

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN
THE GREATER ACCRA REGION OF GHANA

BY

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: Date.....

Name:

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature..... Date.....

Name:

Co-Supervisor's Signature..... Date.....

Name:

ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating quality assurance practices in ten private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study involved 268 participants, comprising 168 lecturers, 70 students, 10 Quality Assurance heads, 10 registrars and 10 deans of students. Simple random and purposive sampling technique were used in selecting the respondents. Questionnaires and interview guide were the main instruments used to collect data. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to analyse the quantitative data, using Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 21 while the qualitative data were analysed by the thematic analysis approach using themes that emerged from the data. The questionnaires generated a standardised Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .83. The respondents perceived the role of quality assurance as, to help the universities to achieve their missions and visions. Also they perceived that quality assurance raises the reputation of the university. The study concludes that the role of quality assurance is very important in the sense that it helps private universities in the greater Accra region of 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 universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana should continue to use feedback from the periodic evaluation of courses to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

KEY WORDS

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Quality assurance

Quality assurance model

Quality

Private universities

Higher education

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However, I am entirely responsible for errors of fact or reasoning in this work.

DEDICATION

To the entire Atsu and Associate families especially Ex W O II Alex Atsu, Mr Daniel Workman Atsu, Mrs Rejoice Wemegah, Mrs Gifty Wemega and the entire Executive Brothers and Sister.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The importance of quality higher education cannot be overemphasized. Only citizens who are resilient, informed, adaptable and confident will manage the consequences of the new global economy with all its opportunities and threats. A strong education system designed to ensure genuine opportunity for all to reach their full potential and to continue to improve their knowledge and capacities throughout their lives will build such people (Hawke, 2011). Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have over the years played pivotal roles in the socio-economic development of nations (Okae-Adjei, 2012). Higher education's strategic importance to economic and social prosperity makes it imperative that our institutions have robust strategies for demonstrating students' academic achievement (Hawke, 2011).

Nevertheless, tertiary education is facing several challenges arising from globalization, the increasing importance of knowledge as a principal driver of growth, and the information and communication revolution (World Bank, 2002). The role of education in general, and of tertiary education in particular, is now more influential than ever in the construction of knowledge economies and democratic societies (Batte, Wanzala, Ochola, Judith & Adipala, 2010). Higher Education (HE) is indeed fundamental to the creation of the intellectual capacity on which knowledge production and utilisation depend and to the advancement of the lifelong-learning practices necessary for

updating people's knowledge and skills. New kinds of tertiary institutions and new forms of competition require that traditional institutions change their modes of operation and delivery. In reaction to these responses, a number of countries are altering their tertiary education systems, including financing and governance, institutional differentiation, creation of evaluation and accreditation mechanisms, curriculum reforms, and technological innovations. However development has been irregular, and sharp dissimilarities remain between and within tertiary education systems worldwide (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009).

Domestic and international expansion of higher education demands more transparent and relevant measures. The growing demand for tertiary education coupled with the rate of higher education population growth in Ghana with little expansion and improvement of existing physical facilities such as libraries, lecture halls, residential facilities, information, communication and technology (ICT) and laboratory facilities for science education has created a state of malaise hindering the enhancement of efficient and effective higher education system (Baryeh, 2009). While there has been an increase in the number of private universities in order to shoulder the excess demand, these universities charge very high fees and for that matter have become attractive to only the rich in the society. According to a World Bank report on Africa (World Bank, 2000) "expansion in both public and private universities have been unbridled, unplanned and often chaotic resulting in deterioration of average quality" (p. 27). Also, Awuah as cited in Baryeh (2009) pointed out that the drive to increase enrolment in Ghanaian higher education institutions has occurred at the expense of quality. In order to

guarantee the sensitivity of Higher Education to national circumstances and offer value-for-money, there is the need to consistently and efficiently assure high standards in the provisions of the institutions that deliver higher education (Anon, 2008). To achieve this, a number of HEIs have put in place internal mechanisms and policies to ensure quality standards. Quality assurance agencies have been set up by various universities to coordinate the proper development of such institutions.

Quality assurance is the process of verifying whether products or services meet or exceed customer expectations. According to Ruiz and Junio-Sabio (2012) it is also seen as a process-driven approach with specific steps to help define and attain goals. For Campbell and Rozsnyai (2002), quality assurance is the systematic review of educational programmes to warrant that acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being maintained. A quality assurance system in the case of a university is seen as an opportunity to increase student confidence and reinforce the university's credibility as a provider of quality services to improve processes and efficiency and to enable a university to better compete with others (Pavlenko, Bojan & Trif, 2008). It has been proven that there is a link between educated manpower and economic development (Okae-Adjei, 2012). In the world of globalization, the room for progress lies in the ability of countries to understand how to make the best use of their resources both human and natural.

Quality Assurance must become an indispensable part of institutional management and planning (Okae-Adjei, 2012). Tertiary education is changing, and quality assurance practices must change with it, or become irrelevant.

Quality assurance is a process that takes time and it must be done with HEIs, learning to trust and to help them improve themselves (Lemaitre, 2007).

Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ghana are either university colleges or universities, and are generally classified as public or private. Private university colleges and universities may either be owned by “churches” or “individuals or group of individuals” and the government respectively.

The advent of private universities in the country has been necessitated by the inability of the public ones to admit the many qualified applicants over the years (“Meridian students deserve a fair deal,” 2014). Thus, many were those who welcomed the arrival of the private universities as a great sigh of relief to students, parents and all stakeholders in the educational sector since they would augment the manpower needs of the country. From the day that Valley View University, the premier private university, came on the scene, there have been many others that have emerged onto the higher education landscape in Ghana. These include the Central University College, Ashesi University College, Methodist, Catholic and Presbyterian University colleges. These Universities have all shown some signs since their establishment that they are in to contribute their quota to the provision of private university education to the many qualified Ghanaians who are unable to gain admission to the public universities (“Meridian students deserve a fair deal,” 2014).

The daily graphic finds it strange that while these and many more have lived up to their call, some have not performed as expected of tertiary institutions (“Meridian students deserve a fair deal,” 2014). Examples, Methodist University College and Meridian University College. A development which leaves one asking whether all the institutions and bodies

that are charged to approve the setting up and operations of private universities conducted due diligence before they gave such institutions the green light to operate. It is therefore reasonable to elicit the responses of Registrars and Head of Quality Assurance Unit of the private universities who are confronted with issues of quality assurance in their institutions. According to Hayward (2006), there is often differences of opinions about what are relevant or what are appropriate standards from the perspectives of faculty members, university leaders, administrators, employers, government, parents and students as well as the community, media, regulatory authorities and professional associations.

Statement of the Problem

It has been generally observed that the Greater Accra Region of Ghana has some private universities whose poor quality of educational provision and students are reported in the dailies on regular basis. This is often blamed on the lack of commitment on the part of lecturers and university authorities with little said about lack of quality facilities and teaching and learning materials that are the prerequisite for assuring quality. In view of this observation, the public tend to over generalize the situation to reflect the poor quality of private universities in the region in general.

At the university level for instance, 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 fulfil their own purposes. Also at the national level, government through its agencies like the National Accreditation Board (NAB), National Council for Tertiary

Education (NCTE) and the Ministry of Education are working assiduously to shape how private universities operate in the country through policies and programmes.

It is in the interest of the whole country for private universities to assure quality and also it is an appropriate investment for domestic and international reputation. Private universities that have the necessary qualified lecturers and administrative staff, teaching and learning materials, good infrastructure, qualified students, congenial environment, good libraries among others that can compete at the international level. It is believed that this would enable the nation to achieve the type of education it seeks to achieve.

Despite all these efforts by the private universities, the public perception about quality assurance practices in these institutions seems to be a gloomy one. The perception gains credence in view of the staffing problems coupled with the acute teaching and learning materials as well as infrastructural constraints faced by private universities, particularly those newly established ones. Also excessive media reportage on closure of some private universities due to financial constraints, students taking their universities to court for running unaccredited programmes and courses, the private universities themselves matriculating students without the minimum entry requirements while some of their lecturers hold fake certificates are challenges that threatens the very essence of their establishment (NAB, 2014).From the above challenges, it is worth investigating the quality assurance practices in private universities so as to ascertain the role of quality assurance in private universities within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the quality assurance practices in private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Specifically this study sought to explore the views of the participants of the research regarding the roles of quality assurance in private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

Research Questions

The research questions which guided the study include the following:

1. How do private universities in the Greater Accra region of Ghana conceptualise quality assurance?
2. What do private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana perceive as the roles of quality assurance?
3. What quality assurance practices are currently being utilized by private universities in Greater Accra Region of Ghana?
4. How do the quality assurance practices of private universities in the Greater Accra region of Ghana conform to the requirements of the National Accreditation Board's guidelines?
5. What challenges do the quality assurance offices of private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana face in the performance of their duties and responsibilities?

Significance of the Study

This research was intended to make a useful and relevant theoretical contribution to the body of knowledge relating to quality higher education and quality assurance with specific emphasis on private universities. This would be done by publishing the findings of this research in local and international

journals. Also copies of the research findings would be submitted to libraries in Ghana to serve as a reference point for students and other stakeholders in higher education.

Again the findings of this research would afford Management and Academic Board of the private universities to review their position on policy strategies and practices. This would be done by giving copies of the research findings to institutions that participate in the study

The findings of this research would provide private universities with enough information on how to plan, revise, provide, review, amend and implement appropriate strategies to influence their operations and improve quality academic delivery in the Ghana. This would be done by organizing press conference or seminars in order to communicate the findings of this research.

This empirical attempt, definitely, would enable the higher education institutions to identify, review and improve their existing quality assurance practices and eventually facilitates them to keep up with the ambitious challenges. This study would be helpful in establishing a baseline on the status of quality assurance practices in the private higher education sector of Ghana. This study would also be of remarkable assistance to policymakers, implementers and development partners involved in higher education sector of Ghana by providing information and analysis needed to identify and prioritize capacity-building needs for quality improvement in private universities.

Delimitation

This study was delimited to only private universities recognized by the National Accreditation Board in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. This is

because Greater Accra Region in Ghana has the highest concentration of private universities in the country. The study was again delimited to only the Registrars, Quality Assurance Officers, Deans of students, Lecturers and Student Leaders of the various institutions. My choice of this category of persons was based on the fact that they occupy powerful positions in the organization and have access to relevant information about the institution. Another reason was that they are involved in the day to day running of the institutions and their perspectives are likely to be unique within the institutions.

Limitations

One of the instruments used for the gathering of data for the study was questionnaire. Questionnaires usually makes little room for free expression or extemporaneous responses and sometimes they are not very effective in getting at the causes of problems and possible solutions.

Another limitation was the sampling method used to select the registrars, deans of students, quality assurance heads, and students in the various universities. This was basically purposive, a non-probability sampling technique and therefore less likely than probability sampling to produce accurate and representative samples. Other limitations encountered include difficulties during the data collection in various private universities. In some of the universities their division of human resource took all the questionnaires and administered them on my behalf. It was explained to mean that it is their policy to administer the questionnaires. This could affect the responses of the respondents. It is anticipated that the universities administering the questionnaires on my behalf led to the exposure of participants responses to

the responses of other participants. It is also anticipated that the authorities could have influenced the responses and this situation may affect the internal validity of the study findings.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study the following terms have been defined as follows:

Quality Assurance: is a planned and systematic review process of an institution or programme to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced (Materu, 2007).

Audit: audit is defined as a process of review of an institution or programme to determine if its curriculum, staff and infrastructure meets its stated aims and objectives.

Abbreviations

HEI	Higher Education Institutions
H E	Higher Education
QA	Quality Assurance
NAB	National Accreditation Board
MUC	Meridian University College
UCC	University of Cape Coast
EQA	External Quality Assurance
TQM	Total Quality Management
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
AUQA	Australian Quality Assurance Agency
NCTE	National Council for Tertiary Education

UNESCO United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation

WHO World Health Organisation

Organization of the Study

To ensure the logical and sequential flow of ideas in this study the thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction to the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions as well as significance, limitations, delimitations of the study, definition of terms and organisation of the rest of the study.

Chapter Two constitutes review of related literature. It examines the current literature on supporting and opposing views of other authors on relevant issues of the research questions. It also uncovered other areas of literature that need to be explored.

Chapter Three presents the methodology of the study. It comprises research design, population, sample and sampling procedure. The research instruments, pilot-testing, ethical considerations, data collection procedure and method for data analysis and validity and reliability of the data are captured in this chapter.

Chapter Four of this study presents the findings and discussions of the study. It also discusses all the research questions (from one to five) of the study.

The final chapter, Chapter Five presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study based on the findings and conclusions of the study. Suggestions for further studies are also highlighted in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews literature relevant to the study. It is divided into two sections. The first section presents an overview of the historical perspective of higher education in Ghana, the emergence of private universities in Ghana, characteristics of private university colleges in Ghana, quality assurance agencies in African higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies in Ghanaian higher education. The rationale is to give a fair view and draw attention to the various developments that have characterized the situation in Ghana. Also this section looks at National Accreditation Board of Ghana, quality assurance in African higher education institutions, the concept of quality assurance, quality and quality assurance and quality assurance models. In the quest of achieving the objectives of the study, this section would highlight internal and external quality assurance, approaches to quality assurance and specific strategies used in higher education for ensuring quality. The second section accounts for the empirical reviews that are relevant to the subject matter of this research. This section also accounts for the theoretical framework and conceptual framework that serves as the analytical lens for this study.

Historical Overview of Higher Education in Ghana

According to Baryeh (2009), the development of higher education in Ghana can be traced back to the year 1948. This is by an ordinance dated 11 August 1948, in which the University College of the Gold Coast (now

University of Ghana) was created by the British colonial government in “special relationship” with the University of London, to offer limited programmes of study. Baryeh (2009) again stated that in 1961, the university college attained sovereign university status with the powers to award its own degree. This gives an indication that the University College of the Gold Coast (now University of Ghana) was mentored by the University of London in order to assure quality in terms of programmes, faculty and staff. To overcome the problems of rapid population growth coupled with increasing demand for higher education it was expedient for the nation to open the doors for new universities. In view of this, according to Daniel, as cited by Baryeh (2009) the Kumasi College of Technology was upgraded to a university status and was renamed University of Science And Technology by an Act of Parliament on August 22, 1961. The Kumasi College of Arts, Science and Technology was opened officially on the 27th January, 1952 with 200 students.

In a similar development, the University College of Cape Coast was established in December 1962 and was upgraded to a full university status in October 1971 by an Act of Parliament, the University of Cape Coast Act 1971, and subsequently the University of Cape Coast Law 1992 (PNDC LAW 278). This University was established with the purpose to provide graduate teachers for the growing number of secondary schools and teacher training colleges. Also in 1992, the University College of Education, Winneba was established with an affiliation to the University of Cape Coast. The University was established to train teachers for the nation’s secondary schools. In May, 1992, the University of Development Studies was established in Tamale by Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) Law 279 (Agbodeka, 1998) as

cited by Baryeh (2009). The new university is a novel institution not attached to any other university. It is free to explore integrated programmes directed at development in critical areas of agriculture and health delivery. The University has four campuses spread over four regions of the country namely, Brong Ahafo, Sunyani; Northern Region, Tamale; Upper East Region, Bolgatanga; and Upper West Regions, Wa.

Currently, the country has 38 public post-secondary teacher training colleges, 10 polytechnics and 9 public universities. The universities are: The University of Ghana, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Cape Coast University, University of Education, Winneba, the University of Development Studies, Tamale, and the University of Mines and Technology, Tarkwa, University of Health and Allied Science, Ho, University of Professional Studies, Accra, University of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani. In addition to these, the National Accreditation Board has accredited 58 private universities and university institutions that offer various programmes. The Board has also accredited nine tutorial professional colleges, which prepare students for taking examinations of accredited professional bodies within and outside Ghana, and two distance education centers that represent accredited universities outside Ghana (National Accreditation Board [NAB], 2014).

The Emergence of Private Universities in Ghana

The expansion and rapid growth of private higher education institutions is apparent in most parts of the world. Although the expansion of the sector can be attributed to a number of reasons, Altbach (2005) argued that the main reasons is related to massification and financing. An increased

demand for access to higher education and the change of thinking about the financing of higher education, which is related to the change in concept from the traditional idea that higher education is a public good that has to be provided by society to a private good, has been the major derivatives for the growth of private higher education. In line with the general rational plus the national political and ideological changes, the country has seen a tremendous growth in private higher education institutions since the year 2000.

Student enrolment worldwide increased from 13 million in 1960 to 82 million in 1995 and to 137 million in 2005 (UNESCO, 1998, 2007). According to Utuka (2012), the growing number of private higher education institutions is a noticeable feature of this expansion in several regions, including Sub-Saharan Africa. According to UNESCO (2006), the private sector plays a large role in three regions, namely Latin America, East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the development of a private sector in higher education has been seen as a solution to widening participation and is embedded in reform measures of the sector (Varghese, 2004). This is in line with Quddus and Rashid (2000) assertion that this phenomenon is part of a world-wide movement away from state control and management to what they called “a new faith in the efficacy of free market mechanisms to allocate resources most efficiently” (p. 15). According to Utuka (2012) the situation in Ghana is no exception to the reforms and expansion in higher education. In 1987, the Government of Ghana constituted a University Rationalization Committee (URC) to develop proposals for reforming the management, academic structure and funding of tertiary education in Ghana. The Committee undertook its work over the period

1986-88, and submitted the final report in 1988. The URC undertook a thorough job of reviewing the current situation of tertiary education in Ghana, and of suggesting a way forward from the demoralized and depressed state then experienced within the sector. Following the submission of the Committee's report, the government issued a White Paper in 1991 on the reforms to the tertiary education system. The policy framework recommended by the URC was subsequently reformulated as a "White Paper, Reforms to the Tertiary Education System (1991)". This served to clarify the Government's commitment to the new policies both within Ghana and beyond it. The reforms fell into four main policy objectives, one of which is the: Significant expansion of the tertiary education system as a whole, to meet the demands of school leavers and the needs of employers, and to provide greater opportunity of access to those previously denied it (Utuka 2012). Without doubt reforms in higher education in Ghana has brought about significant transformation in the sector since the mid-1980s. These changes have not only revealed the increasing number of undergraduates but also unprecedented expansion in post graduate education. Also private university colleges have expanded rapidly as a response to the increasing student enrolment.

Currently, according to the National Accreditation Board there are fifty-eight (58) accredited private higher education institutions dotted across the length and breadth of the country. Among these there are different types of private higher education institutions, these are university colleges, diploma awarding institutions, theological colleges, professional and specialized institutions and tutorial colleges (NAB, 2014). These institutions are either self-financing (owned by individuals or group of individuals or private

organisations) or are supported by religious organisations (Utuka, 2012). Christian and Islamic organizations are active in providing private higher education in Ghana. A chunk of institutions of higher education are sponsored by the Christian organisations. For example, the first accredited private university college - now Valley View University - was established by the 7th day Adventist church. Most of the private institutions operating in the country are profit-making institutions. They rely heavily on student fees as their major source of financing the institutions and do offer programmes in market-friendly subject areas (Utuka, 2012).

These private universities are registered and accredited by NAB before they can commence their operations. According to Tsevi (2014) an exact pattern in the Ghanaian case is the fact that private universities begin as university colleges affiliated to public universities, which serve as mentors for a number of years. Also some of the institutions are affiliated to or collaborate with foreign and international universities. The purpose of this affiliation to the degree awarding public universities is to ensure that there is proper certification and supervision of the affiliate institutions (Utuka, 2012). This implies that the rationalization for quality assurance is to guard against proliferation of detached private institutions that lack the ability and will to offer adequate quality. The application form for accreditation of the said institution has the proposed name of the University College, academic resources available, and timetable indicating how within the next three years the objectives of the institution are to be achieved. The premises of the new private university college are inspected, verified, and subsequently issued with a letter of interim authority. A private institution qualifies for institutional

accreditation only if, among other things, it meets minimum admission requirements for certificate, diploma, and degree levels; minimum number of students enrolled and minimum qualifications of faculty. Institutional charters are granted by the president of the country. According to National Accreditation Board, a private institution qualifies for an institutional charter if it has been affiliated to a mentoring institution for at least 10 years and has fulfilled all necessary requirements (NAB, 2014). A private university's programme qualifies for accreditation; if, among other things, it states minimum student admission requirements, description of courses, and provides rules on student performance. In addition, educational programmes have to align with national education policies to qualify for accreditation.

The short fall of the private universities include their inability to keep pace with the requirements of the National Accreditation Board (NAB) with regards to accredited institutions offering programs that have not been authorized. Similarly, it has come to the fore that some accredited private institutions admit students lacking the minimum qualification requirements, a common occurrence at some private institutions (NAB, 2012). There is also the challenge of private universities and their satellite campuses that are not accredited but start advertising to the public as if they had accreditation.

Characteristics of Private University Colleges in Ghana

The fastest growing and expanding sector of higher education in Ghana is the private sector. Their numbers exceed the public universities however, the proportion of their student intake accounts for a relatively low percent of the total student enrolment in the country Their challenge is the fact that they do not have adequate facilities in order to admit larger number of students.

According to Varghese (2004), the goals and orientation of the operation of private universities are far from that of the public institutions. Their nature as profit making institutions drives them to offer courses that have premium both in education market and the employment of graduates. The programmes that are mounted by these institutions reflect either a commercial consideration or a religious orientation (Utuka, 2012). As noted by Thaver (2003) these institutions offer selected courses and they are better understood as 'boutique' institutions as distinct from the supermarket model of public universities. The choice of these programmes is based on the fact that they require little investment in terms of infrastructure, equipment and the necessary human capital. Some of the private universities including the religiously supported ones offer commercially related courses in business administration (with options in management, human resource management, marketing, banking and finance), as well as in information and communication technology, which requires lower levels of investment in infrastructure facilities. None of these institutions except Central University College has ventured into engineering and medical sciences (Utuka, 2012). Also admission into private universities is not so much competitive. This is due to the fact that most of the student in the private institutions were denied admissions into public universities. The number of student admitted into the private universities have low aggregate entry score. As emphasized by (Utuka, 2012) the chances are that the academic profiles of students in private universities may be lower than the academic profiles of their colleagues in the public universities.

Again the teaching capacity of the private universities is of greater interest. Some of these institutions do not have the required staff and faculty members. A significant number of these institutions rely heavily on part time lecturer from the public universities or adjunct lecturers from industry. Also some of their staff and faculty members do not have the requisite qualification and experience to teach in the universities. According to Varghese (2004) a common characteristics of these private universities irrespective of their location and orientation is the fact that they are reliant on part time lecturers and adjunct lecturers.

Quality Assurance Agencies in Ghanaian Higher Education

Quality assurance in higher education institutions in Ghana began in the early 1990s in response to an increase in the number of private institutions, providing post-secondary education and the concern over their level of performance (Tsevi, 2014). In Africa, the situation involved a rising population's demand for higher education, government's inability to meet it, and therefore giving in to the surge of private higher education. However, the Ghanaian government would have met rising demand in any case but its capacity was undermined by the economic downturn of the 1980s and pressure from the World Bank, to shift public educational expenditures to schools and thus leave the financial liability for expanding higher education to private stakeholders (Tsevi, 2014). These private higher education growth did not mean that government initially established a formidable public design for it. Instead, its basic posture was to permit private stakeholders to blaze the way. That would be a route to accomplish the public interest goal of rapidly expanding access to higher education for the many qualified candidates.

As a result of the private proliferation in HE, government, student, and public concerns soon mounted about quality. By quality assurance, government and others generally envisioned reviews of programmes and institutions that involve some systematic measuring performance against standards of academic and infrastructural matters. Whatever the concerns over general or declining quality in public higher education, the widespread view was that the public sector already had internal quality assurance mechanisms and norms in place. Then, too, political dynamics sometimes made it uncomfortable for government to challenge entrenched public university practices and interests. Quality assurance was envisioned on two fronts, internal and external. The internal part would ensure that a programme or an institution has policies that guide its standards and objectives. On the other hand, the external part would be conducted by external organizations. External quality assurance mechanisms would include accreditation, quality audit, and quality assessment (Tsevi, 2014).

Whatever the motivation of government, private institutions often recognized the quality assurance process as an opportunity to establish their legitimacy. Literature on higher education quality assurance indicates that improvement and accountability are believed to be the two main purposes of national quality assurance agencies. However, at the moment most national quality assurance agencies seem to focus on the accountability aspect rather than the improvement (Baryeh, 2009; Utuka, 2012; Tsevi, 2014). The issue of balancing accountability and improvement in higher education quality assurance has become a major concern in recent times and many scholars have contributed to the debate (Wilger, 1997; Vroeijentijn, 1995; Vught &

Westerheijden, 1994). According to Vught and Westerheijden (1994) a national quality assurance agency needs to combine both internal needs of higher education institutions (improvement) and external needs of society (accountability) in quality assurance, as mentioned before. Cambell and Rozsnyai (2002) also argue that if external quality assurance (e.g. requirements for the approval and design of programmes) is very rigid, then higher education institutions may not have the flexibility to respond rapidly or in an innovative manner to new demands.

National Accreditation Board of Ghana (NAB)

The National Accreditation Board (NAB) is a public service institution under the Ministry of Education (MOE), responsible among other things for the accreditation of both public and private tertiary institutions with regards to the contents and standard of their programmes and also to determine, in consultation with the appropriate institutions or body, the programme and requirements for the proper operation of their institutions and the maintenance of acceptable levels of academic or professional standards. It is also responsible for the determination of equivalents of diplomas, certificates and other qualifications awarded in Ghana and elsewhere.

National Accreditation Board (NAB) was established by the government of Ghana in 1993 with the enactment of the NAB LAW 1993 (PNDCL 317), to contribute to the furtherance of better management of tertiary education as a quality Assurance Agency. Kwarteng-Ashia (2014) indicates that the legislation has since been replaced by the National Accreditation Board Act, 2007, (Act 744) and operationalized by Tertiary Institutions (Establishment and Accreditation) Regulation , 2010 (LI. 1984).

The passage of the National Accreditation Board Act, 2007, Act 744 of the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana retained the above mentioned mandate but also assigned NAB additional responsibility to, publish the list of accredited public and private institutions and programmes at the beginning of each calendar year. Advise the President on the grant of a charter to private tertiary education. Perform any other functions determined by the Minister.

The agency is governed by a board composed of a chairman; representative from the University of Ghana (UG), representative of University of Cape Coast (UCC), representative of the University for Development Studies (UDS), representative of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology(KNUST), representative of University of Mines and Technology (UMaT), representative of Conference of Polytechnic Principals (COPP), representative of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS), representatives of Association of Professional Bodies (APB), representative of Public Service Commissions (PSC), representative of National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations (NABPTEX), representative of Ministry of Education (MOE), representative of Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) and the Government nominees.

Quality Assurance in African Higher Education Institutions

Many African countries have historical roots in their colonial past (Otoo, 2013). According to (Otoo, 2013) almost all of the early universities were attached to their colonial parent universities, which had responsibilities of ensuring quality. An example is the University College of the Gold Coast (now University of Ghana), these attachments were severed as many of the

countries became independent. After which quality assurance was left to the internal machineries of the institutions (Baryeh, 2009). Quality assurance beyond the institutions came up through the activities of some professional associations dealing with subjects such as medicine, architecture, law, accounting, and engineering, who set up standards for the accreditation of programmes in their field. Apart from this, countries like Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, started with the development of national bodies for the regulation, control and setting up of standards for their higher educational institutions (Varghese, 2004).

According to Otoo (2013), the National Universities Commission (NUC) which was established in 1962 serves as a regulatory agency for all universities in Nigeria with a major responsibility for quality assurance. In Kenya, the Council for Higher Education (CHE) which oversees quality assurance, was established in 1985. The South African Council on Higher Education (CHE) was established as an independent statutory body in May, 1998 in response to the Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997 and has an executive responsibility for quality assurance within higher education and training (Mhlanga, 2008). Today, there at least twenty African countries with national quality assurance agencies. These include Botswana, Cameroun, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Tanzania, Tunisia, South Africa, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. This list excludes some French speaking countries which have a collective and central quality assurance responsibility system. In French speaking countries, an organization called Conseil African et Malgashe pour Enseignement Superior (CAMES) takes charge of regulatory functions to the

extent that in this group, only Cameroun and Mauritius have national agencies for quality assurance (Varghese, 2004).

The Concept of Quality Assurance

Quality assurance (QA) has become an important global phenomenon in higher education. Almost half of all countries around the world have created quality assurance mechanisms of one type or another during the last decade or two (International Institute for Educational Planning [IIEP], 2009). Quality assurance involves a wide range of concepts covering all matters that individually or collectively influence the quality of a product (WHO, 2010). The term cuts across all discipline such as health, manufacturing, industry, commerce, science, education and other sectors.

In education, the confidence of students and other stakeholders in higher education is likely to be maintained through the practices of efficient and effective quality assurance policies which ensure that programmes are well designed, regularly monitored and periodically reviewed, thereby securing their continuing relevance and currency (Inter-University Council for East Africa [IUCEA], 2010). According to Lamarra, as cited in CHEA (2010), “there is a diversity of perspectives and emphasis on quality assurance: for academics it refers to knowledge; for employers too competence; for students too usability (employability); for society too respectable and competent citizens; for the state according to the conception assumed, it can vary from aspects linked with the social and human development to the efficiency and the cost and requirements of human capital” (p.37).

Quality Assurance as a Planned and Systematic Review of Programmes

Materu (2007, p.45) states that QA is a planned and a systematic review process of an institution or programme to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced. Mishra (2007) describe it as a “conscious and planned process which is responsibility of everyone in an educational institutions, though the top management sets the policies and priorities” (p.32). Thus QA should be an ongoing and a continuous process. UNESCO (2004), for example, described quality assurance as a systematic review of educational programs to ensure that acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being maintained.

Quality Assurance as an All-Embracing Term

Quality assurance is also viewed as an all-embracing term covering all the policies, processes and actions through which quality of higher education is maintained and developed (Campbell & Rozsnyai, 2002). In the same vein, Vlăsceanu, Grunberg & Parlea (2007) provide an extended description of quality assurance as a regulatory mechanism, quality assurance focuses on both accountability and improvement. Quality assurance activities depend on the existence of the necessary institutional mechanisms preferably sustained by a solid quality culture. Quality management, quality enhancement, quality control, and quality assessment are means through which quality is ensured (Vlăsceanu, et al 2007, p.74).

Quality Assurance as a Continuous Process

According to the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP, 2006) quality assurance is conceptualised as a continuous process of evaluating, assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving

the quality of higher education system, institution, or programme. As a regulatory mechanism, QA focuses on both accountability and improvement, providing information and judgment (not ranking) through an agreed and consistent process and well established criteria. Quality assurance (QA) is a range of review procedures designed to safeguard academic standard and promote learning opportunities of acceptable quality for students. QA is therefore a continuous process by which an institution can guarantee that standards and quality of its educational provisions are being maintained or enhanced. The National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Commission (NQAAC) in Egypt remarked that quality assurance is the means of ensuring that informed by its mission, academic standards are defined and achieved in line with equivalent standards nationally and internationally, and that the quality of learning opportunities, research and community development are appropriate and fulfill the expectations of the range of stakeholders (NQAAC, 2004, p.23).

In relation to the provision of higher education which is a social service which makes HEI's not only responsible to their management but also to the public. The wider society requests for the attainment of acceptable standards in their quest for the achievement of their set objectives. Quality assurance therefore refers to planned and systematic processes that ensure confidence in educational services provided by training organisations under the remit of relevant authorities and bodies (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p.19). Quality assurance is a set of activities established by these relevant authorities and bodies to ensure that educational services satisfy consumer requirements in a systematic and reliable fashion. Wilger (1997)

also shares a similar view. For him/her quality assurance is a collective process by which a university ensures that the quality of educational process is maintained to the standards it has set itself.

Quality Assurance as Internal and External Phenomenon

Quality assurance may be external or internal. External quality assurance refers to the actions of an external body which assess the universities operations or that of its programmes in order to determine whether it meets the standards that have been set, while internal quality assurance refers to the institutions programmes, policies, designs and mechanisms for ensuring that it is fulfilling its own purposes as well as the standards that apply to higher education in general or to the profession or discipline in particular (IIEP, 2006). The external quality assurance and internal quality assurance are strongly linked by being complementary and integrated with each other. The external QA is essential for the internal QA while external QA motivates internal QA for future developments and improvements (Batool & Qureshi, 2004).

Quality Assurance as a Culture

Other authors (Batool & Qureshi, 2004; Vroeiijensstijn, 1995; Vlăsceanu, Grunberg & Parlea 2007) focus on learning in conceptualizing quality assurance in higher education. Centrex (2004), for example, defined quality assurance as the means by which an organization confirms that conditions are in place for students to achieve the standards set by the training organization (p.14). Green (1994) also maintains that quality assurance practice is considered important for it enables a university become a learning organization. If this is so, underlying pedagogical assumptions concerning the

teaching and learning relationships implicit in quality assurance come into focus. To Barnett (1992), quality assurance implies a determination to develop a culture of quality in an institution of higher education, so that everyone is aware of his own part in sustaining and improving the quality of the institution. Similarly, International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, INQAAHE (2005) defined quality assurance as all those attitudes, objects, actions and procedures, which through their existence and use, and together with the quality control activities, ensure that appropriate academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by each programme (p. 13)

Quality Assurance as a Tool for ensuring Stakeholder Confidence

Still others consider quality assurance in higher education as a process of establishing stakeholder confidence that provision (input, process, and outcomes) fulfills expectations or measures up to threshold minimum requirements (Harvey, 2002; Barnett 1992; Boyle & Bowden, 1997). In the context of higher education, quality assurance is viewed as the ongoing development and implementation of ethos, policies, and processes that aim to maintain and enhance quality as defined by articulated values and stakeholder needs (Boyle & Bowden, 1997). In line with this, Cheng & Tam (1997) noted that if higher education is considered as a system, then any quality assurance programme should concentrate on assessing input, process and outputs. Quality assurance is the process of establishing stakeholder confidence that provisions (input, process and outcomes) fulfils expectations or measures up to the threshold minimum requirements. This concern is shared by Martin and Stella (2007) who have visualized quality assurance as a

generic term used for all forms of external quality monitoring, evaluation, or reviews. It may be defined as a process of establishing stakeholder confidence that provisions (input, processes and outcomes) fulfill expectations or measures up to the minimum requirements.

Quality Assurance as a Tool for Accountability and Improvement

Contained in these definitions are issues of maintenance and improvement of quality and standards. However, there seems to be a consistent line that we could find across the varied perspectives. Also, a quality assurance system in higher education institutions may be described as the totality of the policies, values/attitudes, procedures, structures, resources and actions devoted to ensure continuous improvement of quality of the educational processes (Otto, 2013). Advocates of quality assurance view accountability as necessary not only to satisfy external constituents, but also as a precondition for improvement, especially in undergraduate education (Wilger, 1997). There is also an argument that improvement, arising from regular monitoring of the services offered, should be at the heart of any quality assurance process (Further Education and Training Awards Council [FETAC], 2007). This suggests that quality assurance has both intrinsic and extrinsic roles in effecting improvement, sustaining accountability and encouraging exchange between the system and its context. To Vroeijsstijn (1995) quality assurance is a systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of quality maintenance and improvement. Most authors on the concept of quality assurance share this view (Batool & Qureshi, 2004; Vroeijsstijn, 1995; Vlăsceanu, Grunberg & Parlea 2007).

Quality assurance however, is not an easy issue to deal with, mainly because of differences in understanding what quality assurance means. The definitions provided in this chapter bring some clarity to this debate. Quality assurance in its broadest sense includes all activities that are related to defining and assuring quality. It also involve enhancing the quality of HEI's, thus arguing for adopting an all-inclusive approach derived from an institutions strategic goals, fitting into their internal quality culture while also fulfilling the external requirements for quality assurance. In the context of this study QA may be viewed as an all-embracing term, continuous process, planned and systematic review of programmes or institutions by internal and external mechanisms for the purposes of ensuring accountability and improvement as well as ensuring stakeholder confidence and quality culture. I adopt Materu (2007) definition of QA as a planned and a systematic review process of an institution or programme to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced. This is because it lays emphasis on all the central issues that cuts across the various definitions of QA.

Quality and Quality Assurance

The term quality migrated or was imported from its more familiar industrial and commercial settings of the 1980s into the domain of HE and also to other professional and public service settings Newton as cited by (Okae-Adjei, 2012). Defining quality in Higher Education is a challenging task since quality is a rather vague and controversial concept (Okae-Adjei, 2012). In the literature there is no single definition of the term which is absolutely agreed or universally accepted. Tammaro (2005) observed that

quality is a value judgment, differently interpreted by different stakeholders, such as governments, employers, students, administrators, lecturers, etc. Like beauty, quality is subjective, a matter of personal judgment (Doherty, 2008). Although it is difficult to define quality especially in HE, Mishra (2007) argued that the term has a few central ideas around which the whole concept revolves. Quality as absolute (is given and considered as the highest possible standards), quality as relative (is described in relative terms), quality as a process (is the outcome of systems and procedural requirements), and quality as culture (recognises the importance of organisational view of quality as a process of transformation, where each entity is concerned and acknowledges the importance of quality). Mishra (2007) noted that educational institutions are particularly concerned with quality as a culture, though other ideas of quality have their respective places.

Harvey (1997) also identified five broad approaches to quality identifiable in relation to HE. These are quality as exceptional, quality as perfection, quality as fitness for purpose, quality as value for money, and quality as transformation. Most of these definitions however do not seem to apply to HE. For example the dimension of quality as perfection cannot be applicable since HE does not aim to produce defect-free graduates Watty, as cited by (Okae-Adjei, 2012, p 2).

I will also consider “quality” as “fitness of purpose”; that is, establishing the status of quality assurance in private universities in order to ascertain their conformity to generally accepted standards as defined by the institution and quality assurance bodies. Quality assurance has become globally important especially in HE and more attention is being paid to it than

ever before. According to Tagoe (2008) the purposes of quality assurance and accreditation in HE are to ensure good quality education is being offered, to equip students to manage their own learning and development throughout their lives, to provide students with knowledge and skills that are relevant to the current job market locally, nationally and internationally, and to ensure that internationally recognized academic standards are achieved.

Quality Assurance Models

Mhlanga (2008) asserts that reform in general and quality assurance systems in particular do not operate in isolation; rather they operate within and are responsive to a whole range of factors, values and orientations that inform the gamut of higher education reforms in a given context. This is to indicate that changes in higher education today seem to be affected by forces originating from three main sources the state, the market (in society) and the culture of the higher education institution itself. As Maasen and Cloete (2002) put it, the role of a higher education institution today reflects the constellation of interests voiced by different interest groups. This is particularly so given the increasing number of university stakeholders, often with competing interests in university affairs. The tension that exists between the varying interests of the state, the market and the institution itself has a bearing on the quality assurance systems that eventually prevail. From the literature there seems to be three prominent models of quality assurance in HEIs. These are the Command and Control Model, the Self-regulation Model, and the Market Regulation Model (Okae-Adjei, 2012; Mhlanga, 2008; Jamieson, 2008)

Command and Control Model

In an educational system where the state provides much of funding which is required by the universities, the state has a responsibility of negotiating public interests in and expectations of higher education institutions. Governments therefore, demand efficiency, quality and accountability on the part of university institutions. These affect institutions quite differently in terms of institutional autonomy and reforms pursued in the higher education system in general. Also these state control strips the universities of their academic freedom and autonomy to exercise their freedom of enquiry. The regulatory effect of the state varies from strict state control through interference, right up to arm's length steering or a supervisory role (Mhlanga, 2008).

As observed by Jamieson (2008) the Command and Control Model is an attempt by the state to control HEIs. In this case the state has authoritarian rules and or standards to ensure quality in HEIs are sanctioned for failure to observe these rules and/or standards. An example of this model is how US state universities are regulated.

Self-regulation Model

Traditionally, universities have protected their role of knowledge generation and dissemination, a cherished academic autonomy and their ivory tower status. In this sense, universities are unique organisations by virtue of the unique nature of their work to teach students and to advance human learning through production and dissemination of knowledge. The act of inquiry is central and pervasive for all institutions of higher education. Its realisation requires a necessary degree of autonomy, freedom and social responsibility, which must be granted to the intellectual community involved (Pullias & Wilbur, 1984).

In the Self-regulation Model, HEIs are autonomous. They design their own curricula and award their own degrees. HEIs are ruled by professionals and it is trusted that these professionals will do the right things. According to Mhlanga (2008) these self-regulated universities are known as stakeholder universities. A stakeholder university is an institution that identifies and establishes relationships with strategic partners like funding agencies, government, the business sector, research councils, foundations, charities and professional bodies. Ramirez (2004) prefers to call this type of university a socially-embedded as opposed to a buffered university. Such universities have to be well-networked in the turbulent and unpredictable economies that have become so globalised. Being networked is in fact a deliberate strategy institutions adopt in order to survive in an environment where government subsidy is continually diminishing. Thus, "...relationships with employers, employers" organizations, and professional bodies will have to be mapped in order to find out which are the crucial ones and how much weight the university should attach to the various relationships." (Jongbloed & Goedegebuure, 2001; p.10).

It is worth noting that the more a university succeeds in becoming a stakeholder institution, the more it is called upon to be accountable to an increasing number of external constituencies. The nature of such accountability is complicated since the institution has to take into account the different stakeholders" interests whenever it makes strategic choices and decisions (Jongbloed & Goedegebuure, 2001).

Market Regulation Model

In the Market Regulation Model there is a relationship between market competition and HEIs. Market competition for HE causes consumers (students) to make informed choices. The best HEIs flourish and the worst fails. According to Maasen and Cloete (2002) market-related values uphold non-academic corporate management styles, commodification of education, profit maximisation and institutional efficiency which is believed to be brought about through tight competition between private and public providers of higher education. From a market point of view, standards of excellence and issues of quality are approached from the perspective of labour market demands. Institutions compete for clients, strive to enroll as many students as possible, develop a variety of full-time and part-time courses, and strive to do more with less. All these practices have direct bearing on institutional quality delivery.

As noted by Mhlanga (2008) the market ideologies push for commercial interests that protect profits and not people, and they privilege corporate styles of management that concentrate decision- making power in the hands of managers and not academics. Market ideologies encourage policies that promote economic efficiency through liberalisation and deregulation of national markets. In the process, as Yang (2003) argues, the market fails to safeguard the needs of those without money as it responds only with sensory equipment that can detect money and profits. Because universities are run more and more like corporate enterprises, the market discourse influences an instrumental approach to quality assurance in higher education institutions. According to Lim (1993) this approach begins by forming a mission for the institution, followed by functions that have to be

carried out to achieve this mission, with the objectives of each function being set out. A quality assurance system is then introduced in order to ensure the quality of the programmes.

While there is nothing wrong with working towards the achievement of organisational missions and objectives, Lim's (1993) argument is that this influential approach is too mechanistic to be meaningful in an educational organisation. The hunt of such missions and purposes is done in such a managerialistic manner that inherent epistemic values of an institution are compromised. Besides, by adopting such an instrumental approach, the quality assurance activities of an institution seek to achieve the pre-stated aims and objectives of an institution and by so doing a somewhat narrow view of quality assurance is pursued. It is worthwhile to note that the encroachment of market ideologies into higher education has resulted in academic units in universities operating as profit centres. Their success is very much judged in terms of their ability to generate funds for the institution. This practice has obvious implications for the type of programmes that academic units offer and the numbers they choose to enroll in order to meet certain financial targets. Thus, institutions become more preoccupied with quantity than with quality in their programme offerings. Reforms and quality should be driven first and foremost by academic values, not by an economic rationale.

Jamieson's (2008) observation is in line with Clark's (1983) classic triangle of coordination which suggests three principal modes for coordinating or controlling behaviour in academic institutions: state regulation, professional self-regulation which was termed "the academic oligarchy" and market forces.

Clark's (1983) model is used to determine how HEIs are steered and how influential each force is in relation to the steering of these systems. Michael (2001) agreed with Clark when he observed that the state, the academe, and the market are the primary forces influencing quality in HE.

External and Internal Quality Assurance

Internal (institutional) quality assurance

One distinction that needs to be considered is that between “internal” and “external” quality assurance. According to Brink (2003) studies on quality assurance in higher education have focused on two separate but related issues, namely internal and external evaluation. As noted by Jackson (1997), quality assurance systems may be classified as self-regulating (regulated by the institution or provider of the educational programme), externally regulated (regulated by an external agency), or a combination of the two. According to Mhlanga (2008), internally-driven self-improvement quality assurance is characterised by self-enlightening evaluation, is informed by a sense of professionalism, addresses the teaching-learning interface of an institution, and bases its policies primarily on inward-professional accountability. This type of quality assurance necessarily prioritises “... a transformative approach to quality” (p.52). Internal quality assurance focuses on the provisions and processes designed by an institution to assure the quality of the education it provides. Such systems may be a response to external pressures or legislation, but the processes are essentially designed and operated by the institution itself. Internal quality assurance aims at institutional development and assessment of internal accountability. It incorporates every institutional activity that focuses on quality assurance and development in all the fields of

activity of the institution. El -Khawas (1998) noted that internal quality assurance concentrates mainly on academic issues and lies in collecting evidence and information about mission fulfillment, efficiency of activity and ways of insuring quality within the institution.

In talking about internal quality assurance, Hall (2006) describes quality assurance as a general term that “covers all aspects of an institution’s provisions and activities that focus on assuring educational (or research) quality” (p. 5). Hall further notes: More specifically, when something is said to be “quality assured”, the presumption is that it has satisfied a relevant standard or test that is specified in the quality assurance framework of an institution. The standard or test may relate to external requirements – such requirements may be determined by a professional body, an external quality assurance agency, or through legislation (p. 5). Common’s (2003) study revealed that self-assessment makes a major contribution to improving the quality of college provision for students and also promotes a range of management practices, especially evaluation.

External quality assurance (EQA)

Externally-driven quality assurance is underpinned by quality assurance policies that are anchored in upward and managerial accountability values, particularly in terms of the reporting lines institutions have to observe, which are often mandatory and not optional (Mhlanga, 2008). Institutions perceive quality from a value for money and fitness for purpose standpoint. Performance benchmarks are also pegged from the same position. External quality assurance refers to the systems that are designed and operated by an external agency, often mandated by legislation, to monitor the quality of

the education provided by tertiary institutions. The major aim for these external requirements is to achieve accountability. EQA in higher education has witnessed major developments in the last two decades internationally (Billing, 2004; Woodhouse, 2004). Western and developed countries have practiced external monitoring for a longer time and thus tend to have considerable experience with EQA systems. With regards to developing nations, recent studies have reported varying degrees of success and experience in their attempts to implement external quality assurance practices that they have adopted from the advanced nations (Bordia, 2001; Gnanam, 2002; Lenn, 2004).

Advantages of EQA System:

It can be argued that external validation has several advantages. First, according to Utuka (2012) it provides an assurance of quality and it helps the institutions to achieve their own objectives. Mostly, the institutions are required to respond to the standard procedures of the external bodies as well as to some queries that are raised. This results in the self-study prepared by the institution which is helpful in enhancing the quality of the institution. Assessment of educational programmes of an institution undertaken by independent experts strengthens the international reputation and standing of the country's tertiary educational system (Utuka, 2012). Secondly, it ensures that students', employers' and taxpayers' resources are directed to providers and programmes that meet minimum quality standards. As noted by the Tait (1997) systematic and constituent quality assurance helps to establish an institution's reputation and enhances its image (p. 2). It includes defined standards of achievements, documented procedures, and established ways of

clear accountability for outcomes. The result is likely to be greater public confidence, more satisfied students, and efficient processes and confident staff. The students are more likely to experience better quality instructional, learning materials and interaction with the institution and its staff, leading to enhanced learning outcomes.

Disadvantages of EQA:

Quality assurance is not universally welcomed by academics (Utuka, 2012). Research conducted at the departmental level on the impact of quality assurance mechanisms indicates that academics adopt various behaviours to cope with what they perceive as accountability-led change, driven by the quality agenda (Utuka, 2012; Bordia, 2001; Gnanam, 2002; Lenn, 2004). Newton, as cited in Watty (2003, p. 218) in his research to find out the attitude of academics towards the introduction of quality assurance in the UK reported that academics conceive quality as “intrusion, inspection and as conformist behaviour”.

Current external evaluation systems have been criticized by many scholars. Harvey (2003) said accreditation is mainly about shifting of power from the academics to the managers of an institution while Worthington and Hodgson as cited in Kemenade, Pupius and Hardjono (2008) argued that ostensibly the aim of quality assurance was to “improve service provision but in reality it is a subtle form of “panoptic” power, control and surveillance over the academic labour process” (p.181). Supporting this assertion, Jeliaskova and Westerheijden (2002) noted that the main outcome of external evaluation systems, which are characterized by bureaucratic procedures, is the control they exert over academics. This control is evident in the prevailing top down

approaches to management now characteristic of higher education. In principle, quality assurance is intended to improve the quality of programmes through active involvement of all staff within the organisational structure.

It has been indicated that quality audits undertaken periodically have promoted a culture of compliance and conformity to external requirements of EQAAs; there has been limited impact on improvement and enhancement at the teaching and learning level (Jeliazkova & Westerheijden, 2002; Kemenade, 2008; Harvey, 2003). Also the process of EQA in most cases is very expensive for both the external agencies and the institutions and has resulted in additional costs to tertiary institutions in order to satisfy EQA requirements (Utuka, 2012; Campbell & Rozsnyai, 2002). This has resulted in the displacement of costs where significant proportions of resources are allocated to quality assurance processes; this has happened at a time when institutional funding has been reduced. As noted by Daft (2006), the implementation of quality assurance principles and activities in any organization is a burdensome job. Preparing and writing down activities and principles of quality may be easy but practicing them is tough. According to Article 11 (a) of the World Declaration on Higher Education (UNESCO, 1998) “internal self-evaluation and external review, conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international experts, are vital for enhancing quality” (p. 65).

Approaches of Quality Assurance

According to Bogue (2003), at least four torrents of activity may be distinguished in contemporary approaches for assuring quality in colleges and universities. Also Wiklund, Klefsjo, Wiklund and Dvardsson (2003),

emphasized that different approaches several have been adopted for the introduction of quality management in higher institutions. Van Vught and Westerheijden (1994) suggest that there is a general model showing the commonality of approaches employed by individual national systems. Billing (2004) is of the view that of all the wide range of approaches to quality assurance there is not a universal model of quality assurance, many elements are in common. Higher education has fashioned several approaches to quality assurance that include a range of strategies (Utuka2012). These are broad based approaches to quality assurance such as (quality audit, quality assessment, quality control, accreditation, TQM, ISO and Benchmarking, and specific techniques or strategies such as site visits, self-review, peer review, external examination, and student evaluation of teaching.

Quality audit

Quality audit as defined by the Australian Universities Quality Agency [AUQA] (2005, p. 1) is a “systematic and independent examination to determine whether activities and related results comply with planned arrangements and whether these arrangements are implemented effectively and are suitable to achieve the objectives”. The process involves a systematic review of the quality assurance mechanisms of an institution to ensure that they are comprehensive enough to achieve their purposes. In brief, it is a check to see whether the institution is fit for its stated purpose. Quality audit is an attempt to verify the extent to which the institution is fulfilling its own objectives (Woodhouse, 1999). It checks the extent to which the institution is achieving its own explicit or implicit objectives. In Hall (2006) view most quality audit processes attempt to prod institutions into self-evaluation and

enhancement, the belief being that the hallmark of a quality organisation is its ability to self-assess its own strengths and weaknesses and to take corrective action. This is because audit does not set any external standards against which to judge the institution. Its outcome does not involve a pass or fail decision, but rather assessing an institution on its own terms and against its own objectives.

Accreditation

Bogue (2003) posits that accreditation and programme reviews epitomize the more traditional approaches, incorporating the principles of peer review and external standards. In general, accreditation is undertaken to verify whether an institution or a programme qualifies or has satisfied the criteria set up by the accrediting body. As noted by Harman and Meek (2000) accreditation refers to a “process of assessment and review which enables a higher education course or institution to be recognised or certified as meeting appropriate standards” (p. vi).

Also, according to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA, 2010) accreditation is a means to assure and improve higher education quality, assisting institutions and programs using a set of standards developed by peers. This means that an institution or programmes that has successfully completed an accreditation review has in place the needed instructional, student support and other services to assist students to achieve their educational goals. Kwarteng-Ashia (2014) posited that accreditation is a system of according recognition to an educational institution for meeting satisfactory standards in performance, integrity and quality. Also the American Psychological Association (APA, 2014), acknowledged that

accreditation is both a status and a process. As a status, accreditation provides public notification that an institution or program meets standards of quality set forth by an accrediting agency. As a process, accreditation reflects the fact that in achieving recognition by the accrediting agency, the institution or programme is committed to self-study and external review by one's peers in seeking not only to meet standards but to continuously seek ways in which to enhance the quality of education and training provided.

Maryland Higher Education Commission (2011), mentions two types of accreditation; institutional accreditation, and specialized or programmatic accreditation. Institutional accreditation means an entire college is accredited. This gives credibility to the college as a whole. This is supported by Kwarteng-Ashia (2014), who indicated that accreditation granted to an institution is “campus specific and not transferable” (p. 3). Specialized and programmatic accreditation is where certain specialized professional programs are accredited independently of their parent institution. Programme accreditation specifies programmes that each accredited institution has been permitted to offer within acceptable standards (NAB, 2012). The focus of an institutional accreditation provides the assurance that the general characteristics of the institution have been examined and found to be satisfactory. Also the focus of a specialized accreditation provides the assurance that the components of that particular program meet the external accreditation standards.

According to Utuka (2012) the purpose of accreditation is to assure the quality of an institution and its programmes and to assist in their continuous improvement. Erichsen (2000), is of the view that aims of accreditation is to

contribute to transparency and to accountability and so to the justification of public or private funding. Thus accreditation builds confidence in the general public that the tertiary institutions are providing services of standard value. This view is supported by CHEA (2010), that accreditation identifies institutions and programmes that have voluntarily undertaken explicit activities directed at improving the quality of the institution and its professional programme and are carrying them out successfully. This means that the public will repose their confidence in an institution which has the capacity to deliver successfully. In other words accreditation is a signal of success of a tertiary institution. For example in Ghana, accreditation systems are formed by the national government which specifies minimum standards and overseen by the NAB. NAB grants accreditation to institutions and the programmes they offer for study. Institutional accreditation is granted to proprietors to run tertiary education institutions when they meet the minimum standards, had assembled the requisite resources and deemed ready to run approved programmes

For an institution to be granted accreditation, according to Lenn (2004), much attention is given to such areas as the mission, governance, effective management, physical facilities, and financial facilities of the institution. It is usually an assessment that is conducted to find out if the institution meets the established minimum standards. The process allows for the evaluation of the total context in which teaching and learning takes place.

Total Quality Management (TQM)

This system of quality assurance in higher education was originally developed for corporations, especially in the manufacturing industries. Built

on the pioneering work of Deming (1986), TQM emphasizes continuous improvement and systems analysis. In addition to its focus on the continuous improvement principle, TQM also focuses on the principle of customer satisfaction (Bogue & Saunders, 1992).

According to Oakland (1992) contended that “TQM is an approach to improving the effectiveness and flexibility of business as a whole. It is essentially a way of organizing and involving the whole organization: every department, every activity, and every single person at every level” (p. 15). TQM therefore, is a holistic approach that seeks to integrate all sections of the organization with the aim of meeting the customers’ needs and the organizational goals. It calls for the active participation of all employees of an institution with the aim of meeting the needs of customers. According to Lewis and Smith (1994) TQM as a “philosophy by which management systems can direct the efficient achievement of the objectives of the organizations to ensure customer satisfaction and maximize stakeholder value” (p. 29).

International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

ISO 9000 is a set of international quality management standards and guidelines. It refers to a set of quality management standards which aims at specifying standards that organizations have to meet or follow to ensure that their services or products meet the need of customers. Sun, Li, Ho, Hansen and Frick (2004) maintain that ISO 9001: 2000 provides guidelines to assist organizations in setting up their quality management mechanisms. The focus is to help the organizations streamline their operations to enable them provide quality services or product.

The ISO 9000 standards have been applied into the educational system. Stimson (2003) and Ayudhya (2001) argue that the increased focus on quality assurance can be attributed to attempts by people who are business minded to introduce the concept of ISO 9000 quality management system into schools. This system is aimed at improving conformity with specific criteria, covering course design, delivery, and meeting customers' needs. Arguably, there are some advantages derived from the implementation of ISO 9000 to the educational sector. Ayudhya (2001) noted that one such benefit is the cultural changes in an organization and an attitudinal change in staff members towards business-related principles which increases their sensitivity to quality-related issues. This is likely to flow on to a greater focus on customer needs. Another benefit identified by Bae (2007) is that the ISO standards would ensure that educational organisations undertake a more systematic approach to their administrative processes.

Specific Strategies Used in Higher Education for Ensuring Quality

Self-assessment and self-reviews

Self-assessment is an evaluation that makes graded judgments about quality in respect of in this respect; it goes beyond accreditation that makes binary judgments (Dill, 2000). Harman and Meek (2000) notes that processes related to self-assessment or self-review came from the work of American accreditation agencies and refer to the institutions' internal evaluation of its activities to generate a self-reviewed report for the commencement of the external review.

Self-assessment is the on-going process through which tertiary education organisations evaluate their own performance, identify strengths and

areas for improvement, and make the necessary improvements overtime (Utuka, 2012). It should be clearly focused, with priority given to areas the institution considers crucial to achieving better education outcomes. Harman and Meek (2000, p. xii) argues that “good management practice requires that all institutions should have in place appropriate internal quality assurance and improvement plans, and submission of these to some outside body provides useful discipline for institutions to keep plans up to date”. Self-evaluation provides ownership of the evaluation process to the staff who must deal with issues of quality and enhances their commitment to quality improvement where deficiencies are identified. Bazargan’s (2000) study confirmed this view that when faculty members are actively engage in evaluation, they are likely to become motivated to assist in the development of the department. Self-studies have many positive features: They are usually not too costly because the assessment is undertaken internally; they are likely to achieve some degree of ownership because key staff are actively involved in the process and such participation increases the chances of improvements being achieved.

Peer review

Peer review by external experts or colleagues in higher education is not a new phenomenon. It is an academic process that has long been established, particularly in the research area. A very important issue to be considered before undertaking a peer reviews to establish the validity of the process relates to the selection of the panel members for the review. According to Kis (2005, p. 17) on the one hand, peers are “colleagues” which raises questions of legitimacy about the review process to those outside of higher education. On the other hand, peers are “competitors” which reduces the legitimacy of the

review inside higher education. Harman and Meek (2000) argues that peer review in combination with self- study will be a very effective quality management process as long as the external reviewers recognise and show respect for the values and processes of the institution being reviewed. Furthermore, the panel members should be informed that their major task in the review process is to contribute or assist the institution being evaluated in their quest to further improve on their internal processes.

The Site-Visit

External evaluation and review is the periodic process undertaken by a quality assurance body that leads to judgment about the quality and value of an institution's activities and processes. According to Harman and Meek (2000), a site-visit team normally comprises people of diverse professions and interest groups who are carefully selected according to the environment and nature of the institution and programme to be reviewed. The task of the visiting team is to evaluate the institution or programme in the light of its objectives and provide judgments based on its own expertise and its external perspective on the degree to which standards are met.

Generally, institutions are reviewed on a cycle such as every five years, but accrediting agencies could undertake a review of its member institutions and their programmes at any time particularly where the agency suspects that an institution is operating below minimum set standards. The case in Ghana, for instance is not different, the NAB Act 2010 (LI. 1984) stipulates that an institution should be visited at least once in five years. NAB also reserves the right to review any substantive change such as an expansion from undergraduate to graduate programmes or an expansion of off-campus

offerings. In this way, accrediting bodies hold their member institutions and programmes continually responsible to their stakeholders and to the public.

External Examiners

The use of external examiners in moderating the examinations of an institution is yet another form of quality assurance process in higher education. This is not a new approach to quality assurance in higher education. It is well established in higher education for a long time (Lewis, 2005). Stensaker and Brandt (2005) maintain that external examination systems are still in vogue and seem to be recognized as an effective means of ensuring the quality of education provided in those higher education systems in which it is found. Giving reason for its continuous application, Stensaker et al., (2008, p. 213) argue that this can be related to the two basic purposes of external examiners systems, i.e., to: “ensure that degrees awarded by different institutions are comparable with respect to (national) academic standards; and treat students fairly ensuring a certain distance between teachers and those who assess their achievements”. They argue further that these may not be the only reasons for introducing external examination systems.

Empirical Review

Utuka (2012) examined policies and practices of quality assurance in higher education in Ghana and New Zealand in order to identify those practices in New Zealand which are potentially applicable to the Ghanaian Higher Education context or which, at least, may suggest a direction for the Ghanaian government to consider for development. A qualitative methodology was used to gain the perceptions of key practitioners in quality management systems in the two countries. Interview and

documentary analysis were the main research instruments employed for data collection. This study found out that although NAB has made significant impacts on the quality regime of the higher education sector in Ghana since its inception, the processes of quality management demands remains a challenge to both the institutions and NAB and much remains to be done for improvement. The study recommended that quality of provision at the institutional level (internal structures, documented policies, external involvement, conduct of self-assessment), and at the national level (regular monitoring, change in compliance approach, adequate qualified staff) are key areas requiring urgent policy attention if Ghana is to achieve the objectives of its tertiary educational reforms.

Okae-Adjei (2012) examined the quality assurance practices of Koforidua Polytechnic (KP). The study was a descriptive qualitative research. Using the student life cycle framework the author followed students from admission stage through being taught and assessed and to graduation, looking at the quality checks at each stage. The findings suggests that Koforidua Polytechnic has taken steps to assure quality in its operations. The study recommended that the quality assurance agencies should support Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) including Koforidua Polytechnic to develop internal quality culture.

Rasool (2010) studied quality assurance practices at public and private sector higher education institutes of Pakistan. The study was limited to only recognized universities of capital Islamabad and the Punjab province. Twelve universities from public and twelve universities from private sector were selected randomly as population of the study. The major findings of the study

indicated that quality assurance model of Higher Education Commission is the predominant model of quality assurance in the higher education sector of Pakistan. Some departments of few universities have adopted ISO 9000 model of quality assurance. Also the study indicated that there was shortage of qualified personnel for quality assurance in higher education sector of Pakistan. Potential employer and alumnae are not involved in the process of programme and courses review. A reassuring findings of the study are that most of the universities in public and private sector have mission statement and quality assurance policy which indicated that universities are taking quality assurance seriously.

Ullah, Ajmal and Rahman (2006) studied quality indicators of higher education institutions of Pakistan. It was a descriptive study and conducted in twenty universities. Both public and private universities were equally used in the study. The sample of the study consisted of administrators, academicians and students. A total of 100 administrators, 300 academicians and 1000 students participated in the study. It was found that private universities lacking trained faculty members, equipped library, merit based admission policy, research and hostel facilities. It was recommended that the higher education commission introduce an academic audit system and provide foreign training to faculty members of universities. The study again recommended that merit based admission policy be ensured in the universities.

Woodhouse (2006) carried out an in-depth review of literature to compare cost benefit analysis of quality assurance and he exuded that the benefits of having quality agency outnumber the cost incurred. To validate good performance, continuous improvement, comparison between HEIs,

consumer protection and accountability, the role of quality assurance agency is pivotal. He further predicted that international agencies will emerge and collaboration will increase between quality assurance agencies. Quality agencies will transform them according to the need of time.

A similar situation of quality assurance of HEIs in Serbia has been identified by Milenkovi (2003). The study reveals that although some measures of quality assurance such as the academic councils of the university and faculties to approve curricula and decide the promotions of faculty members, clearly defined selection criteria for faculty, compulsion of two international papers for PhD degree, was practiced in Serbian HEIs but these institutes were not delivering according to the aspiration of the nation and were falling behind the other European institutions.

Again a study was conducted by Fuinlong (2000) to find the current status of quality assurance practices in Thai colleges and universities. All the heads of quality assurance and vice president of academic affairs were sent a questionnaire to find their response about the model used by the HEI and difficulties associated with these models. Besides this future development of quality assurance in Thai higher education sector as envisaged by the respondents was also explored. The results confirmed that the primary model of quality assurance for most of the HEIs is that of Ministry of Education Affairs quality assurance model. Second most commonly used model was ISO 9000 model. Majority of the respondents were of the view that internal quality assessment procedure should concentrate on the teaching-learning process and should be embedded with the current quality control procedures. However, the researcher is convinced that the current model of quality assurance can be used

to build a platform for sound quality assurance and quality enhancement system.

Csizmadia (2006), in a study on the implementation of quality management in higher education institutions, applied institutional theory together with resource dependency to analyze the introduction of quality management in Hungarian higher education. He found that organizational characteristics (organizational complexity, leadership, decision-making processes etc.) influence the pace and scope of implementation of quality management in higher education institutions. That is the more complex the higher education institution, the slower the pace of quality management implemented. Another finding was, the higher the commitment of leaders, the faster the pace and the wider the scope of quality management implementation. In general, Csizmadia's study demonstrated the relevance of organizational theories in analyzing the practice of quality assurance in universities.

Frederiks and Associates (1994), for instance examined the relationships among evaluations of the quality of teaching and the effects of these evaluations, as well as other explanatory variables in Dutch universities, based on a contingency framework. One of their findings demonstrated a significant and positive relationship between size of study programs and active utilization of the external evaluation report in universities.

Erden (2006) applied the institutional perspective to study the Turkish higher education sector and found that where there are no strong coercive mechanisms, and when the legal framework itself has multiplicity within,

historical roots of organizations become more effective in influencing the institutions' activities, structures and procedures, creating divergence.

Several critics in the existing works on quality assurance in higher education also emphasised the importance of organizational context in understanding and explaining the adoption of quality assurance in universities (Newton, 2002; Raza et al, 2006; Bhatti & Tauqir, 2006; Naize & Mace, 2006; Telford & Masson, 2005; Frederiks & Associates, 1994, Martins, 2005). Newton (2002), for example, stressed the importance of taking full account of the constraints and circumstances of situation and context, which influence both policy implementation, and the activities of key actors or 'system-users' in changing or reshaping quality assurance policy.

Theoretical Framework

The view of universities as organizations enjoys sustained popularity as revealed in the writings of many researchers (Meyer, et al, 2005; Washington & Ventresca, 2004; Colbeck, 2002; Stensaker & Norgård, 2001; Scott, 2001; Santos, et al., 1998; Fjortoft & Smart, 1994; Birnbaum, 2000). As argued by Bastedo (2006), to better fathom higher education as an organization, a university must first be assumed as an open system. True to the nature of open systems, higher education institutions too depend on constant interchange with the environmental factors. Many scholars recognize universities as open system organizations (Kahsay, 2012). Also Birnbaum (1988) portrayed colleges and universities as open and dynamic systems existing in and interacting with their environment. As defined by Bastedo (2006) an open system simply refers to the concept that organisations are strongly influenced by their environment (p.23). As open

system organizations, the basic activities and processes of private universities depend on the contextual factors within the organizational environment (Kahsay, 2012). Two organizational theories, contingency theory and institutional perspectives based on an open system framework provide a theoretical lens to clarify how organizational contexts affect the practice of quality assurance in private universities. The basic premise of contingency theory is that the best practices depend on the contingencies of the situation, implying that there is no one best way for all organizations, while institutional perspectives emphasize the importance of the institutional environment of organizations.

Contingency Theory

Contingency theory explains how organizations adapt to their immediate operating contexts (Kahsay, 2012). The two fundamental assumptions of contingency theory are, first, that there is no one best way to organize, and, second, any way of organizing is not equally effective under all conditions (Galbraith, 1973). The main thrust of contingency theory is to understand the interrelationship within and among subsystems as well as between organizations and their environments (Kahsay, 2012). It focuses on how organizations operate under varying conditions and in specific circumstances. According to Drazin and van de Ven, (1985), fundamental to contingency theory is the proposition that the performance of an organization depends on the fit between its properties and its relevant context. This theory holds that there is an optimal fit between an organization and its environment. That is an effective organization is optimally adjusted to specific environmental circumstances (Frederiks et al., 1994). A closer fit

between the organization and its environment results in better organizational performance, whereas misfit leads to organizational problems.

It can be said that organizations are contingent upon several internal and external environmental factors (Lenz & Engledow, 1986). Most theorists studying organizations have identified organizational size, age, location, technology, leadership, goals and culture as some of the contingency variables that affect organizations (Donaldson, 2001; Henderson, 1999). Many organizational studies have used this theory as a useful tool to examine the extent to which organizational characteristics explain and predict organizational practices (Donaldson, 2001; Daft, 1992).

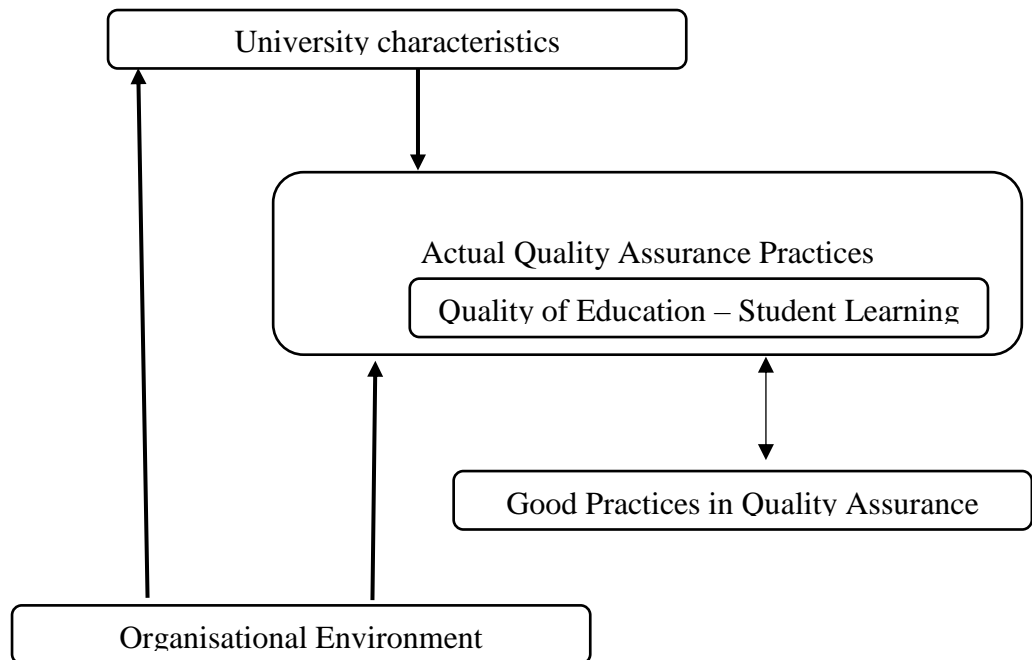
Institutional Theory

One of the fundamental assumptions of institutional theories is that the environment exerts mammoth influence on how organizations operate. They assert that organisations are social systems shaped and influenced by the context of larger social and political frameworks of norms, values and rules (Meyer & Rowan, 2005). An organisation's environment may be divided into two categories: the task environment and the institutional environment (Hall, 1977; Oliver, 1997). The task environment consists of the limited number of factors that directly affect an organisation, whereas the institutional environment involves the almost unlimited number of factors that influence all organizations in the society (Hall, 1977). Factors in the task environment include: customers of the organization's output, suppliers of the organisation's input, competitors of the organisation, and regulatory agencies (Carroll & Huo, 1986, Jones & George, 2003). Institutional environment refers to the general

environment composed of economic, socio-cultural, political/legal, technological, and demographic forces. It functions as highly rationalized myth to which organizations must ceremonially conform to appear appropriate and responsible, and not explainable by direct task contingencies (Zucker, 1987; Scott & Meyer, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Conceptual Framework

In this section, the conceptual framework of the study is presented and expounded. The main theoretical constructs identified from the quality assurance literature and elements of the organisational theories were combined to draw the dimensions of the framework. The framework conceptualized in open systems perspectives comprises four dimensions. These are the actual quality assurance practice, good practices in quality assurance, university characteristics and the organisational environment. The diagram of the conceptual framework of the study is portrayed in the Figure 1. The single arrow lines indicate the direction of the influence among the variables while the double arrow line is used to show whether there is a link between actual practices and good practices in quality assurance.



(Source: Kahsay, 2012)

Figure 1. Elements of quality assurance in private universities

Actual Quality Assurance Practice

As a result of the open systems perspective, private universities are conceived as organizations that receive certain inputs from their environment, transform them, and discharge the outputs to the external environment in the form of graduates and services. Hence, as an organization-wide task, actual quality assurance practice refers to what the universities do in terms of ensuring quality of their educational provision (inputs, processes and outputs) vis-à-vis student learning (Kahsay, 2012). It involves policies, procedures, methods, structures and resources necessary to ensure quality. The addition of student learning to this concept is based on the argument that students are vital part of private universities. Many researchers of quality in higher education agree that student learning should be at the center of quality assurance systems and practices (D'Andrea, 2007; Harvey & Newton, 2006; Centrex, 2004; Tam, 2002; Astin, 1993; Barnett, 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). As Tam

(2002) noted, the continuing improvement to maximize student learning and development is the primary goal of universities, and it should be the focus of any concern over quality and its measurement. Thus, actual quality assurance in universities is examined in terms of its emphasis on the conditions and core processes that influence quality of student learning.

Good Practices in Quality Assurance

This aspect signifies the conditions, processes and practices necessary for a worthwhile internal quality assurance system. These include: a focus on quality improvement and the core educational processes; participation and commitment of leadership, academic staff and students; adequate resources; policy and structure, and accountability and transparency (Kahsay, 2012). These elements are used to analyze actual versus good practices in quality assurance.

Organisational Environment

Focusing on the theories of contingency and institutionalism, the university's environment comprises both the task/technical and institutional environments. The environment of private universities is complex due to the numerous stakeholders that higher education must serve, including external and internal actors (Bastedo, 2006). The external factors include governments, ministries, legislators, industry, parents, and etc. while the internal factors include students, staff, and faculty. Each of these actors presents their own demands for private universities to adapt to their needs. This suggests that the adoption and implementation of quality assurance practices and processes is not free from the influence of an organization's environment. As Newton (2006) contended, any quality assurance system will

always be affected by situational factors and by context. The suppliers and regulators of the university from the task environment, and the legal/political, and socio-cultural elements from the institutional environment will compose forces of the organisational environment in this study. The adoption and full implementation of quality assurance in private universities requires commitment and engagement of all actors. These values can be influenced by the socio-cultural factors prevailing in the university.

University Characteristics

Private universities are as complex organizations with unique characteristics that may influence the adoption and implementation of policies such as quality assurance. The elements that differentiate one university from the other include: leadership and governance, staff and students characteristics, age, size, location and quality culture (Kahsay, 2012). Each of these elements is briefly described as follows.

Leadership and Governance

From an organizational standpoint, one major element to drawing distinction between successful and unsuccessful organizations is the effectiveness of leadership and governance. This is an organizational factor, which is expected to influence the effectiveness of quality assurance practice in universities in a significant way. Though there are various meanings of the term, leadership may be considered as the art of influencing human behavior towards organizational goals (Harvey & Foster, 2007). Leadership is also important in promoting a culture of quality throughout the university.

Organizational Size

This refers to the number of students enrolled by private universities, number of teaching and non-teaching, staff, infrastructure, land size and the visibility of an institution to a variety of external stakeholders. Many contingency theorists consider organizational size as one of the most important factors affecting the structure and processes of an organization (Damanpour, 1996; Bastedo, 2006). As argued by Hitt et al. (1990), large organizations have more slack resources for new projects and diversification, greater challenges and more opportunities for promotion and growth among their employees and more control over the external environment. On the other hand, small organizations are said to be more innovative because they are more flexible, have greater ability to adapt and improve, and demonstrate less difficulty accepting and implementing change (Aldrich & Auster 1986; Damanpour, 1996). A study by Frederiks and associates (1994) on utilization of evaluation results in Dutch universities, affirmed a positive relationship between size and utilization of evaluation results.

Organizational Age

There is a debate regarding the effects of organizational age in organizational practices. Age is associated with experience and capacity of organizations. Though there are no clear evidences regarding the relationship between age and quality assurance practices in private universities, we can assume that age may provide experience and capacity for organizations.

Academic Staff and Students

These are the main actors that directly influence the attainment of the goal of universities. The academic personnel in universities are key resources

and their performance determines, to a large extent, the quality of the student experience of higher education (Rowley, 1996). Similarly, students also play an important role in improving the quality of education in private universities by providing feedback on the quality of their experiences. In this regard, academic staff and students matter a lot for a successful implementation of quality assurance in private universities.

Quality Culture

The prominence in the notion of quality culture in private higher education stems from the general interest in the culture of organizations (Kahsay, 2012; Maassen, 1996). Nonetheless there is no universally accepted meaning of the concept, the culture of an organization is associated with shared values, beliefs, norms, assumptions, and meanings of individuals participating in the organization (Tierney, 1988; Maassen, 1996). It includes the ways of doing things and standard operating procedures that develop over time inside an organization. Organizational culture is perceived as an independent variable in organizational studies in higher education, since “in private higher education, culture can affect student life, administration, and curriculum” (Maassen, 1996, p.41). This means that quality and its assurance are culturally embedded (Harvey & Stensaker, 2008). Thus, the concept of ‘quality culture’ acmes that, structure and policies alone are not enough to enhance quality in private universities.

Summary

The need for quality tertiary education has been a concern for all in the country. Quality is the conformance to requirements. According to the National Unions of Students in Europe [ESIB] (2002), quality assurance refers

to an ongoing process of ensuring the delivery of agreed standards. This means that tertiary institutions cannot stop striving to achieve quality. Quality cannot be achieved once and for all. Natarajan as cited in Otoo (2013) is of the view that quality is very specific; it involves continuous improvement; it can be achieved by prevention; it implies zero defects or errors; it includes correction of errors.

From the review of literature, quality higher education is of prime importance for Africa's future. This has culminated into the provision of quality higher education institutions in Ghana through diverse models. Without doubt it is of paramount importance to regulate the actors in the higher education industry by establishing quality assurance institutions, bodies, and agencies globally to provide security to quality academic and management delivery of programmes by these higher education providers. However, quality assurance operations have across the globe are confronted with various challenge which includes cross border difficulties, bureaucratic hindrances, logistics, funding inadequate and relevant human resources with professionalism (Otoo, 2013).

Again from the literature review, private universities face the challenge of meeting the standards put in place by the National Accreditation Board in terms of ensuring quality teaching and learning in their institutions. These challenges include academic and faculty, infrastructure and resources. This work suggests that the adoption of quality assurance policies, practices and models would go a long way in improving academic quality in private universities in Ghana.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the procedure that was adopted in conducting this study. The chapter presents the research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, the instrument that were used for data collection and how the data would be presented and analysed. Validity and reliability issues as well as ethical considerations were also looked at in this chapter.

Research design

Research design is defined as a plan that describes how, when and where data are to be collected and analyzed (Parahoo, 1997). A research design expresses the mutual efforts of the major parts of the research project in the solution of research question (Orodtho, 2003). Creswell (2008) indicates that in conducting a research, the researcher needs to think about the philosophical worldviews, the strategy of enquiry related to the worldviews and the methods and procedures of the research.

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study as the most appropriate design for this study. Creswell (2008) explained that the descriptive survey design is used to determine individual's opinions about policy, issues and programmes. A descriptive survey focuses on determining the status of a defined population with respect to certain variables. It also seeks to determine the nature of a group or a situation as it exists in the time of the study (Ary, Jacobs & Razaviah, 1990). Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) explained that descriptive survey design affords the researcher the opportunity

to obtain good number of responses from the participants. Despite the above enumerated strengths, the descriptive design can introduce errors due to the fact that some of the responses may be characterized by biases with respect to questionnaire which may distort findings. Best and Khan (1993) opined that descriptive statistical analysis limits generalization to a particular group of individuals observed in a study and that no conclusions are extended beyond this group. Notwithstanding these demerits, the descriptive survey helps to observe, describe and document situations as they naturally occur. For this reasons, I consider the descriptive survey design appropriate for this study.

Population

A population of a research study is any group of individuals or objects that have characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher (Sekaran, 2001). The population of this study is the thirty two (32) private university colleges in the Greater Accra Region. The participants from the private universities comprise registrars, heads of quality assurance unit or department, executives of the student representatives' council (SRC), deans of students, and lecturers from all the institutions. The total population of all the lecturers in all the ten private universities was 300 (Field data, 2015).

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The purposive sampling technique was used to select ten (10) of the private universities which have been in existence for the past ten (10) years, and are going through the required paper works for reaccreditation. According to Hopkins as cited by Mhlanga (2008) the selection of these private universities was based on the varied nature of the institutions in terms of their context and their assumed levels of development. These factor include size of institution, size of market share and the expectation of government and

society. These ten (10) private universities were perceived as being unique in terms of the level of development they have reached in instituting QA systems, institutional size, resource availability and their general political and socio-economic environment. They were also perceived to have different identities derived mainly from their unique historical legacies. Also in terms of developing and implementing quality assurance measures, I believe that the registrars, quality assurance officers, deans of students, lecturers and students (SRC) in an institution do play a very significant role in shaping both quality assurance policy and practice. These variations formed the basis for the purposive sampling of the cases that were studied

Again the choice of these private universities is based on the fact that NAB LI 1984 requires the private university colleges that have been in existence for ten (10) years to be given the presidential charter to operate as fully fledged private universities. These are:

1. Central University College
2. Methodist University College
3. Pentecost University College
4. Valley View University College
5. Jayee University College
6. Islamic University College
7. Ghana Technology University College
8. Wisconsin International University College
9. Zenith University College
10. Maranatha University College

In view of the purposive selection of the private universities, 10 registrars, 10 quality assurance officers, 10 deans of students and 70 executives of the SRCs were also used for this study. This is in line with Patton's (1989) assertion that purposive sampling enables the researcher to achieve "information rich case" (p. 52).

Additionally, one hundred and sixty eight (168) lecturers were selected randomly from the faculty /department of the selected universities through the simple random technique (lottery method). This technique was employed to give equal chance to all the lecturers. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) in a population of 300, the minimum sample size is 168. The procedure used was the lottery method and it is described as follows: I first designed a sample frame the list of lecturers I obtained from the field data by writing all the names and addresses of lecturers on a sheet of paper, I then cut the papers into equal sizes and folded the papers into equal sizes and put them in a small container. Each paper bears a yes or no. The papers were mixed up by me and removed randomly from the container one at a time without looking into it. I recorded each paper selected, and when a paper was selected and recorded, it was thrown back into the container before the next one was picked. This process continued until all the lecturers were selected for the study. Hence, two hundred and sixty eight (268) 'respondents were selected from all the faculty/ departments (in all the 10 universities) for the study.

Research Instruments

The data collection approach employed was the mixed-methods design. Mixed-methods design is one in which both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to answer research questions in a single

study (Mertens, 2005). Mixed-methods approach is useful to develop a better understanding of complex phenomena by triangulating or corroborating or complementing one set of results with another and thereby enhancing the validity of inferences (Mertens, 2005, Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2002; Green, Benjamin & Goodyear, 2001). A mixture or combination of methods in studying about quality assurance practices have harmonizing strengths and non-overlapping faults. This is the fundamental principle of mixed design. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches in studying about quality assurance practices, the deficiencies of one approach can be off-setted by the advantage of the other (Creswell, et al., 1996). Miles & Huberman (1994) argue that quantitative and qualitative methods are inextricably intertwined, not only at the level of specific data sets but also at the levels of study design and analysis. According to pragmatists, if a researcher provides strong evidence for his or her claims about what practices are effective, then he/she has met Dewey's standard of warranted assertability (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

This study was an effort to make evident the complementarity of using quantitative and qualitative methods in studying about quality assurance practices in private universities. The mixed-methods design was selected for this study based on two assumptions. Firstly, studying quality assurance as a public policy is a compound and multifaceted process that involves the viewpoints of different actors and, the collection and analysis of data from different sources. Secondly, employing a single approach to study quality assurance systems and practices at institutional level in private universities may limit the extensiveness of the data and accuracy of the

findings. Hence, the mixed methods design was selected for this study to generate greater understanding about the issues under the study.

Again, both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gaining knowledge are legitimate ways of understanding the world. The use of the mixed method in studying about quality assurance provides the opportunity in using one approach as a precursor for the other to answer different questions embedded in a specific instrument. Currall and Towler (2003) advocated that quantitative and qualitative research methods are complementary rather than opposed approaches. Thus, the mixed method design seemed the most appropriate methodology for this study (Johnson & Ownwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, 2003; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Questionnaires and interview guide were employed to collect data for the study. The choice of the questionnaire was based on the fact that it was more economical and reachable to the respondents, and uniform in terms of questions (Amedahe, 2002). The questionnaires consisted of a brief introduction showing how respondents were to respond to the questionnaire, the type of information the questionnaires was soliciting, instructions for answering the questionnaire and the assurance for how the confidentiality of their responses would be treated. The questionnaire was constructed on four-point structured Likert-type scale. It consisted of mostly items on the perception of the role of quality assurance, perceptions about quality assurance practices and the challenges of the quality assurance offices where respondents were expected to give their rating to statement by ticking the appropriate column on the scale of 1 (one) to 4(four) (See appendices A and B). As far as

the administration of the questionnaire is concerned, Amedahe (2002) identified two main ways of administering questionnaires, namely through the mail and non-mail. I used the non-mail for this study because I wanted to have a feel of the data collection using questionnaires and also avoid the situations where questionnaires sent by mails are not sent to the respondents.

According to Babbie (2004), an interview is a data collection method that consists of an encounter where one person (interviewer) questions another person (the respondent). Interview technique provides for a very useful and strong means of collecting data on significant educational problem (Nworgu, 1991). In interview, the researcher interacts with the interviewees to elicit the required response, genuine and detailed information (Nworgu, 1991). I used the face-to-face method which is economical compared to the telephone interviews. An interview guide was developed in order to carry out a structured interview of the registrars and quality assurance heads. The justification for the use of the interview guide lies in the fact that it provided the opportunity for asking more probing questions which otherwise would not be possible with the use of questionnaires. The interview guide was responded to by three (3) heads of the quality assurance of the private universities, and two (2) Registrars because these persons are faced with the challenge of assuring quality in their respective institutions. Also these persons occupy relevant positions in the universities and their experience and opinions about quality assurance in their respective institutions are valuable to this study. The interview guide was guided by questions which were formulated in line with research question five. The outline of questions on the interview guide was presented in section C. Section I was on the background characteristics of the

respondent. Section II was on the role of the quality assurance office. Section III was on the challenges of the quality assurance office. With the permission of the interviewees, I recorded the responses of the respondents with a digital audio voice recorder and wrote down the responses at the same time so as not to be found wanting when the voice recorded became faulty. Recording of the interview was to have an audio text of the conversation. This enabled me to transcribe the exact information the respondents gave.

Pilot Testing of Instruments

According to Creswell (2008), pilot testing is important to find tune instrument. Pilot testing of the questionnaires and interview guide was conducted in a private university in the Ashanti Region of Ghana (Baptist University College) to find out the validity and reliability of the instruments. The choice of the private university in the Ashanti Region was based on the fact that the region has the second highest concentration of private universities in the whole country. Also the private universities in the region have the same characteristics as those in the greater Accra Region, for example they have almost equal enrolment figures and the same quality of academic and administrative staff. These private universities are also briddled with the issues of quality assurance.

To ascertain the validity and reliability of the instrument for the pilot testing, I contacted my supervisors who are senior lecturers at the Institute for Education Planning and Administration (IEPA), University of Cape Coast who helped me in determining the validity and reliability of the research instrument. They did this by vetting the questionnaires and interview guide I developed to make sure they were in tune with my research questions. The

quantitative data collected was analysed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Science version 21. The pretest instrument generated a standardized Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of .68. After the pretest the necessary corrections were made on the questionnaires. The pilot study made it possible for some corrections to be made in the instrument. For example, item 40 was corrected to read in which period did your department /faculty/ institution started implementing internal quality assurance model(s). The corrected questionnaires were used to collect the main data from the field. The questionnaires were coded and imputed into this software for it be analysed. When the data was analysed, a standardized Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of .83 was obtained for all the items in the questionnaire. According to George and Mallery, as cited in Agbevanu (2010), the following are the rule of thumb for alpha coefficient: ">.9- Excellent, >. 8- Good, >.7- Acceptable,> .6- Questionable, > .5- Poor, and <.4- Very poor" (p. 74). This indicates that the Cronbach's Alpha falls within good in the rule for alpha coefficient. This indication provides a better basis for internal consistency of the instrument since the standardized Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was a somehow closer to one. This implies that the questionnaire generated a high statistical reliability as indicated by Kline (1999).

Also the interviews were analysed through the use of the thematic analysis where the proceedings of the interviews were indexed, coded, retrieved, and transcribed. Themes that emerged were put together for summarizing and interpreting the data. The pilot testing of the interview guide also provided the opportunity of ensuring that the questions were clearly worded in order to draw appropriate range of responses from the interviewees.

It served as a mirror to the actual interview in that it helped to identify where revisions needed to be made. For example more probing questions were included to elicit the views of the interviewees.

Data Collection Procedure

An introductory letter from the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) of UCC was obtained to prove the authenticity of this research. The copy of the introductory letter was given to the Presidents of the private universities to seek their audience in order to conduct the research in their institutions. Also copies of the introductory letter were given to all the participants alongside participants consent form and the invitation letter asking for permission to invite participants who fall within the domain of the study area to participate in the study. The essence was to enable the participants to familiarise themselves with the content (themes) for discussion. 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. After explaining the rationale for the study to them, a convenient date and time were set for the administration of the instrument to the respondents.

Participants' privacy, confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed through the permission letter, consent form and covering letter provided by IEPA. The purpose of the covering letter was to introduce me as a student of IEPA so that all necessary assistance could be given to me. Private universities, being the main focus of the research were assured that the findings, recommendations, reporting and dissemination of the study would be

used appropriately. As indicated by Punch (2000), all social research involve consent, access and associated ethical issues, since it is based on data from people about people. Participants were eager to give their responses and due to the good rapport established in the process of the interactions, respondents readily accepted and responded to the questionnaires and interview guide, even though, work-related issues sometimes disrupted and delayed most interview sections.

The questionnaires and interview guide were administered personally and as anticipated, the questionnaire was retrieved from the various institutions and a mutual agreement was established on the day, time, venue and whether or not to record their comments aside writing down of key points. All responses to the interview guide by the two registrars and three QA heads were recorded by me and played back for respondents to listen to. This was to make the necessary changes where appropriate. According to Guba as cited in Kusi (2012) the elements of trustworthiness criteria include credibility, transferability and conformability. To ensure the credibility of this study which is an important canon for establishing the quality of qualitative research findings, at the end of each interview I summarised what was said and allowed the participants the opportunity to ascertain whether the summary accurately reflects their position. This was done in an effort to verify with the participants the construction that emerged from the interviews. A maximum of three days was spent in each of the ten institutions for data collection. The schedule for the data collection in the institutions were 31st January to 20th February 2015 in all the Institutions.

Data analysis

According to Osuala (1993) data analysis is the breaking down of the raw material obtained into constituent parts and performing of statistical calculation with the raw data to provide answers to questions initiating the research. I edited the questionnaire and organized them based on the research questions for which the research was designed. The questionnaires were coded and inputted into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. This was employed to analyse the data. Means, percentages, and standard deviations were used to analyse Research Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4. The frequency distribution tables presented contained the percentage for each response. To facilitate the interpretation of the data, the responses to items on the likert-type scale, mostly involving “strongly agree”, “agree”, “disagree” and strongly disagree were scored 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The mean score of each item calculated was interpreted as: 1-1.25= strongly disagree; 1.26-2.50= disagree; 2.51-3.25= agree; 3.26-4.00= strongly agree. The midpoint for the scale of acceptance or rejection was 2.50. Thus any score below 2.50 indicated disagreement while any score up to 2.50 indicated an agreement.

In order to ensure easy analysis, the four likert-type scaled responses subgroups of “strongly agree”, “agree”, “disagree” and strongly disagree were collapsed into a two type scale response subgroups of “agree” and “disagree”. Tables were constructed to present the two type Likert-scale and discussed. Data collected using interview guide were transcribed and organized on four main themes that emerged from the interviews. These themes were misconception or misunderstanding of QA, resistance, inadequate

infrastructure and manpower challenges. The themes of the transcription were used to answer Research Question 5.

Qualitative analysis

Tere (2006) states that qualitative analysis can be regarded as a continuum, with highly qualitative, reflective types of analysis at one end, and on the other end, those which treat the qualitative data in a quantitative way, by counting and coding data. This can consist of indexing, coding, sorting, retrieving or otherwise manipulating data (“data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10). In other words, the focus is on the procedures of analysis and the interpretation of the data, or, as Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 7, 10) put it, “an imaginative, speculative, artful, flexible and reflexive analysis”.

There are various methods of analyzing qualitative data but I decided to use the thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is when data is analyzed by theme (Tere, 2006). This type of analysis is inductive, allowing the themes to emerge from the data without the preconceived ideas of the researcher interfering in the process. In this type of analysis, data collection and analysis usually take place simultaneously. Even background reading and the literature review can form part of the analysis process, especially if it can help to clarify an emerging theme. Thematic analysis involves coding. Patton (2002) states that coding provides a framework for organising collected data, and provides a platform for the interpretation to follow. It is an exploratory process commencing with open coding, while developing initial categories by considering the data in minute detail. Looking for themes involves coding. This means the identification of passages of text or other information and

applying labels to them to indicate that they are examples of some thematic idea or pattern (Babbie, 2004). In Babbie's (2004) view a key feature of the current research was coding that "readily applies to the coding of open-ended questionnaire responses" (p. 406).

After organizing the data, the recorded interviews were transcribed into text data. Creswell (2008) notes that transcription is the process of converting audiotape recordings or field notes into text data. This enables the researcher to repeatedly read data identified and generate themes to form major emerging ideas from each transcript for data analysis. After themes were generated, the data was then coded to each manuscript to identify and describe the text segment. This was done by placing a bracket around them and a short phrase to form meaning of each text segment. Creswell (2008) indicates that coding requires the researcher to identify text segment by placing bracket or a circle around them and assign code, a word or a short phrase that precisely describe the meaning of a text segment. After coding the data I provided a detailed description of the codes under a particular theme and added brief quotations from the transcript to realism (Creswell, 2008).

Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative data collected was organized in accordance with the research questions. Responses were coded. The data was processed and analyzed using a computer software called statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 21. Quantitative data analysis makes use of descriptive statistics including measures of central tendency (averages, mean, median and mode) and measures of variability about the average (range and standard deviation) (Cohen, et al., 2007). Percentages, means and standard deviations

were used for the study'. This was then represented in the form of tables for interpretation and discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The findings of the study are presented in themes along the lines of the research questions posed, namely:

1. How do private universities in the Greater Accra region of Ghana conceptualise quality assurance?
2. What do private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana perceive as the roles of quality assurance?
3. What quality assurance practices are currently being utilized by private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana?
4. How do the quality assurance practices of private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana conform to the requirements of the National Accreditation Board's guidelines?
5. What challenges do the quality assurance offices of private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana face in the performance of their duties and responsibilities?

Background Characteristics of Respondents

Before the presentation and discussion of the research findings, the biographic information of the respondents are presented to help understand and appreciate the responses given by the participants regarding the issues explored in this study. The background characteristics of the respondents

include gender, level, educational qualification, academic rank, years of service in the university, years of experience at current post and position held by the respondents.

Gender of Respondents

This aspect of the analysis sought to find out the gender differences of respondents. Table 1 shows the gender differences of the respondents.

Table 1

Distribution of the Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	(%)
Male	192	71.6
Female	76	28.4
Total	268	100

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of the respondents who participated in the study. As can be observed, out of the 268 respondents, 192 representing 71.6% were males whilst 76 representing 28.4% of the respondents were females. This indicates that the male respondents outnumber their female counterparts.

Highest Educational Qualification of Respondents

Information on highest educational qualification was also obtained from respondents. This was to determine the academic background of the lecturers, registrars, QA heads and deans of students. Table 2 captures the information. This table does not include the 70 students since they do not hold any qualification.

Table 2

Distribution of the Respondents by Highest Educational Qualification

Highest Educational Qualification	Frequency	(%)
PHD	4	2.0
M.ED/MA/MSC/MPHIL/MBA	189	95.5
B.ED/BA/BSC/BBA	5	2.5
Total	198	100

From Table 2, 2.0% of the respondents are PhD holders as the highest educational qualification, 95.5% are master's degree holders while 2.5% 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 the private universities. This is a remarkable feat since highly qualified university teachers are needed for the delivery of quality teaching and learning in the private universities.

Position held by Respondents

Information on the position held by the respondents was also obtained from respondents. This was to determine the categories of respondents involved in the study. Table 3 shows the positions held by the respondents.

Table 3
Distribution of the Respondents by Position Held

Position held	Frequency	(%)
Registrars	10	3.7
Dean of students	10	3.7
Head of QA	10	3.7
Lecturers	168	62.7
Students	70	26.2
Total	268	100

Table 3 shows 3.7% of the respondents were registrars, 3.7% of the respondents were deans of student and also 3.7% of the respondents were also quality assurance directors. Again, 62.7% of the respondents are lecturers whilst 26.2% of the respondents are students. It can be inferred from the outcome of the results that more lecturers participated in the study than all other participants.

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 universities. The findings are presented in Table 4. This table does not include the 70 students since they do not have any years of experience.

Table 4

Distribution of the Respondents by Years of Experience at Current Post

Years of experience at current post	Frequency	(%)
1 – 5	175	88.4
5 - 10	23	11.6
Total	198	100

From Table 4, 175(88.4%) of the respondents had been in their current post from 1 to 5 years while 23(11.6%) of the respondents have been in their current position in the university for the past 5 to 10 years. This indicated that a fewer number of the respondents had been in their current position for the past 5 to 10 years. Interestingly, majority of the respondents have been in their current position for the past 1 to five years. The number of years of experience of the respondents indicates that the respondents have been dealing with quality assurance issues.

Analysis of the Main Data

Research Question 1: How do private universities in the Greater Accra region of Ghana conceptualise quality assurance?

This section of the study focusses on how private universities conceptualise quality assurance. Section II of the questionnaire for registrars, deans of students, QA heads, lecturers and students containing items 11-26 were used to obtain answers to the Research question 1. The results are presented in Tables 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Also, Table 10 shows the responses of all categories of respondents in relation to research question 2.

Table 5 depicts the lecturers’ conceptualisation of quality assurance practices in their respective institutions.

Table 5
Lecturers' Conceptualisation of Quality Assurance

Statement	SD N(%)	Ratings			Total N(%)	M	S
		D N(%)	A N(%)	SA N(%)			
Academic programmes are evaluated periodically	1(.6)	8(4.8)	46(27.4)	113(67.3)	168(100)	3.61	.609
All stakeholders are involved in programme review	2(1.2)	19(11.3)	93(55.4)	54(32.1)	168(100)	3.18	.671
Department/faculty has collaboration with international universities/ organisations	4(2.4)	29(17.3)	63(37.5)	72(42.9)	168(100)	3.21	.811
Faculty members are well aware of quality assurance practices/ processes	8(4.8)	13(7.7)	77(45.8)	70(41.7)	168(100)	3.24	.793
Grading system is well defined	2(1.2)	6(3.6)	62(36.9)	98(58.3)	168(100)	3.52	.628
Admission criteria for undergraduates is well defined	3(1.8)	12(7.1)	49(29.2)	104(61.9)	168(100)	3.51	.709
Students are involved in the assessment of lecturers	0(0)	12(7.1)	64(38.1)	92(54.8)	168(100)	3.48	.628
Guidance and counselling services is available to the student	12(7.1)	13(7.7)	74(44.0)	69(41.1)	168(100)	3.19	.861

Table 5 continued

Statement	SD N(%)	Ratings			Total N(%)	M	S
		D N(%)	A N(%)	SA N(%)			
Feedback from student is used to improve teaching and Learning	6(1.8)	12(7.1)	89(53.0)	61(36.3)	168(100)	3.22	.729
Good internet facility is available	6(3.6)	18(10.7)	85(50.6)	59(35.1)	168(100)	3.18	.739
Related and up-to-date books are available in the library	12(7.1)	16(9.5)	78(46.4)	62(38.1)	168(100)	3.13	.859
Departments have well-defined mechanism for students to channel their grievances and appeals	8(4.8)	18(10.7)	78(46.4)	64(38.1)	168(100)	3.18	.807
Financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively	9(5.4)	23(13.7)	89(53.0)	47(28.0)	168(100)	3.04	.796
Quality assurance practices are shared among different academic departments of the university	9(5.4)	30(17.9)	66(39.3)	63(37.5)	168(100)	3.09	.874
QA reports are available to all stake holders	19(11.3)	25(14.3)	75(44.6)	49(29.2)	168(100)	2.92	.944
Weighted mean						3.24	.763

Note: 'Strongly agree' [SA], 'Agree' [A], 'Disagree' [D], 'strongly disagree' [DS], 'Mean' [M], 'standard deviation' [S]

Table 5 depicts the lecturers' conceptions about quality assurance practices in their respective departments, faculties or institutions by lecturers. It can be observed that 94.7% of the respondents agreed that academic programmes are evaluated periodically. This notwithstanding, 5.4 % of the respondents disagreed that there were review of academic programmes periodically. The data demonstrates that respondents observed that quality assurance practices were being practiced in their departments, faculty or institutions ($M=3.61$, $S= 0.609$). This finding supports the views of IUCEA (2010) which reports that quality assurance ensures that academic programmes are well designed, regularly monitored and periodically reviewed, thereby securing their continuing relevance and currency. This finding is again supported by Jeliaskova & Westerheijden, 2002; Kemenade, 2008; Harvey, 2003 who indicated that quality audits undertaken periodically have promoted a culture of compliance and conformity to external requirements. This is an indication that private universities periodically evaluate their programmes to ensure that they prepare students to meet the prevailing job market demands. A comprehensive programme review provides the students, academics, staff and public information on quality in relation to the operations private universities.

Also, when asked whether all stakeholders are involved in programme review, 87.5% of the respondents agreed while 12.5% disagreed that stakeholders are involved in programme review ($M=3.18$, $S=.671$). This indicates that the respondents perceived that stakeholders are involved in programme review. This means that private universities engage stakeholders in the review of their programmes. Private universities serve varied

stakeholder interests such as employers, students, alumni and regulatory agencies as a result must be involved in curriculum review. Table 6 shows the responses of student regarding their conceptualisation of quality assurance.

Table 6
Students' Conceptualisation of Quality Assurance

Statement	SD N(%)	Ratings			Total N(%)	M	S
		D N(%)	A N(%)	SA N(%)			
Academic programmes are evaluated periodically	1(1.4)	4(5.7)	22(31.4)	43(61.4)	70(100)	3.53	.675
All stakeholders are involved in programme review	1(1.4)	9(12.9)	37(52.9)	23(32.9)	70(100)	3.17	.701
Department/faculty has collaboration with international universities/ organisations	0(0)	14(20.0)	24(34.5)	32(45.7)	70(100)	3.26	.774
Faculty members are well aware of quality assurance practices/ processes	3(4.3)	7(10.0)	31(44.3)	29(41.4)	70(100)	3.23	.802
Grading system is well defined	1(1.4)	2(2.9)	22(31.4)	45(64.3)	70(100)	3.59	.625
Admission criteria for undergraduates is well defined	0(0)	6(8.6)	20(28.6)	44(62.9)	70(100)	3.54	.652
Students are involved in the assessment of lecturers	0(0)	5(7.1)	29(41.4)	36(54.4)	70(100)	3.44	.629

Table 6 continued

Statement	SD N(%)	Ratings			Total N(%)	M	S
		D N(%)	A N(%)	SA N(%)			
Related and up-to-date books are available in the library	8(11.4)	8(11.4)	31(44.3)	23(32.9)	70(100)	2.99	.955
Departments have well-defined mechanism for students to channel their grievances and appeals	2(2.9)	8(11.47)	37(52.9)	23(32.9)	70(100)	3.16	.735
Financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively	5(7.1)	12(17.1)	42(60.0)	11(15.7)	70(100)	2.84	.773
Quality assurance practices are shared among different academic departments of the university	6(8.6)	12(17.1)	33(47.1)	19(27.1)	70(100)	2.93	.890
QA reports are available to all stake holders	7(10.0)	13(18.6)	32(45.7)	18(25.7)	70(100)	2.87	.916
Weighted mean						3.37	.773

Note: 'Strongly agree' [SA], 'Agree' [A], 'Disagree' [D], 'Strongly disagree' [DS], 'Mean' [M], 'Standard deviation' [S]

From Table 6, it can be observed that 80% of the respondents agreed the department/faculty has collaborations with international universities/organisations while 20% disagreed that the department/faculty has collaborations with international universities/organisations ($M=3.26$, $S=.774$). This indicates that private universities have collaborations with international universities or organisations. This finding is supported by Woodhouse (2006) assertion that international agencies will emerge and collaboration will increase between quality assurance agencies, organisations and universities. This finding is again emphasised by Tsevi (2014) who indicated that some private universities are affiliated to or collaborate with foreign and international universities.

With the issue of whether the Grading system is well defined, 95.7% of the lecturers disagreed that the grading system is well defined. On the other hand, 4.3% disagreed that the grading system is well defined. This indicates that the respondents perceived that grading system is well organized ($M=3.59$, $S=.625$). Involving the issue of whether admission criteria for undergraduates is well defined, 91.5% agreed while 8.6% of the respondent disagreed that admission criteria for undergraduates is well defined. This data is a proof that admission criteria for undergraduates is well defined ($M= 3.54$, $S=.625$). This means that private universities have put in place mechanisms to ensure that admissions for undergraduates is well defined.

Moreover, relating to the issue of whether financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively, 75.7% agreed while 24.3% of the respondents disagreed that financial resources are efficiently and effectively allocated. This shows that the respondents accepted that financial resources

are allocated efficiently and effectively ($M=2.84$, $S=.773$). This means that private universities allocate financial resources efficiently and effectively. Looking at the response of the QA head on the same issue, 90% agreed whereas 10% disagreed. This is a demonstration that the views of students confirms the perception of the QA heads.

Table 7 presents Dean of Students' responses on their conceptualisation of quality assurance.

Table 7

Dean of Students' Conceptualisation of Quality Assurance

Statement	Ratings				Total N(%)	M	S
	SD N(%)	D N(%)	A N(%)	SA N(%)			
Academic programmes are evaluated periodically	0(0)	1(10.0)	3(30.0)	6(60.0)	10(100)	3.50	.707
All stakeholders are involved in programme review	1(10.0)	2(20.0)	5(50.0)	2(20.0)	10(100)	2.80	.919
Department/faculty has collaboration with international universities/ organisations	0(0)	2(20.0)	5(50.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.10	.738
Faculty members are well aware of quality assurance practices/ processes	2(20.0)	1(10.0)	3(30.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	2.90	1.197
Grading system is well defined	0(0)	0(0)	4(40.0)	6(60.0)	10(100)	3.60	.516
Admission criteria for undergraduates is well defined	0(0)	1(10.0)	2(20.0)	7(70.0)	10(100)	3.60	.699
Students are involved in the assessment of lecturers	0(0)	2(20.0)	3(30.0)	5(50.0)	10(100)	3.30	.823

Table 7: continued

Guidance and counselling services is available to the student	1(10.0)	1(10.0)	4(40.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	3.10	.994
Feedback from student is used to improve teaching and learning	1(10.0)	1(10.0)	6(60.0)	2(20.0)	10(100)	2.90	.876
Good internet facility is available	0(0)	2(20.0)	6(60.0)	2(20.0)	10(100)	3.00	.667
Related and up-to-date books are available in the library	1(10.0)	1(10.0)	3(30.0)	5(50.0)	10(100)	3.20	1.033
Departments have well-defined mechanism for students to channel their grievances and appeals	2(20.0)	1(10.0)	6(60.1)	1(10.0)	10(100)	2.60	.966
Financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively	2(20.0)	1(10.0)	4(40.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	2.80	1.135
Quality assurance practices are shared among different academic departments of the university	2(20.0)	1(10.0)	3(30.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	2.90	1.197
QA reports are available to all stake holders	2(20.0)	1(10.0)	3(30.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	2.40	1.350
Weighted mean						3.04	.847

Note: 'Strongly agree' [SA], 'Agree' [A], 'Disagree' [D], 'Strongly disagree' [DS], 'Mean' [M], 'Standard deviation' [S]

Table 7 revealed that 80% of the deans of students agreed that feedback from student is used to improve teaching and learning, however 20% of the respondents also disagreed. The respondents admitted that feedback from student is used to improve teaching and learning ($M=2.90$, $S=.876$). This means that feedback from students are used to improve teaching and learning. Using feedback from students to improve teaching and learning in private universities is very essential for students. This is because it is through the feedback that the private universities will get to know the challenges that the students are facing in their various departments or faculties so that immediate attention will be given to the students in order to improve teaching and learning in the private universities. The feedback is equally important for the management of private universities since it helps them to know where they went fowl, so that all necessary actions can be taken to improve teaching and learning in private universities. Private universities which do not make use of feedback form students to improve the teaching and learning situation in private universities are doing that at their own peril. Students are the backbone of every private university and as such must be given the necessary attention.

Again, 80% agreed that good internet facility is available, whereas 20% disagreed that good internet facility is available. The respondents acknowledged that good internet facility is available ($M=3.00$, $S=.667$). This means that private universities have a good internet infrastructure which allow their students to access information on the internet for their studies. Additionally 80% of the respondents agreed that related and up-to-date books are available in the library. While 20% of the respondents disagreed that related and up-to-date books are available in the library. This demonstrates

that the respondents felt that there were related and up-to-date books are available in the library ($M=3.20$, $S=1.033$). This means that private universities have relevant, related and up to date books in their libraries.

Table 8 shows responses of quality assurance heads about their conceptualisation of quality assurance.

Table 8

Quality Assurance heads' Conceptualisation of Quality Assurance

Statement	Ratings				Total N(%)	M	S
	SD	D	A	SA			
	N(%)	N(%)	N(%)	N(%)			
Academic programmes are evaluated periodically	0(0)	0(0)	3(30.0)	7(70.0)	10(100)	3.70	.483
All stakeholders are involved in programme review	0(0)	3(30.0)	6(60.0)	1(10.0)	10(100)	2.80	.632
Department/faculty has collaboration with international universities/ organisations	0(0)	2(20.0)	5(50.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.20	.632
Faculty members are well aware of quality assurance practices/ processes	2(20.0)	1(10.0)	1(10.0)	6(60.0)	10(100)	3.10	1.287
Grading system is well defined	0(0)	0(0)	2(20.0)	8(80.0)	10(100)	3.80	.422
Admission criteria for undergraduates is well defined	0(0)	1(10.0)	4(40.0)	5(50.0)	10(100)	3.40	.699
Students are involved in the assessment of lecturers	0(0)	3(30.0)	2(20.0)	5(50.0)	10(100)	3.20	.919
Guidance and counselling is available to the student	0(0)	0(0)	7(70.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.30	.483

Table 8: continued

Feedback from student is used to improve teaching and learning	0(.0)	2(20.0)	5(50.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.10	.738
Good internet facility is available	1(10.0)	1(10.0)	6(60.0)	2(20.0)	10(100)	2.90	.876
Related and up-to-date books are available in the library	0(0)	1(10.0)	5(50.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	3.30	.675
Departments have well-defined mechanism for students to channel their grievances and appeals	2(20.0)	1(10.0)	2(20.0)	5(50.0)	10(100)	3.00	1.247
Financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively	0(0)	1(10.0)	5(50.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	3.20	.919
Quality assurance practices are shared among different academic departments of the university	1(10.0)	3(30.0)	3(30.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	2.80	1.033
QA reports are available to all stake holders	0(0)	2(20.0)	7(70.0)	1(10.0)	10(100)	2.70	.949
Weighted mean						3.16	.799

Note: 'Strongly agree' [SA], 'Agree' [A], 'Disagree' [D], 'Strongly disagree' [DS], 'Mean' [M], 'Standard deviation' [S]

A vivid look at Table 8 confirms that, regarding the issue of whether faculty members are well aware of quality assurance practices or processes, 70% of the respondents agreed while 30% disagreed. The responses reveal that respondents acknowledged that faculty members are well aware of quality assurance practices/ processes ($M=3.10$, $S=1.287$). This means that quality assurance is not an entirely new phenomenon in private universities. Thus faculty members in private universities are aware of the quality assurance practices. In private universities where faculty members are well aware of quality assurance practices or processes, there is a culture of improving and maintaining quality standards.

Again 100% of the respondents agreed that guidance and counselling services is available to the student. Respondents seemingly observed that guidance and counselling services is available to the student ($M=3.30$, $S=.483$). This means that private universities provide the necessary guidance and counselling to their students. This will enable students who are facing challenges in terms of their academic and social life can seek useful counsel from professional counsellors.

Finally on the issue of QA reports are available to all stake holders 80% of the respondents agreed while 20% strongly disagreed. This exhibits that the respondents perceived that QA reports are available to all stake holders ($M=2.70$, $M=.949$). This means that private universities give to their relevant stakeholders their annual quality assurance reports. These reports will inform the relevant stakeholders of the quality assurance practice which a being practice by the private universities. It will also inform the relevant

stakeholders what the private universities are doing to maintain the quality of education they provide.

Table 9 depicts the registrars' conceptualisation of quality assurance practices in their respective institutions.

Table 9

Registrars' Conceptualisation of Quality Assurance

Statement	SD N(%)	D N(%)	Ratings		Total N(%)	M	S
			A N(%)	SA N(%)			
Academic programmes are evaluated periodically	0(0)	2(20.0)	3(30.0)	5(50.0)	10(100)	3.30	.823
All stakeholders are involved in programme review	2(20.0)	0(.0)	4(40.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	3.00	1.155
Department/faculty has collaboration with international universities/ organisations	0(0)	4(40.0)	2(20.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	3.00	.943
Faculty members are well aware of quality assurance practices/ processes	2(20.0)	0(0)	4(40.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	3.00	1.155
Grading system is well defined	0(0)	0(0)	2(20.0)	8(80.0)	10(100)	3.80	.422
Admission criteria for undergraduates is well defined	0(0)	2(20.0)	1(10.0)	7(70.0)	10(100)	3.50	.850
Students are involved in the assessment of lecturers	0(0)	1(10.0)	6(60.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.20	.632
Guidance and counselling is available to the student	2(20.0)	0(0)	4(40.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	3.00	1.155
Feedback from student is used to improve teaching and	2(20.0)	0(0)	5(50.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	2.90	1.101

Table 9: continued

learning

Good internet facility is available	0(0)	2(20.0)	5(50.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.10	.738
Related and up-to-date books are available in the library	3(30.0)	1(10.0)	4(40.0)	2(20.0)	10(100)	2.50	1.179
Departments have well-defined mechanism for students to channel their grievances and appeals	2(20.0)	1(10.0)	4(40.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	2.80	1.135
Financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively	2(20.0)	3(30.0)	2(20.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	2.60	1.174
Quality assurance practices are shared among different academic departments of the university	2(20.0)	1(10.0)	5(50.0)	2(20.0)	10(100)	2.70	1.059
QA reports are available to all stake holders	2(20.0)	2(20.0)	4(40.0)	2(20.0)	10(100)	2.60	1.075
Weighted mean						3.0	.973

Note: 'Strongly agree' [SA], 'Agree' [A], 'Disagree' [D], 'Strongly disagree' [DS], 'Mean' [M], 'Standard deviation' [S]

A careful look at Table 9 endorsed that of all the participants, 90% of the respondents agreed that students are involved in the assessment of lecturers whereas 10% disagreed. This data indicates that the respondents disclosed that students are involved in the assessment of lecturers ($M=3.20$, $S=.632$). This means that students assess their lecturers as a part of the quality assurance practices. This assessment of lecturers by students will provide relevant information on the lecturers teaching methodology, content matter and the lecturers' pedagogical skills. In essence it will enable private universities to obtain various data on the individual characteristics of the lecturers.

Table 9 further reveals that 80% of the respondents agreed that feedback from student is used to improve teaching and learning. While 20% of the respondents disagreed that feedback from student is used to improve teaching and learning. The respondents admitted that feedback from student is used to improve teaching and learning ($M=2.90$, $S=1.101$). This finding is supported by Rowley (1996) who reiterated that students can also play an important role in improving quality in higher education through providing feedback on the quality of their experiences. Students are the ambassadors of the private universities and their voices provide valuable insight of the quality assurance practices in private universities. Quality assurance systems in private universities should recognize the value and importance of student involvement in the assessment of their lecturers.

Table 10 shows the responses of all categories of respondents' perception of quality assurance practices.

Table 10

Respondents' Conceptualisation of Quality Assurance

Statement	Lecturers		Students		Deans		QA heads		Registrars		Total	
	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Academic programmes are evaluated periodically	159(94.7)	9(5.4)	65(92.8)	5(7.1)	9(90)	1(10)	10(100)	0(0)	8(80)	2(20)	251(93.7)	17(6.3)
All stakeholders are involved in programme review	147(87.5)	21(12.5)	60(85.8)	10(14.3)	7(70)	3(30)	7(70)	3(30)	8(80)	2(20)	229(85.4)	39(14.6)
Department/faculty has collaboration with international universities / organisations	135(80.4)	33(19.7)	56(80.0)	14(20.0)	8(80)	2(20)	8(80)	2(20)	6(60)	4(40)	215(80.2)	53(19.8)
Faculty members are well aware of quality assurance practices/ processes	147(87.5)	21(12.5)	60(85.8)	10(14.3)	7(70)	3(30)	7(70)	3(30)	8(80)	2(20)	229(85.4)	39(14.6)

Table 10: continued

Grading system is well defined	160(95.2)	8(4.8)	67(95.7)	3(4.3)	10(100)	0(0)	10(100)	0(0)	10(100)	0(0)	257(95.9)	11(4.1)
Admission criteria for undergraduates is well defined	153(91.1)	15(8.9)	64(91.5)	6(8.6)	9(90)	1(10)	9(90)	1(10)	8(80)	2(20)	243(90.7)	25(9.3)
Students are involved in the assessment of lecturers	156(92.9)	12(7.1)	65(95.8)	5(7.1)	8(80)	2(20)	7(70)	3(30)	9(90)	1(10)	245(91.4)	23(8.6)
Guidance and counselling services is available to the student	143(85.1)	25(14.8)	56(80.0)	14(20.0)	8(80)	2(20)	10(100)	0(0)	8(80)	2(20)	225(84.0)	43(16.0)
Feedback from student is used to improve teaching and learning	150(89.3)	18(8.9)	62(88.6)	8(11.4)	8(80)	2(20)	8(80)	2(20)	8(80)	2(20)	236(88.1)	32(11.9)
Good internet facility is available	144(85.7)	24(14.3)	58(82.9)	12(17.1)	8(80)	2(20)	8(80)	2(20)	8(80)	2(20)	226(84.3)	42(15.7)
Related and up-to-date books are available in the library	140(83.4)	28(16.6)	54(77.2)	16(22.8)	8(80)	2(20)	9(90)	1(10)	6(60)	4(40)	217(81.0)	51(19.0)
Departments have well-defined mechanism for students to channel their grievances and	142(84.5)	26(15.5)	60(85.8)	10(14.3)	7(70)	3(30)	7(70)	3(30)	7(70)	3(30)	223(83.2)	45(16.8)

Table 10: continued

appeals													
Financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively	136(81.0)	32(19.1)	53(75.7)	17(24.2)	7(70)	3(30)	9(90)	1(10)	5(50)	5(50)	210(78.4)	58(21.6)	
Quality assurance practices are shared among different academic departments of the university	129(76.8)	39(23.3)	52(74.2)	18(25.7)	7(70)	3(30)	6(60)	4(40)	7(70)	3(30)	201(75.0)	67(25.0)	
QA reports are available to all stake holders	124(73.8)	44(25.6)	50(71.4)	20(28.6)	7(70)	3(30)	8(80)	2(20)	6(60)	4(40)	195(72.8)	73(27.2)	

Note: 'Agree' [A], 'Disagree' [D],

Table 10 depicts all categories of respondents' conceptualisation of quality assurance practices in their respective departments, faculty or institution. Generally, it can be observed that 93.7% of the respondents agreed that academic programmes are evaluated periodically while 6.3% of the respondents disagreed that there were the review of academic programmes periodically. The data demonstrates that respondents acknowledged that quality assurance practices were being practiced in their departments, faculty or institutions. This finding supports the view of IUCEA (2010) which reports that quality assurance ensures that academic programmes are well designed, regularly monitored and periodically reviewed, thereby securing their continuing relevance and currency. This finding is again supported by Jeliaskova & Westerheijden, 2002; Kemenade, 2008; Harvey, 2003 who indicated that quality audits undertaken periodically have promoted a culture of compliance and conformity to external requirements. Largely, in terms of the department or faculty having collaborations with international universities/ organisations 80.2% of the respondents agreed that the department has collaboration with international organisations or universities while 19.8% of the respondents disagreed. This means that the respondents admitted that their faculties or institutions have collaboration with international institutions.

In general, when it comes to the issue of whether Grading system is well defined, 95.9% of the respondents agreed while 4.1% disagreed. This indicates that the respondents felt that grading system was well defined. Lastly on the issue of whether QA reports are available to all stake holders, 72.8% agreed while 27.2% disagreed. In all this demonstrates that the respondents acknowledged that QA reports are available to all stake holders.

Research Question 2

What do private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana perceive as the roles of quality assurance?

This section of the discussion focused on what the research lecturers, registrars, deans of students, QA heads and students perceived to be the role of quality assurance in private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Items 27-38 under Section II of the questionnaire were used to obtain information from the respondents to answer the research question. Tables 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 present the responses with respect to the perception of the research participants of the roles of quality assurance in private universities in Ghana. Also, Table 16 presents the summary of the responses by all the categories of respondents on the perception of the research participants on the roles of quality assurance in private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

Table 11 shows the responses of the lecturers regarding their perception of the roles of quality assurance.

Table 11
Lecturers' Perception of the Roles of Quality Assurance

Statement	Ratings				Total N (%)	M	S
	SD N (%)	D N (%)	A N (%)	SA N (%)			
QA helps the university to achieve its mission and visions	0(0)	8(4.8)	47(28.0)	113(67.3)	168(100)	3.63	.576
QA raises the reputation of the university	0(0)	11(6.5)	83(49.4)	74(44.0)	168(100)	3.38	.606
QA helps to ensure that there is adequate academics and administrative staff in the university	0(0)	20(11.9)	61(36.3)	87(51.8)	168(100)	3.40	.693
QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning	2(1.2)	8(4.8)	90(53.6)	68(40.5)	168(100)	3.33	.625
QA helps to ensure programme/curricular improvement	0(0)	11(6.5)	72(42.9)	85(50.6)	168(100)	3.44	.616
QA gives recognition to the university locally	6(3.6)	8(4.8)	89(53.0)	65(38.7)	168(100)	3.27	.713
QA gives recognition to the university internationally	0(0)	9(5.4)	71(42.3)	88(52.4)	168(100)	3.47	.599
QA gives recognition to the students	3(1.8)	18(10.7)	89(53.0)	58(34.5)	168(100)	3.20	.697
QA makes students feel prestigious	3(1.8)	22(13.1)	91(54.2)	52(31.0)	168(100)	3.14	.703
QA gives recognition to the student certificates	2(1.2)	17(10.1)	71(42.3)	78(46.4)	168(100)	3.34	.708
QA ensures student have adequate resources for learning	5(3.0)	23(13.7)	70(41.7)	70(41.7)	168(100)	3.22	.792
QA ensures competition among universities	11(6.5)	29(17.3)	70(41.7)	58(34.5)	168(100)	3.04	.885
Weighted mean						3.32	.684

Note: 'Strongly agree' [SA], 'Agree' [A], 'Disagree' [D], 'Strongly disagree' [DS], 'Mean' [M], 'Standard deviation' [S]

As can be observed from Table 11, 95.3% of the lecturers agreed that quality assurance helps the private universities to achieve their mission and visions whilst 4.8% disagreed with the assertion. The analysis suggests that the respondents are of the strongest view that quality assurance helps the universities to achieve their missions and visions ($M=3.63$, $S = .576$). The finding supports the view of Utuka (2012) that quality assurance provides an assurance of quality and it helps the institutions to achieve their own objectives. This view is also supported by NQAAC (2004) which remarked that quality assurance is the means of ensuring that informed by its mission, academic standards are defined and achieved in line with equivalent standards nationally and internationally, and that the quality of learning opportunities, research and community development are appropriate and fulfill the expectations of the range of stakeholders. This means that private universities which have visions and missions have an interest in quality assurance and are bent on ensuring scholarship, good academic practice, higher academic standards and good governance.

Interestingly, regarding the same issue 92.9% of the students agreed that quality assurance helps private universities to achieve their missions and visions whereas 7.1% disagreed. This view confirms the assertion of the lecturers that quality assurance helps private universities to achieve their missions and visions.

On another related issue, 88.1% of the lecturers agreed that QA ensures that there is adequate academics and administrative staff in the universities whereas 11.9% of the lecturers disagreed on the same issue ($M=3.4$, $S=.693$). This data indicates that the respondents perceived that QA

ensures that there is adequate administrative and academic staff in the universities. According to Utuka (2012) adequate qualified staff are key areas requiring urgent policy attention if Ghana is to achieve the objectives of its tertiary educational reforms. The study reveals that quality assurance ensures that there is adequate academic and administrative staff in the private universities. The finding also supports the view of Rowley (1996) who asserts that the academic personnel in universities are key resources and their performance determines, to a large extent, the quality of the student experience of higher education. The adequacy of the academic personnel will help private universities to provide students with the requisite knowledge, skill and technical know-how for the job market and the world. Also students coming from private universities with the requisite academic and administrative staff can compete with their colleagues from the public universities and also internationally.

It is interesting to find out that on the same issue 84.3% of the students agreed that quality assurance helps to ensure that there is adequate academics and administrative staff in the university whereas 15.7% disagreed. This endorsed the assertion of lecturers that quality assurance ensures that there is adequate academics and administrative staff in the university.

Table 12 shows the responses of students regarding their perception of the role of quality assurance.

Table 12

Students' Perception of the Role of Quality Assurance

Statement	SD N(%)	D N(%)	Ratings		Total N(%)	M	S
			A N(%)	SA N(%)			
QA helps the university to achieve its mission and visions	0(0)	5(7.1)	20(28.6)	45(64.3)	70(100)	3.57	.627
QA raises the reputation of the university	0(0)	4(5.7)	32(45.7)	34(48.6)	70(100)	3.43	.604
QA ensures that there is adequate academics and administrative staff in the university	0(0)	11(15.7)	22(31.4)	37(52.9)	70(100)	3.37	.745
QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning	2(2.9)	5(7.1)	32(45.7)	31(44.3)	70(100)	3.31	.733
QA helps to ensure programme/curricular improvement	0(0)	3(4.3)	27(38.6)	40(57.1)	70(100)	3.53	.583
QA gives recognition to the university locally	2(2.9)	5(7.1)	35(50.0)	28(40.0)	70(100)	3.27	.721
QA gives recognition to the university internationally	0(0)	5(7.1)	29(41.4)	36(51.4)	70(100)	3.44	.629
QA gives recognition to the students	1(1.4)	10(14.3)	30(42.9)	29(41.4)	70(100)	3.24	.751
QA makes students feel prestigious	1(1.4)	9(12.9)	37(52.9)	23(32.9)	70(100)	3.17	.701
QA gives recognition to the student certificates	1(1.4)	7(10.0)	27(38.6)	35(50.0)	70(100)	3.37	.726
QA ensures students have adequate resources for learning	0(0)	12(17.1)	26(37.1)	32(45.7)	70(100)	3.29	.745
QA ensures competition among universities	5(7.1)	13(18.6)	27(38.6)	25(35.7)	70(100)	3.03	.916
Weighted mean						3.33	.706

Note: 'Strongly agree' [SA], 'Agree' [A], 'Disagree' [D], 'Strongly disagree' [DS], 'Mean' [M], 'Standard deviation' [S]

Table 12 shows that 95.7% of the students agreed that QA helps to ensure curricular/ programme improvement whereas 4.3% disagreed. The data shows that the respondents acknowledged that QA helps to ensure programme/curricular improvement ($M=3.53$ $S=.583$). This finding supports Vroeijsstijn (1995) assertion that quality assurance is a systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of quality maintenance and curricular improvement. In private universities in which there are curricular/programme improvements, it ensures that the academic programmes meet national and international standard in higher education. This is a signal to the students, academics, government and its agencies of the universities commitment towards ensuring quality teaching and learning. It also ensures continuous improvement in the management of quality in higher education.

It was interesting to find out that regarding the same issue, 93.5% of the lecturers agreed whereas 6.5% disagreed. This observation confirmed the assertion of the students of the private universities that quality assurance helps to ensure programme or curricular improvement.

Again 92.8% of the respondents agreed that QA gives recognition to the university internationally while 7.1 % disagreed that QA raises the reputation of the university internationally. The data further confirmed that the respondents attested that QA gives recognition to the university internationally ($M=3.44$, $S=.629$). The finding supports the views of Utuka (2012) who stated that quality assurance strengthens the international reputation and standing of the country's tertiary educational system. The finding also supports the view of Tagoe (2008) who stated that quality assurance is to ensure that internationally recognized academic standards are achieved. This means that

quality assurance practices in the private universities would ensure that their academic programmes and activities are internationally certified. This will help to attract both qualified academics and staff to the university from within the country. Also they would attract a large number of students from both within the country or outside the country. If the academic programmes of private universities are internationally certified and meet the required standards of scholarship it will help the universities to attract and recruit qualified foreigners to fill academic positions or serve in adjunct positions.

It is interesting to find out that regarding the same issue 94.7% of the lecturers agreed whereas 5.4% said otherwise. This endorses the view of the students of the private universities that quality assurance helps to give recognition to private universities internationally.

Table 13 shows the response of Deans of students' perception of the roles of quality assurance.

Table 13

Deans of students' Perception of the Roles of Quality Assurance

Statement	Ratings				Total N(%)	M	S
	SD N(%)	D N(%)	A N(%)	SA N(%)			
QA helps the university to achieve its mission and visions	0(0)	1(10.0)	2(20.0)	7(70.0)	10(100)	3.60	.699
QA raises the reputation of the university	0(0)	1(10.0)	4(40.0)	5(50.0)	10(100)	3.40	.699
QA ensures that there is adequate academics and administrative staff in the university	0(0)	2(20.0)	2(20.0)	6(60.0)	10(100)	3.40	.843
QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning	0(0)	1(10.0)	6(60.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.20	.632
QA helps to ensure programme/curricular improvement	0(0)	0(0)	6(60.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	3.40	.516
QA gives recognition to the university locally	0(0)	1(10.0)	6(60.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.20	.632
QA gives recognition to the university internationally	0(0)	1(10.0)	8(80.0)	1(10.0)	10(100)	3.00	.471
QA gives recognition to the students	0(0)	1(10.0)	6(60.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.20	.632
QA makes students feel prestigious	2(20.0)	0(0)	7(70.0)	1(10.0)	10(100)	2.70	.949
QA gives recognition to the student certificates	0(0)	0(0)	8(80.0)	2(20.0)	10(100)	3.20	.422
QA ensures student have adequate resources for learning	0(0)	1(10.0)	6(60.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.20	.632
QA ensures competition among universities	1(10.0)	3(30.0)	4(40.0)	2(20.0)	10(100)	2.70	.949
Weighted mean						3.18	.673

Note: 'Strongly agree' [SA], 'Agree' [A], 'Disagree' [D], 'Strongly disagree' [DS], 'Mean' [M], 'Standard deviation' [S]

Table 13 confirmed that 90% of the respondents agreed that quality assurance raises the reputation of the university. Also, 10% of the deans of student disagreed that quality assurance raises the reputation of the university ($M= 3.40$, $S=.699$). The finding affirms the Tait (1997) assertion that systematic and constituent quality assurance helps to establish an institution's reputation and enhances its image. This means private universities must make quality assurance their underlying principle upon which the universities operate. It will enhance the reputation of the university and as well as lift high the image of the universities. This will make private universities an excellent example for other institutions to look up to or affiliate with.

On the same issue 94.3% of the students agreed however 5.7% of disagreed. This is perplexing and it affirms the deans of students' assertion that QA raises the reputation of the private universities.

Lastly in relation to the statement that QA gives recognition to students certificates 80% agreed; 20.0% of the respondents strongly attested that QA gives recognition to the student certificates ($M=3.20$, $S=.422$). This view is supported by Kwarteng-Ashia (2014), who is of the view accreditation as a tool for quality assurance accords recognition to an educational institution for meeting satisfactory standards in performance, integrity and quality. This means that students who obtain their degrees, diplomas and certificates from private universities will be given the necessary recognition that they deserve. Thus students from private universities are able to access jobs without any hindrances as well as find it easy to continue their education in any institution of their choice. Table 14 shows the responses of QA heads' perception about the role of quality assurance.

Table 14

Quality Assurance heads' Perception of the Roles of Quality Assurance

Statement	Ratings				Total N(%)	M	S
	SD N(%)	D N(%)	A N(%)	SA N(%)			
QA helps the university to achieve its mission and visions	0(0)	0(0)	3(30.0)	7(70.0)	10(100)	3.70	.483
QA raises the reputation of the university	0(0)	0(0)	7(70.0)	3(30)	10(100)	3.30	.483
QA ensures that there is adequate academics and administrative staff in the university	0(0)	2(20.0)	1(10.0)	7(70.0)	10(100)	3.50	.850
QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning	0(0)	1(10.0)	7(70.0)	2(20.0)	10(100)	3.10	.568
QA helps to ensure programme/curricular improvement	0(0)	1(10.0)	5(50.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	3.30	.675
QA gives recognition to the university locally	1(10.0)	0(0)	6(60.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.10	.876
QA gives recognition to the university internationally	0(0)	1(10.0)	3(30.0)	6(60.0)	10(100)	3.50	.707
QA gives recognition to the students	0(0)	0(0)	8(80.0)	2(20.0)	10(100)	3.20	.422
QA makes students feel prestigious	1(10.0)	1(10.0)	5(50.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.00	.943
QA gives recognition to the student certificates	0(0)	0(0)	7(70.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.30	.483
QA ensures students have adequate resources for learning	0(0)	1(10.0)	6(60.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.10	.876
QA ensures competition among universities	2(20.0)	1(10.0)	5(50.0)	2(20.0)	10(100)	2.70	1.059
Weighted mean						3.23	.702

Note: 'Strongly agree' [SA], 'Agree' [A], 'Disagree' [D], 'Strongly disagree' [DS], 'Mean' [M], 'Standard deviation' [S]

A look at Table 14 confirmed that, 90% of the Quality Assurance Heads agreed that QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning while 10% disagreed that QA ensures that the universities provide infrastructure for teaching and learning. This data indicates that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning ($M=3.50$, $S=.850$). This finding supports the view of UNESCO (2004) which remarked that quality assurance is a systematic review of educational programmes to ensure that acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being maintained. This assertion is also supported by Materu (2007) who states that QA is a planned and a systematic review process of an institution or programme to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced. Table 8 further shows that 90% of the respondents strongly agreed that QA gives recognition to the university locally while 10% disagreed. This data shows that the respondents asserted that QA gives recognition to the universities locally ($M=3.10$, $S=.876$).

Also 100% of the students agreed to the statement that QA gives recognition to the students. The data indicates that the respondents affirmed that QA gives recognition to the students ($M=3.20$, $S=.422$). This confirms that quality assurance gives recognition to students. This means that the students are the nucleus of every quality assurance system. Thus students cannot be taken out if private universities are taken any decision with regards to quality assurance. Every quality assurance system in private universities should aim at improving the experiences of the students.

Table 15 shows the responses of Registrars regarding their perception about the role of quality assurance.

Table 15

Registrars' Perception of the Role of Quality Assurance

Statement	Ratings				Total N(%)	M	S
	SD N(%)	D N(%)	A N(%)	SA N(%)			
QA helps the university to achieve its mission and visions	0(0)	1(10.0)	4(40.0)	5(50.0)	10(100)	3.40	.699
QA raises the reputation of the university	0(0)	1(10.0)	7(70.0)	2(20.0)	10(100)	3.10	.568
QA ensures that there is adequate academics and administrative staff in the university	0(0)	2(20.0)	5(50.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.10	.738
QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning	0(0)	2(20.0)	5(50.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.10	.738
QA helps to ensure programme/curricular improvement	0(0)	0(0)	7(70.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.30	.483
QA gives recognition to the university locally	0(0)	0(0)	7(70.0)	3(30.0)	10(100)	3.30	.483
QA gives recognition to the university internationally	0(0)	1(10.0)	7(70.0)	2(20.0)	10(100)	3.10	.568
QA gives recognition to the students	0(0)	0(0)	6(60.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	3.40	.516
QA makes students feel prestigious	0(0)	1(10.0)	8(80.0)	1(10.0)	10(100)	3.00	.471
QA gives recognition to the student certificates	0(0)	0(0)	6(60.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	3.40	.516
QA ensures student have adequate resources for learning	0(0)	0(0)	6(60.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	3.40	.516
QA ensures competition among universities	0(0)	1(10.0)	5(50.0)	4(40.0)	10(100)	3.30	.675
Weighted mean						3.24	.580

Note: 'Strongly agree' [SA], 'Agree' [A], 'Disagree' [D], 'Strongly disagree' [DS], 'Mean' [M], 'Standard deviation' [S]

The figures presented in Table 15 confirms that 90% of the respondents agreed that QA makes students feel prestigious while 10% also disagreed that QA makes students feel prestigious. From the data it was observed that the respondents agreed that QA makes students feel prestigious ($M=3.00$, $S=.471$). This means that the respondents acknowledged that quality assurance makes students feel prestigious. In private universities in which quality is assured through compliance with vigorous standards, the serene atmosphere makes sure students feel happy, confident and secured within their respective institutions. This would serve as a glowing endorsement of private universities as well as reflecting positively on the students, families, staff and other stakeholders. Again, 100% of the respondents agreed that QA ensures students have adequate resources for learning ($M=3.40$, $S=.516$). This means that the respondents seemingly observed that QA ensures that there is adequate resources for learning. This means that private universities provide the necessary resources for teaching and learning.

Lastly, in relation to the statement that QA ensures competition among universities 90% of the respondents agreed whereas 10% disagreed. The data demonstrates that the respondents established that QA ensures competition among universities ($M=3.30$, $S=.675$). This means that QA ensures competition among universities. With the high competition for students private universities in the higher education sector need to assure quality. This will serve as a competitive factor that will differentiate between the private universities educational provision and also serve as a means to attract and retain students. Table 16 shows the response of all the categories of respondents regarding the perception about the role of QA

Table 16

Respondents Perception of the Roles of Quality Assurance

Statement	Lecturers		Students		Deans		QA heads		Registrars		Total	
	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
QA helps the university to achieve its mission and visions	160(95.3)	8(4.8)	65(92.9)	5(7.1)	9(90)	1(10)	10(100)	0(0)	9(90)	1(10)	253(94.4)	15(5.6)
QA raises the reputation of the university	157(93.4)	11(6.5)	66(94.3)	4(5.7)	9(90)	1(10)	10(100)	0(0)	9(90)	1(10)	251(93.6)	17(6.4)
QA ensures that there is adequate academics and administrative staff in the university	148(88.1)	20(11.9)	59(84.3)	11(15.7)	8(80)	2(20)	8(80)	2(20)	8(80)	2(20)	231(86.2)	37(13.8)
QA helps to ensure programme/ curricular improvement	157(93.5)	11(6.5)	67(95.7)	3(4.3)	10(100)	0(0)	9(90)	1(10)	10(100)	0(0)	253(94.4)	15(5.6)
QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning	158(94.1)	10(6)	63(90)	7(10)	9(90)	1(10)	9(90)	1(10)	8(80)	2(20)	247(92.1)	21(7.8)

Table 16: continued

QA gives recognition to the university locally	154(91.7)	14(8.4)	63(90)	7(10)	9(90)	1(10)	9(90)	1(10)	10(100)	0(0)	245(91.4)	23(8.6)
QA gives recognition to the university internationally	159(94.7)	9(5.4)	65(92.8)	5(7.1)	9(90)	1(10)	9(90)	1(10)	9(90)	1(10)	251(93.7)	17(6.3)
QA gives recognition to the students	147(87.3)	21(12.5)	59(84.3)	11(15.7)	9(90)	1(10)	10(100)	0(0)	10(100)	0(0)	135(87.7)	32(12.3)
QA makes students feel prestigious	143(85.2)	25(14.9)	60(85.7)	10(14.3)	8(80)	2(20)	8(80)	2(20)	9(90)	1(10)	128(85.1)	40(14.9)
QA gives recognition to the student certificates	149(88.7)	19(11.3)	62(88.6)	8(11.4)	10(100)	0(0)	10(100)	0(0)	10(100)	0(0)	241(90.0)	27(10.0)
QA ensures student have adequate resources for learning	140(83.4)	28(16.7)	58(82.9)	12(17.1)	9(90)	1(10)	9(90)	1(10)	10(100)	0(0)	126(84.3)	42(15.7)
QA ensure competition among universities	128(76.2)	40(23.8)	52(74.3)	18(25.7)	6(60)	4(40)	7(70)	3(30)	9(90)	1(10)	134(75.4)	66(24.6)

Note: 'Agree' [A], 'Disagree' [D],

In Table 16, the responses of all respondent groups are put together and presented. This is done with the view of indicating in general what the perceptions of the responses are in relation to the research question. Table 16 indicates that 94.4% of the participants agreed that quality assurance help the universities to achieve their missions and visions while 5.6% disagreed that quality assurance help the universities to achieve their missions and visions. The data did indicate that the respondents perceived that quality assurance help the universities to achieve their missions and visions. The finding support the view of Utuka (2012) that quality assurance provides an assurance of quality and it helps the institutions to achieve their own objectives. This means that quality assurance helps private universities to achieve their missions and visions.

Also, 93.6% agreed that quality assurance raises the reputation of the universities while 6.4% of the respondents disagreed that quality assurance raises the reputation of the universities. This confirms that, the respondents felt that quality assurance raises the reputation of the universities. The finding affirms the Tait (1997) assertion that systematic and constituent quality assurance helps to establish an institution's reputation and enhances its image. Also, 86.2% of the respondents agreed that QA ensures that there is adequate academics and administrative staff in the universities while 13.8% of the respondents disagreed that QA ensures that there is adequate academics and administrative staff in the universities. According to Utuka (2012) adequate qualified staff are key areas requiring urgent policy attention if Ghana is to achieve the objectives of its tertiary educational reforms. Nonetheless, the study reveals that quality assurance ensures that there is adequate academic

and administrative staff in the private universities. This means that quality assurance ensures that there is adequate administrative staff and academics in private universities.

Again, 92.1% of the respondents agreed that QA ensure that the universities provides infrastructure for teaching and learning while 7.8% of the respondents disagreed that QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning. This indicates that the respondents acknowledge that QA ensures that the universities provides infrastructure for teaching and learning. This means that private universities provide infrastructure for teaching and learning.

Table 16 further shows that 94.4% of the respondents agreed that QA helps to ensure programme or curricular improvement while 5.6% disagreed that QA helps to ensure programme/curricular improvement. Overall, the data shows that the respondents agreed that QA helps to ensure programme/curricular improvement. Indeed, 93.7% of the respondents agreed that QA give recognition to the universities internationally however, 6.3% of the respondents disagreed. The data further confirms that the respondents established that QA give recognition to the universities internationally. The finding support the assertion of Utuka (2012) who stated that, quality assurance strengthens the international reputation and standing of the country's tertiary educational system. This means that private universities ensure curricular or programme improvement.

Lastly, with regards to the statement that QA ensure competition among universities in general, 75.4% of the respondents agreed while 6.5% of the respondents disagreed that QA ensure competition among universities. The

data is an indication that QA ensures completion among universities. This means that quality assurance ensures competition among universities.

Research Question 3

What quality assurance practices are currently being utilized by private universities in Greater Accra Region of Ghana?

This section of the study sought to find out the quality assurance practice being utilized by private universities. Item 38- 45 under Section III of the questionnaire was used to obtain information from respondents to answer the research question. Table 17 represents the summary of responses of the participants with regards to the quality assurance practices being utilized by private universities. Table 17 is the result of the responses from lecturers, students, deans of students, QA heads and Registrars.

It can be observed from Table 17 that on the issue of whether the department/ faculty/ institution has a written mission statement, majority of the lecturers that is 91.1% reported yes. The rest of the lecturers, which is 8.9%, reported no. When it comes to students on the same issue, 87.1% reported yes and that the department/ faculty/ institution has a written mission statement. Again, 12.9% intimated no the department/ faculty/ institution has a written mission statement. Also, when it comes to Deans of students on the same issue, 80.0% intimated yes while the rest which is 20.0% intimated no. Still on the same issue of whether the department/ faculty/ institution has a written mission statement, 90.0% of the QA heads reported yes while 10.0% also reported no. Furthermore, 80.0% of the registrars indicated that yes, implying the department/ faculty/ institution has a written mission statement whereas 20.0% indicated no. From the data analysis above, it can be

concluded that private universities have written mission statements, since the highest ratings for lecturers, students, deans of students, QA heads and registrars were 91.1%, 87.1%, 80.0%, 90.0% and 80.0% respectively. This is a confirmation of Rasools' (2010) assertion that most of the universities in the private sector have mission statements which indicated that private universities are taking quality assurance seriously.

Also, on the issue as to whether the department has a quality assurance policy, majority of the lecturers, which is 80.4%, reported yes while the rest of the lecturers, that is 19.6% maintained no. When it comes to students on the same issue, 75.7% reported yes implying that the department has a QA policy while 24.3% maintained no. Also, when it comes to deans of students on the same issue, 70.0% reported yes while the rest 30.0% maintained no. Again, when it comes to QA head on the same issue, 80.0% reported yes. The rest of the QA heads 20% maintained no. Lastly, on the same issue, 70.0% of the registrars reported yes while the rest of the respondents 30.0% maintained no. From the discussions, it can be concluded that majority of private universities have a quality assurance policy. This confirms Rasool (2010) assertion that most of the universities in public and private sectors have quality assurance policies which indicated that private universities are taking quality assurance seriously.

Table 17 shows the responses about Quality Assurance Practices being used by Private Universities.

Table 17

Quality Assurance Practices being used by Private Universities

Statement	Lecturers			Students			Deans of students			QA Heads			Registrars		
	Yes No. (%)	No No. (%)	Total No. (%)	Yes No. (%)	No No. (%)	Total No. (%)	Yes No. (%)	No No. (%)	Total No. (%)	Yes No. (%)	No No. (%)	Total No. (%)	Yes No. (%)	No No. (%)	Total No. (%)
The department/ faculty/ institution has a written mission statement	153 (91.1)	15 (8.9)	168 (100)	61 (87.1)	9 (12.9)	70 (100)	8 (80.0)	2 (20.0)	10 (100)	9 (90.0)	1 (10.0)	10 (100)	8 (80.0)	2 (20.0)	10 (100)
The department/ faculty/ institution has a QA office	153 (91.1)	15 (8.9)	168 (100)	63 (90.0)	7 (10.0)	70 (100)	8 (80.0)	2 (20.0)	10 (100)	9 (90.0)	1 (10.0)	10 (100)	7 (70.0)	3 (30.0)	10 (100)
The department has a quality assurance policy	135 (80.4)	33 (19.6)	168 (100.0)	53 (75.7)	17 (24.3)	70 (100)	7 (70.0)	3 (30.0)	10 (100.0)	8 (80.0)	2 (20.0)	10 (100.0)	7 (70.0)	3 (30.0)	10 (100.0)
The department has a QA manual	112 (66.7)	56 (33.3)	168 (100)	43 (61.4)	27 (38.6)	70 (100)	5 (50.0)	5 (50.0)	10 (100)	6 (60.0)	4 (40.0)	10 (100)	6 (60.0)	4 (40.0)	10 (100)

Section IV, items 43-45 of the questionnaire also provided other questionnaire items that the respondents had to respond to in order to answer research question 3. One of such issues was the internal quality assurance model being followed by the department. The data gathered reveals that out of the 168 lecturers that participated in the research, 6.5% acknowledged that the internal quality assurance model being followed by the department is ISO 9000; 29.8% reported Total Quality Management and 63.7% also reported they implement directives from NAB. The discussion reveals that majority of the private universities implement or adheres to the directives of NAB. On the same issue, it was revealed that of the 70 students that participated in the research, 4.3% of the respondents approved that the internal quality assurance model being followed by the department is ISO 9000; 31.4% disclosed that TQM was being used and 64.3% made it known that they adhere to directives from NAB. Again, on the same discussion, of the 10 deans of students that participated, 20.0% endorsed ISO 9000; 20.0% endorsed TQM while 60.0% endorsed directives from NAB. Also, on the same issue, 10 QA heads participated, 30.0% endorsed TQM while 70.0% endorsed directives from NAB. Lastly, of the 10 registrars, 10.0% acknowledged ISO 9000; 30.0% indicated TQM while 60.0% acknowledged directives from NAB. This finding is supported by NAB (2014) which requires that these private universities are registered and accredited by NAB before they can commence their operations.

This means that private universities have to be duly registered and after that appropriate checks and balances are put in place to ensure that they meet the necessary requirements before they are given accreditation to operate.

Furthermore, in relation to the issue of when was self-assessment for

internal quality assurance purposes last held, 24.4% of the lecturers reported that self- assessment for internal quality was held this year. Also, 29.2% reported a year ago; 45.2% reported two years ago while 1.2% reported never. Likewise when asked when was self-assessment for internal quality assurance purposes last held, 27.1% of the students reported that self- assessment for internal quality was held this year. Also, 37.1% reported a year ago; 34.3% reported two years ago while 1.4% reported never. Again, on the same issue, 30.0% of the dean of students reported this year, 20.0% reported a year ago, 40.0% reported two years ago while 10.0% reported never. The QA heads also reported this year 40.0%, a year ago 10.0%, two years ago 40.0%, never 10.0% while the registrars also reported this year 50.0%, a year ago 10.0%, two years ago 40.0%. This indicates that majority of the respondents confirmed that self-assessment for internal quality assurance was held by the department. This confirms Common's (2003) assertion that self-assessment helps to improve the quality of college provision for students and also promotes a range of management practices, especially evaluation. Also, Harman and Meek (2000) indicate that good management practice requires that all institutions should have in place appropriate internal quality assurance and improvement plans, and submission of these to some outside body provides useful discipline for institutions to keep plans up to date.

Research Question 4

How do the quality assurance practices of private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana conform to the requirements of the National Accreditation Board's guidelines?

This section of the study sought to find out how the quality assurance

practices being utilized by private universities conform to the requirements of the National Accreditation Boards guidelines. Item 46- 56 under Section V of the questionnaire for registrars, deans of students, QA heads, lecturers and students was used to obtain information from respondents to answer the research questions.

Table 18 represents the responses of the lecturers, students, deans of student, QA heads, and registrars with regard to the quality assurance practices being utilized by private universities.

Table 18

Conformance to the Requirements of NAB

Statement	Lecturers			Students			Deans of students			QA Heads			Registrars		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Faculty/ Departmental meeting on quality assurance of educational provisions	150 (89.3)	18 (10.7)	168 (100)	63 (90.0)	7 (10.0)	70 (100)	7 (70.0)	3 (30.0)	10 (100)	9 (90.0)	1 (10.0)	10 (100)	8 (80.0)	2 (20.0)	10 (100)
University-wide meeting to discuss about academic matters	150 (89.3)	18 (10.7)	168 (100)	63 (90.0)	7 (10.0)	70 (100)	8 (80.0)	2 (20.0)	10 (100)	8 (80.0)	2 (20.0)	10 (100)	10 (100.0)	0 (0)	10 (100)
Completing questionnaires on programme/ course evaluation	140 (83.3)	28 (16.7)	168 (100.0)	56 (80.0)	14 (20.0)	70 (100)	7 (70.0)	3 (30.0)	10 (100.0)	9 (90.0)	1 (10.0)	10 (100.0)	8 (80.0)	2 (20.0)	10 (100.0)
Completing questionnaires on student learning experience and related issues	130 (77.4)	38 (22.6)	168 (100)	54 (77.1)	16 (22.9)	70 (100)	6 (60.0)	4 (40.0)	10 (100)	7 (70.0)	3 (30.0)	10 (100)	7 (70.0)	3 (30.0)	10 (100)

Table 18 continued

Completing questionnaires on effectiveness of teaching and assessment	143 (85.1)	25 (14.9)	168 (100)	57 (81.4)	13 (18.6)	70 (100)	9 (90.0)	1 (10.0)	10 (100)	9 (90.0)	1 (10.0)	10 (100.0)	8 (80.0)	2 (20.0)	10 (100)
Curriculum review	162 (96.4)	6 (3.6)	168 (100)	69 (98.4)	1 (1.4)	70 (100)	9 (90.0)	1 (10.0)	10 (100)	10 (100.0)	0 (0)	10 (100.0)	9 (90.0)	1 (10.0)	10 (100)
Institutional self-evaluation	159 (94.6)	9 (5.4)	168 (100)	66 (94.3)	4 (5.7)	70 (100)	9 (90.0)	1 (10.0)	10 (100)	9 (90.0)	1 (10.0)	10 (100.0)	10 (100.0)	0 (0)	10 (100)
External evaluation	163 (97.0)	5 (3.0)	168 (100)	67 (95.7)	3 (4.3)	70 (100)	9 (90.0)	1 (10.0)	10 (100)	10 (100.0)	0 (0)	10 (100.0)	10 (100.0)	0 (0)	10 (100)
Accreditation	163 (97.0)	5 (3.0)	168 (100)	68 (97.1)	2 (2.8)	70 (100)	10 (100)	0 (0)	10 (100)	10 (100)	0 (0)	10 (100.0)	10 (100)	0 (0)	10 (100)
Others (mentorship)	163 (97.0)	5 (3.0)	168 (100)	68 (97.1)	2 (2.8)	70 (100)	10 (100.0)	0 (0)	10 (100)	10 (100.0)	0 (0)	10 (100.0)	9 (90.0)	1 (10.0)	10 (100)

It can be observed from Table 18 that, regarding the issue of curriculum review the larger number of the lecturers, which is 96.4% upheld yes. The rest of the lecturers, that is 3.6% upheld no. Similarly, 98.4% of the students also endorsed yes while 1.4% of the students also maintained no. Also, majority of the deans of students that is 90.0% also indicated yes, meaning there were regular curriculum reviews whilst 10.0% also maintained no. The QA heads also reported 100% yes to the same issue. Finally 90.0% of the registrars also reported yes while 10.0% reported no. This indicates that majority of the respondents accepted that there are curriculum reviews in their respective institutions. This finding affirms Bogue (2003) assertion that curriculum or programme review epitomizes the more traditional approaches to quality assurance.

On another related issue, the same group of respondents were asked to respond yes or no to the issue of whether there are institutional self-evaluation, 94.6% of the lecturers reported yes whereas 5.4% also maintained no. Interestingly, the students reported 94.3% yes whereas 5.7% reported no on the same issue of institutional self-evaluation. Also, the deans of students were asked the same questions as to whether or not there were institutional self-evaluation, 90.0% reported yes while 10.0% maintained no. Again, the QA heads were asked the same question as to whether or not there were institutional self-evaluation; 90.0% reported yes while 10.0% maintained no. Lastly, 100.0% of the registrar, reported yes when asked to comment on the issue of institutional self-evaluation. This data indicated that majority of the respondents reported that there were institutional self-evaluation. This confirms UNESCO (1998b) assertion that institutional self-evaluation

conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international experts is vital for enhancing quality. Institutional self-evaluation provides ownership of the evaluation process to the staff who must deal with issues of quality and enhances their commitment to quality improvement where deficiencies are identified (Harman & Meek, 2000; Utuka, 2012).

On the issue of external evaluation, the following were the results of the lecturers; yes: 97.0%, no: 3.0%; students yes: 95.7%, no: 4.3%; deans of students yes: 90.0%, no: 10.0%; QA head yes: 100.0% and registrars yes: 100.0% from Table 15. From the above discussions, it can be concluded that majority of private universities engage in external evaluation. Again, on the issue of accreditation, majority of the lecturers that is 97.0% reported yes. The rest of the lecturers, that is 3.0% reported no. When it comes to students on the same issue, 97.1% reported yes. Again, 2.8% intimated no on the issue of accreditation. Also, when it comes to Deans of students on the same issue 100.0% intimated yes. Still on the same issue of accreditation, 100.0% of the QA heads reported yes while 100.0% of the registrars also reported yes. Furthermore, on the issue of mentorship, majority of the lecturers, which is 97.0% reported yes. The rest of the lecturers, that is 3.0% reported no. In relation to the students on the same issue, 97.1% reported yes. Again 2.8% intimated no on the issue of accreditation. Also, with regards to the Deans of students on the same issue 100.0% intimated yes. Still on the same issue of accreditation 100.0% of the QA heads reported yes. Whereas 90.0% of the registrars reported yes and the rest 10% reported no. This means that majority of the respondents affirmed that there were accreditation. This view is supported by Tagoe (2008) who indicated that the purpose of accreditation is

to ensure good quality education is being offered, to equip students to manage their own learning and development throughout their lives, to provide students with knowledge and skills that are relevant to the current job market locally, nationally and internationally, and to ensure that internationally recognized academic standards are achieved.

Research Question 5

What challenges do the quality assurance offices of private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana face in performing their duties and responsibilities?

This research question sought to examine the perspectives of the respondents on the constraints that the quality assurance offices of the respective private universities face in the performance of their activities. In order to answer this research question, an interview was conducted with two (2) registrars and three (3) QA heads. The interviews were analysed under four themes to determine the extent of the challenges that the quality assurance offices of private universities face in performing their activities. These were;

1. Misconception or misunderstanding of quality assurance
2. Manpower challenges
3. Inadequate infrastructure
4. Resistance

A common challenge that emerged from the interviews was the misconception or misunderstanding of quality assurance. All the five participants gave a general overview of the extent to which misconception or misunderstanding is affecting their various institutions. The study revealed that misunderstanding or misconception of quality assurance is affecting the

operations of the various quality assurance offices in the respective private universities. The study found out that the quality assurance units in the private universities are new. The participants indicated that they have been in existence for not more than ten years. To this end, the participants of the study felt that these misconceptions or misunderstanding of the activities of the quality assurance units/ departments are affecting their operations and activities.

The views of the participants summarise what the misconceptions or misunderstandings were. For example one respondent explained:

The university community feels that if you are the head of quality assurance you are the police of the organisation (QA head, Institution 1, 31/1/2015).

Another participant also noted:

Our challenge is mostly as a result of minimum or inadequate understanding of our role. A lot of the people think that quality assurance is just paper work. But I think as time goes on people will understand that quality assurance helps to improve our institution and makes our work easier (Registrar, Institution 1, 31/1/2015).

Others respondent said:

Another challenge is the availability of information. Quality assurance works with information and these are things that have not been instilled in our faculty members, heads of departments and staff from the beginning so it is usually difficult to when you want to get information about certain aspects of their work (QA head, Institution 2, 11/2/2015).

Also another respondent said:

The challenges are many as I have said, to ensure that quality is maintained you have those who do not agree that quality standards should be maintained. The academic board sets guidelines for quality for example, examination grades should be submitted by this date. When I write to them to remember members about what academic board has said. They think that the decision is coming from me. As a result they will say that as for this man he is always talking about quality but if salaries delay he doesn't say anything about the delay (QA head, Institution 3, 4/2/2015).

Lastly another participant said:

People think that it is all- in- all and that it must ensure that everything works rather than that everyone has a responsibility to ensure that things are working the way they ought to. So people will be complaining about quality issues but they don't see it as what can I individually do at my level to ensure that these quality issues are addressed (Registrar, Institution 4, 11/2/2015).

All the participants were unanimous in their assessment that the quality assurance offices in their respective institutions face manpower challenges. The study reports that the manpower within the various quality assurance offices were in adequate to handle the entire universities workload. The study further revealed that in some private universities, there was only one quality assurance staff. This may have an effect on the institution in terms of ensuring quality teaching and learning. This affirms Otto (2013) assertion that quality assurance operations across the globe are confronted with various challenges

which include cross border difficulties, bureaucratic hindrances, logistics and funding, inadequate and relevant human resources with professionalism. The opinions of some participants review what the manpower challenges were:

As I said in the office we are only three staff and this is a serious. I will say the office is still in its formative stage. We are a small university so I combine the quality assurance work with that of my teaching job. So resources in terms of time and manpower is an issue (QA head, Institution 2, 11/2/2015).

Another participant said:

Manpower wise currently we have only one staff in the office. Whatever you want to do you have to take it to the administrative staff assistant and that is making the work very difficult (QA head, Institution 1, 31/1/2015).

Others participants also said:

I will say in terms of staff strength we are three and we have so much to do. Even though we liase with other people in different departments. If our team were to be stronger we will be able to penetrate other aspects of our work (QA head, Institution 3, 4/2/2015).

All five of the participants of the study were of the view that their quality assurance offices face a problem of inadequate infrastructure which adversely affects their operation in monitoring and ensuring quality teaching and learning in their respective institutions. The study further reports that most of the directors of most quality assurance were operating from different offices while the supporting staff also operated from different offices. This makes daily office administrative routines difficult. The study again reveals that

where there is an office there are inadequate furniture and fittings. Since most of the quality assurance offices were in their formative stage they did not have adequate office furniture and fittings. This made their daily activities in the office very much uncomfortable and unbearable. Here are some of the expressions of participants:

I am the director and I do not have an office as the director of this unit.

This office is the office of the dean of social studies (QA head, Institution 3, 4/2/2015).

Another participant said:

I am the dean of the faculty of science and I operate as the director of quality assurance unit from this office. My administrative staff are also far away in another block. This is really making my work very difficult (QA head, Institution 2, 11/2/2015).

Another challenge that is worthy of mentioning is the issue of resistance. The study reveals that there were challenges in introducing new policies and measures in order to ensure quality teaching and learning in the universities. The study further reveals that they faced resistance from both faculty members as well as administrative staff. The study again revealed that there was resistance from other parts of the institution. A participant elaborated:

Of course we faced resistance in introducing certain measures that would assure quality. This is because whether you like it or not in every human institutions once there is a status quo there will be vested interest. Somebody might be benefiting from current situations one way or the other, so if you are pushing for things to be done differently,

then you find resistance in various forms (QA head, Institution 3, 4/2/2015).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the study draws conclusions from the key findings and makes recommendations. The chapter also provides suggestions for further research.

Summary

The overall issue of quality assurance in private universities in Ghana is so essential that it plays a critical role in ascertaining and ensuring quality in our higher education system. In effect, the study was to find out the quality assurance practices in private universities in the greater Accra Region of Ghana. Specifically, the study sought to explore the views of Registrars and Quality Assurance officers, Deans of students, Lecturers, and Students of private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana regarding the similarities and differences in the quality assurance practices in their respective institutions vis-à-vis those espoused and or prescribed by the National Accreditation Board (NAB).

Descriptive survey design was adopted as the most appropriate design for the study. The registrars, quality assurance heads, deans of students and students were purposively selected while the lecturers were selected using the simple random sampling technique (lottery method). A sample of 268 respondents participated in the study. A four-point structured, Likert-type scale questionnaire and an interview guide were the main instruments used for the study. The questionnaire was designed for all the participants while the

interview guide was developed for the registrars and quality assurance heads. The questionnaires and interview guide was pilot tested in the Ashanti Region of Ghana (Baptist University College) and after the analysis, the instrument generated a standardized Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .83 indicating a high statistical reliability of the instrument. The interview guide was also tested.

The questionnaire and interview guide were administered personally and as anticipated, all the questionnaires were retrieved from respondents. The statistical package for the social science (SPSS) version 21 was employed to analyse the main data. Means, percentages and standard deviations were used to analyse Research Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4. Research Question 5 was analysed using the thematic data analysis technique.

Summary of Key Findings

The study revealed a number of findings with respect to quality assurance practices in private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The following findings emerged from the study:

1. The study revealed that majority of the respondents (94.4%) perceived the role of quality assurance as to be helping the universities to achieve their missions and visions. The study further revealed that quality assurance raises the reputation of the universities.
2. The study reveals that the respondents perceived quality assurance to be valuable since it ensures that academic programmes are evaluated periodically. The study again revealed that all stakeholders are involved in programme review. The study also revealed that the department/faculty have collaboration with international universities/organisations.

3. The results of the study indicated that majority of the respondents (89.1%) confirmed that private universities have written mission statement and quality assurance office. Also it was revealed that the private universities have quality assurance policies and quality assurance manuals. These notwithstanding, (63.8%) of the respondents again revealed that the internal quality assurance model being followed by the institutions were the directives from NAB.
4. It was found out that majority of the lecturers (97.0%), students (97.1%), deans of students (100.0%), quality assurance heads (100.0%) and registrars (100.0%) confirmed that private universities conformed to the requirements of 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.
5. The study also revealed that quality assurance offices in private universities 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 in adequate infrastructure

Conclusions

From the research findings the following conclusions can be emphatically drawn;

It is evident from the findings that the role of quality assurance is very important in the sense that it helps private universities to achieve their visions and missions. It can therefore be concluded that private universities within the

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

The study again concludes that quality assurance practices are crucial elements in ensuring the quality of the educational provisions in private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Their role is inevitable as such when better adopted and executed could immensely contribute to helping to develop and sharing good practices in learning and teaching in higher education as well as safeguarding public interest in private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

Recommendations

The findings of the study have provided the necessary information about quality assurance practices in private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. From the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are recommendations to students, lecturers, administrative staff, university council, university management, the Ministry of Education as well as Ghana Education Service and the government and other stakeholders.

1. 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 universities 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 congenial environment for teaching and learning.
2. Again, it was revealed that private universities 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 university 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.

3. It is recommended that private universities 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 universities should also continue to engage in curriculum reviews and self-evaluation.
4. It is recommended that the quality assurance officers of the private universities should organise workshops, seminars and conferences to educate the members of the university about quality assurance.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study focused on quality assurance practices in private universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The participants involved were Lecturers, Registrars, Deans of students, QA heads and Students. Therefore, I recommend that another study could be conducted on the perception of private university council members on quality assurance.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR REGISTRARS, HEADS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE, HEADS OF DEPARTMENT/FACULTY, LECTURERS

This questionnaire is designed to collect relevant information about quality assurance practices in Private Universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Your response to the items of this questionnaire will remain confidential and the results will be used to examine the existing quality assurance systems and practices in private universities in Ghana. We hope you will be able to take time and carefully complete this questionnaire. You can use a mark (√) to indicate your responses for items with alternative responses. Please briefly state your responses for the open-ended items.

I. BIOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Name of University: _____

2. Faculty/College: _____

3. Department: _____

4. Sex: Male Female

5. Educational qualification:

Diploma BA/B.Sc. / B.Ed. M.Ed. / MA/M.Sc./M.Phil.

PhD Others (specify): _____

6. Academic rank:

Graduate Assistant

Assistant Lecturer

Lecturer

Registrar

senior assist. Registrar

Senior lecturer

Deputy Registrar

Assistant Registrar

Assistant Professor Associate Professor
 Professor Others (please specify) _____

7. Area of specialization _____
 8. Year/s of service in the University _____
 9. Years of experience at current post _____
 10. Position held

Registrar Head of Department Director Dean None

II. CONCEPTUALISATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

Please rate the statements below concerning your conceptualisation of quality assurance in your department/ faculty/ institution

SA- strongly agree, A- Agree, D- disagree, SD- strongly disagree

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
11. Academic programmes are evaluated periodically				
12. All stakeholders are involved in programme review				
13. Departments/faculties have collaboration with international universities/ organisations				
14. Faculty members are well aware of quality assurance practices/ process				
15. Grading system is well defined				
16. Admission criteria for undergraduates is well				

defined				
17. Students are involved in the assessment of lecturers				
18. Guidance and counselling is available to the students				
19. Feedback from students is used to improve teaching and learning				
20. Good internet facility is available				
21. Related and up-to-date books are available in the library				
22. Departments have a well-defined mechanisms for students to channel their grievances and appeals				
23. Financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively				
24. Quality assurance practices are shared among different academic departments of the university				
25. Quality assurance reports are available to all stakeholders				

II. PERCEPTION OF THE ROLES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE (QA)

Please rate the statements below concerning your perceptions about the role of quality assurance practices in your department/ faculty/ institution

Key: SA- strongly agree, A- Agree, D- disagree, SD- strongly disagree

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
26. QA helps the university to achieve its mission and visions				
27. QA raises the reputation of the university				
28. QA ensures that there is adequate academic and staff in the university				
29. QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning				
30. QA helps to ensure programme/ curricular improvement				
31. QA give recognition to the university locally				
32. QA give recognition to the university internationally				
33. QA gives recognition to students				
34. QA makes students feel prestigious				
35. QA gives recognition to students certificates				
36. QA ensures students have the requisite resources for learning				
37. QA ensures competition among universities				

IV. QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES BEING USED BY PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

This part of the questionnaire is designed to find the current quality assurance practices in your department/ institution. Please indicate YES/NO

Statements	YES	NO
38. The department/faculty/institution has a written mission statement		
39. The department/ faculty/ institution has a quality assurance office		
40. The university has a quality assurance office		
41. The department has a quality assurance policy		
42. The department has a quality assurance manual		

43. The internal quality assurance model being followed by the department is (you may choose more than one)

- a. ISO 9000
- b. TQM
- c. Directives from NAB
- d. If any other please specify _____

44. In which year did your department/ faculty/ institution start implementing internal quality assurance model(s) _____

45. When was self-assessment for quality assurance purposes last held?

This year 1 year ago 2 years ago never

V. CONFORMANCE TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF NAB

Statement	YES	NO
46. Faculty/Departmental meetings on quality assurance of educational provision		
47. University-wide meeting to discuss about academic matters		
48. Completing questionnaires on programme/course evaluation		
49. Completing questionnaires on student learning experience and related issues		
50. Completing questionnaires on effectiveness of teaching and assessment		
51. Curriculum review		
52. Institutional self-evaluation		
53. External evaluation		
54. Accreditation		
55. Others (please specify)_____		

APPENDIX B
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

This questionnaire is designed to collect relevant information about quality assurance practices in Private Universities in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Your response to the items of this questionnaire will remain confidential and the results will be used to examine the existing quality assurance systems and practices in private universities in Ghana. We hope you will be able to take time and carefully complete this questionnaire. You can use a mark (✓) to indicate your responses for items with alternative responses. Please briefly state your responses for the open-ended items.

I. BIOGRAPHIC DATA

2. Name of University: _____

2. Faculty/College: _____

3. Department: _____

4. Programme of study: _____

5. Level: 200 300 400

6. Sex: Male Female

II. CONCEPTUALISATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

Please rate the statements below concerning your conceptualisation of quality assurance in your department/ faculty/ institution

SA- strongly agree, A- Agree, D- disagree, SD- strongly disagree

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
56. Academic programmes are evaluated periodically				
57. All stakeholders are involved in programme review				
58. Departments/faculties have collaboration with international universities/ organisations				
59. Faculty members are well aware of quality assurance practices/ process				
60. Grading system is well defined				
61. Admission criteria for undergraduates is well defined				
62. Students are involved in the assessment of lecturers				
63. Guidance and counselling is available to the students				
64. Feedback from students is used to improve teaching and learning				
65. Good internet facility is available				
66. Related and up-to-date books are available in the library				
67. Departments have a well-defined mechanisms for students to channel their grievances and appeals				

68. Financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively				
69. Quality assurance practices are shared among different academic departments of the university				
70. Quality assurance reports are available to all stakeholders				

II. PERCEPTION OF THE ROLES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE (QA)

Please rate the statements below concerning your perceptions about the role of quality assurance practices in your department/ faculty/ institution

Key: SA- strongly agree, A- Agree, D- disagree, SD- strongly disagree

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
71. QA helps the university to achieve its mission and visions				
72. QA raises the reputation of the university				
73. QA ensures that there is adequate academic and staff in the university				
74. QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning				
75. QA helps to ensure programme/ curricular improvement				
76. QA give recognition to the university locally				
77. QA give recognition to the university internationally				
78. QA gives recognition to students				

79. QA makes students feel prestigious				
80. QA gives recognition to students certificates				
81. QA ensures students have the requisite resources for learning				
82. QA ensures competition among universities				

IV. QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES BEING USED BY PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

This part of the questionnaire is designed to find the current quality assurance practices in your department/ institution. Please indicate YES/NO

Statements	YES	NO
83. The department/faculty/institution has a written mission statement		
84. The department/ faculty/ institution has a quality assurance office		
85. The university has a quality assurance office		
86. The department has a quality assurance policy		
87. The department has a quality assurance manual		

88. The internal quality assurance model being followed by the department is (you may choose more than one)

- e. ISO 9000
- f. TQM
- g. Directives from NAB
- h. If any other please specify _____

89. In which year did your department/ faculty/ institution start implementing internal quality assurance model(s) _____

90. When was self-assessment for quality assurance purposes last held?

This year 1 year ago 2 years ago never

V. CONFORMANCE TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF NAB

Statement	YES	NO
91. Faculty/Departmental meetings on quality assurance of educational provision		
92. University-wide meeting to discuss about academic matters		
93. Completing questionnaires on programme/course evaluation		
94. Completing questionnaires on student learning experience and related issues		
95. Completing questionnaires on effectiveness of teaching and assessment		
96. Curriculum review		
97. Institutional self-evaluation		
98. External evaluation		
99. Accreditation		
100. Others (please specify)_____		

APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR REGISTRARS/ HEADS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

Section A: Background Information of Interviewee

1. Can you tell me about yourself?
2. Can you tell me about your academic qualification?
3. Can you briefly describe your role as a registrars/ heads of quality assurance

Section B: Perception of the role of quality assurance

Please your department is involved in the day to day running of the university

4. How do you understand quality assurance?
5. How is quality assurance ensured in terms of teaching and learning in your institution?
6. What are your views about the role of quality assurance?
7. What are the drivers of quality assurance?

Section C: Challenges of the quality assurance office

8. You have a quality assurance office, what are your impressions about the office?
9. What has been done so far by your department to assure and enhance quality teaching and learning?
10. What are the main challenges/hurdles in quality assurance in your institution/Office?
11. What is the future map for quality assurance in this university?