



**GHANA ACADEMY
OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

Development and Growth of Private Universities

Implications for Access, Equity and Sustainability

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Outline



**GHANA ACADEMY
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- Introduction and Background
- Historical Development and Growth in Private Universities
- Current Landscape in Private Higher Education Institutions
- Role in Expanding Access and Promoting Equity and Sustainability
- Role in Contributing to Economic and Social Development
- Challenges
- Future Prospects of Private Institutions
- Key Recommendations for Policy and Practice
- Conclusion



Introduction and Background

- The introduction of private universities in the late 20th century saw the most noteworthy changes in higher education in Ghana
 - 1979 – establishment of Valley View University
 - To the surge in private Higher Educations Institutes (HEIs) in the late 1990s to early 2000s.



Introduction and Background

- Liberalization policy of the 1980s
- Suggestion from the University Rationalization Committee (1983-1987)
- Increased demand for tertiary education that public institutions were unable to meet
- As well as education reforms in the mid 1990's led to the birth and surge of private institutions in Ghana
 - Increase quality in tertiary education
 - Bridge the gap in infrastructure and access
 - Groom young people to become top-notch scientists and business entrepreneurs through specialized programmes and curricula designed to appeal to industry



Introduction and Background

- There was an expectation that private universities will make public universities unattractive to those who desired to have a more personalized learning environment and development, and aspire for more academic excellence.
- This expectation boosted the popularity of private universities among the teeming youths in the early 2000s, becoming the preferred choices for the children and wards of some of the elite and middle-class Ghanaian
- The image of private universities reached its plenitude when some received high ratings by internationally renowned assessors e.g. Valley View and Ashesi - world class universities



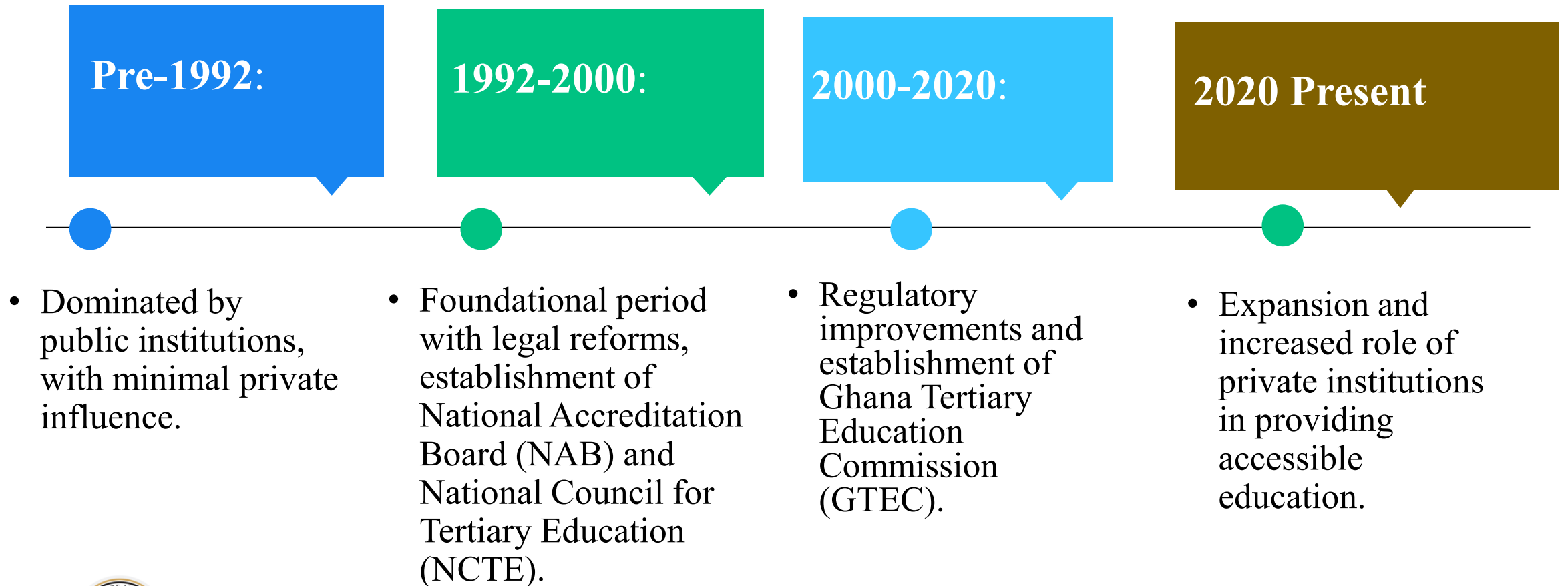
Introduction and Background

- Some studies have documented the challenges faced by private universities particularly around financial sustainability, infrastructural challenges, limited faculty while still keeping educational standards and regulatory requirements
- Their survival and resilience has been attributed to their affiliation with public universities
- Others have contended that the operational difficulties tend to revolve around the founders and their small group of financiers.

Aim of the Background Paper: Analyze the development, growth, impact, challenges and future potential of private universities in Ghana.



Historical Evolution of Private Higher Education



Historical Evolution of Higher Education in Ghana

- **Foundations in Colonial Era:**

- Initial higher education focused on training for colonial administration.
- 1948: University College of the Gold Coast (now University of Ghana) established with support from the University of London.



- **Post-Independence Expansion (1957-1980s):**

- Kwame Nkrumah's push for an Africanized, technically-focused education to drive industrialization led to the creation of Kumasi College of Technology which was upgraded into the University of Science and Technology (now KNUST) in 1961, followed by the establishment of University of Cape Coast in 1962
- Shift towards tuition-free public universities to promote access.



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Historical Evolution of Private Higher Education

1980s - 1990s Reforms:

- Economic challenges led to end of free tuition for the three public universities
- Economic Recovery Program (ERP) under Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) opened up higher education sector to private sector participation (in 1987) with the gradual deregulation of public higher education.
- Little uptake of private participation until the education reforms seen in the early 1990's

- 1992 Constitution of Ghana created several regulatory bodies for the higher education sector
- 1993: Establishment of National Accreditation Board (NAB) to regulate and support private institutions, and National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) an advisory body to liaise between government and higher education institutions in Ghana



Historical Evolution of Private Higher Education

Modern Growth of Private Universities (1990s-Present):

- Enabled by 1992 Constitution and demand for specialized programs, the government established a number of public universities across the nation
- At the same time private institutions increased in numbers

- As of January 2020, NAB had accredited over 70 private universities , including
 - Central University, Methodist University, All Nations University College, Catholic University College of Ghana, Islamic University College, Presbyterian University College, Wisconsin University College, Valley View University College and Ashesi University College among others.



Historical Evolution of Higher Education in Ghana

Key Milestones

1 Pre-1992

- 1948: Elliot and Asquith Commissions led to the establishment of University of Ghana
- 1951: Accelerated Development Plan of Education
- 1961: Education Act (to ensure compulsory primary and middle school education for all children of school-going age)
- 1973: Dzobo Committee (Reduced pre-university education to 13 years)
- 1980s: Bretton Woods Institutions (Liberalisation of education and economy)
- 1987: PNDC Reform (Reduced pre-university duration to 12 years)
- 1988: University Rationalisation Committee (Developed a framework for reforming management, academic structure & funding of tertiary education in Ghana.)

2 Post-1992

- 1992: Constitution (Enshrined educational rights)
- 1993: National Accreditation Board (NAB) & National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) formed (NCTE was formed to be a regulatory body to help the government oversee tertiary education while setting guidelines for the institutions. NAB was set up to be an accreditation body that monitored institutions for quality assurance (Utaka, 2008: Armah, 2022))

4 2012–Present

- 2016: Technical Universities Act 2016 (Act 922) (Amended in 2018, the act came to convert qualified polytechnics to Technical Universities)
- 2018: Updated Education Strategic Plan (from 2018-2030)
- 2020: Education Regulatory Bodies Act (NAB & NCTE merge into GTEC)

3 2000-2012: Regulatory Refinements

- 2000: GETFund established (to provide financial support to education at all levels)
- 2003: Education Strategic Plan (2003 - 2015)
- 2007: National Accreditation Board Act
- 2007: Polytechnics Act (Polytechnics became tertiary institutions with academic autonomy)³
- 2012: Colleges of Education Act, 2012 (Act 847) (Elevated teacher training colleges to tertiary status, and designated them as Colleges of Education)



Current Landscape of Private Higher Education

- As of 2024 GTEC has accredited over 140 private tertiary institutions, including universities (12 chartered) and university colleges, polytechnics and colleges of education.

Private Tertiary Institutions Offering HND/Degree Programmes	108
Chartered Private Tertiary Institution	12
Private Nurses Training College	14
Private Polytechnic	1
Private College of Education	4
Distance Learning Institution	2
Total	141



Current Landscape of Private Higher Education

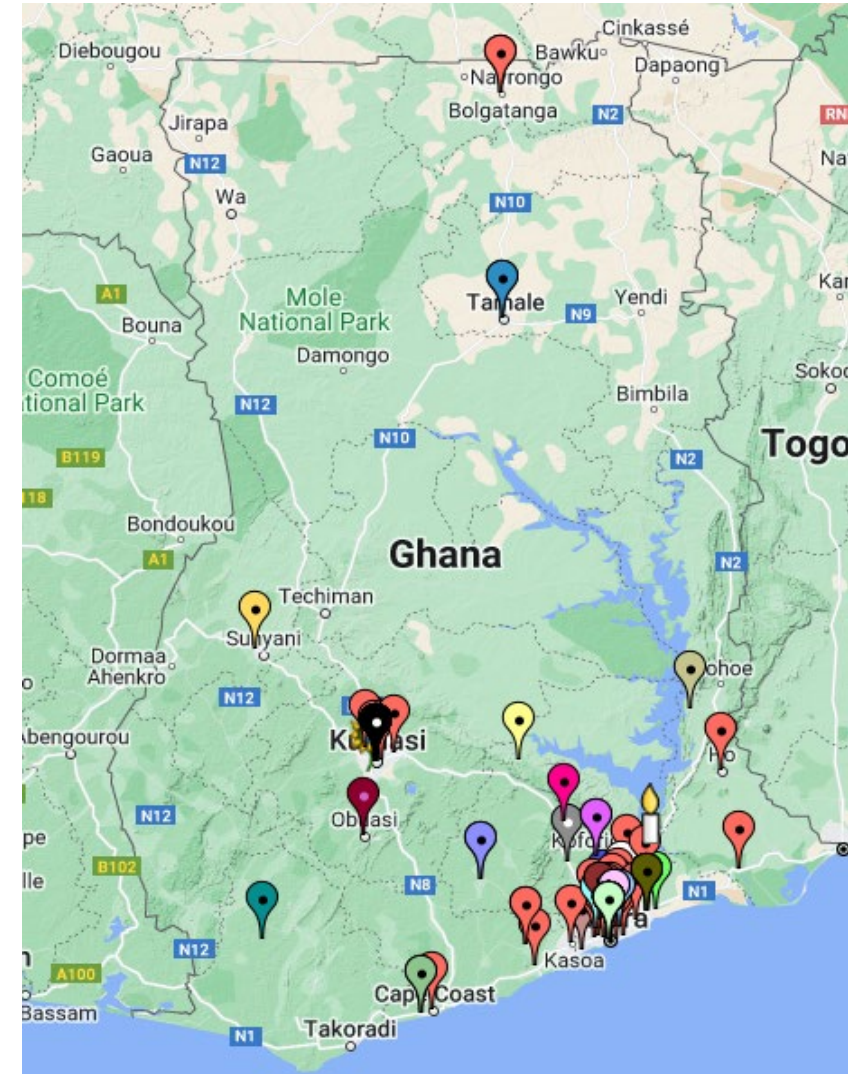
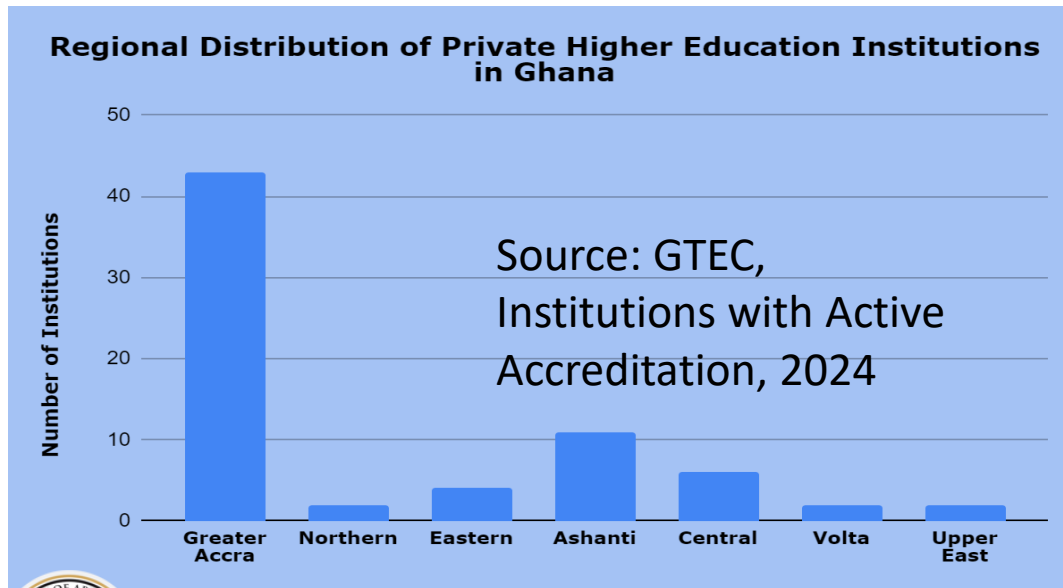
Typologies of Private Universities

- Classification by Ownership
 - Faith Based Institutions (such as Central University, Pentecostal University, Valley View University, Catholic University, Methodist University, All Nations University among others)
 - Private Owned Institutions (Ashesi University, Academic City University College, Radford University College, et al)
- Classification by Business Model
 - For Profit Institutions (e.g. Lancaster University Ghana, Radford University College, Knutsford University College, Academic City University College, African University College of Communications)
 - Not for Profit Institutions (e.g. Ashesi University, Central University, Pentecost University, faith based institutions to name a few)
- Differentiation
 - Governance and Curriculum often influenced by the founding organization (e.g. religious, private owners)
 - Interdisciplinary programmes more common in private universities
 - Contribution to access and filling gaps in public higher education



Current Landscape of Private Higher Education

- **Distribution:** Predominantly in urban areas, with 50% located in Greater Accra and southern Ghana.
 - Advance Global College (Tamale)
 - Millar Institute For Transdisciplinary And Development Studies (Bolgatanga)



Current Landscape of Private Higher Education

- **Enrolment Trends:**

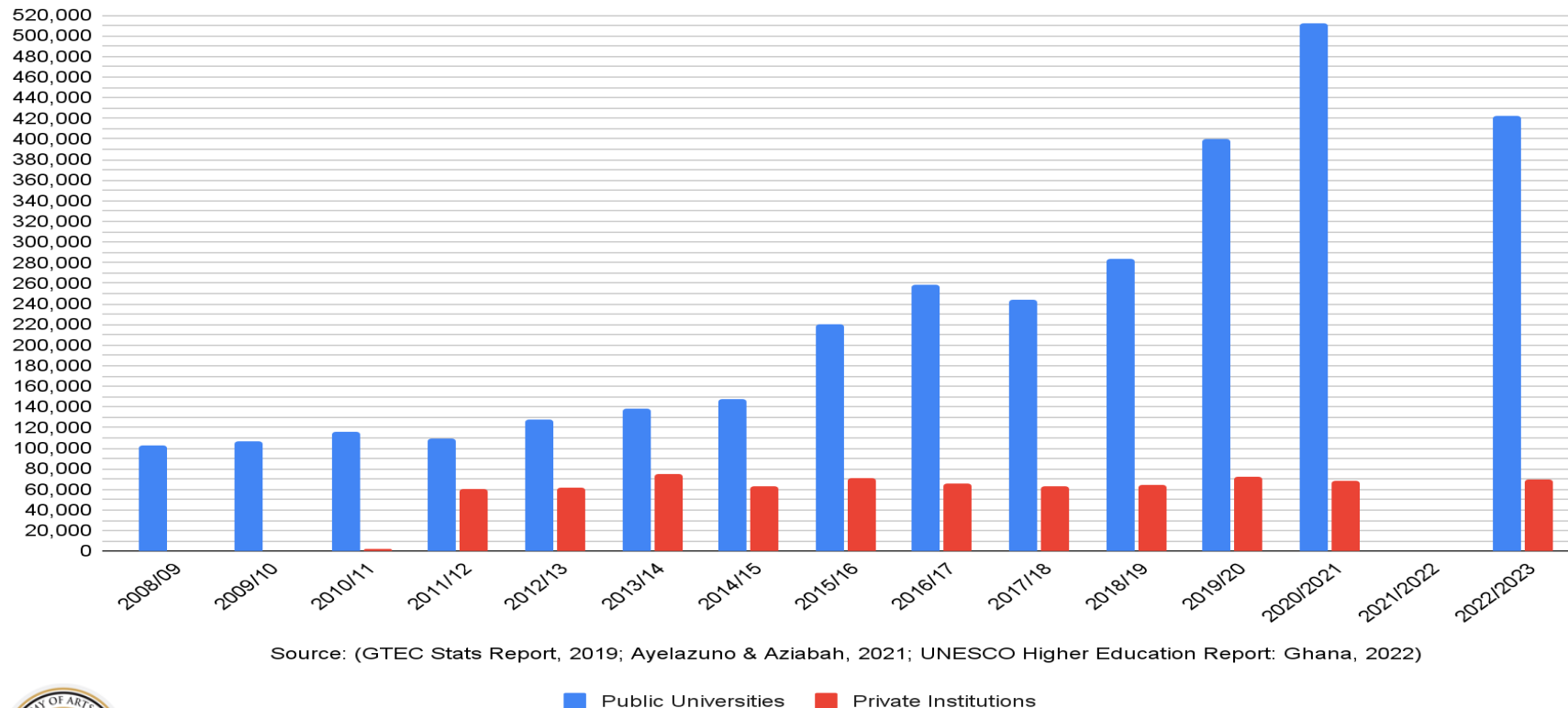
- Increase in the number of private HEIs has not translated into increase in student enrollment
- Apart from the initial uptake in enrollment in 2011/2012, enrollment in private tertiary institutions has been consistent in terms of new entrants
- As of 2023/2024 the total student enrollment for private higher education was at 70,557
- Public institutions have always had higher enrollment numbers
- Significant rise in enrolments, following the graduations of the first beneficiaries of the free SHS policy and the expansion of public offerings to distance education, fee paying options for highly subscribed programmes and establishment of satellite campuses as part of their postCOVID-19 impact recovery.



Current Landscape of Private Higher Education

- 2020/2021 saw the highest disparity between public universities and private institutions, 88% vs 12% of a total enrollment of 580,751 students

Public Universities and Private Institutions (Enrollment Figures)



Enrolment by Gender
(Male to Female ratio)

GTEC Norm	Public HEIs	Private HEIs
50:50	54:46*	43:57

Source: GTEC 2024 for Private HEI and predicted* for Public HEI based on GTEC statistical data 2015-2021



Current Landscape of Private Higher Education

- **Programme offerings**

- Universities offer a diverse range of courses/programmes
- Categories broadly into Science related programmes and Humanities-related programmes
- Although some institutions have made significant contributions to STEM education
 - Academic City's innovative BSc Artificial Intelligence and Robotics Engineering
 - Ashesi University's BSc Mechatronics and Computer Engineering programmes
 - Central University's BSc Physician Assistantship and Doctor of Pharmacy
- Both Private and Public HEIs have been unable to achieve the GTEC norm of 60:40 ratio for Science to Humanities related courses.

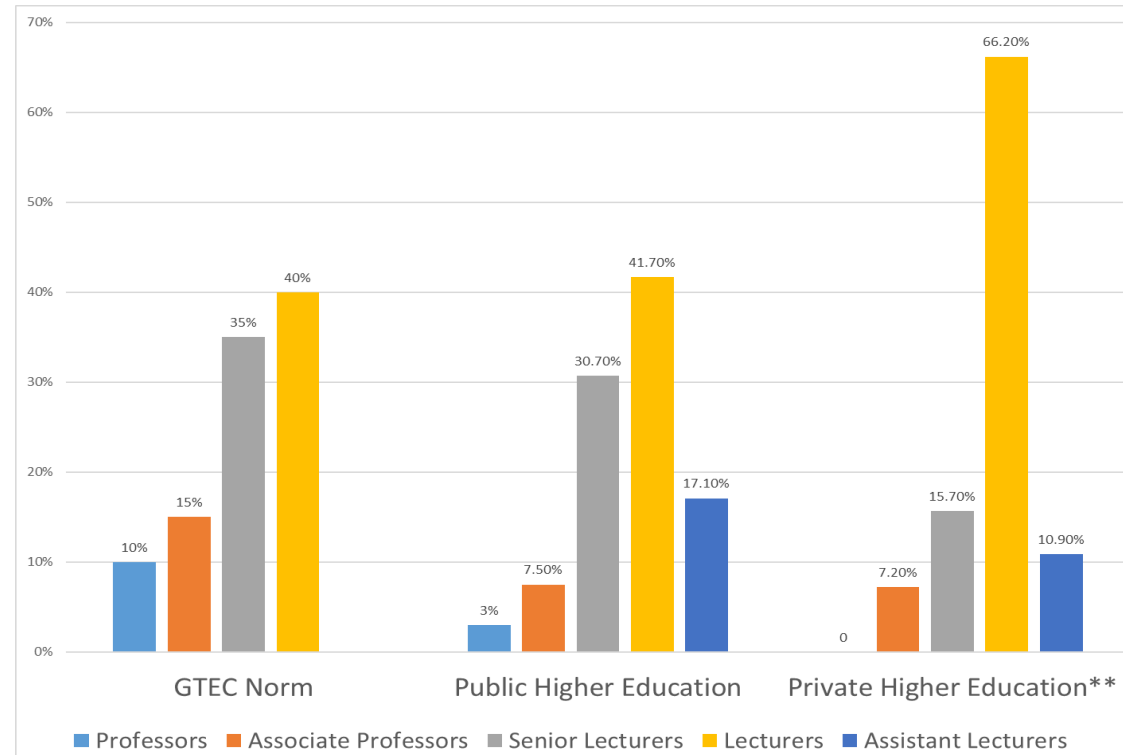
Source: GTEC 2018/2019 Statistical Reports



Current Landscape of Private Higher Education

• Staffing Statistics

- Historically private institutions have been heavily reliant on part-time academic staff due to cost constraints
- Challenge in attracting and retaining high ranking full-time academic staff



Source: GTEC
2018/2019
Statistical Reports



Current Landscape of Private Higher Education

- **Governance Structure**

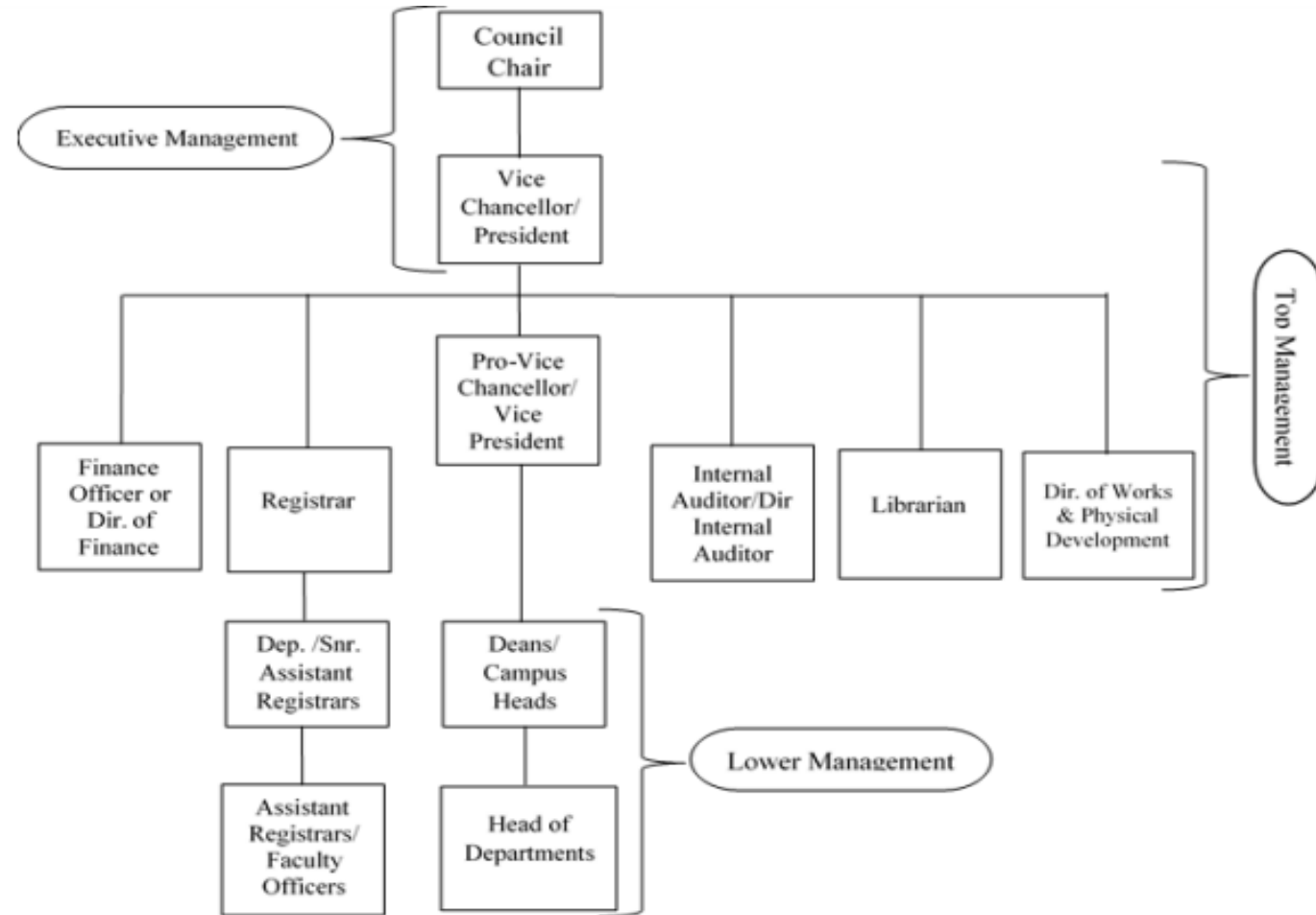
- Internal governance structure of private universities (particularly chartered ones) are similar in structure to the governance structure of public universities, but with a higher percentage representation of the institution's founders or owners on the Governing Council or Boards
- Faith based institutions (such as Valley View University, Methodist University and Pentecost University) have several of the council members representing the church or religious body
- There is a strong external representation (from both academic and industrial backgrounds) appointed in partnerships with the founders



Current Landscape of Private Higher Education

- **Governance Structure**

- Similar to public higher educations, the functions of the governing council are similar
- Unlike public higher education systems some private institutions have no student representation while others do (e.g. Ashesi Board of Directors with no student representatives, Academic City's Governing Council with Student representatives)



Hierarchical Structure of Leadership in private Higher Education Institutions



Current Landscape of Private Higher Education

Business Models and Financial Sustainability

- Primarily tuition-dependent;
 - Limited access to government support means tuition is the primary revenue source, making private institutions financially vulnerable. (e.g. Catholic University 95% funding from tuition)
 - Declines in enrolment due to competition directly impacts financial stability.
- Most faith-based private higher education institutions also receive support from their parent organisations.
 - Others like the Islamic University College Ghana and All Nations University receive donations and grants from abroad to cover close to 50 - 70% of operation costs (Varghese, N.V. et al, 2006).
- Ashesi University has the Ashesi University Foundation, a registered non-profit that spearheads its fundraising to support the school's mission.
- Further, international partnerships with funding agencies and charities such as MasterCard Foundation also support and fund the needs of some private higher education institutions e.g. Ashesi.



Current Landscape of Private Higher Education

Sources of Funding

- In Ghana, the main sources of funding for public higher education institutions include Government grants, GETFund, development and donor partners, internally generated funds and private sector support, (Awotwe et al, 2020).
 - The cost and funding for public higher education institutions is regulated by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, who advises the Ministry of Education on issues of finance.
- Private institutions are heavily reliant tuition and academic user fees.
- Some private higher education institutions receive research funding and participate in donor-funded projects by regional and international organisations as a source of funding beyond tuition revenue.
- Partnerships with industry on multiple projects are also a source of funding for private higher education institutions in Ghana. Some of these partnerships come in terms of scholarships, projects.



Role in Expanding Access and Promoting Equity and Sustainability

- Private universities serve as alternative pathways
 - Increased access for people who otherwise would not have gained admission to public universities, due to limited admissions quota by public universities
 - Evening and weekend classes provide flexibility, supporting working adults and non-traditional students
 - Smaller student to staff ratios
- Impact on Marginalized Groups
 - Private universities see higher enrolment among female students, helping improve gender parity.
 - Targeted scholarship programs for low-income students and female students, though limited in scope.



Role in Expanding Access and Promoting Equity and Sustainability

- Curriculum Innovation
 - More market oriented and future ready programs (e.g. Industrial and Systems Engineering, Artificial Intelligence and Robotics Engineering by Academic City, 1st in sub-Saharan Africa)
 - Strong focus on entrepreneurship training at the core of their curriculum.
- Equity Challenges:
 - The concentration of institutions in urban areas limits access for rural populations.
 - Institutions concentrated in economically advanced southern regions, limiting access for those located in the northern areas
 - High tuition costs present affordability barriers, particularly for lower-income families



Role in Contributing to Economic and Social Development

- Economic Impact:
 - More access to higher education through private institutions means young people get the requisite skills join active workforces.
 - Job creation within universities, through faculty and staff roles, and indirectly in the surrounding communities
 - Partnerships with industry for internships and applied training to meet labor market needs.
 - Employment creation through the practical teaching and training in entrepreneurship hubs and innovation centres (e.g., Academic City's innovation centers).
- Social Impact:
 - Programs focused on ethics, entrepreneurship, and social responsibility. (e.g. Academic City and Ashesi university promotes leaderships and Ethics)
 - Enhanced opportunities for disadvantaged groups, and increase in local community projects and engagement.
 - E.g. Ashesi University's alumni projects impacting local communities (e.g., WACCE, community libraries). Academic City's partnership with Vodafone Foundation to train 50 girls (some with disabilities) in STEM and Waste Recycling



Financial Sustainability and Funding Challenges

- Sustainability Challenges:
 - Competition with public universities for the same crop of students,
 - Higher operation costs due to investment in state of the art laboratories for small class sizes and regulatory costs
 - Economic instability have a direct impact tuition costs
 - Limited scholarship funding restricts access for students without financial means (i.e. low income students), hindering local equity efforts, therefore attracting more and more student from international communities
 - Tuition reliance limits resources for research and faculty development, affecting institutional growth and graduate quality
- Opportunities:
 - Diversification of revenue through alumni donations, partnerships, grants and university-led ventures



Staffing and Faculty Challenges

- Recruitment Challenges:
 - Financial limitations hinder the recruitment of qualified PhD holders; salaries are often uncompetitive.
 - Heavy reliance on part-time and adjunct faculty, affecting teaching consistency and quality.
- Workload and Quality:
 - Over-reliance on part-time staff can negatively impact teaching quality, particularly in research and supervision-heavy courses.
- Opportunities
 - Cost-sharing models for highly specialized faculty across institutions.
 - Incentives for diaspora scholars to teach in Ghana, including tax waivers and reduced bureaucracy



Policy and Regulatory Landscape and Challenges

- Accreditation and Quality Assurance:
 - GTEC oversees quality and accreditation of all private institutions
 - NAB/GTEC mandates affiliation with chartered public institutions before granting full accreditation to private universities. (which comes with its associated affiliation and regulatory fees)
- COVID-19 and Hybrid Learning:
 - Increased hybrid learning demands oversight and quality control to ensure consistency.
- Challenges with Mentorship:
 - Limited capacity of public institutions to provide mentorship to growing numbers of private institutions.
 - Tensions with GTEC over accreditation, disparities between private and public institutions.
 - Perceived stricter enforcement of accreditation requirements on private universities compared to public universities



Future Prospects for Private Universities

- **Creating Niches:** Focus on specialized programs and emerging fields such as AI, cybersecurity and sustainable business practices to meet labor market demands
- **Collaboration Potential:** Opportunities for partnerships with international institutions, industry collaborations for research and funding.
- **Improving Equity:** Expanding regional access through satellite campuses or scholarships targeting underserved regions to improve access.
- **Increase potential to rival top public institutions** with strategic investment in faculty and research capacity



Key Recommendations for Policy and Practice

- **Enhanced Funding Opportunities:**
 - Policies to incentivize private sector investments in education, including tax breaks for donations.
 - Funding framework Reform:
 - expand access to public funds (GETFund) or similar grants for private institutions with accountability metrics
 - Developing a stronger financial aid system (student loans options) for students in private institutions to enhance equity
 - Promote income diversification through alumni engagement and external partnerships



Key Recommendations for Policy and Practice

- **Research and Development Support**

- Providing government-backed grants for research and infrastructure projects
- Partnerships with international organisations to expand research opportunities and facilitate capacitate building
- Encourage government-industry partnerships to support specialized programs and research

- **Faculty Recruitment and Development**

- Implement shared staffing models
- Create incentives for diaspora scholars
- Provide training and development programmes to enhance teaching quality and assist with retention



Key Recommendations for Policy and Practice

- **Policy Reforms**

- Adjustments to enable private institutions' growth without undermining their role in education.
- Emphasis on creating equitable policies that ensure both public and private institutions can thrive without disadvantaging each other
- Amendments to policies for private institutions to access public funding, clearer mentorship frameworks for accreditation



Key Recommendations for Policy and Practice

- **Regulatory Reforms**

- Streamline the accreditation process: reform affiliation requirements
- Develop clearer guidelines for route and application to presidential charter
- Collaborative regulatory models that encourage innovation whilst safeguarding quality standards



Conclusion

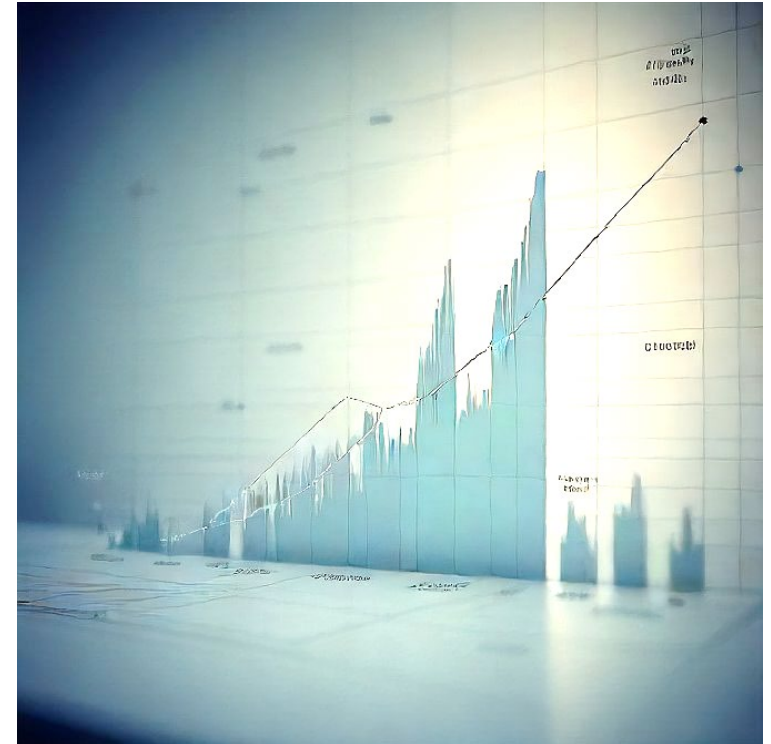
- Private higher education has played a vital role in expanding access to tertiary education in Ghana
- Addressing funding, faculty recruitment, and regulatory challenges is essential for their sustainability.
- Supportive policies and partnerships will allow private universities to further contribute to Ghana's national development goals
- Despite challenges private universities are positioned to contribute significantly to national development



Key Observations in Conducting this Research

Scarcity of Recent Data

- Data Limitations:
 - Latest available data from the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission dates to 2019, making it challenging to capture the true current state of Ghana's private higher education accurately.
 - Reliance on secondary sources from past studies may affect the analysis's relevance to present-day dynamics.



Key Observations in Conducting this Research

Historical Nature of Literature

- Outdated Research:
 - Much of the foundational literature on Ghana's higher education is from 2004-2006.
 - This highlights a research gap, emphasizing the need for up-to-date and comprehensive studies in the sector.



Recommendations for Future Research

- Primary Research Needs:
 - Conducting new, in-depth primary research with current statistics and insights on private higher education in Ghana is essential.
 - More recent studies will support more accurate analysis and policy recommendations

Improving Data Collection and Accessibility

- Encouraging Regular Data Updates:
 - Authorities, such as the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, should be encouraged to publish frequent statistical reports.
 - Up-to-date data accessibility will enable timely and reliable analyses to inform educational policy and planning.





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