

QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES IN SELECTED PRIVATE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN THE ASHANTI REGION, GHANA

Appau, A. R.¹, Agyei, I.K.², Adu-Agyem, J.³, Owusu, A., S.⁴

Department of Educational Innovations in Science and Technology, Faculty of Educational Studies, CABE, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana^{1,3},
Department of Industrial Art, Faculty of Art, CABE, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana²
St. Joseph College of Education, Bechem, Ghana⁴
Email: ikegyei@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aimed at investigating quality assurance practices in private colleges of education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana by examining the functions of quality assurance in selected private colleges of education, to determine the current level of collaboration between the administration of these colleges of education and the students and to recommend strategies for improving and monitoring quality assurance services to ensure their sustainability. The study examines how regulatory measures are not only designed to enhance the quality of private higher education institutions, but also how they impact the effort employed by private providers towards meeting quality assurance standards in the area in which they are located. The study involved 100 participants, consisting of five (5) Registrars, five (5) Dean of Students, five (5) Quality Assurance Heads, fifteen (15) lecturers, twenty (20) Administrators and fifty (50) students. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used in selecting the respondents. Questionnaires and interview guide were the main instruments used to collect data. The data were analysed with SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The respondents perceived that the role of quality assurance go a long way to help the private colleges of education to achieve their missions and visions. Also, they perceived that quality assurance raises the reputation of the colleges. The study concludes as regard how quality assurance helps private colleges of education in the Ashanti region, Ghana to achieve their visions and missions. Though the role of quality assurance is to help the universities to achieve their missions and visions, it is should be noted that it takes the collective and relentless effort of students, administrative and academic staff as well as management to achieve the desired standard of quality. It is recommended that private colleges of education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana should continue to use feedback from the periodic evaluation of courses to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Keywords: Education, Quality education, Quality assurance practices, Visions and Missions

INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance, a comprehensive approach adopted by higher education institutions, ensures that services provided to students and stakeholders meet the required standards of quality. This approach encompasses all activities carried out within the institution and aims to deliver services that meet the expected benchmarks of excellence. A quality assurance system needs managerial assistance to be effective. Nevertheless, it has been noted that a number of issues are being faced by colleges of education as a result of globalisation, the growing significance of knowledge as one of the main drivers of expansion, and the digital and electronic revolution (World Bank, 2000).

More transparent and effective policies are required due to the domestic and international expansion of colleges of education. Due to the rising demand for tertiary

education in Ghana and the quick expansion of the population enrolled in higher education, a malaise has been generated and insufficient progress in the creation of a successful and effective higher education system is being observed. Additionally, there is still a dearth of development and improvement in key physical facilities for science education, including libraries, lecture halls, housing, ICT infrastructure, and lab equipment (Baryeh, 2009).

Consistently and effectively maintaining high standards in higher education institutions is crucial. By doing so, we can ensure that higher education is responsive to our country's unique circumstances and offers good value for the money we invest (Anon, 2008). As a result, quality assurance needs to be a crucial component of institutional administration and planning (Okae- Adjei, 2012). From the perspectives of academics, university presidents, administrators, employers, the government, parents, and students as well as the community, media, regulatory agencies, and professional associations, there are frequently differences of opinion about what standards are pertinent or appropriate.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dewey (1916) argues that education has been a priority for all human cultures, both past and present. Some clever people have even asserted that teaching, when done well, is a noble profession. Not all societies allocate sufficient funds to enhance educational programs and institutions. Nevertheless, they all acknowledge the significance of education due to valid reasons. To begin with, it's undeniable that infants are born without any knowledge of language, customs, or cultural accomplishments of their society. However, with the guidance of well-trained teachers and dedicated individuals from their families and communities, along with the availability of educational resources through media and the internet these days, children can acquire the skills of reading, writing, calculating, and behaving appropriately within their culture within a few years.

Education also acts as a social-sorting mechanism because some people learn these skills with better resources than others, and it unquestionably has a significant impact on a person's economic future. Education, when done well, equips individuals with knowledge and skills to identify and strive for their personal aspirations. It also empowers them to actively participate in their communities, functioning as self-reliant citizens. All parties involved in education work together. Future citizens' identities are shaped through education as they join a multicultural, international community. In Ghana's Ashanti Region, where we will be doing this research, there are a large number of private institutes of education. There is a debate surrounding the caliber of instruction in institutions of higher learning and its impact on students' academic achievements. Often, the focus is on the perceived lack of dedication among professors and university authorities, while the inadequate provision of facilities and materials essential for quality teaching and learning remains largely unaddressed.

It can be evident that measures such as restructuring of courses and programs, revision of study curricular, introducing sufficient financial resources, employing competent intellectual and office workers, and other measures has been done primarily for quality control. These constitute the internal guidelines and controls set up to guarantee the

accomplishment of these objectives. Despite all of these efforts made by these private colleges of education, the public's impression of their quality assurance procedures appears to be unfavorable. The staffing issues, severe material shortages for teaching and learning strengthen the notion, and infrastructure limits those private universities, especially those that are newer, must deal with.

Additionally, excessive media coverage of the financial difficulties that forced some private colleges of education to close, suits filed by students against those colleges for providing unaccredited programs and courses as well as the private colleges' own matriculation of students without the required admission standards are examples of unaccredited programs and courses are difficulties that endanger the very existence of these institutions (NAB, 2014).

In light of the aforementioned difficulties, it was crucial to examine the procedures for quality control. Employed in private colleges of education in order to understand the role played by quality assurance in some selected private colleges of education in Ashanti Region, using clear and straightforward language.

Quality Assurance Agencies in Ghanaian Higher Education

Since there were more private institutions offering post-secondary education and there were concerns about their performance, higher education institutions began implementing quality assurance measures in the early 1990s (Tsevi, 2014).

The situation in Africa involves higher education becoming more and more necessary for the population, but the government is unable to provide it, therefore it has given in to the surge in private higher education. Despite this, the Ghanaian government could have met demand if it weren't for the 1980s economic crisis and pressure from the World Bank to divert public education funding to schools and assign financial responsibility for higher education expansion to private stakeholders (Tsevi, 2014).

There was no indication from these growth in private higher education that the government had first developed a robust public plan for it. Instead, it took the fundamental position that private stakeholders should choose the pace. That would be a quick approach to give the many competent people access to higher education, which is a goal in the public interest.

Quality control is intended to take place both internally and externally. The internal component would make sure that a project or organization guidelines for its standards and goals. As opposed to that, other organizations would handle the external component. Accreditation, quality audits, and quality assessments are examples of external quality assurance procedures (Tsevi, 2014).

Regardless of the government's motivations, private organizations frequently saw the ability to demonstrate their credibility through the quality assurance method. The literature on ensuring the quality of higher education suggests that national quality assurance bodies primarily aim to enhance improvement and foster accountability. However, the majority of national quality assurance organizations currently appear to place more of an emphasis on responsibility than on improvement (Baryeh, 2009; Utuka, 2012; Tsevi, 2014).

A national quality assurance agency, according to Vught and Westerheijden (1994), should integrate the aforementioned internal demands of higher education institutions (improvement) with the exterior needs of society (accountability).

According to Cambell and Rozsnyai (2002), higher education institutions would not be able to react quickly or creatively to new demands if external quality assurance (such as standards for the approval and design of programs) is excessively inflexible.

National Accreditation Board of Ghana (NAB)

The National Accreditation Board (NAB), an institution under the Ministry of Education (MOE), is in charge of, among other things, accrediting both public and private tertiary institutions in terms of the quality and content of their programs. It is also tasked with determining, the curriculum and requirements for their institutions' proper functioning and the maintenance of acceptable levels of academic success, in cooperation with the authorized institutions or bodies.

The National Accreditation Board (NAB), established in 1993 through the NAB LAW 1993 (PNDCL 317), plays a vital role in determining the comparability of academic qualifications, including degrees, certifications, and other credentials, both within Ghana and internationally. The NAB aims to enhance the management of tertiary education by simplifying its language for improved understanding.

According to Kwarteng-Ashia (2014), the National Accreditation Board Act, 2007, (Act 744) has subsequently taken the place of the previous legislation, and the Tertiary Institutions (Establishment and Accreditation) Regulation, 2010 (LI. 1984) operationalizes it. The above-mentioned mandate was retained with the passage of the National Accreditation Board Act, 2007, Act 744 of the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana, but NAB was also given the additional duty of publishing the list of accredited schools, programs, and organizations released at the beginning of the year.

Quality Assurance in African Higher Education Institutions

The history of many African nations is rooted in colonial times (Otoo, 2013). Nearly all of the early institutions were connected to their parent universities in the colonies, which had obligations related to assuring quality, according to Otoo (2013). The University College of the Gold Coast, which is now the University of Ghana, is one illustration. As numerous nations attained independence, these ties were broken, and quality control was then turned over to the institutions' internal operations. (Baryeh, 2009).

Through the initiatives of several professional organizations working in fields like medical, engineering, accounting, law, and architecture, who established criteria for the certification of programs in their sector, quality assurance outside of the institutions came to be. In addition to this, nations including Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, and Egypt began with the creation of national organizations to govern, regulate, and establish requirements for their higher education institutions (Varghese, 2004).

Otoo (2013) asserts that the National Institutions Commission (NUC), a regulatory body for all institutions in Nigeria with a primary focus on quality assurance, was founded

in 1962. The Council for Higher Education (CHE), which is responsible for quality assurance, was founded in Kenya in 1985.

The South African Council on Higher Education (CHE) was founded as a result of the Higher Education Act in 1997. This independent organization holds executive responsibility for quality assurance in higher education and training in South Africa (Mhlanga, 2008). At least 20 African nations now have national quality assurance organizations. These include Botswana, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Tanzania, Tunisia, South Africa, Sudan and Zimbabwe.

Some French-speaking nations with centralised systems for quality assurance are not included in this list. To the extent that only Cameroon and Mauritius have national agencies for quality assurance in this group of French-speaking nations, regulatory duties are handled by a body called Conseil Africa'n et Malgache pour L'Enseignement Superieur (CAMES) (Varghese, 2004).

The Concept of Quality Assurance

In the sphere of higher education, quality assurance (QA) has evolved into a prominent global trend. In the last ten to twenty years, more than half of all nations have developed various QA methods (International Institute for Educational Planning [IIEP], 2009).

The term "quality assurance" covers a variety of notions that encompass all aspects affecting the quality of a product, whether individually or collectively (WHO, 2010). This term applies across different sectors, including health, manufacturing, industry, commerce, science, and education. The implementation of effective and efficient quality assurance policies, ensuring well-designed programs, consistent monitoring, and periodic reviews, plays a crucial role in cultivating trust among students and other stakeholders in higher education, thus ensuring its ongoing importance and significance (Inter-University Council for East Africa [IUCEA], 2010).

Various perspectives and emphases on quality assurance exist, as Lamarra states in CHEA (2010): "For academics, it signifies knowledge; for employers, competence; for students, usability (employability); for society, it entails honorable and proficient citizens; and for the state, it ranges from social and human development to efficiency, cost, and human capital requirements, depending on the assumed conception" (p.37).

In Materu's study in 2007, he defines quality assurance (QA) as a deliberate and systematic process of evaluating programs or institutions to verify if they meet, maintain, and improve acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure. Mishra (2007) further explains that QA is a conscious and planned process that involves the active participation of all members in an educational institution, while the top management establishes the policies and priorities (p. 32).

As a result, quality assurance should be a constant and ongoing process. Quality assurance, for instance, is a systematic examination of educational programs to make sure

that proper academic, scholarly, and infrastructure standards are upheld, according to UNESCO (2004).

Quality Assurance as a Broad Concept According to Campbell and Rozsnyi (2002), "quality assurance" is also seen as an all-encompassing word that refers to all the procedures, guidelines, and initiatives used to uphold and improve the standard of higher education.

Advantages and disadvantages of EQA System

One may argue that external validation provides a number of benefits. First, it aids institutions in achieving their own goals, according to Utuka (2012), and it offers a guarantee of excellence. The majority of the times, the institutions are needed to react to some questions as well as practices that external bodies follow on a regular basis.

As a result, the institution prepares a self-study that helps to raise the caliber of the institution. Independent specialists' evaluation of an institution's educational offerings helps the nation's tertiary educational system's standing and reputation abroad (Utuka, 2012).

Secondly, it makes sure that resources from taxpayers, employers, and students are used to support organizations and initiatives that adhere to minimal quality requirements. According to Tait (1997), systematic and comprehensive quality assurance helps build a reputation for an organization and improves its appearance (p. 2).

Academics do not always support quality assurance (Utuka, 2012). According to departmental study on the effects of quality assurance processes, academics display a range of behaviors to deal with what they view as accountability-led reform that is promoted by the quality objective (Utuka, 2012; Bordia, 2001; Gnanam, 2002; Lenn, 2004).

In his research to ascertain academics' attitudes towards the implementation of quality assurance in the UK, Newton, as described in Watty (2003, p. 218), found that academics saw quality as "intrusion, inspection, and as conformist behaviour." Numerous academics have criticised the current external evaluation schemes.

While Worthington and Hodgson, as cited in Kemenade, Pupius, and Hardjono (2008), argued that quality assurance's ostensible goal was to "improve service provision but in reality it is a subtle form of "panoptic" power, control, and surveillance over the academic labour process," Harvey (2003) claimed that accreditation is primarily about the handing up of authority by academics to institutional management.

In support of this claim, Jeliaskova and Westerheijden (2002) pointed out that the fundamental result of bureaucratically structured external assessment systems is the power they have over academics. This control is apparent in the top-down management styles that are currently prevalent in higher education. Quality assurance's primary goal is to raise program quality by actively involving every member of the workforce inside the organizational structure.

It may be simple to plan and record quality-related actions and principles, but it can be challenging to put them into practise. The World Declaration on Higher Education (UNESCO, 1998) stresses the importance of two key factors in improving the quality of

higher education: internal self-evaluation and external review. It suggests that independent specialists, ideally including international experts, should carry out these evaluations transparently. The declaration identifies these evaluations as vital for enhancing quality in higher education.

METHOD

Research Design

A research design is crucial to the overall research process, according to Saunders et al. (2009). Saunders goes on to say that the research design is the overall study's plan and that this plan details the data requirements as well as the processes for gathering and analyzing data. It specifies the target study population, which consists of registrars, deans of students, directors of quality assurance, professors, administrators, and students.

Non-probability sampling was employed in the research to choose a sample size and participants for gathering data. Data were gathered for the study from primary as well as secondary sources. Utilizing data acquired from both primary and secondary sources, the results were presented as tables, figures, and graphs. Any collection of individuals or objects in which a researcher takes an interest may be referred to as the population of a research study (Saharan, 2001). The Ashanti Region of Ghana served as the research population's geographic location for the purposes of this study. Two (2) private institutes of education in Ghana's Ashanti Region were included in the sampling frame for the study. The group was made up of the registrars, the dean of students, the heads of quality control, the lecturers, the administrators, and the students.

Sampling Method of Respondents and Sample Size

Finding accurate information about the sample that also accurately represents the population from which it was chosen is the goal of sample selection. To ensure an accurate reflection of the population, it is crucial to have a representative sample that is characteristic of the population as a whole. Thus, a set of things or events chosen from a population might be referred to as a sample size. From the target population, 100 cases were chosen as the sample size. One hundred cases were unsystematically handpicked from the population as the sample, and the research instrument was then given to them. It is significant to highlight that the sample size chosen appropriately reflects the target population due to the researcher's choice of confidence level (Morra Im as and Rist, 2009). The study determined the sample size by employing Slovin's Formula,

n = sample size,

N = total population of the study area,

α = the margin of error.

It will be decided to use a five percent margin of error to guarantee a confidence level of ninety-five (95%) percent. The calculations for the sample size are shown in the sections below.

n =	sample size	=	100
N =	total population of the study area	=	>1000
α =	margin of error	=	0.05

One hundred people made up the study's selected sample size consisting of five (5) registrars, five (5) dean of students, five (5) quality assurance heads, fifteen (15) lecturers, twenty (20) administrators and fifty (50) students.

The groups into which the respondents are divided are delineated in table 1.

Table 1. Classification of Respondents

Item	Sampling	Sampling Size	Percentage
1.	Registrars	05	5%
2.	Dean of students	05	5%
3.	Quality assurance heads	05	5%
4.	Lecturers	15	15%
5.	Administrators	20	20%
6.	Students	50	50%
Total Sample Size		100	100%

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, November 2022

Data Sources and Types

In a research project, data are collected by the researcher to enable him/her answer the research questions and meet his/her objectives (Saunders et al. 2009). The two main sources of data used in research are primary data and secondary data. For the purpose of this research, primary data was employed. The primary source consisted of respondent's responses to questionnaires. It included also revelations by respondents during interviews.

Primary data are first-hand data collected by the researcher purposely from respondents used to answer the research questions and meet the set research objectives. Data collection tools can collect primary data: interviews, observation and questionnaire.

This research employed questionnaires as the main tool or instrument for collecting primary data from the research respondents. Other instruments that were used consisted of interviews, observations and telephone conversations. The following Primary data were employed

1. Respondents' responses/answers to questions
2. Explanations, opinions, views and ideas expressed on issue.
3. Criticisms leveled by respondents.
4. Causes and reasons given.

According to McDaniel and Gates (2010), secondary data are data already been collected for purposes other than the present research. Secondary data are second-hand revelations and evidence contained in both published and unpublished materials in books, audio and video records, internet, census reports, governments' publications and surveys

from academia. Saunders et al. (2009) argues that there are three chief sources of secondary data and these are survey, documentary and multiple sources data.

The research employed both questionnaire and group interview (quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments respectively) to collect primary data from the research participants. Structured and unstructured questions were prepared and administered. The nature of the questionnaires were molded so as to help respondents to provide relevant responses. Other instruments that were used for data collection included observations and discussions with key stakeholders such as the management staff of the private colleges of education, lecturers and students.

The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and they were also encouraged to participate and respond to the questions. Nuamah (2005) remarked that the goal of explaining the purpose of the study to the respondents is to obtain meaningful responses that would help in the decision-making process.

The researchers introduced themselves to the various respondents. Questionnaires were left with the appropriate persons who were selected as a respondent for necessary responses. The completed questionnaires were subsequently collected later. The responses were edited and coded for proper use. In all seventy-five (75%) percent of the questionnaires were received and responses were considered relevant to the study. The data analysis involves reducing the raw data into a manageable size, developing summaries and applying statistical inferences. Consequently, data collected from primary and secondary sources were edited to detect and correct possible errors and omissions. The analysis was also to ensure consistency across respondents.

Data collected through questionnaire administration, interviews with other officials, as well as statistical records on local people participation in the Assembly's activities and its effects on decision making were collected and analysed using the appropriate statistical techniques such as distribution tables, percentages, bars and pie charts. The Microsoft Excel was used. Information such as specific comments and issues raised by respondents were also analyzed and summarized into tables.

In this study, structured questionnaires were designed with reference to the research questions and objectives in mind. The questionnaires are administered to the respondents. When using questionnaires to collect primary data, the questions can be open-ended or close-ended. The study used both open-ended and close-ended questions as well as the *Likert Scale* in the collection of primary data. A total of one hundred questionnaires were administered to respondents, out of which seventy-five were returned to the researcher, giving a response rate of seventy-five percent (75%).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper presents and discusses demographic information, the roles of quality assurance in the selected private colleges of education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana, the collaborations that exist so far between the management of the colleges of education and students in the Ashanti Region of Ghana as well as the strategies, that would better enhance and investigate quality assurance services to ensure its sustainability. A look

would be made as regards results, interpretations, as well as the discussions emanating from the information gathered from the field survey.

Demographic characteristics

Demographic data on all the hundred (100) research respondents comprising 72 males and 28 females are presented below. Demographic information collected on the respondents includes gender, age, educational level and occupation. The following table below illustrates the demography.

Table 2. Gender of respondents

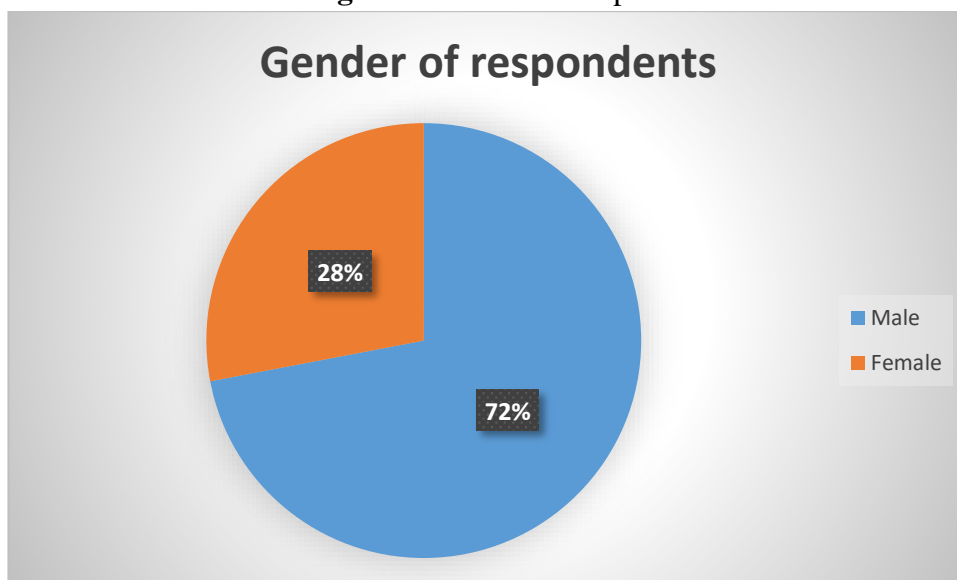
Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	72	72
Female	28	28
Total	100	100.0

Source: Researchers' Field Survey (2023)

Gender of the respondents

The results of the field survey indicated that out of the hundred (100) participants, 72 respondents representing (72%) percent were males whereas 28 respondents representing (28%) were females as illustrated in Figure 1. This indicates that the male respondents outnumber their female counterparts.

Figure 1. Gender of respondents



Source: Researchers' Field Survey (2023).

Educational Qualification of Respondents

Information on educational qualification was also obtained from respondents. This was to determine the academic background of the lecturers, registrars, quality assurance heads and deans of students. [Table 2 captures the information. This table does not include the 50 students since they do not hold any qualification.] I would like to emphasize that the distribution was made ranging from the highest level of education attained right down to the basics.

Table 3. Distributions of the Respondents by Highest Educational Qualification

Highest Educational Qualification	Frequency	(%)
PHD	4	8
M.ED/MA/MSC/MPHIL/MBA	37	74
B.ED/BA/BSC/BBA	9	18
Total	50	100

From Table 3.2, eight percent (8%) of the respondents are PhD holders thus falling into highest Educational qualification. These comprised four (4) persons. Seventy-four percent (74%) are master's degree holders while eighteen percent (18%) had bachelor's degree. On the whole the findings indicated that a majority of the respondents had at least a second degree in various disciplines. This means that the lecturers are academically qualified to teach in such private universities/Colleges of Education. This is a remarkable feat since highly qualified teachers are needed for the delivery of quality teaching and learning in the private colleges of education. In this regard, there is the assurance that students who avail themselves to the teaching and learning practices from the realm of such lectures would be projecting themselves to be excelling in their final results/exams.

Number of Years of Experience at Current Post

It was of interest to me to find out the number of years of experience of lecturers, registrars, QA heads and deans of students at their current post. This was to help to determine the respondents' experience with regard to quality assurance issues in the private Colleges of Education. The findings are presented in Table 3.4 This table does not include the 70 students since they do not have any years of experience.

Table 4. Distributions of the Respondents by Years of Experience at Current Post

Years of experience at current post	Frequency	(%)
1 – 5	39	78
5 – 10	11	22
Total	50	100

From Table 3.3, thirty- nine respondents, representing seventy-eighty percent (78%) present have been observed to be at their current post for up to five (5) years. Eleven (11) respondents, representing twenty-two percent (22%) were also noticed to have been at their current position up to ten (10) years. The number of years of experience being exhibited by the various respondents brings to light the role and place of quality assurance in such institutions of higher learning.

Roles of Quality assurance in Private Colleges of Education

This section of the discussion focused on what the registrars, lecturers, deans of students, quality assurance heads, administrators and students perceived to be the role of quality assurance in private colleges of education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The frequencies were grouped under the 4-point Likert Scale where 1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree and 4 = Strongly disagree.

Below is a Likert scale indicating Respondents' views on the role of quality assurance.

No	Involvement of the people in local governance	Strongly agree	agree	disagree	Strongly disagree
1	QA helps the Colleges to achieve its mission and visions	82%	18%		
2	QA raises the reputation of the Colleges	95%	5%		
3	QA helps to ensure that there is adequate academics and administrative staff in the private colleges of education	92%	8%		
4	QA ensures that the Colleges provide infrastructure for teaching and learning	15%	75%	10%	
5	QA helps to ensure programme/curricular improvement		87%	13%	
6	QA gives recognition to the Colleges locally		60%	25%	15%
7	QA gives recognition to the Colleges internationally	97%	3%		
8	QA gives recognition to the students			85%	15%
9	QA makes students feel prestigious		78%	22%	
10	QA gives recognition to the student certificates		98%	2%	
11	QA ensures student have adequate resources for learning	85%	15%		
12	QA ensures competition among private colleges of education	25%	75%		

Source: Researchers' Field Survey (2023).

As part of the research, a look was made into the critical roles of quality assurance in such institutions/colleges of education. A light was thrown into the activities of registrars and deans among others. It was realized that eighty-two percent (82%) are of the view that QA helps the Colleges of Education to achieve its mission and vision. It posited that only five percent (5%) agree to the high extent that QA raises the reputation of such colleges in the country.

From the answers given by the respondents from the questionnaire provided, ten percent (10%) totally disagree to the views or ascertain that QA ensures academic and administrative adequacy in private colleges of education.

A lot of the respondents affirmed that QA provides conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning; programmes curricular development, recognition of such colleges locally and internationally and above all the recognition of certificates being held by students from such institutions globally.

It could however, be brought to the fore that, fifteen (15%) percent of the respondents strongly disagree to such pronouncements being made about recognition of certificates globally.

Collaborations that exist between management and students

Collaboration takes place when members of an inclusive learning community work together as equals to assist students to succeed in the classroom. This may be in the form of lesson planning with the special needs child in mind, or co-teaching a group or class (Friend & Cook, 1992). This section of the discussion focused on the collaborations that exist between the management of the colleges of Education and students in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The frequencies were grouped under the 4-point Likert scale where 1= strongly agree, 2= Agree, 3=Disagree and 4= strongly disagree.

Below is a Likert scale indicating the Respondents' View on the collaboration that exist so far between the management of the colleges of Education.

No	Leadership and Quality of management	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	QA Unit is staffed with qualified individuals	85%	15%		
2	QA guidelines and policies are adhered to	90%	10%		
3	QA monitoring and evaluation of the College Improvement Plan (CIP)	92%	8%		
4	QA helps Colleges operate an open and transparent recruitment process	75%	15%		
5	QA gives a well-documented staff audit.	70%	15%	15%	
6	QA gives an opportunity for further training and in-service programme clearly defined and made available to all staff		60%	30%	10%
7	QA helps the College's improvement plans and development plans that are gender responsive	97%	3%		
8	QA selects qualified ICT tutors who are employed	85%	15%		
9	QA appropriate use of ICT in Teaching and Learning		78%	22%	
10	QA helps to have clear guidelines and mentoring procedures for students on teaching practice	85%	15%		
11	QA helps to provide facilities which are disability friendly, adequate of students toilet and washroom	85%	15%		
12	QA helps to ensure security of life and property in the college		75%	25%	

Source: Researchers' Field Survey (2023)

Eighty-five percent (85%) of the respondents were satisfied with the collaborations that exist between the management of the colleges of education and students. However, the

remaining fifteen percent (15%) were of different opinions: stressing poor relationship, bad attitude, information dissemination challenges among others.

As regards guidelines and policies of such Colleges of Education, ninety (90%) percent strongly attested to the fact that they were being carried out or adhered to effectively. I also realized that most of the respondents gave positive nods to how monitoring and evaluation from the said Colleges of Education have imparted on developmental plans.

An area worthy of note was in answer to the question whether staff of these Colleges of Education were generally given the opportunities to further their education. To this sixty (60%) percent consented whilst the rest, forty (40%) percent, responded somehow. It could however be posited that in-service training could be encouraged from time to time, pending whoever qualifies for further training as time went on.

It could be postulated from the findings that measures such as restructuring of programmes and courses, curricular reviews, provision of adequate finance, employment of qualified academic and administrative staff, among other things, have been put in place with the sole aim of assuring quality. These are internal policies and mechanisms put in place for ensuring that they fulfill such purposes to enhance teaching and learning in such Colleges of Education

Strategies to enhance and invigilate Quality Assurance Services

Data gathered from respondents indicates that there are a number of ways that the quality assurance process can be improved. The suggestions are regular training for peer reviewers and institutions, individually developing their internal quality assurance process, incorporation of graduate education in the quality assurance process and public higher education institutions being held to the same standards as the private higher education institutions before charter.

To strengthen the quality assurance process, respondents were of the view that there should be a regular continuous training for peer reviewers contracted by the NAB. However, according to NAB officials interviewed for this study, training is provided on “as and when needed” basis which is not adequate. Materu (2007) affirms this point that in Ghana particularly, peer reviewers complained about inadequate training.

According to Materu (2007), the training of peer reviewers in Ghana as a whole and Ashanti Region in particular, being out as a final output is observed to be inadequate. To him, which as a researcher I agree with to a large extent, much attention should be given to the quality and length of the training, taking cognizance of the needs of those involved, in this case the peer reviewers.

CLOSING

Conclusion

Partnerships and Collaborations are advocated as a means to address problems plaguing higher education. Partnerships involve organizational joint ventures that may go by any number of names (strategic alliances, joint ventures, collaborations, partnerships, to

name a few). These initiatives can take several forms—between or among institutions, through departmental alliances across institutions, or with university programs that pair with businesses or community agencies.

Faculty pairings across institutions typically are referred to as collaborations rather than partnerships, though from these initial faculty collaborations, organizational partnerships may emerge. Central to organizational or individual collaborations are a series of processes. Better understanding of the components of how collaborations develop can thus result in more effective joint ventures. Why is it important to know more about partnerships and collaborations?

State policymakers want to avoid redundant efforts and duplicate state spending in education (Van de Water and Rainwater, 2001) and often look to P–16 collaborations to streamline educational pathways for students (Leskes, 2006; Yff, 1996) as one method to create efficiencies. Institutions favor partnerships as a means to leverage resources and pool talent as they tackle challenging issues (Russell and Flynn, 2000)

The study revealed a number of findings with respect to quality assurance practices in private colleges of education in Ashanti Region of Ghana. The following findings emerged from the study: The study revealed that majority of the respondents, eighty-two (82%) percent strongly agree that the role of quality assurance was geared toward helping the private colleges of education to achieve their missions and visions. The study further revealed that quality assurance raised the reputation of the private colleges of education.

The study revealed that the respondents perceived quality assurance to be valuable since it ensured that, academic programmes were evaluated periodically. Ninety-two (92%) percent stipulated that there were adequate academics and administrative staff in the private colleges of education.

The results of the study indicated majority of the respondents (87%) confirmed that quality assurance helped to ensure programme/curricular improvement.

It was found out that majority of the lecturers, students, deans of students, quality assurance heads, administrators and registrars of these Private Colleges of Education conformed to the requirements of National Accreditation Board (NAB) by going through accreditation and external evaluation. Self-evaluation and curriculum review being performed in order to meet the requirements of NAB were revealed by the study.

It was brought to fore in the course of the study that quality assurance offices in Private Colleges of Education also face some challenges which inhibit their operations. The following challenges were identified at the end of the data analysis as misconception or misunderstanding of quality assurance, manpower challenges and inadequate infrastructure.

From the research findings, it is evident that the role of quality assurance is very important in the life of Private colleges of Education, the sense that, it helps such Colleges to achieve their visions and missions. Hence, when better adopted and executed well, could immensely contribute to develop and sharing good practices in learning and teaching in higher education as well as safeguarding public interest in private colleges of education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. It could be stated that, Private Colleges of Education within

Ashanti Region of Ghana are enhancing their reputation to meet national and international standards.

Recommendations

The findings of the study have provided the necessary information about quality assurance practices in private colleges of education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. From the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher would like to offer the following recommendations to students, lecturers, administrative staff, Dean of students, the Ministry of Education as well as Ghana Education Service, the government and other stakeholders.

From the responses by the respondents, it was revealed that quality assurance is valuable since it ensures that academic programmes or courses are evaluated periodically. It is recommended that private colleges of education should continue to use the feedback from the periodic evaluation of courses and programmes to improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as create a conducive environment for teaching and learning.

Again, it was revealed that private colleges of education have written mission statements and quality assurance offices. This was not the case for the various departments under the faculties. It is therefore recommended that each department within the colleges should have a mission statement as well as quality assurance unit. The mission statement should be fixed at a place where every member of the department can see it.

It is recommended that private colleges of education should continue to conform to the requirements of the National Accreditation Board by going through accreditation and external evaluation. It is again recommended that private colleges of education should also continue to engage in curriculum reviews and self-evaluation.

It is recommended that the quality assurance officers of the private colleges of education should organise workshops, seminars and conferences to educate the members of the college about quality assurance.

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