



Some Problems Inherent in The Delivery of Tertiary Education in Ghana: The Way Forward from An Administrative Point of View

Kofi Sarpong Adjepong¹ & Kweku Arhin²

¹ School of Agriculture, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

² Faculty of Educational Foundations, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

Correspondence: Kofi Sarpong Adjepong, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

Email: kadjepong@ucc.edu.gh

DOI: 10.53103/cjess.v3i2.137

Abstract

This paper reviews several articles on problems inherent in the delivery of tertiary education in Ghana. It outlines some of the problems and makes some recommendations that would enhance the delivery of tertiary education in Ghana from an administrative point of view.

Keywords: Tertiary Education, Tertiary Institution

Introduction

Tertiary education is the education offered after the secondary level. The education is offered by universities, polytechnics, specialized institutions, open universities and any other institutions offering training leading to the award of diploma and degree qualifications. In Ghana, tertiary education is provided by both private and state institutions.

Tertiary education plays a vital role in the socio-economic development of the nation in the current knowledge-based economy and the globalization phenomenon. It has a key role to play in the creation, dissemination and application of knowledge, production, and production of human capital as well as developmental needs.

In the light of the above, it is important to critically examine the systemic problems inherent in tertiary education in Ghana and make recommendations that would enhance the delivery of tertiary education in Ghana.

Some Problems Inherent in the Delivery of Tertiary Education in Ghana

Tertiary education in Ghana is faced with a number of problems including the following:

1. Funding
2. Access and Participation
3. Staffing
4. Quality Assurance
5. Quality and Relevance
6. Postgraduate Training and Research
7. Governance and Management

Funding Tertiary Education

Funding is crucial to the achievement of the objectives of tertiary education in Ghana. The government remains the main source of funding for tertiary education. The government's financial allocation to tertiary institutions however represents only about 40 – 60% of the total amount required for the effective operation of the polytechnics and universities in particular (NCTE Report 2011). This has been inadequate over the years making development planning very difficult for the tertiary institutions.

Tertiary institutions, especially universities will have a lot of difficulty in being competitive in the global market unless they can finance investment in new educational technologies and the necessary infrastructure. Within the last five to ten years, enrolment into tertiary institutions has increased more quickly than the capacity of the government to support the institutions. This has had tremendous implications for funding and the quality of tertiary education. Tertiary institutions in Ghana are now, therefore, facing new resource management challenges.

Access and Participation

The rate of access to tertiary institutions depends upon space and facilities that are available for potential applicants. Although there has been a significant expansion in enrolment in tertiary education in the last decade, the participation rate of the age-group 18-21 years in tertiary institutions in the country is as low as 2 – 5% as compared to 30 – 40% for the corresponding age group in some developed countries. Available statistics indicate that for the past eight years, only an average of about 32% of qualified applicants for admission into the universities, and about 54% of same for admission into the polytechnics, were admitted (NCTE Report, 2011). Again, some of the factors that account for the problem of access and participation are:

- i. Existing tertiary institutions are unable to meet the high demand for tertiary education, which has arisen out of rapid growth in population and the expansion in pre-tertiary education.
- ii. Inadequate teaching and supporting staff to meet the growing need for tertiary education

- iii. The mismatch between existing academic facilities and physical infrastructure on the one hand and the increasing number of students admitted into tertiary institutions on the other.
- iv. Limited opportunities and avenues for working people and those who for one reason or the other, have had to terminate their education for a period to re-enter or acquire higher education through other modes.
- v. Public tertiary institutions were originally developed as residential institutions because of their national character and model adopted. Thus, the lack of availability of residential accommodation has influenced admission into institutions. The problem of limited infrastructure has been compounded by an under-developed culture of renting rooms in houses to students among local communities. This puts the whole burden of accommodating students on the institution thus resulting in a reduction in admissions to the institutions (NCTE Report, 2008).

Staffing

A major challenge facing tertiary institutions is the inability of the institutions to attract and retain qualified staff. Technical universities, in particular, are unable to compete with industry in recruiting qualified and experienced staff. The main reasons for the state of affairs are non-competitive salaries, poor conditions of service, unattractive working environment and high market value of qualified Ghanaians outside the country. Out of the existing staff requirement in the universities and the polytechnics about 40% of faculty positions in the universities and 60% of those in the polytechnics are vacant. A survey in Ghana universities in 1998 indicated that more than 34% of the teaching staff in the universities are more than 50 years old (NCTE Report, 2008). Fresh graduates refuse to take teaching appointments in tertiary institutions because of better salaries and conditions of service elsewhere.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance, which involves both internal and external evaluation mechanisms, provides the means for ensuring high standards in education delivery. The Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) and the National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations (NABPTEX) have been established to be responsible for external evaluation. However, most tertiary institutions do not have comprehensive mechanisms for monitoring internal quality. Quality of teaching and learning and research is adversely affected by the high Student-Teacher Ratio (STR).

Quality and Relevance

The achievement of high quality and relevance of tertiary education in Ghana is hampered by several factors notable among them are:

- i. The institutions' qualified staff: All the tertiary institutions in Ghana face the problem of attracting, recruiting and retaining qualified academic staff due to unattractive salaries and working conditions. Those at post are ageing and many departments in the universities engage retired lecturers on contract and part-time basis to enable them to continue to function effectively.
- ii. Weak linkage of programmes with industry: There is a gap between programmes offered in tertiary institutions and knowledge and skills that are relevant to the needs of industry. Secondly, industries are not adequately involved in the development of programmes of tertiary institutions. Staff and students hardly undertake practical attachment programmes in the industry, which is important for the promotion of collaboration, co-ordination and exchange of ideas and development of practical skills. Very few industries provide avenues for attachment.
- iii. Lack of national manpower projections: Admissions into tertiary institutions are:
 - a. not informed by human resource requirements, consequently, programmes run.
 - b. supply-driven rather than demand-driven.
- iv. Lack of linkage in programmes at pre-tertiary and tertiary levels: There is a little affinity between programmes run in tertiary institutions and those offered in technical and vocational institutes. Similarly, the research and extension mandate of tertiary institutions are rarely directed to the needs of pre-tertiary education. Also, some students obtain high aggregates but are unable to gain admission into tertiary institutions due to deficiencies in their subject combinations at the second cycle level.
- v. Lack of adequate and modern academic facilities: Academic facilities such as lecture theatres, laboratories, consumables for practical work, workshops, well-equipped libraries and ICT including internet facilities in tertiary institutions are inadequate and have also not kept pace with modern technology.
- vi. Inadequate emphasis on science and technology: In any modern economy the main driving forces are science and technology and ICT. Tertiary institutions in Ghana are confronted with limited capacity, which does not make it possible for them to fully share in the global knowledge pool.
- vii. Inadequate funding for postgraduate work and research: Postgraduate studies and research work constitutes a major function of university education. They serve as the foundation for quality education at that level. Yet, facilities in the universities as they exist now are woefully inadequate to promote postgraduate education.

- viii. **Quality of students:** The quality of students at the tertiary level is partly a function of the quality of products from the pre-tertiary institutions and partly conditions in the tertiary institutions themselves. Some students enter tertiary institutions with deficiencies in communication skills and the inability to adjust readily to the rather “free” tertiary environment. It has been observed that, the learning culture among students has also changed for the worse over the years. Now, students place more emphasis on passing examinations than acquiring knowledge and skills.
- ix. **High student/teacher ratio:** The norm for the student-lecturer ratio as indicated by the National Council for Tertiary Education should be 12:1 for the sciences and 18:1 for the humanities. The available evidence, however, indicates that on average the ratio could be as high as 30:1 for the sciences and 40:1 for the humanities. These high student-teacher ratios affect the effectiveness of the tutorial system, in particular and academic work in general.
- x. **Pedagogy:** Some of the lectures lack teaching skills, and therefore, resort to practices such as dictating notes and giving out lecture notes in the form of handouts. Such teaching methods have encouraged rote learning.

Postgraduate Training and Research

Postgraduate education is an integral component of the tertiary system. It provides the next generation of educators at all levels, trains personnel for basic and applied research, as well as high-level personnel for all sectors of the economy. However, postgraduate training has not been given the desired support and attention over the years due to limited funding, inadequate facilities and few qualified staff for postgraduate supervision. This is a disincentive to the promotion of postgraduate education in the country (Ministry of Education Report, 2011).

Governance and Management

Governance structures and management practices constitute important aspects of the life of any organization. Whether or not tertiary institutions flourish or flounder depends to a large extent on how they governed or managed. All tertiary institutions have governing councils as contained in their respective acts. Councils are made up of lay and professional people some of whom often lack knowledge about the administration and governance of the institutions whose activities they are to oversee. Governments have over the years been known to interfere in the internal affairs of tertiary institutions. This undermines the autonomy of the institutions as well as the authority of the institutional heads.

Recommendations that Would Enhance the Delivery of Tertiary Education in Ghana

Funding

Government should make funds available through the setting endowment funds and the use of the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) to support the rehabilitation and expansion of infrastructural. There should be a collaboration between tertiary institutions, business/industry and society in general in the areas of the provision of some needed resources like student accommodation for tertiary institutions. There is also the need for tertiary institutions and businesses/industries to collaborate in the areas of their human resource needs so that the institutions can design academic programmes in those areas to suit businesses/industries. This is to make tertiary education programmes relevant to the socio-economic needs of the nation.

Tertiary institutions should identify other innovative strategies for generating additional funds. They should also diversify their sources of funding to remain competitive. The recent Cabinet decisions to allow universities to give 5% of their admission quota to full fee-paying foreign students and an additional 5% to Ghanaians sponsored by companies/organizations will raise the level of non-government revenue and enable the universities to meet some of the increasing demands for educational service and innovation (Ministry of Education Report, 2011). To enable tertiary institutions to generate more funds internally, the following are some recommendations:

1. Tertiary institutions should encourage the establishment of chairs and endowments.
2. Tertiary institutions should strengthen the operations of their consultancy centers to raise extra funds.
3. Alumni associations should be encouraged to contribute to the development of their Alma Mater.
4. Finally, tertiary institutions should explore additional areas of potential income such as research income, research commercialization, investment income, fees from distance learning, sandwich and remedial programmes and conferences in addition to other high demand-driven programmes.

Access and Participation

To increase the capacity of the university to admit more students the following are recommended:

1. There is a need for the government to make the conditions of service of lecturers and support staff more competitive to attract the best brains. Furthermore, the conditions under which the lecturers and support staff work should be enhanced to give them a good working environment and job satisfaction.
2. The government should also provide more spacious lecture theatres with modern teaching facilities such as audio-visual aids and projectors. In addition, adequate workshops and well-equipped laboratories necessary for practical work should be built and expanded in the universities.
3. Government should try to solicit the support of the private sector, corporate bodies, NGOs and religious bodies to put up more on-and-off campus hostels.
4. The policy of the GETFund to build more facilities on campuses of tertiary institutions is in the right direction and should be encouraged and implemented. The facilities should include staff accommodation.

Staffing

Given the important role lecturers in tertiary institutions play in human resource development, there is the need to give them special consideration to create a large pool of highly qualified and motivated staff in such institutions. The following are recommended:

1. The government should establish a more competitive salary structure for the tertiary sector. Vice-Chancellors and Professors should retire on their salaries.
2. The working conditions, including facilities for research and teaching, should be improved to attract and retain staff.
3. Every effort should be made to recruit international and Ghanaian staff through international agencies such as the Center for International Migration (CIM) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) and linkage programmes. The institutions should establish centers for international education and encourage the internationalization of their curricula and programmes as much as possible.

Quality Assurance

To strengthen the quality of education delivery at the tertiary level the following are some recommendations:

1. Tertiary institutions should set up well-resourced quality assurance units to monitor academic and professional programmes in the institutions.
2. Newly appointed lectures should be given orientation in continuous assessment and evaluation as well as a teaching methodology. This should be institutionalized.
3. Tertiary institutions should develop appraisal schemes to be used by both heads and students and the result fed into in-service training programmes.

4. Tertiary institutions should liaise with industry and business to set up standards of competencies for skills acquisition.
5. Finally, external examinations and assessment of staff papers for promotion as well as other measures already in place in some of the institutions should be strengthened.
6. Accountability of all departments (both academic non-academic) to ensure effective use of allocated resources. Performance indices should be developed for the various departments/ units of the institutions.

Quality and Relevance

To improve on quality and relevance, the following are some recommendations:

1. The universities should re-examine their mandates because of the advances in knowledge and changing demands in the economy. The universities should be reminded that knowledge-based economies are required globally.
2. The technical universities should re-examine the relevance of the programmes they inherited from GES in the view of their new status and mandate as contained in the polytechnic law, as well as the demands of the economy.
3. All tertiary institutions should formalize collaboration with industry and other relevant sectors of the economy in the development, design and delivery of relevant programmes and the review of the content of the courses in existing programmes.
4. The universities and polytechnics should develop centers of excellence with their mandates.
5. Tertiary institutions should establish centers to be responsible for organizing orientation and in-service programmes as well as developing policies in staff development. The centers should introduce lecturers to new instructional skills and technologies.
6. Tertiary institutions should encourage organizations to establish chairs and endowments to promote research and postgraduate studies.
7. Finally, tertiary institutions should develop a strong “backward” linkage with pre-tertiary institutions through their outreach mandate.

Postgraduate Training and Research

To improve postgraduate training and research in tertiary institutions the following are some recommendations:

1. There is the need for government to provide funding for postgraduate studies to enable the universities to achieve the 10% intake of postgraduate students in the short term, and at least 20%, in the long run, this can be done through the GET-Fund.

2. The universities should ensure that there are qualified and motivated staff in adequate numbers and improve facilities for the running of successful postgraduate programmes.
3. Conditions of service of staff should be enhanced to attract and retain some of the best researchers and teachers especially at the professorial level.
4. GETFund should allocate a substantial proportion of its funds for postgraduate studies.
5. GETFund should also allocate a substantial proportion of its funds to support infrastructure development and improvement of research facilities.
6. Finally, the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) should come out with national priority research areas to give direction to tertiary institutions.

Governance and Management

To strengthen the governance and management of tertiary institutions in Ghana the following are recommended:

1. The Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) should frequently organize orientation-training programmes for Council members, Vice-Chancellors and other principal officers of the administration. The training should cover strategic leadership qualities and should include skills for managing change.
2. Institutions should organize orientation courses on the administration and management system for deans, heads of departments and other members of staff.
3. Staff orientation should include aspects of the committee system with emphasis on the mode of university administration.
4. Government should try as much as possible not to interfere directly in the internal affairs of the institutions.
5. Finally with the expansion of tertiary institutions in the country the GTEC should be adequately resourced to carry out its functions.

References

- Ministry of Education (2011). *Meeting the challenges of education in the twenty-first century*: Report of the President's Committee on review of education reforms in Ghana. Accra: Adwinsa Publications Ltd.
- National Council for Tertiary Education (2011). *Report of the technical Committee on polytechnic education in Ghana*. Accra: NCTE.
- National Council for Tertiary Education (2008). *Evaluation of the policy objectives of the reforms to the tertiary education system*. Accra: NCTE.