Ghana and around the world.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research Approach***

The study adopted a wide range of approaches, specifically mixed-method which makes use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This is where the implications behind the collected data were thoroughly discussed. Also, a multiple-case approach was used as six different universities selected throughout the country were studied with some comparisons and contrasts among them. This means the study used the cross-case analysis that explores in detail the similarities and differences existing across cases to support generalisability and prediction of theory (Miles and Huberman, 1994). That approach seeks a chain of evidence for the relationship studied. As Yin (1994) as well as Miles and Huberman (1994) put it, studying multiple cases makes it possible to build a logical chain of evidence.

The study also adopted the “institutional-analytical” method that makes use of historical details and records which then relate them to wider social explanations that are inherent (Tuma, 1971 as cited by Adarkwa, 2012). Specifically, the method draws on textual analysis by reading original texts to tease out the intent of the authors; contextual analysis of ideas by considering the mood of the time period in question; historical narrative including critical synthesis of the stories in the past and rational reconstructions such as re-reading old texts and making sense of them in a modern context (Marcuzzo, 2008).

### ***Sampling***

Purposive and stratified sampling techniques were used. These were adopted to ensure that all the selected institutions satisfy the developed criteria. It also ensured that all the different groups were represented to bring about homogeneity (within group) and heterogeneity (between groups). Initially, stratified sampling method was used to ensure that the six universities were selected from the three main zones of Ghana. Therefore, all the universities both public and private were categorised into three strata using the three zones. These are the coastal zone dominated by Accra-Tema and Sekondi-Takoradi; a middle zone with Kumasi as its centre; and the northern savannah zone (Nabila, 1986).

Subsequently, six inclusion criteria were applied to select the universities for the study. The criteria were whether: i) a particular university was chartered or not, ii) it had



extension campus or not, iii) it was accredited or not, iv) it did postgraduate programmes or not, v) the institution was faith-based or not and also, vi) to find out years of existence of the particular university. Equal weight was then given to each criterion and institutions were picked based on their total scores. Six Ghanaian universities were explored in the study. These were Kwame Nkrumah Universities of Science and Technology Kumasi, University of Education, Winneba and University for Development Studies which represented the public universities while Valley View University, Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture as well as Technical University College of Tamale represented the private ones.

### ***Data Collection Instruments***

Various tools were used to collect data for the study. Literature was the first source of data for the study. These included reviews of similar research conducted on the subject both global and contextual. Review of official documents and reports such as the statutes of the institutions studied, the Fourth Ghanaian Republican Constitution, Ghana Educational Strategic Plan 2003 to 2015 and NAB's accreditation documents. Again, NCTE's Annual Enrolment Reports on Tertiary Education Institutions (TEIs) were also studied. Primary data were collected using self-administered questionnaires, expert interviews, key-informant interviews, in-depth interviews and observation.

A set of eighty-eight item-questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire was based on eight principles of good governance as mentioned earlier, namely: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, as well as accountability. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined by proof-reading, pre-testing and retesting to ensure fitness for purpose. The content validity of the questionnaire was determined by expert review by selected senior members at KNUST and the Kumasi campus of UEW. Respondents to the interviews and the questionnaire were Vice-Chancellors, Registrars, Provosts of Colleges, Deans, Heads of Department, executives of Staff Unions as well as SRC executives. An interview guide was developed to ensure content validity and reliability in order that the desired responses and results were elicited. The interview guide had four sections with the Section 'A' structured to elicit demographic data of respondents. The other sections were devoted to the various themes of the study.

### ***Data Analysis Framework***

Responses from the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive as well as inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as the computation of the mean scores were employed in the perception index analysis for analysing respondents' general agreement or disagreement to the various statements. Also, three regression models were used. Models 1 and 2 had external challenges (EC) and operational challenges (OC) as the dependent variables respectively with all the eight (8) measured principles of good governance as independent variables. It must be mentioned that the external challenges refer to factors which the institutions have no control over while the operational challenges are the ones that confront the institutions in their operations. The third model

*Obeng-Sarpong, Buor & Addo*

is a multiple reverse of the first and second models. It tests each of the principles of good governance as dependent variables while the two challenges (EC and OC) are considered independent variables. The intention of this multiple reverse of the equation was to find out the extent of influence of both operational and external challenges on the principles of good governance.

### Results and Findings

The results and key findings from the study are presented in the tables below:

Table 2: Institutional/Operational Challenges (OC)

| Statement   | SD |      | D  |      | N  |      | A  |      | SA |      | Mean scores |       |       |
|---|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|-------------|-------|-------|
|   | F  | %    | F  | %    | F  | %    | F  | %    | F  | %    | PrUs        | SoUs  | Ovr   |
| 1 All decisions made in the Institution conform to the provisions of its Statutes/Constitution but implementation sometimes becomes problematic.                          | 1  | 2.8  | 3  | 8.3  | 7  | 19.4 | 15 | 41.7 | 10 | 27.8 | 0.28        | 0.45  | 0.38  |
| 2 In making decisions by the Institution, the normative is more often different from practice.  | 1  | 2.8  | 9  | 25.0 | 13 | 36.1 | 11 | 30.6 | 2  | 5.6  | -0.7        | 0.02  | -0.38 |
| 3 Sometimes, the Head acts ultra vires when it comes to decision-making.  | 5  | 13.9 | 4  | 11.1 | 14 | 38.9 | 11 | 30.6 | 2  | 5.6  | 0.03        | 0.02  | 0.02  |
| 4 The staff and students occasionally complain about certain decisions taken by the University which affect their interest (for example, those on promotions, fees, etc.) | 3  | 8.3  | 2  | 5.6  | 3  | 8.4  | 21 | 58.3 | 7  | 19.4 | 0.35        | 0.43  | 0.40  |
| 5 The authorities do not have courage to apologize and withdraw bad decision taken.   | 4  | 11.1 | 6  | 16.7 | 11 | 30.6 | 14 | 38.9 | 1  | 2.8  | 0.17        | 0.32  | 0.26  |
| 6 Decisions are taken without considering the socio-economic conditions of staff and students.  | 5  | 13.9 | 14 | 38.9 | 8  | 22.2 | 8  | 22.2 | 1  | 2.8  | -0.10       | -0.23 | -0.18 |
| 7 Political considerations sometimes compel Institutional authorities to take unpopular decisions.  | 8  | 22.2 | 9  | 25   | 11 | 30.6 | 7  | 19.4 | 1  | 2.8  | 0.32        | 0.18  | 0.23  |

|  |   |      |   |      |   |      |    |      |   |      |      |      |      |
|--|---|------|---|------|---|------|----|------|---|------|------|------|------|
| 8 Views of staff and students are sometimes glossed over when certain decisions are taken.                               | 2 | 5.6  | 9 | 25.0 | 5 | 13.9 | 19 | 52.8 | 1 | 2.8  | 0.14 | 0.11 | 0.12 |
| 9 Feedback on implemented decisions is not often sought.   | 3 | 8.3  | 7 | 19.4 | 9 | 25   | 15 | 41.7 | 2 | 5.6  | 0.10 | 0.09 | 0.09 |
| 10 Some staff and students become apathetic during implementation of some decisions because their views were not sought. | 1 | 2.8  | 5 | 13.9 | 9 | 25.0 | 17 | 47.2 | 4 | 11.1 | 0.21 | 0.25 | 0.23 |
| 11 Tools and logistics to implement decisions are often not considered before the decisions.                             | 6 | 16.7 | 7 | 19.4 | 9 | 25.0 | 9  | 25   | 5 | 13.9 | 0.32 | -0.4 | 0.09 |

Where SA=Strongly Agree, A =Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagrees, SD=Strongly Disagree, PrUs=private universities, SoUs=State-Owned Universities, OvT= Overall

Source: Author's construct based on field data, April 2015

From Table 2, the responses for the statements measuring the institutional or operational challenges confronting the universities are varied. From Table 2, eleven (11) statements were posed with two (2) of them producing an overall negative mean score. The first statement which produced a negative mean score was that “*In making decisions by the institution, the normative is more often different from practice*”. The second statement which also produced negative mean score was that “*Decisions are taken without considering the socio-economic conditions of staff and students*”.

In summary, the eleven variables were reduced to six major variables explaining the challenging issues of governance confronting Ghanaian universities, using factor analysis as a variable reduction tool. It could also be deduced from Table 2 that the said six major variables produced overall positive mean scores each which clustered around “Agree” response suggesting the idea of unanimity. The following were identified as the major operational or institutional challenges that confront most Ghanaian universities and they are explained by three components of the factor analysis:

1. Staff and students occasionally complain about certain decisions taken by the university which they think affect their interest.
2. Political considerations sometimes compel institutional authorities to take unpopular decisions.
3. Feedback on implemented decisions are not often sought.
4. Tools and logistics (related to funding) to implement decisions are often not considered before the decisions.
5. Authorities do not have courage to apologize and withdraw bad decisions taken.
6. All decisions made in the institution conform to the provision of its statutes/constitution, but implementation sometimes becomes problematic.

Table 3 and 4 provide summary for interpreting the results. It could be seen from these tables that, R, R<sup>2</sup>, adjusted R<sup>2</sup>, and the standard error of the estimate can be used to determine how well a regression model fits the data. In the Model Summary, Table 2 (the External Challenges (EC)), entry of all eight (8) independent variable was done. The results show that model 1 accounted for 14.7% of the variance (R Square) in the External Challenges (EC).

Table 3: Model Summary for External Challenges (EC)-Model 1

| Model                           | R                  | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics |          |      |      |               |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|------|------|---------------|
|                                 |                    |          |                   |                            | R Square Change   | F Change | df 1 | df 2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1                               | 0.383 <sup>a</sup> | 0.147    | 0.123             | 0.36323                    | 0.147             | 6.198    | 1    | 36   | 0.018         |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), EOEE |                    |          |                   |                            |                   |          |      |      |               |
| b. Dependent Variable: EC       |                    |          |                   |                            |                   |          |      |      |               |

Source: Author’s construct based on field data, April 2015

In Table 4 (Operational Challenges (OC) ), however, entry of the first most significant principle of good governance (Evidence of Effectiveness and Efficiency) accounted for 43.7% of the variability (R Square) in the Operational Challenges (OC). Entry of the second and final most significant principle of good governance (Accountability in Governance-AIG) resulted in an R-Square change of 10.6%. This means that as the number of significant good governance indicators increases, the more the amount of variability is explained in the predicted OC. Hence, the total variability explained increased from 43.7% to 54.3% with the entry of the second variable (AIG).

The "R" column represents the value of R, the multiple correlation coefficients. R can be considered to be one measure of the quality of the prediction of the dependent variable (i.e. EC for model 1 and OC for model 2). The "R Square" column represents the R<sup>2</sup> value (also called the coefficient of multiple determination), which is the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables (technically, it is the proportion of variation accounted for by the regression model above and beyond the mean model). So, as can be seen in Table 3 above, the independent variables explain 0.147 (14.7%) of the variability of the dependent variable in model 1, 0.543 (54.3%) of the variability of the dependent variable in model 2.

Table 4: Model Summary for Operational Challenges (OC)-Model 2

| Model Summary <sup>c</sup>           |                    |          |                   |                            |                   |          |     |     |               |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
| Model                                | R                  | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics |          |     |     |               |
|                                      |                    |          |                   |                            | R Square Change   | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1                                    | 0.661 <sup>a</sup> | 0.437    | 0.421             | 0.29302                    | 0.437             | 27.904   | 1   | 36  | 0.000         |
| 2                                    | 0.737 <sup>b</sup> | 0.543    | 0.517             | 0.26770                    | 0.106             | 8.131    | 1   | 35  | 0.007         |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), EOEE      |                    |          |                   |                            |                   |          |     |     |               |
| b. Predictors: (Constant), EOEE, AIG |                    |          |                   |                            |                   |          |     |     |               |
| c. Dependent Variable: OC            |                    |          |                   |                            |                   |          |     |     |               |

Source: Author's construct based on field data, April 2015

### ***Challenging Issues of Governance in Ghanaian Universities: External Challenges***

It came to light that issues of funding, internationalisation as well as attracting the right calibre of faculty were found to be the key external challenges confronting Ghanaian universities.

It was realised that some of these external challenges make it difficult for Ghanaian universities to follow the global trends. The issue of not completely following the global trends was amplified in light of a statement made by one of the respondents (Vice-Chancellor). In answering the question "*Are we (Ghanaian Universities) following the global trends*", he said among other things the following

*“There is a lot to do to align with the global trends. Professionalism reigns globally but here, lobbying for positions for example, Vice-Chancellorship exists”.*

This clearly shows that though generally speaking, Ghanaian universities follow the global trends, there is more to be done in order to get aligned properly. It must, however, be pointed out that even though the external challenges exist, such challenges do not necessarily affect the application of the principles of good governance in the governance systems of the Ghanaian universities per se. This is because though the external or global challenges exist, they are external to the operations of these institutions. They rather negatively affect the institutions' international image. For instance, universities generally have the mandate of teaching, researching and offering community service. Some of these research works, especially, the applied ones could be undertaken only when there is adequate funding. Universities are often rated with regard to research they conduct. Such researches are always crucial in solving societal problems. Therefore, their absence to a large extent reduces the relevance of these institutions in the eyes of the public and also, affect international rating and hence, recognition of these universities.

#### Challenging issues of governance in Ghanaian Universities: Operational Challenges

The operational challenges which actually confront the universities almost on daily basis were that staff and students occasionally complain about certain decisions taken by the university which they think affect their interest, political considerations sometimes compel institutional authorities to take unpopular decisions, feedback on implemented decisions is not often sought, tools and logistics (related to funding) to implement decisions are often not considered before the decisions, authorities do not have courage to apologise and withdraw bad decisions taken and all decisions made in the institution conform to the provision of its statutes/ constitution but implementation sometimes becomes problematic.

For instance, the issue of not seeking for feedback on implemented decisions makes evaluation of decisions difficult. It was, however, unraveled that all decisions made in the institutions conform to the existing provisions in the statutes/constitution. A case in point was when one of the respondents was asked the question “Do you always have to comply with statutes in carrying out your mandate?” The respondent answered with certainty:

*“Such a thing is not negotiable”*

This means no one could be allowed to set aside the existing rules and take any decision. The essence is that the existing governance instruments must necessarily be complied with. This, however, was found to be more pronounced in the state-owned universities than the private ones. With some of the private institutions, it was realised that even though the statutes make provision for the establishment of some committees, such committees were yet to be put in place. This is because some of the owners of these

institutions purely run them as business entities (except a few who have other motives) with the chief executives wielding so much power such that they can easily set aside whatever recommendations or pieces of advice given by the governance instruments and do what pleases them so far as it does not directly breach the law. For instance, in an interview with one of the students' representatives, serving on a statutory committee (Library Committee) in the institution, he retorted as follows:

*“We do not have a functional Student Representative Council per se with all its units functioning but, some of us are nominated by the students to represent them on some committees during such committees' meetings” (Private University student leader, 2015)*

The issue of funding was found to be a crucial challenge affecting Ghanaian universities. This is due to the competing demands for the available governmental resources from other sectors of the economy (OECD, 2008). On the part of the private universities, the financial challenge is more pronounced. As stated by one of the respondents in the following words:

*“Some private universities are supported by their churches. But those of us not having such support indeed suffer financially”.*

This is mainly because private universities are self-funded. The situation becomes more aggravated as the public universities are the preferred option for most students due to competitive fees, respect associated with public universities as a result of being in existence for long as well as their programme options. It must, however, be mentioned that even though the funding challenge is more pronounced with the private universities, decisions are swiftly taken to deal with issues and also, student-lecturer engagements were found to be better in such institutions.

These external and operational challenges were found to often militate against Ghanaian universities. This is due to the kind of limitations imposed by some of these challenges despite the frantic efforts made by these institutions to conduct their businesses as expected. The nature and the extent of these challenges especially the operational ones, are recurrent in nature. This is because so far as the universities operate, these challenges are encountered. They, therefore, call for drastic measures some of which go beyond the very institutions for resolution especially, in the public universities where occasional political interference was found to be prevalent.

## **Discussion**

From findings, it could be deduced that Ghanaian universities are confronted with both external and operational challenges. Factors such as aligning with the global trends, the issue of quality assurance as well as internationalisation of the universities were found to be very crucial challenges confronting the institutions externally. Though these external or global challenges exist, they are external to the operations of these institutions.



Besides some key operational challenges were also found. These included the fact that staff and students occasionally complain about certain decisions taken by the university which affect their interest. For instance, the conversion of some male halls of residence into mixed in Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology triggered serious unrest which resulted in the closure of the University in 2018. Political considerations also sometimes compel institutional authorities to take unpopular decisions especially, during appointments. Such decisions often fail as they lack general support. Occasionally, tools and logistics (related to funding) to implement decisions are often not considered before such decisions are made. Feedback on implemented decisions also hardly sought.

As the Agency Theory sees the organisation (university) as an existence of a kind of contract between holders of resources and their agents (the University Council and all those entrusted with management of the institutions), results are always expected from these agents. The owners of private universities see their organisations (universities) as business entities and, therefore, those who have been hired should operate in such a way that there will be value for money. Therefore, decisions that do not support this trend (at least, in their estimation) are not encouraged. For them, decisions are made with the ultimate aim of adding to the kitty. This corroborates the Agency Theory where the agents should ensure that shareholders get some profit.

With public universities, since the investment and commitment of resources are always done by governments, the crave for profit is not the primary consideration especially when governments are expected to provide education for their people at all levels. However, in recent years, with the application of the principles of New Public Management (NPM) by governmental institutions, which is the adoption of private sector corporate or entrepreneurial principles (Hall et al., 2003), the trend seems to be changing. This has made public universities a bit profit-minded especially when the in-flows from governments have become very irregular.

One of the perspectives of the Performance Theory is the situational perspective which considers situational factors as facilitators and impediments for performance. In line with this perspective, it is obvious that the conditions of service existing in the public and private universities are not the same and such situations have impact on performance differently. While the public universities comparatively have better conditions of service, such a situation is likely to impact positively on their performance which will make them perform better than their private counterparts, some of whom are deficient in some logistics.

## **Conclusion**

The study concludes that there are several factors which militate against effective governance system in HEIs in Ghana. Funding was generally seen as challenging to Ghanaian universities. Unlike their public counterparts, the private universities do not receive financial support from the government. This seriously militates against them in

their governance on various fronts and so, impedes their effort to align with the global trends. Public universities, on the other hand, are comparatively better resourced as they are the preferred choice of prospective students when one considers their enrolment numbers. Comparatively, the state-owned universities also have the financial muscle as they receive funding from government despite the fact that such support often delays and is insufficient. The public universities are thus better placed in aligning with the global trends. For instance, international practices such as staff and student exchange, collaborations and partnerships are more enhanced in the public universities as a result of their resourcefulness. Notwithstanding this, the issue of comparability and compatibility of certificates internationally, for example, are still very challenging to Ghanaian universities, either public or private.

It should be emphasised that since the state-owned universities are often able to activate all committees (both statutory and ad hoc), the governance processes are more transparent, inclusive, participatory and accountable. It is envisaged, however, that with the needed financial and logistical support to the private universities, most of their challenges will be solved. Though, one may argue that as governmental financial support to even the state universities are erratic, it will further overstretch the financial commitments of the governments. That notwithstanding, if one considers the fact that the state ultimately benefits when the citizens are well educated, then it appears reasonable for governments to extend a hand of support to these privately-owned universities.

## **Recommendations**

The study makes the following recommendations after the investigation:

### ***Financial support for Private Universities***

The private universities, just as their state counterparts, exist to teach, research and offer community service. All these have positive consequences on the country. Again, they offer alternative avenues for training the manpower needs of the country. It is, therefore, necessary for the state to support them financially in a form of periodic grants to reduce their financial burden. For example, private universities can be made to benefit from the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFUND) to help improve upon their infrastructure. This will at least give them some financial relief to support their operations. This will also enable them to institute proper governance structures. However, private universities should be made to show evidence of sustainable financial arrangements before the commencement of operations. This ensures financial propriety during operations which, for instance, will make it possible for the institutions to hire the services of the right human resource and offer appropriate remuneration. It is the highly qualified staff that can effectively contribute to proper governance and the general achievement of the institutional objectives.

### ***Effective Implementation of Educational Policies***

The merger of NCTE and NAB to regulate the activities of the universities and the other tertiary institutions should lead to decentralization. This is because among other things,

the regulators must ensure the institutions' full activation of their governance structures. This will ensure that the universities take the appropriate action at the right time. Currently, apart from their national headquarters from where they operate, they do not have offices anywhere else. The new body should have offices, at least, in some of the regions to regularly monitor the activities of universities. This is to ensure that the institutions are strictly made to follow the existing governance instruments. Non-compliance and late enforcement of these rules and regulations should attract sanctions.

This is to say that the regulators should ensure that the institutions do not only show evidence of existence of these statutes/ constitutions and other operational documents but must also ensure that those documents are complied with. Also, approval of academic programmes for running could be better facilitated to avoid midstream stoppage of academic programmes.

#### ***Adherence to Quality Indicators.***

Though there are norms from NCTE regarding lecturer-student ratio, some institutions gloss over that in an attempt to increase access to university education. Reducing class size means greater participation in class activities and enhanced lecturer-student engagements. When the system is participatory, people feel confident and are motivated. Reduced class size to some extent may have positive bearing on quality especially, when appropriate methodology is employed and vice versa. However, this reduced class size should be balanced with the need for access.

#### ***Reducing Political Interference***

The universities are regarded as community of scholars who have the needed professional and academic competence to execute their mandate. The perceived manipulation of politicians through some of the institutional leadership should, therefore, be minimized to give way to professionalism and objectivity. University Council Chairpersons should be selected by an independent Search Committee where all interested and qualified people can apply for consideration. The government can be represented by the regulators. This will make these Chairpersons act independently. It is recommended that the extent of political influence or interference in decision-making in the governance of universities must be a subject for further research to ascertain its shape and form.

#### ***Capacity Building for Board/Council Members***

It is recommended that training on cooperate governance must be done for all those in higher education leadership especially, at decision-making level. To this end, higher educational institutions offering educational leadership and or administration programmes must design special programmes for such people on continuous bases for life-long learning and constant improvement.

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