

# Examination of globalisation's clouts on Ghana's tertiary education policy

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## Abstract

The paper examined and analysed the extent globalisation and its dimensions impinged Ghana's tertiary education policy landscape in global and national historical and contemporary perspectives. Historical and contemporary policy documents and articles, that help to understand how globalisation and its antecedents have interwoven and permeated the dynamics underpinning Ghana's tertiary education policy, were used as conduits for the analysis. Within the context of structural adjustment and democratisation juggernauts triggered by the West, neoliberal reforms were initiated in the early 1990s. They were characterised by the liberalisation of the sector for the establishment of private tertiary education institutions, creation of buffer agencies to ensure effective stakeholder control in policy and quality assurance of those institutions, initiating laissez-faire financial reforms and incorporating non-governmental financial responsibility. Nonetheless, they concomitantly spurred the tertiary education institutions to drift towards entrepreneurialism and innovation through activities such as research, fee policies and collaborations with vital stakeholders. Although the reforms were geared towards market, the Ghanaian system of tertiary education remains a quasi-market system with substantial governmental control.

## Keywords

globalisation, reforms, tertiary education, market, government

## Introduction

Reorganised in the 1990s through reforms, Ghana's tertiary education<sup>1</sup> system is remarkably institutionally differentiated. It is composed of private and public universities including technical universities, colleges of education and agriculture, nursing training colleges, seminaries and tutorial

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colleges and regulated by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). The juggernaut of globalisation can be argued as the force that, among other factors, precipitated the tertiary education reforms and their aftermath.

This paper examines and analyses the extent globalisation and its dimensions impinged Ghana's tertiary education policy landscape in global and national historical and contemporary perspectives. With regards to structure, the paper foremost discusses globalisation and higher education, followed by a presentation of the historical context of Ghana's tertiary education and the creation of buffer agencies within the Ghanaian tertiary education space. It subsequently focuses on the financial dynamics underpinning the Ghanaian tertiary education landscape and then highlights evidence of neoliberal manifestations such as marketisation and privatisation. Research as a revenue generation valve, university-industry collaborations and then an overview of the response of public universities in Ghana to hegemonic discourses of globalisation and neoliberalism are analysed. The final section provides conclusion, implication and recommendations.

## Globalisation and higher education

There is little doubt that the discourse of globalisation is deeply affecting higher education worldwide. The United Nations and Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) explains globalisation as 'the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas... across borders. Globalisation affects each country differently due to each country's history, traditions, values, cultures, resources and priorities' (2004, p. 6). The inflow of various dimensions such as ideas, values, knowledge and technology as expressed by the UNESCO definition is mediated or intervened by multinational corporations or transnational organisations rather than nation-states. Globalisation represents a serious shake up of the social relationships that had previously been primarily defined through a series of territorially bound constructs. In this sense, it represents more than simply greater levels of internationalisation, liberalisation, universalisation or standardisation/Westernisation (Scholte, 2002). Almost any definition of globalisation begins with the idea that the integration of human societies across pre-existing territorial units has sped up, assisted in part by the development of new technologies that compress time and space (Marginson and Sawir 2005; Maringe, 2010). For some authors, the main motor of integration is economic, that is, the expansion of truly global chains of commercialised production and consumption. Others focus on the cultural and political dimensions of globalisation as driving forces. Whatever the focus, central to all theories of globalisation is the notion that interregional and 'deterritorialised' flows of all kinds of social interaction have reached new magnitudes in recent history (Ruggie, 1993).

Globalisation ensures the blurring of territorial national borders. What this means is that whenever there seem to be some existing barriers, these transnational organisations are used as agents to permeate such flows (Marginson and Sawir, 2005). There has also been a consistent argument within the literature that the hegemonic influence of globalisation has to some extent led to the diminishing of territorial borders of a nation-state. This unveils that the local peculiarities and conditions are of great importance, as referred to by Ball (2012) and Marginson and Rhoades (2002) as 'layers and conditions'. Willis and Taylor (2014) assert that globalisation seems to move towards a trajectory of both integration and mutual interdependence. Again, there seems to be a continuum between the tensions of globalisation in the literature; on the one end is homogenisation and on the other end is heterogenisation in the sense of global inflows and responses of local responses (Appadurai, 1996).

A brief retrospection of the UNESCO definition underpins the assumption that there are differences concerning how institutions and nation-states respond to globalisation. Globalisation's

effect is to some extent determined by cultures, resources, technology and a country's strength. This unveils that the local peculiarities and conditions are of great importance as [Ball \(2012\)](#) and [Marginson and Rhoades \(2002\)](#) termed them as 'layers and conditions'. [Willis and Taylor \(2014\)](#) assert that 'universities are not simply shaped by the forces of globalisation, but, as large international organisations and key sites of knowledge production, they are enmeshed in global processes' (p. 154). [Morrow and Torres \(2000, p. 44\)](#) claim that 'perhaps no place has been more subject to these processes of globalisation than the university'. Over the past four decades, globalisation has become pervasive and emerged as a commercial approach in (re)shaping how national educational policies are constructed and to some extent dictates the relationship between nation-state and tertiary education systems at the national level ([Gyamera and Burke, 2018](#); [Torres and Jones, 2013](#)). Besides, within the globalisation template, associated elements such as New Public Management and neoliberal agenda have influenced the ideology, operations and structure of tertiary education systems and policies ([Maassen, 2012](#)).

Before the advent of New Public Management, the traditional university governance was branded as inefficient, non-responsive to societal needs and above all by its inability to address the quality of standards of its core functions ([Amaral et al., 2003](#)). Recent public sector reforms which also include higher education institutions hold the idea that productivity and quality could be best improved by transforming the public bureaucracy by means of New Public Management ([Paradeise et al., 2009](#)). The idea of strengthening self-management in universities is related to the need to become more efficient and responsive to the diverse needs of society.

Within the Ghanaian higher education context, the phenomenon of the changing mode of governance as a result of New Public Management has led to governments acting as referees who watch over the game and only intervene when the laws are violated. The phenomena have influenced universities solely responsible for defining their own legitimate goal and position themselves through setting strategies. The resultant effect of globalisation on most national higher education policies is to inject effectiveness, efficiency and mimic best business practices and cultures ([Clark, 1998](#)). It has been argued that the changes in governance modes in higher education institutions are partly inspired by the New Public Management ideas ([Intsiful and Maassen, 2017](#)).

[Olsen \(2007\)](#) highlights that as a result of global forces, universities are pressured to transform to 'service enterprise embedded in competitive market' (p. 35). These changes could be argued from the fact that in current times, funding of higher education has been reduced by various governments ([Acquah, 2021](#)). Besides, the changes can be argued that the hegemonic influence of globalisation has to some extent led to the diminishing of territorial borders of a nation-state.

With the introduction of cost-sharing fees, universities in turn need to generate additional funds or income from their students ([Clark, 1998](#); [Gumpert, 2000](#)). The assumption underlying this reduced funding is that the university, which can also be characterised as a rational actor, will have to open and depend on the global market and students to generate additional income to support their activities. This to some extent makes the university adaptive to the demands of society within which they operate and consider students as their customers. In effect, these pressures force the universities to adapt to a trend within the organisational field, therefore leading to isomorphism or homogeneity ([Scott, 2001](#)). At the same time some of the environmental pressures from the global scale that have implicitly become change drivers, as defined by [Peterson \(2007\)](#), includes information communication technology, issues of quality, issues concerning diversity, socio-economic productivity, globalisation and increasing resource limitations.

In a contemporary globalised era, as a result of changes in higher education governance modes, most higher education institutions are operating on performance management systems, output funding models and strategic alliances framed within a cost-benefit analysis framework ([Maassen, 2017](#)). This then shifts

the focus of steering higher education to an evaluative state model (Neave, 1998). Boateng (2010) asserts that the evaluative state became a dominant discourse when issues of provision of access and equity (social justice) tended to be predominant when higher education institutions evolved from elite to mass structure of higher education. It served as a lens through which government regulated and financed higher education from the 1980s. The evaluative state framework consists of the historical drift from *apriori funding* to a *posteriori funding*. The *apriori* which involved routine and strategic evaluations and legal instrumentality was based on trust on higher education institutions to rationally use the allocations for the intended purposes. *Aposteriori funding* sought to evaluate after the fact, that is, ascertaining the extent to which overall targets had met funding objectives through the evaluation of higher education activities and outcomes (Neave, 1998). In various higher education landscapes, buffer agencies are set up to mediate between the governments and higher education. The evaluative state as a prime vessel of economic liberalism is characterised by the conditionality of standardised performance indicators or benchmarks [set by the buffer agencies] expected to be met by the higher education institutions as they are expected to account for their relevance in the use of public funds (Neave, 2017).

## Historical context of Ghana's tertiary education

In order to understand the effect of globalisation on Ghana's tertiary education system, it is essential to discuss system's antecedents especially from the 1990s. The poor fiscal management of social and economic resources of the 1970s and early 1980s (Bondzie, 2020) compelled the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) military junta to adopt the neoliberal reforms of the Bretton Woods institutions dubbed the 'Structural Adjustment Program/Economic Recovery Programme'. They sought assistance to resuscitate the economy which was in doldrums. Some scholars (e.g. Munene, 2008; Andrews et al., 2012) are of the view that reforms were impositions from the international financial institutions and further argue that those reforms birthed the tertiary education reforms in the early 1990s (e.g. Varghese, 2006).

The higher education system, made up of three state universities,<sup>2</sup> was characterised by low access of females in universities, especially in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) courses and programmes; paucity of funds; poor research activity; large class sizes (Arthur and Arthur, 2016); infrastructural deficiencies; ageing faculty; huge class sizes; low access to international support and deficiencies in access, equity, quality and relevance (Osei-Tutu, 2021; Sawyerr, 2004). There is a nexus between the country's socio-economic and political conditions and its higher education system. The economic constraints and political instability of the country at the time accounted for the decline of higher education (Budu and Quashigah, 2013). This prompted the reduction of budgetary allocations to the institutions, which in turn contributed to the reduction in staff strength and the exodus of lecturers and administrative staff from Ghana (Sawyerr, 1994).

For decades, the tertiary education sector received little to no attention from the international development community from the 1970s because of World Bank studies (e.g. Psacharopoulos, 1973, 1981) pointing to lower rates of returns relative to primary and secondary education (Asamoah, 2017). The findings became the justification for lower investments in and the zero-sum game in funding tertiary education relative to pre-tertiary education (Marcucci et al., 2008). Public higher education investments were deemed regressive, distributionally perverse and exacerbating existing socio-economic disparities. (Bloom et al., 2005; Pillay, 2011).

Nevertheless, the reforms were instituted to make the tertiary education sector responsive to the needs of the country. The government passed a University Rationalisation Policy in 1986 based on which a University Rationalisation Committee was created 2 years later as part of the medium-term university development plan (Boakye, 2020). It accepted the University Rationalisation

Committee's 166 recommendations and issued a White Paper, 'Reforms to Tertiary Education System', the perspective of which was to the effect that university education was inadequate in capacity to meet and address the problems plaguing the higher education system as well as ensuring the market of the newly created Ghana's tertiary education system was opened to the world (Bingab et al., 2016). Hitherto, the University of Ghana, the University of Science and Technology and the University of Cape Coast constituted Ghana's higher education system. The term 'tertiary education' was an encapsulation of the reforms. The sector had to be liberalised for private participation; conversion of institutions from second cycle to tertiary education status; the creation of buffer agencies to act as liaisons between government and the tertiary education institutions in quality assurance, policy and finance; and the roll-back of some of the unlimited powers of the state to the institutions in governance.

Globally, reforms in the sector were to reduce the political influence in higher education governance by making higher education more autonomous (Henard and Mitterle, 2003). In the case of Ghana, the Head of State was the Chancellor of the University of Ghana, the University of Science and Technology, and the University of Cape Coast, but with the advent of the reforms, the institutions were allowed by law to choose their own Chancellors (Sawyer, 1994). Hence, all postsecondary institutions were reclassified as tertiary education institutions. From this it seemed the state was on course to be an evaluative one to satiate global and national/local needs. The changing role of the state in its relationship with the tertiary education sector was quite analogous to the transition from state control to one of state supervision (Neave and van Vught, 1991). The triggering of the reform by the Bretton Woods institutions is characteristic of international financial agencies as global appendages of centre nations interfacing with periphery nations as the government sought the support of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the Structural Adjustment Programme/Economic Recovery Programme. It can be argued, however, that it was the trojan horse for the transition of third world countries like Ghana from authoritarian military despotism to democratisation. Policy discourses from then tilted heavily towards deregulation, privatisation and marketisation albeit appreciably soothed with social justice and equity clamours and accomplishments.

### **Institutionalisation: The creation of buffer agencies**

The creation of buffer agencies in Ghana's tertiary education system ought to be situated within the context of the evolution of the quality movement in higher education within the global historical and political milieu especially from the 1980s.

Internationalisation of quality, as a means of production tool, had increasingly been pursued by think tanks in centre countries in the 1980s such as the International Standards Organisation ([ISO] 9000, 1987) and the British Standards Institute ([BSI] 5750, 1979), and accepted by the European Community as its quality standards (Kenny, 2006). That had a cascading effect on the higher education sector. The global focus on quality in higher education was prompted by a gamut of competing factors: control of higher education politically, growth in student enrolments/massification and their increasing manifold expectations and the control of the higher education sector financially (Mertova et al., 2010). Governments resorted to quality monitoring using performance indicators or benchmarks to address the aforementioned factors (Kenny, 2006).

Quality assurance in higher education is not a novelty. The traditional approach of universities to quality was internally based on the notion of excellence by departments or units. It was not characterised by control and monitoring mechanisms because it was an anathema to institutional autonomy (Harvey, 1997; Kenny, 2006). External quality assurance in higher education, as a global

phenomenon, originated in the 1980s and expanded rapidly in the 1990s with the fall of Communism in Eastern and Central Europe (Woodhouse, 2004) and the adoption of benchmarking (the American version of quality standards) in American higher education. Harvey (1997) argues that rather than emphasising on enhancement, the dominant focus on accountability was disguised. It can be concluded that it was an era when the distrust of the institutional self-regulation of higher education institutions by government was at its peak.

One of the corollaries of the neoliberally triggered and inspired tertiary education reforms was the creation of two institutions in 1993: the National Accreditation Board and the National Council for Tertiary Education, which in 2021 were merged to become the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission. As stated earlier, the sector had been expanded and there was a pressing need to regulate and assure its quality. The National Accreditation Board (emanating from PNDC Law 317, 1993) and the National Council for Tertiary Education (emanating from Act 454 of 1993) were created for the regulation of and oversight in quality and policy of tertiary education in Ghana, respectively, (Manuh et al., 2007; Tanko et al., 2017).

The National Accreditation Board initiated vital quality interventions and instruments including institutional and programme accreditation, affiliation of newly established institutions to supervisory institutions, academic audits, reviews that are cyclical, reaccreditation and institutional charter (Alabi et al., 2018). These were geared towards ensuring that programmes and institutions were consonant to the national standards through the evaluation of their processes and outcomes. After almost 3 decades of relating with tertiary education institutions in Ghana, the National Accreditation Board further directed them to establishing quality assurance outfits as means to internally assure quality based on its national guidelines of accreditation. Alabi et al. (2018) remark that the guidelines to assist the institutions establish such outfits lacked clarity, engendering challenges on their institutionalisation. Nevertheless, the extant quality assurance units in the institutions, at least most of them, and associated policies, aligned to the national accreditation standards are testament to the relative improvement in the National Accreditation Board's efforts and indeed the state's arms-length evaluative means to assure quality in the sector.

The National Accreditation Board, now part of the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, has been undertaking accreditation and reaccreditation of tertiary education institutions and their programmes; chartering institutions that satisfy requirements and so forth. As part of its mandate, it periodically publishes on its website and in media outlets accredited and unaccredited institutions and advises the public from patronising the latter. In its evolution, the National Accreditation Board has had collision courses with some foreign tertiary education institutions and their local partners over the administration of their operations based on the values of the foreign institutions. A typical example is the National Accreditation Board in 2010 urging Ashesi University, a private Ghanaian university, to cease its Honour System which required no invigilators in its examinations, based on its conviction that the integrity of the examinations could not be enhanced with the Honour System. Emulating the Honour System of Princeton and Dartmouth College, Ashesi prided itself with this policy based on the belief that the Honour system rather prompts students to operate in integrity and hold each other accountable (Adu, 2010). The National Accreditation Board insisted that Ashesi conforms to the examination policy of utilising invigilators in examinations. This development is indicative of the conflicts between global and local values of tertiary education as globalisation paves way for such interfaces between local and international institutions.

The National Council for Tertiary Education, also part of Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, is tasked with the financial steering of tertiary education institutions, policy creation and development of the tertiary education sector and advising of the Ministry of Education on tertiary

education matters. The influence of globalisation in financing and consequently in budgeting is discussed in detail in the next two sections.

## Financing dynamics

The financing landscape of the tertiary education system of Ghana historically and contemporaneously depicts an ebbing but still dominant grasp of the state on the sector. The annual recurrent cost per student in tertiary education in Ghana in 1969 was \$3800 (Williams, 1974) but had reduced substantially by 2015 to \$1952.49<sup>3</sup> (MOE, 2018). Tertiary education occupied slightly over 17% of government's recurrent budget in 1991 (Berk, 1992). The portion of the allocation to tertiary education out of government budget for education increased to 19.1% in 2013 (Newman and Duwiejua, 2015) but slumped to 18% the following year (World Bank, 2022). In 2017, it had increased to 22.5% (ESRP, 2018). The government expenditure per student at the tertiary level as a percentage of GDP was 298.8% in 2005 and 55.5% in 2014 (UNESCO Institute of Statistics [UIS], 2022). Rising tertiary education costs and dwindling public expenditure evidenced in the gamut of funding gaps from 2011 to 2015 was between 39.7% and 41% (Newman and Duwiejua, 2015).

Higher education in Ghana has been fully footed by government from independence until the 1990s. In the 1980s, public funding of the sector was in dire straits due to expansion of student enrolments in the universities, putting a toll on facilities which had not been expanded to meet the growing student populations, fiscal and economic mismanagement and political instabilities due to military putsches (Bondzie, 2020; Budu and Quashigah, 2013; Manuh et al., 2007).

The government therefore pursued the Structural Adjustment Programme/Economic Recovery Programme which was aimed at inducing financial efficiency in the government funding. The tertiary education reforms of 1991 were spurred by the appointment of the University Rationalisation Committee to make recommendations as rostrums for the reforms. With respect to financing, the University Rationalisation Committee recommended free tuition given to all local students, student maintenance must be commensurate with national resources and priorities, payment of a uniform maintenance fee for student recreational facilities, food, accommodation and eligibility of access to loans to cover maintenance charges to be defrayed after graduation, with the granting of full scholarships to exceptional students (University Rationalisation Committee, 1988).

Despite the somewhat Keynesian bent of the University Rationalisation Committee's funding recommendations, the Structural Adjustment Programme/Economic Recovery Programme and the sector reforms, which were not mutually exclusive, was believed to have been the precursors to private funding in tertiary education (Bondzie, 2020). Poku et al. (2013) in a nuanced way asserted that the Structural Adjustment Programme/Economic Recovery Programme resulted in plummeting state investments in higher education putting pressure on academic facilities that needed to be expanded to facilitate access thereby making non-governmental funding in the sector imperative. Such neoliberal reforms are meant to reduce government funding (Munene, 2008; Varghese, 2006) and replace the shortfall with private sector funding to induce efficiency (Girdwood, 1999).

Privatisation in funding tertiary education in Ghana did not only entail the liberalisation of the sector characterised by the establishment of private tertiary education institutions but the partnership of the state in funding the sector with stakeholders. In 1997, the government under the Akosombo Accord introduced the cost-sharing policy where it was to finance 70% of the sector, with parents/students, the tertiary education institutions and philanthropies catering for 10% each (Manuh et al., 2007). Cost sharing is a financial arrangement in which consumers (parents, students, etc.) share in the cost of services in the form of deductibles, coinsurance and co-payments (Johnstone, 2003, 2006). It was introduced in hitherto fee-free countries characterised by dwindling public investments in

higher/tertiary education and increase in tuition and other fees in hitherto fee-free countries (Acquah, 2021; Marcucci et al., 2008). The cost-sharing policy in Ghana's tertiary education, composed of privatising university accommodation and meals and surcharging academic user-fees representing student's co-responsibility in financing higher education. These were introduced in 1998 in response to the introduction of the policy by government in the preceding year (Bondzie, 2020).

The tertiary education institutions were to have an instrumental role in the determination of their fees and charges. This reached a consummation in 2009 when the Fees and Charges Act 2009 (Act 793) was passed. The Act mandates public tertiary institutional heads to submit for consideration and approval to Parliament their proposed fees and charges. The public universities were allowed to charge full fees for students who ideally meet the 6–24 grade bracket but did not meet the cut-off point of the university for admissions. The National Council for Tertiary Education gave a limit of 5% of the admission numbers. However, universities in Ghana often exceed the limit of 5% of their admissions of fee-paying students given them by the National Council for Tertiary Education. The University of Ghana, for example, exceeded the limit four-fold in 2008 (Anyan, 2009).

Regarding public tertiary education institutions, the government discretionary allocation, the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund)<sup>4</sup> (set up by government by an Act of Parliament) and internally generated revenues (IGRs) accounted for 15%, 34% and 51%, respectively, in 2017 (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2018a; 2018b). In the University of Ghana, for example, academic fees (or tuition) and other student charges accounted for 17.4% of its revenue, while government subvention and grants, research grants and contracts and revenue from other exchange transactions were 46.8%, 22.8% and 11.5%, respectively, (University of Ghana Annual Report, 2021). Tuition fees relative to subsidised tuition paying students and full fee-paying students in the public tertiary education institutions especially the big ones from 2013 to 2018 largely flattened. Tables 1 and 2 provide data for the University of Ghana (UG) and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), the largest universities in Ghana. As seen from the tables, the percentage of full fee-paying students from 2013 to 2016 increased but nose-dived in the subsequent 2 years in the University of Ghana. For Kwame University of Science and Technology, the percentage increased from 2013 to 2015 but slumped from 2016 to 2018.

Tuition is a major source of funding for private tertiary education institutions in Ghana: it accounts for 95% of their revenue and the remaining 5% is obtained from other external sources (Twene, 2014). Students in such institutions pay their fees upfront while most of the fee-paying undergraduate students in the publicly funded universities pay their fees under the umbrella of the dual track tuition fee policy which was introduced to enhance the financial sustenance of Ghana's tertiary education system (Anyan, 2009). Dual track tuition policies are characterised by a highly restricted, 'merit-based entry to free or very low-cost higher education, with other applicants not so admitted permitted entry on a fee-paying basis' (Marcucci et al., 2008, p.2).

Another component of the cost-sharing policy is the students loan scheme. The very first time a students' loan policy was introduced in Ghana was in 1971, albeit ephemerally. University students had to pay boarding and lodging fees with the automatic withdrawal of scholarships (Williams, 1974). In 1988, another loan scheme was initiated to be administered by the Social Security and National Insurance Trust. In 2015, the Student Loan Trust Fund was created out of an Act of Parliament (the Students Loan Trust Fund Act 2011, Act 820). It replaced the Social Security and National Insurance Trust Loans scheme due to inefficiencies in loan recovery, frustrations in the procedures for accessing the loans with the resultant low access to the loans and high subsidies (Obeng, 2019). With respect to Student Loan Trust Fund, coverage increased from 11,111 beneficiaries in 2006/2007 to 31,301 beneficiaries in 2016/17 (ESRP Report, 2018). The Student Loan

**Table 1.** Admission statistics of regular non-tuition-fee-paying and full fee-paying students in Ghana: University of Ghana (UG), Legon, Accra.

Academic year	Overall total students admitted	Regular students (tuition-free)		Full fee-paying category (local and international)	
		Number	%	Number	%
2013/14	21,323	18,536	86.9	2787	13.1
2014/15	20,220	17,139	84.8	3081	15.2
2015/16	20,243	17,088	84.4	3155	15.6
2016/17	25,863	23,121	89.4	2742	11.9
2017/18	27,901	24,953	89.4	2948	10.6
Total Average	23,110	20,167.4	87.0	2942.6	13.3

Source: Bondzie's (2020) analysis based on Statistics data obtained from Institutional Research and Planning Office (IRPO) Unit, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra.

**Table 2.** Admission statistics of regular non-tuition-fee-paying and full fee-paying students in Ghana: KNUST, Kumasi.

Academic Year	Overall total students admitted	Regular students (tuition-free)		Full fee-paying category (local and international)	
		Number	%	Number	%
2013/14	23,572	17,069	72.4	6503	27.6
2014/15	18,080	12,046	66.6	6034	33.4
2015/16	—	—	—	—	—
2016/17	21,534	16,601	77.1	4933	22.9
2017/18	36,231	30,417	84.0	5814	16.0
Total Average	24,854.3	19,033.3	75.0	5821.0	25.0

Source: Bondzie's (2020) analysis based on Statistics data obtained from Basic Statistics, Quality Assurance and Planning Unit, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology (KNUST), Kumasi.

Trust Fund, notwithstanding, is beset with arduous challenges especially with respect to the delay in the disbursement of loan funds which stifles the lives of students on campuses (Citinewsroom, 2022).

The resultant effect of the shift to the right in terms of the tertiary education policy, besides opening the floodgates of privatisation, can be viewed from the state's fiscal allocation to the publicly funded institutions. The public expenditure on public tertiary education as a percentage of total expenditure in education plummeted from 89.6% in 2004 to 77.3% in 2014 (UIS, 2022). This corresponds to the increasing proportion of Internally Generated Resources in relation to total revenue on the institutions in the sector from 27% in 2003 to 35% in 2007 and 43.5% in 2009 (Bailey et al., 2011). It rose to 51% in 2017 (ESRP, 2018). This evinces the institutions becoming entrepreneurial and thus, drifting towards creating and maximising non-traditional income streams while grappling with dwindling public investments (Clark, 1998). It is noteworthy that, tertiary education institutions in Ghana are situated in a quasi-market fostered by a policy of marketisation,

operating under a competitive market which is somewhat doubtful, within inevitable governmental regulations (Bertolin, 2011; Willis and Taylor (2014)).

## Norm-based budgeting

At the onset of the reforms, prior to the creation of the National Accreditation Board and National Council for Tertiary Education, the Ministry of Education and Culture was in charge for policy coordination and quality assurance of the higher education sector. In perspective the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) set up in 1969 was abolished under the Provisional National Defence Council Law 42 of 1983 to the chagrin of the universities. They loathed the direct control over by the government (Girdwood, 1999) and were reminiscent of the collision course between governments and universities in Ghana in the 1960s to the 1970s (Sawyer, 1994).

Before the reforms, the budget allocation was not based on or linked to the volume of operations of the tertiary education institutions. The government then decided to link funding to programmes and develop norms that would 'delineate costs based on the student as the unit of production to foster efficiency' (Newman et al., 2013, p. 275). The norms were based on the University Rationalisation Committee's general proposal of administrative, financial and staffing norms which were introduced in 1991. Girdwood (1999) explains that after the initial piloting they had not been reviewed by 1999. Furthermore, institutional calculations for traditional student-staff ratios that were utilised were rigid and inconsequential in external conditions.

In allocating money from the Ministry of Education, the National Council for Tertiary Education resorted to three mechanisms: historical incremental budgeting hinged on student enrolment numbers (annual allocations based on preceding year's allocation with slight variations; bidding and bargaining (based on annual budgetary demands, a justification for funding is made); and discretion (the total allocation of money received from the Ministry of Finance to the education sector represents the final decision on the amount of money allocated to the tertiary education sector) (Newman and Duwiejua, 2015). The funding mechanisms are devoid of performance indicators or pre-determined outcomes. Although norm-based budgeting has been in place for years, Newman et al. (2013) argues that it has been abandoned. The *a priori* funding systems are strongly extant in Ghana's tertiary education system as they are only linked to student numbers as inputs. Regardless of the existence of norms, financing is not linked to outputs or performance, and as such, it is a disincentive for public policy implementation, reform or innovation (Girdwood, 1999).

Newman and Duwiejua (2015) recommend a couple of mechanisms to induce *aposteriori* or output funding in the sector. First, a diversified financing approach in Ghana's tertiary education system made up of four funding approaches complementing the funding formula is used in allocating base grants to higher education institutions in Ghana: institutional factor grants, earmarked grants, performance funding and research grants. They also call for increased private funding for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, increase in fees of fee-paying students and enrolment quota of foreign students as well as full fees for foreign students, fees charged to inflationary rate and so forth. While this is a clear shift to full scale privatisation of funding championed by neoliberalism, it must be noted that the consequences to the access and capacity of domestic students would be dire in a milieu where the gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education for 2019 was 17.2% with strident socio-cultural and economic disparities (Aryeetey and Kanbur, 2017; Atuahene and Owusu-Ansah, 2013; Sawyer, 1994). The richest fifth of the population are disproportionately beneficiaries of tertiary education (Atuahene and Owusu-Ansah, 2013).

## Segments of privatisation and marketisation

The University Rationalisation Committee recommended the expansion of the sector to surmount some of the challenges the sector faced ([University Rationalisation Committee, 1988](#)). The reforms birthed private higher education in Ghana which today dominates the tertiary education landscape. The Ghana Tertiary Education Commission as at 2021 reported that Ghana's tertiary education system is made up of a motley of tertiary education institutions: 15 public universities, 10 public technical universities, 7 public degree awarding and professional institutions, 46 public colleges of education, 57 public nursing training colleges, seven chartered tertiary education institutions, 109 private tertiary education institutions offering Higher National Diploma (HND)/degree programs, one private polytechnic, 4 private colleges of education, 23 private nursing training colleges, 2 distance learning institutions, 4 colleges of agriculture, 1 regionally owned tertiary education institution, 5 registered foreign institutions and 6 tutorial colleges. In terms of enrolment, while private enrolment occupies 54% in terms of institutional makeup, it accounts for 16% of total enrolment [Education Strategic Plan (ESP), 2020]. However, the public tertiary education institutions dominate when it comes to enrolment. What is challenging now is the capacity of the resource-challenged Ghana Tertiary Education Commission to manage the expansion of the private sector in tertiary education ([Armah, 2022](#)), making it difficult for the sector to market its potential ([Anyam, 2017](#)).

Nonetheless, the existential position of private tertiary education institutions has been cemented. The 1992 Constitution consummates the privatisation and marketisation of (tertiary) education in Ghana. The 2nd section of the 25th Article of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana stipulates:

Every person shall have the right, at this own expense, to establish and maintain a private school or schools at all levels and such categories and in accordance with such conditions as may be prescribed by law.

The law (aforementioned in the quote) refers to Education Act, 2008, Act 778. Article 23(1) which stipulates that:

A person or an institution may establish, manage and operate a private educational institution in an accordance with the guidelines issued, and the Regulations made in that behalf, by the Minister, in consultation with the Education Service Council or the National Accreditation Board.

Higher education institutions have adapted in response to the changes in the external environment manifested in World Bank-engineered public sector reforms geared towards making public organisations efficient and effective (Brett, 1994; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004 cited in [Bisaso, 2010](#)). This development was also consonant to the NPM that was in vogue from the 1980s ([Intsiful and Maassen, 2017](#)). The implication of the neoliberal, laissez-faire drift of Ghana's tertiary education reforms triggered by the Structural Adjustment Programme/Economic Recovery Programme was that all the institutions especially the publicly funded ones, accustomed to full benefaction by the state, were compelled to be entrepreneurial and innovative. This was congruent to the state's ebbing investments by instrumentalising the institutions to be entrepreneurial and innovative in generating their own incomes ([Clark, 1998](#)). The implication of such a development was that the institutions were to augment their internally generated revenue capacities and adopt cultures of the private sector. In this end, tertiary education institutions including the state funded ones are profit-making

business ventures (Obeng, 2019). One major area they resorted to is the dependence on tuition (already discussed in the previous section), which is described in detail in the section of funding. Private tertiary education institutions depend wholly or preponderantly on tuition revenue, which hinges on enrolments. They have been vigorously undertaking enrolment drives aimed at attracting students, characteristic of private universities globally (Kaneko, 1992). The public and private universities have strangleholds in enrolments. Nonetheless, the demand and pressure for them to be innovative in response to access and fiscal challenges have spurred them to embrace and prioritise distance learning and sandwich programmes for non-traditional students. Majority of such students are in the working class.

Concerning distance learning, enrolments have generally expanded in the sectors as the institutions have set up learning centres in the regions to provide tertiary education as they augment their access and revenue capacities. As seen in the Tables 3 and 4, the University of Ghana, distance learning enrolments consistently increased from 2012 to 2017 while with respect to the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, enrolment decreased from 2014 to 2017 but increased in 2018.

## Research as a Cardinal Revenue Generating Valve

Research has become the cardinal function of tertiary education institutions because of its utility in transforming society as well as generating funds, which are needed in an era of plummeting public investments in tertiary education. Research has become so important such that research output (publications, winning grants and valorisation of research) is a major indicator in the methodologies of university rankings (Odorika and Lloyd, 2014).

Universities strive to augment their research capacities, collaborations, partnerships and activities so that they feature well in university rankings. The Shanghai Jiao Tong University Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), the Quacquarelli Symonds' QS World University rankings, and the Times Higher Education World University rankings have become standards many universities look up to in terms of measuring and assessing their performance. In the global university rankings, African universities do not fare well in the rankings (Cardoso, 2019). Ghanaian universities hardly feature in the top 10 rankings of African universities except in 2016 when the University of Ghana occupied the 7th position in the Times Higher Education Africa Rankings.

**Table 3.** Annual enrolment indicators of innovative mode of educational delivery by regular, distance learning and sandwich in public universities in Ghana.

Academic year	Total	Regular students (including tuition-fee-paying)	% Regular	Distance learning (DL)	% DL	Sandwich (S)	% S
2012/13	199,455	128,118	64.2	59,539	29.9	11,798	5.9
2013/14	221,948	138,419	62.4	66,653	30.0	16,879	7.6
2014/15	231,006	147,180	63.7	66,401	28.7	17,425	7.5
2015/16	219,596	155,402	70.8	49,261	22.4	14,933	6.8
2016/17	258,669	167,736	64.8	80,119	31.0	10,814	4.2
Percentage Annual Average			65.2		28.4		6.3

Source: Bondzie's (2020) based on NCTE Annual Enrolment Data for Higher Education.

**Table 4.** Information on applications and admissions into the institute of distance learning (IDL), KNUST, Kumasi (2012/13–2017/18 academic years).

Academic year	Applications and admissions			% Admitted into DL based on total admissions
	Applied	Admitted	% Admitted	
2012/13	5101	5101	100	24.4
2013/14	5626	4340	77.1	18.4
2014/15	4118	2971	72.2	16.4
2016/17	3827	2950	77.1	13.7
2017/18	6437	5380	83.6	14.8
Total Average	5021.8	4148.4	82	17.5

Source: [Bondzie's \(2020\)](#) analysis based on Basic Statistics Documents (2013–2018) obtained from Quality Assurance and Planning Unit, KNUST, Accra.

Academics have been undertaking research in various disciplines, winning grants from international development agencies, multinational agencies (MNCs), international research funders, opulent and influential research-intensive universities and domestic and international governments. Although some universities and academics have gained substantial income and advancement in their careers through promotions from such research activities, the largest funders have been foreign-based with their priorities not always in consonance with national exigencies. Researchers, by virtue of research funders, are steered to satiate international research priorities of centre countries and their agencies ([Sarpong et al., 2020](#)).

## University-Industry Collaborations

The most common form of university-industry collaboration in Ghana is in the area of provision of internship and attachment opportunities. Another type of such collaborations is the compulsory National Service Scheme administered by the National Service Secretariat providing students with on-the-job training and special collaborations between some universities and development partners such as the World Bank, United Nations (UN), United Nations Agency for International Development (USAID) and so forth on research projects ([Mamudu and Hymore, 2016](#)). There have been scanty long term strategic collaborations with industry geared towards research, knowledge transfers and innovative start-up businesses.

In the area of technology transfer, breakthroughs, innovations and inventions, albeit very few have fetched universities and income. In the area of technology transfer, the Technology Consultancy Centre (TCC) set up in 1972 but absorbed by the College of Engineering in KNUST in 2012 is noteworthy. The [UNESCO Science Report News \(2021, para. 3–5\)](#), reports:

students have been able to access equipment at KNUST for practical training, such as machine shops for prototyping and fabrication, laboratories, ceramic kilns and ovens, cooking stoves and water filters. As a national centre, it has also developed training manuals and programmes for advanced manufacturing technologies, including 3D printing and plasma technologies. The center has also undertaken policy advocacy. It has recommended establishing an automotive manufacturing industry, for instance, and intensifying collaboration between academia, industry and the government sector through the establishment of a technology park that was supported by Ghana's National Development Planning Commission.

For the private universities, such partnerships have not delved in technology transfer, breakthroughs, innovations and inventions. Ashesi University's strategic partnerships with international universities and organisations such as General Electric (GE), focussing on curriculum development, exchange programmes, seminars and training programmes, is worthy of note. The Triple Helix model which conjoins government, academia and industry in producing innovation to society and economy is very weak in Ghana.

## Responses among Ghanaian public universities to globalisation and neoliberalism

The last 3 decades within the Ghanaian higher education landscape have showcased interesting happenings. Amongst them are the seemingly changing relationship with respect to the state and public universities (Gyamera and Burke, 2018). This stems from the fact that the government through, for example, the UG Act, 2010 has granted the University of Ghana institutional autonomy. This means that the University of Ghana (and public universities) have the right to decide on their own and design their own strategic policies and plans with limited interference from the government. The only aspect for which the government is taking responsibility is emoluments of staff of these public universities (Manuh et al., 2007). Besides, the state caters for academic staff research and book allowances which are often characterised with delays (Anyan, 2009). As a result of this relative institutional autonomy granted to most public universities in Ghana, some New Public Management measures have been introduced with the aim of enhancing efficiency, effectiveness and judicious use of resources (Intsiful and Maassen, 2017). Similar to the argument made by Desjardins (2013), it has been argued that initially the government was very 'generous' in giving out everything for the public universities (Anyan, 2009).

Again, universities started engaging in diversifying their income streams and activities. Within the current dispensation, most positions and officeholders are based on performance management. The position of the Vice-Chancellor (VC) is quite synonymous to a 'Chief Executive Officer' of a business-like organisation. A brief process or outline of the recruitment of a VC is such that a Search Committee is established together with the University Council. Suitable applicants who apply must demonstrate a feasible and clear strategy and indicate how to generate funds to carry out those mandates. The term is for 4 years and is renewable for another term based on satisfactory performance. The same process pertains to Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Provosts, Deans and Directors of Institutes (Effah and Mensa-Bonsu, 2001). Furthermore, most public universities have become quite enterprising and entrepreneurial in their academic core activities (Gyamera and Burke, 2018).

## Conclusion

From the epoch of 1980s when the globe tilted towards the arena of neoliberalism and the market, structural adjustment reforms geared towards efficiency, accountability and relevance in the public sector. Reforms were adopted impinging on tertiary education systems in developing countries such as Ghana (Manuh et al., 2007; Osei-Tutu, 2021; Sawyer, 2004). The reforms triggered reforms in tertiary education, with the government ostensibly steering the sector through buffer agencies in an arms-length manner. The shades of privatisation in institutional participation and financing etched constitutionally were to satiate public demands for excellence and quality in the sector (Bondzie, 2020). The manifold institutions were compelled to tread on the path of entrepreneurialism and innovation through research, fee policies and collaborations with other vital stakeholders. Ghana's

system of tertiary education while embracing the market, the level of marketisation and deregulation is appreciably low. Thus, tertiary education institutions are still dominantly moulded by the state.

The paper has a far-reaching implication for the state of tertiary education in Ghana within the context of the ubiquitous phenomenon of globalisation. Some tertiary education structures were reorganised, others were newly created. New governance and funding modalities introduced by the state with the aim of pushing the sector to the market have made the institutions attempt to be financially innovative in research. They have also redefined their relationships with external stakeholders, especially industry.

One must note that marketisation, deregulation and privatisation must be deepened to offset the unreliably ebbing public investment in the sector. The reality of disparities in access and social justice must however not be ignored. The state thus becomes an important lever in ensuring that the two sets of seemingly antithetical forces are ever present and influential in steering tertiary education in Ghana to meet its varied stakeholder expectations. The state ought to coagulate its empowerment of the buffer agencies in their oversight functions through resource generation and capacity building. The agencies must rigorously undertake their evaluative functions and the institutions must be responsive in their functions of transmitting, generating and applying knowledge to cater for local, national and international demands.

Stakeholders in Ghana's tertiary education sector must contribute to the adherence and compliance of regulatory frameworks in the sector. The buffer agencies ought to periodically evaluate the frameworks and push for amendments in consonance to global and national trends. More so, there should be a common understanding and resolve to deal with the inadequacies and failures of the market, that is, ensuring that the disparities in the sector are nipped in the bud.

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## Notes

1. Tertiary education and higher education are used interchangeably in the context of Ghana where the former was officially used to refer to all postsecondary education institutions after the reforms while the latter pertains solely to universities.
2. The University of Ghana, the University of Science and Technology now the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and the University of Cape Coast.

3. Amount quoted in Ghana Cedis was 7439 GHS. The conversion was done based on the average dollar to cedi exchange rate for 2015, which was 3.81 GHS.
4. The GETFund was established to support educational institutions by providing financial resources, providing assistance to students who are genuinely needy and academically talented, generating funds to support the student loan scheme and fiscally supporting research and development (Atuahene, 2015).

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