

## Market Positioning of Public and Private Universities in Ghana: Students Perspective

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**Abstract.** *This paper concentrates on universities strategies for admitting students and the rate at which private sector universities expand in today's higher educational setups. This paper answers the following question: to what extent are the public universities different from the private universities? In an attempt to find the answers, the whole study is developed towards students' perception of the universities positioning in terms of what they are offering to the customers, through what they prompt people to apply for admission? Therefore, this paper looks at the prevailing admission strategies and potential students' entry requirements at both public and private universities to determine the theoretical systems that are used by these universities in competition for customers (students). A quantitative survey of students in both public and private universities in Ghana was undergone. In all, a total number of 255 questionnaires were printed. Only 187 were answered and returned out of 200 distributed questionnaires to the public sector universities whereas 55 questionnaires were distributed to the private sector students and 51 were answered and returned. This research was based on sampling data collection methods. The findings show that there are three categories of universities such as Publicly/Fully Independent Chartered Universities, Privately Owned Universities and Personal/Sole Proprietorship University Colleges. All these affect students' choices for admission application. The findings clearly indicate that both public and private universities purposes are related using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient formulae to that of the sole proprietorship colleges. Also, the admission requirement strategies differ between public and private universities.*

**Keywords:** *nonprofit marketing, higher-education, university admission, public university, private university, positioning, university strategies, students, Ghana.*

## Introduction

The marketing concept is an idea that has been adopted in non-business contexts, with particular reference to universities and their students. This paper aims to find out students' views on university admission strategies. Years ago, only public institutions were in existence to provide undergraduate and post graduate programs to people who qualified and wanted to pursue high education.

Almost all top-management of government administration, of large institutions and of companies in some countries consists of persons who graduated traditional universities, such as the University of Ghana. This has huge implications and ramifications in the decision-making body and process in many countries. That is, decisions on matters affecting the national curricula have to be decided by these persons. Hence, indecisions and bias regulations of the public sector institutions in a country will always surface.

As it has been noted that the world is moving fast, so is the educational systems and practices are moving in the same pace. There is this marketing niche whereby private universities have been established in frills to the public sector universities. These accredited organizations have been in existence for less than 10 years now. Some of these universities in Ghana are Central University, Kings University, Methodist University, and Jayee University College. These universities are established to fulfill the career aspirations of the youth especially those who want to study for university degrees. Most of these universities have gained affiliations to some of the Public Sector Universities (PSU) as their mentor institutions. Though, private universities are working hard to be upgraded to a fully chartered university status. Currently, there are six known public universities in Ghana: University of Ghana, Legon; Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi; University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast; University of Education, Winneba; University for Development Studies, Tamale; and University of Mines and Technology, Tarkwa. This paper aims to depict the distinctions, considering admission requirements, planning and marketing status of these universities. This is by way of finding out the reasons why and how parents and the prospective students make choices and select a particular university.

There are also other professional institutions that have been accorded the status of public universities. These are: Ghana Institute of Journalism; Ghana

Institute of Languages; Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration; Ghana Institute of Surveying and Mapping; Institute of Professional Studies; and National Film and Television Institute. There is also one university in the capital city of Accra which is registered as a regional university called Regional Maritime University. These are all branches regarded as higher or tertiary institutions in Ghana. The private universities are affiliated to some traditional universities known as public university, they are the bone of contention in terms of competition in the universities market positioning strategies.

### **Rationale / background of the study**

The rationale behind this research topic is that education nowadays is about marketing mix systems. This has to do with how both public and private universities position their activities in terms of business strategies in reaching prospective students. These universities are providing future modalities and career aspirations to future leaders in the country.

The backbone of this study is that the economy is now full of private universities in addition to the few public universities whereby they are all competing to fulfill the career aspirations of the country's manpower and industrial needs with good human resource capital. It is now in a form of market competition as all of them have drawn up their marketing plans to grow their intakes in order to gain high funds and profits. Many parents were encouraged in the past by government to send their wards to schools so that the illiteracy rate in Ghana will be minimized many years to come. Majority of the young men and women are now attending schools in high numbers with the zeal and passion towards acquiring knowledge and skills in life through higher education. This makes the research of the marketing mix systems adopted by the universities strategic plan towards admission of prospective students necessary.

### **Statements of the problem**

The educational policies and systems in Ghana are now confused in the sense that the government (i.e. the National Accreditation Board) kept changing their policies frequently. There is a problem with the students' intake at the public sector universities, although the private sector is trying to gain momentum on student's admission and enrolment. The major problem is the total numbers of

qualified students who do not get admission into the public sector universities are higher than those that usually are admitted. Despite that, those left out may also have good grades with distinctions. Another, alarming point is that the total number of students who completes the universities each year is so large that there aren't enough organizations that can absorb them, hence, these increases the unemployment rate of the young people in the country. This brings a lot of hardships and more problems within the economy.

### **Limitation of the research**

This paper does not rely on the theories and previous articles on or research on higher education but rather specifically gathered findings on marketing strategies during admission with reference to students' opinion.

### ***Purpose of the research topic***

The purpose is to disseminate any findings about the students' perception on Ghana's universities market strategies and positioning to educational stakeholders – national and international bodies.

### ***Aims***

The specific aim is to identify the drawbacks in making university choices by students and parents in terms of marketing mix systems in both public and private universities. Another aim is to ascertain the students' perception on public and private universities market positions within the educational set-ups. We also aim to further ascertain whether there are different kinds and levels of universities ownership in the eyes of the prospective students.

### ***Objectives***

The main objective of this research is to depict to the masses of aspiring students and their guardians as to how to make important and crucial decisions before applying into either public or private universities of their choice. Another objective is to critically show whether there is a relationship between public and private universities in terms of success.

### **Literature review**

The traditional marketing tools historically grouped into 4Ps (product, price, place and promotion), 5Ps (adding people) and 7Ps (adding physical facili-

ties and processes) may be used in the university market systems (Ivy, 2008). While the number of students' increases every year, so too are the number of tuition providers especially in the private university sector. The competition between traditional public/independent and private universities is increasing with a variety of joint ventures and franchise operations fragmenting this highly competitive market causing problem of choice to the prospective students (Cubilloet et al., 2006). As the number of degree choices grows and prospective students have a wider variety of universities from which to choose, the need for universities to differentiate themselves from their competition is self evident, resulting in the increased role of marketing in student recruitment (Taylor & Darling, 1991; Canterbury, 1999; Nicholls et al., 1995; Coates, 1998). Notably, numerous higher education institutions (MacGregor, 2000; Merten, 2000) and some business schools have seen declines in their enrolments, further emphasising the importance of marketing for student recruitment (Taylor & Darling, 1991; Smith et al., 1995; Tagwireyi, 2000).

As admission choices available to students grow, life changing decisions about where they want to study are becoming more complex. The decision-making process becomes longer while prospective students assess alternative offerings of competing business schools or private universities. According to Ivy (2001), perceptions of business school (private universities) offerings and the image that they convey need to be managed. While the collection and evaluation of the information on universities is being critically evaluated, universities are providing only some of the information that prospective students are using to develop the image they have of an university. At a time when many business schools are facing increasing financial pressures and competition, it has become imperative for them to market themselves.

Marketing in higher education sector is not new. Many authors have recognised the increasingly important role that marketing is playing in student recruitment (Cubilloet et al., 2006; Ivy, 2001; Maringe & Foskett, 2002; Fisk & Allen, 1993; Carlson, 1992; Wonders & Gyure, 1991; Murphy & McGarrity, 1978). When universities offer qualifications that satisfy student needs, distribute the tuition using methods that match student expectations, provide data on which they can make informed decisions about qualification choices and price those program at a level that students see as providing value for money courses are more likely to be patronised. The tools alluded here are the most basic elements of the marketing mix (product, price, place and promotion), which are used by universities to increase not only the number of enquiries regarding programs, but also actual applications, and therefore obtain high enrolment.

### ***a. Universities marketing mix strategic systems application***

The marketing mix is a set of controllable marketing tools that an institution uses to produce the response it wants from its various target markets. It consists of everything that the university can do to influence the demand for the services that it offers. Tangible products have traditionally used a 4Ps model; the services sector on the other hand uses a 7P approach in order to satisfy the needs of the service providers and customers. These 7ps are product, price, place, promotion, people, physical facilities and processes. The product is what is being sold. It is more than a simple set of tangible features; it is a complex bundle of benefits that satisfy customer needs. In the case of a university, what is being sold is widely debated. Some argue that students registering for degrees are the raw materials of education and that the graduates are the products, with employers being the customers. While there is merit in this argument, employers seldom pay universities for their graduates, it is far more common to have students pay universities for the services that they receive and ultimately the degrees that they are awarded. For this reason, students will be seen as the customers and the MBA degree for example, the product. Design of the degree is central to the product element of the marketing mix. The curriculum must be appropriately developed and adapted to meet the needs of the students. Program duration is also expected to influence business school choice.

Little et al. (1997) and Ratshinga (1998) wrote that the price element of the services marketing mix is dominated by what is being charged for the degree or tuition fees that are required to enrol at the university. The pricing element not only affects the revenues that a university derives from its enrolment, but also affects student perceptions of quality. With most universities charging tuition fees for post graduate education, tuition fees have an impact on a student's ability to afford to register for an MBA Program, with some researchers finding a direct link between demand for the MBA degree and tuition fees. Some universities have established their business schools as separate cost centres and are expected to be entirely self funding without support from the university's central budget. Many private university colleges established this way are also expected to make a contribution to the university's central funds and cross subsidise other areas of business school activities, such as research. Hence, the pricing element is critical to the day to day operation of many business schools.

*Place* is the distribution method that the university adopts to provide the tuition to its market in a manner that meets, if not exceeds, student expectations. The development of alternative modes of tuition have grown significantly; no

longer are students confined to the classroom and their lecturer to get the input they need to meet the requirements of the course. Access to lecture and support materials are increasingly becoming available through virtual learning media, like Blackboard and Moodle. Distance learning opportunities have also developed through post, email, Internet, video and teleconferencing, block release options and more recently pod-casts in the advance countries.

*Promotion* encompasses all the tools that universities use to provide the market with information on their offerings, that is, advertising, publicity, public relations and sales promotional efforts. When one considers the wide variety of publics with which a university needs to communicate, the use of only the university's prospectus or its website is unlikely to be effective. Different elements are used for different audiences. Indeed, some targets like prospective students are so important that several promotional tools will be targeted at them for admission purposes. Other methods that could be used are open days, international higher education exhibitions, conventions, direct mail and advertising. They are employed by universities to inform, remind and persuade prospective students to select an university of their choice.

The intangible nature of services resulted in the addition of a further element to the marketing mix. The people element includes all the staff of the university that interact with prospective students and once they are enrolled as students of that university. It could be both academic, administrative and support staff. The role of the image and the status of the academic staff in recruitment of undergraduate students is open for debate; however at a graduate level, student perceptions of teaching staff reputation can play an important role in the choice process (Cubilloet et al., 2006; Ivy, 2001). Some students, for example, may be influenced by the number of academic staff who are PhD holders or have a professorial title, others by academics' public profiles (as experts for television interviews or other publicity). On the administrative and academic support front, significant input to the provision of higher education services both at the front line and what might be considered behind the scenes has to be provided, which does impact on student perceptions of service quality. Lin (1999, p.190) argues that "*there is no more important element than selecting people for positions at a college or university*". The simple process of how a telephone enquiry is handled may have a greater impact on whether or not a prospective student is going to keep that university in their range of options than an eminent Professor's publications or research record. Though, *physical evidence and processes* are the newest additions to the marketing mix service system.



*Physical evidence* is the tangible component of the service offering. A variety of tangible aspects are evaluated by a university's target markets, ranging from the teaching materials to the appearance of the buildings and lecture facilities at the university.

*Processes* are all the administrative and bureaucratic functions of the university, that is, from the handling of enquiries to registration, from course evaluation to examinations, from result dissemination to graduation, to name but a few. Unlike tangible products that a customer purchases, takes ownership of and then takes home to consume, an university education requires payment prior to "consumption", an ownership exchange does not take place and a long and closer face-to-face of the relationship often emerge. Students attend classes for at least a year (on post-graduate programs) and much longer for undergraduate degrees. During the period that the student is registered, processes need to be set in motion to ensure that the student registers for the correct courses, has marks or grades correctly calculated and entered against the student's name and is ultimately awarded the correct qualification. While this might seem quite straight forward, there are numerous other processes that need to be implemented concurrently (with the finance system, accommodation, time tabling and the library) to ensure the highest level of student satisfaction.

In the marketing literature it is constantly argued that the marketing executive should pay attention to the customers' needs and wants in order to achieve and maintain successful business relationships in the marketplace. This fundamental approach is often referred to as the "marketing concept" (McKitterick, 1957; Keith, 1960; Kotler, 2000). It is one of the most significant concepts ever developed in the marketing literature. There are different approaches to marketing such as the marketing mix (e.g. McGarry, 1950; Borden, 1964; McCarthy, 1960), industrial marketing (e.g. Håkansson, 1982; Ford, 1998), services marketing (e.g. Shostack, 1977; Grönroos, 2000) and relationship marketing (e.g. Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Gummesson, 1995; Zbucheá, Pinzaru & Galalae, 2009) all of which stress the importance of the customers to the firm or institution.

The marketing concept is an idea that has been adopted in non-marketing contexts, such as the relationships between universities and their students (Aliff, 1998; Baldwin, 1994; Delmonico, 2000; Driscoll & Wicks, 1998; Lust, 1998; Pitman, 2000; Seymour & Collett, 1991; Shupe, 1999; Spicuzza, 1992; Tierney, 1999). Students are seen as customers of knowledge at many universities. Likewise, universities regard themselves as suppliers of knowledge to



these customers. In extension, many universities go a step further and regard their students as collaborators in the quest for knowledge. It is apparent that these universities have been strongly influenced by marketing metaphors. The use of marketing metaphors appears sometimes to be appropriate to use in the context of student-university relationships, while other times inappropriate. The notion of students as customers, made us to consider that it has caused a misinterpretation of the relationship between universities and students.

As Driscoll and Wicks (1998, p.60) suggest that limitations are to be placed on the application of the marketing concept in universities, and urge relevant stakeholders to consider the dangers of taking the customer-seller analogy too far. Shupe (1999) further suggests that marketing metaphors are inappropriate to describe the student-university relationship. The student-university relationship has no analogy to traditional marketing relationships such as customer-supplier or buyer-seller.

#### ***b. The universities educational environment in modern world***

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, universities around the world were forced to look for financial sources other than those provided by governments (Delmonico, 2000; Driscoll & Wicks, 1998; Marginson & Considine, 2000), that would enable them to generate fee income for the sector (Stilwell, 2003). This fee income would need to come from overseas students and local students willing to pay for the privilege of attending a university course. Universities became creative in their course offerings and broadened their target markets. No longer did they focus solely on home country residents, but they sought out international students and targeted the corporate world through their newly established university commercial apparatus, that is, designed to introduce the corporate world to the concept of “life long learning” and to become a repeated purchaser.

According to Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006), the literature on higher education marketing is incoherent and lacks theoretical models that reflect upon the particular context of higher education and the nature of its services. They further added to their limitation that, “*the research field of higher education marketing is still at a relatively pioneer stage with much research still to be carried out both from a problem identification and strategic perspective*”. And that despite the substantial literature on the marketisation of higher education and consumer behaviour, the evidence of the marketing strategies that have been implemented by institutions on the supply-side remains limited. The authors conclude that this is relatively uncharted territory.

St. George (2006) wrote on positioning in higher education and question the increase in competition among universities is the developing countries. It is through the higher educational system that the developing countries can obtain sustainable development. This author argues that “*despite pressure across the globe to encourage a market among universities, this may not always be the most efficient use of resources, or the best way of integrate universities in a country’s drive for a economic growth*”.

### ***c. Admission requirements***

#### **Public universities application and admission process guide:**

##### **UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON**

##### **Entry Requirements**

##### **GENERAL ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR DIPLOMA PROGRAMS**

With the exception of holders of Certificates in Statistics from the University of Ghana, all other applicants to Diploma programs must satisfy the following minimum requirements besides any other conditions which may be stipulated for a particular program:

- **WASSCE/SSSCE Applicants:**

Credit Passes (A1 - C6 in WASSCE and A – D in SSSCE) in five (5) subjects comprising three core subjects, including English Language and Core Mathematics plus two (2) elective subjects

- **Post-Secondary Teachers Certificate.**

##### **DIPLOMA PROGRAM TO BE OFFERED THROUGH DISTANCE EDUCATION**

##### **Diploma in Youth Development Work**

##### **Entry Requirements**

Applicants must satisfy the following minimum requirements:

- Credit Passes (A1 - C6 in WASSCE and A – D in SSSCE) in five (5) subjects comprising three core subjects, including English Language and Core Mathematics plus two (2) elective subjects
- Mature Students with age 27 and above by January 31, 2014.
- Holders of diploma/degree certificates may also apply to the program.

An entry examination will be conducted at University of Ghana, Legon.

## ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR DEGREE PROGRAMS WASSCE/SSSCE APPLICANTS

### General Entry Requirements

To be admitted to any Degree program, Senior High School graduates must possess:

At least credits (A1 - C6 in WASSCE and A - D in SSSCE) in English, Core Mathematics and Integrated Science (for Science applicants) or Social Studies (for non-Science applicants) and three elective subjects in Science for applicants applying to Science or Agriculture related disciplines or three elective subjects in General Arts/Business for applicants applying to non-Science related disciplines, **with the total aggregate not exceeding 24**. In addition, Science applicants should have at least a grade C6 in WASSCE/D in SSSCE in Social Studies/Life Skills and non-Science applicants should also have at least a grade C6 in WASSCE/D IN SSSCE in Integrated Science/Core Science.

**Application fee(s)** are NON-REFUNDABLE including applications submitted in error.

Graduate Admissions	GH¢130.00	GHC
Ghanaian Applicants	GH¢130.00	GHC
International Applicants & Ghanaians abroad	\$110.00	USD
Ghanaians with foreign background	GH¢130.00	GHC

### Where to Buy Voucher

University of Ghana on-line application **E-VOUCHERS** can be obtained by **Ghanaian applicants** for **GH¢130.00** at the following banks: **Ecobank, HFC Bank, Agricultural Development Bank, Ghana Commercial Bank, Zenith Bank, Merchant Bank, UniBank and Fidelity Bank.**

Source: <http://admission1.ug.edu.gh/freshstudents/index.php/entry-requirements.html>

## UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

### Minimum University Entry Requirements for Undergraduate Programs

The basic requirements to be satisfied to qualify for entry into the University. These requirements are to be met in addition to the other program-specific requirements

**1.1.1 SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL (SHS) CERTIFICATE HOLDERS.**

- Must have at least, six (6) WASSCE Credits including three (3) Core Subjects: English Language, Mathematics and Integrated Science, as well as three (3) Electives in relevant subjects with the total aggregate of 36 or better
- Must also satisfy Special Program requirement(s) for program(s) chosen.

**1.1.2 ADVANCED BUSINESS CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION (ABCE)**

Passes in three (3) subjects (at least, one of the passes should be Grade D or better). Also the applicant must have had credit passes in five (5) subjects including English Language, Mathematics, Integrated Science or Social Studies in the General Business Certificate Examination (GBCE).

**1.1.3 MATURE APPLICANTS**

- Must be at least 25 years by August 1 of the academic year one wants to enroll.
- Should have a Senior High School Certificate or its equivalent.
- DBS and Certificate Holders should apply as mature applicant.
- Must pass the UEW Entrance Examination.

**1.1.4 DISTANCE EDUCATION APPLICANTS**

These programs can be pursued through the Distance Education Module. They are: B.Sc. Automotive Technology, Mechanical Technology, Wood Technology, Construction Technology, Electricals or Electronics Technology, Fashion and Textile Design Technology as well as Catering and Hospitality Technology Education.

**Entry Requirements:**

- Four (4) G.C.E. O' Level Credits or Three (3) SHSCE Credits in English Language, Mathematics and Integrated Science.
- One of the following qualifications:
  - Automotive Technology - Motor Vehicle Technician III (MVT III)
  - Mechanical Technology- Mechanical Engineering Technician III (MET III)
  - Wood Technology- Advance Furniture Design and
  - Construction/Advance Carpentry and Joinery
  - Construction Technology - Construction Technician Certificate II or III

- Electricals/Electronics Technology - Electrical Technician Engineering III
- Fashion and Textile Design Technology - Advanced Fashion Certificate
- Catering and Hospitality Technology - Advanced Cookery Certificate (812/2)
- Must pass UEW Entrance Examination

### **1.1.5 DIPLOMA HOLDERS**

- Must possess a Higher National Diploma or its equivalence from previous field or area of study.
- Full-Time applicants must pass an interview.

### **1.1.6 SCHOOL CERTIFICATE/GCE HOLDERS**

Five (5) credits at GCE "O" Level, including English Language and Mathematics as well as two (2) "A" Level passes other than General Paper in relevant subjects.

### **1.2.0 DIPLOMA PROGRAMS**

#### **1.2.1 2-YEAR DIPLOMA PROGRAMS**

- A Distinction or Credit in an accredited certificate program  
OR
- Five SHS Credits including English Language and Mathematics
- People with higher qualifications can apply

#### **1.2.2 1-YEAR DIPLOMA PROGRAMS**

- Certificate from a recognised institution
- People with higher qualifications can apply

#### **1.2.3 CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS**

At least Credit in SHS Mathematics and English Language

#### **Cost of Application Forms**

Undergraduate - GH¢100 || Post-Graduate - GH¢150 || International Applicants - US\$50

Source: <http://www.uew.edu.gh/content/minimum-university-entry-requirements-undergraduate-programs>

## Private university application and admission process guide:

### JAYEE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

#### Admission Requirements

##### A1. LEVEL 100 (DEGREE)

- SSCE Grade D or better in three (3) Core subjects and three (3) Electives
- WASSCE Grade C6 or better in three (3) Core subjects and three (3) Electives
- GCE 'A' Level in three (3) subjects (at least, one of the Passes should be Grade D or better). Also, the applicant must have had Credit Passes (Grade 6) in three GCE 'O' Level subjects in English Language, Mathematics and a Science subject (for non-science students) and an Arts subject for science students.
- ABCE Passes in three (3) subject (at least, one of the passes should be Grade D or better). Also the applicant must have had Credit passes in five (5) subjects including English Language, Mathematics, Integrated Science or Social Studies in the GBCE
- Baccalaureate
- Mature Students (25 years of age and above with 2 years relevant work experience). Must have passes or better in GCE 'O' Level or SSSCE or their equivalents or Must pass the mature students' Entrance Examination and / or by an interview.
- Candidates awaiting results may also apply with the support of their SHS transcripts.
- 2-year Non-Tertiary Diploma in a related field

##### A2. TOP-UPS LEVEL 200 (DEGREE)

- Teacher's Certificate 'A'
- GCE 'A' Level (with at least passes in 3 subjects with Grade E
- ABCE (with 3 passes or more) or RSA III
- 2-year Tertiary Diploma with transcript (from an accredited institution) Transfer from another university (with transcript)  
ICM Diploma Certificates with (SSSCE/WASSCE aggregate 24/36 or better)
- 2-year Non-Tertiary Diploma (with Distinction) in a related field

##### A3. TOP-UP LEVEL 300 (DEGREE)

- A degree in any discipline

- Three-year (Advanced) Diploma e.g. HND, Dip in Bisc etc
- Foundation stages in ACCA, ICA, ICS, CIMA etc
- Transfer from another University (with a good academic transcript)

#### **A4. TERTIARY DIPLOMA (ALL PROGRAMS)**

- SSSCE/WASSCE with at least an aggregate of 26/38 or better
- GBCE with 3 passes or more

#### **A5. NON-TERTIARY DIPLOMA**

- SSSCE/WASSCE results
- SHS education with supporting testimonial from previous schools
- Candidates with NACVET/NVTI or other professional certificates may apply

### **B. CERTIFICATION: University of Education, Winneba**

#### **C. APPLICATION FORMS:**

Local Student:

Degree GH~ 50.00

Diploma GH~ 40.00

Foreign Students

Degree US\$ 60.00

Diploma US\$ 55.00

Source: <http://www.juc.edu.gh/content/admission-requirements>

## **Distinctions of institutional business setups and ownership**

### ***Sole proprietor business/university***

This term refers to one man business enterprise or ownership business. Because the proprietor is the sole owner of the enterprise; he must manage the business and bear the final responsibility for its success or failure. In an absent of partnership or group of individuals joining forces together is one man set-up.

### ***Private company***

This is a type of higher education institution or tertiary level of education that is initiated by an individual and raises shares or funds through other groups



of people or other organisations wishing to invest into the business for a benefit. This can also be referred to as a group of individuals coming together as individuals in partnership to own a company or institution. Registration must not be done by only one person but with other executive members of the establishment. This is a company whose ownership is private as a result it does not need to meet the strict Securities and Exchange Commission filing requirements of public companies. Private companies may issue stock and have shareholders but however, their shares do not trade on public exchanges and are not issued through an initial public offering. In general, the shares of these businesses are less liquid and the values are difficult to determine because it is private in nature. It is based on personal determination on the amount to offer per shares with its own design and system.

### ***Public University***

This is a higher education that is established by the central government of a nation with statutory regulation and legislative instrument that guides and protects its operation. The major stakeholder is the governments through the interest of the ordinary citizens are the owners. Therefore, its organizational structure is built on the predetermined structures and systems spelt out in the laws that govern the university and its acts.

### **The research methodology**

Considering the rate at which institutions and schools increase, private sector universities are rampant in Ghana educational setups. The idea that came to mind first was to what extend are the public universities different from the private universities? In an attempt to find an answer we decided to curve the whole study towards students' perception of the universities positioning in terms of what they are offering to the customers through what prompts the people to apply and gain admission. A quantitative data was collected from the students based on the design of questions which was given to both students in public and private universities. This means a sample data method was used whereby the targeted interviewees were choosing to participate in answering the questions.

Questionnaires were distributed to the public sector university students to answer the questions contained in the questionnaire. The same questionnaires were given to private sector students to answer as well. In all, a total number of 255 questionnaires were printed. Only 187 were answered and returned

out of 200 distributed questionnaires to the public sector university whereas 55 questionnaires were distributed to the private sector students and 51 were answered and returned. This research was based on sampling data collection methods as discussed above. The formula used to calculate the percentages in the data analysis is as below:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Responses}}{\text{Total Number of Respondents/Questionnaires Returned}} \times 100\%$$

(i.e. No. of Responses Divided by Total No. of Respondents/questionnaires returned, times hundred)

In order to have better presentation of these research findings, we have decided to use data tabulations and graphs with unique corresponding variables to give us the facts of the students perceptions of their choices made. This will indicate clearly how both the public and private universities position their strategies in the marketplace as much as the aspiring students' population is concerned.

We have narrowed the research findings to two categories of universities, one being public and the other private. It is also obvious that public sector university students' responses are much more than the private sector university students in terms of quantity or frequency. To make the research more scientific, we constructed correlation between the public and private universities.

### Presentation of primary quantitative source of data gathered

*Table 1. Corresponding Answers to the Primary Data Questions from both Public and Private Universities Students Randomly Selected*

*Question No.	Pvt Uni.	Pub Uni.	Pvt Uni.	Pub Uni.	Pvt Uni.	Pub Uni.	Pvt Uni.	Pub Uni.
	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes %	Yes %	No %	No %
1	39	156	12	31	76	83	24	17
2	22	118	29	68	43	63	57	36
3	22	154	29	33	43	82	57	18
4	25	118	26	69	49	63	51	37
5	43	146	8	34	84	78	16	18
6	38	147	13	40	75	79	25	21
7	40	31	11	156	78	17	22	83

*Question No.	Pvt Uni.	Pub Uni.	Pvt Uni.	Pub Uni.	Pvt Uni.	Pub Uni.	Pvt Uni.	Pub Uni.
	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes %	Yes %	No %	No %
8	41	153	10	34	80	82	20	18
9	37	156	14	31	73	83	27	17
10	43	100	8	87	84	53	16	47
11	12	67	39	120	24	36	76	64
12	29	110	22	77	57	59	43	41
13	48	69	3	118	94	37	6	63
14	29	153	22	34	57	82	43	18
15	23	33	28	154	45	18	55	82
16	38	146	13	41	75	78	25	22
17	18	69	33	118	35	37	65	63
18	33	34	18	148	65	18	35	79
19	35	167	16	20	69	89	31	11
20	15	35	36	152	29	19	71	81
21	43	37	8	150	84	20	16	80
22	44	150	7	37	86	80	14	20
23	41	37	10	150	80	20	20	80
24	9	147	42	40	18	79	82	21
25	23	118	28	69	45	63	55	37
26	26	40	25	147	51	21	49	79
27	15	35	36	152	29	19	71	81
28	44	146	7	34	86	78	14	18
29	41	33	10	154	80	18	20	82

**Correlation between Public and Private Universities: YES Responses from table 1**

**Table 2. YES Correlation Coefficient**

Question No.	Pvt Uni.	Pub Uni.			
	Yes (x)	Yes (y)	(xy)	(x <sup>2</sup> )	(y <sup>2</sup> )
1	39	156	6084	1521	24336
2	22	118	2596	484	13924
3	22	154	3388	484	23716
4	25	118	2950	625	13924
5	43	146	6278	1849	21316
6	38	147	5586	1444	21609
7	40	31	1240	1600	961

Question No.	Pvt Uni.	Pub Uni.			
	Yes (x)	Yes (y)	(xy)	(x <sup>2</sup> )	(y <sup>2</sup> )
8	41	153	6273	1681	23409
9	37	156	5772	1369	24336
10	43	100	4300	1849	10000
11	12	67	804	144	4489
12	29	110	3190	841	12100
13	48	69	3312	2304	4761
14	29	153	4437	841	23409
15	23	33	759	529	1089
16	38	146	5548	1444	21316
17	18	69	1242	324	4761
18	33	34	1122	1089	1156
19	35	167	5845	1225	27889
20	15	35	525	225	1225
21	43	37	1591	1849	1369
22	44	150	6600	1936	22500
23	41	37	1517	1681	1369
24	9	147	1323	81	21609
25	23	118	2714	529	13924
26	26	40	1040	676	1600
27	15	35	525	225	1225
28	44	146	6424	1936	21316
29	41	33	1353	1681	1089
Total	916	2905	94338	32466	365727
	x <sup>2</sup>	y <sup>2</sup>			
Total of:	839056	8439025			

Given that, Correlation coefficient (r) = 
$$\frac{n\sum xy - \sum x \sum y}{\sqrt{n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2} \sqrt{n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2}}$$

Where  $\sum x^2 = 916^2 = 839056$ ;  $\sum y^2 = 8439025$  and  $n = 29$

Therefore,

$$(r) = \frac{(29 \times 94338) - (916 \times 2905)}{\sqrt{(29 \times 839056) - 839056} \sqrt{(29 \times 365727) - 8439025}}$$

$$(r) = \frac{2735802 - 2660980}{\sqrt{(941514 - 839056)(10606083 - 8439025)}}$$

$$(r) = \frac{74822}{\sqrt{102458 \times 2167058}}$$

$$(r) = \frac{74822}{\sqrt{222032428564}}$$

$$(r) = 0.2$$

Hence forth, there is fairly perfect positive correlation between the YES answers of both the public and private universities. This simply means that the marketing mix system or strategies that these categories of universities adopt are common in nature and in practice, since they are all gearing towards the same objectives which are to educate people at higher level.

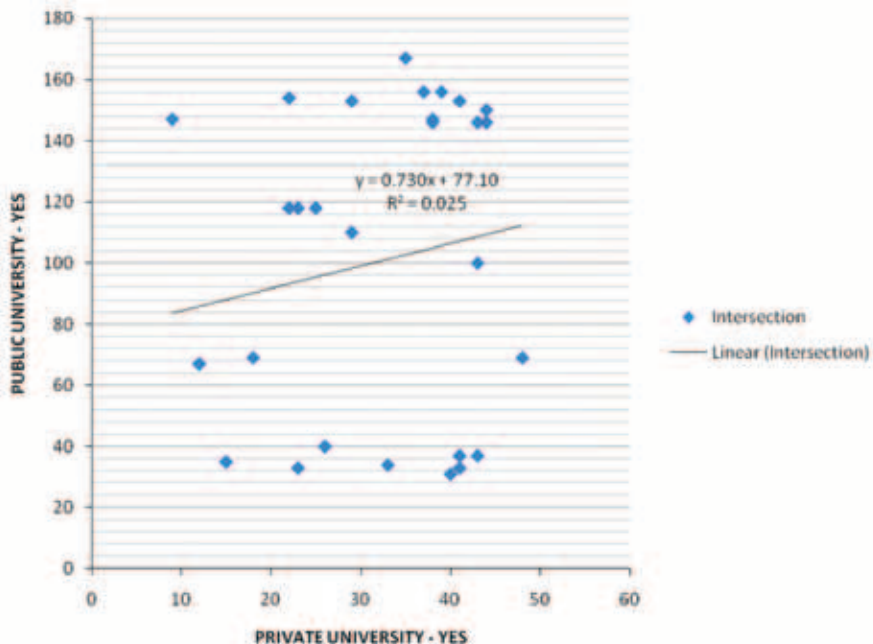


Figure 1. YES Correlation Coefficient of the Universities  
Correlation between Public and Private Universities: NO Responses from table 1

**Table 3. NOs Correlation Coefficient**

Question No.	Pvt Uni.	Pub Uni.			
	No (x)	No (y)	(xy)	(x <sup>2</sup> )	(y <sup>2</sup> )
1	12	31	372	144	961
2	29	68	1972	841	4624
3	29	33	957	841	1089
4	26	69	1794	676	4761
5	8	34	272	64	1156
6	13	40	520	169	1600
7	11	156	1716	121	24336
8	10	34	340	100	1156
9	14	31	434	196	961
10	8	87	696	64	7569
11	39	120	4680	1521	14400
12	22	77	1694	484	5929
13	3	118	354	9	13924
14	22	34	748	484	1156
15	28	154	4312	784	23716
16	13	41	533	169	1681
17	33	118	3894	1089	13924
18	18	148	2664	324	21904
19	16	20	320	256	400
20	36	152	5472	1296	23104
21	8	150	1200	64	22500
22	7	37	259	49	1369
23	10	150	1500	100	22500
24	42	40	1680	1764	1600
25	28	69	1932	784	4761
26	25	147	3675	625	21609
27	36	152	5472	1296	23104
28	7	34	238	49	1156
29	10	154	1540	100	23716
Total	563	2498	51240	14463	290666
	x <sup>2</sup>	y <sup>2</sup>			
Total of:	316969	6240004			

$$\text{Given that, Correlation coefficient (r)} = \frac{n\sum xy - \sum x \sum y}{\sqrt{(n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2)(n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2)}}$$

Where  $\sum x^2 = 563^2 = 316969$ ;  $\sum y^2 = 2498^2 = 6240004$  and  $n = 29$

$$(r) = \frac{(29 \times 51240) - (563 \times 2498)}{\sqrt{(29 \times 14463) - 316969} \sqrt{(29 \times 290666) - 6240004}}$$

$$(r) = \frac{(1485960) - (1406374)}{\sqrt{(419427) - 316969} \sqrt{(8429314) - 6240004}}$$

$$(r) = \frac{79586}{\sqrt{102458 \times 2189310}}$$

$$(r) = \frac{79586}{\sqrt{224312323980}}$$

$$(r) = \frac{79586}{473616.2}$$

$$(r) = 0.2$$

Here again, there is fairly perfect positive correlation between the NO answers of both public and private universities in terms of their application of market mix systems.

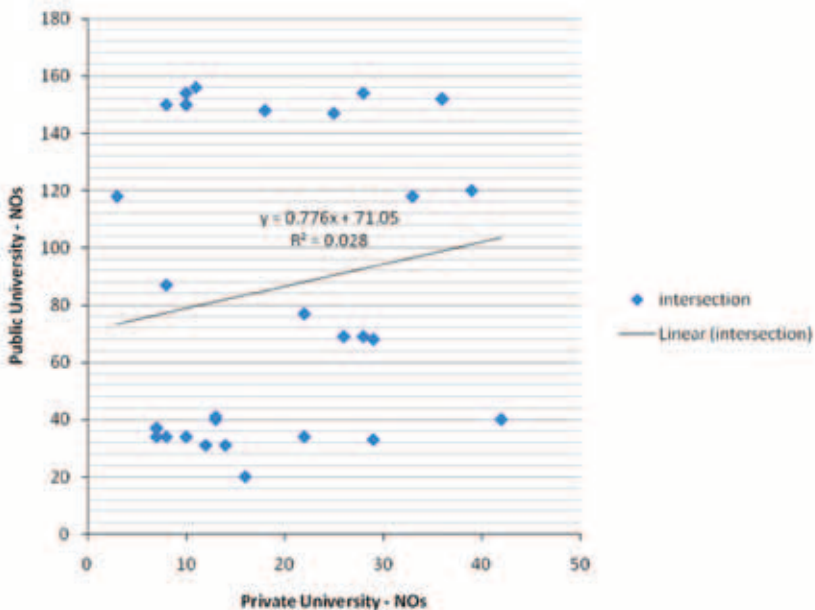


Figure 2. NOs Correlation Coefficient of the Universities



### Major written input information by respondents from primary data

- **Private university students input to the question *why did they choose this university if not captured in the questions?* The following are the text information provided by the interviewees.**
  - I choose this university because it is one of the best private schools in Ghana and also has lecturers who have gone up to the international standards.
  - I want to experience how it feels like to be a foreign student.
  - I choose this university because the lecturers in this university are up to the international standards.
  - Because is the best.
  - I choose this institution because it has a perfect affiliation (UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION).
  - Because the lecturers are good and understanding.
  - There is no intake to undergraduate course in communication science in any of the public universities.
  - I choose this university because my uncle recommended it to me and am not impressed with this university at all. The university lacks facilities.
  - Since it is a University and has a good lecturing activities.
  - Because majority of the people in public sector employment are product of this university.
  - I choose this University because at least it's within the first to third in the Ghanaian universities and also the fees are moderate.
  - I choose this school because I needed to move forward in life and I believe every university is an university.
  - I was inspired by a colleague who is now working with the Commercial Bank at Hohoe. Who attended this school and came out successfully.
  - I choose this university because the course I wanted to study is not in the public university.
  - I choose this university because of the course I wanted to study.
  - I choose this university because I did not get admission to the public university.
  
- **Public university students input to the question *why did they choose this university if not captured in the questions?* The following are the text information provided by the interviewees.**
  - Because I knew it could help me tailor my career in the near future i.e. acquiring the right knowledge, skills, and abilities to embrace the corporate world.

- I choose this university because it has been my dream to pursue Law and the course I am pursuing currently serves as the foundation stone (political science with history).
- Because I think I love it.
- Proximity, moderate fees.
- Because I have to attend the university as part of my growing process.
- Because I wanted to read BSc. Administration or Economics or Mathematics or Statistics.
- I chose this institution because I was looking for a place where I will get a holistic education.
- I believe it is the best in the country.
- It is because it is in my region.
- I chose it because I thought it was the least among 4 evils i.e. better than the other public universities.
- Because is one of the best universities in Africa and also because of its prestigious name.
- I choose this university because I couldn't get admission to my preferred school that I wanted to go: Harvard University.
- It offers the course I want to study further.
- It is considered as the best institution for my desired course.
- Because it is situated in Accra.
- Because it is closer to home.
- I choose this university because I wanted to be outside the region I started schooling to another region.
- To pursue academic excellence.
- Because of its prestige and academic excellence.
- I choose this university because I want to be a student of Legon.
- Close to my work place.
- It was my favourite.
- Because I understand is the premiere university in this country.
- The environment is good for teaching and learning.
- I chose this university because of its reputation in the past years.
- Life time aspiration to graduate from this university.
- I chose this university because my mother had stayed in East Legon before and recommended it to me.

## Analysis of the research data

The analyses are presented in two separate categories (i.e. public and private).

The primary data collected and depicted above shows that most students studying in the private universities are based on the following marketing mix factors in accordance to the arrangement of the research questions presented. These are faculties, people in employment, universities ranking in Ghana, compares to international universities, university courses, formal admissions, economic programs, accommodation/hostelling, fees levels, payment of fees policies, fees including accommodation, distance/nearness to university, coming from different regions, transportation within campus, reputation of the university, occupation of top Ghanaian positions, modern technology in delivering programs, lawmakers/policy stakeholders, parents/guardian involvement, parents/guardian paying fees, good lecturers, standardization of lecturers, large land and space, social amenities, recommendation by a friend, peer group influence, good grades/distinction, university affiliation, obstacles of choice, and university type. These are the narrowed marketing positioning areas that we considered under the private university.

Using table 1 for analysis, 55 questions were distributed to the private sector students and 51 were returned answered, out of which 76% said that it's because of the faculties that made them to apply into the private university. Also 57% consecutively responded that it's because of the majority of people in employment and also the university has good ranking position in Ghana (i.e. within first to third positions). Moreover, 84% of the students applied and gained admission into the private university because of the courses that they offer, where as almost 75% of them said it's because of the tailored nature of their courses which is based on a formal regulation of the country Educational Policy by National Accreditation Board (NAB) as entry point. More so, 78% of the respondents said that it's because the university has programs that can fulfill economic human development and provides job opportunities. In terms of accommodation or hostelling, 80% live in the universities hostels and attend lectures whereas 73% of them agreed that the university fees are moderate compared to other universities.

Furthermore, 84% of the respondents confirmed that the university allows payments of school fees in installments which, makes it more affordable and

attractive and that is why they always want to be there as compared to other universities. In fact, they also confirmed that the charges that they pay do not include accommodation or hostelling fees and the number of the respondents who agreed to this was 76%. This makes it a bit difficult during the course of their studies because they have to pay for private accommodation. Also, distance to the university is not a problem to the students since 57% of them said so. Majority of the respondents, representing 94%, said that it's because the university is near to where they live makes it easy for accessibility and hence no daily transportation cost is incurred. As much as 57% students come from different regions to the university, although 55% of the students said transportation within the campus is very poor or not efficient. 75% of the respondents said they are in this university because it has produced a lot of students who are in responsible positions in this country. Instinctively, 64% of the students said that they don't agree or believe that majority of the past products of this university occupies the top Ghanaian government positions such as in the political arena.

Modern technological advancement in terms of equipment used in the facilitation and teaching and learning are more common in the university, which is said by a number of 65% of the respondents. 69% of the respondents agree that past students are part of lawmakers and policy stakeholders in this country. 71% of them said that it's not their parents or guardians who choose the university for them and they are those paying their fees (84% of the respondents). 86% of the respondents said that they are in the university because it has very good and brilliant lecturers and that some of the lecturers are up to the universal or international standards (80% of the respondents). Decisively, 82% of the respondents do not agree to the fact that the university campus is very nice, with large land or space for other activities. 55% of them said that the social amenities such as banks, sports ground, conference hall etc. are not there or is very poor. With regards to recommendation by a friend are competitive as its 51% against 49%, yes and no respectively. Moreover, 71% of the respondents said that most of their mates are not attending the university. Furthermore, 86% said that they are in the university because they had good grades and with distinctions and vividly. 80% of the students said that the university is affiliated to a public university which indicates dependency of its activities and functionalism.

84% of the respondents said that they are in this university because they could not get admission into the private universities. This contradicts the heading of this analysis (private university students' perspective). It depicts that the

students where shy or not honest about this question, hence bias. Only 16% of them said they could not get admission into the public university which is fair enough because of its true nature. By and large, 69% of the students confirm that they are in private university.

Public sector university is obviously incomparable to the private sector university. From the data presented, 83% of the respondents said that it's because there are faculties that suit their needs that is why they are there. 63% of them said that majority of the past students are employed. 82% of the students recognized the fact that the university is seen within first to third position of the ranking of universities in Ghana, whereas 63% of them consider that it is even seen as second to none compared to the international universities around the globe. Moreover, courses offered in the university also stimulate them to apply for admission which is confirmed by 78% of the respondents. In a more elaborate manner the following diagram depict fully, of the correlations of the interviewees responses from both the private and public university students.

The significance of this study has found out that both public and private universities have separate requirements and method of admitting students. Public universities has more formal way of considering their new entrants likewise the private universities also has an informal and semi-structured way of absorbing and appealing to new applicants. Since, they have to comply with the mentor institution's approval of their system in conjunction of NAB regulations and rules. Moreover, the public universities admission procedures are very strict on grades and other requirements whereas it appears that the private universities are only struggle and plan for those with lower grades or the last grade that has been marked by the NAB.

## Conclusion

The practical implication of this research is that students should not be viewed as customers of a university, but as citizens of a university community. It confirms that customer metaphor is inappropriate to describe students' relationships to universities (Svensson et al., 2007).

This analysis clearly indicates that universities position themselves by the faculties that they create which actually make some aspiring students to apply. For private universities it's unclear if their positioning is based on the majority of their graduate students being in Ghanaian employment sector. Though, this is true

for public universities as they existed before the private ones. Again, a private university market position is not based on its previous performs in accordance to the Ghana's universities ranking system even though it's a major factor in the public universities. The best university is what students look for and considers first. Inevitably, it's very hard to slightly say that private universities in Ghana can be compared to the global universities even though the public universities position is considered as second to none comparable to the international universities. Below there is a summary distinction of the market positioning activities within the private and public universities as indicated by the respondents:

Private university market positioning	Public university market positioning
1. Courses they offer	1. Courses they offer
2. Tailored course type of admissions (e.g. SHS)	2. Tailored course type of admissions (e.g. SHS)
3. Economic programs	3.
4. Private accommodation/hostels	4. Private accommodation/hostels
5. Moderate fees	5. Moderate fees
6. Payment in instalment	6. Payment in instalment
7.	7.
8. Distance	8. Distance
9. Easy accessibility	9.
10. Different regions	10. Different regions
11.	11.
12. Reputation	12. Reputation
13.	13.
14. Modern technological systems	14.
15. Lawmakers/policy stakeholders	15. Lawmakers/policy stakeholders
16.	16.
17. Parents/Guardians pays fees	17.
18. Good lecturers	18. Good lecturers
19. Universal standardization of lecturers	19.
20.	20. Large land and space for activities
21.	21. Social amenities on campus
22. Recommendation by a friend	22.
23.	23.
24. Good grades	24. Good grades
25. Public university affiliation	25.

The above table makes it clear for in-depth conclusions on the reasons why potential students and guardians choose the University for Admission. Government have introduced and implemented consumer rights legislation, trade practices legislation, antitrust legislation, watchdogs and consumer advocates to ensure that the customer is protected against the provider of the goods or ser-

vices that they purchase (Kotler et al., 2001). One can, therefore, understand that students who enter university are being regarded as customers, and consequently in their own minds they are justifiably so. They transfer the dominant marketplace “customer” model to their perceived relationship with the university. If they have concerns in their studies, they are encouraged to express their dissatisfaction. They are frequently surveyed to determine what they like and what they do not like about their courses. The role of the customer is reinforced in them and they act out that role when they engage with universities on issues that have not met their expectations. Such engagements are done through students associations like SRC, JRC, and Executives/Student Leadership.

Private universities in Ghana are affiliated to the public universities which means they have not yet gained fully chartered status from the NAB or government except one private university named Valley View University College. Hence, it's a puzzle to conclude that we have private universities since they rather started by private ownership but in affiliation to other public universities as noted in the wikipedia official website. Private university marketing mix strategy in admitting potential students are not the same method used by public universities. It appears that the public universities have a cut off point where private universities rely on those left out by public universities. Hence, public universities are always on top in terms of students' consideration of choice making whereas private universities are below first time consideration by prospective students.

In final conclusion, it is clear that we have categories of universities such as Public Fully Independent Chartered Universities, Private Owned Chartered Universities and Personal/Private University College.

## **Recommendation**

The use of marketing buzzwords does not contribute to a correct description or an accurate understanding of the student-university relationship. On the contrary, misconceptions and misunderstandings flourish due to misleading terminology and contradictory vocabulary. These frameworks tend to be illusionary if used in non-marketing contexts, such as universities (Svensson et al., 2007).

Private universities must make sure that they work hard to get their graduates to be in public offices as well as in government positions which will boast their



market positioning in the public domain. More so, there is the need for them to improve themselves to gain good ranking position among the Ghanaian universities and globally recognized. Strategic planning is needed by both the private and public sector universities by factoring in accommodation cost into the fees students pay and making sure that the university can actually provide accommodation/hostels. Travelling within campuses must be improved by the universities transport system. Parents/guardians must be encouraged to recommend either private or public universities to their children. The space and large compound must be improved to give room for social amenities to be established by private universities (e.g. Central University College has done so recently). Student mates and friends must be encouraged strategically to lobby their acquaintance to get admission with a university and that will increase the inflow of the potential student numbers within private universities.

The public sector universities must make sure that they develop and also create economic programs that will portray the current and future development and growth of a nation. The location of most public universities has to improve their accessibility, may be by developing or creating a dedicated information desk to the outside world so that proper descriptions can be given. More so, some of the universities were established before the areas became a city hence, it might not be in the heart of the city to make it easy to locate and accessible. Travelling within campuses has to be improved to enhance students' movement. Also, both public and private universities should make sure that their graduates are occupying the top Ghanaian positions since this is not the case from the students' perspective. Also there is the need for them to improve their modern technological systems in delivering teaching and learning processes.

Parents must be encouraged to take the payment of their children school fees as their responsibility and with these will ease the tensions and hardships on students and will enable them to concentrate on their studies. The standardization and quality of the university lecturers has to be improved to the international standard as it's noted from the students' perspective. Students must be encouraged to recommend their friends into the universities so that they can all be attending the same university as they did in the SHS level which will increase student numbers. It is obvious that public universities do not need affiliation within the country but the question is won't it be possible for them to increase their services to the international world by getting affiliated to other global universities?

Therefore, since this research concentrated on students' perspectives, it would be good idea for future researche to consider looking at what constitute a public university compared to that of a private university. And whether there can be personal university (i.e. sole proprietorship school or college becoming a private university?), how can this happen or be possible in terms of educational laws and P policies of constitutional mandates in Ghana?

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